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TROUBLES IN IRISH WRITING
AND
THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS AND RELIGION

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Irelande is with strange warr possess
like an Ague: now raging, now at rest,
which time will cure: yet it must do her
good if she were purged and her head
wayne let blood.

John Donne, 1594

ABSTRACT

It appeared to me that the differences and a particular atmosphere I found in Irish writing were due to more than the syntax of Hyberno-English. I was curious and to investigate further I returned to university to add English literature as a major to an existing degree in Psychology, Anthropology, Linguistics and the relevant ancillaries. The literary approach to the few – mostly Anglo-Irish – writers on which single courses were offered left my questions mostly unanswered. My own research continued along historical and psycho-sociocultural lines. I believe this approach discovered what I sought.

Violence and power struggles appeared always to have been part of the Irish heritage from pre-history. From the Reformation it became evident that political and religious conflict were interlinked and the violence this generated was subsumed under the euphemism Troubles. Both Troubles and the shibboleths these incidents engendered were, I concluded, enshrined in the Irish psyche and variously reflected in Irish writing over centuries. (Ballads are a prime example of this). There seemed to be no studies available on the effect or function of the shibboleths. I wanted to explore and analyse some of the texts in which they appeared.

There were, however, other themes and characteristics which wove themselves in and out of narrative and autobiography, especially the increasingly popular memoirs or stories of Irish childhood and adolescence. The personal influence of religion and its effect on sexual mores was ever-present; domestic or individual cruelty and violence frequently appeared as if they were a routine part of life, as does alcoholism; the decay of the Big House and anti-English or Anti-Protestant sentiments all appeared almost *en passant*.

In order to test my hypotheses every mention of these different characteristics was recorded from each book I read. Ranging from law textbooks (including analyses of Brehon law), published in the 1700s, through history, biography, journalism, fiction, poetry and translations of the sagas and various Annals, I made notes of the way each subject was mentioned and its relevance to the text. To facilitate recording I used a system of telestroking for statistical purposes as well as entering on both subject and book cards every relevant page number and the *manner* in which both political and individual violence was mentioned as well as similarly recording appearances of the other themes, . (This is fully explained in the Preface.)

In virtually every single novel listed in the bibliography one or more of these specific themes appear, often with scant relevance to the narrative. They all, especially the Troubles, appear as sociologically significant factors shaping attitude and values even where they seem to disappear into the background.

To test the validity of my hypothesis about the effect of the shibboleths I conducted, over several years, an informal research project with any readers who were prepared to respond with their immediate and emotional response to significant signifiers. Initially this was among university students attending UCT who were either from Ireland or who had links to the country. Later this was extended to a U3A group meeting monthly for an Irish Studies Discussion Group seminar as well as members of book clubs and acquaintances interested in Irish writing. .

My conclusions were that in order to understand the way in which the Troubles manifest themselves in Irish writing from the nineteenth century onwards, it is essential to look at influences from the past. Briefly (because of space limitations), I trace the pattern in Irish narrative, poetry and history from the time of oral legend to journalism in the 1800s, through the 20th century to 2004. Because themes and patterns repeat themselves it is

impossible to analyse the subject matter chronologically. The intertwined tropes gyre, combine, separate and rejoin over the centuries. My conclusion is that politico-religious violence and conflict, as reflected in sagas from pre-history through to modern legends of political 'martyrs', has left its mark on Irish writing in ways I enumerate in my thesis.

To avoid confusion I have used the Irish language spelling as given in the Oxford reference books on Irish Literature and History as listed in the References except where it differs in the works under discussion.

The fairly extensive Appendices and Bibliography are not part of the thesis but do provide further interesting evidence and sources.

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Signed by candidate

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PREFACE

The *historian* may claim –though we may be sceptical about the claim – that the scientific rigour of his work, and the accepted standards by which it will be judged, dispense him from any need to identify his own point of view, or the factors which may have conditioned it. The writer of an essay like the present, containing as much commentary as interpretation of fact, can claim no such dispensation. This essay is concerned directly and throughout with the Catholic and Protestant communities of Ireland, and it is therefore relevant that the reader should know where the writer stands in relation to these communities.

Conor Cruise O'Brien. 1974 *States of Ireland* 2nd Edition.

Some fifteen or so years ago a large retail bookshop moved into new premises. On the last day in the old shop the books that had not yet been moved — mostly paperback fiction — were on sale at prices from 25c to R5. I had an hour before the final closing time. With no time to browse I selected books on the basis of the author receiving a literary award or nomination. I spent over R375. On cataloguing scores of books I found, to my amazement, that the majority were by Irish authors.

I perceived a pattern among the Irish writers. Politics, religion and violence manifested as the Troubles appeared frequently, irrespective of their role in the narrative. I began making notes and keeping records. Each Irish writer, fiction and non-fiction, was cross referenced by entry on two cards, one by author the other by book title.

As I read I developed a code system enabling me to note, collect and classify examples illustrating my theory. In my own books I make marginal code marks in pencil and enter the page numbers under categories listed on open spaces in the front pages. For borrowed books the information is entered on a sheet of firm board used as a bookmark. This system obviates the making of separate notes whilst reading and thus interfering with the flow and atmosphere of the book. Later relevant entries are

made on both the author and the title cards, briefly summarising the point and noting the page number. Access and comparison of data is instant. Larger subject cards provide further cross referencing. On these quotations and sources are noted. For some subjects the number of large cards is extensive and sub-categories are developed.

Subject cards are particularly useful where I do not have a book in my own library of over three thousand Irish books published from the 1700s to 2004. Occasionally small cards are extended by affixing lengths of paper which fold up concertina-style and contain important summarised features. All the cards, author, title and subject are cross-referenced. Author cards contain information on the subject matter and title cards summarise the plot, note writing styles and particular examples of special interest.

In order to test my hypothesis regarding the development of shibboleths and the response by readers to these, I utilised the technique as described in the first chapter of this thesis. It was not a primary source of research but an investigation of hypotheses arrived at through extensive reading, research and discussion over more than a decade. I have been fortunate in having access to sources in private collections of Irish writing on history, politics and folklore not normally obtainable in South Africa. The attached bibliography encompasses only a portion of the Irish books I have read since my interest and curiosity were aroused. The space restriction of this thesis makes it impossible to do more than summarise an extensive field of study.

My interest in the Republican and military aspects of the Troubles is not purely literary. In a different place and era I was young, idealistic and in the army of another small country fighting for survival. It was the mid 1940s and I was among a group trained in guerrilla warfare and 'special services' techniques by a previous officer of the IRA. Childhood memories of my father

railing against de Valera combined with my own 'underground' military experience made me curious to examine the political influences permeating Irish writing with references to insurrection.

This is a study, from a Republican viewpoint, of the appearance in Irish journalism, fiction and poetry from the mid 1800s until the present, of political conflict subsumed under the collective title 'Troubles'. As such it is not an examination in terms of metafictional, intertextual or other literary theory, but of the manner in which these references are made. Non-fiction usually attacks directly whereas in fiction and poetry the approach is oblique, with entire histories being encapsulated in shibboleths. It is particularly to the way and the frequency with which Troubles appear in Irish writing that I wish to draw attention.

The approach is three-pronged. My hypothesis is that the development of shibboleths is linked to an acceptance of violence evident in the earliest Irish-language writings. To trace this connection it has been necessary to take a long glance backwards into the nature of the sagas and early histories. As the oral tradition stretches into pre-history this cannot, of necessity, be a detailed examination. Examples of the psychological 'set' displayed in the sagas and the linking of nationhood with religious affiliation as expressed by Church and historian are explored. These attitudes are traced over centuries in various examples of writing.

I hope to demonstrate that religion and politics have been associated in Irish history since the Reformation and the Plantation of Protestant settlers. This connection has frequently been expressed by both Church and politician. Their influence on Irish writing could be seen as combined, but it is not as simple as that. There have been times when the Church has proscribed certain Nationalist political activities.

Religion, in the form of Irish Catholicism, has, however, had another influence not related to politics. It has strenuously attempted to extend a moral censorship on what is acceptable and permissible reading material for its members. This influence dates back to the alteration of records in order to eliminate pagan influences.

The third and closely related point is in identifying early, and repeated, expressions of Nationalism which would refute the contention that Nationalism was a product of the Celtic Literary/Gaelic Revival. I suggest it was Nationalism which produced these revivals.

In order to establish connections and similarities between eras and outlooks it is impossible to present the evidence in a strictly chronological order. Much is interconnected and this calls for leaps forward before returning to take up the thread.

As this is an examination of Nationalist emotional responses toward trigger concepts and shibboleths it is inevitable that these viewpoints are biased. This does not attempt to be an objective study. It seeks to establish that there exist dimensions, in some Irish writing, which are inaccessible to those who are unaware of the associations and suggestions of the shibboleths. These aspects seldom reflect on the plot or the characters of the protagonists to the extent that continuity would be prejudiced if they were removed. They add vibrancy and reality to the story, as well as supplying a social background. This results in an enriched reading experience and an understanding of underlying tensions in the text.

Terms can be confusing. The word Irish can refer to a people, a language or be an adjective. If it is the language to which I am referring I shall state Irish-language. When I use the word Gaelic it is specifically in the content of the old language in which the sagas or manuscripts were written; or when quoting. It is a term more frequently applied to culture than the language now referred

to as old-Irish. The term Irish writing, as used here, refers to anything written or translated into Hiberno-English: the terms are inter-changeable. Troubles are defined in the first chapter.

The term Anglo-Irish can apply equally to those Protestant settlers with loyalist Unionist tendencies as well as to those whose avid Nationalist politics indicate their self-identification as Irish. As the political view, rather than the origin of the individual, is relevant to this discussion I will, where possible, make the distinguishing affiliation clear if necessary. The best distinction one can draw is in the attitudes of the writers.

My original intention of carefully separating Anglo-Irish writing from the Irish-Irish has proved impractical. The deeper one delves the more tangled the connections become. Many of Ireland's first and greatest Nationalists were drawn from the ranks of the Protestant Anglo-Irish. They were often the leading martyrs of the Cause -- an Ireland free of colonisation, free of English exploitation and dominance, the source of the country's longest and most bitter Troubles. There has also been much intermarriage. Ultimately it all devolves on politics.

Of course the other side has its shibboleths as well, but we are not looking at the obverse side of the coin. To simplify matters, which is impossible when it comes to Irish politics without losing most of the story, the Troubles arise from two different points of view. Republicans have always believed they are entitled to their own country, in its entirety, free from the coloniser. Loyalists regard the six counties remaining under dispute as a legitimate part of Britain. To think otherwise is, they consider, treachery. Even the circuitousness of Irish logic is unable to fathom why the conquered should owe allegiance to the conqueror.

The field covered by writing about the Troubles is so vast that my attention is focussed on Troubles as they are reflected in *some* writing and literature. My selection of writers will be almost

random, avoiding, on the whole, the well known names which have been mercilessly analysed and discussed. I have to stress that writers such as Swift, Wilde, Shaw, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, Graves, Beckett, Yeats, Synge, ÓCasey, Seamus Heaney, Seamus Deane, Brian Friel etc are not part of this study. They have been adequately analysed by many others, yet there will be the odd occasion when they are mentioned. The writers I have chosen range from great to mediocre. All provide easily accessible examples of the points discussed as well as covering an extended period of time.

What I am interested in is tracing the progressive history of writing about conflict, Troubles, evolving from power disputes. From pre-history through the period of the sagas, into historical times, the Irish have been fighting and telling about it in wonderfully vivid stories. It is not only great causes recounted by the famous but the lives and stories of the unimportant that are reflected in Irish writing. Because of the vast field and the extent of the necessary reading to establish trends -- running into many hundreds of books -- this can only be considered a preliminary study of what could develop into an encyclopaedic examination of the styles, genres and attitudes in which the Troubles have been and continue to be presented in Irish writing.

I start by examining the term Troubles and showing how Troubles legends and their shibboleths develop. The thesis is divided into seven Parts consisting of twenty-one chapters of varying length. In some the influence of a single aspect or person is examined, such as the one on Maud Gonne whose influence was extensive, varied and interconnected with many prominent politicians and writers. In other chapters several writers are compared, or the development of a theme is traced. The chapters follow a sequence wherein positive or negative influences are linked either by styles or attitudes. Because of the interlinked

circularity of Troubles legends it is not possible to present them chronologically.

The influence of writers or events may not only spread from era to era but may present various aspects which are examined in different chapters in relation to that particular facet as it impinges on the Troubles and their shibboleths.

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PART ONE
WORDS AND LEGENDS

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CHAPTER 1

A WAY WITH WORDS

A long period of studying the subject, and teaching it at various levels, had convinced me that Irish history was by no means the same thing as the history of Ireland ... but in Ireland past and present were indistinguishable. There, history was regarded as too important to be left to historians and no one had the slightest intention of leaving it to them.

A.T.Q. Stewart. (1989: 1-2) *The Narrow Ground: The Roots of Conflict in Ulster*.

The Irish have a way with words. Generations of mayhem, murder, internecine conflict, guerrilla warfare, executions of both the enemy, and one's own deemed traitor, and the likelihood of finding close family in the sights of your weapon, are referred to as 'the Troubles'. World War Two was termed 'the Emergency', and the bitter and bloody Civil War of 1921-1923 -- hinted at obliquely in many novels -- called 'the Crossness'.

For a people not unfamiliar with a reputation for loquacity Troubles seems an odd choice to describe events of major national trauma. Was violence such an accepted part of Irish life that it warranted this rather casual description? Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey claim that violence is endemic in Ireland. Editing a comprehensive and detailed study of Irish warfare, *A Military History of Ireland* (1996), brings them to the conclusion "that events both of the first twenty-five years of this century [20th], and, of course, the past twenty-five years have done nothing to disturb this sombre view of Ireland as essentially a land of war in which peace occasionally and fitfully breaks out." (6). They further state that it is not only a shortage of other employment which "made a military life both acceptable and desirable", but claim that Ireland has, since Medieval times until recently, had a natural leaning towards a "martial ethos" (7).

If this is so had centuries of warfare entered the collective unconscious of the nation and marked its psyche? And if so how is this manifested in writing? Had the literature of the 20th century accorded the Troubles attention as abbreviated as its naming? To analyse this it was necessary to examine what had come before; to look into the past to discover on what the Irish collective memory of violence is based and how, if at all, this affected writing and literature. Are there similarities of outlook and approach?

The Oxford Companion to Irish History (1998) edited by S.J. Connolly has no entries under 'Troubles'; it is left to its sister volume *The Oxford Companion To Irish Literature* (1996) edited by Robert Welch, to define its use as

...a term commonly (and confusingly) used to refer to two separate but related periods of crises in modern Irish history, the first being the years of the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the ceasefire of 1923; the second being of much longer duration, from the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland in 1968 ... to the ceasefire of 1994. (571)

This definition restricts a longer history and omits reference to recent and current events in Northern Ireland where continued assassinations and murders, committed by both sides, are attributed to the Troubles. The term though frequently used is difficult to pin down.

The word does not just stand for a series of historical events; it symbolises a wound, or many separate wounds differentiated through associated shibboleths. Unlike physical wounds this one, to a country's psyche, does not heal with attention. The more scrutiny it receives the greater the sensitivity. A.T.Q. Stewart (1989), Reader in Irish History at the Queen's University in Belfast, states in *The Narrow Ground: The Roots of Conflict in Ulster* that "[i]n Ireland, if you push history out through the door, it comes smashing back in through the windows" (4-5). He believes that

the Troubles in Northern Ireland started with the Plantation in 1609. Since then an impressively large number of legends, anecdotes, histories and ballads have accumulated in which the collectively summarised Troubles are commemorated.

Stewart claims that manifestations of civil disorder are repetitive; the same slogans, areas of conflict and methods of warfare recur. His research shows that behaviour patterns, both political and violent, are, in a historical context, “elaborately structured” and “time-hallowed.” Most importantly he found that “public reaction to the troubles was itself a part of ritual behaviour, moulded by history” (5). It is exactly these ritualised and moulded behaviour patterns we see responding to individually internalised triggers. They are evoked by mention of the Troubles or associated words, the shibboleths, which are a short-hand form of recalling a series of events.

In mentioning ‘Troubles’ extensive tracts of history are recalled. Seldom has a single word acquired such vast power to stir memory, patriotism, anger, sadness and latent rebellion. The word Troubles, particularly in conjunction with closely associated referents or icons, reactivates seemingly dormant emotions. It is in this phenomenon that I am interested, rather than when incidents relating to the Troubles are the overt subject of writing. It is the nuance, the implied meaning appearing in a text, which, if removed, would not significantly alter it that, for the purpose of this thesis, is significant in Irish writing.

The ability to conflate events and emotions within a single word has resulted in so enriching certain associative words, names and dates that they have become shibboleths within a Nationalist and Republican context. A single emotive signifier can unlock tracts of related history and the responses this evokes.

Troubles subsumes a great many of these shibboleths most of which are connected to violence and sorrow arising from political, religious and contested land claim conflicts. They

appear throughout Irish writing often merely as a background, a sort of wallpaper effect to the social ambience in which the story takes place. They are also the subject of much fiction and many non-fiction analyses or re-evaluations.

These words have become greater than the sum of their parts; they are metaphors and symbols of both a reality and a dream. To those with the key to the hidden associations these apparently insignificant words produce a whole new and separate reading experience. A text can resonate with a depth of extra significance or emotion not available to those to whom these shibboleths are meaningless.

In order to test and confirm assumptions derived from an extensive study of both fiction and non-fiction from the middle 1800s until the present I have, over a period of 18 months, tested responses to many of these shibboleths. The respondents come from an Irish Studies Discussion Group. The members are middle-aged and mature women post-graduates and include Roman Catholic doctors from the Republic of Ireland, several diverse Protestant graduates, including a lawyer, from Northern Ireland, and a mixed group of South Africans — of similar educational background — who have either family or professional links to Ireland. Those with a strong Republican sympathy, those who grew up hearing tales of Ireland's struggles for freedom, often recounted by grandparents or parents who had participated in the Troubles, reacted totally differently from neutral respondents or those whose bias lay with Britain. Emotions still flared.

Respondents with no knowledge of or interest in Irish politics were amazed at the wealth of associations engendered by something as simple as " '98". This group remarked on the fact that whereas *they* had presumed the reference was to 1998, the politically aware immediately associated it with so distant a time as 1798. This single date evoked not only calm associative responses such as "the Uprising", "Vinegar Hill", "Wexford", but

also highly emotive associations with ballads, poems and incidents which have become Republican legend.

The song of the Croppy Boy -- a favourite rebel ballad referring to an anecdote associated with this Uprising -- and strong remarks about perfidious English were intermingled with names of mythologised heroes. Not only was Wolfe Tone's capture and tragic death mentioned, but the trigger date '98 evoked recall of Emmet's subsequent 1803 attempt at uprising. It was made clear that this "was justifiable as the English had forced Union upon an unwilling Catholic South in 1800." "'98" seemed, automatically, to start a reminiscing chain of associations including later heroes "who had died for Ireland's freedom". Robert Emmet's famous final speech from the dock and the effect it has on Irish Nationalism was mentioned.

Granted, the manner of testing was not by random sampling. This group was, however, randomly composed from members of U3A (the University of The Third Age), who expressed interest in joining an Irish Studies Discussion Group. The tests, conducted at monthly meetings, consist of giving each respondent folded papers on the inside of which is written a single highlighted word or number. On opening the paper they immediately write their first thought when reading the highlighted word. Below this they write any further associations and finally a comment. (See Appendix 1 for examples of replies).

The papers are handed in and followed by a discussion on the different responses. Later, after studying a piece of Irish writing, the different individual reactions are analysed in relation to the emotive and intellectual responses to trigger words. The texts studied are varied. They are taken from fiction, non-fiction, poetry and folklore.

Not only interpretations but the emotional responses evoked by the texts, the enjoyment of the readers and their evaluation has a direct correlation to their understanding of and their personal

reaction to the shibboleths. It is a very interesting exercise and will continue beyond the scope and duration of this particular study. As an adjunct to the analysis and research of texts it has helped to identify and define the function of the shibboleths.

* * *

An example of the way in which the Troubles appear in Irish writing, and the emotions they evoke, is given by Louis MacNeice (1965) in *The Strings Are False*.

We should have gone South earlier had it not been for the Troubles; my father, in spite of his nationalism, had said, 'How can you mix with people who might be murderers without you knowing it?' ...I resented their disparagement of Southern lawlessness. (226)

Violence in Ireland seems ubiquitous, it stretches back and encompasses centuries of history. It is difficult to establish exactly when the term Troubles was first used for political confrontational conflict. In the singular it has a long history of milder usage. When sympathising with the bereaved it is customary to say "I am sorry for your trouble". Such simple phrases ease the tension of finding the 'correct' words to say; the familiarity of custom comforts. In a climate of continuous violence a short-hand reference could have the psychological effect of curtailing the emotional confrontation of horrific facts. By diminishing the monster it becomes less frightening.

An apocryphal tale combines the consoling Irish phrase, used in a similar but less serious context, with political undertones. Farmer O'Lavery's family had a formidable porker, huge and sure to supply sufficient rashers, blood puddings and ham for the winter and beyond. It was a richness on which to gloat. Although a good Catholic family, they had named the animal Kingbilly, perhaps because he came to them on the 12th of July. The pig was petted and made much of though everybody knew he would

finally be slaughtered. An ambagious form of delayed revenge, perhaps?

Disaster struck. Kingbilly, as the story was told, slipped off “with Protestant cunning and deceit, showing great ingratitude for months of luxurious feeding”. Unfortunately he was involved in an accident and “destroyed utterly” to such a mangled mess that nothing edible could be saved. The neighbouring farmers came visiting to tell the entire O’Lavery family that they were “Sorry for your trouble”.

Of course the loss of an entire future year’s protein was indeed a disaster for a large and poor family. Perhaps it is this type of usage that moved naturally to encompass national disruption and death. Whatever the origin, the term, albeit without the capital, was in use in the 1700s. It appears always to have been associated with violence, death and destruction, whether in country, town or family. Its latter use as ‘the Troubles’ seems exclusively related to conflict associated with Republican aspirations.

The above anecdote is also an example of the function of the shibboleth in Irish writing. An uninformed reader may wonder at the significance of the connection between the name Kingbilly and the 12th July. The initiated will enjoy the joke at the expense of King William and his final victory over the Jacobites at the Battle of the Boyne in July, 1690. Those who have known the terror in the Catholic streets of Ulster, when the Protestant Orange orders march through them, *understand*. Not only personal experience, but also the empathy of those who share the emotions, elicit response to the secret codes. In killing a pig named Kingbilly who arrived on the 12th July, there is some small revenge for the yearly humiliation of the beating drums on that day as the ‘Prods’ of Ulster parade through Catholic areas, rubbing salt into the Catholic wounds of defeat. Troubles have a long memory in Ireland.

The misdating of the Battle of the Boyne is an example of the mythologising of the history which has given rise to Troubles and shibboleths alike. When the Orange society decided in the 1790s to celebrate this Protestant victory as their central festival they either miscalculated or overlooked the calendar reform of 1752. In terms of the new system, according to *The Oxford Companion To Irish History* the correct date would have been the 11th July (56).

So much history, triumph on the one side, anger and pain on the other, brought to mind by words as simple as a diminutive name and a date -- King Billy, 12th July. These are the secret codes in Irish writing; the shibboleths. Names, places, dates and concepts which, when used consciously or unconsciously, open vistas for those with the key. They cluster round the deep resentment of English occupation and the most minor events arising from the ensuing political turmoil. Strangely even after Ireland achieved freedom the shibboleths retained their potency and only towards the end of the 20th century did this diminish. Yet there are still those, both young and old, who reverberate with all the old passions and others who have been able to laugh through their anger or pain.

Richard Hayward (1950) in *Ulster & The City Of Belfast*, tells the apocryphal story of an irritated Orangeman, replying to a visitor's query if the 12th July procession celebrated a local event. The reply, "Local event! Ah for God's sake away home an' read yer Bible!" (56). Celebrating King Billy's victory over the Catholic King James' forces at the Battle of the Boyne, though not recorded in the Bible, is a holy event for the perfervid Protestant participants. Equal prejudice on the other side is illustrated by Bill Cullen in *It's A Long Way From Penny Apples* (proofcopy 2001). On hearing that his granddaughter was going to Trinity College in the 1990s Cullen's father objected, "What's the world coming to when a

granddaughter of mine ends up in danger of being contaminated by them Protestants" (373).

Cullen's own comment confirms the tenacity of the Troubles in Irish writing spawned by the animosities born of religious differences; he remarks, "Hard to change the beliefs of a lifetime" (373). Of course both these stories are subject to the tendency towards hyperbole in Gaelic narrative which Dr Daith O hOgain demonstrates and highlights throughout *Myth, Legend And Romance: An Encyclopaedia of the Irish Folk Tradition* (1990: *passim*). Perhaps Irish writers have little choice of remaining neutral. Another probably apocryphal tale, which Colm Tóibín repeats in his amusingly titled *Lady Gregory's Toothbrush* (2002) has it that John O'Leary, the stalwart Fenian, warned Yeats that in Ireland you must have either the Fenians or the Church on your side (61).

It is not only in the emotive texts of poetry and fiction that the word 'Troubles' appears. Its presence persists in the dry correspondence of government officials which later provides 'proof' to fuel anti-English sentiments expressed in further writing. Inflammatory reference is made to 'the troubles' in the correspondence between the first Viceroy in Ireland after Union, Phillip Yorke, Earl of Hardwick, and his political correspondents in England. They included William Pitt, Prime Minister; Lord Pelham, Home Secretary; The hon. Charles Yorke, War Minister and Hardwicke's brother to whom his letters were less formal.

These fraternal letters reveal aspects of the Viceroy's thoughts about the political dilemmas not found in his official correspondence. In many of them he pleads the cause of Catholic Emancipation maintaining that if, with Union, Catholics had been allowed to sit in the House of Parliament, much of the then current troubles would have been alleviated. In this instance there is no capital, presumably indicating that the word was in common usage in that context.

Michael MacDonagh in *The Viceroy's Postbag* (1904), a collection of previously unpublished letters, presents extracts from them with commentary and explanatory background. It is another example of the seemingly interminable analyses generated by Irish political Troubles and the antipathy evoked by the English occupier. From this type of writing Troubles legends proliferated, for here was proof of the validity of Irish dissatisfaction. From a psycho-sociological perspective it appears that *these* stories were taking the place of the half-forgotten sagas and the diminishing folk-lore.

The history of the term troubles linked to politically generated violence can be traced back to its use by ordinary people. Emma Donoghue (2002) gives examples in a factionalised story, 'Acts of Union', in her recent book *The Woman Who Gave Birth To Rabbits* (15-28). Donoghue bases her tales on actual incidents revealed in letters and documents dating from the 1700s to the late 1800s. She describes an incident in the early 1800s when English soldiers (sent to Ireland to quell disturbances arising from objections to the enforced Union with England in 1800), referred to "the recent troubles from 1798". Further on Apothecary Knox complains of tumult leading up to these events, "Oh, we suffered in Mayo during the late troubles. Those craven Wexfordmen, they hadn't half as much to bear. The rebels stole a flitch of bacon from my own kitchen!" (15). Both regional and political animosities are aired.

Donoghue's book dramatises accounts of incidents reported in the past. At the end of each story she quotes the sources and event on which her faction is based. The historic link between religion, politics and Troubles is clearly illustrated. Here they are given a Protestant viewpoint: "There was a rumour going around at the time ... that every man, woman and child of us would be gutted with a pike if we didn't convert to Rome" (17). "Those who protest at paying tithes to God's own Established Church" (18)

refers to the tithes Catholics and dissidents, such as the Presbyterians, were forced to pay to The Church of Ireland. This was a major, constant irritant and source of many of the Troubles.

The land issue, another cause of political agitations and rebellions, is aired with complaining comments: "There'll always be troublemakers." "And the occasional hamstringing of cattle, as a consequence of evictions ..." (18). What is interesting is that in 2002, more than 200 years after the events, these old political and religious animosities still retain a fascination for Irish writers and readers. Even more remarkable is the number of people who are still aware of the connotations of the shibboleths and react appropriately to them.

Such precedents, although lacking the capital, give me permission to subsume a long history of violence and internecine conflict under the label Troubles. They are apparently endemic to Ireland and it is small wonder a reductive term is applied to what appears a common occurrence. Contrary to a tendency of the Literary Revival movement to produce bucolic idylls of a happy united Ireland before English occupation, a record of inter-tribal savagery and warfare between the North and South stretches back into pre-history.

The early Abbey Theatre, product and producer of the Revival, was shaped by both the groundswell of growing Nationalism and the interest of Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats in folklore. They stressed the importance of 'authentic' Irish culture being presented to Irish audiences. Their approach was influenced by what Robert Welch describes as "the idealistic popular balladry and fiction of the Young Ireland movement" (311). Politically motivated, spurred by nationalistic idealism, the outpourings of writers such as the novelist William Carleton (1794-1860), and poets Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810-1886) and the dissolute James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) corresponded with the current European vogue for Celtic studies. As Welch

demonstrates, John O'Leary found this literature accorded well with his Fenian aspirations (312). It did not, however, adhere to a more sordid reality, a trend which Trouble literature adopted in elevating incidents and people to iconic status.

The rediscovery of the sagas and the translations of old neglected manuscripts interpreted battles and exploits as those of Irish heroes from a Golden Age. Neither they nor the internecine clan feuds were seen as the often murderous and treacherous political power-struggles they had been. The aggrandisement of the 'martyrs' and 'heroes' of the Troubles assumed a similar form. Both old and new history, fictionalised and inflated, followed a similar route. Various versions of the never-never land of one united happy country were created as Declan Kiberd (1996) reveals in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. From this vault of phantom past and painful present emerged the spectre of the Troubles which still sporadically haunts Irish writing.

Whatever the origin, the term Troubles -- albeit without the capital but with all its baggage -- was used to describe politically linked violence as early as the 1700s, if not before. It appears always to have been associated with rebellion against foreign rule, and the death and destruction which ensued. It is these histories which have become enshrined (perhaps embedded would be a better description), in the Irish unconscious. Stories have grown. They proliferate, change, acquire new resonances or lose them, as time passes. Accolades, small incidents and large tragedies are added to the folklore of the 'heroes' and 'martyrs' of Ireland's long resistance and final fight to rid herself of English dominance. The Troubles have been, and remain, a wonderful source for writers of all types. How this process evolved becomes understandable if we examine in detail the proliferation of words in relation to Robert

Emmet. This instance exemplifies the way the Troubles legends and their entrenched shibboleths came to permeate much Irish writing.

* * * *

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CHAPTER 2

ROBERT EMMET & EDWARD FITZGERALD: MAN INTO MYTH

In Ireland it happens sometimes that the
insane are taken to be saints.

Attributed to William Trevor.

A quotation from the English Home Office Papers from Ireland, labelled "Private and Secret, 1803" (referred to continuously in Michael MacDonagh's *The Viceroy's Postbag*, 1904), has Robert Emmet (1778-1803) using the expression 'the troubles'. According to the evidence given by his landlady, Mrs Ann Palmer, he had asked her to use a pseudonym on the list of occupants required to be kept by boarding-houses. His reason, she explained, was that "he was concealing himself on account of the troubles" (338). This is reported in a letter written by William Wickham, Chief Secretary of the English government in Ireland, to the Home Office on the 28th August 1803.

Robert Emmet, sent down from Trinity College Dublin for his revolutionary sympathies, is an icon of Irish Republicanism. After the failure of the Insurrection of 1798 he organised another rising, which, like so many others, went awry. His hoped-for French allies did not materialise and an untimely explosion at a rebel arms depot resulted in the abortive, and soon quelled, attack on 23rd May, 1803. Not the debacle, but the intention was enshrined. This pattern of Troubles legends is similar to those sagas which vociferously acclaim a hero's great deeds but speak briefly of his ignominious death. Cú Chulainn is the prime example of this pattern so closely adhered to by folklorists whose influence still lingers in Irish writing.

Emmet was the perfect subject for the creation of such a legend. He could have escaped the certain death his capture brought but stayed in Ireland to remain near his secret fiancée,

Sarah Curran. Initially Emmet hid in the Wicklow Mountains in his once-resplendent green, gilt and white uniform. When able to discard the tell-tale green, he returned to Dublin and Sarah. He was arrested at Harold's Cross on the 25th of August, convicted of treason and hanged publicly outside St Catherine's Church in Thomas Street, Dublin, on the 20th September, 1803. His body suffered the indignity of being beheaded.

Patriotism linked with romance has made of Emmet's name a shibboleth which is immediately associated with his inspirational and literary final speech from the dock. These speeches of dead heroes from the condemned docks have become enshrined in Irish memory and echo through political writings of the Troubles, as well as in poetry and fiction. Stirringly Emmet declared, "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written" (Robert Welch, 1996: 172. S.J. Connolly, 1999: 170-171).

Mention is still made of Emmet's unwritten epitaph. Indubitably its inflammatory spirit influenced the subconscious of many Irish writers in the 20th century. For some this flame became somewhat dimmed after the Economic Revolution of the 1970s brought more material comforts to those for whom politics had once been idealistically aspirational.

Emmet's name within a line of prose or poetry conjures up not only an era but an ideology, particularly to those for whom it speaks emotionally. Connolly (1999) maintains Emmet's final speech "became a classic of nationalist literature" (171). Both name and the speech it recalls are shibboleths. Emmet's friend, Thomas Moore, poet and famous writer of Irish songs, immortalised Emmet and Sarah Curran in verse and prose. With each additional paean of praise the legend grew, the shibboleths garnered more strength.

Of Thomas Moore's many songs celebrating Emmet's story the lyric 'She Is Far From The Land' is still sung although many

no longer remember the exact political context in which it was written. Even to those for whom the history behind the words is vague, its sentimental tug is due to the shibboleth status accorded anything related to emigration. Troubles, Famine, Emigration — these words encapsulate Ireland's deepest wounds.

Moore's song refers to Sarah's escape and lonely isolation in England. She stole away to avoid her father's anger on his discovering her relationship with Emmet. It was revealed by police investigating the insurrection organised by her lover and her suspected involvement. In *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1831), Moore (1779-1852) celebrates in prose the political ideals of these two charismatic men of the 'United Irishmen'. We also learn details of Emmet's romance and of the brutal treatment his faithful housekeeper, Anne Devlin, received from the English. She, too, has become an icon representative of Irish torment under English rule. The creators of the Troubles legends allowed no instance of injustice and misery to escape.

Tortured and horribly ill-used when arrested with members of her family, Devlin was imprisoned at Kilmainham for refusing to divulge information about Emmet. The name of that infamous jail is another shibboleth associated with the Troubles. The place is now a museum and a monument. Pamphlets recounting its history, which were available to tourists some years back, did not shrink from describing its horrific past. Their wording was not neutral. It was clear that the English gaolers were still regarded with considerable resentment.

Kilmainham was a potent reminder of Irish helplessness in the face of English occupation. To be imprisoned for a 'political' crime, in that fearful pile, was enough to ensure one's name on the roll of honoured Irish heroes. These names are still treasured; many have become highly evocative shibboleths.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), politically active theatre manager and dramatist, wished to write about Devlin's

experiences but she refused him permission. There have been numerous other unimportant people who suffered equal indignities for 'political' crimes, and about whom legends have not been created. It was Devlin's connection with Emmet that made her story famous.

When she was old, however, Devlin dictated her story to a Carmelite, Brother Luke Cullen. This manuscript is in the National Library of Ireland and in 1968 John Finegan edited and published it as *Anne Devlin: Patriot and Heroine*. In 1984 -- proving the longevity of the literary and artistic fascination of the political excitement of the United Irishmen and the magnetism of Emmet -- the story was made into a film by Pat Murphy. Troubles enshrined in legends have always been good material for fiction and poetry.

Possibly the recorded life of Emmet most plundered by historical novelists was the one by Richard Robert Madden (1798-1886). A well educated, much travelled Irish medical doctor, Madden, on his return to Ireland, pursued his early interest in the United Irishmen. After completing his study of Emmet, published in 1840, he devoted himself to his major work, *The Life and Times of the United Irishmen*. Emmet's betrayal was analysed in this more prosaic history of which seven volumes were published between 1842 and 1846. These were followed between 1857 and 1860 by a further four. In 1887 Father Charles Patrick Meehan reissued portions of the final section, with the addition of his own poems, in two volumes entitled *Literary Remains of the United Irishmen*. The political furore engendered by the Penal Laws inspired Madden's reforming spirit and literary talent to write critically of these in 1847 (Welch 439-440).

In 1910 Mathias McDonnell Bodkin (1850-1928) published a historical novel about Robert Emmet's life entitled *True Man and Traitor*. There were also numerous references to Emmet's name and exploits in the dreadful doggerel which the Victorian and

Edwardian era produced in great outpourings of sentimental patriotic fervour.

In 1958 the bilingual biographer and historian León Ó Broin (b1902) produced *The Unfortunate Mr. Robert Emmet*, as well as biographies and histories of other Irish political figures and turmoils. *Parnell*, written in Irish, appeared in 1937; *Fenian Fever* in 1971 and *Michael Collins* in 1980. Collins' name is, of course, another of those double-edged shibboleths of Irish writing. Its efficacy depends upon your attitude towards The Treaty of 1921. *Na Sasanaigh agus Eiri Amach na Cásca* (1967), translated from the 1966 English version *Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising*, gave a double emphasis to the important place in Irish history of this period and the continuance of the Troubles as a subject for Irish writers.

Although the tone of these later books about Emmet, and the continuous struggle for independence, differs from that of the earlier Victorian writers, the voice of the aspirant Republican remains undimmed. Greta Cullen Browne's 'popular fiction' historical novel, *Tread Softly On My Dreams* (1990), is a 652 page romantic recreation of Emmet's story. Browne followed this with *Fire On The Hill*, an equally long historical novel of Michael Dwyer and life in the Wicklow hills after 1798. The Troubles retain their fascination for both reader and writer.

A wild romance cloaks the Irish nationalists and their political struggles of the 1700s and 1800s. It lends itself extraordinarily well to mythologising history and Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-1798) was a very promising subject. He was the youngest son of the 1st Duke of Leinster, whose family's aristocratic Irish roots reached back into the mists of folklore and saga. It is not relevant here to examine the permutations of their shifting allegiances, the intermarriages between English and Irish aristocracy, their established status as Anglo-Irish gentry with all its political baggage.

Lord Edward was a radical. Although he had initially fought on the English side in the Anglo-American war he was later influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution. As a member of the Irish parliament he took an anti-government stance. After joining the United Irishmen he negotiated with French politicians hoping to organise an invasion to back up an Irish strike for freedom from English rule. Resisting arrest on the 19th of May, after being betrayed, he was mortally wounded and died in June 1798.

Not only the subject of Thomas Moore's book he appears as a romantic figure in plays. Fitzgerald is also mentioned with interesting personal anecdotes in W.R. le Fanu's memoirs, *Seventy Years Of Irish Life* (1904). MacDonagh gives us fascinating details of his betrayal in *The Viceroy's Postbag*. Both these books will be discussed in a following chapter. It is obvious that FitzGerald's name is a shibboleth to Republicans with long political memories.

As recently as 2003 Janet Todd recreated Lord Edward Fitzgerald in all his flamboyant revolutionary patriotism. The book *Rebel Daughters: Ireland in Conflict 1798* was well enough received to be republished in paperback in 2004. It clearly delineates the conflicting loyalties within Irish families, even those as highly placed as the leading aristocrat the Duke of Leinster whose politics differed from those of his revolutionary younger brother Edward. Todd's well-researched historical biography gives a telling human insight into the lives of the United Irishmen and the traitors who betrayed them. The characters are vividly portrayed; they seem to think and act as if living today. The longevity of the legend is due, indubitably, to the personality of the protagonist as well as to his deeds.

The dramatised histories of such heroes appear to fill the position once held by the sagas of oral legend. The retelling of legends is an essential part of the Irish ethos for they are a verbally gifted people and apparently have a need for both the

hearing and the telling of tales. The shibboleths are memory tags to a vast treasury of legend which flows easily and is enjoyed both orally and in the written form.

James William Whitbread (1847-1916), a sympathetic Englishman, wrote, produced and acted in a number of popular political melodramas which he staged in Dublin from 1880 to 1907. His plays have evocative titles such as *Shoulder to Shoulder* (1886), *The Nationalist* (1891), *The Irishman* (1892), *Spectres of the Past* (1893), *Wolfe Tone* (1898), *The Ulster Hero* (1903) and the dramatic *Lord Edward, or '98* (1894), which was another Troubles-motivated piece of writing commemorating Edward Fitzgerald's exploits. The influences form an accretion. To Troubles as a source of public entertainment is added the influence of the books upon one's parents bookshelves. All these further entrench conditioned responses to the shibboleths.

The attraction of political and revolutionary fervour is spiced up by the titillation of romance. Besides being a leading figure in the planning of the Insurrection of 1798 Fitzgerald's personal life had an added mystique which added to his popularity. His wife, Pamela, as involved in revolutionary activities as her husband, was, incorrectly, whispered of as the Duke of Orleans's illegitimate daughter (Todd 2004: 189-203).

The inflammatory legends of the Troubles and their shibboleths were not just products of the Uprisings of 1798 and 1803. Nationalists became increasingly dissatisfied and half a century later another legend erupted in the history of The Manchester Martyrs. Irish writers derived new mythologies with their accompanying shibboleths.

* * * *

CHAPTER 3

THE MANCHESTER MARTYRS: BUILDING ANOTHER LEGEND

I met wid Napper Tandy and he took me by the hand,
 And he said 'How's poor ould Ireland, and how does she stand?'
 She's the most disthressful country that iver yet was seen,
 For they're hangin' men and women for the wearin' o' the Green
The Wearin' o' the Green. (Ballad c. 1795)¹

The use of words as icons is in the *Dinnseanchas* tradition, according to Michael Kenneally (1988), editor of *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Literature*. Not only the personal significance of place, but place names were capable of "generating awareness because they are a *common symbolic means of expression*" (5-6. my emphasis). This influence spreads from the names of places with political connotations or links to uprisings and battles, such as the Castle, Vinegar Hill, Yellow Ford, Wexford, Boyne, to dates and the names of people: 1641, 1688, and the most poignant which needs no prefix or century, '98.

Names are conjured with. Wolfe Tone, Emmet, Sarsfield, Daniel O'Connell, Parnell, Pearse, Collins, de Valera; the list seems endless. Patrick F Sheehan and Walentina Witoszek (1988) in 'Irish Culture: The Desire For Transcendence', ascribe this culture of imbuing words with an extra dimension to an "integration of the self in the symbolical and metaphysical" (in Kenneally, 73). They postulate that this yearning towards a reality beyond the mundane everyday present life is the cause of "two characteristic Irish tendencies towards verbophilia and mythomania" (6). It also creates shibboleths.

To understand the potency of the shibboleths it is important to understand their accumulative effect. Decade follows decade of conflict. Failure to accomplish goals is repeated by each group formed to withstand England's heavy-handed administration of Ireland. Pressure increases as frustration grows. Examining a

specific incident in a long line of Troubles one sees how it becomes established and entrenched. Like an oyster covering the irritant with nacre to produce a pearl, each new retelling adds a layer of lustre. An event is raised above its mundane significance, an individual elevated almost to saintliness. The shibboleth encodes an entire history.

It is impossible to examine all such incidents, but the Manchester Martyrs, and their elevation to shibboleth status, is a pivotal example. Here we can observe the cumulative effect of the written word transforming reality into folklore. It was one of the most notable of these histories collated by the political activists T.D, A.M. and D.B. Sullivan and published in *Speeches From The Dock*² [s.a.].

Alexander Martin Sullivan (1830–1884) and his brother Timothy Daniel (1827–1914) were both journalists. The younger brother, A.M, served a prison term of six months in 1867–1868 for vociferous protests against the execution of the Manchester Martyrs, published in *The Nation*, of which newspaper he was editor and proprietor. Both brothers served as Nationalist MPs, and the eldest was a poet whose ballad ‘God Save Ireland’ became the unofficial anthem. The words were based on a speech made by one of the accused at the notorious Manchester trial in 1867.

In the retelling of this event, one hundred and twenty-nine years later, facts already seem to have diverged between the reportage of those present and the version in *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (1996). It is stated here that “Edward Condon, the fourth man, was reprieved...” (354). There were, in fact, *five* men tried and two who escaped the noose, although initially found guilty and condemned to death on the joint charge and evidence.

It is in *this* story, and the injustice of the hanging of the remaining three of the five condemned, that the emotive content erupted into writing and made of the words “the Manchester

Martyrs" a shibboleth of Irish Nationalism. The event led to a tentative reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Fenians who gained an increasing sympathy among the general populace.

In order to understand the influence of politics in shaping the icons from the mid 1800s to the mid 1900s, and their subsequent effect on the readers and writers of Ireland, it is necessary to re-tell the story of the Manchester Martyrs in the treasured detail in which it was passed from generation to generation. It was a turning point in Irish politics. The ordinary, non-politicised Irish person was hardened against England. Political and Nationalist slogans assumed a greater force and influence than before; history became illuminated with a radiance which was reflected in the ballads, the writing and the sentiments of the people³.

In Manchester, on the 23rd November 1867, crowds converged around the New Bailey Prison to be entertained by the public hanging of three men. The Sullivans report in *Speeches From The Dock* how, when the drop had fallen, "the victims were struggling in the throes of a horrible death. The ropes jerked and swayed with the convulsive movements of the dying men" (241). The spectacle was enjoyed by the English mob avid for the blood of Fenians.

Many of the Irish in Manchester at that time did not consider patriotism a crime. Their loyalties were not to England, the conqueror and coloniser, but to Ireland whose freedom and independence they regarded as a justifiable cause. A decision was taken to rescue the captured Fenian leader, Captain Thomas J. Kelly and his aide-de-camp Captain Deasey, who were both charged with 'treason-felony', an offence punishable by life-long transportation or death. They were being conveyed between the dock of the Manchester police-station and the gaol in a horse-drawn van in which cells on either side of a central passage held

other prisoners. A policeman, Sergeant Charles Brett, sat inside the locked van whilst two others sat outside.

Some time after half-past-three on Wednesday, September 18, 1867, as the van and its escort, in a cab, passed through a sparsely populated area, in the suburb of Salford, about thirty hidden men climbed over a wall in order to rescue their leaders. Unable to open the locked door of the van which had been abandoned by the driver and escort who had run away, the rescuers asked Sgt. Brett to unlock the door. He refused. They then announced their intention of shooting out the lock, which they did. Unfortunately the bullet used to open the lock struck the policeman in the temple.

Kelly and Deasey were spirited away before the absconded policemen returned with a crowd drawn by the pistol shot. Some of the rescuers disregarding their own safety remained; they attempted to keep the crowd at bay until the escapees had got away safely. Many managed to evade pursuit but some were overwhelmed, badly beaten, kicked and stoned by the mob. One solitary Englishman objecting to their savage treatment was himself attacked.

Police reinforcements arrived and the new prisoners were hauled off whilst the authorities mounted a frenzied search for the fugitives. No Irish person or home was safe. Within several hours thirty-two people were arrested and charged with being involved in the escape. Kelly and Deasey disappeared without a trace.

Sergeant Brett died in hospital several hours after being wounded. The police were humiliated and angry, the crowds inflamed by rumours and exaggerated reports of anticipated Irish attacks on England and the Queen. The nation was in a ferment; hysteria prevailed.

During the night Irish homes were broken into, their male occupants lumbered off to gaol where they were chained and thrown into overcrowded cells. Irish shops were attacked and

people in the streets taken off to be incarcerated as if already proven guilty of heinous crimes. Eventually sixty chained men were crammed into prison cells.

Britain's pride was wounded. This second snatching of Irish political prisoners followed the gaolbreak and liberation of James Stephens in November 1865, and occurred a mere six months after an insurrection and guerrilla warfare in the hills of Ireland in March 1867. It was too much. Determined on revenge it mattered not to the authorities that the men and youths captured and locked up might not only be innocent of the rescue attack but completely ignorant of the planning and organisation behind it. No delay would be brooked, a special commission was called for, a rapid trial and conviction were demanded.

By the 25th October, 1867, many of those initially arrested and kept chained in confinement were released, not because 'evidence' proving their guilt was unobtainable but because evidence of their innocence overwhelmed that of those prepared to attest to their guilt. The rewards offered enticed many perjurers to give false and conflicting testimony.

Witnesses appeared to swear against the prisoners with obviously untrue, trumped-up statements such as, "the whole lot of them wanted to murder everyone who had any property." Others openly admitted they gave evidence for the money which the government had offered. Men and women came forward not only for what Sullivan calls "the blood-money", but also for the satisfaction of seeing the hated Irish hanged (Sullivan, 254). After so long and persistent a period of irritation by the interminable Irish gadfly, the political situation, on both sides, was reaching breaking point.

Of the crowds captured only five men were eventually found guilty of murder and condemned to death on the basis of such obviously false and flawed evidence that the English Press itself objected to the verdict, petitioning for a re-evaluation. There was

an explosion of words in Irish newspapers, pamphlets, broadsheets and ballads.

One of the condemned men was William Philip Allen (b1848), the son of a Protestant father and a Catholic mother, and a member of a Fenian organisation. At the trial the wounds inflicted by the mob and the injuries caused by the manacles cutting into his wrists, were evident. He accepted that his life was a fair exchange for the escape of his leader.

Michael O'Brien, among the many wrongly named and 'recognised' prisoners, was down as Gould on the court list. He had emigrated to America where he enlisted and fought in the Civil War during which he rose to the rank of Lieutenant. On demobilisation he returned to Cork.

Michael Larkin, older than the others, was a grandson of James Quirke, an affluent farmer who was flogged and transported for refusing to turn traitor to his fellows in the Uprising of '98 (1798).

Thomas Maguire, a private in the British Royal Marines, was on leave from his unit, sitting in his home from which he was dragged, because of his Irish name, despite his complete innocence of any complicity or knowledge of the Fenians. Ironically, this young man, loyal to England and "his Queen", had been 'identified' by many 'witnesses' as the ringleader of the attack on the van.

Edward O'Meagher Condon — named as Shore on the court list — was an Irish-American and a citizen of Ohio. Against him, too, 'witnesses' had been eager to attest. The claims of those purporting to give 'evidence' were bizarre. The Fenians, they said, were brewing plots to murder the Queen and burn Balmoral. That handful of men, among whom only a few had been armed with hand-held firearms, were supposedly planning to attack the armouries, blow up the Bank [of England], explode the gas works, poison the water!

The jury, though maybe not overtly rigged, were far from unprejudiced in an atmosphere of fearful anxiety in which the Irish, and particularly Fenians, appeared as a threat to English society and a scourge to be extirpated. An application for a postponement of the trial, because of the difficulty in empanelling a neutral jury, was to no avail. The public bayed for blood, an immediate trial, martial law; even lynching was suggested.

Meanwhile, at the trial, witnesses drawn from those criminals locked in the van, as well as from the mob who captured and stoned the Irish prisoners, and others who had obviously been nowhere near the rescue site, gave conflicting evidence. The leading role was assigned variously by different 'witnesses' to Allen, O'Brien and Condon, each of whom were claimed to be the one who shot the lock from the prison van although none were armed when captured. Seven witnesses identified Maguire, the British marine, as having helped to break open the van, although he obviously had no connection with the others. He, understandably, showed signs of bewilderment and anxiety. The evidence was blatantly concocted.

The other four remained calm, retaining their dignity and composure. In spite of the evidence of his superior officers and his unstained record in her majesty's navy, Maguire's verdict was the same as that of the other four. All five were found guilty of murder. Their various replies to why the death sentence should not be given have become legend.

The condemned all pleaded innocent of the murder and expressed sincere regret for the death of Sgt. Brett. Not one had carried weapons. Allen deeply regretted the shooting and death of Sgt. Brett. He refused to plead for mercy where none had been granted to patriots such as Burke and Emmet before him. The judge would not allow him to review the contradictory evidence or query the verdict, but only to comment on why the judgement of death should not be passed.

Allen pointed out, in vain, that while he was being held in confinement his clothes were shown to people for four hours in order that they would be able to identify him. He was also marked in the prison to enable witnesses to 'identify' him. Pointing out that he had been identified and charged under an incorrect name he denied that he was William O'Meara Allen. His name was William Philip Allen.

Michael Larkin denied using pistols or revolvers. He admitted going to the aid of Kelly and Deasey, but with no intention of harming any person, and deeply regretted the policeman's death.

O'Brien began by saying that every witness against him gave false evidence. He had held neither pistol nor stone. In his speech he mocked the hypocrisy of England who condemned the "tyranny" in other countries, deplored the injustice in Italy, the incarceration of innocents in Naples and the slaughter in Dahomey, whilst themselves practising a brutal repression and impoverishment of a conquered people.

