



Cultural Nationalism and the Irish Literary Revival

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ABSTRACT

The impact of cultural nationalism on the Irish Literary Revival is a topic of continuing interest for the cultural critic and literary historian alike. In recent years, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall, political scientists and others, such as A.D. Smith, Ernest Gellner, and E.J. Hobsbawm, have also focused on the subject of nationalism. The intention here in this article is to revisit a familiar site in the light of these new ideas and to test their validity or appropriateness in the Irish context. The article, part of a larger project to be published in 2003 by Polity Press under the title *A Cultural History of Twentieth-Century Irish Literature*, is divided into 5 sections: What is my Nation?; What is a Nation?; Do Nations Have Navels?; 1890s: Winds of Change; English As We Speak It In Ireland. Among Irish authors discussed are Hyde, Shaw, Yeats, Wilde, Lady Gregory, Joyce, and Beckett.

KEYWORDS: cultural nationalism; nationalism; colonial encounter; Irishness; Literary Revival; language and identity; Hiberno-English.

If we enter a classroom almost anywhere in the world and ask for the names of Irish writers, the response will almost certainly be immediate and enthusiastic: Yeats, Joyce, O'Casey, Brendan Behan, J.P. Donleavy, Roddy Doyle. With four Nobel Prize-winners for Literature — Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Beckett, Heaney, and five if the Irish-American dramatist O'Neill is

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included — and a fair sprinkling of Booker Prize-winning novelists and runners-up, Irish writing is now at the forefront of world literature in a way impossible to imagine, say, in 1890. And it is more than just literature which has gained prominence. "The Irish Are Ascendant Again" ran a dramatic headline in *The New York Times* in October 1996, and by way of evidence the author produced Frank McCourt, Bono, Riverdance, Van Morrison, the Chieftains, Liam Neeson, the business leader Anthony O'Reilly, and the hundred Irish names on the Forbes list of the 400 wealthiest Americans.¹ In the last decade also there has been, as Rosa González has more subtly suggested, a cultural greening of Britain.² So something is happening that belongs both to Ireland and the world beyond, both to literature and the wider culture.

Arranging the scene in upbeat fashion helps foster the idea that those embarking on a course in modern Irish literature should quite properly spend time reflecting on this literary and cultural explosion, and almost immediately questions surface about cultural and other issues, Ireland's relationship with Britain and Europe, emigration, economic backwardness, the Celtic Tiger, censorship, size of population, Northern Ireland. Here in this article I explore some of the ways in which the beginnings of modern Irish writing seem in part to stem from or to belong to the expression of cultural nationalism which came to prominence after the Act of Union in 1801, received renewed energy from the 1880s onwards under the dual influence of Protestant and Gaelic nationalists, and which continues to hold sway today as if not a dominant then a residual ideology both north and south of the border.

In Tom Stoppard's recent play *Shipwreck* (2002: 57), the literary critic Vissarion Belinsky is animated by the thought that "People are going to be amazed by Russian writers. In literature we're a great nation before we're ready." The first sentence could also apply to Irish writers, but the second sentence — Belinsky is thinking of Gogol, Puskin, Dostoyevsky — is one to ponder in the Irish context. Russia was already a nation-state, if not a "great nation", when the major writers came on the scene; modern Ireland did not become a nation-state until 1922. As for the issue of readiness, this is rarely asked in the context of culture — though it has been in historical accounts of the transition with the outgoing British administration — and it would be difficult to answer given that the achievement of the Revival (1890-1920) was followed so rapidly by the Irish Civil War (1922-3). Part of the problem with the comparison lies in this: modern Ireland has produced great writers but these writers do not or did not in themselves produce either a nation or a great nation. Twentieth-century Irish writers have paraded with the best, but 'great nation' status has rarely featured as a political ambition, the battle-cry of the republic-in-waiting being simply "A Nation Once Again". So the relationship between literature

¹ See Dinitia Smith, "The Irish Are Ascendant Again", *The New York Times* 3 October 1996. The play in the headline is on the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the social class who ruled Ireland for two hundred years and more. The poor Irish were never 'ascendant'.