Edward Maguire, the British sailor, declared he was not and never had been a Fenian; he had never seen or heard of Captain Kelly until his arrest. This lad, who had been at home on furlough at the time of the rescue, could not understand how policemen and citizens had identified him as a ringleader. There had been an "overwhelming array of unimpeachable evidence brought forward in his defence." His proclaimed loyalty to his "Queen and country" were ignored (Sullivan 268).

Edward O'Meagher Condon, the last to speak, was a better orator than his co-accused. He too denied the murder charge and found it strange that "a man could have been convicted of wilfully murdering others he never saw or heard of before he was put in prison. Declaring that witnesses had committed perjury, he proved that his head was uninjured and unmarked, contrary to the evidence given that a large stone had fallen on him. Pointing

out how the witness, Mr Batty, had changed his evidence, he then queried the veracity of those witnesses who had sworn seeing an accused person at the site of the van when he was subsequently proven to have been in Liverpool at that time. "Others have an overwhelming alibi, and I should by rights have been tried with them." He pointed out that a policeman, Thomas, swore to having identified a witness in the cells on a date two days prior to this man's arrest. Condon not only claimed never to have been at the place he was supposedly seen, but that furthermore he was misnamed Shore on the court list and was an American citizen (Sullivan 269-271).

Although not guilty, Condon proudly declared he was not afraid to die. "Nor I, "Nor I", "Nor I", stirringly echoed the three Irishmen. Concluding his damning condemnation of witnesses and British justice Condon declared, "I have nothing to regret or retract, or take back. I can only say GOD SAVE IRELAND!" (Sullivan 270). The cry was taken up in a defiant chorus which has echoed through the ensuing years

The men, *all five*, were then sentenced to "be hanged by the neck until you shall be dead." Their bodies would be covered in lime, to destroy them utterly, and buried in unsanctified earth in the prison grounds. As the condemned men left the court again was heard the defiant "God Save Ireland!"

It is now that the strange drama begins. Between about thirty or forty senior and reputable representatives of the English press, who had been present throughout the trial, were so moved by the blatant injustice and flawed evidence that they sent a memorandum to the Home Secretary. In all the years of their previous courtroom experience of criminals, witnesses and juries their observations of these in the present trial convinced them that Private Thomas Maguire been wrongly condemned. They were sure that he had been convicted due to mistaken identity.

Such a move, such an outcry was unprecedented. It was also embarrassing as these were reputable men of considerable influence. The government was in a quandary for all five men had been convicted and condemned on the same evidence, on the single verdict. It seemed impossible to release one without nullifying the verdict of the others.

The Sullivans reported that “[i]f these men were saved from execution, owing to any foolish scruples about hanging a possibly — nay probably — innocent man along with them, a shout of rage would ascend from that virtuous nation [England]” (275). It was Maguire’s bad luck to be linked in a joint verdict with other men, who though maybe not guilty themselves of actual murder were on the site where it was committed and thus guilty — in English law — by association. No suggestion was even considered that the charge should have been lessened to unintentional homicide. By law Maguire’s fate could not be separated from that of the others.

Fortunately for Maguire the character of the witnesses against him was revealed. Some were “thieves, pickpockets, or gaol-birds ... others were persons palpably confused by panic, excitement, passion or prejudice” (Sullivan 276). But these were the identical witnesses whose evidence had condemned the others. Maguire was so patently innocent, there was such controversy and outcry throughout England and in the press that on the 21st November he was pardoned — not declared innocent — of a crime he never committed

This was as good as admitting the jury had erred, the trial had not been fair. All Ireland held its breath. Surely the others would escape death, though, because of their admitted complicity in the escape, they would be imprisoned. These expectations were dashed. Shortly after Maguire’s pardon and release it was announced that for the others the verdict remained unaltered.

Legal argument and discussion of the flaws of the trial followed. England was abuzz with speculation as Ireland waited

with raised hopes. Mr Roberts, the prisoners' solicitor, applied for a stay of execution so that arguments could be put before appeal judges. He was denied without further evidence being led. The men were to be executed. Hope had briefly flared only to be extinguished. Nobody in Ireland could believe that men could be executed as a result of a trial shown to be at fault.

The date of execution was set for November 23rd. Even in England, as a counterpoint to the constant baying for Irish blood, wiser voices questioned the validity of the hasty trial. To the condemned men in Salford goal Maguire's reprieve had been a taunting sliver of hope, but they now resigned themselves and took written leave of their families. Their letters repeated their innocence of murder, their patriotism, their unshakeable religious faith and their brave and dignified acceptance of the inevitable.

On the 21st November, two days before the scheduled execution, it was announced that the sentence of the man still referred to as Shore, Edward O'Meagher Condon, was to be commuted. Surely, now the sentence of the remaining three would be altered? Maguire was released because he so obviously had nothing to do with the rescue. But, by his own admission Shore/Condon had participated in the rescue plans. Where was the logic, the justice, in executing Allen, Larkin and O'Brien?

The mood was changing in England and the artisans of London petitioned against the execution of the remaining three. All appeals were rejected, though in Ireland it seemed impossible that this could be.

News of Condon's release reached Ireland on the 22nd November. It seemed self-evident there would be a stay of execution for the remaining three. Again the entire country held its breath. It was not to be. On the 23rd November Ireland heard, by telegraph, that Allen, Larkin and O'Brien had been hanged at eight that morning. Their names have joined the ranks of Irish martyrs and were sung of in street ballads. Many such rapidly

composed songs commenting on current political events were sold on the street in Ireland for a penny or less. Poorly printed on cheap paper they, too, constitute Irish writing about politics and Troubles

The news of these executions was surely the ultimate goad, the beginning of the end of England's grip on Ireland. It strengthened Irish resolve against her. It brought the divergent Irish groups together in the same way that, forty-nine years later, another set of hasty executions after the 1916 Easter Rising, would lead to final outright war, the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921 which brought eventual freedom from colonisation to Southern Ireland.

The execution was a political act meant to intimidate the Irish. On the evidence available, had the incident been without political significance, constituted no challenge to England's domination, the verdict would not have withstood the demonstrable irregularities of the case. The American was respited, the Irishmen executed. They became martyrs, icons to be revered. Their names and their sobriquet, The Manchester Martyrs, became a commonplace of Irish writing for many years. They remain a powerful shibboleth.

The huge English crowd, drawn to watch the Fenians die, was swollen by large contingents of troops and 'specials' called upon to keep the Irish element at bay on the day of the execution. Sent to English cities and towns where disruption was feared, these 'specials', according to newspaper reports, were regaled with "hot pork pies and beer *ad libitum* which seemed to attract volunteers of the worst type" (Sullivan n286).

As England made a festival of their deaths, Ireland's resolve strengthened. Indubitably the story of the Manchester Martyrs, their name on every Irish tongue, in every Nationalist and Republican heart, in every newspaper and political pamphlet, heralded an unbreachable deepening of the chasm between the

two countries. It was the final straw, the single most influential factor in turning once compliant citizens into implacable enemies. And yet, just over one and a quarter centuries later, the drama, the tension and tragedy of the two 'pardons', the hopes raised by the one following so closely on the other, and the chilling finale of the act are subsumed in 'Edward O'Meagher Condon was the only one not hanged.' The mythologising of history apparently can take two paths.

Brendan Behan, an underage prisoner in an English Borstal writes scathingly, in *Borstal Boy* (1958), of English warders rejoicing when the Birmingham Two were hanged. He had probably himself escaped execution, because of his youth, when arrested with explosives and an intent to use them in guerrilla warfare against England. This mention of another notorious hasty British hanging immediately sparks off an association with the earlier Manchester Martyrs. This associative cross-referencing in Irish writing evokes an emotive response from readers familiar with the history, whereas to those for whom the shibboleths have no meaning the richness of the text is lost. The Irish seem to collect martyrs as a philatelist does stamps; very carefully, very lovingly and to be kept in splendid condition and exhibited with pride for as long as possible.

Each execution, each quelled rising for freedom raised fervour, fanaticism, and the pressure to revolt, a notch higher. Kept at boiling point by rebel songs, ballads and stories, eventually it erupted in the Anglo-Irish War, which lasted from the 21st January 1919 until the truce of July 11th, 1921 led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. These events are poignantly recounted in the short stories of Sean O'Faolain's *Midsummer Night Madness* (1982). They continue to shadow Irish fiction.

Before looking at modern fiction it is necessary to examine the very foundations on which this writing is based. What are the patterns and the processes of story in a country where its

influence is inextricably bound to politics and religion? What happened in the beginning to permanently influence the pattern and subject matter of Irish storytelling?

¹ Napper Tandy (c 1737-1803), patriot, United Irishman, and revolutionary, he was arrested in Europe, brought back to Ireland for trial. He was sentenced to be executed but was deported in 1802.

² There are no publication dates given on my copy which is the *forty-eighth edition*, published in Dublin by M.H. Gill and Son, probably in the late 1800s. This book, regarded almost as a bible by revolutionary Republicans, was much quoted. Some of the older people from the Irish Studies Discussion Group are not only familiar with all its contents but still treasure the copies inherited from parents.

³ I am using, as my primary source, the Sullivan brothers account, but drawing also on other histories of the period as given in the bibliography.

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PART TWO
PAST BECOMES PRESENT

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CHAPTER 4

IN THE BEGINNING

Item, yf any man hath many Iorneys to take by land or by water, let him have an eye rounde about hym, for Force is lykely to excede in all places, and Violence already shaketh his head, and frowneth vpon Trauaylers but Warinesse and Courage, are the best spelles agaynst such Sprites and Goblins.

Thomas Porter, *An Almanacke Or Prognostication For The Yeere MDLXXXV*. (as quoted by Joseph O'Conner in *Sweet Liberty* 1997).

In the beginning was conflict and the word made it fiction. Murder and pillage were mythologised. Robert Welch (1996) in *The Oxford Companion To Irish Literature*, states unequivocally that “there is virtually no segment of medieval narrative that is without a mythological constituent or dimension” (385).

This mythological characteristic stretches back into the pre-history of the saga which, incorporating history and fantasy, resonates with the battles of supernaturally brave and successful heroes. Always there is ultimate defeat, glorious death in battle or ignominious slaughter in a diminished and frustrated old age. Cú Chullain, Ireland's great hero, tied to a post to enable him to fight until he dies; the evil High-King Diarmait mac Cerbaill (*circa* 544-565) of whom the sagas tell of a “threefold death”; Conchobor mac Nessa ruler of the Ulaid, scorned by Deirdre because of his age, later dies in an exertion of rage. Fionn mac Cumhaill, whom Welch regards as a “central figure in Irish literary tradition” is “weakened in combat” before being killed by five brothers (194-195). It is not surprising that Troubles legend repeats this pattern of supreme heroism eventually defeated by unfair means or treachery.

Through the centuries these earlier mythologised narratives dealt predominantly with conflict centred on power and territorial possession. As such they were indubitably political. In the form

of 'story' the Irish were imbued with a politicised world view passing proudly down a long history of sagas and annals. But, in addition to the glory there was always the gore. It is *on* this foundation, and *from* it, that the modern Irish writers have developed. Troubles legends in both style and content, particularly those of the 19th and 20th centuries, appear to have replaced the sagas.

Writers are shaped by their history. Stephen Howe in *Ireland And Empire* (2002) quotes Seamus Deane who believes that "[t]here is no such thing as an objective history, and there is no innocent history. All history and literature, as far as I understand them, are forms of mythology" (116). This would apply equally to the folklore which became legend transmuted to popular history of the Troubles.

How can a people, over centuries, be shaped by and accept certain strictures to which they become obedient even when these conflict with other aspects of their lives? How do dual loyalties exist? How does the devout believer square his conscience with the Church's prohibition on violence when he belongs to an 'underground' movement? The answer is in the word, spoken and written as mythology, as doctrine, as aspiration, confused and contradictory. This enables opposed attitudes to be held, and expressed in writing. It empowers the illogical to transcend the analytical; and it manifests itself in Irish writing of the Troubles. To understand this is to have an insight into the ambiguity and circularity of an Irish ethos shaped by politics *and religion*. And underneath all this is the turmoil of what remains of natural instincts and human nature¹.

It is not surprising to find religion linked with violence in Irish writing. In the beginning were the Druidic sacrificial practices. These were followed by the often forceful conversions of native Irish to Christianity and later the repressions and murders of the Protestant Reformation in Ireland. Songs like that of the

Croppy Boy tell of the execution of priests and the persecution of their flock.

The theme appears in stories, both oral and written. Religion in Ireland has always been associated with force, either physical or spiritual; this means fear. Fear of being a sacrificial victim, fear of hell if one transgresses in thought or act, fear of losing one's property or life by refusing to convert during the time of the Penal Laws². Later, and continuously until Southern Ireland was free, the fear of scorn; of not getting work because one's accent revealed one's faith. In Sebastian Barry's 2002 novel, *Annie Dunne*, an old woman remembers her father's inability to rise in the police force, during Britain's occupation, because he is Catholic and Irish. In this way the shadows of past Troubles appear in present Irish writing.

The psychological violence inflicted on individuals torn between comfort and compulsion, the promises and the threats of religion, are obvious in recent revelations such as Mary Raftery's and Eoin O'Sullivan's *Suffer The Little Children* (1999). This serious study of "The Inside Story Of Ireland's Industrial Schools" reveals the sadism and abuse to which novelists like Edna O'Brien and Patrick McCabe have attributed the warped characters and actions of their protagonists. This type of violence has also shadowed Irish writing from James Joyce's hints in *The Dubliners* to Patrick McCabe's more strident accusations.

Frequent, almost casual mention is made by Irish writers of abusive incidents in childhood. Anne Enright's short story 'Pillow', in Andrew O'Hagan and Colm Tóibín's collection *New Writing 11*, illustrates this: "She was taught by Irish nuns ... then held out her hands for proof, 'Look at the scars' " (9). In *The Photographer* (2000), Eamonn Sweeney illustrates that fallibility in Church or priest is denied and consequently a film illustrating this (made by Peter Hopkins), is not shown. His revelations evoke physical attack. Further, speaking of "reports from America of

priests being jailed for sexual assaults on altar servers" (119) he adds, "No one liked watching these reports, but in some houses they stirred up memories of hints and stories from the past" (238).

An unbroken line of violence linked to an intoxication of power stretches from pre-history until the present. The revered sagas extol both. Later they slip into modern literature and erupt as Troubles.

But, in the beginning, long before the Irish wove their history into manuscript mythology their predilection for conflict was recorded by the Greek geographer Ptolemy. In 102 AD he wrote of the fortifications of the early Kings of Ulster, the O'Neills, whose stronghold was a centre of warfare. The earthworks, the Black Pig's Dyke, on the southern border of Ulster was reputedly used between 550 to 500 BC to prevent or hamper marauding cattle raiders from the south; not always successfully judging by Queen Maeve's exploits. Modern writers continue to refer to this ancient fortification. Richard Hayward (1950) maintains that the end of Emania -- for 700 years the palace of the Ulster Kings of the Red Branch -- came with its conquest (111).

History, saga, legend and folklore are often intertwined. In many cases the linking feature is the supernatural: the gods, God, or the *sidhe*³ frequently take a hand in organising or disrupting mankind's plans. They all play an important role in Irish writing and are often found together, socialising in the same story. Invariably the stories are closely linked to places, forming a connection, so that place and incident merge, the one associated with the other in a manner like that of the shibboleths to the Troubles. A prime example is the Cattle Raid of Cooley (*Tain Bó Cuailnge*), when the huge brown bull from Cooley, County Louth, was captured from the Ulstermen, by Queen Maeve/Medb and her warriors.

Cruachain (Rathcroghan) in Co Roscommon was the royal capital of Connachta. This was Queen Medb's domain from where

she and her husband Ailill launched the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* and as such it appears in the Ulster Cycle. Rathcroghan Mound is the central feature of fifty or more archaeological structures dating from pre-historic to medieval times. These mounds and linear earthworks not only link the pre-history of oral saga to the mythology of written history, but, as they are said to be a royal cemetery they are a gateway to the Otherworld which has always been a feature of Irish folklore.

In Irish saga recorded in the annals it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between the worlds of Christian and earlier religions. They intermingle. Troubles legends frequently sanction the actions of their heroes by suggesting the protagonists' staunch religious faith. The Otherworld appears in the form of prayers, last confessions and priests' blessings before execution. The era and the conventions may differ but basic patterns remain.

Cruachain was also the inauguration site of the Connachta kings and as such entered literature through legends of running skirmishes for power. It is interesting that the circularity of death and accession is acknowledged and celebrated in the same place. Both were of huge political significance in Ireland's early history, generating feuds whose clangour resounds through the sagas.

How much history is embellished by myth we will never really know, but what remains of these old tales in manuscript form is a subject of study on its own. Their patterns and influence have percolated through the collective memory of a nation given to the telling of tales.

As always, in Irish legend, lurking in the background are the denizens of the Otherworld whose concerns and activities with Irish affairs, both political, spiritual, romantic and military are ever present. Numerous memoirs report stories of encounters with the *sidhe*, they also appear in fiction and are usually referred to obliquely as 'the good people' or 'the wee folk'. Padraic O'Farrell (1997) points out, in his collection *Irish Fairy Tales* that

"[s]eldom did the written word equal the effect of the oral narrative" (7). He also draws our attention to the fact that whereas the *seanchaí*⁴ retained the basic pattern of an oral narrative each was free to "weave his descriptive tapestry. And how he revelled in his art of embellishment and exaggeration!" (8). This is why sagas and legends appear in different versions, sometimes hardly recognisable against the original; so 'creatively' have *seanchaí*, geography and political distances shaped the tale. The same phenomenon occurs with Troubles legends.

For centuries, in both literature and the hearts and minds of the people, beliefs and actions have been moulded and guided by a combination of saints and *sidhe*. The saints were venerated and loved, the *sidhe* were respected and feared for they were not the amiable winged creatures of English fairytale. Malign and crossgrained, if opposed or their territory trespassed upon, their rewards or punishments were immediate and terrible. O'Farrell reveals them as having all the quirky characteristics of perverse human nature to which is added the magic of their spells. Is there nothing untouched by threat or fear in the background of Irish writers?

In O'Farrell's story of 'The Seven Year Son', this young man, with help from the *sidhe*, enjoys an orgy of chopping off heads. Granted they were heads of ill-intentioned people allied to the English king. After decapitating his enemies our hero relishes kicking the heads around "shouting that this was the best game of football he ever had" (94). An obsession with severed heads pervades the sagas and folktales. Heads are an honourable trophy to be worn, still dripping blood, from a victor's belt. But added to this ancient tale is another dimension: we see how easily political opinion infiltrates story.

The antiquity and longevity of the Irish oral tradition is, according to Peter O'Connor, what makes Irish writing different. He combines two disciplines, Psychology and Mythology, in a

study of Irish writing and character. *Beyond The Mist: What Irish Mythology Can Teach Us About Ourselves* (2000) looks at the role of Ireland's oral tradition. It was alive "until the sixth or seventh century AD", almost a thousand years later than in Greece. The effects of this, Peter O'Connor believes, are "clearly present in Irish literature, both the ancient and the modern, noted for their rich imagery" (3, 11, *cf.*).

Perhaps such a long history of exulting in decapitation, in sagas and legend, has desensitised reaction to violence, both on the page and in life? It appears to be so easily accepted, a part, almost a trope, of much Irish writing.

Could this relish of violence be a catharsis, the metaphor replacing an envisaged and much wished-for defeat of the enemy? The Irish had a long history of winning a skirmish, succeeding brilliantly in an ambush, but losing the battle and never winning a war of their own. Queen Maeve's initial success in capturing the coveted Bull but then being defeated is a typical example of this pattern in Irish story. It reappears frequently in Troubles legends. Once in exile, as commanders, generals and presidents of foreign countries, the luck of the defeated Irish seems to change.

The Flight of the Earls on the 4 September 1607, provided most of Europe with doughty military leaders; and when the Wild Geese flew from Ireland throughout the 18th century, it was to fight, and often win, the wars of strangers. The term Wild Geese was used for the first time in official documents around 1726. It was given to those emigrants who, because of political or religious persecution, were driven from home. Such appellations, quivering with political significance, easily become shibboleths to recall past wrongs and the bravery of 'our heroes'. They are an example of the "rich imagery" in which Peter O'Connor rejoices.

What is interesting, and probably germane to the question of an apparent acceptance of ubiquitous violence, is the difference in attitude. The "West sees death as a negation of life not as an

aspect of it", Peter O'Connor maintains (7). To those recounting and living the sagas it was obviously perceived as *part* of life. An heroic death was a particularly important achievement -- albeit the last -- of a warrior's life. The Manchester Martyrs, and many other Irish freedom fighters, have echoed these sentiments. Was their mind-set shaped by childhood tales of the ancient heroes most of whom died gloriously even in defeat? If the longevity of the oral tradition has visibly influenced Irish writing up until the present, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the identical factor has managed to retain, virtually unchanged, the insouciance of this tradition towards violence and death. They can be presented without explanation or apology. They exist -- no need to quibble or explain. It would appear, then, that there can be several reasonable explanations for the frequent and casual appearance of violence in Irish writing. A social worker from Belfast, now retired, sighed as she explained that as a factor of life it is "a rite of passage."

Changing to written records meant abandoning the memory training and years of discipline which the oral tradition required. Peter O'Connor points out the marked difference between Irish and Greek myths. Irish myths have a tendency to be more embroidered and elaborate. A particularly interesting aspect of Irish myth is that people and events move easily between the four different cycles. There is no linear progression: reality and magic merge. Most folklore, whether political or magical, continues this tradition.

Confusingly the origin of an established character appearing in an earlier saga cycle may only be detailed in a later one. We can hear of his death before learning the circumstances of his birth; another example of circuitous Irish logic and a gyre-like influence on narrative. One is, and has to be, moving in a different dimension of reality to feel at ease in the genre.

This feeling of existing in a different dimension is one of the characteristics that makes certain Irish fiction so characteristically and recognisably 'Irish'. There is no need for quaint characters speaking with an odd accent: these ordinary people and their world just *are*, in some inexplicable way, different, although they inhabit the same world we do. Emma Donoghue's characters — leave alone her title — in *The Woman Who Gave Birth To Rabbits* demonstrate this, as do those of Sean O'Faolain. It is important to perceive that the old legends and traditions remained as a potent backdrop to the writers of the first half of the 1900s. They have a long history.

The first Mythological Cycle dates from approximately 1500 BC. The Ulster Cycle is the second and is placed at about the first century AD; it is followed by the Fenian Cycle, the third, originating roughly in the third century. The final Historical Cycle of the Kings dates from the third to the eighth centuries. According to Peter O'Connor Irish mythology "meanders" seemingly with no boundaries, no beginning, so that one finds oneself in the midst of it without quite being able to determine where one starts (20).

O'Connor has made a study of the uses of myth. In *Beyond The Mist*, he suggests it provides insight into universal themes and conflicts. Whereas the mind is fed by logic "[t]he soul is fed by myth" (3). Because of the oral tradition's long continuance in Ireland, it has influenced thought and language patterns which, he demonstrates, are "*less linear, less ordered and more richly imaginative*" (3, my emphasis). This "oral component" which has clearly influenced both ancient and modern Irish literature is easily recognisable in the Gaelic syntax of many Irish-English works⁵. Not only in the early ones, or in such as Lady Gregory's Kiltartan dialect (in her collection of folklore recounted by Gaelic speakers), but it is found in recent works of fiction as well. Bill Cullen (2001) and Eamon Sweeney (2000) have made good use of

it in recent books and Canon Sheehan used it so effectively in a series of novels that one could almost determine the occupation of his speakers.

Peter O'Connor (2001), makes the point that much Irish writing is more easily comprehended and vivid when heard, proving the still-close connection to the oral tradition (3). It is this link which has helped to engender the attitudes which give significance to the shared emotive content of concepts acting as shibboleths. In direct relationship to the weakening of this connection writers lose that definable Irishness while others, where the bond is tighter, retain it. This is noticeable in the modern writers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The sagas, which can be seen as the foundation of Irish literary tradition, express different values. The concentration in the Ulster sagas is more on personal achievement by "self-contained" heroes. Those of the Fionn or Ossianic Cycle, although lauding the exploits of Fionn mac Cumhaill, (Finn Mac Cool), speak more of group achievements and activities. Part outlaw and wholly poet, diviner and sage, Fionn's powers come in part from his Druidic heritage, in part from the protection of the *sidhe* Donait. His mother was the daughter of Tadg, a Druid. Fionn's wife Sadb, came to him in the form of a deer. She was the mother of Oisín, Fionn's famous son. Briefly Sadb resumed human form but was changed back into a fawn by the Black Druid when he discovered her, happy again, in human form. Fionn's story is filled with detail of these Otherworld connections.

In both cycles the mythic constantly appears either as a theme or a character. Heroes are assisted or thwarted by supernatural forces such as the Morrigan whose sphere is battle and death. She is the killer, a Kali-like aspect of the pantheon of personalities presented by the fertility goddess(es). It was the Morrigan who, in the shape of a raven, perched on the shoulder of the dead Cú Chulainn to peck out his eyes. Perhaps it is an

ancient culturally instilled devotion to the goddess of life and death that enables young men, called to battle by Cathleen Ni Houlihan, to go so willingly to their slaughter. Like their ancestors before them they have been conditioned to obey her call.

It is important to realise that even when the sagas were being born the animosity between South and North existed. According to Welch,

[t]he Fionn cycle developed in Munster and Leinster and may reflect a desire on the part of medieval storytellers and scribes in those areas to develop a counter-balance to the Ulster cycle that enjoyed a long supremacy related to the dominance of the Uí Néill as High Kings. (193)

These were the influences that were absorbed by Irish children born before WW II, and, in many cases even later, as the 2001 autobiographies of Bill Cullen and David Marcus show. They are full of tales of Cú Chulainn, mixed up with the Troubles and anti-English sentiments passed on by parents and grandparents. Looking at how these sophisticated writers of the 21st century so lovingly recall the past of their grandparents will make it easier to trace the development of this particularly Irish trait. Part of the longevity of the traditions could be attributed to the desire of a defeated nation to cling to its unique cultural heritage.

Colonisation's effects on self-image are notorious and post-colonial studies have analysed the subject in 'third-world' countries. Similar psychological reactions occurred in Ireland. Much of the bravado of the Troubles ballads and legends can be attributed to the need of a repressed and colonised people to assert their individuality as they strive for liberation. As we have seen with the histories of Emmet and the Manchester Martyrs it is necessary to inflate both individuals and events into epic proportions. The echoes linger.

The English suppression of Ireland in the 1600s was linked to religious persecution. (See Appendix 2 for Penal Laws). Inevitably politics and religion became inextricably linked to the extent that this has precluded attempts to establish political unity across the religious divide. The literature, the legends, and casual remarks unconnected with a tale, constantly remind one that 'Prods' and Catholics, although both Irish, are separate communities.

The formative influences remain strong enough to continue to emerge, insinuating themselves into texts purportedly dealing with other subjects. Bill Cullen, one of Ireland's leading entrepreneurs, published the story of his rags to riches journey in 2001. *It's A Long Way From Penny Apples* tells of how a seven-year old barrow-boy selling penny apples becomes a tycoon raising loans of eighteen million pounds. One would expect the story, told in the third person, to have little to do with Ireland's old history of repression, but interspersed with the success story Cullen constantly quotes Ireland's bitter narrative. Much is absorbed from his grandmother who, while sipping a cup of tea, tells him popular versions of Ireland's woes.

We had them English villains come over here and rob our best land, shunting the Irish off to the barren rocky ground of Connemara. And when ya couldn't pay them the rent they kicked you out on the side of the road, and burnt down old cottages to make sure no other Irish family would live on their land. Oh my God, eviction is a terrible thing, not to have a roof over your head, and listen to me now, there was no need for anyone to die of the famine 'cause it was only the potatoes that were hit. Wheat and barley and vegetables all flourished in the pasturelands of Ireland, but all owned by the English, who shipped it out to the English markets to feather their own nests. They owned the fish in the lakes and an Irishman would be flogged for poaching a salmon. They didn't mind the Irish peasants dying like flies and that old reprobate Lord Trevelyan encouraged the export of grain. (102-103)

The torch is passed on by dramatising resentments in literary form, rather than factual statements in dry history books. Placing the story in somebody else's mouth -- usually

a member of the older generation — gives it added credence. This technique occurs in many such accounts. The ‘facts’ are accepted without quibble, the past pain treasured as a rare artefact handed down by a loved grandparent.

In this extract we encounter two potent shibboleths, ‘Evictions’ and ‘Famine’. It is unnecessary for the narrative to expound further. These shibboleths carry many repeated histories of British settlers planted on Irish soil, land appropriated without compensation. The resultant curtailment of income, impoverishment with all the entailed sad loss of status and self-esteem are personal histories of many families.

Famine, in itself a dread concept, has been embellished with stories of whole communities dead in ditches, their mouths green from the grass eaten to still the hunger; of disease stalking the walking skeletons; of ‘coffin ships’ in which emigrants escaping the famine would die in large numbers. Those who survived the devastation of families shattered by death or departure of the young to America, perhaps never to be seen again, were indelibly branded. So deep was the excoriation it was passed on to following generations as inescapably as a genetic heritage. And repetition in various forms of Irish writing, from street ballad to novel or serious historical study, carried the message forward.

All the concomitant responses to the shibboleths were neatly indoctrinated, so that even if in later life one attempts to examine the situation more objectively the old conditioned emotional reflex remains. It is rather like the situation with the *sidhe* in whom one no longer believes intellectually, yet the covert sentiments remain deeply engraved. Both politics and *sidhe* reappear again and again in song, poetry and fiction.

It is not only the defeats that are celebrated; it is important to remember the glory days as well. ‘Mother Darcy’, a poor woman selling from a market barrow for a living, teaches her grandson Ireland’s history. She illuminates the early days when Ireland was

an island of saints and scholars, holy men and Druids, and tells how St Brendan the Navigator

“headed off across the Atlantic in a leather boat to discover America. Hundreds of years before Columbus got there; and came home to tell the tale. ... But the Normans came to Ireland in the twelfth century, ... and took over our country. [Secret weapons they had, bow and arrow.] Strength and bravery were useless when you couldn’t get near your opponent. ...and that was the beginning of eight hundred years of tyranny of the English. Wiped out our schools and monasteries, killed our priests, destroyed our churches, took our lands and banished the Irish people to the rocky fields of Connaught in the barren west of Ireland. Gave our most fertile land to their soldiers and generals. Used the natives as slaves, peasants and farm workers.”
(Cullen, 105)

It is interesting to compare this version, and the language quoted with the previous excerpt. Cullen is obviously putting words in the old woman’s mouth to get a point across. It is easier that way, presenting as part of a narrative the facts one wants to impress on the audience. He has her list the iconic names, “Red Hugh O’Donnell, Patrick Sarsfield, Wolfe Tone and many more...” (105). Here we have a perfect example of the exclusion of sections of history. To mention Red Hugh O’Donnell without including Hugh O’Neill says more about the speaker’s attitude than if their disapproval of the anglicised O’Neill were openly stated. It is a sophisticated stance and one presumes more the educated opinion of the grandson than that of the old woman.

It would be impossible to present a précis of Irish history without including the infamous chapter on Cromwell. The name alone is a red rag to a Republican bull, for Cromwell “murdered men, women and children up and down the country. Condemned to death we were for being Irish and Catholic.” The young Liam (Bill) “was overcome by the tragic stories, and blessed himself as she recited” a prayer for Ireland (105).

Generations of Irish children were similarly conditioned to respond to the stimuli which the shibboleths evoke and hence the

layered readings of Irish writing which, either deliberately or as an ingrained mindset, pervade much narrative and verse. Cullen admits as much for himself. Once he had discovered the library, due to his grandmother whetting his appetite, his “avid interest in Irish history gave him a strong republican bias” (197). It appears to be a self reproducing cycle which in his turn he replicates.

Cullen mentions many more specific incidents relating to the Troubles (23, 24, 32, 76, 106-7, 332, 314, 326). These include a bomb blast in Dublin as recent as 1974. He refers to the Famine again on page 76, and exults in naming sagas and old and new heroes; “Molly told her stories of Ireland, of Cúchulainn, of Brian Boru. Of Michael Collins. Of bravery and of treachery” (230). Every one of these names is a shibboleth.

On numerous pages Cullen exhibits the Irish joy of naming places evident in the *dinnshenchas*. In explaining why the two elder children took the eight younger ones by the long route for a Sunday afternoon outing, he, in true *seanchai* fashion, sings the place-names along the way as he politicises those to avoid:

Over Butt Bridge, left into Townsend Street, over to Westland Row, up Merrion Square into Ely Place, into the Green. No way could they take the simple route down O’Connell Street and up Grafton Street to the Green. Why? Because you’d have to walk along the front gates of Trinity College. Last bastion of English Protestantism in the Republic of Ireland. Perverse English schooling. Hadn’t Archbishop John Charles McQuade decreed that no Catholic could go near the place. Excommunicated you’d be if you looked at it. So the family took the scenic route. The Ma and Da would have a snooze at home. Little rest. *Sos beag*. Door locked. (173)

Anti-English sentiments are insinuated in a seemingly innocent explanation for childish actions. And, although there is an almost tongue-in-cheek poke at the old ways and now-outmoded values, it is done with a loving touch. The one easily recognised attitude, transferred from another age to the present, is the political stance. Irish writing is full of it.

When recounting his entrepreneurial successes the language and tone differs, but even here the adult Cullen lapses to include an account of singing a rebel song with the old caretaker of a factory newly taken over by his group. The choice was “how the Wexford men fought and died for Ireland in the 1798 Rebellion – *‘the boys of Wexford/ who fought with heart and hand/ to burst in twain the galling chain/ and free our native land’*” (357). This is a perfect example of the ubiquitous appearance of the Troubles -- and specifically that most potent one, '98 -- in an Irish text which has nothing to do with past political furores.

Mention is made of the “positive benefits of Seán Lemass and T.K. Whitaker’s financial policies;” new hopes for Ireland’s economy are expressed when President Kennedy visits Ireland. Here again the Famine is mentioned -- but less emotionally -- as background to the President’s family roots and the reason for their emigration to America (302-305). Ireland must claim all the fame and achievement of her sons. It is also too good an opportunity to miss quoting Kennedy in another of the iconic potted histories which pop up continuously:

No nation did more than Ireland to keep Western culture alive in the darkest centuries. No nation did more than Ireland to spark the cause of independence in America. No nation has provided the world with more literary and artistic genius. (302-305)

70,000 copies of Cullen’s book sold before being printed in soft cover. It was a “number one Irish bestseller”. Apparently the Irish in the 21st century still hunger for their particular form of truncated history where certain aspects are repeated and others are seemingly ignored. Those reiterated facets become shibboleths. Ian Hill in *Ireland* (1993) states that “to the people who live on the island of Ireland, north and south, the history of their country is not just a rote of long-past dates, but a living reality, an ingrained part of daily life” (7). As such it is inevitable

that the politics and religion of the country are reflected with more than usual emphasis in their literature.

Cullen's enjoyment in repeating the old tales is not an exception. Two other Irish writers produced fictionalised versions of Irish history in 2001. David Marcus, who for almost fifty years has been a kingpin in the Irish literary world, creating outlets for short-stories, encouraging and helping to establish new writers, wrote his memoirs. He called it *Outobiography: Leaves From The Diary Of A Hyphenated Jew* (2001), because this Irish-Jew was continually told that he ought to write his story. From Jewish ghetto childhood to education and friendship with Jack Lynch, future Taoiseach (for whom he later wrote a speech), Marcus became immersed in Irish culture. He translated Gaelic poetry into English and his version of Brian Merriman's *The Midnight Court* was well received when published by Dolmen Press in 1953. Later he wrote several novels woven around significant situations and occurrences in Ireland. The first, whose title was suggested by Seán O'Faolain, *A Land Not Theirs* (1986) brought "to life the place, the times and the people, -- the British, the Irish, and the Jews". Marcus considered this to be "a unique *ménage à trois* on a site which the Irish owned, the British held, and where Jews, with no home of their own, had found sanctuary" (224).

It tells the history of Cork where both Marcus and O'Faolain were born and spent their formative years. Although much remained unchanged in the twenty-five years between their births one feature stands out. On one side of the main thoroughfare, St Patrick Street, all the buildings, including the City Hall had been "burned to the ground by the Black and Tans" (257). Irish literature resounds with the misdeeds of politically motivated violence inflicted by the hated Tans. Theirs was a name with which to frighten naughty children: "The Tans'll get you if you don't behave!" The book was on the best-seller list for six months, in four of which it occupied first and second place. It is another

example of the success of Irish politics and history in memoir and fiction. Marcus' *A Land In Flames* (1988), dealt with the Listowel Mutiny and was also well received.

Whereas Marcus's rendering of Irish Troubles is scholarly and restrained, Rory O'Connor's *Gander At The Gate* (2001) parades every single stereotype, icon and shibboleth. From the predations of the British to the wrath of *sidhe* when their space is violated, an entire patchwork of Irish life is presented. This is done with such verve and charming use of Irish-English, such a sympathetic insight into a young boy's growing up that it comes as a surprise when the momentum of the story pauses to allow for many pages of his father Seamus' experiences in the IRA. As this was long before Rory O'Connor's birth he quotes verbatim from his father's own memoir *Tomorrow Was Another Day* (1970). The bitterness engendered by the Civil War is more openly and less subtly drawn than in either O'Faolain's or Delaney's fiction (which is analysed in a later chapter).

What is the background, the material which has formed these writers and from which they draw, either consciously or in delving into the collective unconscious? Why do they trawl through deep, half-forgotten impressions of childhood, and constantly reiterate fragments of Ireland's long-past history? What compels them to pause in their own stories to visit previous Troubles which have had no immediate effect on their own lives? Resentments have been deeply seared into the collective memory of a past where the colonised native was openly regarded with either patronising condescension or contempt. Republican propagandists have used this well.

Ireland by Annabel Wigner (1988) is a textbook aimed at "14-17 year-olds" on the "historical background to modern twentieth-century Anglo-Irish politics. ...Written and visual evidence ... is included throughout this book." She comments that one thing noticeable in the sources is "anti-Irish prejudice" and points out

that “anti-Irish humour is considered acceptable in almost every form.” The reader is reminded to bear in mind this bias “when weighing up the evidence” (3), which is purportedly neutral. In the summary on the back cover, however, is boldly stated that whereas other British colonies gained their independence in the twentieth century “Northern Ireland remains one of the oldest examples of English conquest and colonization.” The spirit and ideals fuelling Troubles legends and the dreams of a single united Ireland are evoked by reminders of old resentments.

Wigner quotes an extract from the novel *Under Goliath* by Peter Carter (1977) which accompanies a picture of the Orange Lodge Procession. A young Protestant boy explains what the 12th July marches are about: “To keep the memory of that beating alive, [of Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne] and to make sure that the Protestant religion stays on top of the league in Northern Ireland, is what the Orange Orders is all about” (57). On the same page she gives an extract from a poem by Louis MacNeice recalling “his childhood memory of Ulster drums.” Entitled ‘Autumn Journal’ it confirms how vividly these politically related occurrences seared themselves into a child’s mind. It is *this* type of memory, reinforced by similar repeated stories, read or recounted, which keeps the Troubles haunting the side alleys of Irish fiction writing.

Drums on the haycock, drums on the harvest, black
 Drums in the night shaking the windows:
 King William is riding his white horse back
 To the Boyne on a banner.
 Thousands of banners, thousands of white
 Horses, thousands of Williams
 Waving thousands of swords and ready to fight
 Till the blue sea turns orange. (57)

The legends, as those of Cullen’s grandmother and the folklore of their youth, were a background added to the mythology passed down through many generations of Irish writers and patriots. Combined they escalated Nationalist fervour to an

hysterical frenzy. One of the most inflammable of these histories of martyrdom, as described in the preceding chapter, was that of the Manchester Martyrs. It is only one example of twenty-eight similarly highly charged reports in the Sullivan's *Speeches From The Dock*.

Many patterns and influences shaped the writings about the Troubles and it is significant that the pattern of the sagas has been absorbed and passed on in this form.

¹ This is illustrated in the chapters 'From The Other Side Of The Fence' and 'Writing Wrongs' where politics and religion or group loyalties clash.

² See Appendix for details of Penal Laws.

³ *Sidhe*: the faerie people. Welch (1996) (states that "[a]ccording to a life of St Patrick in the 9th cent. *Book of Armagh* the sidh were the pagan gods of the earth ... over whom Christianity has triumphed, but according to Gaelic tradition they were the Tuatha Dé Danann, the ancient gods of Ireland residing in the fairy mounds all over the country." (523)

⁴ *Seanchai*: professional story-tellers versed in the traditions of oral history.

⁵ Over a period of years I have heard almost as many versions of a basic story embellished with different small personal details of speech, mannerisms and even of the capture and death.

⁶ Irish-English or Hiberno-English is, according to Welch "the term applied to those varieties of English which were and are spoken, and sometimes written, in Ireland. ... They are distinct from other varieties of English in that they have their own grammatical structures, vocabularies, sound systems, pronunciations and patterns of intonation. ... Modern Hiberno-English was at a remove from the English of England, and remained conservative by comparison. Conversely, however, it was in almost continuous contact with Irish, so that the influence of that language was considerable and pervasive at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels." (244-246)

CHAPTER 5

SAGAS, HISTORY AND *DINNSHENCHAS*

For the great Gaels of Ireland
 Are the men that God made mad,
 For all their wars are merry,
 And all their songs are sad.

G.K.Chesterton 1874-1936, *The Ballad
 of the White Horse. Part 2* (1911).

Sagas were the backdrop to Irish narrative. It is sometimes difficult to remember how rapidly technology has changed lifestyles and that the older generation grew up in a world where entertainment did not come from a box in the corner of the room, but from wonderful tales told by one's seniors. Cú Chulainn, Maeve, Fionn, Ossian, the *sidhe* and their adventures were an integral part of an Irish childhood. As such the relationship of future writers to words was shaped by this magical component of story.

In Irish tales of the "good people" (the *sidhe* of whom it is wiser to speak indirectly), not only heroes but ordinary humans receive their attention. The faerie-folk devolved from the gods of the pagan *Tuatha Dé Danann* who were overwhelmed by invaders. They took refuge in the faerie raths¹ and underground places where they would be safe from their conquerors. *Even in the Irish supernatural world the Troubles of conquest, occupation and violence appear.* The genre seems to be ubiquitous.

Traditional Irish narrative is largely a story of violence which assumes a Protean character of its own, sneaking or blustering through the centuries. Irish history, legend and fable intertwine in a long sequence of conflict, internecine strife and battles over the 'kingship' of the clan or the ownership of land. Each takes its shape from the other. The larger than life heroes perform prodigious feats of strength and bravery. It is obvious that the recorded history of later heroes, those of the revolutionary

Republicans, assume many of the mythologised attributes of the earlier ones. Every Irish child, until the modernisation of latter 20th century Ireland, was brought up hearing these old tales.

Cú Chulainn and Fionn mac Cumhaill are each the central hero of their own cycle of sagas. They were role models for earlier generations of Irish boys and the pattern against which a woman could measure a man. Their names are still bandied about in conversation and yarns told in pubs, or nostalgically recalled in prose or poetry.

One of the most celebrated sagas of conflict is found in the four texts of the Ulster Cycle. Medb (Maeve) the Queen of Connacht features prominently in these. Peter Beresford Ellis in his *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (1993), suggests that she might be “another triune goddess representing sovereignty” (159). She is given a wider characterisation in James MacKillop’s (1998). *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. He describes her as “the most vibrant female personality in all of Celtic mythology”. Ageless, she remains always beautiful and desirable as is attested by her name which means “she who intoxicates” (288-290).

Once believed to be a historical figure, Medb is presented by MacKillop as the combination “of several forces and antecedents”. If she was ever one single woman her attributes blended with those of goddesses of fertility, kingship and land ownership. Again we have the wedding of religion and politics in the shaping of an icon. As befits another of those personifications of Ireland she also assumes the characteristics of a mother goddess being portrayed with small animals, usually a bird or a squirrel. Her talents seem all-encompassing for she carries a sometimes flaming spear and can outpace a galloping horse. MacKillop (288-290) describes her as long-haired, pale and lovely. She overpowers men by the force of her personality. Early religion and mythology fuse in the writing of the Irish sagas which retain much of the original spiritual attributes. The influence filters

down to modern writing, both in tone and assumptions of an Otherworldly presence.

Before puritan Catholicism dimmed her pagan exuberance and bowdlerised the versions in popular books on folklore she was also known as 'Medb of the friendly thighs'. Scholars, who have only met Maeve through sanitised popular versions, find out to their amazement that she is reputed to have had nine husbands, all kings of Ireland, and many lovers. It appears her character has fused with that of Ireland's spirit with whom a king must mate ritually before his authority is accepted. Her active extended-family life and numerous pregnancies -- subsequently added by medieval chroniclers -- seem not to have interfered with her busy schedule of conquering men in love and in war. (McKillop 288-290).

The best known story of Medb, and possibly one appearing most frequently in prettied-up versions of mythology, is of her power struggle with Ulster. Is there a subconscious confirmation here of the validity of this animosity being continued into modern times? Differences of opinion and life-style between the two areas are expected and illustrated by writers such as Annabel Wigner (1988).

Coveting Donn Cuailnge, the renowned brown bull of Ulster, Medb failed to acquire it through bargaining with its owner Dáire. To this day discussions to solve political differences in the Six Counties seem doomed. Perhaps the arrogance of Maeve's drunken negotiators was at fault for they made it clear if the deal was not struck they would take the animal by force. There was no subtlety here. Challenges to pride and the ensuing conflict feature large in Irish sagas and continue as a theme today.

Medb mounted a marauding party. And so was born the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*), which Welch asserts is "one of the oldest stories in European vernacular literature" (551). Nobody knows how old it was before passing from oral tradition to

the written manuscript. *It is also one of the earliest detailed stories of cross-border fighting in Irish writing.*

Another determining influence on the Irish psyche, a role-model after whom girls are named, it is important to understand the psychological significance of Queen Maeve. She represents an attitude and an approach. She, too, went to war to achieve her desires. Though vanquished, her triumphs are the focus of the legend, and usually only scholars append the ultimate traumatic ending. Troubles legend tends to stress the glory of the battle rather than the ignominious defeat. When attention is directed to the 'unjust execution' of a 'war hero' it is in an inflammatory tone.

The *Tain*, therefore, typifies a narrative pattern which has continued into the present and which is particularly relevant to Troubles legend. There is domestic competition which can be interpreted as a struggle for power. Historically this was one of the many weaknesses of the small groups of competitive Republicans, particularly when it came to an inability to mount a concerted armed attack. Time and again such internal disagreement and contesting of authority reduces the efficacy of the later patriot group. It is almost a given in the history of Troubles conflict.

Initially Maeve's attack is successful, she captures the coveted animal. But, as happens so frequently in the Uprisings, any initial advantage won by guerrilla tactics or surprise ambush is soon negated by superior and better organised forces. Maeve is repulsed, she retreats and the coveted prize brings destruction and further defeat. It is almost as if the Saga were a blueprint for subsequent Irish Uprisings. Their histories are uncannily similar. Surely the modern saga is patterned, albeit unconsciously, on the older one.

Attesting to its popularity the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* appears in three manuscript versions; the *Book of the Dun Cow*, (*Lebor na hUidre*) dating from the late 11th century; the *Book of Lecan*

(*Leabhar Leacáin*), compiled between 1397 and 1418; and the *Book of Leinster*, a renowned manuscript collection from the 12th century (Welch, 551). Although the tales are told with a different bias, in each form the mythological Irish hero Cú Chulainn is acclaimed for his successful slaughter of enemies. Diplomacy is not an option. Cú Chulainn is the embodiment of rampant aggression and when he eventually dies it is a hero's death. Chained to a stone so that he can die standing, sorely wounded, he continues to fight. It is only when a raven plucks out his eyes that his enemies realise he is dead. What a simile and inspiration this was seen to be for Ireland's long and uneven battle against colonisation. It is one Edna O'Brien (1994) utilises in *House Of Splendid Isolation* where the last-ditch Anti-Treaty fighter McGreevy is likened to the mythical hero.

An amazing number of modern writers continue to refer to Cú Chulainn as if he lived recently. He is a national hero and remains a role model despite his appalling record as a husband and a father. The Republicans placed a statue of him in Dublin, a symbol to honour the martyrs of the 1916 Uprising. One can muse as Yeats did about his play, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (in his poem 'The Man And The Echo'), whether *these* many words of legend, too, sent out "Certain men the English shot?".

In *Angela's Ashes* (1997), Frank McCourt tells how a drunken father dragged his small sons out of bed at night to declare their willingness to emulate Cú Chulainn's Red Branch Knights, the Fenian men, the IRA, and die for Ireland (18). The fervour of patriotism induced in young children remains an emotional trigger even after adult logic takes over — if it ever does. There are others, however, for whom this overdose of patriotism has the opposite effect. They are the ones who write with a stinging satirical cynicism, as did James Joyce throughout his life, and as Patrick McCabe does today in such books as *The Dead School* (1995) and *Mondo Desperado* (1999).

There are numerous re-tellings and summaries of the *Táin*, this most complicated and intertwined history of which Eleanor Hull's *Cuchulain The Hound Of Ulster* (1909) -- still quoted as a primary source by James MacKillop in 1998 -- gives a great many details usually omitted in more curtailed versions. Welch considers it the central saga of the Ulster cycle as it reflects "dynastic conflict and issues relating to sovereignty in ancient Ireland" (552).

Like many others of the old Gaelic tradition, it glorifies combat and the decapitation of the enemy as proof of prowess. Welch also points out that "[s]tories of Cú Chulainn survived in manuscript tradition up to the 19th century and in folklore into the 20th" (126). This is an indication that the characteristics Cú Chulainn represented were still valued. Violence in the form of 'heroism' and bravery is a powerful boost to self-confidence for a nation that accepts it has very little else. This was Ireland's condition for centuries before eventually regaining independence in twenty-six of her thirty-two counties; and it was continually reflected in her writing.

Cú Chulainn was wily as well as brave. In order to keep an assignation with Fedelm Noíchruthach he had to delay Maeve's approaching Connacht army, so he placed two taboos in their path. It is impossible to pass such a *geis*². The first one consisted of a hooped oak sapling "carved with ogam, on a standing stone." The second "a four-pronged fork of a tree stuck with severed heads" (Welch, 551). Both the sexual and the savage facts seldom appear in sanitised translations which subsequently lose most of the original character. But the spirit of these sagas survived, in the oral retellings and delight in trickery, among the Irish-language speakers until into the early 1900s.

Rough and barbaric as they were judged to be by their earlier academic translators, they were part of the heritage of a once war-like people. As such, no doubt, they made battle -- even without

weapons or training -- an acceptable action for people pushed beyond endurance. This was certainly the case with the Croppy Boys of '98. *Their* escapades and misadventures have added largely to Irish writing and have been one of the many woes of the Troubles saga. Cú Chulainn was, for generations, the inspiration of the Irish warrior, as is attested by the adulation he received until well into the 20th century.

Violence, military might and conquest by fair means or foul, appeared in Irish writing long before the histories of recent Troubles spawned tales of equal craftiness or valour in modern times. It is an Irish tradition. From the earliest Irish saga and fable to the most recent publication on the Troubles in Ulster, there is a continuing sequence of conflict. Troubles are an ubiquitous phenomenon in both Irish legend and literature. (See Bibliography for only a few of the recently published — or reissued — studies of the conflict.)

To understand the circuitous complications of the sagas and the way in which politics and myth and personal ambitions intertwine and cast their shadow on modern Irish writing it would be appropriate to look at a précis of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.

Medb (Maeve) Queen of Connacht, whose wealth and splendour, she boasted, was greater than that of her husband Ailil, arranged a great competitive display of their stock and other possessions. It was she who originally owned Finnbennach, so-called for his white horns, one of the two great bulls of Ireland. Medb's animals were ready to be put on display in this competition when her herders told her that the great bull had left her cattle. He had gone over to those of Ailil. It was impossible to retrieve him. So great and powerful was he that he defied all the efforts of her herders to drive him back.

Such a loss of a prize possession frequently occurred in the historic internecine fights over clan leadership. It was a pattern carried forward into the activities of the squabbling leaders of Irish

insurrections. As we see, possession of property and power has always been the crux around which violence occurs. It was more than a tradition, it became a habit, and the sources ranged from ownership of a country to the possession of a few yards of bogland. There are many amusing folklore tales told of feuds arising from the disputed right-of-way a pathway through a field. It seems each storyteller has their own version.

The bereft queen Maeve was told of the equally great Donn Cuailnge, the famous Brown Bull of Ulster. She coveted the animal and also sought a cause to avenge a previous grudge against the Ulstermen. And here again the Otherworld takes a hand, for the enemy were under a *geis*² restricting their fighting capacity. Cú Chulainn was still young and not yet come into his full strength, so Medb decided to mount a raid. She was determined to capture the coveted animal.

It is not relevant to go into the permutations of the scheming and dealings, the bloodthirsty battles and barely credible feats of superhuman bravery and merciless slaying of enemies performed by the heroes. Sufficient to point out that the tradition of cattle raids and attacks on neighbouring clans was well established along with the stringing of enemy's severed heads on the victor's belt.

Although she gained the coveted animal Maeve lost the battle and in her retreat "she menstruates, filling three ditches with her blood." It was one of the rare occasion when Cú Chulainn was chivalrous towards an enemy for he allowed Maeve and her army to return home (Welch, 551-552). There was little of this chivalry in later fights. The Troubles, however, followed a similar pattern in that an initial attack or ambush frequently succeeded only to be followed by devastating defeat. Maeve's prodigious blood loss could well stand as a metaphor for the condition to which subsequent defeated patriots were reduced. Certainly in the

Flights of the Earls and Wild Geese the country was bled dry of the best of its fighting men.

The last act of the *Tain* is a fight between the two bulls watched by Maeve's army as the coveted Brown bull tears Finnbennach's carcass to shreds and distributes the pieces all over Ireland. Metaphor is a constant of the sagas. *This* saga in its differing versions deals with political issues of property, power and status but also includes the supernatural as well as inexplicable and illogical human motives. The sagas were assiduously recorded; refined and retold, they travelled down the centuries and, though much diluted, retained enough fire to inspire subsequent generations to acts of derring-do. Traditions shape a people's ethos and I suggest the roots of Troubles legend emerge from the sagas.

It is interesting that many of Ireland's heroes of both saga and historical battles, are handicapped by a *geis*, which makes defeat inevitable. Although the handicap in reality, as opposed to saga, can be — and often is — attributed to the perfidy of Informers, the intransigence of promised allies who do not deliver, or just plain bad luck, the pattern persisted in life as in Irish fiction. It was a leitmotif of the Troubles.

It would appear, then, that stretching into pre-history there has not only been conflict between the North and South of Ireland but that it has always been celebrated, first in the oral tradition and then in writing. If the image of an Ireland united and happy, before the advent of the English, did not entirely originate with Geoffrey Keating (c.1580-1644), his *Foras Feasa* helped make it a new universal Irish belief. In this way political motives instilled in Irish writing have greatly influenced subsequent writing and concepts of the country. They continue to be paraded, as Bill Cullen and Rory O'Connor have done in their recent autobiographies.

Tara was eulogised, it became a symbol and a shibboleth for all the greatness Ireland lost. Despite Keating's adjustment of history, Troubles, in the form of internecine conflict, were strung like fairy-lights. Recounting them illuminated the valour and heroism of characters throughout early Irish literature. There seems never to have been a time when clans were not clashing or tearing themselves apart over disputes of leadership. The tradition persists.

Although the *Tain Bó Cuailnge* is one of the most repeated tales of the Ulster Cycle there are other narratives from the Gaelic sagas of the 6th and 7th centuries. These include the Fenian cycle of which Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn MacCool) is the central figure. His popularity grew and, particularly in the oral tradition, his exploits eclipsed those of the sub-heroes of the Ulster Cycle. But Cú Chulainn as an icon and inspiration of the 20th century revolt against England regained his earlier popularity.

The Cattle Raid is probably the best known legend and the one to whose characters reference is most frequently made. What remains of the manuscripts of these sagas now repose in museums. They have been translated with varying degrees of attention paid to the ubiquitous grizzly sadism and the popularly reproduced tales have been rendered with a saccharine Victorian disregard for the ethos of the original. The slaughter and conquest have been changed to make the tales acceptable as fairy-stories for children, but the flame infusing the legend remains burning no matter how it is disguised.

A saga from early historical times, less well-known than that of Maeve's predations, also deals with conflict between North and South. It is that of the Ui Chennselaig whose hero king Brandub mac Echach (d 605), the most admired of the early Ui Chennselaig kings of Leinster, fought to defend his territory from attack by the Northern Ui Néill. *Bóruma Laigen (The Cattle Tribute of the Leinstermen)*, records the fighting and the heroism. As there were

Ui Chennselaig based in monasteries their history, over a considerable period of time, is adequately recorded. Both external and internecine fights for the Kingship of Leinster continued from the 600s until 1171 when Diarmait Mac Murchada died. Well established in historical fact as they were, those early Irish writers nevertheless added perfume to the rose in their accounts. History as saga is not unbiased. When written by the victors it is aggrandised; recounted by the victims it becomes myth, the influence and style of which is evident in Troubles legend.

It is *this* Diarmait MacMurchada who is reviled by many for inviting Henry II's soldiers into the country to help him regain his lost kingship. From these incursions began England's occupation of Ireland. Known as 'Diarmait na nGall' (Dermot of the Foreigners) he recruited Richard fitz Gilbert (d1176), called Strongbow, as an ally. Cementing the pact MacMurchada gave to the foreigner his daughter Aife in marriage. He also promised Strongbow that he would inherit the kingship of a reclaimed Leinster. Strongbow and MacMurchada fought well together; they conquered Dublin and the Englishman gained estates and titles. This drew the attention and covetousness of Henry II. He threatened confiscation of Longbow's English properties unless his overlordship of the new Irish estates was acknowledged. In this way, most subtly and unannounced, the might of England's kingship entered Ireland; the dual loyalties of intermarried families spread and identities became blurred. Naturally religion had a hand in this as well.

The practices of the Irish Catholics did not meet the approval of the Pope in Rome. Subtly he encouraged Henry II to spread his influence in the benighted country in order that the recalcitrant Irish Catholics could be brought to book. Politically this was a move which suited the English King who was concerned over the power Strongbow was gaining.

The whole affair could well have been the subject of Greek tragedy, so insidiously was inflicted what would one day become Ireland's festering wound. More reams of paper than could be calculated have since covered this event and its results. Resentment still smoulders at the craftiness of the transaction. (Quite recently I heard a young working-class Catholic man from Northern Ireland roundly curse MacMurchada. How many countries can boast a grudge held so passionately over 900 years?)

Ironically it seems that the conflict was caused and compacted by the possession of two women, one abducted, the other exchanged for military assistance. Initially this was no mere political fight. In addition to a failed attempt at gaining the coveted high kingship, MacMurchada is the culprit reviled by Keating for abducting Derbforgaill, wife of Tigernán Ua Ruairc, king of Bréifne. Here again politics and 'romance' — if it can be so called — spawned a limitless number of written words. Not only the original annals of the clan but all the subsequent arguments, the conjectures and analyses of what would have happened had Strongbow, and hence the English king, not been invited to Ireland.

Keating wove his origin-legend from such histories and sagas passed down orally from generation to generation before being written down. The early monks filtered the tales through the ethos of their Christian beliefs and wrote them in manuscripts, of which a considerable number survived the predations of the Reformation and of age. Fortunately many of those original works, no longer in existence, were copied and re-copied. In some cases only fragments remain and the final material is an accretion of versions, interpretations and additions from different areas.

The 'facts' Keating harvested were derived from the Annals of various regions. These recorded, chronologically, significant genealogical facts like marriages, births and the installations and deaths, or deposing, of heads of ruling dynasties. Battles and

political jockeying within and between clans often involved labyrinthine genealogies and linkages through marriage or fosterage. Entries detailing the founding of abbeys and monasteries, their activities and problems, provide interesting glimpses into the period. Welch claims that the Annals originated as “marginal notes in chronological tables used to calculate the date of Easter in the medieval monasteries” (15). It was originally with this contested date that the Irish and the Roman Catholics disagreed.

Eventually the task of historiography passed into the hands of learned families from the latter part of the 12th century. This change was a product of the monastic reforms when Irish Catholicism was made to conform more closely to that of Rome. As each region’s recording family compiled the old records — and inserted new information according to their own interpretation -- the ‘facts’ in the many Annals differ. Gone was the earlier monastic adherence to stated principles and liturgical requirements. In some instances they become a lot more interesting, with a return to the direct Gaelic ability to present a naked fact without the veil of Catholic propriety.

The final compilation, the *Annals Of The Four Masters* (c.1630) is accredited to Michéal Ó Cléirigh (Tadhg an tSléibhe, c.1590-1643), and his colleagues. The family Ó Cléirigh were traditionally renowned scholars, poets and historians. They were the official scribes of the O'Donnell family (Ó Domhnaill), lords of Donegal. Maghnus Ó Dohmnaill (d 1563) lord of Donegal (until deposed and held prisoner by his son, Calbhach), wrote a hagiography of Colum Cille (1532) in which he called for religious reform. Although an amateur Ó Domhnaill’s lively poetry, including love poems for his wife, was sufficiently well received to be translated into Latin in 1645 and into English in 1918. Poor Maghnus Ó Domhnaill was neither the first nor the last victim of internecine envy. It was another occasion in which literature benefited from

politics, and in the writing of which Ó Domhnaill surely found some relief from his tedious incarceration.

When the task of recording knowledge and history passed from the monks it returned to families trained in the classical Gaelic style of the bardic schools. These dated to pre-Christian times and originated in the Druidic teachings of the old Celts. They out-lived the religion from which they sprang, and many of the *filid*, the sacred poets, had been absorbed into the monasteries which is why so much early Irish monastic writing seems tinged with pre-Christian beliefs and practices. It was in the 12th century when Church reform ousted the traditional Gaelic/Irish poetic learning from their schools that *filid* and well-educated secular poets cooperated to re-establish a coherent system of education in Bardic schools. From bard to monastery and back to families with bardic traditions, such is the zig-zag gyring of Irish writing.

Although many of the early manuscripts were damaged, they were later collated and rewritten so that although the contents are often contradictory they are the source of both Keating's and our knowledge of early Ireland's legends and history. Regrettably with many modern versions the original salty Gaelic descriptions were omitted, such as those describing Maeve's thighs as "friendly".

The influence of religion on Irish writing is perhaps even stronger on what was *not* written, or when dared to be written was banned. From James Joyce through to Sean O'Faolain and Edna O'Brien the list of acknowledged writers' works to be prohibited to the good Catholic Irish arose from the 'Censorship of Publications Act of 1929. Its purpose, explained by Welch, was "to throw a cordon sanitaire around the newly independent State, which felt itself threatened by undesirable matter running counter to the idea of Irish Catholic identity it encouraged" (94).

Not all that the modern Irish writers inherited was blood-tinged. An old poem exemplifies another spirit, one of rejoicing and a national pride in evidence long before the Celtic Revival.

Ich am of Irlaunde.
 Ant of the holy londe
 Of Irlande.
 Gode sire, pray ich the,
 For of saynte charité.
 Come ant daunce with me
 In Irlaunde.

Anon c 1300 published in *Emerald Isle*,
 compiled by Anna Nicholson 1995.

Among many Irish literary traditions continued into the present is that of the Gaelic *dinnshenchas* which emphasises the poet's knowledge of the community's historical association with their physical environment. Poets celebrated this with a joyful enumeration of significant words, as do the modern writers with their secretly loaded code words, the shibboleths of Irish writing.

Michael Kenneally, editor of *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Writing* (1988), points out that the *dinnshenchas* custom is still a vital characteristic of Irish writing. He states that a need for a "metaphysical placement" appears to be the motivation behind a poetry of place (5-6). Literally *dinnseanchas* means traditional knowledge of significant places. (The new Oxford Irish Minidictionary [1999] under the spelling *dinnseanchas* gives topography.)

The *dinnshenchas* tradition links names to legends by what Kenneally terms "pseudo-etymological techniques" (5-6). On occasion fictitious explanations are attached to existing names in order to 'explain' their origin. Because of this some legends are only found in the *dinnshenchas*, but the tradition is evident in the Annals and many later versions of local folklore. *Place and story become one concept*, a trait apparent in the shibboleths, particularly those from the late 1700s to the mid 1950s. They recall the entire history of different Uprisings. We see, then, that this use of words as shibboleths is no more than a continuation of several old traditions of Irish storytelling. Utilising a traditional well-established literary love of riddles it sanctifies names of places and people while emphasising shared knowledge of the

country's historical Troubles and travails. It is a perfect example of the loaded semiotic capacity of a single signifier.

The *filid* and the bards were expected not only to know but also to be able to explain the significance of the stories. It was an important part of the job qualification. Many of the old manuscripts carry verses traceable as far back as the 800s, to poets who can be named, such as Mael Muru, of the Othnian monastery at Fahan, Co Donegal. He, like other monks working as scribes — and also often as poets in their own right -- produced recensions of the remains of older manuscripts, such as *Lebor Gabála*, the *Book of Invasions*. This date indicates that the praxis of Irish writing about Troubles, in the shape of military forays and invasions, is firmly based.

Such a long and proud tradition of oral and recorded history indubitably influences those who follow. Although the intricate stresses and internal vowel cadences of the old Gaelic poetry are no longer used, the echoes of its music and beliefs drift through into the most unexpected places. If, in a history of combat, a tough I.R.A. commander, like Ernie O'Malley (1898-1957), can recount how he is swayed by local belief in the supernatural, we must acknowledge the tenacity of the Otherworld in Irish writing. We will look at this particular example in a later chapter.

Taken from the oral tradition, which safely can be dated to have lasted until the 7th century, the *Lebor Gabála's* recorded version of Ireland's history uses Leinster genealogies to trace Irish descent back to the biblical Noah. It tells how his Scythian descendants travelled to Babel and then, in Mosaic times, to Egypt whence they journeyed to Spain. The similarities between words such as Hibernia and Hiberia are taken as further proof that the 'sons of Mil Espáin' (Spanish soldier), conquered Ireland while Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356-323 BC), was conquering Persia. Even earlier invasions by the Fir Bolg, followed by those of the Fir Domnann and Gáiléoin, the gods of the Tuatha Dé Danann,

their enemies the Fomorians as well as those of the Britons and the Picts are recorded. Like others of his profession Mael Moru wrote a poem on the origin of the Irish race. (Welch 149, 350).

Ireland's history is written in blood. Invasions or struggles for power followed one on the other until fighting and violence as a way of life appears the norm. And all this bloodshed and horror mythologised and glorified as heroism and sanctified in verse. It is no wonder that the shorthand of the shibboleth is utilised to recall and evoke the memories of battles or skirmishes, and their heroes. They are the mnemonics of a people who remember uprisings of two or three-hundred years ago along with recent battles and celebrate them together in song or verse. From the many battles of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, with the English during the late 1500s to the eventual Flight of the Earls on 14th September, 1607, to warfare with the 'Tans (1919-1921), events are tagged by shibboleths for easy retrieval.

This history of battle and its celebration in story stretches far back. It was established and flourishing when Seanchán Torpéist (c. 570-647), Chief Bard of Ireland travelled, with 50 followers, to the Isle of Man to enter a literary contest. Not only were the stories and techniques of telling them well known but they were shared by other Celts. Peter Berresford Ellis explains that "the legends and tales of Ireland were a common heritage in Scotland and Man" (4). This fact supports the legend of the early Gaels colonising, in the 6th century, the area that later became Scotland.

To legitimise the coronation of Fergus Mac Erc, the brother of the Irish High King Murtach Mac Erc, the coronation stone Lia Fáil was borrowed and taken to Scotland. Fergus refused to return it and later, as the stone of Scone, it was stolen by the English King Edward I (Ellis, 142-143). Here again we have a history of broken promises, fraternal rivalry and successful English aggression and seizure of property. Even more interesting is the fact that the famous Irish leprechaun of the Otherworld first appeared in this

saga as a small water creature; further evidence that Irish history is inseparably intertwined with the history of the *sidhe*.

Ellis reports that Professor Kuno Meyer (1858-1910) had, in 1910, listed 400 tales and sagas in manuscript. Subsequently another 100 were added to the list and he estimated that at least 50-100 more tales could be lying undiscovered in libraries (4). Meyer was the renowned German philologist and prolific translator who, in 1903, established a School of Irish Learning at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS). His motive was concern at the lack of trained and competent scholars and translators to edit the old manuscripts in Dublin libraries.

Many of these historically valuable manuscripts had been neglected and half-forgotten in municipal offices and other repositories. According to Welch, Meyer "significantly extended the range of Irish learning" (365). And, with the Celtic Revival a new interest in the sagas and legends resulted in a quantity of translations becoming available. *The histories of old battles, the Troubles of their ancestors, was part of the background of the writers growing up in the first half of the 1900s.* For those who spoke the Irish language the rediscovery and publishing of certain of these old manuscripts provided a treasure trove. Their influence is evident in the syntax of Hiberno-English, as well as in the revitalising of the *dinnshenchas* tradition.

In her Introduction to *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* Eleanor Hull in 1898 made a similar assessment about the numerous still untranslated sagas and annals. She also pointed out the proliferation of different versions within a single cycle. Of these many were then still not translated or edited, a fact which concerned scholars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tragically manuscripts translated in the 1800s and early 1900s lost most of their original vigour. But the rot had set in even earlier with the retelling of the sagas.

In the Introduction to her own translation of *Cuchulain The Hound Of Ulster* (1909) Hull states that “[a]s a general rule, the older the form of a story the shorter, terser, and more barbaric its character” (11). She approved of the recent versions being altered “to soften down the more barbarous and rougher portions.” Not only was the tone altered but “touches of symbolism and imagination” have been added. Hull feels this addition of “poetry” has improved them. This has strangled their original voice. She admits to having altered the “Sickbed of Cuchulain” an account of his visit to Fairy-land. It “required a slight modification of the central situation in order to make it suitable reading for any children into whose hands the book might chance to fall” (12-13). Wonderful pieces of direct Irish writing were left mouldering in the manuscripts for fear of the disapproval of society or the Church.

Later scholars, anthropologists and folklorists would deplore her statement that “[i]t is, after all, the human interest of these old stories, and not primarily their importance as folklore and the history of manners, that appeals to most of us today” (13). Saccharine seems to be a successful seller.

One aspect of an earlier form of Irish writing remains undimmed. The significance of the *dinnshenchas* tradition is its continuity in reflecting a mind-set in which Ireland and story meld. There is a continuous repetition of the history of each place and the importance of events shaping this has infused Irish literature into the modern time. *From the Táin Bó Cuailnge*, through James Clarence Mangan (1803-1840), the balladeers of the 1700s and 1800s, to Ernie O'Malley (1898-1957), Sean O'Faolain (1900-1991), and recent poets of the 20th and 21st centuries, the awareness of a present past, interacting with the countryside, is a constant. Welch claims that “a feeling for the luminous in Irish places has given depth to the symbolism and imagery of writers such as Yeats and Heaney”. “Place-lore” he adds, “provided a means of uniting psychological exploration with

a larger framework of collective cultural understanding". He gives Brian Friel's play *Translations* as an example of this (150). Heaney's 'Bog Poems' and the countryside poems such as 'Anahorish', 'Death of a Naturalist', and 'Digging' are excellent examples of the luminous quality with which the modern poet transmutes ordinary events and places.

But the poet is also political. Neil Corcoran's study *Seamus Heaney* (proofcopy 1986), reveals how Heaney in "the fairly lengthy pamphlet poem, *An Open Letter*" objected to being classified as "British" in the 1982 *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*.

This 'British' word
Sticks deep in native and *colon*
Like Arthur's sword. (41)

In *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (1990) Heaney likens the forced Act of Union with England, in 1800, to a rape, the progeny of which will beat at Ireland's borders and cock his "little fists" at England "across the water".

No treaty
I foresee will solve completely your tracked
And stretchmarked body, the big pain
That leaves you raw, like opened ground, again. (74-75)

Written in the second half of the 20th century such vivid imagery makes it clear that Ireland's wound still bleeds in the hearts and minds of its poets.

The quality of Otherworldly enrichment of significance, in words acting as shibboleths, gives Irish writing an extra dimension. Much writing of the Troubles also assumes the mystical content of the *dinnshenchas*. It is a tradition, a mental 'set' reaching into antiquity and passes into the personal. A great many of Seamus Heaney's poems are interwoven with places which have been significant in his development and growth as a poet. He is especially aware of their importance when their symbolism, and the emotions this evokes, are shared.

The telling of tales was an honoured profession and in the centuries before Christianity fragmented the old customs each 'king' and great household had resident bards. They were not only repositories of old knowledge and clan history but also created new versions. These poets composed verses exalting exploits of valour which became legends; they have passed on the practice. The new recorders of tales of 'martyrs for freedom' followed an old tradition.

According to S.J. Connolly "[a]part from inscriptions the earliest surviving writings in Irish are interlinear glosses in Latin religious texts" (321). There were times when the early Irish-speaking monks grew tired, or cold and hungry and expressed their feelings in margins. These un-Christian complaints can still be seen where the manuscripts are safely housed. This ability to mix the sublime with the mundane may at times create bathos, as can be seen in the political doggerel of the 1800s and 1900s. In the hands of a master such as Sean O'Faolain the results are poignant and deeply moving. Even the soldier, Ernie O'Malley, layers his war-talk with exquisite lyrical prose in which we can almost hear the countryside breathe. Both these writers utilise the *dinnshenchas* technique.

¹ Rath: the remains of an ancient fortified, circular earthen wall, formally the dwelling place of a chief which the *sidhe* have now taken over and occupy. It is unwise to build your home between two such Rathes as it would interfere with a pathway of the *sidhe*.

² Geis: Celtic society, and therefore mythology, abounds in prohibitions, taboos, or bonds that, when placed on a person or persons, compel them to obey instructions. (Peter Berresford Ellis 1993: 202).

CHAPTER 6

GEOFFREY KEATING REWRITES HISTORY

According to tradition, he was driven into hiding in 1618 or 1619 when a local gentleman's wife concluded that he was insulting her in a sermon on adultery and set her lover, the President of Munster, on him. He is also said to have planned *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, the foremost work of Gaelic historiography, while living in a cave in the Glen of Aherlowe in the Galtee Mountains, and to have remained a fugitive in Tipperary and elsewhere until 1624 when the warrant against him was revoked. Robert Welch. (285)

Searching for a predominant Irish characteristic, ethos or symbol is as unrewarding as attempting to catch a Leprechaun for his crock of gold. Both activities have been reported but I can find no reputable authentication of either. Judging from themes of histories and fiction there are definite strands which intertwine and repeat themselves through the centuries to create identifiable characteristics. They are like the metallic threads in a tapestry, calling for one's attention although not constituting the bulk of the fabric. Politically motivated violence, which is almost a form of sport, continues as a proud tradition; in collusion with the metaphysical it appears repeatedly.

Animosities resulting in feuds due to mishandled relationships between the *Sidhe* and humans; Protestants and Catholics unwilling to change their religion, or just individuals with grudges to repay, influenced literature as Geoffrey Keating could vouch for.

Religion merged with politics remains an evergreen topic providing much grist for Irish writers' mills. But what came before the political dissention and the Troubles which are so richly reflected in modern writing? Did the earlier years influence the later propensity for dramatic dissention? It is important to understand part of the initial shaping of a mind-set seemingly cast in stone. To do so it is necessary to analyse and understand how

history and attitudes have been moulded by writers such as Geoffrey Keating.

The Irish way with words has not only transformed slaughter into noble saga, but fact has been fictionalised to provide a situation where one could have one's cake and eat it. Writing in Gaelic Keating 'proved' one could be a subject of an English king and a free independent citizen of a sovereign Ireland at the same time. Because his ambivalent vision of old Ireland has been incorporated into popular mythologised history, and inspired much Irish writing, it is imperative that we look, in detail, at how he rationalised and altered reality with words.

Maeve and Conor Cruise O'Brien state in the revised third edition of *A Concise History of Ireland* (1991) that the Anglo-Normans became "hibernized" and quote the old saying *Hibernicis ipsis hiberniores*, more Irish than the Irish themselves (47). About two hundred years on, in the Irish Parliament when Henry VIII was proclaimed king, the announcement had to be read in Irish. Connolly, in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, states that only the Earl of Ormond, the leader of the 'English' party, could understand the proclamation in the original.

Geoffrey Keating (*Sesthrún Céitinn*, c.1580-1644), a descendant of these hibernised foreigners, was the author of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, considered the most important of Gaelic historiographies. He compared and drew distinctions between the true Gaels, the Old Anglo-Norman *Sean-Ghoill* and the New English *Nua Ghoill* (Welch, 285-6). He maintained that the original Irish and the *Sean-Ghoill*, the old Anglo-Normans, had merged to become *one single Catholic Irish Nation*. This was probably the first expression of a national sentiment and identity, a good 300 years before the Celtic Revival which, Declan Kiberd claims (in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature Of The Modern Nation*. 1996), fostered a sense of an Irish nation.

Catholic priest and poet, Keating was taught in the old bardic tradition. He supported the Eoghan Ruadh O'Neil and his Old Irish Party in the 1641 Rebellion. Even then, politics based on religious differences and the persecution visited on Catholics by the Protestants of the Reformation influenced literature. Keating's two religious works were as much political treatises as spiritual guides. *Eochairsgiath an Aifrann*, defended the Counter Reformation; *Trí Biorghaoithe (Three Shafts of Death)* warned that the English invasion was sent by God as a punishment for sin. To achieve both a political and a religious goal it warned good Irish Catholics to watch their naughty ways and reform.

The irony was that Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (c.1634), a meticulous study of Ireland's history, and his rendering of this in what Douglas Hyde later described as "limpid Irish [at] its highest perfection", was not welcomed by the Gaelic aristocracy (Welch, 286). Not only did they decry his Norman origins but the intellectuals of Ulster, Munster and Leinster were at loggerheads about his interpretations and selection of material. Each felt the sagas of the other were favoured above their own. Internecine conflict among the Irish aristocracy as well as inter-tribal warfare could be, and often was, over status and one's position in the hierarchy: it has been the source of great sagas such as the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.

Keating sought to counteract the disparaging opinions of the English by giving a 'true' account of Ireland's history. This he based on ancient documents and legends. In the 1920s, this work was dismissed by some scholars as "a monument to a doomed civilisation", an opinion with which Dr Tom Dunne agreed in 1981. They considered it no more than a description of Ireland before the Reformation and subsequent Plantation. But they were wrong. Today the *Foras Feasa* is seen as a valuable example of antiquarian patriotism and a source of information about the many nuances of political problems current at the time. Brendan

Bradshaw also expresses a different view of the work's popularity. In his chapter 'Geoffrey Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland', in *Representing Ireland: Literature And The Origins Of Conflict* (1993), (edited by himself and Andrew Hadfield), he maintains the work was generally well thought of, basing his opinion on the numerous surviving manuscript copies (166).

Keating placed great credence on the authenticity of his early sources but saw them in relation to the political and religious concerns of his 17th century Irish Catholic community oppressed by Protestant Reformation colonisers. The rhetoric he employed focussed on three ideological spheres which Bradshaw defines as "the commonwealth", "the fatherland", and "the kingdom". These concepts, like the shibboleths of later generations, serve to confirm "the polity's claim to a state of self-subsistent political entity" (168); and, like subsequent trigger words, they forged a unitary identity between religious and political claims of allegiance.

In authenticating Irish identity by recourse to its roots Keating was able to evoke a "constructive response" from what Bradshaw defines as "the native *literati*" (168). This made it possible to react positively to the changed political circumstances and realign a previously accepted ethnic categorisation.

Keating altered the pejorative concept of *Ghoill* -- meaning foreign invaders -- as applied to the Anglo-Norman settlers after their 12th century invasion and conquest of Ireland. Their descendants in becoming "more Irish than the Irish" adopted the Irish language, customs, style of dress and lifestyle which the occupying English authorities later attempted, too late, to ban. Keating applied the prefixes *Sean* (Old) and *Fionn* (Fair) to these integrated, intermarried settlers, whereas the new Tudor Conquest colonists were dubbed *Nua* (New) *Ghoill*.

For Keating and his ilk these Protestant New English represented the common enemy usurping the rights of the settled

community whose land and power was seized. *He used a new collective title, Éireannaigh (Irish) indicative of a new National identity, to distinguish between the two communities* (Bradshaw 169, my emphasis). This was a momentous step in the successful shaping of Ireland's ethos when there was no popular 'media' proliferation of new ideas.

The division has remained into the 21st century in terms of Catholic versus Protestant. Frequently one still encounters in conversation the comment, "Oh, but he was/is Protestant", referring to famous Irish Nationalist leaders or literary figures, such as Yeats. The implication is that irrespective of their contributions they do not really belong. They are not one of the 'true' Irish, the Catholic Irish. Keating would have approved of this stance which was reiterated by Canon Patrick Augustine Sheehan (1852-1913), throughout his numerous books published at the turn of the 19th century and into the 20th. The influence of religion on the written word was overwhelming: it helped to maintain this division, from both sides of the fence. It was certainly one of the foci of Sheehan's copious output.

Keating divides the phases of Irish history into three stages, in line with his three ideological groupings. The first stretches from the original Celtic settlers to late antiquity, the second encompasses the conversion of Gaelic Ireland to a Christian community and the third is the new awareness of a shared national identity in response to the unwelcome and unjust colonisation (Bradshaw 169).

Stephen Howe in *Ireland and Empire* (2002), maintains that Keating introduced an approach which became standard in Irish historiography, a "too national" persistence in "a pervasive myth of Irish exceptionalism, to which the rather insular focus of most modern history-writing has contributed heavily" (78). If one considers the insular usage of shibboleths this criticism is not unjust.

It is in the first phase that Keating transforms an aggressive, tribal and localised grouping of petty kingdoms into an idealised arrangement of centralised governance. He presents the High Kingship as a hereditary national monarchy instead of the originally insecure elective position from which the incumbent could — and often was — ousted by dissatisfied relatives or previously submissive clans. It is from this vision that the idea of Tara, as the site of the High King (*ard-ri*), has become another shibboleth. It represents a glorified golden age, and is much bandied about in political and nostalgic song. References to Tara provide a wide-angled lens onto a vision of Ireland's imagined perfect past.

Keating's Tara was elevated to an administrative capital of a national entity, ruled by a "professional bureaucracy ... a patriot militia and a written law code ... and a triennially convened parliament." In this manner Keating elevates the high-king's household retainers, the mythical Fianna, the Druidic Brehon law, and the *Feis* at Tara into a mythologised organised structure (Bradshaw 170). This is in contradiction to the reality of an often warring, loosely linked group of tribes. To further authenticate his creation Keating introduces the legend of the *Lia Fáil*. This 'Stone of Destiny', it was foretold, would assure that a descendant of Mil — the Milesian Gaelic founding father — would rule wherever the stone was lodged. On it the High Kings were installed in office.

In the sixth century *Lia Fáil* was moved to Scotland to validate the coronation of the High King's brother, Fergus 1's Gaelic kingdom. Edward 1, of England, appropriated the stone and took it home and as the Stuarts — Scottish royalty — were currently on the English throne, Keating conjured with words and logic to legitimise the concept of a revival of the line of Irish high-kings. His argument was circuitous.

Scotland means the land of the Scoti, a name derived from that of the Milesian queen, Scota. The Gaelic Scotia, from what is

now Ireland, colonised the territory which became known as Scotland. The early Irish called it Alba, as is apparent in the story of Deirdre and the sons of Uisnech, one of the legends woven into Keating's origin history. It is fascinating how an old saga was converted to a then-current history which subsequently proliferated, in written form, to reshape Ireland's ethos and self-image. This is one of the best examples of the way in which politics and religion have influenced Irish writing.

It seems far-fetched that King Edward's theft should be the mechanism whereby English royalty could be claimed as descendants of Mil, the patriarch of Gaelic Ireland, whose sons were the ancestors of the Irish kings.

What was the logic that made Keating seem to validate the rule of the English crown over Ireland? This was not his intention. By proving that Ireland had been built up by a succession of free settlers who later established a kingdom after the arrival of the Milesians, Keating validated Ireland's historical sovereign status. It was never "a mere appendage of the realm of England" (Bradshaw 170-172). It had, however, provided the founders of a line from which, ultimately, England would be supplied with a king. The inference was heavy-handed

In his reconstruction of Ireland's Catholic history Keating continued writing creatively. His version of a Tridentine Catholicism blatantly ignores the early feud between Irish and Roman Catholicism. He makes no mention of the original federal organisation of monasteries which followed the tribal organisation of Celtic society.

Despite recording Ireland's own ancient lore of waves of new arrivals overcoming the established inhabitants, Keating quotes English antiquarians to 'prove' that "Ireland had never been subjugated to foreign jurisdiction" (Bradshaw 172). This was a blatant politically motivated lie. By painting a skewed picture of Ireland's early political organisation and in giving the high-kings

greater organised governmental authority than existed, the *Foras Feasa* is the source of grossly mythologised history. Like a snowball rolling unchecked, growing ever larger, the glory and splendour of Ireland's high-kings and of Tara moved down the generations. Emotionally charged it became a political cannonball for the nationalist republican Cause. In this manner it entered literature and propaganda, poetry and doggerel. Another shibboleth became a metaphor for lost glory destroyed by unjust conquest.

The implication that being Irish meant being Catholic was introduced by Keating's contention that their staunch adherence to the Faith was one of Ireland's three attributes. The man was nothing if not consistent in his adherence to groupings of three, perhaps influenced not only by the religious concept of the Trinity, but harking back to a yet older Gaelic tradition of triads. The other two attributes were valour and learning.

Surely in this linking of Irishness with Catholicism was sown the seeds of the eventual split between the Protestant instigators of the Insurrection of 1798 and their Catholic fellow United Irishmen. Keating's teachings as a Catholic cleric have much to answer for. The religious division remains present even today although it has lost much of its earlier iron-bound proscriptions against associating socially with Protestants. As we have seen it still appears in Irish writing such as Cullen's account of children avoiding walking past the Protestant University T.C.D.¹

Not only was Keating's re-shaped version of history a politically significant ploy but it was buttressed by further misrepresentation. As part of the Church's battle to retain authority during the Counter Reformation, Keating portrayed the organisation of the early Irish Catholic church, as well as the manuscript recordings of ancient knowledge, as the achievement of the Bishops. This was false. It was the monks who recorded the *seanchus* — the oral history. Keating's purpose was to portray

the Bishops as assimilated into Ireland's ruling class, in conjunction with whom they were part of the pictured administrative structure of a centralised monarchy. As such they could legally claim both religious *and* political authority in the Ireland of his day.

To succeed in his purpose Keating had produced what Bradshaw terms an "origin-legend" which put a different slant on fact (174). Having presented a fictional polity it was necessary for this to survive as a Catholic Irish kingdom. This fiction had to persist despite the reality of conquest and settlement by the Anglo-Normans when King Henry II (of England) was called upon, in 1167, to assist Diarmait Mac Murchada reclaim his lost kingdom (see p64f above).

As a descendant of the Anglo-Norman Conquest it was necessary for Keating to combine the Old Irish Kingdom with the new order so that what emerged was a common Irishness. The sleight of hand was provided by a papal bull. Keating's labyrinthine and seemingly contradictory argument, for one purporting to prove Irish sovereignty, centred on the infamous *Laudabiliter*.

Adrian IV, the only English pope, had issued this bull in 1155. In it he bestowed a hereditary over-lordship of Ireland to the king of England. The gift was not within the pope's possession nor authority to bestow. For Keating it provided 'proof' that what was originally an elective Irish high-kingship was now an hereditary possession of England's royalty.

Keating rationalised that this had been a collective decision of the Irish nobility. What actually happened was that they wished to resolve interminable struggles over the High Kingship. Ever since Brian Boru carried this off, breaking the North's dominance towards the end of the 10th century, there were repeated contradictory claims with resultant warfare.

In 1092 Donough O'Brien, the high-king 'with opposition', in conjunction with the Irish nobility agreed to appeal to the Pope for his help in solving the current conflict. It was not the intention permanently to abdicate the authority of the Irish chiefs and nobles to select their High King. Unfortunately this precedent was falsely utilised when Adrian IV empowered Henry II to address the aberrant morals and faith of the Irish. Again politics weds religion in falsifying a situation. And again this gives birth to Troubles of which much has been written.

As Keating pointed out, the legal obligations of the *Laudabulier* was only to address the supposed religious and moral turpitude. It was to leave the constitutional organisation of Ireland unchanged. In this way he argued that the Anglo-Norman 'settlement' was not a conquest but a process of *translatio imperii* - granted by the *Laudabulier* -- to which the political and ecclesiastical powers agreed. What he did not point out was how it also altered the clan structure based on Gaelic material concepts of clientship, rent, tax, wage and stipend and introduced the foreign concepts of homage, service, worship and obedience (Bradshaw 176-177). This is a perfect example of how subtly the use of words to achieve a politico-religious purpose has influenced Irish writing which, in its turn, has had repercussions on new writing. The basic premise of the original social order was being twisted out of shape, and accepted as valid.

This 'arrangement' eliminated the Irish elective kingship and although, technically, Ireland's constitution supposedly was to remain unaltered, it was in fact absorbed into the English feudal system. *Ireland became a fiefdom of English kings.*

It is difficult to match Keating's objectives with his narrative. After his tortured arguments linking Ireland to England he proceeds to recount the horrific predations of Diarmait MacMurchada's imported allies, many of whom were foreign mercenaries in Henry's employ. Here Keating distinguishes

between Pagan and Christian conquest. The former being brutal suppression by force of a people, their customs and language. The New English, like MacMurchada's rogues, were Pagan conquerors. In contrast a Christian conquest, such as that from which his antecedents evolved, adopted native customs, especially the language.

The internecine bloodshed within both native and colonist lineages, following on MacMurchada's predations, led to the demise of many of them. It was, as Keating presented it in *The Three Shafts Of Death*, a punishment from God. For him this opened the case for the virtuous Anglo-Norman colonists who were rewarded for their good deeds. By establishing churches and monasteries and granting gifts of land to them, *these* settlers, in Keating's estimation, deserved God's protection and survived. Of course Keating did not expand on from whom or how the Anglo-Normans settlers acquired the land so freely gifted to the monasteries.

But the Irish have long memories. Resentment simmered, boiled over, was subdued, rose again and again, was heated by the ballads and Troubles legends until finally it culminated in the Uprising of 1916 and the following war. Spoken and written stories about injustice and the desire for freedom played their role. Although Keating's identification of Catholicism with Irishness was retained, his putative political linkage with England was rejected.

The pictured piety Keating projected is another linking of Irish identity with devout Catholicism, a belief which subsequently repeatedly sabotaged attempts to combine both factions in a mutual desire for independence. But this attribute, in addition to their assimilation, was another point in the Sean Ghoill's favour. It made it possible for them to be a part of the new "Irishness", and Keating praises their dominant lineages, among whom his own appears.

To illustrate that Keating is inconsistent (and what politician isn't?), one has only to look at the different versions he gives in his politico-religious writing, *The Three Shafts Of Death* and the *History*. In the former Keating ascribes the defeats of Ua Conchobar and his enemy Diarmait Mac Murchada as retribution for their lechery. Because MacMurchada "abducts and rapes" Dervogilla, the wife of Tigernán Ua Ruairc he is conquered. Ua Conchobar's crime is that he lusts after every woman in his kingdom, married or single. As Seán Duffy points out in *Ireland In The Middle Ages* (1997), "[i]t is not the accuracy of the story that matters so much as the implication"; and this was that the Irish were conquered and defeated because they refused to behave in accordance with the Christian mores of 12th century Europe (27). There is, as usual, another version.

T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, the editors of *The Course Of Irish History* (1967), comment that this is filled with ambivalent messages. Although, wearing his priest's hat, Keating castigates MacMurchada for rape and abduction he also recounts, in his role as historian, how Dervogilla sent a message to MacMurchada "urging him to seize her". The narrative describes how Diarmait, on receiving the message went to the appointed meeting place with his men. There, when the woman was "placed on horseback behind a rider, ...[she] wept and screamed in pretence, as if Dermot were carrying her off by force" (124). The Irish way with words can weave a double-sided vision where story-telling and violence seem a constant.

Historically it appears that much of Keating's controversial polemic was in response and in opposition to Richard Stanihurst's dissertation in Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Both men were Old English Counter-Reformation ecclesiastics but Stanihurst was from the Pale. He was anglicised and reviled the provincial Gaelicised communities whom he believed would only attain the full flower of their Celtic potential if they grasped the 'civilising'

advantages of English customs. Even then the division about the form or the amount of their loyalty to England was a dividing factor between the Anglo-Irish. These differences continue: they remain a source of contest in Northern Ireland.

Both men's purpose was political. The crux of the opposition between Stanihurst and Keating was that the former desired an anglicised commonwealth and the latter one where the newcomer was acculturated into the existing Gaelic life-style. Keating wanted to prove that the new pagan invaders were nullifying Ireland's status as a sovereign Catholic Kingdom under the Crown of England. Both men expressed voluminously, in print, their political affiliations which not only recorded past Troubles but engendered fresh ones. Their points of difference culminated in diverse concepts of national identity (Bradshaw 181). Here again, within communities with basically similar aims and background, two men's religious clout energises opposing political aspirations. And both writers toy with truth.

These ancient political differences may seem petty and irrelevant to modern Irish writing, but from *Foras Feasa* comes the merging of the Gael with the Sean-Ghoill. *Keating introduced the concept of a new national identity, the Éireannaigh, the Irish.* So influential was his politically and religiously inspired manipulation of words that the ripples still lap across modern Irish thought and writing. Fiction, fact and wishful thinking fuse. Whatever of old truths managed to filter through the retelling by Christian monks was again transmuted by Keating. From his writings new myths were born and wedded to new heroes.

Keating had drawn from the past for his origin-legend. He used the sagas to rationalise a fusion of peoples forming the Irish nation. These legends still reverberate in Irish poetry and fiction.

¹ The Catholic hierarchy's banning of TCD was only lifted in 1970.

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PART III
DUAL VISION: FROM THE 1800s ONWARDS

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CHAPTER 7

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

I have tried to unfold, as dispassionately as possible, earlier events of which some knowledge is essential for the understanding of everything that has happened, or may happen in Ireland. Knowledge and understanding do not in themselves provide solutions, but there can be no solutions without them.

Robert Kee (2000), *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism*.

Geoffrey Keating died in 1644. The separatist sermon he preached was successful in preventing a permanent unification of patriots from either side of the religious divide. Among those attempting to create a cohesive resistance against England certain names stand out. Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, Edward FitzGerald, the United Irishmen -- united only in name -- attempted to forge permanent links and failed. None of these contemplated a politically-achieved peaceful solution with England. Uprisings, Troubles legends, ballads and shibboleths accumulated.

Three things cracked the mould. Famines, the Tithe Wars and the Agrarian Protests culminating in the Land League War, had interrelated effects. The Great Famine of 1845-1849 is well-known, but two others a century earlier in 1728-1729, and 1740-1741 also had devastating effects. The Rising of 1641 resulted in crop destruction and famine. Pressures mounted.

The Tithe Wars of 1830-1833 had the support of the larger Protestant farmers as well as the poor Catholic tenants. As with many other revolutions the influence and example of the intellectuals and the middle-class filtered down to the *sansculottes*. Their agitation over the injustice of making Catholics pay tithes, for the upkeep of the Protestant Church of Ireland, spilt over into the Agrarian Protest that had been simmering on and off since 1761.

Members of various Ribbon Societies (such as the Whiteboys, Hearts of Steel, Oakboys, Molly Maguires), successfully organised boycotts and strikes at landlords or their agents. Punitive and swift retaliation was directed against anyone foolish enough to move into a property from whom a tenant had been evicted for non-payment of rents. Nationalist and Republican sentiments mounted and turned to practical outlets. There was an explosion of writing from the 1800s until after the Anglo-Irish and the Civil Wars. It is these writers, their opinions, analyses, solutions and emotions, which were a formative influence on those who came after them. In order to understand the variety, the turmoil and the repetitive recurrence of the Troubles in Irish writing it is necessary to look at some of the more important or strident writers of this period.

Some Anglo-Irish Protestant patriots firmly believed they were as Irish as the Fenians, and more entitled to rule because of their superior education, culture and savoir faire. This group, too, was divided. Those who maintained Home Rule was necessary, whilst remaining part of the British Empire, saw themselves as essentially Irish. The Unionists, content to remain part of England and her parliament, had a different perspective.

History books, articles, newspaper reports, magazines and biographies appeared with perspectives so different that it was difficult to believe the same subject was being discussed. It is not part of this study to mine the depths of Irish politics. The situation is summarised by the comment of a Belfast citizen in 1970, when the Northern Ireland Troubles were beginning again. Reported by Nigel Rees, editor of *The Cassell Dictionary of Anecdotes* (1999), the remark -- equally applicable to the 1800s as the present -- contends anyone who isn't confused here doesn't really understand what is going on. A survey of articles in magazines of the 1800s confirms this confusion.

Strong expressions of Irish patriotism and national identity are expressed by the Anglo-Irish who yet see themselves as separate from the indigenous Irish. There is more than politics between the groups. Culture, values, norms, social status, beliefs, if not always education form an apparently insurmountable barrier. It is, nonetheless, interesting to note that, even among the 'opposition', there were occasional murmurs acknowledging conditions against which Nationalist patriots railed. On the whole, though, the idea of separate identities and interests, which Keating promulgated, persisted.

The patronising or contemptuous tone of much Protestant Unionist writing was inflammatory. Snide remarks against the Ascendancy and the Big House have been the result. Seldom is the Ascendancy reflected in their pomp and glory, unless by the Anglo-Irish themselves, where their demise is written of with sad nostalgia. Irish writing appears to concentrate on the degeneration and collapse of the once powerful. In a short story, 'Clara', Edna O'Brien (1986) has the narrator comment about local view sites where there are "other houses or ruins of houses. He did not have to tell me that there were more burned ruins there than any place else in the world" (168). This fact is irrelevant to the story. We are not told that these burnt houses are the results of the post-1916 Troubles, but those informed by Troubles legend are aware of this fact and it expands the text. William Trevor, however, in *The Story Of Lucy Gault* (2002) delineates the situation with an admirable even-handedness. Distance appears to be blurring previously intractable divisions.

For centuries the average Catholic Irish experienced poverty to which was added defeat, denigration and despair. The disdain, or at best disparaging condescension expressed by the coloniser would create a psychological need to counteract this image of inferiority. Defeat must be turned into victory by eulogising the defeated as heroes. A positive re-telling of events has to justify the

negative outcome. The Troubles were enshrined; shibboleths were a conquered people's talisman recreating their history and identity.

To understand the climate of contempt which set this response in motion it is sufficient to look at sentiments expressed by prominent Protestants who shaped opinions. It explains the force of Irish resentment. From 1833 – 1877 *The Dublin University Magazine: A Literary And Political Journal* appeared each month. Bound into book form it contained contributions from the previous six months. Ostensibly a neutral publication claiming to seek a resolution of differences, its overall tone was anti-Catholic, Protestant and strongly in favour of Unionism. Its founders reflected the conservative views of Trinity College Dublin (TCD). All were critical of the Catholic Emancipation and Reform Bill and all saw themselves as patriotic, loyal Irishmen. Interestingly the question of 'loyalty' and to whom it was owed was never a point of argument: they could not understand the Republican/Fenian viewpoint that Irish people owed their loyalty to Ireland and not to England.

Welch lists the founders of the *Dublin University Magazine*. They include Isaac Butt (who later, as a patriotic Unionist, supported the campaign for Home Rule and defended Nationalists charged with treason-felony)), and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (158). Many contributors and editors preached the moral and intellectual superiority of the Anglo-Irish Protestant. It was these attributes, they claimed, which made it necessary for *them* to wield political power in the country and guide it to a better future. Irish Patriotism, they believed, was demonstrated by researching Irish literature and history; yet confusingly they protested that Irishness was not exclusively rooted in a Gaelic and a Catholic past. To this purpose they tried to demonstrate "how the Protestant mind and heart could analyse and respond to Irish literature and history." This in spite of their contention that *they*

were higher “on the scale of ‘civil evolution’ ” (Welch, 158-159). Surely *this* earlier involvement with Irish literature and folklore was the original seed from which the later Irish literary revival sprang?

Although aspiring to be the source of information for the general public of the “depth, complexity, and antiquity of the Irish past, allowing the sympathetic reader ‘to live back’ in the land he lives in” (Welch, 158-159), it is unlikely that this goal was reached. Irish grandmothers and story-tellers generally continued to repeat the sagas and legends in the way in which they had come down to them while the Anglo-Irish translated them in the mould of English Romanticism.

It was Douglas Hyde (1860-1949) -- first President of Ireland 1938-1945 -- who was the original translator to “provide an accurate English version of the locutions and syntax of the Irish oral narration.” *His* was a true rendition of the folklore into Hiberno-English and the first to include the “actual names and localities of the story-tellers” (Welch, 254-255). But this is not the tone adopted by the writers for *The Dublin University Magazine*; its voice remains overwhelmingly Ascendancy.

In un-indexed copies of the bound magazine from 1853 to 1856, little is found of Hyde’s spirit of true research and interest in retaining the character of original Irish folklore. Nor is there a positive identification with Irish Ireland, especially in its Catholic persona. In the January to June copy of 1853 references to “our British World” occur. This is in the introductory article ‘Our Past, our Present, and our Future’, which boasts of giving “a voice to our literature” (2). It is a very English voice.

The next article ‘Gweedore’ (9-22), quotes Scottish proverbs and castigates Irish peasants as “simple savages” for their “communistic principles” of sharing assets, sorrows and celebrations. The stories illustrating this point are simplistic. They contradict or ignore the ethos of a people whose survival

depends on communal sharing of agricultural activities such as harvesting. An example of Irish "stupidity" is of three farmers who share a horse, each being responsible for the shoeing of one hoof. When the horse became lame for lack of a fourth shoe they have recourse to a magistrate to guide them, but the horse is no longer fit for work. This is patently ridiculous. Any farmer aware of the necessity of shoeing a horse would not neglect one hoof.

Similar misunderstood stories emerge about various peasant communities. The writers seem unaware that these are folktales illustrating the importance of mutuality and forethought and not to be taken as literal incidents. For a serious magazine to offer, as evidence of Irish incapability, such obviously apocryphal stories indicates either a lack of respect for the reader's intelligence or a blinding prejudice. Another instance denigrating the Irish Catholic farmer, in the same piece, likens them to "stupid puffins". They over-breed and fight for the subsequent limited space on "the ledge."

In today's politically correct climate one is horrified at the blatant prejudice, amounting to hate speech, appearing in these magazines of the mid 1800s. Resentment of this prejudice has a long memory. It still appears in anti-English sentiments in recent writing. These old journals reflect attitudes at the time. What is significant is that these abrasive off-side digs are seldom relevant to either plot or character but appear to be no more than social colouring or background in *exactly* the same manner as the references to the Troubles in Irish writing.

Many of the magazine articles are unsigned or appear under initials. 'A Chapter Of Legends', by M.E.M., has nothing to do with old Irish literature or folklore. It is blatant Catholic bashing in the guise of story-telling. In one incident a travelling priest is asked to continue a sermon when the resident priest becomes ill. The performance is brilliant, but a keen-eyed fellow ecclesiastic notices the cloven hoof under the visitor's robe and challenges

him. Why, he asks, does the devil give a sermon against the very sin he normally encourages? The reply is that it makes no difference because "their penitence lasted no longer than till they found themselves at home." This supposedly proves the inefficacy of Catholic confession and penitence (42-49). Reading these articles it is difficult to believe that they were taken seriously or were included among literate, informative studies of a high standard.

Other articles consist of serialised fiction, sonnets, a travel article, as well as literary criticism and discussions of Thomas Moore (95-111). In this latter article, supposedly a literary discussion, the comment is made that:

The detestable politics of the Irish Catholics were Moore's perpetual torment and curse. He felt their meanness and their mischiefs, but yet he never succeeded in relieving himself from them. He thought that in his poetry they formed a part of his inspirations. It seems to us, that they greatly deteriorated his poetry by perpetual allusions, and by his never looking at his proper subject, without some reference, more or less direct, to the insane politics of Dublin and its wretched parties. (103)

Later we are told that "[t]he Roman Catholics deserve very little, and even if they merited all that they ask, I cannot see how it is in the nature of things they should get it" (105): a statement which confirms the injustice of which the Catholic Irish complained and which has been enshrined in songs and legend.

The majority of the articles in the *Dublin University Magazine* are typically academic discussions of classical literature, European history, trips abroad and other subjects of no relevance to intra-Irish religious or political amity. This calls into question the declared intent of the publication and is an example of political double-speak where bashing the opposition is passed off as constructive criticism.

The only article in these particular volumes that had any relevance to current affairs was one entitled 'The Land Question -- Mr Napier's Bills', in which, again, Catholics were criticised in a

footnote on page 122 of the January to June 1853 volume. "It must be borne in mind that before the agitation for Roman Catholic Emancipation was set on foot, religion had practically nothing to do with politics": a remarkable statement in a country where, since the Reformation, religion and politics have been linked. Keating's *Foras Feasa* is adequate proof of this. Priests were blamed for attempting to "interfere" between the landlord and tenant.

In the same article the fact that "English and Scotch farmers are coming to Ireland in a silent but steady stream;" is lauded and the depletion of the "pauper tenants" welcomed (124). This 'plantation' of foreigners was not a cause for celebration among the Irish but the focus of discontent and political agitation. It became one of the major reasons of conflict and violence manifesting themselves as Troubles.

Such writing appearing in magazines would not only have further ignited the flames of agrarian revolt but also confirmed the "planting" of British farmers on Irish soil to the exclusion of the original inhabitants. As such they were tinder for political fires. The apparent praise for the land reforms is overshadowed by the criticism of Irish tenantry. One is aware of a self-consciously 'superior' group patronising those regarded as an ignorant lower class.

As Welch states, the intention of the magazine was to present an attitude of reconciliation but "it retained a radical Protestant streak" (158). The arrest of Daniel O'Connell, fighter for Catholic Emancipation, was an occasion of rejoicing. The magazine consistently descried a moderate approach, calling instead for heavy-handedness in quelling Troubles arising from political and agrarian dissatisfaction (Welch, 159).

Amusingly in the second volume of 1853, from July to December, Alexander Smith discusses Mangan and his poem *Dark Rosaleen*. It is compared favourably with Edgar Allan Poe's

'Ulalume' but there is no acknowledgement of the original Irish *Róisín Dubh*, or its purpose. Significantly the first and last stanzas are omitted because "though very beautiful in themselves [they] give a political or allegorical meaning to what should simply be (what it really is) one of the most passionate and melodious songs ever written" (95). So much for an in-depth examination of Irish literature and history! Even the supposedly stupid and backward Catholics could not miss the irony.

Coming upon 'Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan: A Biography', in the magazine of November 1853 (509-532), one begins to expect some even-handedness. Sarsfield is, after all, an Irish hero and icon whose name is a shibboleth reminding the reader of the country's long fight for freedom. He is eulogised by both sides, the Anglo-Irish claiming him as one of their own – which indeed as an Anglo-Irish aristocrat he was – but focussing on his valour in European battles. They minimise his fight for Irish independence from England. To an outsider these obverse sides of the coin must be confusing. An extract is given from an old ballad as an epigraph to the article.

Oh, Patrick Sarsfield, Ireland's wonder,
Who fought in the fields like any thunder,
One of King James's chief commanders,
Now lies the food of crows in Flanders!
Oh, Hone! Oh, Hone! (509)

Immediately the incorrect rendition of the Irish *ochone* arouses suspicion. It is justified. Such inaccurate rendition of a common expression of woe, which could be translated as 'alas', indicates a lack of veracity and interest in the Irish point of view. It mocks.

The biography is well researched and adequately presented. It seems, however, an unnecessary glee is taken in pointing out that despite bravery exhibited in overseas battles those at home have always been fought "shamefully." The "constant issue of disaster" in Irish warfare is "less to a want of courage than to the absence of unanimity — a fatal and unerring cause of failure,

quaintly but emphatically expressed in a verse of the old ballad, entitled, 'A Farewell to Patrick Sarsfield' " (511). The verse praises the bravery of the Irish troops and ends "But, ochone! they scorned to combinel" Strangely here *ochone* is correctly given. The original was written in Irish in 1691 and this verse is part of a longer ballad. Used in the context in which it is here quoted is a perversion of its original intent. The assumption of Irish intransigence and inferiority is unquestioned.

These were not exceptional occasions of blatantly expressed negative attitudes towards the native Irish. Three years on, in the January issue of 1856 an article entitled 'Missing Chapters Of Irish History. – No. 11' claims "strict impartiality" (55). On the same page we are told that "England proved herself able and worthy to hold the supremacy she had acquired." The inference is that Ireland is unworthy. Hardly an impartial statement! No mention is made that England's occupation of the country was due to previous political machinations and an uneven conquest. Strongbow is hailed as a noble English patriot and hero rather than a mercenary adventurer

A call is made to combine the histories of the two countries, but a footnote some pages later quotes the English king as saying he would "do all that lay in him to *discourage* the woollen manufacture in Ireland" (63). These attitudes, which engendered a continuous stream of similar statements, chafed the Irish unceasingly. They further fuelled resentment against English occupation. It was unforgivable for Ireland's economic collapse to be manipulated.

Because of England's need to eliminate Ireland as a competitor, repeated punitive laws were passed prohibiting her agricultural exports. These measures, from both perspectives, financial and political, created Troubles. Naturally the Irish viewpoint differed. They rationalised that only extreme action could partially alleviate the disadvantages imposed on their trade.

As a result smuggling and defying the law became accepted, even honourable in such circumstances. In the next chapter we look at a fictionalised account of the results of Ireland's exports being prohibited.

There were more moderate commentators in the second half of the 19th century. Away from the rarefied atmosphere of Ascendancy TCD – of which he was a graduate -- W. Steurt Trench (1808-1872) wrote of his practical problems and experiences as a land agent. These were published as *Realities of Irish Life*. No publication date is given but the preface is dated August 1868. The period under discussion covers two major occurrences of Irish Troubles, the Great Famine and the years of the Land League agitations.

Although a Protestant representative of Anglo-Irish aristocracy, Trench gives a generally unbiased picture. He may not agree with the point of view of the tenant farmers but he understands their problems and tries to alleviate them. Responsible for organising the emigration of entire families, or communities, at the landlord's expense, Trench was condemned by Catholic nationalists and clergy for this scheme. *He* genuinely saw it as a humane solution to alleviate both tenants' and landlords' problems arising from the extreme poverty of the destitute tenants. Unable to pay their rent they faced eviction. Not many landlords were generous enough to assist emigration or relieve the plight of their evicted tenants. Trench wrote feelingly of their destitution and misery.

Financially devastated by the potato blight of 1846 (when an extensive area of waste land, which he was reclaiming under potatoes, was affected), Trench understood the peasant farmers' plight. His depiction of the horrors of the Famine is one of the best current accounts. No matter what relief methods were undertaken, and he lists them all, to each the end result is "—but

still the people died.” Of the consequences of the famine he writes:

It hurried on the introduction of free trade. ... It created the Land Improvement Act. ... It drove some millions of people to the other side of the Atlantic, and sent many thousands to an untimely grave. ... It brought over hundreds of Scotchmen and Englishmen, who have farmed on an extended and more scientific system than had before been the practice in Ireland; and, in short it has produced a revolution in the country which has lasted ever since. (105)

And indeed it did. The beginnings of this revolution which Trench succinctly describes in accounts of the Land League agitations are, with his accounts of the Famine, still regarded as reference sources according to Welch (570).

Trench writes very readable descriptions of his encounters with members of the Ribbon Societies. He uses dialect to good effect in recorded conversations and much of the book reads like a novel. There is a build-up of tension with both sad and satisfactory resolutions. Trench's style displays none of the pompous prolixity, so often encountered in the writings of the time, which often make it difficult to plough through the articles in *The Dublin University Magazine*. Perhaps more than the pleasure derived in reading history as anecdote is that derived from experiencing an open mind from the other side of the fence.

Realities of Irish Life was well received by the press, but here again the chasm between Britain and Ireland is obvious in the reviews. The British reviewers — almost to a man — value the book for its contribution to the insights it gives into ‘the Irish character’, which is always regarded as quaint. The ever-present condescension, though not explicitly stated, is tangible. The *Quarterly Review* of January 1869 states:

The whole volume is occupied with the great question and the great difficulty of Ireland, which throw every other question and difficulty into the background — namely, the peculiar character of the people, and their ideas and feelings in reference to the land.

The *Times* of December 24, 1868, refers to the Irish as "this strange people." Is it any wonder that Irish writing responds with anti-English comments?

A peculiarly obtuse criticism comes from the *Pall Mall Gazette* of December 1868, which queries the lack of any "word ... about politics or the Irish Church, and scarcely anything -- a great omission in the volume -- about the priesthood." One of the few reviewers wanting more than the usual presentation of the Irish as quaint characters seems a voice in a wilderness of prejudice. But how can it be oblivious of the huge political implications of this book?

The response to *Realities Of Irish Life* was phenomenal. Within a few weeks a second edition was released. The attraction was not only the interesting and often poignantly told tales of the lives of individual Irish peasants. There was the excitement of Trench's own life endangered, for over a year, by threats from the Ribbonmen agitating for agrarian reform. What makes the book important is that the author, a member of the Ascendancy related to prominent aristocrats with political influence, himself a land-owner, was able to engage the reader with sympathy for Irish peasants. Even if momentarily this response mattered.

The *Tablet* of December 26, 1868 perspicuously summarised the situation:

...the question of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church [Protestant] divided the constituencies of the United Kingdom into two hostile camps. Today, an anxious Cabinet is deliberating how to give effect to the emphatic response which the nation has returned. Through the ensuing session *Ireland, with her wrongs, her sorrows, and her claims*, will be the prominent, if not the absorbing subject which will occupy legislature. The Irish question will be the battle-ground on which every resource of statesmanship will be called forth ... (My emphasis).

Trench's book, though not ostensibly political, had an explosive effect at a time when Ireland was a powder-keg, still

smouldering emotionally from the Famine and aflame with agrarian and religious animosities. He was reviled and praised by individuals and organisation on both sides. The majority of responses were, however, favourable and, even if only in passing, it made some Anglo-Irish Protestants aware of the hardships and difficulties of tenant farmers. Indubitably this insight had political reverberations.

Of thirty-two reviews between 1868 and 1869, in both British and Irish publications, only two are outright criticism. The *Examiner* of February 6 1869 calls it "a bad book, written in a bad spirit, and calculated to have nothing but a bad tendency." The *Cork Examiner*, January 5, 1869 says of the book that "it is a most mischievous one." The reviewer finds the selection, the spirit and the author's occupation offensive and "of a vicious tendency", and bemoans the enthusiastic reception given to the book in England.

One of the most far-reaching reforms brought about by the devastation of the Famine and the Land League agitations was the formation of The Land Commission. The effects of Trench's book on those in authority cannot be denied. If not gaining their sympathies, it at least revealed a situation which was intolerable. The Land Commission was brought into being by the Land Act of 1881, in an attempt to alleviate the destitution to which the feudal system of land tenure had reduced the people. They who had once owned the land now, in abject poverty, worked it for the benefit of landlords.

That the Land Commission was only finally dissolved in 1992 is evidence of the desperate necessity for reform and the long period of time it took to rectify matters. Opinions were sharply divided about this attempt to establish many small farms on large tracts of confiscated land. The rancour and longevity of the debate and the final culmination of the problems revealed by Trench, illustrates the inter-linkage of Irish writing with politics.

Few of the books discussing Irish affairs, either fiction or non-fiction, which followed *The Realities Of Irish Life* in the latter 1800s, caused such a furore of political response. This book was certainly seminal in the formation of attitudes which for decades after were expressed in Irish writing. It is ironical that it still remains a source from which disaffected Republicans quote the horrors of the Great Famine.

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CHAPTER 8

WRITING WRONGS

At a time when the Repeal movement which was suspended by the famine is manifestly reviving; when the establishment of religious equality has removed the old lines of party controversy, and prepared the way for new combinations; when security of tenure, increased material prosperity, the spread of education, and the approaching triumph of the ballot, has given a new weight and independence to the masses of the people; and when, at the same time, a disloyalty in some respects of a more malignant type than that of any former period has widely permeated their ranks, it is surely not unadvisable to recall the leading facts of the great struggle of Irish nationality.

W.E.H. Lecky(1871), *The Leaders Of Public Opinion In Ireland*.

Following on from Trench's more even-handed presentation of the Land Troubles, William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903), was one of the most influential people writing about Irish politics in the 1800s. He was also an optimist and saw the situation, as outlined above, with a positive anticipation which was not to be realised. The plight of the ordinary Irish citizen was *not* greatly improved; he remained the underdog.

Of Lecky's eight volume *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1878-1890), five volumes were devoted to Irish history of that period. In this work he made a point of rectifying the misapprehensions generated by the politically motivated statements of another historian, J.A. Froude, in *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1871-1874).

Froude was opposed to Gladstone's policy of introducing Home Rule to Ireland and to this end represented the Catholic Irish as barbarous Celts, an inferior race incapable of governing themselves. He further castigated the Anglo-Irish for failing to keep the unruly Irish under control. At the same time, however,

and apparently illogically — for surely it contradicts his opposition to the Irish ruling themselves -- he acknowledges the “historical injustice of ranking them as English subjects, thus making their rebellions treasonable” (Welch, 206). Froude’s novel, *The Two Chiefs Of Dunboy* (1889), deals with the smuggling activities resulting from the punitive measures England took to smother Irish exports and trade.

Indiscriminate public insults and contemptuous remarks such as Froude’s, bore bitter fruit. In the literature of the late 1900s one comes across still-smouldering anti-English sentiments. Some are direct but most appear quite casually, often so out-of-context in relation to the story that they can only be seen as a reflection of an ingrained attitude. If they were removed it would not alter the flow of the narrative.

Leonard Hugh (1984) in *Home Before Night* tells how Father Athanasus, conducting a lesson on Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part One*, says that Henry was a consummate hypocrite saying one thing and doing another. “A typical two-faced Englishman: carousing with Falstaff one minute and backbiting him the next” (104). He reports later that “my father ... was anti-English” (125). In his autobiography, *Vive Moi!* (1965: 48) Sean O’Faolain remembers: “When British soldiers (Synge’s ‘walking khaki cut-throats’) fought civilians, they used to unfasten their belts, hold the end with the holes in it and swing the heavy brass buckles into the eyes of their opponents”. Centuries of insults combined with memories of injustice evoke remarks like, “I suppose you could never let yourself be married by an Englishman, could you?” in Frank Delaney’s *The Sins of the Mothers* (1999: 100). The conversation is about who will perform a marriage ceremony, the Canon or the Curate.

Inishowen (2001) is a modern, fast-paced detective story with convincingly real characters and situations. In it Joseph O’Connor, to heighten the tension of the narrative, reveals the

friction and animosities of the ongoing Troubles in Northern Ireland. This occurs as Inspector Martin Dillon passes through a checkpoint into that territory with a passenger who openly expresses her anti-English sentiments. With no relevance to the narrative there are at least seven other anti-English expressions and attention is drawn to signs like "BRITS OUT" (155), "BRITS GO HOME" (356). In Southern Ireland a similar animosity is revealed: "Another man got up and said the reason the sun never set on the British Empire was that God wouldn't trust the English in the dark" (64). This happened at a Communist Party meeting the protagonist remembered attending as a youngster. Anti-English feeling is expressed more strongly in an incident after a concert. The band played the English National Anthem, a young man "clambered on the stage and took the microphone. 'God save Ireland,' he roared. 'And fuck the Brits', came a cry from the back" (113).

The overt function of these examples is to supply a social ambience in which characters are fleshed out and the main events of the story take place. In Edna O'Brien's *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994), an illiterate simpleton, having learnt nothing else at school, remembers he was taught that "their beloved country had been sacked, plundered and raped by the sister country" (50). A couple are disowned, "put out", because the woman married an Englishman (187); another couple discuss hating the English and the resentment their presence arouses (191). Whether approval or criticism of these sentiments is implied is irrelevant to the fact that anti-English comments bred of the Troubles still appear frequently in Irish writing.

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Lecky's moderation in the 1800s did not sweeten the insults or the patronising contempt of the majority of the Anglo-Irish and their

English co-religionist colleagues governing Ireland. He wrote, seemingly to no avail, to rectify Ireland's wrongs. The anomaly of the otherwise resented Anglo-Irish Protestant being either a leader or a guide to Nationalist sentiments and politics is one not frequently encountered in fiction¹.

Confusion evinced in writings about the Troubles of the 1800s were caused by dual loyalties. These can be traced to the secularisation of Irish learning which gave rise to the great bardic families. In the early 1500s there were many aristocratic families, both 'Old English' and Gaelic who spoke only Gaelic. At the end of the 16th century and into the beginning of the 17th many of these educated families had accepted the new faith. How many of these 'conversions' were due to genuine acceptance of the Reformation and how many were socially and materially convenient, or due to intermarriage, has never been determined.

An academic and well-to-do landowner, Lecky analysed what Welch describes as "the ways in which different civilizations express leading moral ideas through culture, laws and institutions." Lecky was the author of many highly acclaimed reference works, but he refused Oxford University's offer of the Regius Professorship of Modern History in 1892. Instead he elected to enter politics and was returned to Parliament in 1895 representing TCD (305).

Among his many acknowledged and well-received publications Lecky was responsible for the anonymous appearance of *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland: Swift -- Flood -- Grattan -- O'Connell* (1861). Although a unionist he was also a liberal and sufficiently fair-minded to acknowledge the wrongs Ireland had suffered and the importance of those leaders who exposed injustice.

Lecky regarded himself as a patriotic Irish Nationalist like Swift before him and wished for an amicable unification of Protestant and Catholic blending as a single Irish nation. To this

end (and unlike Swift who hoped Catholicism would be extirpated), he supported the establishment of a Catholic university. It was a proposition which caused much political uproar and jockeying with the usual resultant outpouring of strongly voiced opinion in press and pamphlet. This was another occasion when politics and religion combined to influence Irish writing. Lecky's voice was probably the most rational in all that tumult.

In 1871 Lecky was prevailed upon to reissue his anonymous work and this time did so under his name. It was a "revised and enlarged" version of the original with an eighteen page Introduction examining "the leading facts of the great struggle of Irish nationality" (vii). It is probably *this* work of his which had the greatest and longest-lasting effect. Most certainly it was one of the accumulating forces of Irish writing which helped to mould the stiffening resistance to England's occupation of the country. It, among others, kept the Troubles firmly in both the literature and the consciousness of the Irish people. Ironically it is not for his moderate views that he was quoted by later historians with Republican sympathies, but as a source of horror stories relating to England's subjugation of Ireland, particularly economically. A typical example is Seamus MacManus' (1921) 737 page threnody of Irish woes, *The Story Of The Irish Race*.

Lecky's new edition carried the further *cachet* of a renowned and respected historian. His measured reporting obviated any suggestion of rabble-rousing and was therefore all the more influential. This work is not only important in its own right, it had an influence on other writers which continued right into the 20th century.

Though he calls Lecky "the pro-British historian", Seamus MacManus (1983), writing with less objectivity, quotes Lecky extensively to justify his presentation of Ireland as a martyred country (492 & *passim*). MacManus' long popularity strengthens

my contention that it is the emotional, rather than the objective, account of the Troubles which gains favour and makes deep impressions. Such emotive narrative forms of history have so imprinted both the Troubles and their shibboleths into the Irish psyche that they emerge -- even into the 21st century -- as if occurring recently.

MacManus writes history with all the drama of fiction and uses the reputable work of the master to prove and fortify his emotional manipulation. Unlike the measured and objective reporting of the original, MacManus adopts a very partisan tone. Deliberately, and surely with political intent, he fans the flames of old animosities. It is a perfect example of the emotionalism surrounding much writing about the Troubles. It has not only kept the memories and resentments alive from generation to generation but has increased them. As the grievances are repeated they acquire greater luminance; defeat becomes martyrdom and the shibboleths develop and grow in effectiveness.

Of particular relevance is the response of the huge Irish diaspora in America in the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s. Like many exiles they clung to the emotional, and often sentimentally false, visions of 'home'. Their revolutionary political fervour often surpassed that of the homeland, particularly after Independence. It remained a market for politically inflammatory articles and songs long after these became rather an embarrassment in Ireland. Joseph O'Conner (2001) expresses this through Martin Dillon as he criticises the American Ellen for her outspoken anti-English and pro-Republican comments at the border. "Jesus beautifull The fourth green field. And gobshites in America snivelling into their green beer about it" (367). The remarks are heavy with associations and references which, if not shibboleths, are equally inaccessible to a reader unaware of the political connotations involved.

An example of MacManus' provocative technique is when he writes of Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill, believed to have been poisoned by the English. We are reminded that "they poisoned Red Hugh O'Donnell in Spain, a short time before". Chapter 50 starts "For, Owen Roe, the hope of Ireland, was not destined to stay the bloody whirlwind that now entered Ireland for its final devastation." Claiming that Ormond was jealous of O'Neill, MacManus refers to him as "the abhorrent Ormond". All this in one paragraph on page 422 of a book purporting to be a history "of the more prominent peaks that rise out of Ireland's past" (unnumbered first page of Foreword).

Of the Cromwellian invasion MacManus writes.

But Ireland's sufferings, great and terrible as they had been, were far from ended. True, she had quaffed her chalice to the last bitter drop, but it was ordained she must now lap up the poisoned dregs. (428)

Throughout the book the dreadful doggerel of the sentimental patriotic verses is frequently quoted. Adjectives more suited to melodrama than history are everywhere. In Chapter 55 'The Suppression Of Irish Trade', each point made is valid, but the detail and the injustice are presented in a way guaranteed to evoke an emotional reaction. Resentment, even outright anger, keeps the torch of the Republican cause glowing, if not leaping into destructive flames. It is easy to lose objectivity and be swayed when familiar stimuli evoke responses integrated into ones very identity in childhood.

The Rev. E.A. D'Alton, another admirer of Lecky, considers him "one of the greatest historians of this age" and praises his fairness and "judicial impartiality" (491). Ironically D'Alton himself exercises no such impartiality. It seems a typically contradictory phenomenon among Irish writers claiming no partisan bias that they thereupon proceed to demonstrate how incalculably wrong are the opinions on the other side. In his *The*

History of Ireland: From The Earliest Times To The Present, in six volumes ending in 1908 (no publication date but c.1910), D'Alton's approach is judgemental and emotional.

He claims open-mindedness but his strictures are voiced in the tones of a Catholic Priest. His observations -- based on what he considers correct Christian behaviour when reporting Irish history -- is further evidence of the imprint of religion in Irish writing. In Volume one when discussing the early forms of Irish contractual marriage in the 12th century Father D'Alton, although admitting that customs differ, makes the following comment, "a contract having the sanction of religion, even though bound up with what was unusual and irregular, is entirely different from those illicit connexions which ignore religion altogether and are founded exclusively on the uncontrolled impulse of the passions" (187).

What he is in fact saying is that the custom of cohabitation upon a contract to marry is considered acceptable if the contract is sanctioned by his Church, but totally evil without it. The old chiefs who ignored the tenets of *Roman Catholicism* -- as opposed to the Irish form more tolerant of the old customs -- are condemned. Irish Catholicism of that period is likened to a vessel which had become "a battered hulk, aimlessly drifting on the sea" (187-188).

D'Alton's political message is equally strident as he uses familiar images and shibboleths. When discussing the speaking of Irish as the mother tongue he makes the point that "in the National schools children were punished for speaking it" (Vol. 6, 1879-1908: 497).

Anti-English sentiment is again evident when D'Alton describes the writer William Carleton (1794-1869). "Cradled in misery and oppression he was often made to feel that he belonged to a subject race and to a despised creed" (482). What is not

added is that Carleton converted to Protestantism and became an active and vociferous critic of his old religion.

Aware that facts are incomplete the reader may lose confidence in D'Alton's reliability. One is amazed at the naivety and the self-consciousness with which politics or religion infiltrated almost every subject in what claimed to be a serious history of Ireland. His remarks on the Young Irelanders were, at least, accurate. Of them he said that they were not poets "but inspired journalists. They write for the day, often to influence the public opinion of the passing hour" (486). Strangely he abstains from commenting on their politics, but adds that as an historian Mitchel's work was "disfigured by prejudice and partiality, ... by a fierce hatred of England" (486). This is a case of the pot calling the kettle black if ever there was one.

D'Alton completely omits to mention that John Mitchel (1815-1875) contributed extensively to both journalism and the Repeal Association for Catholic Emancipation. His newspaper *The United Irishman* combined his own revolutionary writing with what Welch terms James Clarence Mangan's "apocalyptic poetry" (367). When to this was added the socialistic writings of James Fintan Lalor (1807-1849), who founded the Tenant League and promulgated a no-rents policy, Mitchel was arrested. These were all writers from whose pens cascaded torrents of words about old and current Troubles. Their names, their activities and their writings entered Trouble literature and gave rise to more shibboleths.

Mitchel was convicted and transported on the charge of treason-felony. During the five years of his imprisonment he wrote the remarkable *Jail Journal or Five Years in British Prisons* (1854), which, when he escaped to America, was published and well-received. It is regarded as "a classic of Irish writing for its forceful Carlylean prose" (Welch: 368) and is another commended and meticulous example of Troubles writing.

With so much to tell, and so little told, one wonders if D'Alton's *History Of Ireland* was no more than a collection of facts in which to disguise his own religio-political message. Irish Political writing is a quagmire to traverse. Is D'Alton following in Sheehan's footsteps and dispensing dollops of religious philosophy under the guise of another genre?

The redoubtable and influential John Healy, Archbishop of Taum, commends the first edition. The one from which I am quoting is the third edition. In the preface to the second edition (included in my copy, with no page numbers given), Father D'Alton points out that though the religious differences only arose towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII, "the race hatred existed from the first." But, he claims, it was "the contempt of the English for the Irish, which was even more galling than their hate."

Here again the point is made by a respected religious leader of opinion and one who was read for many decades. In the first half of the 1900s, if not until later, D'Alton's volumes of history were in the libraries of most Catholic schools. (As recently as 2001 some sets were removed from local Catholic school libraries to be replaced by reference books conforming to school curricula.) *These* were the opinions taught by grandparents and parents and passed on to the next generation, even in the diaspora. It is the residue of them which is washed up into words when writers respond to the ripples of subconscious patriotism.

In his critical comment on Anglo-Irish attitudes D'Alton sums up one of the major reasons which kept the Troubles appearing in Irish writing: contempt stings. Surely there are no better defence mechanisms than denial and transference? The repetition of the old tales of heroism minimises continuous defeat and humiliation. The ability to recall your country's valiant struggle by a single word, is not only a way to create a psychological 'comfort zone', but also strengthens the ties of community. 'We' are solidly ranked against 'them'. Long after the initial causes disappeared,

and Ireland had become a modern state, the habit was still ingrained. The defensive mechanism of the shibboleth had become a national tic.

The three recent autobiographies quoted above are examples of the familiarity and importance of the Troubles as part of an Irish writer's ethos; their shibboleths continue to appear in fiction. Although this is occurring to a lesser extent than it did twenty-five years ago, it is still a familiar emotive theme with many fiction writers. Faction utilises the Troubles less manipulatively as background *and* event as is evidenced in Roddy Doyle's incomplete trilogy *The Last Roundup*. The recent second book, *Oh, Play That Thing*, is reviewed on pages 25-28 of *Books Quarterly*, Autumn 2004. On the other hand the number of non-fiction books analysing the causes, the organisations, the personalities connected with the Troubles, particularly in the 20th century, appears to be increasing. Serious studies are reconstructing a mythologised past.

D'Alton laments that it was not only due to English perfidy that the Irish lost their country but also because "they were undisciplined, inferior in arms, incapably led; their chiefs quarrelled, and thought not of their country, but of their clans" (vii). Legends and songs help to ease the pain of accepting *this* aspect of history.

It was easy to bear grudges when historians, sanctioned by the Church, reminded the Irish that the Land problems had created congestion and poverty. It was easy to blame the coloniser for all their woes. They were told that their country, which had been taken by the invader, had landlords with up to 4000 acres "used for cattle and sheep only", with nothing left over for the tenant farmers, the original owners of the land (D'Alton, 472).

In his final volume D'Alton continues to rub salt into the wounds. He tells of how Sir John Barrington "writing of Ireland about 1770, and writing of what he knew from personal

knowledge", despised his tenants "as Papists and treated them like slaves." This behaviour, D'Alton explains, is because "he was a Protestant" (477-478). History appears never to have been a matter for objective writing in an Ireland slowly building up towards its ultimate battle with England (in the South).

The oratory and aspirations of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, and other Protestants' last speeches from the docks, identify them as Irish Nationalists. Despite this religion continues to be recognised as the divisive factor as originally claimed by Keating. This attitude is largely due to associating the social division with the religious one which, in many cases, can be attributed to writing about politics in the manner of Seamus MacManus and Father D'Alton.

Lecky did not write to inflame rebellion. He stated that "[n]o reasonable man who considers their relative positions can believe that England would ever voluntarily relinquish the government of Ireland" (xv). He foresaw that a separation of the two countries would only be brought about by civil war. The Irish saw it differently. To them any battle against the English was that of a conquered and invaded people justifiably fighting to regain control over *their* own country. As they were not fighting their own it was not civil war. The tragedy is that when partial independence eventually came it did bring the Civil War which Lecky had foretold.

Revealing the innate conviction of the Ascendancy Anglo-Irish that the country could never survive without their governance Lecky postulates that the bloodshed attendant upon separation would

...drive from the country much of its intelligence and most of its capital, and would inevitably and immediately reduce it to a condition of the most abject misery. (xv)

Such opinions come strangely from a man who is aware that the country is badly governed, and who continuously draws his

reader's attention to this fact. He admits that "the existing form of government is notoriously opposed to the wishes of the people"; points out that officials sent to govern the country are not only inexperienced but totally unfitted for the work. He goes so far as to claim that "on account of their characters [they] would have been tolerated nowhere else" (xvi-xvii). Repetitively one encounters this strange self-contradiction when Irish politics are discussed, particularly from the stance of the Anglo-Irish Nationalist. It seems as if their dual-loyalties create a character bifurcation which allows two personas to exist.

Like many others of his class and position Lecky hoped that Catholic Emancipation would result in an equality which would dissolve the bitterness and result in "the benefit of real union" (xxiii). He felt that with increased prosperity not only would the division between rich and poor become less obvious but that the schism between Protestant and Catholic would disappear. Considering the suffering resulting from the Penal Laws and years of oppression, which Lecky recounted, it is not surprising that his hopes for a melding of the two peoples was ignored by writers like MacManus and D'Alton. They and others like them made the Troubles a cherished artefact of Irish writing. Relevant or not, it appears the Troubles must be mentioned if only to acknowledge their existence. This pervasiveness is strangely reminiscent of lapsed Catholics, now agnostic, still blessing themselves out of deeply ingrained habit. It may mean nothing but it is still a habitual part of life.

As Lecky demonstrates, writing of the Troubles was no new phenomenon of the 1800s. Discussing the politically motivated writing of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Lecky claims that "he was capable of a very deep and genuine patriotism; and a burning hatred of injustice and oppression was the form which his virtue most naturally assumed" (44). He also acknowledges that this fair-mindedness did not include Swift's attitude towards the rights

and privileges of his own church. These he wished to retain exclusively.

Our attention is drawn to Swift's, by now familiar, pattern of reviling Catholicism whilst condemning English suppression of Ireland. Lecky's summary is one of the most concise and shows, as many others do not, how deeply Swift was involved with anti-English-governance politics in Ireland. It also clearly demonstrates the continuity of this political attitude over centuries, each significant writer being a link between the past and the future.

Swift made no attempt to object against the "infraction of the Treaty of Limerick"², and hoping that "the very existence of the Catholic worship in Ireland ... would someday be destroyed by law", yet castigates England's suppression of Ireland's trade (Lecky, 44-48). Although seeking parliamentary freedom for Ireland he continually speaks against the emancipation of Catholics.

In a notorious series of pamphlets, published anonymously, Swift objected to a wide range of England's policies in Ireland. He urged that only Irish products be used in order to hit back at England's restriction of Irish exports. Typical of his satirical and humorous style he suggested that everything from England, "except its coal", be burned. In the same article he urged landlords to "lighten the rents" (Lecky, 45).

In the brouhaha over Wood's halfpenny patent³, Swift's series of four letters condemned this transaction. The decision had been taken without consulting the Lord Lieutenant or the Irish Privy Council, and was, Swift claimed, "another signal proof that Ireland had been reduced to complete subservience to England." These letters were written in the character of a draper and are known as the 'Drapier's Letters'. In what Lecky refers to as "the famous 'Fourth Letter'," Swift deplores:

the general weakness and subservience of the people. A people long used to hardships lose by degrees the very notion of liberty; they look upon themselves as creatures of mercy, and that all impositions laid upon them by a strong hand are ... legal and obligatory. (47)

Swift agrees with the opinions in *The Case of Ireland's being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (1698), by William Molyneux (1656-1698)⁵. They both maintained that the Crown's powers in Ireland should be limited, for Ireland was by rights an independent and free nation. As further evidence of the dual loyalties of the Anglo-Irish Swift was, at that time, a government official. The Dean's famous claim that "government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery", became a catchphrase for the rebellious. His letters were backed by pamphlets and street ballads which were not only full of wit but were sufficiently "homely" to be accessible to "the very lowest class" (Lecky, 45-51).

This form of political agitation, in both oral and written form, available to all and inviting repetition, flooded the country. Politics reverberates through Ireland in inflammatory language, spoken and written. Starting with Keating this gathered momentum until, in the 1800s, there was a veritable star-burst of politicised words cascading over anyone prepared to be illuminated by their content.

The long-standing interest in Swift's political writings and their relevance to Ireland's history is attested by Maire and Conor Cruise O'Brien's *A Concise History Of Ireland*. Originally published in 1972 it was republished in 1991 and gives a detailed report of Swift's actions and influence in the cancelling of Wood's patent. Once more Swift's statement about Ireland's situation being "the very essence of slavery" is repeated (83). It is a popular image found in the re-telling of Irish Troubles under English rule.

Lecky said of Swift that "[t]he political influence of his poetry [the street ballads] was immeasurable, and for his support of

popular grievances he has long been an idol of the Irish" (51). That this was so at the time is evidenced by no informer revealing to the authorities — who were offering an award for the information -- that the writer of the ballads was none other than the Dean of St Patricks. For a country with a long history of Informers causing the abortive collapse of rebellions and the capture and execution of leaders, this was exceptional.

It was later that animosity was aroused in people who did not realise that Swift's 'A Modest Proposal' was a satire at England's expense. Swift was castigating English lack of organisation and assistance during famine times. The fact that many of the senior government officials, such as the Lord Lieutenant, spent most of the year out of Ireland was a sore point with Swift. The offending passage was often presented out of context to deliberately inflame political unrest. Marina Warner in *No Go The Bogeyman* (2000) places into the category of 'adult ogre' Swift's suggestion "with impassive rationalism the simple economic solution that the Irish eat their babies" (7). The Irish were not amused, and England paid no attention to the devastation of poverty and famine among those for whom they were, as the government, responsible.

From Molyneaux to Swift to Lecky to D'Alton and MacManus the re-telling of Ireland's Troubles continues in an unbroken stream. It enters fiction. Cromwell's depredations of Ireland in the mid 1600s remains an ever-fresh subject. F. Frankfort Moore (1855-1931) in 'The Comedy of The Old Love: A Story Of Nell Gwyn', refers to "stout Irish lads — who were sold to the plantations by Cromwell" (161, v. 11-12 *Masterpiece Library of Short Stories*, c. 1910).

Nearly a hundred years later, in what is an otherwise light-hearted account of personal travels, Pete McCarthy reminds his readers of this particular aspect of earlier Troubles. *The Road To McCarthy* (2002) dwells on Cromwell's expulsion of around 50,000 Irish people, as slaves, to Barbados and Montserrat. And this is

picked up in the review of the book by Kieran Falconer in *Play* of the 31 August-6 September, 2002. Repetition has made Ireland's Troubles so much a part of Irish writing that they appear and reappear in the most unexpected contexts.

It was due to Swift's continuous unrelenting attacks and exposures of government oppression, Lecky believes, that matters started to change. Did constant reiteration, initially a way to fight back, become so established a habit that it continued after its purpose was served? Or do the Irish simply enjoy the litany of their sorrows? There is a certain frenzy in this passing on, from generation to generation, a recitation of defeat, humiliation, exile and loss.

The English Parliament's laws and proclamations intending to effect a systematic destruction of Ireland's cattle and dairy export trade, then of the woollen trade which supplanted it, was a major factor in political upheavals at the time. Swift's scintillating satire and irony attacking British policy, was never quite reached by the many other writers dwelling on the continuous grinding down of Ireland's every attempt to attain financial stability.

Whilst the Irish objected the English commented in a seemingly continuous stream of written words, thus confirming the truth of situations against which complaints were continuously voiced. D.J Taylor, in his biography *Thackeray* (1999), quotes a review of J. Venedey's *Ireland* appearing in the *Morning Chronicle* of 16 March, 1844. In this William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), wrote "Poverty and misery have, it seems their *sublime*, and that sublime is to be found in Ireland" (182). Obviously the agitators had good reason to parade their Troubles in print and this they continued to do.

Without individually analysing each of the writers following Swift, Trench and Lecky, it is interesting to glance briefly at some of the links in the chain of those who have focussed on the

Troubles. It continues, unbroken, well into the 20th century and beyond Ireland's war with England and the Civil War.

¹ It is interesting to see, as mention of the Troubles becomes less inflammatory, how the subject matter moves from the analyses of non-fiction into the fields of the historical novel. Its background presence in fiction may take long to disappear for its roots stretch deep into the past.

² Treaty of Limerick (3 Oct 1691), *inter alia* supposedly guaranteed Catholics "such religious freedoms 'as are consistent with the laws of Ireland' or as they had enjoyed under Charles II". Irish Protestants, wanting the "total destruction of Catholic political power" resented the terms of the Treaty and ignored them (S.J. Connolly: 316).

³ Wood's Halfpenny Patent: The manufacture of these had been given to a private individual owing to the influence of the King's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal. The vociferous debates surrounding this nefarious and corrupt action which, it was feared, would flood Ireland with £100,800 of useless copper coins, raged from 1722 to 1725. The patent was eventually rescinded. Swift's *Drapier's Letters*, as well as political insubordination in Ireland won the day. Connolly contends that this incident was another "episode ... in the development of patriotism" (598).

⁴ This is not an unusual tone in Irish writing. I have seen Tourist Guides printed in the 1930s to 1950s commenting on the brutality and injustice of the English. Such comments are part of a description of ruined churches or battle sites.

⁵ A popular apocryphal legend has it that Molyneaux's book was burnt by the common hangman on the orders of the English Parliament.

* * * *

CHAPTER 9

MORE LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Every educated person knows that religion has long since become entangled with nationalism and irredentism all over the globe.

A.T.Q. Stewart. *The Narrow Ground: The Roots of Conflict in Ulster*. (1989: 3)

Stewart, another reputable pro-Union, Northern Ireland professor of history, presents incontrovertible statements which read well as epigraphs in a Republican-biased study. *He*, however, uses the same facts subtly to introduce negative connotations about the native Irish, their characteristics, tendencies and politics. This is a technique frequently encountered, on both sides of the political divide. An unchallengeable fact is declared and then used as 'proof' of the intransigence of the opposition.

The sentence following on the quotation above is, "Why then, when the heathen rage so furiously together, do the people imagine a vain thing?" (3). A strange remark in what is self-proclaimed a serious, non-partisan study intending to find a solution to the problem of the current situation in Northern Ireland. We are shown only the savagery of the native Irish. Isolated incidents of agrarian violence during the Troubles of the Land League period in the middle and late 1800s are linked with the more recent Troubles in Northern Ireland. They prove, he maintains, the incorrigible and unalterable barbarity of the wild Celt.

Stewart reflects the slow building up, decade after decade in the 1800s, of opinions repeated and embellished, until they emerge to be automatically reproduced in the 1900s. The remarkable thing is that, *on either side*, these identical 'facts' and the contradictory opinions they have created, are entrenched tenets of faith.

In addition to histories and memoirs there was, during this politically inflammatory period, no shortage of investigation and

comment by reporters from newspapers sent to the Troubled areas. Some, such as Bernard H Becker (1881) admitting to being "the Saxon", claim neutrality by their very ignorance of the situation to which they have newly arrived (226). His *Disturbed Ireland: Being the Letters Written During the Winter of 1880-81*, is in the crisp narrative style of a good journalist who knows how to supply facts laced with human interest.

Becker was the 'special commissioner' of the *Daily News* and his descriptions of the miserable conditions of the peasant farmers confirm their grievances. He writes of "the miserable cabins, the like of which on any English estate would bring down a torrent of indignation on the landlord" (6-7). This misery of poverty was utilised by rebel leaders to spur dissidents into action.

The Land League, founded by Michael Davitt in 1879 and supported by the then uncrowned 'king' of Ireland, Charles Stewart Parnell, created more dramatic incidents enshrined in Republican history. When Parnell and other organisers of the League were imprisoned in the notorious Kilmainham gaol in 1881 the tenants withheld rent. The Land League was declared illegal because it encouraged this defiance.

During this turmoil Becker wanted to interview Captain Hugh Cunningham Boycott (1832-1897), appointed agent in 1873 to Lord Erne's County Mayo estate. The journalist found the Captain and his wife clumsily herding sheep with the equally amateur assistance of an "intelligent bull-terrier". They were accompanied by "two tall members of the Royal Irish Constabulary in full uniform with carbines loaded" (13-14).

Becker had been unable to get any assistance from the locals in finding this eponymous agent and farmer, proscribed by the Land League. "Not a soul in Ballinrobe country dare touch a spade for Mr Boycott" (16). Land agents and farmers taking over the land of evicted tenants were sent to Coventry, isolated in a

state of siege without supplies or services. Becker gives a fair account of the problems on both sides.

The body of Troubles history and stereotypes grew from oral legends as well as from accumulating written evidence. Grandparents and parents of the 20th century writers and politicians, born before WW II, transmitted this history with its attendant emotions. Cullen's account of his grandmother's tales illustrates this. Reporters drew attention to manifestations of Nationalist sentiment and the retention of a national identity that had not disappeared. In Co. Mayo in the 1880s country people are still referring to places by their "native name" instead of the new English-influenced ones on the ordnance map (Becker, 18-19).

Brian Friel's play *Translations* first published in 1981, one hundred years after Becker's comment, echoes this situation. The play is a poignant and telling account of the changing of Irish names into something unintelligible to the locals. The segments of the chain linking 20th century writers to the original events stretch unerringly from these early reports. And lurking in Friel's play is the shadow of the future IRA, the men who plan secret guerrilla resistance to the occupier.

Whether of 'Saxon' or Irish source the information creates a stage on which the Troubles are presented in the next century. Becker shows that the anger over injustices of the past -- evictions of thirty or forty years ago -- is exacerbated by the attitude of the English or Scotch farmers. He speaks of the "resentment caused by a prompt, decisive, and perhaps imperious tone." Throughout the book he reiterates that evictions over the last "third of a century and the depopulation of large tracts of country have filled the hearts of the people with revenge, and rightly or wrongly, they not only blame the landlord but the occupier of the land" (20).

Seventeen pages later Becker is still dwelling on the fact that both the illiterate of the community as well as "the local Press"

speak with one voice about the injustice of the old evictions and “point out the graveyards which alone mark the sites of thickly populated hamlets abolished by the crowbar” (36-7). Eviction is a powerful shibboleth: the resultant helpless destitution is recalled in Troubles legend with a profound resentment of the injustices of English rule.

Whilst being meticulously fair in presenting the landlord’s case, the material logic of which appears self-evident, Becker provides emotional copy. It is the type of proof on which future Troubles writing builds its patriotic case. He tells how the people complain of being lonely.

[T]heir friends have been swept away and the country reduced to a desert in order that it might be let in blocks of several square miles to Englishmen and Scotchmen, who employ the land for grazing purposes only, and perhaps a score or two of people where once a thousand lived — after a fashion. (37)

Religion enters the equation as it must do with all writing about Irish Troubles. In commenting on a peculiar affinity of the Irish for remaining where they were born, clinging to miserable little plots on the mountain which barely sustain life, Becker says, “in this astonishing perversion of patriotism they are supported in unreasoning fashion by their pastors (37).

Becker’s reports, whilst claiming neutrality, yet make a case for subsequent Nationalist political writers to prove the Troubles arose from long-standing injustices. Remarks such as “it was ... not unnatural that advantage should have been taken [by landlords] of the famine” are inflammatory. They also prove the verity of accusations. Injury is compounded when landlords let the contested property to hated foreigners for less per acre than it would be let to the locals. The preference is for “one responsible tenant”, an English or Scots farmer, who would pay a pound an acre against the “twenty-five and thirty shillings paid [by] the starving peasants of Connaught.” This was perceived as

“deliberate cruelty framed to drive away the people who were willing to stay and pay their high rents of old” (Becker, 38-39).

Newspaper reports of local incidents were carried throughout the country and helped to fuse separated agitators. They were used later as examples of the heartlessness of landlords and English officials who allowed thousands to die of hunger. It was all grist to the mill of Trouble writing where much is made of the heartbreak in families torn apart by forced emigration. Sad songs of exile appear in the many books of Irish songs and ballads. (See References). In Ireland ‘Emigration’ was a potent shibboleth; it still evokes old, painful associations.

The actions and attitudes of landlords and agents were held against the entire Anglo-Irish community, even those not of the landlord class. Resentment includes their English colleagues and officials enforcing eviction, seizing livestock or other possessions for debt. These people were rapidly becoming the focus of an increasingly organised resistance and growing hatred which would eventually terminate in the Easter Uprising of 1916 and the subsequent Anglo-Irish War. This development can be charted through the writings of ordinary people as well as those of the more renowned. These are the stories still being retold by the older generation as reported by Margaret Hickey in *Irish Days: oral histories of the twentieth century* (2001). The book is full of personal memories of evictions, of Maud Gonne’s assistance during hard times, of the depredation of the Tans. Each chapter is accompanied by the photograph and a potted history of the person telling the tale. They confirm the journalists’ reports.

Becker states clearly that an “undying hatred [is] felt in this part of the country [Connaught] towards those who ... after the famine determined to get rid of a population which the soil has shown itself unequal to support.” It was not only the agitators of the Land League and the various Ribbonmen organisations who expressed this hatred. The local newspapers also agitated. They

used the same soubriquet used by the people in referring to landlords, such as the Lucans -- "exterminator." This family had the distinction of the title passing on from generation to generation, the various members being distinguished as "the old exterminator" to the current "exterminator." The export of the produce of their cleared lands was another point of anger for it was exported during the famine "to appease the appetite of John Bull" (46).

Both newspapers and agrarian agitators made much of the fact that huge tracts of Irish land were held by absentee landlords. This complaint became part of the litany of the Troubles and their shibboleths. It remained a point held against the English, even after Land Reform, and a rallying call for Republicanism. Parnell, fighting in Parliament for Home Rule, urging tenant farmers to withhold rents, adds his name to the list of patriots whose names evoke an era of Nationalism growing aggressive. As with much Irish political conflict the rent war, celebrated in song, calls on one of Ireland's female personae. "We'll pay no more Rackrents, / Says the Shan Van Voght." Becker found this sufficiently interesting to repeat the entire twenty-four lines of verse (48-51).

The residue of anti-English attitude which appears *en passant* in fiction of the 1900s, even when no longer referring to its initial cause, is firmly rooted in the writing of the 1800s. Its accretion from works discussed in the last two chapters picks up a snowballing effect. From evidence provided by writers supporting the other side, to the flamboyantly partisan reports of people like the Sullivans, reportage of political friction was accumulating. The Troubles proliferated in Irish writing.

In their report on The Manchester Martyrs, in *Speeches From The Dock*, the Sullivans effectively built a case against English justice. The book contains twenty-seven other similar speeches including those of Theobald Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet. The final case covers the trial of A.M. Sullivan and John Martin, tried

for sedition following their protest against the verdict and hanging of the three Manchester Martyrs. This protest took the form of a peaceful 'funeral' service with three empty coffins representing the men hanged and buried in an unsanctified English prison yard. Thousands attended and the Irish throughout the diaspora conducted similar ceremonies. In English colonies they were arrested and gaoled to the accompaniment of more words written about the Troubles.

The lawyer A. M. Sullivan's defence at his trial reads with all the perfervid Victorian verbosity of which he was capable. *It expressed then and it still expresses the logic of the Republican in a divided Ireland.* For this reason and because the roots of much subsequent political Trouble are firmly entwined with these sentiments, I quote fully:

Sedition, in a rightly ordered community, is indeed a crime. But who is it that challenges me? Who is it that demands my loyalty? Who is it that calls out to me. "Oh, ingrate son, where is the filial affection, the respect, the obedience, the support, that is my due? Unnatural, seditious, and rebellious child, a dungeon shall punish your crime!" I look in the face of my accuser, who thus holds me to the duty of a son. I turn to see if I can there recognise the features of that mother, whom indeed I love, my own dear Ireland. I look into that accusing face, and there I see a scowl, and not a smile. I miss the soft, fond voice, the tender clasp, the loving word. I look upon the hands reached out to grasp me – to punish me; and lo, great stains, blood red, upon those hands; and my sad heart tells me it is the blood of my widowed mother, Ireland. Then I answer my accuser – "You have no claim on me – on my love, my duty, my allegiance. You are not my mother. You sit indeed in the place where she should reign. You wear the regal garments torn from her limbs, while she now sits in the dust, uncrowned and overthrown, and bleeding from many a wound. But my heart is with her still. Her claim alone is recognised by me. She still commands my love, my duty, my allegiance; and whatever the penalty may be, be it prison chains, be it exile or death, to her I shall be true. T.D., A.M., & D.B. Sullivan. (349-350)

There is a mistrial. The jury, unable to come to a joint decision, allows John Martin to walk away a free man, but A.M. Sullivan is brought up on another charge and ends up in

Kilmainham for six months. The country seethes. Another link is forged in the growing chain of incidents linking the past to the future writers of the 20th century. Professor R.V Comerford considers Alexander Martin Sullivan "one of the foremost propagandists of Irish nationalism" (in S.J. Connolly, 528). As such both the man and his writing must be recognised for their role in influencing subsequent Trouble literature.

By September 25, 1877, A.M. Sullivan is writing the Preface to the ninth reprinting of his memoir, *New Ireland: Political Sketches and Personal Reminiscences Of Thirty Years Of Irish Public Life* [s.a]. He uses the term Troubles in referring to the Land Leaguers conflict with the landlords after England introduced another Coercion Bill in 1876. Sullivan demonstrates that this ill-judged bill did not succeed, as intended, in controlling the criminal element. What it accomplished was the incarceration in gaol of scores of perfectly respectable professional men and Irish members of parliament. The resentment and animosity this caused was added to the already simmering anti-England disaffection.

If one could measure, in terms of politically explosive potential, the cumulative contribution of words, then the Sullivan brothers, both Alexander Martin and his older brother Timothy Daniel, must be ranked among the foremost contributors to Irish Nationalist agitation. A.M. exposed the farce of the Union Parliamentary system. He made it clear how the House of Lords repeatedly tossed out any measures passed by the Commons to alleviate Ireland's dire poverty and feudal system of land ownership. Many of the absentee landlords responsible for the agrarian Troubles were members of the Lords. Some had not attended the house for 25 years, but when Irish affairs were to be voted on they were trundled in on wheelchairs to defeat any hopes that Ireland might have for fair treatment. Sullivan aroused ire

and forged another written link with the Trouble writing of the 20th century.

By the time Gladstone eventually managed to push through the Land Act it was too late. Rebellion and bloody revenge were afoot and the moderates could not control the long simmering anger of the people. Incidents were attributable to the disregard of English parliamentarians who dismissed famine in 1878 as not serious. Troubles erupted upon Troubles, new ballads and tales linked names to new shibboleths.

Besides writing about the Troubles A.M. Sullivan tells many stories of interesting personalities. His *New Ireland* is a source of invaluable information about the social organisation, class structure and mores of Ireland at that time. It reads informatively and movingly.

* * * *

CHAPTER 10 ENTANGLED HISTORY

“[T]o the people who live on the island of Ireland, north and south, the history of their country is not just a rote of long-past dates, but a lively reality, in integral part of daily life.” Ian Hill, *Ireland* (1993).

The influence of almost continual political agitation in the 1800s, and that of the Irish writers commenting on this, extended into the next century. It will come as some surprise to learn that A.M. Sullivan, co-author of *Speeches From The Dock*, was regarded as belonging to “those of the more moderate school of politicians”. This was the opinion of Richard Pigott (1883: 84). In *Personal Recollections Of An Irish National Journalist* he blames Sullivan for the demise of the ‘Phoenix National and Literary Society’. This organisation was taken over by James Stephens (1821-1901) as a cover for the Fenians or IRB, which he established in 1858. As both the Church and the government forbade secret societies, and as Sullivan abjured violence, he published warning articles in the *Nation*.

According to Pigott these articles “referred pointedly to the Phoenix society — describing their perils, and demonstrating their supposed demoralising effects” (84). The situation that subsequently arose typifies an aspect much lamented in patriotic songs, poems and prose. It haunts Troubles literature. Instead of finding ways of putting aside their differences and joining forces to achieve the mutual aim of freeing Ireland from English rule, energy and organisational skills were wasted on animosity. Reams of angry words were published. The patriotically named *Irishman* and *Nation* fought their own acrimonious war of words. Pigott explains that:

[t]he Fenian party naturally resented Mr Sullivan’s interference with their projects, not merely because it was calculated to so focus public attention on the fact that secret societies existed that the Government could not, were they ever so well inclined, refrain from taking

steps for their suppression, but because their objects and real character were so vaguely stated as to amount to actual misrepresentation." (84)

Pigott then quotes from the *Irishman*, of which he was the proprietor (and main journalist), to the effect that the report in a "Dublin weekly journal of national politics" was a libel. Claiming that honest men, loyal to their country had been insulted, Pigott highlighted a greater harm, that of the Church becoming alarmed.

This is another example of the influence of religion not only on the politics of the country but on the torrent of recriminatory words following this dissention. There was an even more devastating practical side-effect which Pigott illustrates in his *Recollections*. From the summer of 1858 Catholic clergy had been preaching against secret societies. It was a brave Catholic who would forego the comfort of absolution, and this influenced the actions of Republicans.

The Church's influence was far-reaching. When Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa (1831-1915) (the founder of the original Phoenix group taken over by the Fenians), wished to get married he could not obtain the necessary absolution of confession prior to the ceremony. Because of his well-known political views he was refused by three separate clerics. Pigott quotes from O'Donovan Rossa's book *Prison Life*. He was asked, "Do you belong to a secret society?" On his negative response he was further quizzed. "Do you belong to any society in which you took an oath?" Rossa, honestly, replied "I do." On being asked to reveal the oath he answered, "To free Ireland from British rule." The friar who was questioning him then warned "You must give it up." "I must not", Rossa replied.

Pigott comments that "if Ireland is the 'priest-ridden' country it is supposed to be, there was one Irishman, at least, who would not yield obedience to clerical dictation when he considered he has right on his side" (83). But not all were as brave — some would

call it foolhardy, risking his immortal soul — or politically single-minded as Rossa. The split loyalties of the Anglo-Irish was here replicated among Nationalist Catholics, but with greater pressure. The choice was not between two secular paths but between the comforting familiarity of their spiritual home and an urgent patriotic imperative¹.

The *Irishman's* support of the Fenians is a typical example of how the Troubles became a focus in Irish journalism of the period. It also illustrates the influence of religion on both politics and writing in Ireland. Again Pigott quotes from the newspaper on the subject. This is a statement of intent and policy; it is important.

It would seem that there is a political organisation in Munster We learn from unquestionable sources that it has no connection with Ribbonmen or midnight conspiracy: that it contemplates no interference with landlord or tenant relations except such as might result from the establishment of Irish national independence, that it has no 'oaths of blood,' that it countenances no 'dagger law,' but prudently or imprudently, wisely or rashly, its members believe that, by its means, they can help in bringing back the independence of Ireland. We fear the wholesale denunciation of all forms of secret societies by well-meaning amiable persons misleads and confounds the people, and makes them blind to the line where morality ends and crime begins. A secret society for the amelioration of Ireland is no crime. (85)

The mention of Irish National independence was regarded as an inflammatory and seditious remark by the authorities. Men had been incarcerated for less when condoning interference with the relations between landlord and tenant. It is noticeable that the tone of openly expressed Nationalism has become louder, less covert. The many short-lived papers that served the Nationalist cause must have made it difficult to control forbidden expressions of nationalism. As one proprietor was gaoled and his paper closed, or passed on to another with similar views (as was the case with the Sullivans), another would take its place. It was an exciting time to be an avid Nationalist journalist.

Pigott's 447 page book is packed with reports of Nationalist activities, the captures, trials and condemnation of leaders and writers. It also deals with the splits within the 'brotherhood', treachery and double dealing. Not in the book, and of interest, is that later Pigott himself was found guilty of fraud and forgery.

A series of forged letters published in the *Times* in 1882 linked Parnell with terrorism. This was an underhand attempt to derail Parnell's moderate approach to change through legislation. Parnell's call for *all-out* endeavours to bring about Home Rule was twisted out of context.

The incident illustrates the complexities of Irish politics and the way events were bounced back and forth from newspaper to newspaper. Here, as before, the weapon used was the written word. The peculiar aspect is that a Nationalist who advocated violence used the accusation of violence against a man known for his moderation. Well into the next century page upon page of argument susurrated with analyses and interpretations of exactly what Parnell meant by 'all-out effort'.

As Parnell was another of those iconic fighters for Ireland's self-determination, this particular argument was interpreted from many perspectives. The uproar in Parliament and throughout England led to a commission of enquiry which put the entire Nationalist movement on trial. No link between the movement and terrorism could be established but, as with most scandals, the taint of something not quite right lingered. Pigott was found guilty of the forgery: his repeated incorrect spelling of a word, 'hesitant', was revealed during cross-examination. This provided sufficient proof that he was the author of the letters. Managing to get out of the country before judgement was passed, Pigott committed suicide in Madrid.

The ferment of the Troubles has entangled history with contradictory and often inexplicable actions or statements by self-professed patriots. This has made good copy for writers. Welch

draws our attention to the fact that "as the archetypal traitor of the Irish Parliamentary Party [Pigott] features in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, where the misspelling is employed recurrently as a code for bad faith in HCE, who is characterized at one point as being 'unhesitant in his unionism but a pigotted nationalist' " (472—473). Only Joyce, the non-patriot, could so wittily have turned a heavily dramatic ream of words, about yet another Irish political fiasco, into a joke.

The Troubles have a propensity for getting into fiction. In *The Two Chiefs Of Dunboy: An Irish Romance Of The Last Century* (1889), the novel by J. A. Froude mentioned earlier, political actions set the scene. This book has evoked protests and criticism from people spread as widely apart in time as Standish O'Grady, Oscar Wilde, Austin Clarke and Conor Cruise O'Brien. Here again an Anglo-Irish representation of Troubles continues to evoke indignant response. In this case it is remarkable that the commentary has spread over so long a period.

Froude's novel, set in the 1770s, covers a period when England had placed strict embargos on the export of Irish agricultural and manufactured goods. This caused major political upheavals and conflict which strengthened the will of those wishing to plan and organise a permanent break from England. Troubles flared and a brisk smuggling trade developed between France and Ireland. Such is the background to a story where the hero of the tale, Colonel Goring, is presented as the epitome of all the virtues embodied in an upstanding young English settler. Morty Sullivan, shown as the debased descendant of an impoverished aristocratic Irish family, is a smuggler breaking the law.

The Irish are drawn as duplicitous, ignorant, crude and barbaric people. Their activities and conversations are presented in an insultingly condescending and patronising tone. And yet, here again, we find that peculiar situation where injustice to the

Irish is openly presented by a pro-British writer. To a modern reader it seems an illogically contradictory attitude. A major cause of political conflict and Troubles is, apparently, viewed as normal and acceptable:

The English woollen manufacturers, afraid of being beaten out of the field if the Irish were permitted to compete with them, persuaded the Parliament to lay prohibitory duties on Irish blanket and broad cloth, which crushed the production of these articles. Not contented with preventing the Irish from working up their fleeces at home, they insisted that the Irish fleeces should be sold in England only, and at such a price as would be convenient to themselves. The natural price which the French were willing to pay, was three or four times higher and the effect was a premium upon smuggling, which no human nature, least of all Irish human nature, could be expected to resist. (4-5)

Always that derogatory sting in the tail, the 'polite' barb. If it is intended to rankle it succeeds.

It seems incomprehensible that a writer showing injustices can, at the same time, write insultingly about the people subjected to these. Yet, in an incident where an officer allows his horse to trample the foot of a demonstrator, Froude describes the scene that follows with the utmost contempt for the Irish: The "corps from the College" used sticks to quell the crowd because "young Anglo-Irish gentlemen would have disdained to employ nobler weapons on a race whom they despised." A few lines down he speaks disparagingly about "Irish cunning" (257).

Not only in outright remarks, but in a more subtle use of conversations and comments Froude paints the 'Hibernian' as corrupt, willing to sell his country for bribes. He claims that the politicians deliberately set up a cry of injustice in order that they may be paid to keep quiet. If ever a book could be said to represent everything that was wrong with Ireland because of the administrative, economic and political control of England this would be it, and yet it purports to show the inadequacy of the Irish to govern themselves.

The repetition of this schizoid pattern in Irish writing of the Troubles could explain why, to keep sane, the shibboleths have been thrown up as a barricade against uncertainty, insecurity and projected inferiority. Within the comfort of their familiar security the mind is protected against a complexity of contradictions that can only lead to insanity. The psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1974: 90), contends in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study In Sanity And Madness* that when the disparity between reality and what is *stated* to be reality -- particularly in an authoritarian situation -- becomes too great, the mind may escape into another dimension in order to preserve itself. Put bluntly, in some situations a split from reality -- schizophrenia -- is a 'sane' way to react. That, or denial of the situation.

There is no question that many of the patriotic and rebel songs, the legends and aggrandisements of the 'martyrs', functioned, during the darkest days of hopelessness, as a therapeutic form of denial. More than that, they kept morale buoyant. The shibboleths had a similar function. Later they became so much part of an easy reference system that, as the strong emotive content decreased with a comfortable and stable lifestyle, they remained a useful form of verbal and literary shorthand.

Turning to a lighter form of fiction *The Irish Monthly: A Magazine of General Literature* (collected in its twenty-second yearly volume of 1894), provides notes on new books many with a religious theme. The editor, and founder of the magazine, was Father Mathew S.J. Russell, which would account for the strong Catholic tone of many of the articles.

There are discussions of the 'Pan-Celtic Movement', and others by a "Historian" analysing the Irish Literary Revival. The names of writers discussed include those of Canon Sheehan, Yeats and John O'Leary (263-269). The influence of religion on Irish writing of this period is particularly strong. Many popular

publications were under the auspices of the church, and it appears that good Catholics were guided in their choice of reading by what the Church approved.

The influence of Canon Sheehan, who is frequently mentioned by other writers, stretches up to the end of the 20th century as is demonstrated by Michael D. Higgins. In his collection of poems *The Betrayal* (1990), he has an empathetic and moving account of an alcoholic priest. In 'Requiem for a Parish Priest' he writes of a fallible man who has not been able to live up to his original ideals. Retired because of his weakness, his life seems aimless and pathetic. "Even if it was in the snug he sang / Or wandered through sections of Canon Sheehan" (17-18). The intention of the poet to criticise, albeit gently, shows that the Church is not all-powerful as once it was. It is no stronger than its weakest member, but, there is no denying the strength of an influence, such as Sheehan's, stretching across a hundred years.

Continually, in Irish writing, we find this interlinking of past with present. It is an entanglement which produces a circularity of theme and ethos. We live both in the past and in the present with the ubiquitous dual-loyalty that appears to be, if not a national characteristic, then, at least, a literary trope.

The Irish Monthly has numerous instances of politics, religion or the Troubles appearing in the stories. By now, it appears, these have become seamlessly intermeshed with literature, not only as a subject for discussion, but as part of the general background against which Irish life takes place. Politics appear as part of literary criticism. On page 224 we are told that "Dr Hyde inculcates 'the necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland'."

An article entitled 'A Sunday In Dartmoor', by P.A.S., obviously an Irish Catholic cleric, tells of "a poor Irish prisoner" recognising him in the dark "with that extraordinary instinct by which ... an Irishman knows a priest anywhere, and under any disguise or darkness" (80-88). Such 'facts' absorbed into the

cumulative background of received knowledge are the source from which shibboleths are derived. Like religious beliefs these are unquestioned: *faith* in their truth is implicit. It is from this they gain their power.

During the 1800s and early 1900s written reports on mistreatment and injustice meted out by England accumulated. In popular journals poorly written stories were often acclaimed as they fed the public the Troubles propaganda for which it was, apparently, hungry. P.A.S's article utilises trite clichés to good effect. The priest may not see a Fenian prisoner until the man asks for him. The implied criticism is not directed against the political prisoner but against the English system which, because of a technicality, keeps a priest away from a member of his flock. At night Irish prisoners "when they turn in their sleep, ... you hear the chains rattling under the bedclothes" (80-88). Here again politics and religion fuse to create inflammatory legends. Everything connected with English rule turns into potential fuel to ignite further Troubles.

Eleanor Foster shows that the female perspective does not differ markedly from that of the male, despite the condescending attitude toward women in the late 1800s. She comments in 'Off The Beaten Track', how "what is called the Irish question [is] discussed from all standpoints, the Irish character criticised, none too mercifully, the criticism in turn, resented none too mildly". The wish of the Irish for their country is a "longing to see brighter days dawn for her", but they "have grown sick in the waiting" (432-435). Such an underdog, cowed, dispirited image can only be negated by a grandiose recall of valour. Hope must survive to keep intact a bruised national identity. *This* is the function of the shibboleths.

A story by Frances Maitland (504-521), serves to demonstrate the prejudice suffered by co-religionists. It also keeps resentment smouldering. There is no talk of reconciliation, of meeting or

mutual communal interests. Not only has religion influenced Irish writing, but this writing has, in its turn, influenced perceptions. An apparently innocuous, and not very well-written story, can deepen the chasm, strengthen the shibboleths and be the source of much ensuing political strife.

It seems impossible to evade politics in Irish writing of the period. They intrude in a story about what was originally a pagan practice. In 'Puck Fair' by M.C.D. there is displayed "a piece of linen with the inscription ... 'Home Rule! The Land for the People'. So that we see the political question has its place even here among the mountains [of Kerry]" (504-521). There is no doubt of the tension between the lines. It is passed on to the reader.

Another publication of 1894 carries a far less subtle and more deliberately inflammatory political message. Written during the winter of 1887-1888 by Patrick J.P. Tynan, it was, a publisher's note informs us, "originally prepared ... for circulation as a secret document amongst the Revolutionary Organisation in America" (v). The first copy of *The Irish National Invincibles and Their Times* was initially more than half a million words in length. The "English Edition With Appendices And Index" is "curtailed" being only 591 pages of tightly-packed small print (v). Next to Tynan's name on the title page is, in brackets, ("Number One"). This refers to the fact that he was the 'number one' wanted person for whom the authorities had offered an award of £10,000. It was a huge amount for that time and represented the revolutionary challenge he presented to English rule in Ireland. As "the commanding officer of the military INVINCIBLES in Dublin city" his crime was involvement with the planning of the Phoenix Park Murders (vii).

Tynan's language is both floridly descriptive in the popular manner of the time as well as patriotically aggressive. In places it is also surprisingly lean and to the point. Interspersed with

pleasant, and at times rather sentimental, descriptions of nature, he describes British rule, and all who represent it, as "myrmidons of a foreign power". The Irish employed as officials are "West British parasites". Of the instalment of the new Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish who was murdered with the undersecretary, an Irish Catholic T.H. Burke, in Phoenix Park, Tynan says,

Earl Spencer was hailed with acclamations as the British vice-king, and stood commissioned by foreign usurping authority to dispense what they term law and justice and also whatever imprisonings and hangings he deemed necessary to keep the unruly Irish obedient to British sway. (256)

The attack on the British officials is condoned. Tynan sees the situation as one of warfare and throughout the book lists the atrocities performed by English troops against the Irish. These are justification for retaliatory acts by the Invincibles who have taken over armed resistance when the Land League was banned. Enumerating horrors is typical of this type of writing of the Troubles. It lifts Irish resistance to a sacred duty. The influence of such repeated 'evidence' has been phenomenal and responsible for the most negative stereotypes spurring on the activists.

You have seen your leading merchants and business men go to gaol without any form of trial or accusation, even young ladies sent in a despotic manner to prison cells. Your people have been shot down and bayoneted as it pleased your alien rulers; but then — they were mere Irish that were slain. Nine women were shot down and stabbed near Belmullet by Gladstone's Royal Irish, but this was in furtherance of British law; and be ye obedient to those in high places, oh patient Christian countrymen! Old Mrs Deane was shot in the throat and slain. Ellen McDonagh, a simple peasant girl, was stabbed to death. And yesterday, but yesterday, seven little boys in Ballina were shot and stabbed by Britain's Bashi Bazouks; one a tender child of twelve years, expired at his father's feet. (259)

This has all the features of the rallying call of a committed patriot tried beyond endurance — or the polished technique of a professional rabble-rouser. Tynan was both. The language is volatile, individuals are named to give the appearance of a factual report (which it may well be), women and children are presented as the victims. A brilliant piece of propaganda, utilising facts to emotional effect, *this* is exactly the type of emotive call which entrenched the Troubles and their shibboleths as conditioned responses in Irish writing.

One of the most enduring anecdotes of English brutality is that of the mother shot while sitting at her doorway, feeding her infant at her breast. Tynan adds to the familiar image another small son, at the mother's knee. Nobody checks the veracity of individual anecdotes. It is not important to do so because it is the *spirit* of the message that speaks; and, if a hundred such incidents are conflated and distributed in their most telling version, what matter? It is the message that counts.

Perhaps it is easy, at the distance of over a century, to criticise not only the literary style but the melodramatic content of such appeals. We may find them manipulative. That was *exactly* their intention, to arouse and keep aroused the spirit which would, eventually, achieve freedom from foreign rule for twenty-six of Ireland's thirty-two counties. Over the last several chapters the accumulative and interlocking effect of the political writing of the second half of the 1800s has been shown.

Tynan's book is typical of the situation at the time. There is cross referencing and criticism or acclaim of other writers. Sometimes this is confusing. An example of this is when Tynan commends Froude who speaks so insultingly of the native Irish. The approval is, however, tinged with irony, which, with bitter satire Tynan uses extensively. Froude, who considers himself Irish, though with an Anglo attachment, shares Tynan's dislike of Gladstone against whom Tynan fulminates. It is on this point

that he earns approval (150, 423-424). My enemy can be my friend when we share a mutual and greater enemy.

Going into the 20th century the fault-finding with both Church and political party continues but expresses itself with more decorum, perhaps, than that used by Tynan though with equal bitterness.

¹ Those sufficiently undaunted to continue in their Fenian path were, probably, the thin edge of the wedge which eventually prised loose the adamant hold of the Church on the Irish psyche. It helped those fearful of their spiritual status that there *were* priests who supported and approved the Fenian's fight for Ireland's freedom. Many others, without this comfort, had to make a grave decision and those who ignored the Church's strictures opened a fissure that later became a haemorrhage of disobedience. For some this entailed excruciating guilt with all the attendant psychological distress and maladjustment this implies.

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PART IV
RELIGION & POLITICS

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CHAPTER 11
RELIGION, IDENTITY AND RESHAPING
INTO A NEW CENTURY

Religious behaviour was very deep rooted in the Irish person whether that person was a believer or not. The whole society was totally imbued with the Catholic ethos. To be Irish was to be Catholic, and it still is to a certain degree. ...it is a kind of emotionally held notion. It is something very deep in the identity of the Irish person.

Ben Lander *Irish Voices Irish Lives* (1997).

The Church, whose discipline had hitherto been unquestioned, becomes the object of criticism. Not the faith itself, but the caretakers are stingingly accused of neglecting the needs of their parishioners. For a Catholic to do this so openly and aggressively is something new. Michael McCarthy's *Priests And People In Ireland* (1903), sold out 16,250 copies, and was reprinted three times, between August 13, and December 6, 1902. Not until an even more damning publication in 1999, Mary Raftery's and Eoin O'Sullivan's *Suffer the Little Children*, did such open and attested criticism of the Church recur in book form. Both books caused doubt and a loosening of the Church's implacable control of Irish Catholic minds and actions.

McCarthy's book followed on the 1901 publication of an anonymous novel entitled *Priests and People*. This was a criticism of the Catholic Church as well as of the politics of conciliation. Welch (481) maintains it was also intended as a counterattack on Catholic novels such as Rosa Mulholland's *Marcella Gray* in which tenants and landlords are shown to overcome their problems. Although the author was not identified, this work, bristling with political policies, was obviously that of an anti-Catholic. In the form of fiction it paints barely-human Catholic tenants as

ingrates, incapable of responding to kindness and betraying this with violence. Accusations were not substantiated by facts.

McCarthy's book is important. As a practicing Catholic his is not an attack masquerading as a novel but a serious work worth consideration. It had a direct effect on political actions. Devout Catholics who had hitherto regarded God's representatives on earth, the priests, as god-like and hence infallible, began to question. There was no sudden change, no outward rebellion, but doubtful words appeared more freely in conversations and in print. Questions were asked. *More people gathered the courage to defy the Church's proscriptions of certain political policies and organisations.* McCarthy had no overt political intent but because politics and religion in Ireland were fused it was inevitable that ripples passed from one to the other sphere.

The Church and its supporters responded. Battles were fought in print; letters proliferated in newspapers and church magazines, but the clerical campaign was more subtle. Writers like Canon Sheehan, in the form of fiction, repainted the old, comforting picture of Mother Church hand-in-hand with Mother Ireland. Nonetheless what McCarthy had to say was avidly absorbed.

In a well-presented volume of 624 pages of text, including 37 photographs and illustrations, he compares figures and facts showing the extravagant cost of churches with the dearth of charitable expenditure by these parishes. While villagers lived in dire poverty, conditions for the clergy were, in comparison, luxurious.

Photographs of grandiose churches and cathedrals, with soaring spires and magnificent stonework, contrast with those of peasants huddled in squalor below. The cost of building specific new churches and their upkeep is carefully annotated and set

against the unmitigated and unrelieved poverty of many poor unemployed Catholics. Not only the information, but the attitude displayed by the writer is a revelation. Here is a Catholic who takes the Church to task and he is not struck down in punishment! It gives courage to the politically truculent to defy the Church's prohibitions.

McCarthy gives figures correlating an area's poverty with the numbers of clerical institutions in the vicinity and the individuals they support (440-441). The proliferation of clerical buildings, and expenditure on maintenance, McCarthy shows, *has a direct political reaction:*

...the poor Kilkenny people ... protesting it was death to them, ... returned a Parnellite member in 1892, *in defiance of the priests*, finding courage in the polling booths. But the priests continued to bleed them and smother them with stones [new unfinished churches]. And the priests have since made their own of the whole Irish party, Parnellites and all, reducing it into subservience by their subscriptions to the parliamentary fund, leaving the last state of Catholic Ireland worse than the first. (440-441, My emphasis)

Times are obviously changing when, as McCarthy states, "in the opinion of many Roman Catholics, myself included", conflicts between the political aspirations of the people and the Church, are so stridently voiced (xii-xiii). Here the problem of dual loyalties reappears with the concomitant psychological cost in stress and anxiety. This insecurity of identity and self-image is reflected in the fiction of the 20th century. It is another example of the influence of both religion and politics on Irish writing.

Later, and seemingly contradictorily, McCarthy quibbles about the advantages of "the most intense Nationalist hopes for Home Rule". When an area such as Mecklenburgh Street, in Dublin, is a hotbed of degraded poverty, prostitution and crime, *this*, he claims, should be the focus of the Church's attention and

reforming zeal, not politics. While people are individually depraved a people cannot be elevated, he posits, adding that no political morality exists "on a basis of individual immorality" (307). An argument of this nature is another example of fusion in an era when the inseparable connection of religion and politics concerned Irish writers. From whatever angle it was approached the arguments continued. To what extent should the Church be involved in politics and policies of sociological reform? Or should it confine itself to spiritual matters? A furore of writing and retort resulted.

Newspapers such as the *Freeman's Journal* September 20, and the *Evening Telegraph* of September 26, 1901, were drawn into the argument. Their reportage of the kidnapping of young girls, for immoral purposes in the stews of Dublin, is quoted as a verification of the abandonment of the poor by the Church. McCarthy cleverly utilises press reports. He weaves current news items into his evidence using both familiar as well as less well-known data. Information and 'fact', albeit unproven, have always had a happy marriage in writing. Irish writing is no exception.

McCarthy lists the Church's crimes and he quotes statistics to further prove his case. He shows how the population of Kilkenny was reduced from 17,717 in 1861 to 2356 in 1902 because "its industries are dead." At the same time, however, within the city radius are "15 Catholic institutions, 115 priests, 17 monks, 26 theological students, 235 nuns, 111 male teachers, 210 female teachers: total 724." The children attending industrial schools bring the "clerical army" to a total of 1000 people. And this, McCarthy points out, is without including "novices, postulants, and subsidiary religious people" in the various institutions (440-441).

McCarthy ascribes much of the increased impoverishment to newly introduced customs and Church levies and gives examples which one confirms when cross-referencing to memoirs of the period. His figures, he claims, are derived from the *Irish Catholic Directory* (1902) edited at Maynooth¹. There, no doubt, they are published by the Church as a source of celebration, proof of the proliferation of the faith and its outward trappings.

The recurring pattern of a fact being used to 'prove' two different viewpoints is repeated. One 'proves' the Church's success, the other its failure. The psychological effects on unsophisticated people must have been confusing. Such existential insecurity easily leads to the adoption of comforting icons as a part of one's belief structure. The shibboleths, and what they represent, provide short-cut references to an ideology which bolsters the community it serves.

Irrespective of McCarthy's motive — if he has one other than bringing much needed reform — he reveals severe sociological problems arising from the Church's methods and institutions. He illustrates that the products of Church-run industrial schools and laundries emerge totally cowed and uneducated, unable to make decisions or run their own lives. They are added to the army of inadequate persons reduced to penury. The written word, here stronger than any pike, is causing an ancient edifice to creak. It is interesting to compare similar revelations in Raftery and O'Sullivan's recent book which was a bombshell, the reverberations of which are still resounding.

McCarthy's proposed reforms are political as well as religious. More important is his contribution to self-examination of the extent to which a community allows its political values to be determined by priests. His research and conclusions have, as

both political and religious statements, had a considerable influence on Irish lives and writing².

There was open and strident criticism of authority as religion and politics moved in to the 20th century. 1904 was a bad year for State as well as Church when it came to fault-finding. Michael MacDonagh traced the letters of the Earl of Hardwicke, the first Lord Lieutenant of Ireland after the enforced Union of 1800. Lecky had unsuccessfully searched for them in the Irish archives. He concluded they were destroyed and said so in his *History Of Ireland In The Eighteenth Century*.

Not only did MacDonagh have access to these letters, found in "the deed-room of ... the seat of the Hardwicks" and subsequently sold to the British Museum, but he was allowed to obtain further information from "secret papers in the Home Office." They revolved around the Insurrection of 1803 organised by Emmett and were marked, "Ireland, 1803. Most secret and confidential" (vi-vii). MacDonagh was the first to make them public in a book entitled *The Viceroy's Postbag* (1904). It is in his copious and detailed explanatory paragraphs between the letters, as well as his footnotes, that the most fascinating information is found.

In presenting a long self-congratulatory letter by Sir Richard Musgrave, author of another *History of the Rebellion of 1798*, MacDonagh explains that this member of Parliament was avidly anti-Catholic. He also quotes the following anecdote about Musgrave from the *Personal Sketches and Recollections Of His Own Times* by the reprobate Sir Jonah Barrington (?1760-1834). This is yet another example of Anglo-Irish writing being turned against itself to be used to the benefit of Troubles writing:

Whilst he was High Sheriff for the County of Waterford an old man was sentenced to be whipped at the cart's tail for some political offence, when, the executioner not being

in readiness, ... [Musgrave] took up the cat-'o-nine-tails, ordered the cart to move on slowly, and operated himself with admirable expertness, but much greater severity than the hangman would have used! Thus did he proceed to whip the old man through the streets of the city, and when the extreme point was reached, and he was scarcely able to lift his arm, he publicly regretted he had not a little further to go. (231)

Such disclosures coalesce with the growing body of fact and legend compounding histories of the Troubles. Already it reverberates with antipathy towards the English and each new revelation increases this. Old grievances are brought into the new century and fused with fresh resentments. Whereas previously it was pikes that were sharpened to retaliate, now words are honed. And the glory of it is that it is so often the enemy's own words that can be turned back upon himself. This gives to Trouble anecdotes an added vibrancy.

More interestingly we learn from MacDonagh the names of prominent and influential people who were bribed to use their authority and connections to gain support for the Act of Union. Corruption in government circles was rife; favours, appointments and money were promised freely. Judging by the Viceroy's correspondence not all the promises were kept once the Act was passed and he was left to juggle many of the claims. Disloyalty and treachery, coming to light a century later, was still bitterly received. The flames of political passion were fanned anew. The dirty tricks department of the government was unmasked with all the expected indignation. Words flowed on political platform and on paper.

More productive of analysis were the names of informers, who, until these documents were made available, had remained a mystery. History had to be rewritten. Lord Edward FitzGerald was betrayed by a "leading member of the United Irishmen in

Dublin". The informer, Francis Magan, a TCD graduate and barrister, was in financial difficulties and succumbed to the blandishments of Francis Higgins, proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*. This paper, once supportive of the opposition, became, under Higgins, a government mouthpiece.

The Viceroy's correspondence shows that Higgins was paid £1000 for the information leading to Fitzgerald's arrest and fatal wounding on 19 May, 1798. Whether or not he gave the entire amount to the traitor is not disclosed. What we are told is that Magan left a substantial sum of money to his parish church "for perpetual Masses for the repose of his soul (n366-367). Religion combines with politics yet again in writing of the Troubles³.

The repeated involvement in politics by newspaper proprietors of that time seems more than coincidental. It is evident that political ambitions or convictions led several lawyers either to start or support newspapers. We are fortunate to have detailed and prolific accounts of the Troubles fought as political battles in the newspapers. These and the numerous memoirs of proprietors and journalists, activists and organisers of secret and open associations, all became grist to the mill in the accumulating body of legends associated with the Troubles. It becomes clear how both message and history were successfully passed from decade to decade without losing an iota of the initial fervour. Embroidered and altered these accounts might have been, but they were the existential truths of those who carried them on to the next generation and the new century. And they were popular.

Seventy Years Of Irish Life: being Anecdotes and Reminiscences by W.R. le Fanu may not merit a mention in *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, but it ran to an eighth impression between 1893 and 1904. The author, younger brother to the better known writer, J.S le Fanu (1814-1873), was eighty-

seven years when he wrote this, his first and only book. His memories stretch far into a strangely different past. Born in 1816 he remembers duels being fought in the park near his childhood home. He also remembers and tells us of the priests' extra fees against which McCarthy wrote. "The greater part of the income of priests was derived from weddings", for there is always a collection made for "his raverence". According to le Fanu the amount raised at the wedding of one farmer's daughter was "over thirty pounds" (299). This was a huge amount at the time, exceeding many people's annual income.

Being able to corroborate statements in reports through comments in memoirs is interesting. This period is particularly rich in such cross-over verifications. The grievances giving rise to political dissatisfaction are found everywhere, often where least expected, as in memoirs of the Anglo-Irish such as *Seventy Years Of Irish Life*.

Although le Fanu says, in his preface, that he has never taken part in politics and has no intention of writing about them he begins the second chapter with an account of how FitzGerald's dagger came into his possession. The name alone is political dynamite and when we are told that it was "the dagger with which Lord Edward FitzGerald defended himself so desperately at the time of his arrest", political sensibilities *are* invoked (17).

Emma le Fanu, the writer's mother, an admirer of FitzGerald, had stolen the dagger from Major Swan who "had succeeded in wresting" it from Lord Edward. She did so because she felt the weapon did not deserve to be in the custody of the captor of a man so admired. On returning home with the dagger hidden in her stays, she and her sister unpicked a seam of the feather bed and "plunged it among the feathers." There it remained for the twelve

years in which she slept upon it. Taking it with her when she left home it became her "companion in all the vicissitudes of life" (18).

Not only a charming story, but another example of the dual loyalties of the occupants of the Big Houses of the Ascendancy, this anecdote illumines the strong feeling attached to the defeated heroes of Irish patriotism. On the very next page le Fanu tells of the Sheares brothers, who "with twelve other leaders of the insurrectionary movement, were arrested" due to a "base and cruel betrayal" (19). Members of the United Irishmen, barristers, and friends of his family, they were "tried for high treason", convicted, and executed on the 14th of July, 1799 (19).

What, of course, makes this story resonate with rightful indignation, the very marrow of the shibboleths, is that the informer, a friend and trusted companion, was also a member of the United Irishmen. Literature and shibboleth target Informers. Incident by incident, anecdotes following one upon another, decade after decade, the legends of the Troubles become part of the nation's persona. With no axe to grind, no ambition to fulfil, these memoirs of an old man at the end of a long life are germane to the evidence. Considering these revelations 'not political' one realises to what extent politics become subsumed into the everyday life passing from the 19th into the 20th century.

Mentioning successful peace efforts made by priests to end inter-clan rivalries and pitched battles, le Fanu regrets that an equal peace did not extend to the North. There "Orangemen v Roman Catholics" who fought in the past "are now as ready for a fight as then, and are seldom long without one, and are expected to have a still livelier time if a Home Rule Bill should pass" (37). We are in the middle of the most vociferously argued political move of a century, and it is automatically combined with the

religious question. Without a doubt the two are inseparable in Irish writing.

Besides memories of odd customs and superstitious beliefs, talk of the fairies and the beautiful countryside there is always violence skulking in the background of le Fanu's memories. The clan 'wars' were, in his time, still much part of country life and often the cause of severe injuries or death. They would break out on fair days and at funerals when an individual from one large extended family group would challenge a member of another. As much a part of the festivities as the ostensible reason for the gathering, they were, apparently, enjoyed by all, except the injured.

Le Fanu claims that the reason for success in stopping them was a plea, by local priests, to the warring factions, *that Irishmen should be united against the common enemy -- England* (33-39, my emphasis). Not political? Not if it had become so much a part of daily life as to be accepted as the norm. Throughout these memoirs, spanning so many years, the existence of a strong anti-English sentiment is reiterated. It was an accepted fact of life. In 20th century fiction the anti-English sentiment is still evident, albeit perhaps with more irritation and dislike than virulence.

Le Fanu reports that, in their neighbourhood, what had once been friendly relations between Protestant clergyman and Catholic Priest was, in 1831, "suddenly and sadly changed when the tithe war ... came upon us" (45).

Although these memoirs were intended as amusing tales highlighting the eccentricities or foibles of individuals, the majority seem set against a backdrop of conflict. A Priest fiercely denounces from his pulpit the payment of compulsory tithes forced on Catholics in order to pay the upkeep of the Protestant Church of Ireland. His challenge to the landlord, who collects the

tenants' taxes, and the subsequent action, when the priest's own cow is seized, makes a revealing tale. It highlights the chasm between two cultures which share many problems. We see the smug self-assurance of the Anglo-Irish reducing the Catholic Irish to an amusing and often bothersome sub-species, local fauna. We gawp with incomprehension at the unawareness with which the writer, all unconsciously, allows political dynamite to emerge as he thoroughly puts the simple Irishman in his place (58-71).

Confusingly, as with most political matters in Ireland, the initial agitation against tithes had been from the Anglican landlords. They resented competing with their church for a share of the tenants' meagre cash resources. Yet it was from the peasants, and from objecting priests, as le Fanu tells us, that bailiffs removed livestock. When the sale of these beasts was advertised the tenant farmers were organised and forbidden to purchase the animals, no matter how cheaply they went. Not a penny was to be gained from them for the coffers of the Established Protestant Church.

When pasture land was effectively excluded from tithing the landlords evicted tenants from cultivated areas, allowing these to revert to pasture. An additional tithe was levied on potatoes in some areas. It was the peasants who suffered most from this, so the Ribbon Societies became active again, emotions erupted, new resentments were added to old.

Le Fanu tells of companies of "Highlanders", sent to keep order, marching to the strain of bagpipes playing 'The Campbells are Coming'. The "Tithe Wars" of 1830-1833 erupted and more bloodstained Troubles were added to the ever-increasing legend of Ireland's suffering (58-61).

The apparent lack of sympathy by the landlords, for the plight of the Church of Ireland in collecting its tithes, is seen by

the le Fanu brothers as a calm before an approaching storm. They foretell the coming of a greater disruption, a rent war fought along the same lines and with equal success (70). They were correct but little more appears in the memoirs about this terrible time of distress. Incidents there are, tales of violence and shootings, but more in the line of illustrating amusing remarks and the oddities of the native. The news of a steward being shot is the introduction to the following conversation:

Another of the boys said, "Now, why didn't they give him a good batin', and not to go kill him entirely?"
 "Ah, then, I suppose," said the other, "they kem from a distance and didn't like to go home without finishing the job."
 "But," said the other very seriously, "what will them chaps do on the day of judgment?"
 "Oich," said his friend, "what does that signify, sure many a boy done a foolish turn." (130-131)

This is not the first, nor the last time, that this old chestnut explains violence as the result of having to "finish the job". It also illustrates the unperturbed acceptance of murder in the service of political dissatisfaction.

As these events are disclosed one wonders how le Fanu, and other writers entrenched in their comfortable Union with England, are unaware of the political significance of such reminiscences. It seems incredible that the agitations and the violence are not recognised as more than the subject of a yarn. They are not seen as a growing, organised move towards eventual independence. On the other side the shibboleths, at this stage, are the flags of the advance-parties and a subtle form of propaganda

The anecdote about an admitted murder is immediately followed by another example of the ever-present strange dual loyalty. Following criticism of the uprisings and mockery of the peasants, le Fanu gives us his brother's long ballad about Shamus O'Brien, fictional hero of 1798. An Irish Pimpernel, eventually Shamus is captured, tried and condemned. When brought to his

hanging the priest giving the final rites surreptitiously unties his hands. Shamus escapes to live forever an outlaw in the mountains.

The verses, in a mode beloved of the singers of Rebel songs, start by underlining the fate of insurgents. One would believe them to have been composed by an avid Republican, not by a respected scion of the Ascendancy. On analysis Irish political writing does not always make sense:

Just after the war, in the year ninety-eight,
 As soon as the boys were all scattered and bate,
 'Twas the custom, whenever a peasant was caught,
 To hang him by trial, barring such as was shot.
 There was trial by jury goin' on by daylight,
 And the martial law hangin' the lavings by night.
 It's them was hard times for an honest gossoon:
 If he missed in the judges, he'd meet a dragoon.
 And because they loved Erin, and scorned to sell it,
 A prey for the bloodhound, a mark for the bullet
 Unsheltered by night, and unrested by day,
 With the heath for their barracks, revenge for their pay.
 (131-132)

Le Fanu is aware of the potency of shibboleths. He uses them but also apparently despises them, for he praises his deceased sister as having been "without a particle of that cant or one of those shibboleths which spoil the conversation and mar the usefulness of so many" (149).

Does the impulse to entertain turn a blind eye on contradictions of tone and opinion? It certainly produces material that will, later, be turned against the group and class from whence it came.

For le Fanu events of the Tithe War marked the end of peaceful cohabitation between Catholic and Protestant, land-owner and tenant. In typically Irish fashion, nonetheless, he turns the throwing of stones and the shooting of bullets into material for the seanchai⁴. As such the Troubles are carried into a

new century reshaped to the vision of the storyteller.

¹ Maynooth founded in 1795 as a Catholic university was, at the time under discussion, a seminary for the training of Catholic clergy.

² In a copy of this book published a hundred years ago, passed down from a family library, I discovered odd pages from old letters explaining McCarthy's revelations as a cause of emigration. Neither the signature of the writer nor the name of the recipient are present, but these fragile, foxed pages are obviously part of a written discussion. Page numbers in the book are quoted and faintly, in a browning ink, the words, "...good to be free of parasitical priests and Englishmen!"

³ I have been told that a street ballad was composed damning Magan's soul to Hell. There is no way I can confirm this information other than that the septuagenarian, who claims to have learned the song from a grandparent, sang some fragments to me.

⁴ Seanchai, a story-teller dealing with shorter tales, folklore and oral history.

* * * *

CHAPTER 12

A PRIEST FOR THE PEOPLE

Ireland forgets much of her history, but never
the myth, the symbol, the banner ...

Elizabeth Coxhead. *Daughters Of Erin* (1968: 51).

Adding to the cacophony of voices arguing religion and politics in the late 1800s and early 1900s, another Irish Catholic cleric was repeating Keating's message in a series of novels. His intention was to keep young Catholics from straying. Two hundred and sixty-one years after *Foras Feasa* Irish politics and religion were still firmly welded.

Canon Patrick Augustine Sheehan (1852-1913) priest, novelist and crusader, wished to retain the old Catholic values and customs. In a country whose increasing modernisation he deplored, the Canon wrote for a Catholic audience to whom, according to Robert Welch, he "represented their religion as the essence of Irish nationhood" (518).

Sheehan was an important link between the past and the future. His works are a summation of the political and religious opinions expressed in writing over the previous sixty-odd years. Both conservative and forward-looking he was aware of social problems and acutely attuned to the changing political climate. In fiction dealing with the everyday problems of his world of priests, curates and parishes Sheehan evinces a firm political voice. He also utilises all the old stereotypes and shibboleths.

Speaking of the hedge-schools in *The Blindness Of Dr Gray Or The Final Law* [s.a.] somewhat unwilling classical scholars are told about the days when "[u]nder a roof of sods, and seated on a bench of sods", the schoolmaster imparted a love of learning. "Hence, a generation of scholars, -- peasants and even labourers talking Latin in the fields: and every gentleman capable of quoting

Horace at will" (64). Here are the images of 'ould' Ireland, a land of saints and scholars, happy and perfect, despite English depredations. Such images were passed from generation to generation. Political malcontents polished them into shining shibboleths representing a dream Ireland.

In *The Blindness of Dr Gray*, possibly the last of his novels, Sheehan writes approvingly of those who "had a deep love in their hearts for God and Ireland". Tellingly he contrasts them with those who "are goin' back of your counthry and your creed; an goin' over to the landlord an' the souper..." (518).

Deep contempt is kept alive for those whose hunger, during the Great Famine, drove them to accept Protestant soup in exchange for attending Protestant services. We are aware throughout the novel of the schism between Catholic and Protestant, Irish and their English colonisers. The guise of story covers Sheehan's didactic intent. Most of the time the narrative makes this homilistic aspect bearable, but there are occasions when the syrupy perfection of the female protagonists become overwhelming (239).

A typical political message-bearing incident concerns an actor, Tim Finucane. He calls himself Finnigan. At a village performance, as he is playing the ghost in Hamlet, an unruly element bursts into the rowdy ballad 'Tim Finnigan's Wake'. It tells the story of a drunkard, who at his wake was revived when a thrown whisky bottle splattered him with its contents. The audience -- and the reader -- are lectured by a priest. We are given two lessons: the first is the reproof implied for anglicising an Irish name; the second is a long diatribe on how inappropriate it is to sing a song about Irish drunkenness which might entertain Englishmen. Contradictorily, in terms of the criticism, two long verses of the condemned ballad are quoted. One wonders why.

Cynicism dictates that the author in Canon Sheehan at times overwhelmed the priest. The lectures in the novels are well larded with humour and popular appeal; heartstrings are unashamedly tugged; patriotism is kept simmering at just the right temperature.

Sheehan then expounds that Irishmen, a people of a newly awakening nation, should begin to exercise as well "as to feel, that self-respect which belongs to every free people, and the absence of which only characterises enslaved nationalities." The strictures continue: "surely such songs of the nation's slavery as that which they had just listened to should not for a moment be tolerated by a people awakening to a sense of their dignity and importance." One wonders if the reply was intended as a humorous pun to hide what could otherwise be perceived as a subliminal call to revolution? "we couldn't help it, yer reverence. The *timtation* was too great!" (242-246, my emphasis).

At the time Ireland was *not* yet free. For people simmering on the brink of insurrection the implied call to arms would be heard above the voice of reason. Yet Canon Sheehan professed support for constitutional reform as pursued by the United Irish League, the founder of which, William O'Brien, was a friend of his. But the author has Dr Gray bemoaning the change from "glorified" Fenianism uprising to "porter-drinking, platform storming politicians murdering one another for some scoundrel of a landlord" (233).

These are strong words for a cleric purporting to support constitutional change and are an incitement for young men champing on the bit of clerical restraint. It is not difficult to read approval here for Fenian shenanigans. Past Troubles are glorified and many would read more than a suggestion that this is a call to future Troubles. Here pro-Revolutionary politics are moving strongly from their acknowledged perch in journalism into fiction,

not only with the support of the Church, but by its invitation. It is a far cry from the time when O'Donovan Rossa was unable to get a priest's blessing for his marriage because he had taken an oath to free Ireland. Irish writing about the Troubles is coming out of the ecclesiastical closet.

Sheehan does not allow us to forget how the English demean the Irish. A brilliant actor fails because "those London fellows found out he was Irish, and, that was enough!. He was hounded from the stage." It appears that the Canon reflects the almost schizoid stance of his protagonist, Dr Gray, who is a keen supporter of his politically rebellious congregation yet "a strenuous supporter of the law, and an equally strenuous opponent of lawlessness" (129). The ever-present duality of expressed opinion remains entrenched in Irish writing about politics. The key to finding the genuine opinion is in the shibboleths. Watch how and when the author uses them and his inner heart stands revealed.

Trouble pursues Dr Gray. His complaint is that if a priest stands up for his people against oppression he is seen as "an agitator and a revolutionary". If, guided by conscience, he goes against the popular will, he is condemned by the people as a supporter of the oppressors and regarded by the "governing classes" as "a conservative ally" (129). God forbid the latter, is the unsaid implication. Here lies the reason for much double-talk. Prominent people must protect their cover. Even ordinary writers, without a cleric's status to maintain, dare not antagonise or tread too heavily on an increasingly sensitive government's toes. The situation invites the use of shibboleths through which inflammatory emotions can be raised while at the same time appearing innocuous to the outsider.

Following on Keating's precept Sheehan reiterates continually that unless you are a good Catholic you cannot be a good Irishman. It was the message conveyed in his writings in much the same way that W B Yeats proclaimed the salvation of the nation was a return to their Celtic/Gaelic spiritual roots; – not that Yeats found it necessary to learn the language himself.

Sheehan produced ten novels between 1895 (he was a late starter), and 1913. After an initial crusade stressing the importance of a Catholic influence in higher education, he systematically addressed the social problems in Ireland. The land question reforms and what he condemns as a selfish and materialistic attitude move, as recurring themes, throughout his novels many of which were translated. Each propaedeutic pill is spiced with the anticipation of 'what happens next?' Indubitably a clever propagandist if not a scintillating novelist.

Sheehan dealt with many political questions of labour and social unrest; he disapproved of trade unions and underestimated the importance of the land reforms brought about by the Land League movement. He believed the Church should be the ultimate instigator of reform. Swimming upstream against the influences of a popular movement he deliberately used fiction to carry his chosen message, and was phenomenally successful in doing so. The entrenched power of Irish Catholicism was behind him. Its influence on Irish writing began to lose its grip only midway through the new century.

With that typically Irish double vision Sheehan is able to allow Dr Gray to admit that the Church had previously been "on the side of the Government then -- and on the side of 'law and order'. Yes! ... And so much the worse for our Church! It forgot its place as the protector of the poor; and it has suffered a fearful retribution to this day!" (131). McCarthy's 1903 strictures in

Priests And People In Ireland had obviously made its mark. But, within the admission still lurks the niggling implication that being on the Government's side meant adhering to "law and order".

The opinions which Sheehan's characters express are not only those he considered correct, many reflect the exact opposite and they, cleverly, appear in the mouths of the villains and misguided individuals of the piece. This gives the 'good' characters an opportunity to present an argument which, as a straight lecture, would be unacceptable. The meat of the polemic is presented in bite-sized pieces disguised within the sauce of general conversation. The total picture, reflecting the social ambience of the time, provides a valuable insight into the influences of religion on the written word. Class animosities are shown as linked to religious and political differences. "Nothing will ever take away from the peasant's heart the dread of the gentry", yet on the same page, "So long as the classes are at war with one another, what hope can there be for the future?" (299)

The young Nationalist parliamentary candidate Gleeson, a farmer in the locality who had been "a prominent Leaguer in his time and had spent a month in goal" says, "I think we will give the landlords such a lesson this time that they'll never show their faces here again." Shortly after the authorial voice comments "with such people revenge often becomes a kind of religion. 'You may forgive,' said one of that class [tenant farmer] 'but people in our position never forgive'" (300-302). This attitude seems justified by the later comment that "many an innocent man was hanged in Ireland before" (443). We know, without being told, that the hangings were related to the Troubles.

Dr Gray admits that uprisings were madness, but that it was a "glorious madness". He recommends the singing of a Rebel song to his curate who sings a foreign German one.

See who comes over the red-blossomed heather,
Their green banners kissing the pure mountain air (231).

This is more than politics combining with nature poetry. To put it colloquially it seems the reverent gentleman is doing a bit of unclerical 'stirring'! No wonder his mixed messages achieved such popularity among people on the edge of revolt. *This* is the influence of politics in Irish writing and it is never as innocent as it may appear on the surface. With the Church's blessing, as in this instance, it can be explosive. The lines of the song quoted are sufficient to inflame all the justifiable and stored-up resentments of a thwarted patriotism. They represent '98. Such is the power of a well-chosen shibboleth.

Times had changed. In the past written criticism had been publicly burnt and the spirit cowed, as Lecky (1871) had pointed out. Over decades of politically motivated writing resistance had stiffened. *Now* complaint was loud, public and condoned by the priest. We see the progress from Molyneaux to Sheehan as well as the continuity of the message which flaring or dimming has, nonetheless, continued. With time it grows more strident.

Shocking to a modern reader is Dr Gray's anecdote of how he restored speech and hearing to a certain dumb and deaf impostor, by having her taken out in a boat to the deep seas, and flung overboard by the faithful mariners. The emotively approving 'faithful' speaks multitudes for the attitude of the author who neither comments nor implies censure of this barbaric action reminiscent of the witch-ducking of the Dark Ages. Were those men of whom Edna O'Brien continuously writes — abusive, brutal in their treatment of the women in their lives — the product of schools approved by the good pastor?

Canon Sheehan's books did not, however, only carry a religious doctrine and social comment. He continually preached

Keating's political dictum that being Irish and being a good Catholic were synonymous (437). And, although he did a great deal of good in assisting with land-settlement and social work in the towns, he must be found guilty of teaching an exclusivism which still simmers at the roots of political discord between Catholic and Protestants in the Six Counties.

The word of their priests carried great influence, particularly to rural Catholics. Creating a schism between Catholic and Protestant was not only a religious tool to keep one's flock uncontaminated by foreign ideas, it was also a political one, and the root of retaining power. Sheehan deplores that now "[e]very man [is] for himself! ... It is so unlike the old generous spirit that made their ancestors throw up everything for God and their country" (311). The linking of the two pervades Sheehan's works.

Probably due to the Celtic Revival those strange contradictory political opinions appearing in Irish writing are extended to culture. Sheehan says of the Gaelic language that it "seems to have been formed to make prayer into poetry, and poetry into prayer" (29). Yet later he fulminates against the loss of the memory of the Anglo-Irish writer/heroes because the Gaelic League is filling the children's minds with old heroes, Cú Chulainn and Oisín. The book contains many such inconsistencies. Does the Church still fear the pagan influence of the sagas?

Sheehan casts his glance beyond Ireland when pointing out the similarities of the treatment meted out by the English colonisers to the African and the Irish (451). This is a two-pronged barb aimed at the English. Beside their ill-treatment of the colonised they are automatically cast as the villain by the *suggested* shibboleth 'emigrate'. Wycherley is an emigrant dying alone in a foreign country, it is enough to evoke the conditioned response. These are the covert and subtle uses of shibboleths

which allow politics to infiltrate apparently innocent Irish writing. Not that Canon Sheehan's is in any way innocent, his is an example of the most convoluted and well-baited trap to enmesh both naïve and politically informed minds. His technique and example became, for many writers following him, a routine process.

One wonders, now, at Sheehan's long popularity. His themes weave repetitively through the plots which combine sentimentality, melodrama, spiritual philosophy and sententious moralising. His characters are often ciphers, mouthpieces for the sentiments he, and the Church, wished to promulgate, and yet the influence he exercised was phenomenal. Apparently besides guiding political beliefs the Church's influence extends to literary choice. The sententious aspect apart, his novels remind me of the uneven quality and attention grabbing incidents of Cathy Kelly's pot-boilers. In parts they are both effective – and boring.

My grandparents' generation regarded Sheehan's matched set of books as essential reading for the young and they helped instil anti-English attitudes along with the pandy of one's youth. Perhaps it is the confirmation of an increasing political awareness, the anti-English stance and the utilisation of familiar stereotypes which created such a comfort zone for the reader. Sheehan is still mentioned in recent Irish writing.

Dr Gray politely tells a landlord, "Tis a pity! And when men like you, cultivated and well read, and with all the advantages of a university education, fail to understand us, where's the hope?" (133). The Anglo-Irish landlords and their agents are spoken of as "the inimies of our race and religion" (212). Permission has been given to the Irish people to stand up and protest. The Church has joined the flood of politicised writing sweeping into a new century, creating a new vision for the country. Religion and politics are,

again, firmly wedged together, in both Irish non-fiction and narrative.

The Canon retained influence and public support long after his death. Sheehan's correspondence with Oliver Wendell Holmes was published as recently as 1976. Welch states that in 1988 *Ireland's Literature* carried an article by Terence Brown entitled 'Canon Sheehan and the Catholic Intellectual'. Unfortunately the association linking patriotism with Catholicism still manifests itself in the continuing Troubles of Northern Ireland. This is illustrated in a report from the *Sunday Independent* of Sept 1, 2002 by Thami Ngidi writing from "Belfast, Northern Ireland":

... Neil Lennon, the Catholic captain of Northern Ireland soccer team, who has had to turn his back on his country following several death threats from a paramilitary group. His sin is that he is a Catholic soccer player in a country with a Protestant majority. He apparently committed treason by signing for Scottish Giant's Celtic, which have a historical association with Catholics. Being Protestant or Catholic here has very little to do with the head of your church's position on contraception or the ordination of women. It is about culture, history and politics. All of this is ultimately the basis of the conflict that is raging in the interfaces of this city [Belfast] every 24 hours. It does not matter that you are coloured, all they will want to know is whether you are Catholic or Protestant. (8)

* * * *

CHAPTER 13

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The history of Ireland is either seen from the anti-imperialist pro-Irish standpoint or from the pro-British Unionist stand.

Peter Beresford Ellis, *Erin's Blood Royal*. (2002).

The beginning of the twentieth century was a busy time for Irish writing. In addition to Canon Sheehan's thousands of words melding religion, politics and shibboleths The Celtic Revival had started an avalanche of its own. There was a resurgence of interest in the Irish language and in the old legends which good and bad writers alike used as themes or subject matter.

There continued to be those, however, who were writing more aggressively about the Troubles. Their main interest was in campaigning for Ireland's freedom from English rule and they did so with different approaches and abilities. Some few wrote with an incandescent skill. One such was the poet Joseph Cambell. In *The Story Of Anglo-Irish Poetry 1800-1922*, (1967), Patrick Power claims Cambell was the only one who had retained the "Gaelic way" of writing religious poetry in English since the old language had "ceased to be spoken".

In 'The Poet Loosed A Winged Song', we find the "ultimate in religious nationalism" (122). The poet explains how both a Friar and a soldier have tried, to no avail, to "right Ireland's wrong", then cries to Christ in desperation.

Die, die again on Calvary Tree
If needs be, Christ, to set us free! (123)

Not only does this poem retain the internal vowel rhythm and assonance of the Gaelic tradition, but it conveys the strong, direct manner of speech of the old language. Because it is so hard-hitting, unvarnished, it shocks. Gaelic poetry is renowned for

being "vigorous". Powell maintains "it is nothing if not realistic" (131), but one hardly expects this sentiment from Catholic Ireland where Christ has been revered and gently treated. There is none of the comforting familiarity of the shibboleth here, the reader is plunged into unfamiliar territory. For one attuned to accustomed reverence it is one of the most unsettling cries of political frustration and Nationalism coming out of the early 20th century.

Michael Monohan, another in the chain of politicised Irish writers, makes no bones about his message. *Nova Hibernia: Irish Poets and Dramatists of Today and Yesterday* (1914) reverberates with politics, rebellion and anti-English hate-speech coated in sentiment and presented as literary criticism. A floridly written and barely disguised political document it vibrates with the Troubles of the past. It is enough — or must have been at the time — to induce any red-blooded Irish patriot to go out and do mischief to anything related to English governance.

We are immediately told that the book's name derives from the premature and mocking celebration of Home Rule by characters from Thackeray's serialised novel *Pendennis* (1848-1850). The scene is presented as a tongue-in-cheek exposé of drunken and sentimental Irishmen singing perfervid patriotic songs (7). Thackeray's view and 'humour' concerning the Irish as stock figures of fun was particularly acerbic, and bitterly resented. Using his term as a title for a pro-Republican book is a twist of revenge.

Monahan expresses himself strongly and directly about hoped-for Home Rule. He also reveals the ever-smouldering anger at the representation of his race as buffoons by many English writers:

It is something to have lived for if we shall see that people take its rightful place after how much oppression and scorn and weary misdirected effort.

If this thing [Home Rule] shall be, of a truth, I shall hail as its first sign the passing of that species of Irishman whose few good qualities have not weighed with the amount of shame he has brought upon us. (8-9)

Contending that "the merciless pages of Thackeray" add mockery to misfortune in portraying a maudlin patriotism, Monahan adds that "at all times [it] existed as a libel on the national character" (9-10) .

On a more positive note he commends the work of the Celtic Revival pointing out that the critics who have previously been "hostile" are now taking Irish writing more seriously (11). The admixture of religion and politics is acknowledged, with regret. To it he ascribes the "pitiable subjection in which this people has so long been held -- of its own loving, ignorant choice ..." (11).

He tips his hat to the Church, referring to the grace of an "age-long reverence and fidelity", but Monahan strongly declares that neither it, nor any other influence or power will ever again impede his people. They are "stepping forward to the goal of liberty" (12). Published in 1914, a short two years before the Easter Uprising, this is a significant statement and more than the usual political wishful posturing. Outspoken rebellion is voiced in what is supposedly a book of literary criticism.

Admitting that there "are greater and prouder names" than those of the poets he has chosen to discuss, he explains that it is for their "passionate love of country" that he has selected them. In language no less ornate than theirs he commends them for speaking up for an "oppressed nation which has never ceased to struggle during more than seven hundred years for its lost birthright and freedom" (125). What is interesting is that after the period exceeded seven hundred years no alteration or correction to the shibboleth figure seemed needed. Seven hundred said it all. Such is the power of entrenched imagery and suggestion.

Monahan blames the "cause of Christianity" for being a tool in destroying a free people (129). He condemns the Church's interference in the political conscience of the individual in yet another appearance of the two linked, albeit unwillingly, in Irish writing..

Of James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849), Monahan claims that, had he lived in Elizabethan times, his patriotism would have resulted in a price being placed upon his head (127).

The statute of Kilkenny was framed for such as he, and it was with his prototypes in mind that the humane author of the "Faery Queene" advocated the extermination of the whole race of Irish bards!" (127)

Starting with such a politically charged introduction Mangan's poetry is not critically analysed from a literary point of view. It is extolled because it encourages the reading of Irish history; this means the long list of suffering from which the shibboleths are derived. These poems, Monahan states, induce you to learn of "the foulest crimes against liberty and humanity that the earth has ever known".

The critique assumes the familiar stance of Trouble literature. Grandiloquently asserting that Mangan is the last of the great bards, Monahan utilises all the emotive suggestion that shibboleths carry. The poet's

melancholy genius [is] fed on the wrongs of his beloved Ierne until its one strain was that of vengeance against the hereditary oppressor. It is this unquenchable hatred of the tyrant, this immortal inspiration of the patriot, that finds its freest and noblest utterance in "Dark Rosaleen" which, if Mangan had written nothing else, would still entitle him to a high place in Ireland's pantheon of glory. (131)

What Monahan neglects to tell his readers is that Mangan was not the *creator* of 'Dark Rosaleen'. It was his versification of Samuel Ferguson's translation of the original old Irish poem *Roísín Dubh*.

An argument was raging in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1834, about the intention of the original. The magazine had published the translation which Ferguson claimed was a love poem. James Hardiman disagreed and was correct in identifying the poem as a “political poem of the aisling type.” As Welch points out Mangan’s version, written “in the Famine year of 1846”, is awash with the blood of “nationalist fervour” (133).

The deeper one delves into the origins of the shibboleths, the more one examines the expertise of those patriots presenting Irish history, both political and literary, the more one realises how fact turns into fiction. The influence of this *created* vision has been widespread.

Final evidence, if such is still needed, of the manipulation of emotion and the political consciousness-rising in the building up of shibboleths into a force to be reckoned with, is the call to Celtic origins. In a period when philosophy and science were preparing to marry under the title of eugenics, it is not surprising to read Monahan’s explanation of Mangan’s perceived perfection. It is

[b]y virtue of his purely Celtic genius — which so signally discriminates him from the body of Anglo-Irish versifiers. (141)

To the Gael is attributed a *particular* genius. Monahan describes this in Mangan’s own words: his “veins run lightning” (141). He may be a particularly bombastic exception, but Monahan serves, nonetheless, as a perfect example of how easily legends are born, along with their shibboleths.

Arthur Lynch writing a year later would deny Monahan’s claim of racial superiority or purity as a cause for political and literary pride. In *Ireland: Vital Hour* (1915), as he points out, the many successive invasions of Ireland have resulted in “one of the

most assimilative countries in the world" (2). In his view Irish nationality need not be linked to either Catholicism or "the real Hibernian smack". He lists leaders such as Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, Thomas Davis, John "Michel" (*sic.* surely this should be the John Mitchel discussed above?) and Charles "Stuart" (*sic.* Parnell as being neither "Milesians nor Firbolgs" (2).

The misspelling of the names of two prominent Nationalist leaders leads one to conclude that Lynch is more at home writing of literature than politics. And indeed, in this balanced and fair evaluation of aspects of Irish life, there is none of the material from which shibboleths are born. In his Preface Lynch regrets the "Irish tendency to impulsive, unrealistic thought and actions, particularly in politics", and stays well clear of these himself.

Although this book expresses interesting and informative views on many subjects, ranging from politics and religion to agriculture, it does not inflame. The analyses and comments on history and literature, including balanced evaluations of Synge's *Playboy*, yield little in the form of Troubles writing. The wrongs that are discussed are presented with a level-headedness not calculated to arouse patriotic fever. Of Irish history the most telling remark is that it is

terribly entangled. I do not know if many read it thoroughly, beginning at the beginning and continuing consecutively. If they do, I would ask how many come through the process – I will not say wiser – but perfectly normal and sane?" (1)

Lynch's calm comment differs from that of Monahan and is typified by his view that "though there is no Irish race, in any strict sense, but rather a fusion of divers races of widely different sources, yet there is an Irish people, an Irish nation" (3).

Another writer of this period, influential in forming opinions, spent over sixty years writing and crusading. Combining both the rabble-rousing technique examined above as well as considered, statistically backed information about social conditions in Dublin's slums and the famine areas, she was a woman who wrote over a million words for Ireland's cause. Maud Gonne was an outspoken and remarkable Republican.

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PEOPLE, PERSONAS & POETRY

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CHAPTER 14

MAUD GONNE MACBRIDE, WRITER WITHOUT A PAUSE

Peter : Did you see an old woman going down the path?

Patrick: I did not; but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

last lines of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. W.B. Yeats
Selected Plays (1974: 256)

She enters the cottage. A rejected old woman, robbed of her land. "When the people see me quiet they think old age has come on me, and that all the stir has gone out of me." The cottagers question her about her "trouble" and she replies, "Too many strangers in the house." Her land taken from her, she seeks help; old as she may look her fires are unquenched.

They do not recognise the stranger and wonder who she may be. Tomorrow's wedding plans are halted as the family listens to the mysterious visitor singing and speaking in riddles. It is the *Sean Bhean Bhocht* (Shan Van Vocht, the Poor Old Woman), and Michael, the bridegroom, falls under her spell. Forgetting his bride, and the 'fortune' that comes with her, he follows the poor old woman as she leaves.

Towards the bay, Killala, where French ships are landing, cheering is heard. Help has come and, transformed by unquestioning devotion from the young men who follow her, Cathleen Ni Houlihan strides forth — all magnificent six foot of her. Ireland and the actress Maud Gonne triumph. The metaphor is rendered concrete as the woman and the image fuse. Politics and mythology merge in more Irish writing.

It is a timeless trope and one Chaucer's Wife Of Bath uses to beguile the tedious journey; the old crone when given love and acceptance blooms into a beautiful young woman, and often a magic one at that. Ireland in the guise of both the dispirited Poor Old Woman and vibrant Cathleen Ni Houlihan is

able to enchant. Maud Gonne *was* Cathleen. She believed in the Cause, worked unceasingly for it. She and Ireland had no time for the soporific comforts of domesticity. Her task was to keep the flame alive and in doing so she was the Troubles personified. Republican agitations, famine, ill-treated political prisoners, poverty, injustice; wherever these were, Maud Gonne was to be found. Either her presence or her writing called attention for wrong to be righted.

Yeats may have wondered if the words in his play had sent men out to be shot by the English: in Maud Gonne's mouth they did. Ireland was ready for the call. The long gestation was over, birth pangs had begun and with *her* pen Maud Gonne eased the travail, assured acceptance of the new entity.

In his definitive Biography *Maud Gonne* (1977) Samuel Levenson says, "In millions of written and spoken words, she spread the gospel of separation [from England] among many thousands of English, Irish, French, and Irish-American listeners and readers" (419).

She may not have been one of Ireland's great writers, nor even a learned one. Maud Gonne was, nevertheless, effective in her unceasing, decades-long campaigns directed at capturing the emotions of ordinary Irish citizens. *They* were the ones, usually women, who joined her committees and associations and by their efforts and influence changed things that needed changing. Through public opinion she achieved many of her goals.

Maud Gonne and her sister Kathleen played with bare-footed Irish children whose book-knowledge was greater than their own for, as Levenson tells us, "the children trudged every day to the far-away school house" while the Gonnies ran wild in the heather (12). It was this early caste-free association with poor children and their parents that gave the motherless Maud her common touch, the ability to communicate on all levels. It

was to be an invaluable gift, for she was able to state her point of view in the voice of an intended recipient.

Her life, political and personal, was inextricably associated with writers and writing. During the later 1800s and early 1900s there were many histories and examinations of the Irish situation, published by 'professional' writers, as we have seen. Perhaps it was Maud's disregard of the conventions, her lively language speaking directly to her readers, which generated predictable responses. It must have been an editor's dream when an article or letter of hers appearing in the papers evoked so prolific a correspondence.

It was not only as a Republican that Maud wrote, encouraging political change, but also as a dedicated social worker. Throughout a long life her unceasing attempts continued unabated. She wrote articles and letters that were published in newspapers, she gave interviews and addressed meetings. Her speeches were reported and the subject of more letters to the papers. It was not enough to fight for Ireland's freedom, she fought for freedom from poverty, hunger, injustice. She campaigned against the ill-treatment of political prisoners, supported their families, met them as they were discharged and helped them in practical ways throughout her long life. Levenson reports a possibly apocryphal incident relating to Maud Gonne in old age. She was addressing a political meeting when she was pointed out to a visitor with the remark, "Did I not tell you that we have the most beautiful ruins in Europe? There is the most beautiful ruin of them all" (369).

In her mid-seventies, despite being ill, she was writing the second -- unfinished -- volume of her autobiography, *The Tower of Age*, which followed on *A Servant of the Queen*. The title is not a satirical reference to Queen Victoria. Maud Gonne's Queen was Ireland -- Cathleen Ni Houlihan -- whom she served

faithfully until death. It was on this first volume that J. Doran O'Reilly based the biography of Maud Gonne which ran for nine weeks in the *Sunday Chronicle* during 1948.

Aged 84, in November 1949, she broadcast on Radio Éireann in a strong voice belying her age. She spoke of social and political matters; the necessity for school feeding, the evictions in 1886, women's role in politics and social welfare. And the old message still rang out clearly, that *force* was the only recourse for a people whose land was occupied by "strangers" (Levenson 406). It was only in 1948 that Ireland was declared a Republic and in the eyes of many Anti-Treatyite diehards, such as Maud Gonne, the land was still divided, a portion still occupied by "strangers".

In addition to writing political propaganda and persuasion Maud Gonne rolled up her skirts like a peasant and stood over open fires ladling out stew during her school feeding campaigns. She did the same during famines and evictions. Her assistance in alleviating the problems of these destitute, famine-struck evicted tenants, in Mayo and Kerry, was practical in the extreme. In Belmullet, threatening the authorities with violence if they did not comply, she managed to raise famine relief pay from 6d to 1/- a day and to obtain shelter for the roofless near their place of work. It was this familiarity with anguish that shone through her words. She *felt* the pain and was thus capable of making others understand it.

More than that, in Belmullet she was seen as a prophecy come true. She started a new oral legend, for Brian Ruadh, "a great scholar", foretold on his deathbed of wonders to expect. News, he said, is coming into the village on the top of sticks, and it did on the telegraph poles. The railroads through the mountains brought carriages drawn without horses as he had promised. Greatest of all he had predicted the famine and "a woman dressed in green would come and preach revolt, and

that England would be driven out" (Levenson, 138). And there was Maud, Cathleen Ni Houlihan dressed in green, dictating to the authorities, breaking their power. Hope, wanting to make all of the prophecy come true, made belief easy. Words swirled through letters, newspapers and articles written about famine, evictions and social injustices. Wherever she went, whatever she did, this remarkable woman raised a storm of print.

Before, during and after the period in which Maud Gonne wrote there was a series of less flamboyant male writers. All aired Ireland's woes, none for as long or as consistently as she did. Maud Gonne's writing spanned more than 60 years. She proclaimed *and* acted. In 1900, on the 6th April the offices of the newspaper *The United Irishman* were invaded by the police in order to confiscate every paper due for release the following day. They contained the first section of Maud Gonne's article, 'The Famine Queen'. She objected to the celebratory reception of Queen Victoria. Maud Gonne had not only arranged a more triumphant outing for 30,000 Irish children than that organised by the authorities, but had written:

...for Victoria, in the decrepitude of her 81 years.
to have decided, after an absence of half a century,
to revisit the country she hated, whose inhabitants are
the victims of the criminal policy of her reign and
the survivors of 60 years of organised famine, the
political necessity must have been terribly strong.
For, after all, she is a woman, and however vile, selfish
and pitiless her soul, she must sometimes tremble as
death approaches, when she thinks of the countless
Irish mothers who ... watching their starving little ones,
have cursed her before they died. Every eviction for
63 years has been carried out in Victoria's name, and
if there is justice in Heaven the shame of those poor Irish
emigrant girls, whose very innocence rendered them easy
prey, and who have been overcome in the terrible struggle
for existence on a foreign shore, will fall on this woman
whose bourgeois virtue is so boasted. ... Taking the
shamrock in her withered hand, she dares to ask Ireland
for soldiers — soldiers to fight for the exterminators of their
race!

Levenson (167-8) See Appendix 4 for full text.

Playing on the prejudices of the readers whose poverty might be tempted by Britain's recruiting campaign for the Boer War, Gonne, using every available stereotype and shibboleth, strikes her enemy many simultaneous blows. Not all of Gonne's writing is this florid: she has a natural gift for tuning her instrument to the audience.

In the Paris of 1903, resident Chris Healy, a Liverpool reporter, attributed an "anti-English sentiment" to her influence (Levenson, 199). Articles and letters appeared under her own name in the French newspapers, but her influence went further. Maud Gonne's *paramour*, political editor of *La Patrie* and Boulangist deputy, Lucien Millevoye supported her cause. It was an agreement of mutual assistance. She would help him in his efforts to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France. He published articles detailing England's unjust treatment in extinguishing Ireland's once flourishing export trades. Flax, woollens, dairy produce all banned or smothered by prohibitive taxes and duties. Ireland starved. Maud Gonne reputedly not only influenced Millevoye, but wrote many of the pro-Irish columns appearing under his name.

Most effectively, through the words of others who could be seen as neutral, she made sure that her country's history was told. It was she who inflamed the "violent hatred of England" in Arthur Lynch as he reported the French news for his London paper. In his book *Ireland: Vital Hour* (1915) this is expressed with subtle irony, polished politeness and such an insistence on carefully annotating the good with the bad, that the underlying animosity is almost concealed. Commenting on the Orangemen's obsession with King William (also known as 'the Silent'), Lynch remarks that this admiration may "arise from the fact that "the silent Dutchman ... was silent enough never to say what he thought of them" (166). Lynch's remarks are far too muted to be converted into shibboleths.

On Maud Gonne's marriage to John MacBride she assured the editor and readers of *l'Eclair* that, contrary to their expectations, her work for Ireland's independence would be enhanced rather than diminished (Levenson, 199, 204). She continued to contribute to French, English, Irish and Irish-American newspapers and journals into old age as well as to travel widely through these countries making political speeches which were widely published.

Not only did Maud Gonne seek to inform through the press but she facilitated the establishment of *The United Irishman* by paying the salary of Arthur Griffith, its first editor. Although the paper's life was short-lived, 1899-1906 when the British government of Ireland muzzled it with a libel case, it was the source of Sinn Féin. Griffith's separatist policy bore fruit thanks to Maud Gonne's 25/- a week contribution. He too was an idealist and would accept no more than this "the exact amount" needed to pay board and lodging to his mother (Levenson, 150).

Griffith (1871-1922) a member of the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), and co-negotiator of the Treaty which ended the Anglo-Irish war, became President of Dáil Éireann in 1922. Maud Gonne's contribution was there, in the beginning, when it was most needed and her support remained unwavering.

There was reciprocation, of course: in October 1929 *The United Irishman* published *Dawn*, a one-act play by Maud Gonne. Full of anti-British information it could not be called a literary work but this was not its basic purpose. *Dawn* delineated the difficulties of the Irish tenant farmer and has found its small niche in history being included in a collection *Lost Plays Of The Irish Renaissance*. Levenson says of it that "it is a dreadful play" (225). As evidence against evictions and as a political statement it was successful.

It is unnecessary, and probably impossible, to detail all of Maud Gonne's politically motivated writing. It is sufficient to understand how, in Ireland alone, it became part of the background of future and current writers¹. A brief summary of some of the subjects Maud Gonne wrote about and the journals publishing reports of her opinions during her long life is included in Appendix 4.

Maud Gonne objected to Trinity College automatically having three seats in the Irish legislature. She queried the College's contribution to Ireland, remembering the time when no Catholics were allowed as students or lecturers. She was, however, equally critical of the IRA. In a letter, which is now housed in the National Library of Ireland, she castigates them for being unwilling to cooperate with non-Catholics, for not boycotting British goods, for their neglect of political prisoners and their seeming inability to create employment. She accuses them of being conscious of caste, a factor, she felt, which created a schism between the organisation and their countrymen.

In 1936 the Royal Ulster Constabulary arrested Maud Gonne, aged 70. It was not the first time, but unlike the previous occasions she was not detained or deported to England. Her crime, on this occasion, was an article published in the *Irish Times* in which she had espoused an undivided Ireland. Adept at creating and manipulating a situation for the greatest political newspaper coverage she had purchased a single ticket for her trip to Lurgan in Northern Ireland. She had anticipated her arrest and the return trip across the border escorted by a police guard.

In May 1937 a magazine *Prison Bars* appeared. A slight four pages, published monthly and selling for one penny it was another of Maud Gonne's politicised ventures into print. She claimed that many honest Irishmen were jailed on both sides of

the border because the country lacked an independent republic consisting of all her thirty-two counties. This, she felt, resulted in an inequality of opportunities and rights. The unnamed editor was "a Woman of No Importance."

The publications of the Woman Prisoners' Defence League, were assisted by her. In June 1936 it issued and distributed another four-pager, a pamphlet entitled 'An Appeal To Our Race' signed by the secretary Maud Gonne Macbride. In this the persecution of Catholics in the North was described; a list of political prisoners' names was given, and the lack of civil liberties was demonstrated. It was not necessary, she claimed, to produce a warrant for a political arrest on suspicion. Once incarcerated the prisoner was held incommunicado. No contact was allowed with any individual outside the gaol who might be of assistance.

Long before the Civil Rights Movement (founded in Belfast in 1967), Maud Gonne was agitating for diplomats and the Free State government to make foreign countries aware of the circumstances of the Catholics in Ulster. Again politics and religion fuse in her unique, hard-hitting style:

This persecution ranges from economic pressure driving Catholics from their employment, starving and penalising their schools, depriving them of fair representation on all public bodies, to the naked horror of pogroms, shooting old people and children in the streets of Belfast, burning and looting their houses, wrecking their churches, desecrating their graveyards, and bombing their meeting halls. (Levenson, 376)

This was followed up by another article in the *Irish Press* of August 3, 1938, in which Maud Gonne sought to start a relief fund for the destitute families of political prisoners and those unable to obtain employment because they were Catholics.

Politics were often responsible for the many other new and often short-lived newspapers and journals to which Maud

Gonne contributed or gave assistance. They were "the source from which many Irish people drew their inspiration to write. Not all were gifted writers, but, nonetheless, they wrote in a seemingly never-ending torrent" (Levenson 375).

In October 1938 Victor Gollancz published *A Servant of the Queen*, Maud Gonne's autobiography. It contains very few personal revelations but deals in detail with the period of the Land League and her more than fifty years of political action. The book was well received and was reissued in 1950 and 1974. It is regarded as a competent and accurate history of the events during the agrarian revolution.

When Macmillan published tributes to W.B. Yeats in *Scattering Branches* 1940, Maud Gonne's article attributed to the inspiration of his Celtic Revival an important influence towards generating the Easter Uprising. Politics enter even in this salute to an old friend.

In 1943 a still embattled Maud Gonne was suggesting that Ireland resign from the League of Nations as they refused to discuss the question of Ireland's partition. The article was published in the *Capuchin Annual*.

Maud Gonne's belief in the mystic quality of Irish soil was the subject of an article in the Maynooth *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* in 1944. When an attempt by road repairers to quarry stones from Tara was halted it reminded her of a similar campaign to save the legendary site of the old Irish kings. Arthur Griffith and she had prevented attempts by an Englishman, in 1899 and 1900, to excavate the site in the hopes of finding Noah's Ark. Their article in the *United Irishman* had saved the site.

Still mentally active and brimming with ideas in 1943 Maud Gonne's letter to Ella Young, in California, dated November 21, speaks of the three social developmental stages of civilisation. Each had helped achieve progress but had decayed

when the resultant human suffering became overwhelming. These experiments she saw as slavery, feudalism and capitalism and in the — unfinished — second volume of her autobiography she analyses the systems in detail. She believed that the fourth stage would be based on production.

The *Irish Times* of 10 May, 1945 printed an article in which Maud Gonne, aged 80, describes wanton cruelty and warns that a nation which allows such acts pays dearly when the victims retaliate. She is inveighing, again, for the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war. At the time there were prisoners on hunger strike in Portlaoise Prison; Maud Gonne pointed out that the South could hardly condemn the North for their mistreatment of Catholics when they themselves were guilty of a similar offence. Sean McCaughey, a hunger-striker, died the day after the article appeared and the papers were again full of political discussions fuelled by Maud Gonne's strictures against the system.

Twenty-five years later *Hibernia* lauded the manner in which Sean MacBride had, at McCaughey's inquest, exposed the influence of de Valera and Boland in maintaining the deplorable conditions under which political prisoners were held. Maud Gonne had passed her mantle on to her son who, after a short period in politics, became active in Amnesty International where he was the Chairman from 1961-1974.

Sean MacBride was subsequently awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1974 and the Lenin Peace Prize in 1977. The influence of his mother's politics in Irish writing was surely a major factor in Sean MacBride's development. He must also have retained vivid memories of the time she was arrested for suspected political activities. The fourteen year old boy ran after the prison van as his mother, worrying about who would care for her son, watched him through the bars.

Again in the *Irish Times*, still fighting for prison reform, Maud Gonne pointed out that "prisons should be schools of citizenship, instead of factories for the perpetuation of the criminal class" (Levenson, 401).

In December 1948 both the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Press* printed letters from Maud Gonne regretting the ignorance Irish school children showed about their country's struggle for independence. She offered, through the Prisoner's Defence League, to provide every classroom with an identical copy of the original 1916 Proclamation of Independence (Appendix 5). The Minister of Education refused the offer. But again this old woman of 82 years was the source of serious policy debate

January 22, 1950, still writing to the newspapers and being published, Maud Gonne commended the editor of the *Irish Press* on his article about landlords and reminisced about the evictions she had witnessed in 1885. She used the opportunity to castigate England's economic policy towards Ireland. Not having succeeded in stifling the country by military means, she suggested England was attempting to do so by trade restrictions.

Éamonn MacThomáis, in his collection of Dublin street slang, songs and comments, *Janey Mack me Shirt is Black* (1987), praises Ireland's heritage, her ancient art and her poets. He too remembers and comments, "Oh Maud Gonne MacBride I love the memory of your name, I love the memory of your life and I love your cause, but why did you have to see Cathleen Ni Houlihan the Queen of Ireland, coming down the bog in County Mayo? Why didn't you see her running down Stoneybatter or Francis Street? It would have given the Dublin poets and writers a wonderful inspiration" (93).

It might have done that but it would not have been a true reflection of the source of Maud Gonne's activities on behalf of less fortunate people. MacThomáis will have to content himself

with the image of Cathleen Ni Houlihan-Gonne striding through Dublin slums and their pitiable schools. Little is remembered or written about the committees she formed, and the years of hard work to feed children too hungry to learn.

Hunger had been an obsession with Maud Gonne since the days she witnessed the famines in counties Mayo and Kerry and the misery of tenant evictions of Donegal. Among the many pamphlets she had printed and distributed was a leaflet (1898), in which she upheld the right of a starving man to steal food. The authorship of this was shared with James Connolly. They justified their argument with quotations from Pope Clement I, Pope Gregory the Great, Cardinal Manning and St. Thomas Aquinas, in which all had spoken variously about sharing the products of the earth and that extreme need justified taking the property of another. Religion is here used, again, to justify a political stance.

In the *Freeman's Journal* she had previously published an article urging farmers to take a more aggressive approach in solving their tenancy problems (Levenson 133-134). The fact that Maud Gonne was not more frequently arrested or bound over to silence is a reflection of the political climate. It was changing and perhaps it was easier to ignore this voluble woman than to focus even more attention on her critical comments. Not only through the written word but by her magnetic personal presence she did much to raise, to a simmering point, the emotions of a people long depressed in resignation to their lot.

Sinn Féin won a majority of seats in the parliamentary election of December 1918. Refusing to take their seats in the British Parliament, an independent Irish parliament, Dáil Éireann, was formed in January, 1919. *Forty-nine of the seventy-three elected members were incarcerated as political prisoners or hiding to prevent arrest.* Although Countess

Markievicz, who had associated herself with many of Maud Gonne's campaigns, was the first woman in Western Europe to hold the post of a cabinet minister, as secretary of labour, Maud Gonne was ignored.

The cloud hanging over her youthful association with Lucien Millevoe, suspicions about the parentage of her "adopted niece" Iseult, and her unconventional behaviour made it unlikely that she would be allowed to participate actively in the formation of an Irish government. The Church's heavy hand held political reins. Its attitude towards divorce, which caused the downfall of the Home Rule leader, Parnell, had not altered.

Despite her early and current contributions, in propaganda and fundraising, when Griffith's Sinn Féin party gained influence and power she remained an outsider. Her attention and devotion to Ireland's cause had never flagged during her absences.

It seems tragic and unfair that her unceasing efforts never received the acknowledgement they deserved. As Levenson expresses it she "has not been accorded a place with the icons of that period of Irish Republican politics" (233). It says much of Maud Gonne Macbride that not once did she express any bitterness at this exclusion, but continued to write and fight for the Cause of the country and justice for its people, whoever the government might be.

Ireland has sung many songs about its heroes and heroines. It is ironic, and sad, that one who contributed so much is remembered in no more than joking street jingles. Not one of the famous Rebel Songs acknowledges her. I can only attribute this to the ever-present schism. Despite her conversion to Catholicism, she was not "one of us". Maud Gonne was too outspoken, too different for the conservative men running the country.

Some months past her eighty-seventh birthday, Maud Gonne was finally stilled, but others spoke for her. The peasants for whom she had fought, the political prisoners and their families whom she had supported sent messages of appreciation and condolences to her son. Even the politicians, who had been tardy in their acknowledgement of her political contribution, paid homage at her Requiem Mass. Once more the newspapers and journals reflected her life-long contribution and her name was again linked to political discourse in print

¹ I have spoken to old people who remember the conversations, and often very heated arguments of their elders, arising from an article of Maud Gonne's in the daily newspaper.

* * * *

CHAPTER 15

PATRIOTISM, POETRY, AND A FEMALE PERSONA

I beat and pound for the dead,
 I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.
 Viva to those who have fail'd

Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself'

Not all Troubles writing resounded with the fervour or constancy of Maud Gonne's sixty-odd years campaign. Neither was Victorian bluster and verbosity confined to writers of prose. There were those who sang their rebellion in poetry and doggerel.

Among the many versifiers who sang their rebellion were those to whom Gerald Dawe's criticism applies. In 'A Question of Imagination: Poetry in Ireland Today', he finds the inordinate interest of Irish poets in language, place and cultural affiliation "a potentially debilitating pressure, a thematic bias and cultural conditioning which can resist and undermine the poet's ability to maintain artistic integrity." This concern is shared by Tom Paulin who feels there is a "tendency to thematic predictability" in the poet's role in public debate. He cites Montague's delineation of nostalgic landscapes of home and Heaney's poetic exploration of the very practice of being a poet (in Kenneally, 186-196).

Insofar as a "cultural conditioning" may curtail the insight and enjoyment of a reader unfamiliar with references in a poem, this is an acceptable criticism. Generally, though, a poem is not designed architecturally, like an office block; the poet speaks his innermost being, plays with familiar images.

With an Irish poet, nurtured in the *dinnshenchas* tradition, playing word-games and creating puzzles could come almost automatically. On the other hand if a poet, like Bernard O'Donoghue, or Seamus Heaney, chooses to direct his

thoughts at an audience which can fully appreciate the nuances, why should he not do so? The making of poetry is not a commercial undertaking, it is the workings of the heart.

These trends, which Dawe and Paulin deplore, are both confirmed and negated by writers of fiction as different as Patrick McCabe and Edna O'Brien. Both use poetic tropes and metaphors. Like poets they depend on the semiotic content of signifiers which have become "thematic[ally] predictable". At the same time this "predictability" contains an extra, often hidden, compartment of information, available only to those privy to the code.

Literary shibboleths remain potent. The nostalgic landscape of home is there but becomes twisted, it shows a double face, and by this duplicate-layering of meaning attains extra dimensions of depth and interest. The poet Bernard O'Donoghue achieves this in his title alone, as well as in the body of his poem 'Visiting The Birthplace of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille (2003).

The poem looks backward, with implied respect, at Ireland's legendary writer/poet Ó Rathaille, but, at the same time speaks of present hooliganism. The tone is set by the first two lines which tell us, "We got directions from a man in socks/asleep in front of 'Coronation Street' ". Right from the beginning there is no doubting England's presence in Ireland and its influence. Juxtaposing an English Television 'soap opera' with Ó Rathaille says everything about change in cultural values.

Although the trip is ostensibly to visit the birthplace of an Irish bard particularly famous for his patriotism -- and strong anti-English sentiment -- the impression is that the visitors are more interested in getting touristy photographs than paying their respects, or even acknowledging the importance of the dead poet. "We set to, / taking photographs from different

angles, / getting as much fuchsia in as possible". Nothing is said within the body of the poem about Ó Rathaille and why people would wish to see the place where he was born. Unless the reader has background knowledge the title, and therefore the poem, would be meaningless. This total lack of reference *in* the poem is a significant statement of O'Donoghue's intent. The cross-currents of his unvoiced statements vibrate.

The narrator is shown the newly renovated vacant house of an acquaintance, as he tells how "[t]he lads / going home from school throw stones at it / Because it's empty they think it's nobody's." The shattered windows and the fire they lit "on the new boards below", have made it unsaleable.

These images replicate and conjure up in the mind of those who know memories and pictures of the devastation wrought in Belfast by the continuing Troubles. There it is usual for houses to stand abandoned, half burnt-out, windows broken or boarded up, broken glass under foot. When the repeated vandalism is reported to the Guards (police), they "weren't interested". The owner complains that "[h]e'd sell it / if he could, but who would buy it now, / this half-wrecked bit of renovation?" Is this a metaphor for Ulster, a reflection on the devastation of the failed Peace Treaty?

In describing the renovations there is considerable significance in the fact that the restored room has "new orange plaster." Paint is the usual medium used to colour walls. The word plaster has other connotations. Normally applied over the original edifice it is a structural element to cover up and hide the rawness of the bricks. Plastering over is not only a building act but a metaphor implying the hiding of unsightly cracks or unpleasant faults. There are certain literary nuances of covering up in a pejorative sense. Besides, the choice of colour draws one's attention. Who paints their inside walls orange?

Colour, in Ireland, is not simply the manifestation of a decorator's or artist's taste. It is a political statement, particularly if the colour is orange or green. In James Joyce's short story 'A Little Cloud', in *Dubliners* (1914), the brash Ignatius Gallaher, now completely the West Briton, returns home to Dublin for a visit. He patronises and attempts to impress his friends having become very superior, very English. He sports a "vivid orange tie". This reveals as much about his character as does the description of his unpleasant bluster (81). It gets our backs up. O'Donoghue's use of the inflammable word has a similar effect. In both instances one word conveys volumes, but only to the initiated.

The final lines of the poem twist the gut with an indefinable sadness: "I wondered who would want to fix a house / in that wet place of all earthly places." The words of a poet long self-exiled from his home yet still writing nostalgically about its quirks.

Evoking all the emotional, intellectual and *political* nuances and connections which Ó Rathaille's name calls up is an example of the shorthand implicit in the shibboleths available to Irish writers. This poem works on two distinct levels. It is a manifestation of the collective unconscious, an archetype emerging unbidden to enrich depth of meaning below the surface of the word. The interlinking of old writing with new is a particular feature of Troubles literature. Indubitably it is this factor which gives the shibboleths such force.

Ó Rathaille (c 1670-1729) was a revered Irish poet of the Bardic school writing in Irish. He grieves for the confiscation of the lands of his patron, Eoghan MacCarthy, after the Battle of the Boyne. About the same time he wrote the famous *Créachta Crích Fódla*, a lament for the wounds Ireland suffered at the conqueror's hands. He personifies Ireland as a regal yet gentle woman turned into a servant by boorish and discourteous

foreigners who suck dry her breasts. In further poems he satirises those Irish eager to receive the lands of dispossessed Jacobites.

It is mainly Ó Rathaille's visionary Aisling¹ poems for which he was famous. *Mheabhail*, foretelling the return of the Stuarts, with many soldiers and ships at their disposal to drive out the foreigners, is an example of political wish fulfilment expressed in literature. It is only one of the numerous Aislings Ó Rathaille wrote celebrating Ireland's dreamed-of release from occupation and bondage. His name was a rallying call for Republicans. Troubles legends display a similar wish fulfilment and shibboleths would appear to function, in an abbreviated modern form, like the poetic Aisling.

Many of these poems personify Ireland as a beautiful woman awaiting her lover. O'Donoghue's choice of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille's birthplace to visit suggests the sort of pilgrimage commonly made to places associated with saints or heroes. As the title of a poem it is significant and raises expectations which remain unfulfilled. It is this pervasive sense of unfulfilment which haunts the poem. It seems to be its message as well as its theme.

The patriotism and cultural affiliation which Dawe and Paulin criticise for appearing in Irish poetry is even more influential in its prose. This invites not only the *tristesse* of poetic unfulfilment but dictates that Religion and Politics enter Irish fiction. When novelists like Edna O'Brien provide a descriptive background including religious objects or practices, this is more than a mere setting of scene. Because of cultural placement an ambience and a familiarity of habit are created for Irish Catholic readers, or those familiar with the context. An extra depth and dimension are added to the scene and the character. In the same way degrees of religious influence or commitment can be evaluated. Personality and behavioural

patterns are implied and often the extent to which a religiously suppressive childhood forms the background to a protagonist's life. Erecting this familiar backdrop is sufficient to inform fully.

Edna O'Brien has a role in public debate, but contrary to Paulin's suggestion, hers is often a very *unpredictable* influence. She reveals the country's tendencies to brush scandal under the carpet and deny that anything is amiss in good Catholic Ireland. This was evident in her factional exposé of a scandal which rocked Ireland. *Down By The River* (1996) was banned in her home country while becoming a best seller elsewhere. It deals with physical abuse and the incestuous rape of a child. Attempts to have the resultant pregnancy terminated create more religiously motivated media outrage than the original crime.

Patrick McCabe's metafiction exposes both hypocrisy and twisted realities in a very loud, confrontational manner, using black humour to make his point while at the same time making his writing a performer. In this way, similar to a poet consciously parading the function of his craft, he, like a flasher, shows all.

Both writers extricate the inner psyche of their characters as if, bit by bit, painfully, with a pin they are extracting meat from a winkle. Both inscribe their fiction on the palimpsest of the past, toying with mythologised clichés. McCabe's 2001 *Emerald Germs of Ireland* plays with the image of motherhood and the extended metaphor of this as it relates to Mother Ireland. In this way he twists the shibboleth inside-out, perverting what was once held sacred; but is only able to do so effectively because the image is so familiar that the irony becomes immediately (and often offensively) obvious.

Pat McNab -- is there a self-mocking comment in the similarity of names and age? -- "the main character in this book", is a forty-five-year old man completely dominated by his

mother. He sits on her lap while the two of them bawl out songs (7).

Bizarre, macabre, but with sufficient reflections of reality to make the point. The imagery is brutally concrete but the prose utilises the often obscure metaphors of poetry. The picture is uncomfortably close to that of Ireland's sons bawling out their patriotic songs in the pub, tearfully expressing their love for her. Pat McNab's mother would not allow him the national solace. He was not allowed to take a drink, and therein lay the problem.

This book, similar to his run-away success *The Butcher Boy* (1992), shows the humanity, the pathos of an inadequate individual and the destruction wrought by human frailty linked to family and social dysfunction. In *Emerald Germs* (the title alone speaks volumes of satire), the mother figure is turned on her head. She is -- as James Joyce described Ireland in *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man* (1916) -- "the old sow that eats her farrow" (220). In this case it is the son who murders the consuming mother. It would not be stretching the imagination too far to transpose the familial disaster to the national situation of unremitting conflict.

In Ireland poetry as well as prose often functions as storytelling and hence, "as a social binding agent", as Marina Warner points out in *From The Beast To The Blonde*, (1995: 414). This social function is present in rebel songs and the shibboleths of Irish writing. They tell familiar stories that evoke conditioned responses. On hearing 'The Wearing of The Green', the immediate reaction is not to analyse if this is good poetry, nor to question the truth of the Irish being forbidden the National symbol. Neither aesthetics nor verity is important here when the myth becomes tradition and a rallying-post for Republican fervour. The *purpose* and therefore the *function* for which this writing is intended is political. It is this criticised

'cultural conditioning' that Irish writers utilise to their advantage. They rely on similar responses that recognise and interpret deeper connotations in the apparently casual mention of a word like 'Stater'².

In *The Sins Of The Mothers* (1992) by Frank Delaney, the political implications of the term 'Stater' pinpoint a nexus for an informed reader. It reflects both the "thematic bias and cultural conditioning" to which Dawe objects, but it achieves a shorthand reference of remarkable efficacy.

It is irrelevant if the doggerel of traditional ballads and rebel songs is deplorable poetry. They work in the same way that Dawe claims for the introspective "thematic predictability" of some modern Irish poets: a need for identification of self with "nostalgic landscapes" is fulfilled. Self-image is an unconscious factor in emotional and intellectual response. Placed in a familiar space communication between self and the written word is facilitated.

Perhaps we are reaching -- or returning to -- a stage where it is permissible to include a positive emotional response as a qualitative evaluatory tool for selecting the poetry one wishes to read or sing? It is salutary to consider the longevity of verses which, escaping the lecture room, have outlived far more academically acclaimed poetry. I would suggest that this is so because they supply a psychological need in the same way that the ballads and shibboleths do.

Looking at examples of patriotic songs, in both *A Thousand Years of Irish Poetry: Gaelic and Anglo-Irish Poets From Pagan Times To The Present* (1947), edited by Kathleen Hoagland, and the many collections published by Waltons (see References) one notices marked variations of tone and voice. Those translations from the Irish language, retaining the original rhythms and 'feel', have a quality which disappears when converted into an

iambic meter. A perfect example of this is evident in the various interpretations of '*Róisín Dubh*'.

Although 'Dark Rosaleen', the version by James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) is possibly the best known it is the least 'Irish'. He utilises the same Romantic conventions that Yeats employed for his earlier Celtic Revival poetry. It is softer, less sinewy and certainly less authentic than those translations which adhere to the original.

The prevalence of iambic metre, in many of these songs, accords well with the morale-boosting effect needed in a marching song, whereas the less rigid anapaestic metre lilts cheerfully in the narrative verse. It is easy to distinguish the Anglo-Irish influence from the authentic Irish translations. The psychological *function* of the songs remains identical.

Poetry also serves as encapsulated history, a source for tracing trends, values and attitudes. In both the encyclopaedic collection edited by Hoagland and Thomas Kinsella's volume of translations from the original Gaelic in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse* (2001), we find an outline of Irish history traced in patriotic and narrative verse.

James Clarence Mangan is one of the many Irish poets who combined translations with his own interpretations in order to express patriotism. 'Dark Rosaleen' became one of the icons of Nationalism fusing politics, cultural tradition and literature.

Kathleen Hoagland points out that there were several Irish versions of *Róisín Dubh*, and it was possible that Mangan combined these. The original Irish-language poem, by Owen Roe MacWard, Hoagland states, "was composed in the reign of Elizabeth of England, [and] is an address to Ireland" (142). Translations by Eleanor Hull and Padraic Pearse, both more fluent in Irish than Mangan, were less romantic and shorter than Mangan's version, although all contain seven stanzas.

Perhaps Mangan's being the most accessible to the then prevalent romantic ethos was what made it the most popular. It is interesting to compare the final stanzas of these three versions which Hoagland gives on pages 143 – 148. (Appendix 6).

Since the 1600s *Róisín Dubh* was one of the most popular of Ireland's female personas. The English translation is 'dark little rose', words which have come to carry a great burden of emotive content. Their association with rebellion and revolution, political aspirations and patriotic sentiment, far outweigh the original simple literal meaning.

Mangan used versions of Irish poems given to him by scholars such as George Petrie, John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry. In 1846 he wrote 'Dark Rosaleen' based on a translation of '*Róisín Dubh*' by Samuel Ferguson (1810-1886). A rallying call to Irish Republicanism the poem is associated with a frequently repeated legend. When the English forbade patriotic political writing Irish poets wrote love poems. These were ostensibly directed at beautiful women but were statements of political intent. The colonisers were unaware of the *double entendre* and the Irish people laughed up their sleeves as the English listened to, and even sang these songs, with no inkling of their intention (as demonstrated above pp95-6).

Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), poet, and educator was Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers who fought the brief Easter 1916 battle. For a few days Pearse was President of the Provisional Government of a free Ireland. He was also one of those martyrs whose prompt execution by the British was the final straw which tipped the balance and turned previously moderate Irish people into avid Republicans and revolutionaries. His name is an icon, a shibboleth to recall the politicised early years of the last century.

Pearse believed bloodshed was cleansing, it sanctified: a blood sacrifice was necessary to jolt the Irish nation from its apathy. He was correct. And yet his version of '*Roísín Dubh*' is probably the most gentle, for despite his revolutionary status his was basically a cultural approach to change.

Many of the country's bards and poets used this conventional metaphor of Ireland as a young woman in order to express yearning for, and anticipation of, the country's longed-for freedom. The central position that such imagery has assumed in Irish literature, both oral and written, makes it an important metaphor.

Stemming from the original pre-Christian religion of the early Celts, where the goddesses' association with the land was enshrined in ritual, Ireland's identity has always been represented by a female figure. The new king's ritual marriage with her was an essential aspect validating his sovereignty. As part of the ceremony the goddess proffered the king a drink before their symbolic mating. It was the goddesses who assured the fertility of the land, successful harvests both of crop and livestock. (A popular up-dated version of this legend is the story of the Fisher King and his bride).

As with the goddesses who could possess diverse aspects — similar to the Hindu goddess Kali — so too has Ireland assumed the personas of both a young and beautiful woman and of the poor old woman, the *Sean Bhean Bhocht* (Shan Van Vocht). The origin of the latter probably dates from the legendary *Cailleach Bhéirre*, identified as *Boi*, the wife of *Lug Lámfhota* a renowned Tuatha Dé Danann hero and chief, prominent in the early Irish mythological saga. She has another identity as well, that of the old crone appearing to a young hero from whom she asks love. If he kindly accedes to her repulsive request she turns into a beautiful young woman.

Although reputed to be old and ugly the Shan Van Vocht was obviously held in affection by the people. Ireland's appearance in literature, personified as a woman, thus stems from many sources; ancient religion, mythology, association with the wife of an early political figure as well as being the source of revolutionary rallying songs. And although not much celebrated as such in literature she has, indubitably, also assumed the nature of the Mórrígan. The early Irish-language meaning of the word was great queen.

The Mórrígan a feared and commanding goddess of war was part of a trio of such goddesses. She did not participate in the fighting but influenced the outcome of battles in different ways. Her appearance at Cú Chulainn's side, in one of his many fights, turned the tables to his benefit. It was the Mórrígan's frightening appearance, as well as her reputation, which affected the opposing side psychologically and caused their defeat. War's ugly face has always been present in Ireland in some place or form, as is shown in literature from the early sagas until the most recent novels and poems.

Yeats' play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, follows this tradition of personifying Ireland as a woman, but -- typically -- he utilises his own version of another traditional manifestation, Cáit Ni Dhuibhir. Although the English translation would be Kate, daughter of darkness, Yeats chooses to remodel his heroine's name.

Terence Brown (1988), in 'Yeats, Joyce and The Current Irish Critical Debate' argues that Yeats lived and wrote in rarefied self-created isolation "above the filthy modern tide"; his was an effete Celticism (in Kenneally, 118). His Celtic world was typical of the sentimental Victorian image and what he created was an artificial 'tradition' that had no relationship to the factual, but one where his interest in the occult could fit comfortably.

Gorgeous as much of his 'Celtic' poetry is, Brown considers Yeats an anachronism who bent Irish myth to suit his own creative ends (Kenneally, 113-123). In Yeats' 'Travels of Oisín' he alters the original myth, sending Oisín off to visit two further mythical countries. These were never in the original. Further, unable to read the Gaelic himself, Yeats depended on translations which were tidied up and softened to conform to the accepted mores of his time.

Often utilising the romanticism of the period those versifiers who did not share Yeats' ability infused their verse with political and patriotic fervour. Many created the works published in numerous editions of Walton's Irish ballads and songs. The dreadful doggerel of these popular street songs took on a life of its own bridging republicanism across from the 19th into the 20th century.

1 Aisling, (literally vision or dream) is defined by Welch as "a Gaelic literary genre, primarily associated with the political poetry of the 18th century though having roots in early Irish literary texts dealing with both love and sovereignty." (9)

2 'Stater', an abbreviation of Free Stater, is a derogatory term used by Anti-Treatyites for those prepared to accept the partition of Ireland in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Republicans objected to Ireland obtaining little more than fiscal autonomy as a self-governing dominion: a 'Free State' within the British Commonwealth. They further bitterly opposed the required oath of allegiance to the British Crown and its representation by a Governor General. The final vote in the Dáil was a narrow win for those prepared to accept the Treaty, 64 against 57 objecting. The country was set for Civil War. The negotiators, beguiled by promises of future unity, and threatened by the immediate resumption of the Anglo-Irish War if they did not immediately accept the terms, acted in good faith. They believed it was the thin edge of the wedge that would completely separate Ireland from England, that ultimately their aims would be achieved without further bloodshed. They were wrong. The Civil War erupted. Short and bloody, followed by brutally squashed guerrilla and underground action, it left terrible scars on the Irish psyche.

CHAPTER 16

DREADFUL DOGGEREL AND SOME REPUBLICAN PROSE

The Irish ballad is a very cunning form. There's no room for greyness or subtlety. It starts telling the story in the first line, and the rhythm and the metre and the simplicity of the characters draw you in. All would be fine, except there are historians who examine these ballads as authentic social documents, when of course they are works of art designed with a specific purpose – they're very effective weapons in a cultural war.

Joseph O'Connor, Books Interview, in *The Independent Magazine*.

Kathleen Hoagland's formidable collection, *1000 Years Of Irish Poetry: The Gaelic and Anglo-Irish Poets From Pagan Times To The Present* (1947), is carefully edited with informative notes. This 830 page book is, in itself, a reflection of a complete history of Ireland. There are different versions of Rebel songs and ballads. Many of these, appearing in one or other of the booklets published by Walton or the Soodlum Music Company, deviate from the older texts.

As an example of how these popular ballads change over time, the song Tim Finnigan's Wake, in *100 Irish Ballads*, (published by Soodlum Music in 1985), differs quite a bit from that quoted by Canon Sheehan in *The Blindness of Dr Gray* (c. early 1900s, 244-245).

One of the favourites of these patriotic rallying calls, whose first line is in itself a familiar quotation and shibboleth, was by John Keells Ingram (1823-1907). 'The Memory Of The Dead' starts splendidly, plucking the heartstrings with its familiar opening line, "Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?" After four stanzas lauding the brave and glorious dead, the exiled heroes who fought and were prepared to die for Ireland, we have, in the penultimate stanza the inevitable rallying cry:

"They rose in dark and evil days
 To right their native land;
 They kindled here a living blaze
 That nothing shall withstand.
 Alas! that Might can vanquish Right –
 They fell and passed away;
 But true men, like you, men,
 Are plenty here today.

The final stanza ends:

Though good and ill, be Ireland's still,
 Though sad as theirs your fate,
 And true men be you, men,
 Like those of Ninety-Eight. (Hoagland, 505)

One can trace a pattern. Many of these verses are calls to arms, they swing along with an easy lilt on the tongue. They are also sentimental recollections of history turned into song, much in the manner of the ancient bards, but without their meticulous craftsmanship. It is, however, a continuation of an old custom. The history of Ireland's Troubles is told in verse.

Michael Joseph McCann (1824-1883) calls "To join the thick squadrons in Saimear's green vale./...Rush to the standard of dauntless Red Hugh! / ...On for old Erin and "O'Donnell Aboo!"

The fourth and final stanza of this galloping cry to arms, ends:

'Sons of Tir Connell, all valiant and true.
 Make the false Saxon feel
 Erin's avenging steel!
 Strike for your country, "O'Donnell Aboo!"
 (Hoagland, 507)

Red Hugh O' Donnell (Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill 1572-1602), and his father-in-law Hugh O'Neill (1550-1616), fled Ireland during the romanticised Flight of the Earls. His death in Spain, rumoured to be from poison, was not that of a soldier and yet O' Donnell's name has become another of those shibboleths recalling past glory and made much of by writers like MacManus. Ireland appears to rejoice in her most spectacular defeats. She builds great legends more from the

personalities of her defeated heroes than from their few and limited successes. There is a reason for this.

Traditionally the old bards were historians who recounted the history of the influential family or clan they were serving. They were also praise-singers, and from this must have arisen the tendency for defeats and humiliations to be transmuted into glory. No respectable dynasty would keep in its employ a poet incapable of presenting its history in the best possible light. The composers of patriotic ballads do no less. The histories of warfare and politics are not impervious to the craft of a good wordsmith.

Many of these ballads are indubitably in the jingoistic pattern of British Victorian sentimentality; exclamation marks abound with the queen's own generosity of their use. It is ironic that the Gael uses the idiom of the hated Saxon to express his patriotism. Page upon page of doggerel swinging along at a rousing pace, careless of fact and keenly mythologising whatever emotive aspect arose, has created an alternative history. It is one-sided to a degree almost of parody.

Timothy Daniel Sullivan (1827-1914) in 'God Save Ireland' reminds us that these were the last words of the Manchester Martyrs before being hanged. They were condemned as a warning to other Irish rebels. For those who followed the trial, or who afterwards read the reports, the trigger, 'Manchester Martyrs' sets off a powder-keg of anti-English sentiment waiting to explode in justifiable wrath. It took little to ignite political fervour and the writers, rhymesters and agitators knew this and used it to effect.

There were enough heroes in the past to inspire all the patriots. Michael Hogan (1832-1899) used the O'Neill legend as a rallying cry. He gives us, in 'O'Neill's War Song':

Fierce is the flame of the vengeance of Erin ...
The Saxon is come from the towers of the Pale.

John Todhunter (1839-1916) turns to legend. The Banshee' evokes an image in which Ireland is,

The spectre Erin [which] sits.
... A mother of many children
Of children exiled and dead.

We are told how she keens, and then both Ireland and we are comforted:

Wail no more, lonely one, mother of exiles, wail no more, Banshee
of the world – no more!
... The wrongs, the worlds. (Hoagland, 535-536)

These lines retain a certain quality of the old Irish-language versifiers; short lines alternating with longer ones, incomplete sentences suggesting content rather than spelling it out. Mixing patriotism with a folk-legend, so strong that it can almost be termed religious belief, is very potent. Everybody could tell a personal tale about the Banshee whose cry is heard by certain families before a death. The name means woman of the *sidhe*.

William B McBurney was the *nom de plume* of Carroll Malone (c1855 – 1892?). He utilises the ever popular image and folklore of the Croppy Boy which has become another of those shibboleths linked with "98": the one is immediately suggested by the other and an entire chapter of Irish history is recalled by either.

The Catholic insurgents of the Wexford rising cropped their hair, and legend has it that they swore an oath never to allow it to grow until Ireland was free again. This savage Civil War the Catholics fought against their Protestant countrymen was a vicious affray. It was quite contrary to the political ecumenism sought by the leaders of the United Irishmen who wished, like Keating, to combine Gael and old Anglo-Norman Gall against their common enemy the new English Protestant Gall [foreigner].

There was enough drama, enough tragedy to burn events into the nation's soul. Under-armed, under-trained, defeat was inevitable for the Croppy Boys, but seldom has a contingent of fighters been memorialised for so long, so often and so emotionally as those that fought in '98. Theirs is a shibboleth still retaining its evocative intensity. From repetition it is branded into the subconscious and continues to inspire poets. In 'Requiem for the Croppies' Seamus Heaney (1987: 12) continues the tradition in exquisitely crafted and moving images.

Joseph Ignatius Constantine Clark (1846-1925), in five fourteen-lined stanzas, celebrates 'The Fighting Race'. He has Burke proclaim that "My grandfather fell on Vinegar Hill, / And fighting was not his trade; / But his rusty pike's in the cabin still." To which Kelly replies " ...the pikes were great / ... We were thick on the role in ninety-eight "(Hoagland, 552-553). Their production seems limitless, these celebrations of a great defeat and even greater, if foolhardy, bravery. The pace is rollicking, happy almost, belying the sad content with which Chesterton labelled the songs of the mad Gaels.

Charles Joseph Kickham (1830-1882), in 'Rory Of The Hill', speaks of the common practice, in times of insurrection, of turning a rake into a pike. And 'pike' too has become a shibboleth. It recalls the bravery and tragedy of young, untrained and unsophisticated men aflame with patriotism but without arms. The pike was the only weapon which Irish fighters had against the cannon and rifles of armed English Cavalry and infantry.

In this poem Rory of the Hill says of his first-born, "You'll be a Freeman yet, my boy". In the last stanza one of the most potent of Irish shibboleths is invoked: "And would to the kind heaven that Wolfe Tone were here today! / Yet trust me, friends, dear Ireland's strength, her truest strength is still / The

rough and ready roving boys, like Rory of the Hill" (Hoagland, 525-526).

Is it any wonder that generations of idealistic young people, fed on these inflaming and exciting words, performed suicidal, rash and ultimately non-productive acts of war? Often, with even less than a pike in hand, these brave and foolhardy Irishmen rushed to their deaths on the hills of Ireland where they were slaughtered by better fed troops superiorly equipped, trained and disciplined and under experienced professional leadership. The Irish were lemmings of patriotism with only words for weapons.

But it is not only in wars and patriotism that the Irish spill blood and words. Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1815-1868) refers in his second stanza to "Cromah their Day-God and their Thunderer / Made morning and eclipse" (Hoagland 518-9). He thus telescopes the then still-lingering traits of Nature and Druidic Worship. Ireland's past lingers. Poets and versifiers sing lovingly of legends through which the old religion glints.

William Larminie (1850-1900) is another who turns to the sagas for his songs. He writes of ancient myths and ruins. 'The Sword Of Tathra' belonged to one of the Formorian Kings and it is captured by Lugh, the sun-god, but the sword is Death (Hoagland, 559). There is an obsession with death in Irish writing; it appears so frequently, almost casually, stretching back to a time before history.

Lady Augusta Gregory (1852?-1932) manages to celebrate both folklore and patriotism in 'The Old Woman Remembers'. This is a potted lesson in the history of Irish uprisings as the Old Woman remembers and celebrates each of seven Uprisings. The poem recalls memories and emotions of "[s]evenhundred and a half years" of occupation. It does so merely by mentioning a date or a name. The icons of Irish idolatry, the heroes of politics, patriotism, religious fervour and

The intention to kill in cold blood is dissected. The woman, taken captive, hears her death song on the night she is captured and taken to the mountains. Her actions and emotions as well as those of her captors are presented in fragments of minute detail. They are *real*. This is a different sort of song; lacking in the easy rhythm and rhyme of the Rebel songs or the sad reminiscent songs about emigration. It does not bluster. *This* song is about intent, it is direct and has a cold acceptance of violence. Mention is made of the hated Tans, an automatic incentive to revenge.

The same voice is heard in both the old tales accurately translated from the Gaelic and in certain modern works of fiction and non-fiction. Anna Burns' *No Bones* (2001), Padraig O'Malley's *The Uncivil Wars* (1983) which has a list of killings in the index, Toby Harnden's *'Bandit Country': The IRA and South Armagh* (2000), all convey an attitude towards violence which make it appear as an ordinary part of life, whether one likes it or not. It is accepted.

Sean O'Faolain 1900-1991 (born John Whelan) became involved with the Republican movement and joined the Irish Volunteers in 1918. He took the Republican side in the Civil War and was a director of propaganda for the IRA. By 1932, when these stories were published, one is aware that although he draws on the apparent initial romance of the Republican cause and the heroism of the guerrillas, a certain disillusion with war is evident. He sees what could be described as a lack of chivalry, the rawness of human nature in a combat situation, and it offends him. The authorial voice is definite but muted so that it comes through gently, suggestively, rather than as an outright declaration. O'Faolain treads with cat's paws over extremely sensitive issues.

His attitude is subtly expressed in a delicate delineation of character and events which go beyond the partisan description

The change was confusing and attitudes did not immediately alter. New songs and ballads constantly were added to the repertoire, particularly those with a political content, like the song about Kevin Barry (1902-1920). He was the "first IRA man to be executed in the Anglo-Irish war." Caught while taking part in a raid on a military lorry collecting bread in Church St. Dublin, his court martial and death sentence caused a great amount of public indignation because he was so young. Despite many pleas to have his sentence commuted, he was hanged on 1 November. S.J. Connolly confirms that "[h]is tragic end made him a frequent topic of ballads" (39). Was it deliberate that he was hanged on Samhain, the festival of death and darkness?

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PART VI
THE PRESENT PAST

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CHAPTER 17

INCORPORATING CUSTOMS: FROM DRUID TO CHRISTIAN

[W]hen the rumours of distant centuries come to us by two channels, one popular, the other historical, it is a rare thing for these two forms of tradition to be fully in accord with one another.

Ernest Renan, *The Poetry Of The Celtic Races* (c. 1896).

The Romans and Greeks said of the Celts that they were bloodthirsty warriors. Their head-hunting cult is well documented in the folk-lore/history passed down by oral tradition and later documented by Gaelic-speaking Irish monks. Did this tradition influence writers of the 20th century? Were they aware of it and did they share their forbears' attitude to violence? There are certain similarities in narrative style.

A section of the *Scéla Mucce meic Dathó* found in the *Book of Leinster* (early 9th century), was meticulously translated by Frank O'Connor from the Gaelic. He calls it 'Who'll Carve The Pig' and it appears in *A Book Of Ireland* (1959) which he edited. The fragment illustrates a propensity for accepting violence as a normal part of life:

"Is it true that you are carving the pig, Cet?" asked Conall.

"Get up from the pig now."

"What will get it for you?" asked Cet.

"I have the right to challenge," said Conall. "I give contest to you, Cet. I swear by my people's gods since I took a spear in my hand I was never a day without killing a Connachtman, or a night without raiding one, and I never slept without a Connachtman's head under my knee."

"True," said Cet. "You're a better hero than I am. But if Anluan [his brother] were here he would give you contest. It is hard luck on us that he isn't here."

"Oh, but he is," said Conall, taking Anluan's head from his belt; and he hit Cet in the chest with it and blood burst from his lips.

So he went from the pig and Conall sat down at it. (67- 68)

It is the conclusion of a series of challenges for the honour of carving the pig which Cet has won by proving he is the greatest hero. He does this by reeling off a list of death and

One thousand seven hundred years after the story of Cethea came Anna Burns' debut novel *No Bones* (2001) shortlisted for both the Orange and the Booker prizes. It evinces the same cold acceptance of violence. Where it is possible to distance ourselves from the savagery, so nonchalantly reported in the ancient story, we are aghast at Burns' evocation of the numbing effect created by daily violence. Yet the two stories, separated as they may be by centuries, reflect the same literary style. Actions of barbarity, cruelty, abuse, degradation, are reported in a non-judgemental manner as if they are the norm. This is done with an element of comic effect. And *this* is what exacerbates the response of horror, the raised hairs prickling on the nape as one laughs, guiltily, at the black humour.

I doubt if this is the intention of the original anonymous early writer. It is certainly the shocking jolt Burn intends to give. Her narrative takes place in Belfast where the violence of the Troubles is more than the wallpaper background effect to which it has generally subsided in the South. The events, however, do become routine incidents in the lives of the protagonists. These occur without a single authorial comment, not a nuance of overt criticism other than rapid satire, so firefly swift it can be eclipsed by the momentum of events. We are stunned not as much by these occurrences as by the apparent *acceptance* of them. We realise, without being told, how brutality and violence can numb. Is *this* why mayhem, murder, rebellion and civil war have euphemistically been called Troubles? It is an epithet which easily hides reality behind a screen of accolades.

Burns' book is a series of sketches through which the child Amelia Lovett grows up in an atmosphere of exceptional violence at home and in the streets. With the Troubles as a constant presence she progresses through shock, anorexia, an attempted rape by her brother -- whom her sister Lizzie and her friends

...the IRA men looked at each other and decided between them that yes, once and for all, it was time to do something about that annoying family. For although it was trivial, domestic, risible and not as real or as grown-up as killing soldiers, this here long-running feud had to be put a stop to, for it was getting on their nerves, causing mounting disturbance and attracting the wrong sort of attention just when they, the IRA, did not want any sort of attention attracted at all. The British Army, barracked round the corner, ... had taken it into their heads to pop around in their Saracens in the hope of catching gunmen every time this family started up ... If they had more arms, it was true, these would be perfect occasions for the use of natural bait ... (54)

What happens next is that the two young men sent to the Lovetts get beaten up. One is left in the street "unconscious or dead" when his companion flees from the fight-crazed Mr Lovett. Just in time Mrs Lovett drags her husband indoors as "the British army rushes round and up from the corner". After the fracas the Lovett children, who had been in the thick of it, "went back to their dinner" (56).

The English soldiers leave but inevitably the IRA return. This time there is nothing funny about the encounter. The men are gunmen, older and armed. Mrs Lovett knew "that beating the crap out of her sister was one thing, kicking an IRA man to death or nearly was another. People had disappeared for much less" (58). She is annoyed with her husband for interfering in a fight she was perfectly capable of handling herself without getting into trouble. Mrs Lovett negotiates with the IRA man in charge, she "had her husband's life to save" (63). To avoid being shot Mr Lovett has to leave the country, a decision the junior ranks consider not "as severe as it should be, if it wasn't on account of that woman (62).

The narrative, given from the point of view of Amelia Lovett, seems surreal at times. In 'Babies 1974' "Mary Dolan had her baby someone said. There'd been problems with it coming out, maybe because of the age she was. Her da was still pretending he'd nothing to do with it and her ma was still not noticing.

has long since gone; and any young man of those years, and there were enough, who died facing a firing squad may well have been white and terrified at the end. But it must surely have helped him to know that he was dying for something he believed in as fervently as we believed in Ireland then. (140)

In this there is something reminiscent of earlier Pagan practices which were diluted into folklore after Christianity overcame Ireland. There is a tendency to imagine a country happy under the wise rule of the Druids and Brehon laws. But there is a darker aspect. Charles Squire paints a different picture in *Celtic Myth And Legend Poetry And Romance* [s.a. c. early 1900s and reprinted in 1998]. It was by ritual sacrifice, Squire illustrates, that the gods were “persuaded or compelled to grant earth’s increase and length of days to men.” This entailed human sacrifice on so large a scale that “it would seem to have been unsurpassed in horror...” (37). Anything requested from the gods demanded a human sacrifice, even *self-sacrifice*.

Squire, whose popularity appears undimmed, was regarded as a seminal and definitive presenter of Celtic legends in English. He says of the earliest myths of the Celtic gods that they are “almost worthy to be placed beside the tale of Troy divine.” Their history is recorded from “the time of their unquestionable godhood, through their various transformations, to the last doubtful dying recognition of them in the present day as fairies” (v, vii).

Celtic state worship ended in Britain long before its demise in Ireland. This was due to the Romans being “horrificed” by the colossal human sacrifices of the druids. Not exceptionally squeamish themselves they had, nonetheless, abolished such practices before Caesar entered Britain in 55 BC and “could not therefore permit within their empire a cult which slaughtered men in order to draw omens from their death agonies” (Squire, 399).

hagiography is that the Saints consort, do battle and argue with both *sidhe* and ancient Irish kings and heroes, many of whom seem mythologised composites.

Prominent in the Fionn saga are St Patrick's theosophical and philosophical arguments with Oisín whose mother had been turned into a fawn by a druid. St Patrick's presence is obviously a later addition by the Christianised recorder. As reported this conversation occurs when Oisín returns after a thousand years absence in Tir na nÓg (the Land of Eternal Youth), to which he was lured by the *sidhe* Niamh.

Yeats included the episode in his early poem *The Wanderings of Oisín* where Oisín's last words are a rejection of Patrick's creed. He declares that he will go to the old heroes "[a]nd dwell in the house of the Fenians, be they in flames or at feast" (*The Celtic Twilight*, 142-172). Religion not only enters Irish writing as a political factor but seeps into the sagas as well.

In 1905 the then Archbishop of Tuam, The Most Reverend Doctor Healy, published *The Life And Writings Of St Patrick*, in which he gives quotations from the earliest hagiographies. S.J. Connolly (1999), states that "[t]he two Latin texts written by Patrick are the oldest documents in Irish history and the sole contemporary witness to his life" (434). The analyses and comments by Healy confirm that "[w]e know nothing of the Irish Druids from our legal treatises, for *all reference to them was carefully expunged from the national chronicles; so that we find little or nothing about them in our Annals*" (138, my emphasis). This self-admitted cultural genocide is certain proof of the influence of religion on Irish writing. One wonders if St Patrick's writings received the same censorship.

What information survives about the Druids is drawn from "the bardic tales and the Lives of the Irish Saints, especially from the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick", according to Healy (138). The Church's influence on Irish writing of early history means

spirit was to stay with us all through the exciting years to come. (137)

Perhaps only those who in their idealistic youth experienced the heady excitement, the self-sacrifice, hardships and secrecy of belonging to an underground guerrilla movement, can truly share the emotions recalled by O'Faolain's descriptions of the experience (137-140). Irish writing is studded with these reminders.

Sacrifice has a long history in Ireland. Before Patrick's arrival in Ireland, according to James MacKillop (1998) Crom Crúaich's idol was worshipped. It stood covered in gold, surrounded by twelve other idols of stone in Mag Slécht in Co. Cavan. On each Samain, from every family and every animal, the first-born was taken to be sacrificed to Crom Crúaich (100, 134-135). Until St Patrick's arrival he was the principal god of the Irish and human sacrifice was accepted. The smashing of the stone idols by St Patrick and other evangelists is still linked to festivals in Ireland.

His idol was displaced by Christian imagery but Crom Crúaich's spirit would survive. Squire tells how "The sacred places of the ancient Celtic religion might be invaded, the idols and altars of the gods thrown down, the priests slain, scattered or banished, and the cult officially declared to be extinct; but, driven from the important centres, it would yet survive outside and around them" (402).

The people continued to practice the familiar rites. They were not prepared, as were the more educated classes, to abandon their old beliefs and customs. One finds a similar pattern when the evangelism of the Reformation was combined with duress. The Gaelic and Welsh peasants clung to their old gods in spite of the efforts of the clerics to explain them as

We read in hagiographies of Christian saints having conversations and dealings with the *sidhe*, negotiating treaties with the pagan gods such as Manannán mac Lir, the sea god. Fraternising of Saint and *sidhe* is patently a continuation of the tradition of the sagas where hero and god or faerie consorted with happy familiarity. Cú Chulainn himself had an *affaire* with Fand the wife of Manannán.

There is a continuation of the *theme* in Irish story. The “good people” retained their active presence and participation in Irish life well into the 20th century as many firsthand accounts report. These were believed and tales of such encounters, translated from the Irish language, have found their way into books about Ireland and its people. Perhaps the ever-presence of the Otherworld is not surprising in the descendants of the *Tuatha*, the children of a goddess.

The old gods may have been put aside but the traditions remained. In *The Age Of Bede* (1988), edited by D.H. Farmer, the *Navigatio* is described as the work of an expatriate Irish monk. Written in the 9th century it records a long tradition of Irish monastic life which incorporates a history of St Brendan. It is “a fascinating mixture of fact, fantasy and literary borrowing”, much of which is drawn from an Irish tradition as well as from Greek, Roman and Egyptian sources. Even earlier texts, from the 6th and 7th centuries present a positive picture of monasticism in what Farmer describes as “an age and environment in which the heroic was deeply appreciated”. Some of this borrowing includes “pre-Christian elements” (12). Good examples of this can be found in Edward C Sellner’s *Wisdom Of The Celtic Saints* (1996).

Sellner tells of saints, such as Brigid who, he claims, lived around 452-524, and of Conair or Ciaran of Clommacnois, both of whom lived in the first half of the 500s (77-79). He offers no proof for his statements except faith. They, like thousands of

occasion still lingers. It is reflected in the literature. The same spirit of elevating an occasion into a higher dimension, which is performed by the *dinnshenchas*, is present here as well. The shibboleths also reflect this convention. It is a quality, with a meticulous attention to detail, which takes easily to serving a religious or political message.

The occupants of the spiritual world who replaced the old pagan gods are divided between Christianity and the faerie host. The *sidhe*, the children of the goddess Danu and thus aristocrats, took Ireland from the Fir Bolgs, according to Gaelic myth. The goddess Danu's name appears in various permutations throughout Europe and even as far as India, giving frustrating partial clues of the origin of the Tuatha. Their presence, however, is due to conquest. It is another in the uninterrupted litany of bloodshed which is Ireland's history, real or mythical.

Wherever they came from the *sidhe* are the third partner in the conglomerate constructed from pagan, Christian and Otherworldly influences. In whichever form they appear their presence and influence on Irish writing is undeniable.

* * * *

By 1926 Píaras Béaslaí has produced a massive, two-volume biography entitled *Michael Collins And The Making Of A New Ireland*. This is a detailed, scholarly account. If criticism appears it does so in the irony of juxtaposing official accounts. In recording Irish politics of the occupation it is often sufficient to give the unvarnished facts; statistics, government notices and court records are self-condemnatory.

Many biographies about Michael Collins have followed. *The Big Fellow: Michael Collins And The Irish Revolution*, written with Frank O'Connor's renowned flair, appeared in 1937. In 1965 a revised edition was published. It was reprinted in 1969 and is today still eminently readable. Frank O'Connor states in his Foreword that this is "a labour of love", and it is not for Collins' contemporaries, but for the "generation which does not know him" (10). He regrets that the new generation are "utterly indifferent to the great story that began in Easter 1916." This indifference he blames on the fact that the heroes had been presented as unreal and boringly perfect. It is for this reason he presents Collins as somebody who drinks and swears and loses his temper — a *real* person (10). The ploy worked, interest resurged and subsequent studies followed among which were *Michael Collins: The Big Fellow* (1958) by Rex Taylor. It gives more personal insights. By 1971 Margery Forester's *Michael Collins The Lost Leader* included hitherto unpublished letters and documents.

Tim Pat Coogan had even greater access to documents and his biography *Michael Collins* (1991) attests to the continuous fascination of both the man and the events. This is a definitive study reflecting a renewed interest in the politics and the people who took the first difficult steps towards achieving Ireland's Republican dream. Michael Collins' image was further enhanced by Neil Jordan's film of the same name (1996).

political statement. Welch gives an interesting summary of Feirit r's achievements (184).

Thirty-eight years later Peter de Rosa quotes an old Irish saying in *Rebels: The Irish Rising of 1916* (1991) which reflects a changing attitude: "Ireland's history is something the English should remember and the Irish should forget" (15).

As the 20th century progresses it seems this advice is being taken. With the exception of the die-hards, Troubles legends and their shibboleths lose their aggressive edge; *they are still part of the literary background until well into the turn of the millennium*, but act more as place and time markers than calls to rebellion. They are also the entr e to sentimental reminiscences and romantically fictionalised narratives.

A biography by Janet Camdon Lucey reflects the dire conditions of the Irish under English rule. *Lovely Peggy: The Life And Times Of Margaret Woffington* (1952) traces the career of an actress whose Irish mother was a devout Catholic. In illustrating the conditions against which Peg and her young, newly widowed mother triumphed, we learn how they were "cut adrift inexorably from the rest of the [Protestant] family" (22). She had married out of her faith.

The Protestant religion had been "imposed" by Ireland's rulers and marrying a Catholic "was enough to cause trouble" (22). That this young mother from a respectable home was abandoned by *both* families illustrates her pariah status. Her own Catholic family could not accept her back after she had married a Protestant and her husband's family had never accepted her. Lucey explains that "Ireland suffered cruelly from British domination in the first half of the eighteenth century. Prosperity came only to those who obeyed English rule and submitted to the Protestant faith" (37). But she also, albeit unintentionally, reveals the influence of religious prejudice and small-mindedness on *both* sides.

Politics even manifests itself in Irish art. In *A Concise History Of Irish Art* (1969) Arnold Bruce comments that it is "fortunate that art reflects history only in a very oblique way", because the picture of exclusive Protestant rule and the Penal Code "is not an attractive one" (66). This explanation for the paucity of Catholic art is not intended as a political statement. With no rancour, merely stating a fact, we are told that "[t]he Catholic population of Ireland was deprived, ... of the right to participate fully in the social life of the community and art became a Protestant preserve" (66).

Bruce points out that by the late 1950s the painting 'The Flight Of The Earls', by Thomas Ryan, was causing controversy because it so clearly delineated "the divided state of artistic loyalties" (199). It is a rather sentimental portrayal of a priest, standing with the women and old men as he blesses the soldiers and youths about to leave their homeland forever. There is an expressive empty space between the two groups. It is a political statement and a familiar shibboleth.

A continuous stream of non-fiction, in which the tone becomes less strident, covers the lives of political figures from Daniel O'Connell the 'Liberator' who fought for Catholic Emancipation, through to Collins and de Valera. There are several reasons for the change. Not only were attitudes softening, but Irish literature was moving away from its self-conscious obsessiveness with its own past Irishness.

It was not Yeats but Joyce, as Thomas Kinsella points out in an essay of 1966, who should be regarded as the "writer who represents a continuity or healing of the Irish tradition because he deals directly with Irish reality, with the lumpen proletariat, the eloquent and conniving and mean-spirited tribe of Dan". Joyce was the first writer since "the death of the Irish language" to deal with ordinary, every-day Irish life (Keneally, 8).

but the whole parade of Irish history from its beginning with the Firbolgs and the Tuatha de Danain ... the battles and invasions, the English oppression and the risings, the English-Irish trade agreement which crippled the country's economy. Naturally he didn't attempt to be objective about all this: this was Ireland's story, told by an Irishman, with an Irishman's feelings. (38)

Many of the trigger words and emotions of such stories became shibboleths opening up a wider field, a richer texture in the written word. They are examples of Umberto Eco's contention in *The Role Of The Reader* (1985) that the reader's active participation is essential in bringing the text to life.

In Ulster the differences between Protestant and Catholic were compounded in the separate schools, where although children were studying the same period and events the interpretations were different. Devlin recounts an incident which highlights the schism between the groups and the influence of the written word. In the Catholic schools the history taught was from 'Fallons Irish History Aids', published in the South. The Ulster Ministry of Education banned these books as being "seditious and treasonable" and complained about their continued use. Devlin delights in recounting that "Mother Benignus wrote back in Irish, just to make another point clear" (62).

Such influences in childhood, where religion and politics fuse, form permanent conditioned responses. Devlin quotes Pearse's frequently repeated statement: "But the fools, the fools! They have left us our Fenian dead! While Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree will never be at rest" (60). It is evident that as writing in the South became less politicised, in the North it retains all the old fervour of the Troubles legends and shibboleths. Irish literature abounds with memories of childhood and storytelling. Jamie O'Neill in *Disturbance* (1990) has his protagonist, Nilus, lovingly tell of how his father would

The presence of ambiguity in the Irish-speaking writers is not enjoyed by those without a "direct knowledge of the language", as Kenneally notes (7), but the influence on Hiberno-English has added an extra dimension, a fluidity and humour. The circularity of expression, giving like Newgrange petroglyphs, is typically Irish. This is highlighted by the fact that according to Margaret Hickey (2001) there are no words for no or yes in the Irish language. She gives examples of the routine circular manner in which questions requiring negative or affirmative answers are given (30, 33).

Irish writers relishing the tradition of circularity in riddles and old tales have assured an extra depth to Irish writing. The direct linear route is not comfortably followed. Both Sean O'Faolain (1900-1991), and Sebastian Barry (b 1955), use a circuitous approach with the most delicate of touches, revealing more pathos and story by what remains unstated but casts a definite shadow. It is this subtlety, this gift to show by action and implication rather than tell blatantly, which makes the linked stories in O'Faolain's *Midsummer Night Madness and Other Stories* (1982) so poignant.

Unlike the heavy-handedness of the doggerel manufacturers, artists such as Sean O'Faolain utilising the same triggers with consummate and subtle skill enable the reader to grasp the true agony of a multi-dimensional conflict where families and friends were divided. His own family was similarly split during the Troubles (1965: 138).

In 'The Small Lady' (in *Midsummer Night Madness*), as lightly as the touch of spiderweb, yet as pervasively clinging in the backrooms of imagination, are suggestions of situations that could and often did arise. They are all fraught with political significance. The old Constable is forced to lead the Tans along the difficult route to the Abbey where the rebel group have taken refuge. He is the father of the idealistic IRA youth who is

and the poet Patrick Kavanagh. "It's the price of me for writing poetry a policeman can understand," complained Kavanagh (180).

As late as 1997 Edna O'Brien's novel *Down By The River* was banned, due to pressure from the Irish Catholic Church (see Chapter 15 above). O'Brien is self exiled because of the closed parochial attitude and the dominance of the Catholic church in matters of decisions pertaining to literature. She lives and writes in England although her subjects and background are predominantly Irish.

In O'Faolain's short stories, the Republican and Nationalist imperatives are important themes but the undertones are still humanistic and tender. Reality may have entered the political equation as portrayed in the conflict for Independence, it left the sexual component in its cocoon of Catholic and politically approved piety. In this attitude O'Faolain reveals his early Republican/Catholic sympathies which later became more liberal. Welch gives an excellent summary of O'Faolain's political and philosophical development and his later fight against the "obscurantism, authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism" of de Valera's 1937 Constitution (428). In a way Ireland was still fighting for her freedom, a freedom from prejudice and a self-defeating exclusivism. Opinions altered slowly while Ireland's old heroes and battles lost their imaginative appeal. As Christopher Murray (1988), points out in his article 'The History Play Today' (in Kenneally: 269-289) both writers and their audiences were turning to new themes.

In 1966 Thomas Kinsella in an essay 'The Irish Writer' described the problem as a "sense of being cut off from [their] literary inheritance" (Kenneally 8). Although O'Toole considers that by "the early sixties" Irish writers found "it was impossible to talk of 1916 and its leaders in tones other than ironic ones" (in Kenneally: 19 & *passim*), this was not the case with Frank

Admittedly with T.K. Whitaker's and Sean Lemass' new economic policy of the 1960s and the subsequent increasing economic improvement, mores began to change. Irish writing roamed further afield, covered a wider variety of outlooks and styles. And although Kenneally maintains that when Lemass succeeded de Valera he was, by the 1970s, symbolically replaced as an icon in Irish literature, this was not applicable to *all* Irish writing. To this day de Valera's name represents a certain political stance and is still quoted in this context.

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PART VII
THE MORE THINGS CHANGE
THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

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CHAPTER 19
NATIONALISM NO LONGER A BINDING FORCE
BUT THE SHIBBOLETHS REMAIN

Out of Ireland have we come.
Great hatred, little room,
Maimed us at the start.
I carry from my mother's womb
A fanatic heart.
W.B. Yeats from 'Remorse For Intemperate Speech'

Fintan O'Toole (1988), in 'Island Of Saints and Silicon: Literature And Social Change In Contemporary Ireland' (in Keneally, 11-35), expresses the opinion that post Whitaker, Nationalism was no longer "a binding force behind the literature" (19). In O'Faolain's collection of short stories, *Midsummer Night Madness* (1982, first published in 1932), one notes the first faint wisp of disillusion creeping in like a soft fog to blur the previously distinct outlines of heroism in Troubles tales.

The image of countryside and peasant as the essential Irish disappeared. O'Toole refers to the resentment of urban poets at the "glorification of rural literature" which had been a major part of Irish ideology since the Literary Revival. He demonstrates that a schism exists between the rural and familiar and the attractions of the big city. This schism typifies conditions in the first half of the 1960s. O'Toole maintains that lines from Anthony Cronin's 'The Man Who Went Absent From Native Literature' underscore this point (11). These read:

He did not think that the cabin where the rain came in under
the door was free from sordidity;
And thought that in any case the sordid we had always with us.
But that when it came to the sordid
Metropolitan sordidity was richer and more fecund.
Anthony Cronin, *New And Selected Poems*. (1982: 80)

Different attitudes were fostered by the accelerating Economic Revolution. The pull of the old and familiar against the

in the manner of an old boys club to which one's group belongs and where 'the other' can not enter.

In the past writers could share with their readers the all-inclusive "sweep". O'Toole believes even if they chose to "dissent from the glorification of the national struggle, there was a language of discourse in which the audience could share" (18). Both understood the terms of reference,

The new writer's reality included the cowardice and betrayal that had been revealed, and not just the heroism. These incidents seem glossed over in fiction and ballads with only passing, slighting mentions of treachery. On the other hand journalists and historians labour the point painfully.

Is there a nostalgia for the past? When Elizabeth Bowen, Sean O'Faolain and others wrote of the disintegrating Big House and their occupants it was a topical issue. It has been suggested, by Andrew Parkin (1988) in 'Shadows of Destruction: The 'Big House' in Contemporary Irish Fiction', that more recent images of run-down Big Houses, sad and powerless remnants of the Ascendancy are a revenge on an exploitative class (in Kenneally, 306-327). This is unlikely in O'Faolain's case when one considers the compassion with which he describes the reprehensible Hen and the pathetic old people burnt out of their nearby home in *Midsummer Night Madness*. The Anglo-Irish writers like Elizabeth Bowen, with a series of novels based on the Big House, and Anne Gregory (1990, *Me & Nu*), granddaughter of Lady Gregory, write with love and nostalgia.

Is the recurrence of the Big House theme today a form of Irish 'pastoral', a nostalgia for a dream-land that never was, and as Parkin contends, "the tenacious hold of a form of rural culture over the modern, urban imagination" (Keneally, 306-327 & 9)? This would seem unlikely when one considers that the objective reality of modern Irish society is described by Terence Brown (1988) as "unadorned and carrying no sense of seeking continuity

new series of individual visions of the new order. Writers became aware of, and reflected the disruption, the discontinuity and disunion. With the noble peasant image dissipated, reality emerged and this was often revealed as ignorant and vicious (22).

Following the drift to the city, emigration became a literary theme. O'Toole points out that "agonising changes" emerged, not least of which was the impossibility of clinging to old values whilst welcoming the new economic liberation. Emigration which had been an emotive shibboleth compounded of negative images became something positive. This attitude was extended to urbanisation, a form of internal 'emigration'. No longer were literary hands wrung over the tragedy of the young leaving home to go to far places.

Accompanying urbanisation, and escape from the close-knit supervision of the country priest and neighbours where everybody knew everybody else's business, attitudes to sexuality changed. A new class began to emerge, the arriviste, the new urban middleclass. This resulted in major changes of values and identity which were variously reflected in the new writing.

Nothing could be more indicative of the changed order than the reversal of the ancient pattern of emigration. As the '60s came to their close émigrés returned home, some from America, but most from England. But they were no longer the same people. It was impossible to resume the lives they had previously lived or return to parochial values. A new awareness surfaces as background tension due to what Fintan O'Toole refers to as "the sense of dislocation and division" arising from the social and economic changes caused by rapid industrial development. He stresses throughout his article the sense not only of disruption but of disillusion (11-35). Social upheaval was celebrated by emerging writers, many of whom were from the previously impoverished lower classes.

contemporary themes. Many books combined the new more tolerant attitude to sex, the exploration of relationships and character analysis as well as reflections of the Troubles.

Jennifer Johnston's remarkable *The Railway Station Man* first published in 1984, is a typical example of this genre. It was subsequently made into a film. The youth, Jack, having joined the underground movement, is coerced into secretly hiding ammunition in an unused outbuilding. Driving from Dublin to their destination in Ulster with the surly Manus sitting beside him and the contraband truck following, Jack muses:

I wonder why I do this. I get no satisfaction, no glory ...
just an aching bum. What am I trying to do?
Right some ancient wrong? Come, come, surely
not that. Cancel out in some way labels they hand me
... West Brit, shoneen, bourgeois? Show them ... whoever
they may be, that my heart is in the right place? He
drove a car fiftythousand miles for Ireland. Got blisters on
his arse for Ireland and a first-class degree to please
his grandmother ..."

And later, examining his motives he considers if

we could look at the possibility of creating a situation
where the blabbing mouths of the political postures
were silenced once and for all?" ... "But. Oh but, but,
but, is it worth, ha ha, breaking eggs for? I often
wonder to myself why I don't use that brisk word... kill."

He feels uneasy because Manus has a gun and no scruples (179-180).

Johnston looks 'the Troubles' squarely in the face. They are not only background but shape the book. We are forced to consider the futility and pain of needless loss: we understand Helen's hesitancy to become involved in a loving relationship. In her world nothing is sure, safe or permanent. The amorphous Troubles misshape people's lives. This is the new way of looking at them.

Each author coped individually with the need, of both their readers and themselves, to transcend and make sense of the new

individuals is equally present in the ethos of a nation marginalized by colonisation. It is reflected by its writers.

Edna O'Brien turns this insecurity inwards, dwells on the traumatised psyches of women, who like herself have been socially and emotionally marginalized. She skims over Ireland's past but seems unable to extirpate her own. Her earlier work revolves around neurotic, self-obsessed women who are invariably unhappily married to unpleasant men or are involved in an unsatisfactory illicit romance with somebody else's husband. *Mrs Reinhardt and Other Stories*, (1986, originally published in 1978), quivers with a frustrated sexuality and nervous energy. Although her writing cannot be faulted this unbroken series of unhappy, neurotic women in the earlier books can become irksome. Even Edna O'Brien, though, seems unable to avoid the occasional inclusion of oblique references to the Troubles. In *Mrs Reinhardt*, during a discussion of places to walk, Clara is told:

'If I was you I'd go elsewhere,' he said, and reeled off names of other woods where there were other houses or ruins of houses. He did not have to tell me that there were more burned ruins there than in any other place in the world. (168)

An apparently innocuous statement to the uninitiated: to those for whom burnt houses represent the Troubles it recalls not only an era, but an emotion and a turbulence. The sentence could almost pinpoint the area.

Progressively getting bolder in defying the tentacle grips of her childhood religion O'Brien continues to return to her own history. *Time And Tide* (1992) is the story she repeats, in different versions, of a single mother who has left Ireland, a young woman with two sons, divorced from an older, abusive husband. It no longer reflects the Irish background of O'Brien's earlier protagonists, nor the initial Catholic guilt. Like many other new Irish writers who are 'liberated' from this guilt there are the brief wallows in 'soft porn' to prove it. If this is intended to reflect the

partisan opinions are expressed, the men's presence is explained simply. They are there "because of the things Northern Ireland is famous for ... conspiracy to cause explosions, causing explosions, murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, extortion and membership of an illegal organisation" (319). It is yet another illustration of what I claim to be the ubiquitous appearance of the Troubles in Irish writing.

That this was, and continues to be, filled with the troubles of dysfunctional families, may be linked not only to the repressive religious proscription against normal intercourse between young men and women but also to the vast disruptions of change. Kenneally, in his introduction describes the "social and cultural landscape [as] cracked and fissured under the powerful strain of opposing forces" in society (10). This, he maintains, is particularly reflected by Irish women writers. But male writers like Patrick McCabe and Frank Ronan seem not only to reflect this turbulence but to celebrate it.

Lovely (1996), by Ronan, is set mainly, in Europe. Most new Irish writing of the latter 20th century has moved onto a more global stage. Ireland is part of the European Union and its writers reflect less parochial values. The only thing identifiably Irish about *this* book, which deals with drugs and a wild homosexual affair, is the author's birthplace. It typifies the new Irish writers who moved away, emotionally and intellectually, from a consciousness of the Troubles and their shibboleths which are not important in their own, or their protagonists' lives.

The change was, however, not only politically induced. Part of it was retreat from what Kenneally describes as the 1800s influence from America "our ally" (10). This had fortified an Anglophobia which was an aspect of a newly self-aware politically active Ireland and encouraged the romanticised "notion of a poor, simple peasantry which fed both the literary and political movements" (Kenneally, 9, 15). The reality was totally different.

aspirations, the models to which Nationalism aspired and the shibboleths recalled.

O'Toole refers to this communication as "a discourse in which the audience could share" (18). The writers emerging into the latter half of the 20th century could not depend on this understanding of the old terms of reference, based upon the image of Romantic Ireland. Images and aspirations, the blueprints to which Nationalism had directed its emotional and literary energies, lost their relevance. Culture and politics, which were once inclusively intertwined, separated. This close bond had previously linked writers and readers, all one in their Irishness, with that external world, sharing the past and the present, in dream and reality. O'Toole maintains that even such writers as Sean O'Casey and Frank O'Connor, although not sharing in the "glorification of the national struggle," were yet able to communicate with their audience (18).

Translations from the old Irish, such as those of Frank O'Connor, linked writer and reader together in pride of a mutually valued past. And then the tide turned. A new wave of Americanisation made the image of Ireland into a theme-park which amused and irritated the native Irish who were increasingly aware that no more did they wish, or need to live in the imagined Ireland of the Celtic Revival or de Valera's Jansenist ideal.

As the old preoccupations faded and the hitherto forbidden topic in Irish literature emerged not only heterosexual relations are openly examined (as Edna O'Brien increasingly does), but recently there appears to be a spate of homosexual writers 'coming out'. McCabe's *Breakfast On Pluto* (1998) and *Mondo Desperado* (1999) deal with consensual recreational homosexual sex, as does Jamie O'Neill's tongue-in-cheek-titled literary pun *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001).

Colm Tóibín presents a serious study of writers in *Love In A Dark Time: Gay Lives From Wilde To Almodóvar* (2001). In this

CHAPTER 20

FROM THE TWENTIETH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

We have come to acknowledge that human existence is at least as much about fantasy and desire as it is about truth and reason. It is just that cultural theory is at present behaving rather like a celibate middle-aged professor who has tumbled absent-mindedly upon sex and is frenetically making up for lost time.

Terry Eagleton. *After Theory*. (2004: 4)

If the shibboleths remain viable in the present, they, like the Troubles legends of heroism or injustice to which they are attached, change in both function and emotive content. Whereas the Troubles legends, particularly in their oral form, could once be seen as replacing the sagas the shibboleths assumed a life of their own.

As lifestyles altered and the recreational aspect of oral literature and regional legend diminished they were replaced by entertainment aimed at a global audience. New media altered perceptions. Christine Kinealy (2004) points out, in *A New History of Ireland*, that “[t]he establishment of *Radio Telefis Éireann* in 1960 not only helped promote Irish culture, but also brought the outside world directly into Irish homes.” To this influence she attributes the undermining of “the traditional authoritarianism of Church and State” (279).

Kinealy further confirms that when de Valera died in 1975 a link with the traditional conservative past was severed (279). This view is confirmed by Hugh Leonard (2002) when he describes de Valera’s “mandatory dream” for Ireland as “a rejection of all, that by dint of being foreign, was corruptive. More importantly, it was asexual and, on that account, just possibly not immoral” (34).

Altered values ousted Republican fervour, and Troubles legends now only evoke highly emotive responses in the remaining handful of die-hards. Echoes resonate for an older generation

The Civil War was never officially ended. No declaration of peace was made and like many previous Irish Uprisings it petered out as the fighting stopped. Perhaps because there was no formal closure the wounds took longer to heal and the conflict lived on.

It seems as if initially there was a tacit agreement not to speak or write openly about the terrible events where families were split apart and brutal executions were carried out by both sides without recourse to trial. Though hardly a subject for fiction Delaney, in *The Sins of The Mothers* (first published in 1992 before reappearing with its sequel in the 1999 omnibus edition), writes tellingly to show the damaging effects.

The brutalising experiences that were part of his duties as an irregular have altered and disturbed Thomas Kane's personality. The *outcome* of this, as it affects his behaviour and relationships, is a major feature of the story yet these shaping events are only hinted at. Clues to the psychological turmoil of split and changed loyalties is implied by apparently unimportant remarks that Kane had once been a Collins man (1999: 52, 129, 247).

Where O'Faolain (1943, 1965 & 1982) writes about the Troubles leading up to the Treaty, Delaney deals with the *results*. A knowledge of the background is necessary to garner the full effect of the nuances and insinuations that he, as well as other writers, utilise.. Without such information much of the implied sinister atmosphere is lost¹.

Delaney not only uses the shibboleth as a recalling device but rests his story on the foundations of many previous works which shaped attitudes. The Sullivans [s.a.], W.E.H Lecky (1871), and even the fraudster Richard Piggott (1883), show in their histories how treachery, division, petty personal squabbles and an inability to pull together and cooperate had again and again bedevilled any attempts at a combined Irish uprising. These tendencies interfered with aspirations to establish some political unity in order to battle their enemies while, in the literature of the

The tense story seems based on the initially happy domestic relations of a couple. From the beginning, if we read the shibboleths aright, it is obvious that the lives of Mr Thomas Kane the schoolmaster and the new teacher Ellen Morris whom he marries, will be disrupted because of the past. We realise Kane was a gunman².

The build-up is discreet and based on implied meanings which utilise political implications rather than overt declarations. Ellen's father mentions that her new place of employment "had a lot of trouble around there, that place was very active y'know. The Irregulars were out in force there." We *do* know and realise that something is amiss when we hear how Kane had "quit the Troubles" after being a great Collins man and a hero in his own right (23-24).

Lying below the narrative, awaiting an exposure that never comes, are the remains of a murdered man. A coat protrudes from a shallow grave in an anonymous forest and we presume, but are never told, that this is the missing 'informer'. Time and again we are shown visible evidence of a body. Tension escalates constantly as one expects people moving past to stumble upon it. But it never happens. The mystery remains a metaphor for the silences surrounding these known facts of Irish history.

There is no resolution, no closure, but a building up of suspicion, implied accusation and fear until Kane is wounded in a shooting and left handicapped. It may be revenge, but even this is based on assumption for no clear proof is ever presented. The shibboleths, however, inform and we *know*. As the sequel, *A Stranger in their Midst* (1999) bears out, the emotional and psychological damage of the Troubles is carried through even to the second generation.

The 'execution' is described with both the reasons for suspicion, and the suspect's explanation of his innocence. During

the Troubles yet have the insight to reveal the darker obverse side. There is a noticeable dimming in the fervour of adulation for 'freedom fighters' and a strong tendency to examine the consequences, particularly when these are directed at one's own people.

In *The Photographer* (2000) Eamonn Sweeney, however, makes one keenly aware of another aspect of duality. In a world of seedy political chicanery and corruption, Father Lee taken to give absolution to informers about to be executed by their IRA captors "had no sympathy for touts. No one who had seen the men in Long Kesh [prison] could have" (300-301).

Sweeney refers to the word Troubles as "the code word" saying that "it had always preceded news of death. Acknowledgement of responsibility for a bombing, the position of an informer's body, the beginning of a hunger strike. Now a uniform precursor of dread ..." When "[p]eace breaks out" the Television news "shows Troubles footage as if it now belongs to history" (300-301). One is always aware of the burning passion, the ideals driving the violence and yet one is shown how frightful are the results..

Edna O'Brien's *House Of Splendid Isolation* (1994) deals movingly with this dual vision. Tellingly she quotes as epigraphs two comments by English statesmen, one dated 1606 by Sir John Davies, Attorney General of Ireland, the other by Lloyd George after dispatching the Black and Tans to Ireland. Both express the intention of eliminating the troublesome Irish and thus establish the fact that for centuries the Irish were subjugated to stringent restrictions and brutality in their own country. But O'Brien's novel has another voice. It shows both sides and these are, painfully, both Irish. It ends with the inevitable destruction of an innocent civilian during the capture of McGreevy an "Anti-Treatyite." The names of organisations are never given, neither are we told that the action takes place during the Civil War, but

The publication dates of these recent books inform us that the Troubles, and their emotional responses, still give meaning to the shibboleths they have borne, but in a manner different from that utilised in the ballads. *They* intend to provoke, to arouse militancy and resistance while glorifying the Cause. As a subject the Troubles continue to pervade much Irish writing in a manner designed to utilise to the full the faintest of informed response.

What may seem inexplicable is why the Troubles permeate recent autobiographies when they have not directly touched the writers. Can it be that the accumulation of generations of repetition have formed an unconscious mindset, a Jungian 'collective memory'? Edna O'Brien (b1930), makes it clear in Chapter 3, 'The Classroom', in *Mother Ireland* (1978: 40-54). In the countryside school she attended a constant theme was Ireland's sorrows, her aspirations and defeats, her ill-treatment by the colonising English and the identification of the new martyrs with those of the old sagas. The emotional response to the shibboleths was set in the classroom.

In "[t]he concern with growing up in the Irish novel" we may learn much of what forms the Irish adult beyond the fact that it "may be traced to the influence of religion", as claimed in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Vol 48 (1987-8: 260). The Troubles are as woven into the fabric of personality development as are the catechism, mass and the Sacred Heart. They appear frequently as a by-line to activities or as passing thoughts of characters in fiction.

The link between Troubles and the distant past is ever-present in Irish writing, even when it is only there by implication, and is only accessible to those who recognise the implied connection. This was demonstrated in the discussion of Bernard O'Donoghue's (2003) poem 'Visiting the Birthplace Of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille', where he blends past and present. As with much modern writing about the Troubles there is a despondent note, a

sundered them" (41) This refers, obviously, to the Land League agitations from which sprang the Fenians. Agitation was continued by groups such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Gaelic League, the IRA and their off-shoots.. In one sentence Barry encapsulates the ever-gnawing Trouble over land: he activates all the emotions the problems entailed. A sentence recalls an era.

Irish rhythms and syntax enrich the prose (132-133). What is significant is that this is not the memory of a previous century but of 1959 in a still backward rural; Ireland. Barry uses the customary Irish expression of "having the Irish" rather than of speaking it (156).

Violence stalks through much Irish writing and, like the appearance of Troubles, politics and religion it is often as an adjunct to the main plot. In *Annie Dunne* it is expressed by words rather than actions. "I begin to feel so confident and strong, I think I would strike Billy Kerr with a bar if he strode in, and cleave him like a pig, and hang him in the byre and bleed him and shave his bristles for him, and make black pudding from his dark blood and all the rest of those ceremonies reserved for the killing of the munificent pig" (135). These are not the thoughts of an aggressive young man but of an old woman. Billy Kerr threatens Annie, "Don't get in my way, Annie," he says, "I will skin you. I will take out your guts, I will take something you love and destroy it, that I will" (140) This verbal violence is a brick in the wall of the plot.

The images are associated with the slaughter of animals and are relevant to the farming background, but there are deeper elements reminiscent of the early human sacrifices performed in Ancient Ireland. One wonders if this is intentional or a subconscious quirk of collective memory? Equally evocative of the pagan past are the attitudes and actions of the children of Roddy Doyle's 1993 Booker Prize winner *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

is inaccessible to the reader unaware of the long, probing fingers of the Troubles.

Annie's story parallels that of Ireland. "Because I did not bury him, somehow he did not die for me" (150-151). Is this the cause or the effect of Annie's problem, the psychological gnawing that seems always present? Is this the reason why those 'martyrs' in their unhallowed graves did not rest, and for so long haunted Irish songs and the consciousness of their people?

Politics creeps in with no relevance to the story when Barry lets Annie say of Matt, her brother-in-law, "He despises the English or rather hates them as the old enemy of his youth." This in a book published in 2002. Barry includes a sociological summary of the decaying Ascendancy, not as a theme such as with Elizabeth Bowen or Somerville and Ross, but as background (165).

Religion and ancient custom fuse as part of daily life. Annie comments about Matt, "He is recently married for a second time himself, a thing some Catholic widowers will not do" (195). The influence of the Otherworld appears when Sarah (once a renowned healer whose services are no longer required because of modernisation and 'progress'), is called to lay out an old "mountainy" woman who lived alone. After the gouty priest had been with his prayers and oils "[a]t the close, Sarah will place a candle in her hands, and open the window. And when the wind blows out the candle, that will be called the fleeing of the soul, up to the heavens" (171-173). We are reminded of the fact gnawing away at Annie; she does not even know who at her father's death "blessed him, who let out his soul." Her guilt seeps like a dark stain through her thoughts. "I hope God will forgive me, I do hope he will. I hope St Peter will let me past the gates" (174). Religion crouches in the interstices of Irish fiction.

The duality which tore the nation apart is introduced. It is interesting that Annie's views on politics are presented as from the

Denis, meanwhile, obsessed by his sin is unable to go down to the priest's house to confess and obtain absolution. The priest out walking encounters him and the boy, overwhelmed by guilt, tells him he wishes to make a confession. O'Faolain draws out the description of the boy's horror and shame, his balking at going to the priest's house, his inability to say the words describing his sin: "The very thought of anything so coarse and ugly" (87). He attempts to go away while the priest fetches his stole, necessary for the ritual, but is seen and called back in time. The utter importance of the Catholic faith to its practitioners is underlined by Denis' relief and happiness after confession. "As he walked back in the teeth of the mountain wind he felt like a colt turned loose from its stable; he almost choked with happiness; ... and the night and the mountain were clothed in beauty without end" (87).

O'Faolain does not preach. He shows the irony of the situation; it is the 'sin' of sex and not of murder that tears the young man apart. Absolution cannot be given unless a certain piece of material is present at the rite. The forceful hold and the strange mix of both religion and politics are demonstrated, their possession of the Irish psyche — of the period — is reflected in the literature.

As a throw-away remark (lost almost in the tension of the mounting plot intent on the devout and repentant Denis at Mass in the little church in the mountains), O'Faolain reminds us that peasants "all on one knee", face the altar "as their forefathers must before the altar-rock of Christ or Crom." Lurking below the surface we find still the ethos of the old pagan god Crom Crúaich. The Irish, Pagan, Protestant or Catholic are bound and shaped by their religion. After his confession Denis, fighting an uneven fight against the superior forces of the Tans, is "full of the knowledge that he was never so prepared to die" (98). He has done penance and as ever in Irish history, life, religion and politics combine in the actions of the Troubles.

Again and again hate trails the Tans through Irish writing. Though he implies criticism of the IRA group's action, OFaolain emotively charges the reader's mind with negative images of the Tans. He has them bursting rudely, "[b]lack-bonneted devils out of the deepest pit of hell ..." behind fixed bayonets, into the seclusion of the religious house. They ill treat the toper in his DTs, they wave revolvers and they present "murderous forces and whirling torches" to the old guest-master of the monastery (92).

The negative image of the Tans is woven into narrative in diverse ways. In *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNully* (1999: 71) Sebastian Barry even-handedly implicates both Tans and IRA in murder. Eneas trying to get himself off the "black-list" says "When I was in the RIC [Royal Irish Constabulary] in Athlone there was two men killed by the Tans and it was said I was the man fingered them." He denies any culpability and spends the rest of his life hiding, delaying the inevitable day when 'they' come to eliminate him from the black list. Eventually, when he is seventy, he is traced and his one-time childhood friend arrives to assassinate him. He tells Eneas:

Have to show the young the ropes. Fight's on again, boy.
Oh, we'll have the great days now. Freedom for the poor
lost Catholic Irish of the North. That's the new story.
Marching and giving out against that old pagan queen
Elizabeth. (297).

The "old pagan queen Elizabeth" is not the Tudor queen as one might imagine from the language and sentiments unchanged since the sixteenth century, but the current queen of England.

Barry subtly introduces — with a different slant — Famine, another of the constantly appearing Irish shibboleths: "I am ... a half-dead person without rights and land. I am like those landless people that the hunger of the last century destroyed, creatures that could brook no change without the consequence of their demise" (184). There is implied criticism here. It is a different attitude to that which provides a social history with political

decades later still tinged attitudes toward people on the opposing side.

Internecine warfare came naturally to the Irish as my previously traced history should illustrate. Even into 1959, when the action takes place, the image of Ireland's Civil War of 1923 intrudes. The schisms prevail. To Matt who "it seems fired a few shots in 1916 down in Cork City, and so must be termed a patriot, Irish is a holy thing, despite the fact that his half-brother was a chaplain in France in the Royal Irish Rifles during the Great War" (156). The thought, given as a fleeting insight into a bitter old spinster's mind, illustrates the continued acrimony of family feuds fuelled by political divergence.

Annie Dunne carries a second, secret message for those who read the code. There seems a need to continue to tell this other story, the story of Ireland's subjugation, to highlight, again, the infamy of England.

What is interesting in Barry's book is the reshaping of certain shibboleths. He has Annie tell of the old-fashioned schoolmaster, Tommy Byrne, whose own father "had been the keeper of a proper hedge-school, *where the penniless classes of Catholics and Protestants went for their education*" (62, my emphasis). This is a new aspect. Is this a burgeoning form of mythologizing the past? Surely no Protestant in the days of Catholic hedge-schools would attend one? The Penal Laws made them illegal: the priests were severely punished, if not executed, for their temerity in trying to educate their congregants' children.

Another occasion when Barry changes history is where Annie says that there are new "songs now no one has heard, first-time songs, unlike years ago, when all the songs were known by everyone and a new song was like a wind from the Sahara, bearing a strange red dust, a miracle" (63). This is inaccurate. It also shows how history is continually mythologised. Readers who know no better would take this comment about the dearth of new

fellow countrymen, created long-lasting bitterness. The break-away units of the IRA, known as the Irregulars, were disadvantaged by poor organisation due mainly to factionalism within their ranks. Open warfare, between the Government and the Irregulars, lasted little more than two weeks in the urban areas before the anti-Treaty troops reverted to guerrilla tactics as used during the war against England. The new Irish government retaliated with Draconian measures. Extensive internment was immediately adopted and in September 1922 the death sentence was introduced for anybody found with arms or explosives.

² This play of words on the name is repeated in Edna O'Brien's *In The Forest* (2002) where the deranged murderer's name is O'Kane. Here too fiction is based on fact and the metaphor -- in both books -- reaches deep down into the collective prejudices of a religious society.

³ Had this, in fact, been written in the 1950s the sentiment would have raised a few hackles

⁴ Kevin Barry at 18 was the first IRA soldier to be killed in the Anglo-Irish War. Captured by the English whilst with a group raiding an army bread-wagon he was summarily court-martialled and hanged. He lives forever in Irish song and memory where his name is firmly established as an icon and a shibboleth. It is frequently seen in the pages of Irish books.

⁵ The book remains a treasured possession in the libraries of many septuagenarian erstwhile Republicans.

⁶ This is another version of the story that all England's vaunted 'hearts of oak' vessels were built from the plundered Irish forests, leaving her own intact.

ready to leap from their hiding places and onto the pages of Irish writing — even if they have nothing to do with the plot, the continuity of the action, or the era of the narrative.

With time both the character and the content of the Troubles and their shibboleths in Irish writing have changed. Cremins' book is a very scratchy, 'with-it', modern narrative of drugs, unloving irritating family reunions and a dissolute life in which the Troubles and religion persist as background. There are characters with intentionally mocking tongue-in-cheek names like Strongbow and Firbolg, and yet these firmly peg Ireland's past into the present and in the initiated reader's mind; unwilling children are still dragged to mass by Irish mothers; papal visits and crosses persist despite the mocking tone, and a great deal of Ireland's dirty political laundry is disclosed (215-217, 179-183).

The sinister shadow of the gunman continues to hover in a description of an assassination. The Free State politician Kevin O'Higgin's death is described with details taken from the biography by Terence de Vere White. Troubles emerge even in novels intending to be funny. Divergent in approach and style as they may be these new writers have one thing in common. Unlike Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, their souls do not fret in the shadow of the colonising language. They have made it their own and whether in an almost embarrassed self-mockery, or in praise, the Troubles still tread steadily through Irish writing.

A recurrent echo, a persistent repetition of style or theme is also present. Interspersed with the sentimentality and patriotism there is always the satire, the sharp criticism and biting wit. Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) shows in *Tristram Shandy* that he shares a barbed pen with Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), and both are the undoubted forerunners of Joyce's 'stream of consciousness'. Whether ebbing or in full flow this acerbic, often unpleasant wit has always been directed at Ireland's most holy cows. The latter part of the 1900s and early 2000s is awash with

would have been unheard of a few years previously. Even today I have been unable to find it in any anthologies I have examined. It originally appeared in the book of the same name in 1962.

Around the corner in an open square,
I came upon the sombre monuments
That bear their names: McDonagh and McBride,
Merchants; Connelly's Commercial Arms ...

In the same poem Kinsella complains we have "exchanged/ a trenchcoat for a gombeen jungle." 'Gombeen' is the Irish for usury and used insultingly when referring to people. This echoes Yeats' contempt for those who "...fumble in a greasy till", in 'September 1913'. It is in this poem that Yeats states "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, / It's with O'Leary in the grave" (Yeats, 1973: 120-121).

Kinsella's 'Downstream II, a revised and altered version, appears in the *Penguin Book of Irish Verse* (1970) edited by Brendan Kennelly. It does not contain the parody but in the 9th stanza speaks of "- Ourselves through seven hundred years accurst -" (381-383). (The shibboleth seven hundred is persistent). In 'The Ringwood' appearing in *The Oxford Book Of Irish Verse* (edited by Donagh MacDonagh and Lennox Robinson, 1958) Kinsella's voice is different from that in the parody. In a love poem he conjures with the shibboleth 'Vinegar Hill'. Roving with his bride on Good Friday:

The Yellow Spring on Vinegar Hill, ¹
The smile of Slaney water,
The wind in the withered Ringwood,
Grew dark with ancient slaughter.
My love cried out and I beheld her
Change to Sorrow's daughter. (330)

Nothing could more forcefully illustrate the changes of outlook and vision than these poems from the same author. It illustrates perfectly what Frank Sewell (2000) refers to as the "zig-zag" movement in the pattern of continuity in Irish culture.

in the Nut Wood at Coole, when she was a young girl staying with her grandmother Lady Gregory. In both the IRA men retain an aura of a necessary evil which is yet revered. Allowances are made for wrong-doing.

Ernie O'Malley and Ulick O'Connor write history with the emotion and descriptive flair more usually found in literary novels than in biographical accounts of a bloody fight for freedom. O'Malley [s.a.] also gives space to punishments meted out by the British Occupying Forces which read like lists to be rote learned. "Courts Martial sentences ran from a few months to five years: a boy was given a month for carrying a Sinn Féin flag; a man five months for 'being in the company of boys carrying a Sinn Féin flag; a man one month for whistling derisively at the police; two years for singing 'The Felons Of Our Land'; a song written fifty years previously" (69-70). The reported horrors which undoubtedly inflamed further outbursts of patriotic fervour — as they were surely meant to do — seem strange bedfellows next to lyrical and beautiful descriptions of nature.

Some participants in the Troubles write stirring accounts of the events which eulogise the bravery of those fighting for their cause. Others, such as O'Malley reveal the agony of families where split loyalties have brothers fighting on opposite sides. His own brother, Frank, was in the British army. His is a personal account in which the rousing effect of rebel songs is illustrated.

O'Malley, a young man who had dropped out of university — TCD — to join the IRA had not been home for two years. He seldom spent two nights in the same bed and travelled the countryside with all his belongings on a bicycle. Often cold, wet, hungry and sleeping rough he could yet appreciate and write in the *dinnsenchas* tradition, about nights aroar with wind, when only the missal thrush, the storm cock, sang in the biting blast. He notices the sounds of the birds, the colours of the plants and "broken land, umber, upturned, earth smells awakened by the

expression of “the British soldier in South Armagh ... being weighed down by the burden of the past” which saturates that county. It is couched in modern terms:

He draws a helicopter after him,
His beret far below. A wine-red spot
Swallowed by the heathery patches and ling
As he sweats up the slopes of Slieve Gullion
With forty pounds of history on his back. (121)

The name Armagh is a shibboleth carrying a weight of emotional history in its battle for independence. The results of the influence of politics on Irish writing has, here, cast its shadow on the uninvolved reporter.

One particular example of politics — as related to the Troubles of 1916-1923 — expressing itself in a violence of which much has been written, is summed up by Peter de Rosa. In *Rebels: The Irish Rising of 1916* (first published in 1990, with a revised edition appearing in 1991), he supplies a ‘Postscript: ‘What Happened Next’. It captures the essence and the irony. De Rosa writes:

Childers, Erskine: In the Irish Civil War, he joined the Republican Army. Captured by the Free State soldiers, he was court-martialled and executed at Beggars Bush Barracks on 24 November 1922. He first shook hands with every member of the firing squad. His son, also called Erskine, was to become President of Ireland. (638)

Childer’s name, like many others acquired the status of a shibboleth. To those who know, or remember talk of the excitement of his gunrunning escapade in the yacht Asgard, both names, whenever they appear in print carry a deeper resonance.²

This ‘Postscript’ encapsulates much of the spirit and the pain which, as part of the Irish psyche, is affirmed in fiction of the 20th century. Even when writing does not include the Troubles or politics and religious differences, such as in some of the books of Edna O’Brien, Clare Boylan and Mary Morrissy, there is evidence of pain or damage. There is the bruised self-image; lives are

Looking at five writers stretching across the 20th century, we can see change occurring not only in style but in attitude towards the Troubles, religion and politics. Fintan O'Toole (1988) describes it as:

...creating a literature out of the new realities, confirming that the Irish young are part of the subculture of Europe, drifting in and out of the shifting camp of industrial gastarbeiters in Germany or Amsterdam. Sex, drugs and rock and roll are more important in their work than religion, nationalism and land. The evidence suggests that the new literature of urban Ireland will be less carefully honed than what has gone before, but that it will draw on new realities. Its journey will be without maps. (35)

From Sean O'Faolain (1900-1991), Edna O'Brien (b1930), Clare Boylan (b1948), Patrick McCabe (b1955), to Mary Morrissy (b1957), they each reflect an individuality which both confirms and negates O'Toole's rigid prognostication. Interestingly it is not necessarily the youngest writer who displays the new values. Of the five it is Edna O'Brien and Patrick McCabe who have most successfully bucked the system and evaded the mould of 'Irish writer'. Both are iconoclasts. Masters of their craft, although McCabe has not yet mellowed like O'Brien, they illuminate the quirks and hidden perversities of both their people and their country. And still both remain undeniably Irish.

The women of O'Brien's earlier works (many of which were banned in Ireland), are narcissistic, self-obsessed, neurotic rebels against a system from which she herself was escaping. Political, social and religious circumstances are reflected as the background reality against which her characters interact. The Troubles -- with the exception of *House of Splendid Isolation* (1994) which deals with an incident in the Civil War -- are barely acknowledged. They appear in few of her twenty books that I have examined, including short stories, and many take the form of references to the Tans, or to the Famine as a period marker. Most of these appear in a single book, *A Pagan Place* (1971),

lack of self-worth — a typical mindset of a viciously colonised people. Eventually both country and women emerge in their own right, developing innate worth despite unconventional means of breaking through. Both initially appear wanting, hungry for approval but self-destructive in their efforts to obtain what they seek. I doubt the similarity is intentional but is, rather, the unconscious product of a fraught situation.

Sean O'Faolain, besides writing biographies of De Valera, Constance Markievicz, Wolfe Tone and Hugh O'Neill Earl of Tyrone, wrote of Ireland and the Irish both in fiction, non-fiction and autobiography. It is, however, in his earlier short stories, particularly *Midsummer Night Madness*, that his representation of the realities of the Troubles is as incisively delineated as the first welling of blood when a surgeon's knife marks the skin.

Irishness, in O'Faolain, seems to confirm Keating's linking nationality with Catholicism. Philosophical religious questions permeate his writing, weaving through them to the extent that story and religion become one. We find examples of the seamless weaving together of Hiberno-Irish syntax, storyline and perennially thorny religious questions particularly in his autobiography *Vive Moi!* (1965) and short stories like 'Feed My Lambs' in *The Talking Trees* (1973: 103-116).

O'Faolain does not mock. His questioning is sincere, his concern at the falling away from the high ideal is genuine, whether political or religious. There is a strength and a gentleness, a palpable integrity in both his questions and his revelations. More than just half a century lies between him and Patrick McCabe: the differences highlight the changed values and worlds from which the two writers emerge. In his time one would have described the image O'Faolain projects as that of a gentleman. His writing reflects the discipline, the manners and the social consciousness associated with the best interpretation of the word. McCabe deliberately projects onto his characters (and by implication

through the conversations of citizens disapproving of the inconvenience.

A woman's fears are revealed:

She was distraught with concern for her husband,
fearing that he lay in some other woman's arms ...
There was the alternative terror that he might be
murdered in his bed by Republican ruffians and the
house burned down around him, or that he
would belligerently break the curfew and be shot
in the head by the Black and Tans. (285)

Boylan's descriptions appear to give fairly even-handed pictures of the situation. In *Beloved Stranger* (2000) a drunk man in a pub tells Lily "how he had once killed for his country and now it was killing him" (190). Inevitably the song Kevin Barry emerges, but here it is not loaded with emotion. In *Black Baby* a stranger sings the song. The occasion is a description of a visit to a pub. It provides no more than local colour, but it is there (41).

Like O'Brien's the narratives of Boylan concern relationships, which are generally in happier, better adjusted 'normal' families. The men are more accessible, more ordinary. The spectre of incest arises in a secondary, distant, and less violent manner than that in which O'Brien reveals this aspect of warped family life. It is linked with "[t]he sin of touch". Catholic sexual guilt, a mother's desire to avoid further pregnancies, contraception forbidden by the Church; all emerge as part of the Catholic sexual 'problem' in *Home Rule* (28-30).

The usual passing mentions of and comparisons between Catholic and Protestant occur, and the ever-present Irish Catholicism washes up against all story-lines like an infinite ocean. Even the tennis players in *Holy Pictures* (1984) are seen by a character in religious terms: "They were invulnerable even to the venial sins which thickened the air like germs and were breathed in through the nose to nibble the white icing of the soul" (25). It is obvious that Boylan makes magic with metaphors and

injustice in the 1600s and 1700s, past the mounting land agitations and Republican sentiments of the 1800s expressed in prose and ballad, to the novels and histories of the 2000s Irish Troubles and their relationship with an intertwined religious and political ethos continue to be reflected. And the shibboleths not only remain their flag-bearers but have emerged with a life of their own.

Firmly established as the mnemonics of history in Irish literature they have survived the fading of their Republican rallying force and become almost respectable triggers of reminiscence. They have also crossed the Atlantic and appear in fiction both as historical background and as Republican rallying call. In Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) "Cromwell in Ireland" and "The Irish Famine" are listed among the world's horrors (80). More dramatically *Scarlett*, by Alexandra Ripley (1992), the 'popular' commissioned sequel to *Gone With the Wind*, has Scarlett O'Hara returned to her father's homeland and "the songs about the blessed martyrs to Irish freedom and the loud-voiced threats to run the English out" (663).

The myths and legends of Ireland have survived for centuries. Combining beliefs, dreams, aspirations and history woven with fantasy they have reflected an ethos. Shibboleths born from legends of the Troubles, the stories of heroes, martyrs and events, encapsulate a new ethos. It is too soon to pass judgement on their durability in the face of rapid change, but it seems probable that what they represent will, in centuries to come, have a place in Ireland's folklore.

¹ Vinegar Hill near Enniscorthy was the main centre of the rebels in the 1798 uprising. On the 21st June General Lake leading 10 000 well-armed and trained English soldiers fought and defeated the Irish army many of whom were no more than unarmed Croppy Boys, fresh off the fields of their farms. The Irish fought with pikes and passion. It was not enough, the Wexford Rebels were decisively defeated, and Vinegar

APPENDICES

- 1 Responses to Shibboleths
- 2 Penal Laws
- 3 Who'll Carve the Pig? translated from the anonymous 8-9th century Gaelic by Frank O'Connor
- 4 Summary of Maud Gonne's writing & 'The Famine Queen'
- 5 Declaration of Independence, POBLACHT NA H EIREANN
- 6 *Róisín Dubh*
- 7 Summary of Lady Gregory's Use Of Shibboleths

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APPENDIX 1. RESPONSES TO SHIBBOLETHS. The answers given by those who are aware of the connotations are given first in italics, the replies of the uninitiated are given second in ordinary print. Duplicate replies, such as Don't know are not repeated.

SHIBBOLETH & REPLIES.

"A TERRIBLE BEAUTY":

*1916 Easter Uprising.
A stone causing ripples [quote from Yeats].
Uprising leading to Anglo Irish War.
English sent in the 'Tans' after this uprising.
From Yeats' poem about Easter Uprising.
15 Martyrs executed without trial.
Pearse the poet led the uprising.
Infinite sadness.
From a great Yeats poem.
English sent in the Tans after this uprising.
From Yeats' poem about Easter Uprising.*

None.
Something to do with World War I?
No associations.

RIBBONMEN

*I feel I should dislike them but their violence made
English landlords aware of problems.
Land problems.
Land League.
Led to eventual formation of IRB from which came IRA.
In response to evictions and rackrents.*

Don't know.
English tax collectors?
Orangemen?
Ulster militiamen?

STRONGBOW:

*Leader of Norman Invasion of Ireland.
Normans became more Irish than Irish.
Norman Conquest.
1170, Sent to Ireland by ?Henry II to sort out a
domestic difficulty between two Irish kings.
He was the first commander of British troops in
Ireland. They came in 1170 & have not left yet.*

MANCHESTER

Martyrs.
Martyrs murdered after rigged English trial.
Unfair trial.
British "justice!"
IRA arrested, jailed (am very much against
political (or any) violence.
Lock up the IRA AND the UDF.

MANCHESTER

England.
Industry/Football.
Cotton manufacture.
Been there once briefly.
Bedclothes, sheets.

'98

Uprising 1798.
Wolfe Tone.
Failed uprising against British after which they
forced Union on Ireland & took away our parliament.
Followed by unwanted Union in 1800.
Followed by Emmet's unsuccessful uprising in 1803. He
was executed, final speech no epitaph until Ireland
free.
Trauma.
Death.

1998? Has it some sport or political significance?
 An election (provincial?)
 No idea.
 No connection with anything.
 Retirement.
 Selling house – sold.
 A date.
 (The following replies were by N. Ireland Protestants)
 Emotional blackmail.
 Orange Order.
 Peep O' Day Boys.
 Why can't you think of something else.

THE TROUBLES

It's still going on.
Difficult times.
Hardship for many.
Dangerous times.
Wholesale chaos in Ireland.
Waste of lives.

HOME RULE*Constitutional.**To die for**Just.**Parnell**Hard fought and won.**Hurrah.**Eimade.*

None.

(Comments below are from N. Ireland Protestants).

Home Rule is Rome Rule.

Ulster will fight & Ulster will be right.

Adultery used to scupper what $\pm$ everyone wanted [in the South] BUT no one had ever asked the North if they would agree.

Carson, Gladstone, Cardinal Manning, Parnell.

(The following was by respondents who had no idea to which side it applied and obviously mistook it for the Act of Union.)

Anger.

Not a fair ruling and much agony of it.

Something brought out by English and not popular.

DEV*Irish President.**Admiration.**Escaped hanging after 1916.**Strong anti-Dev feelings (WHO killed Micael Collins?) [NB Irish spelling used]**Don't like any of the De Valeras! Some of his children were contemporaries of mine at U.C.D. [University College Dublin].**Very Irish.*

Short for Devlin

Don't know

Davilin or Devalaea (Can't spell it)

POOKA*Fearful creature full of threats & meant to be scary – very scary.**Utter disbelief.**Made his acquaintance in childhood. Childhood threats etc..**Grandmother's stories.**Remember old country people who claimed to have seen it.*

FROM: THE STORY OF THE IRISH RACE (1925)
by Seamus MacManus, 37th printing: Revised ed.
Old Greenwich, Connecticut: The Devlin-Adair Co.
1983

CHAPTER LIII

THE LATER PENAL LAWS

WHEN fire and sword had signally failed to suppress the Irish race, new means to that end must be found. So the fertile mind of the conqueror invented the Penal Laws.

Professor Lecky, a Protestant of British blood and ardent British sympathy, says (in his *History of Ireland in the 18th Century*) that the object of the Penal Laws was threefold:

- (1) To deprive the Catholics of all civil life
- (2) To reduce them to a condition of most extreme and brutal ignorance
- (3) To dissociate them from the soil.

He might, with absolute justice, have substituted *Irish* for *Catholics*—and added, (4) To extirpate the Race.

"There is no instance," says Dr. Samuel Johnson, "even in the Ten Persecutions, of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland exercised against the Catholics."¹

Like good wine the Penal code improved with age. It was only in the 18th century that it attained the marvellous perfection which caused Edmund Burke to describe it as "a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, as well fitted for the oppression, im-

¹ Dr. Johnson evidently laboured under delusion that these dreadful persecutions were entirely the fault of the Protestants of Ireland, not of the Government of England. Lecky, however, knew Irish history; and this is what he has to say of the Penal Code (in his *History of Ireland in the 18th Century*): "It was not the persecution of a sect, but the degradation of a nation. It was the instrument employed by a conquering race (the Anglo-Irish) supported by a neighbouring Power, to crush to the dust the people among whom they were planted. And, indeed, when we remember that the greater part of it was in force for nearly a century, that its victims formed at least three-fourths of the nation, that its degrading and dividing influence extended to every field of social, political, professional, intellectual, and even domestic life, and that it was enacted without the provocation of any rebellion, in defiance of a treaty which distinctly guaranteed the Irish Catholics from any further oppression on account of their religion, it may be justly regarded as one of the blackest pages in the history of persecution."

So it is not to be wondered at that in the early part of the 18th century a foreign observer in Ireland noted that a Catholic could easily be told by his stooped carriage and subdued manner. Even when Thackeray visited Ireland the Catholic priests, he noted, had an abashed look. The innocent man wondered why that was so!

poverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man"—and the French jurist Montesquieu to say of it that it was "conceived by demons, written in blood, and registered in Hell."

In the treaty of Limerick the faith and honour of the Crown were pledged not only that the Irish in Ireland should, in their lives, liberties and property be equally protected with the British usurpers in Ireland—but it was especially pledged that they should be "protected in the free and unfettered exercise of their religion." And this solemn pledge of the British crown by which the Irish were induced to lay down their arms marked the beginning of a national robbery and national persecution which for cold-blooded systemisation was hitherto unapproached in the history of Irish persecutions. Just as the flagrant breaking of the solemn Treaty of Limerick is hardly paralleled in history.

When the Lords Justice returned to Dublin after signing the treaty, Dr. Dopping, Protestant Lord Bishop of Meath, preached before them in Christ Church Cathedral upon the sin of keeping faith with Papists. All over the country the persecution and plundering of the papist began again, and was soon in full swing. A million acres of papists' lands were confiscated, and their owners reduced to beggary.² The British settlers in Ireland began bombarding Parliament with petitions against the Irish papists. If these people got their liberties it was shown that Ireland would be no place for decent British people.³

And, just three years after the faith and honour of the British crown had been pledged for the protection of the papists, the Parliament passed its "Act for the Better Securing of the Government against Papists." Under this Act, no Catholic could henceforth have "gun, pistol or sword, or any other weapon of offence or de-

² An English gentleman who received the estate in Cork robbed from the McCarthy, was in the twilight of a summer day walking in his easily acquired demesne, when he came on an old man seated under a tree, sobbing heart breakingly. He approached the grieved one, and asked the cause of his grief. "These lands," said the broken old man, "and that castle were mine. This tree under which I sit was planted by my hand. I came here to water it with my tears, before sailing to-night for Spain."

³ *Exempli gratia*—

"A petition of one Edward Spragg and others in behalf of themselves and other Protestant porters in and about the city of Dublin, complains that one Darby Ryan, a captain under the late King James, and a Papist, buys up whole cargoes of coals and employs porters of his own persuasion to carry the same to customers, by which the petitioners are hindered from their small trade and gains. The petition was referred to the Committee of Grievances to report upon it to the House." —(*Commons Journals*, ii, 699). The impudent villainy of the papist Darby!

fence, under penalty of fine, imprisonment, pillory, or public whipping." It was provided that any magistrate could visit the house of any of the Irish, at any hour of the night or day, and ransack it for concealed weapons. Says John Mitchel of this clause, "It fared ill with any Catholic who fell under the displeasure of his formidable neighbours. No papist was safe from suspicion who had money to pay fines—but woe to the papist who had a handsome daughter!"

Under the pledged faith and honour of the British crown, which promised to secure the Irish from any disturbance on account of their religion, there was passed, next (in the ninth year of William's reign), "An Act for banishing all Papists exercising any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and regulars of the Popish clergy, out of this kingdom." This Act provided that "All Popish Archbishops, Bishops, Vicars-General, Deans, Jesuits, Monks, Friars, and all other regular Popish clergy shall depart out of this kingdom before the first day of May, 1698"—under penalty of transportation for life if they failed to comply—and under penalty to those who should dare to return, of being hanged, drawn, and quartered.⁴

And by such liberality of the British was the Irish nation repaid for the generosity it had shown them in its short hour of triumph. And the new and improved era of persecution which began under William—whose faith and honour were pledged that the Irish Catholics should be "protected in the free and unfettered exercise of their religion"—marched onward henceforth with marvellous stride.

Before going on to enumerate the new Penal Laws that were enacted, and the old that were confirmed, it is worth while to glance back a couple of years, and note how Irish Catholics, when the keys of their own country came into their hands, treated their long

⁴ Lecky: "In Ireland all Catholic archbishops, bishops, deacons and vicars-general were ordered by a certain day to leave the country. If after that day they were found in it, they were to be first imprisoned and then banished. If they returned they were pronounced guilty of high treason and were liable to be hanged, disembowelled, and quartered. Nor were these idle words. The year 1709 offered a reward of fifty pounds to any one who secured the conversion of any Catholic archbishop, bishop, deacon vicar-general."

Every Irish Catholic could be compelled at any time of the day or night to appear before two Justices of the Peace and swear where he heard Mass, who he attended, and who was present. He was forbidden to harbour a schoolmaster or a priest under pain of having all his goods confiscated.

The Anglo-Irish House of Commons of 1719 carried a Bill against the Popish Recusancy which it was provided that a captured priest who had been officiating should be branded with a red hot iron upon the cheek. The bill was passed in England.

persecutors. We have seen, in a previous chapter, the toleration shown by the Irish Catholics to their late persecutors, when Mary of England re-established the Catholic church and Catholic power. When the poor creature, James the Second, came to Ireland in 1689, and that the Irish got complete control of their own country, an Irish Parliament met in Dublin on May 7th of that year. This was a Catholic Irish Parliament, representing a Catholic Irish country. The members of it were men summoned together in the fury of Civil War—men, too, every one of whom was smarting from memory of the vilest wrongs ever wrought by conqueror on conquered. "They were almost all new men animated by resentment of bitterest wrongs," says Lecky—"men most of whom or of whose fathers had been robbed of their estates." Yet though they burned with holy indignation for the persecutions that they and their people and their land had suffered at the hands of the plunderer and murderer—and though in this their hour of triumph they held the power of life and death over their wrongers, Lecky confesses, with evident astonishment, "They established freedom of religion in a moment of excitement and passion." By this Parliament of cruelly wronged and persecuted papists was enacted the golden statute—"We hereby declare that it is the law of this land that not now, or ever again, shall any man be persecuted for his religion."

Four Protestant bishops sat in the Upper House. No Catholic bishop was called to sit there. While fifteen outlawed Catholic peers were recalled, only five new ones were made. Six Protestant members sat in the Lower House—almost all the rest of the Protestant members having espoused the cause of William, or fled to England.

This Parliament established freedom of religion. Says Lecky, "The Protestant clergy were guaranteed full liberty of professing, preaching, and teaching their religion."

It established free schools.

Where Catholic Ireland had before been compelled to support the Protestant Church, this Parliament enacted that Catholics should pay dues to Catholic pastors, and Protestants should pay dues to Protestant pastors.⁵

⁵ The Catholic Bishop Moloney, in writing to the Parliament, went so far as to recommend that compensation should be provided for all Protestant church beneficiaries who would now lose the state payments that they had been receiving.

The Protestant William Parnell, member of the Anglo-Irish Parliament at the end of the eighteenth century, says (and shows) in his historical treatise upon Ireland: "The Irish Roman Catholics are the only sect that ever resumed power without exercising vengeance."

And thus did these Irish Catholics, in their brief moment of triumph, to the usurpers who had persecuted and plundered them till, as one Protestant historian admits "Protestantism came to be associated in the native mind with spoliation, confiscation, and massacre."

The Penal Laws enacted or re-enacted in the new era succeeding the siege of Limerick, when under the pledged faith and honour of the English crown, the Irish Catholics were to be "protected in the free and unfettered exercise of their religion," provided amongst other things that:

The Irish Catholic was forbidden the exercise of his religion.

He was forbidden to receive education.

He was forbidden to enter a profession.

He was forbidden to hold public office.

He was forbidden to engage in trade or commerce.⁶

He was forbidden to live in a corporate town or within five miles thereof.

He was forbidden to own a horse of greater value than five pounds.⁷

He was forbidden to purchase land.

He was forbidden to lease land.⁸

He was forbidden to accept a mortgage on land in security for a loan.⁹

He was forbidden to vote.

⁶ "They are not only excluded from all offices in church and state, but are interdicted from the army and the law, in all its branches. . . . Every barrister, clerk, attorney, or solicitor is obliged to take a solemn oath not to employ persons of that persuasion; no, not as hackney clerks, at the miserable salary of seven shillings a week. No tradesman of that persuasion is capable of exercising his trade freely in any town corporate: so that they trade and work in their own native towns as aliens, paying, as such, quarterage, and other charges and impositions. . . ."—Edmund Burke (Laws Against Popery in Ireland).

"Every franchise, every honour, every trust, every place down to the very lowest (besides whole professions) is reserved for the master caste." (Burke's letter to Langrishe.)

⁷ Standish O'Grady tells the story of a Catholic gentleman of the County Meath who having driven four blood-horses into the assize town was there held up by a Protestant and tendered twenty pounds for his four valuable horses—whereupon he drew out a pistol, and shot the animals dead. Ever after, he drove into town behind six oxen—his mute protest against "law." "Incidents like this," says O'Grady, "aroused and fed the indignation which eventually compelled the annulment of the law."

⁸ So, a man dead and buried is said, in Ireland, to have "a Protestant lease of the soil."

⁹ "All persons of that persuasion are disabled from taking or purchasing directly, or by trust, any lease, any mortgage upon land, any rents or profits from land, any lease, interest, or permit of any land; any annuity for life or lives, or years; or any estate whatsoever, chargeable upon, or which may in any manner affect any lease."—Edmund Burke (Laws Against Popery in Ireland).

He was forbidden to keep any arms for his protection.

He was forbidden to hold a life annuity.

He was forbidden to buy land from a Protestant.

He was forbidden to receive a gift of land from a Protestant.

He was forbidden to inherit land from a Protestant.

He was forbidden to inherit anything from a Protestant.

He was forbidden to rent any land that was worth more than thirty shillings a year.

He was forbidden to reap from his land any profit exceeding a third of the rent.¹⁰

He could not be guardian to a child.

He could not, when dying, leave his infant children under Catholic guardianship.¹¹

He could not attend Catholic worship.

He was compelled by the law to attend Protestant worship.

He could not himself educate his child.

He could not send his child to a Catholic teacher.

He could not employ a Catholic teacher to come to his child.

He could not send his child abroad to receive education.¹²

The priest was banned and hunted with bloodhounds. The school master was banned and hunted with bloodhounds.

If he had an unfaithful wife, she, by going through the form of adopting the Protestant religion compelled from a papist the heaviest annuity that might be squeezed out of him—and would

¹⁰ Lecky says: "If a Catholic leaseholder, by his skill or industry so increased his profits that they exceeded this proportion, and did not immediately make a corresponding increase in his rent, his farm passed to the first Protestant who made the discovery. If a Catholic secretly purchased either his own forfeited estate, or any other land in the possession of a Protestant, the first Protestant who informed against him became the proprietor."

To encourage among the Anglo-Irish ardour on behalf of the law, the Anglo-Irish Parliament in 1705 passed a resolution "that the persecuting of and informing against a Papist is an honourable service."

¹¹ Lecky says: "The influence of the code appeared, indeed, omnipresent. It blasted the prospects of the Catholic in all struggles of active life. It cast its shadows over the inmost recesses of his home. It darkened the very last hour of his existence. No Catholic, as I have said, could be guardian to a child; so the dying person knew that his children must pass under the tutelage of Protestants."

¹² "Popish schoolmasters of every species are proscribed by those acts, and it is made felony to teach even in a private family. Being sent for education to any popish school or college abroad, upon conviction, incurs (if the party sent has any estate or inheritance) a kind of unalterable and perpetual outlawry. He is disabled to sue in law or equity; to be guardian, executor, or administrator; he is rendered incapable of any legacy or deed or gift; he forfeits all his goods and chattels forever; and he forfeits for life all his lands, hereditaments, offices, and estate of freehold, and all trusts, powers, or interests therein. All persons concerned in sending them or maintaining them abroad, by the least assistance of money or otherwise, are involved in the same disabilities, and subjected to the same penalties."—Edmund Burke (*Laws Against Popery in Ireland*).

inherit all the property at his death. If he had an unnatural child, that child by conforming to the Established religion, could compel from him the highest possible annuity, and inherit all his property at his death—to the total exclusion of all the children who had remained faithful to their father, and their religion.¹³

If he was discovered in the act of having his son educated at home, a ruinous fine and a dungeon awaited him. If he sent his son to be educated abroad, all his property was confiscated—and the child so educated was thereby debarred from all rights and properties in the country, and debarred from inheriting anything.

He was compelled to pay double for the support of the militia. And he was compelled to make good all damages done to the state by the privateers of any Catholic power in which the state was at war.

"After Limerick," says Edmund Burke in his "Tracts"—that is, after the Irish had, by the faith and honour of the British Crown, been pledged protection in their lives, liberties, and property, "there was not a single right of nature or benefit of society which had not been either totally taken away, or considerably impaired."

The law soon came to recognise an Irishman in Ireland only for the purpose of repressing him. Till in the reign of George I, Lord Chancellor Bowes and also Chief Justice Robinson, in their official capacity, pronounced: "The law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic."

Lecky says that it was more through rapacity than fanaticism that the English and Anglo-Irish so ferociously oppressed, repressed, and robbed of both their moral and material rights, the Irish Catholics.¹⁴

¹³ Lecky says: "The undutiful wife, the rebellious and unnatural son, had only to add to their other crimes the guilt of a sacrilegiously vain conversion, in order to secure both impunity and reward, and to deprive those whom they had injured of the management and disposal of their property."

¹⁴ One historian says that they were really more anxious to have the soil of Ireland turn Protestant, than the people.

The insignificant number of Irish who embraced the new religion did so in practically every case for purpose of holding their property. There was in Roscommon a celebrated character named Myers who craved for salvation through the Protestant religion when he found that a rapacious Protestant neighbour was about to bring against him a Bill of Discovery—whereby he would be compelled to disclose the value of his property, which on its being found to be more than the few acres that a papist was legally entitled to, would be confiscated to the discoverer. As, before being accepted and baptised, it was necessary to undergo a period of instruction by a minister of the Established Church and an examination by one of the ecclesiastics, Mr. Myers, for his theological study, dined every day for a week with a boon companion, the Protestant rector of Castlerea—after which a social hour's chat with the Archbishop of Dublin secured for him the certificate that guaranteed him to be a fit subject for "Baptism unto the true Faith." On the day on which he was received into the Established Church the Archbishop gave

But Lecky elsewhere admits that fear of the conquered people ever again taking rank with their conquerors likewise inspired the persecutions. His words are: "It was intended to make them poor and to keep them poor, to crush in them every germ of enterprise and degrade them into a servile race who could never hope to rise to the level of their oppressor." The British traveller, Arthur Young, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century found "an Anglo-Irish aristocracy of half a million joying in the triumph of having two million slaves."

Young tells how he found the gentry for little or no cause, lash with horsewhip or cane, or break the bones of the people, "and kill, without apprehension of judge or jury." "The Punishment Laws," says Young, "are calculated for the meridian of Barbary."¹⁵

Throughout those dark days the hunted schoolmaster, with price upon his head, was hidden from house to house. And in the summer time he gathered his little class, hungering and thirsting for knowledge, behind a hedge in remote mountain glen—where, while in turn each tattered lad kept watch from the hilltop for the British soldiers, he fed to his eager pupils the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge.

Latin and Greek were taught to ragged hunted ones under shelter of the hedges—whence these teachers were known as "hedge schoolmasters." A knowledge of Latin was a frequent enough accomplishment among poor Irish mountaineers in the seventeenth

a dinner in Myer's honour. For the edification of the guests, the good prelate at suitable moment requested of the spotless neophyte that he would "state to his fellow-diners his grounds for abjuring the errors of popery." Promptly replied Myers, "Twenty-five hundred acres of the best grounds in the County Roscommon."

¹⁵ It is scarce a century since papists were for the first time permitted to reside in some of the walled cities such as Derry in the North, and Bandon in the South.

On the gates of Bandon was written the legend:

"Enter here, Turk, Jew or atheist,
Any man except a Papist."

Underneath these lines a rascally papist, possessed of some wit and some chalk, tried his hand at a little "poetry" of his own:

"The man who wrote this wrote it well;
For the same is writ on the gates of Hell."

On a Government return of 1743 the Provost of Bandon reports, "Neither priest nor papist was, ever since the hated King James his reign, suffered to reside within this town. The inhabitants are all Protestants and by our Corporation Laws no other can live among us."

But the mills of the gods were in motion, all unknown to the pious Provost. To-day Bandon is an overwhelmingly Catholic town. And Derry, the very Mecca of Orangeism, has a Catholic majority, a Nationalist Corporation, Nationalist Mayor, and Nationalist representative in the Irish Parliament.

APPENDIX 3: WHO'LL CARVE THE PIG? translated from the anonymous 8th-9th century Gaelic by Frank O'Connor (1959)

"Keep up the contest," said Cet, "or let me carve the pig."

"You're not the right man to carve it," said the big fair-haired warrior of the Ulstermen.

"Who's this?" asked Cet.

"Eoghan mac Durtacht," said all, "king of Farney."

"I saw him before," said Cet.

"Where did you see me?" asked Eoghan.

"In the doorway of your house when I was taking a spoil of cattle from you. The alarm was raised. You came at the cry. You threw a spear at me and it stuck in my shield. I threw it back at you and it went through your head and took out the eye. The men of Ireland see you with one eye. I cut the other out of your head."

So he sat down.

"Keep up the contest, Ulstermen," said Cet.

"You won't carve it yet," said Muinremor mac Gerginn.

"And is this Muinremor?" said Cet. "You were the last I wiped my spears in, Muinremor," said Cet. "It isn't three days since I took three warriors' heads off you and the head of your eldest son." So he sat down.

"More contest," said Cet.

"Here you are," said Menn mac Salchada.

"Who's this?" asked Cet.

"Menn," said they all.

"And what do herdsmen's sons with nicknames mean by competing with me? Because I was the priest that baptised your father; I cut his heel off with my sword so that he went off from me a cripple. What's the cripple's son doing, challenging me?" Do he sat down. ...

But when he took the knife in his hand and approached the pig they saw Conall Cernach come in. He gave a jump into the middle of the house. The Ulstermen gave Conall a great welcome. Conchobar tossed the helmet from his head and exulted. ...

"I'm glad the food is ready," said Conall. "Who's carving for you?"

"It went to the man who is carving," said Conchobar, "Cet mac Magach."

"Is it true that you are carving the pig, Cet?" asked Conall. ... "Get up from the pig now."

"What will it get for you?" asked Cet.

"I have the right to challenge," said Conall. "I give contest to you, Cet. I swear by my people's gods since I took a spear in my hand I was never a day without killing a Connachtman, or a night without raiding one, and I never slept without a Connachtman's head under my knee."

"True," said Cet. "You're a better hero than I am. But if Anluan¹ were here he would give you contest. It is hard luck on us that he isn't here."

"Oh, but he is," said Conall, taking Anluan's head from his belt; and he hit Cet in the chest with it and blood burst from his lips. So he went from the pig and Conall sat down at it.

¹ His brother.

APPENDIX 4. MAUD GONNE; A Summary of her Writing & 'The Famine Queen'.

Writing for a new nationalist paper, *The Republic*, Maud Gonne supports Griffith's and Sinn Féin's campaigns to boycott the purchase of British products. Always giving logical reasons or proof to substantiate her point, Maud Gonne explains that Irish emigration could be reduced by Irish manufacture of goods. Previously, on March 28 1907, the paper had reported on Maud Gonne's symbolic distribution of shamrocks during the St Patrick's Society's yearly celebrations at Notre Dame, Paris. She had organised the despatch of these emotive tokens of patriotism by the Daughters Of Erin. The report made much of the priest's remarks commending her "noble work for Ireland" (Levenson 236).

Bean na hEireann (*Women of Ireland*), the first women's magazine to be published in Ireland appeared in November 1908. Maud Gonne persuaded the organisation *Inghinidhe na hEireann* (Daughters of Erin/Ireland) -- which she had helped establish -- to produce a publication promoting complete separation from England. She wrote articles for it and helped with financial assistance. The journal also promoted feminist ideas which were remarkably advanced for the time.

Independence of not only the country but of its women was a clearly stated goal. For two years the magazine published a variety of articles covering literature, history, the necessity of school feeding schemes, street fighting techniques for political demonstrations, the plight of political prisoners and, of course, politics.

Even the gardening section, written by Countess Markievicz, was not immune from anti-English comments. Levenson remarks on her advice to crush snails and slugs underfoot "with the same relish as one would obliterate the English in Ireland." It is not surprising that the magazine's slogan was "Freedom for our Nation and the complete removal of all disabilities to our sex" (Levenson, 238-240).

The *Irish Press* of October 7, 1933 published a concise and detailed description of the school feeding systems in France, Belgium and Germany with a persuasive suggestion that Ireland follow suit. Maud Gonne was the writer, proving again how she tailored her style to the occasion and the targeted audience.

On October 24, 1938 the *Irish Press* quoted Maud Gonne's comments on dictatorship of which she disapproved whilst yet commending the way Hitler had raised a defeated nation. She took the opportunity to chivy the Catholics of Ireland to similarly release themselves from the humiliations and defeats visited upon

them easy prey, and who have been overcome in the terrible struggle for existence on a foreign shore, will fall on this woman, whose bourgeois virtue is so boasted ...

England is in decadence. The men who formerly made her greatness, the men from the country districts, have disappeared, they have been swallowed up by the great black manufacturing cities; they have been flung into the crucible where gold is made. Today the giants of England are the giants of finance and of the Stock Exchange, who have risen to power on the backs of a struggling mass of pale, exhausted slaves.

The storm approaches, the gold which the English have made out of the blood and tears of millions of human beings attracts the covetousness of the world. Who will aid the pirates to keep their spoil? In their terror they turn to Victoria, their Queen. She has succeeded in amassing more gold than any of her subjects, she has always been ready to cover with her royal mantle the crimes and turpitude of her Empire, and now, trembling on the brink of the grave, she rises once more at their call ... Taking the Shamrock in her withered hand, she dares to ask Ireland for soldiers – for soldiers to fight for the extermination of their race!

And the reply of Ireland comes sadly but proudly, not through the lips of the miserable little politicians who are touched by the English canker, but through the lips of the Irish people.

Queen, return to your own land; you will find no more Irishmen ready to wear the red shame of your livery. In the past they have done so from ignorance, and because it is hard to die of hunger when one is young and strong and the sun shines, but they will do so no longer. See! Your recruiting agents return alone and unsuccessful from my green hills and plains, because once more hope has revived, and it will be in the ranks of your enemies that my children will find employment and honour.

* * * * *

POBLACHT NA h EIREANN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,	THOMAS MacDONAGH,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA,	RAMON CHAMET,
P. H. HARRIS,	JOSEPH PLUNKETT,
JAMES CONNOLLY,	

APPENDIX 6 VERSIONS OF *RÓISÍN DUBH*

Mangan begins 'Dark Rosaleen' in a happy enough anapaestic metre, which proves inadequate when drama and emotion disrupt the flow. "O, My Dark Rosaleen, / Do not sigh, do not weep!" and ends:

I would scale the blue air,
 I could plough the high hills
 Oh, I could kneel all night in prayer.
 To heal your many ills!
 And one ... beamy smile from you
 My fond Rosaleen!
 Would give me life and soul anew,
 A second life, a soul anew,
 My Dark Rosaleen!

O! the Erne shall run red
 With redundance of blood,
 The earth shall rock beneath our tread,
 And flames wrap hill and wood,
 And gun-peal, and slogan cry,
 Wake many a glen serene.
 Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,
 My Dark Rosaleen!

My own Rosaleen!
 The Judgment Hour must first be nigh,
 Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
 My Dark Rosaleen!

Perhaps it is the ubiquitous kill-or-be-killed sentiment that has made this such a Republican battle-cry?

Eleanor Hull is more sparse here, though her *Cuchulain The Hound Of Ulster* (1909), is couched in the elaborate language popular at the time her version also gives a much more detailed translation than those usually offered about Ireland's legendary hero. Hull's rendition of *Róisín Dubh* is different from Mangan's. It is terse and impelling. The opening line begins "There's black grief on the plains, and a mist on the hills" and her final stanzas, although the sentiments are similar, seem hardly to be from the same original which inspired Mangan. Eleanor Hull's final stanza reads:

I would walk Munster with thee and the winding ways of the hills,
 In hope I would get your secret and a share of your love:
 O fragrant Branch, I have known it, that thou hast love for me,
 The flower-blossom of wise women is my Ros geal dubh.

The sea will be red floods, and the skies like blood,
 Blood-red in war the world will show on the ridges of the hills:
 The mountain glens through Erin and the brown bog will be quaking
 Before the day she sinks in death, my Ros geal dubh.

APPENDIX 7 Summary and explanation of the significance of the shibboleths used in Lady Gregory's patriotic poem 'The Old Woman Remembers' (Hoagland, 560). The names and dates, acting as shibboleths which recall entire histories, are emphasised and in bold print whilst an explanation of their significance is in plain text.

1185 Donald O'Brien; wins a battle against English forces at Munster. 1316 [10th August], **Phelim O'Connor**; commemorates the Battle of **Athenry**, Co Galway, under Felim O'Connor [Fedlimid Ua Conchobair]. He led "a vast army of the Irish of Connacht and elsewhere" and was killed at "one of the bloodiest battles in later Medieval Ireland." Defeated by the Anglo-Irish under the command of William Liath de Burgh, a cousin of the Red Earl Richard de Burgh (1259-1326), the O'Connors never regained their former power (Connolly, 30).

1417 Art MacMurrough; [Art Caomhánach MacMurchadha] (d 1467), was the King of Leinster and the chief military target of Richard II during his expeditions to Ireland. He fought well but was eventually vanquished by the English king. MacMurrough was allowed to retain his title and lands if he returned to their rightful owners the lands which he had conquered. He was ordered to give military service to Richard by fighting against the Irish resisting the English invasion. MacMurrough refused, and was able successfully to avoid Richard's demands. He retained his influence and the loyalty of the Leinster Irish until the end (Connolly, 338).

1551 Shane O'Neill (1530-1567), successfully held the English troops, under Sussex, at bay. Although he was eventually granted the O'Neillship he led a life of constant internecine conflict and war against rival tribes. Even after his death his influence continued to bedevil English relations with future Lords of Tyrone for the colonisers banned the title due to Shane's posthumous attainder. (Connolly, 413). The O'Neill name is associated with the High Kings of Ireland and many legends glorify it. It, too, is an icon and a shibboleth.

1693 and Patrick **Sarsfield** (1655-1693) Earl of Lucan, took his Wild Geese and as Lady Gregory tells it "when King and broken treaty lied" fought for King James II in the Williamite War. Sarsfield was an English gentleman, one of the old Gall, and also the grandson of the Irish hero Rory O'More (1620-1652) who was the principal plotter and leader of the rising of 1641. He married into a leading Anglo-Irish family of the Pale and was a crucial link between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English parties. Developing out of this rising of 1641 arose the long conflict and series of Troubles known variously as the Irish War of Confederation, the Irish Civil War, or the Eleven Years War 1641-1653. It was a momentous occasion as a Confederation was formed uniting the Catholics of Ireland and the Old English of the Pale.

1798 celebrates Theobald Wolfe **Tone** (1763-1798) and **Lord Edward Fitzgerald** (1763-1798). Tone, a Protestant, was regarded as the father of modern Irish Republicanism. His is a name with which generations of Irish writers have conjured. Fitzgerald, arrested in May '98, for his part in the military planning of the uprising, died of the wounds he

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