² Rosa González, "The Cultural Greening of Britain" in *Irlanda Anie Un Nuevo Milenio*, (ed.) Ines Praga Terente (Burgos: AEDEL, 2002), pages 17-34 The Irish are now part of the British cultural scene, with Irish films and plays being widely enjoyed, popular sitcoms such as *Faiher Tedshown* on British television, and Irish voices heard constantly in the media.

and nationalism in Ireland is different or more complex, where time-frames both overlap and co-exist, where the word "accompanying" is as much in evidence as "foreshadowing", and where the phrase "great nation" seems strangely out of place.

WHAT ISH MY NATION?

"What ish my nation?" asks Captain Macmorris in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The question, which belongs to both history and the responses to history, has never ceased reverberating in Ireland, especially in the period from the 1880s onwards. Godwin Smith, writing in *The Contemporary Review* in 1885, refused to countenance the possibility that people of English extraction could press for Home Rule: "What can be more ridiculous than to hear a man bearing the name of Parnell, Biggar, or Sexton, talk of driving the British out of Ireland?" (Smith, 1885: 7). A generation later, in Shaw's anti-war play *O'Flaherty V.C.*, with its ironic sub-title "Recruiting Pamphlet", Private O'Flaherty, home on leave after being awarded the Victoria Cross, voices his doubts about patriotism at General Sir Pearce Madigan's country estate in Ireland: "It means different to me than what it would to you, sir. It means England and England's King to you. To me and the like of me, it means talking about the English just the way the English papers talk about the Boshes. And what good has it ever done here in Ireland?" (Shaw, 1934: 821). In the trenches during the Great War, the Irish soldier poet Francis Ledwidge, lamenting the execution of Thomas McDonagh after the 1916 Rising, must also have pondered his position (Ledwidge, 1919: 210). All these shifting responses and allegiances were essentially the product of the colonial encounter between Britain and Ireland, an encounter whose historical accents can still be heard today especially among Northern nationalists and republicans. Thus, according to Bobby Sands, the song which lifted the spirits of republican prisoners in the H-Blocks in the early 1980s was "A Nation Once Again", the unofficial anthem of nationalist Ireland in the nineteenth century (Sands, 1982: 60).

Unlike Spenser, Shakespeare has little to say about the Irish, but in his play celebrating the triumph of the English over the French, he makes much of the sh-sound, the intruding Hiberno-English speech-marker often used—as here—in a patronising fashion: not what *is* but what *ish* my nation. Elizabethan Shakespeare also serves to remind us that Ireland as a nation predated the Elizabethan period. Free for the most part—unlike its neighbour—from occupation by the Romans, Ireland has its origins in antiquity, in the rivers and wells of mythology, in the survival of its ancient language, in its place-names, in its myths and sagas, in its sense of difference and resistance, and its 'personality' was already in place before Shakespeare came on the scene:

"I am of Ireland,
And the Holy Land of Ireland,
And time runs on," cried she.
"Come out of charity,
Come dance with me in Ireland." (Yeats, 1973: 526)

Here is Yeats in his mid-sixties renewing his commitment to *Tír na nÓg*, the mythical Land of Youth, in a poem developed from a fourteenth-century Irish-language dance song "Icham of Irlande". Couched as an invitation by a woman who identifies herself with a spiritual Ireland of the saints but who also recognises the demands of the body and the pressure of time, this is a fine example not only of the "perennialist perspective" on nationhood that Anthony Smith discusses in *The Nation in History* (2000) but also of how pre-modern Ireland could be evoked simply by the act of translation and made modern and enticing in the process.³

In spite of—or, equally, because of—its antiquity, defining Ireland's distinctiveness has never been easy. Beguiled by difference, Yeats typically tends to assume or assert rather than spend time proving his case. Throughout his career, he believed the Irish were a "chosen race" (Yeats, 1968: 210), "nearer than the English to the Mythic Age" (Yeats, 1938: 21). As a boy, his mother taught him to feel disgust at the English lack of reserve, pointing out to him how they kiss at railway stations (Yeats, 1916: 60). Bishop Berkeley's response to English empirical philosophy, cited by Yeats in the Irish Senate in the 1920s, was "We Irish do not hold with this", and it summed up much of Yeats's defiant attitude to the world (Pearce, 1961: 172). But, as is apparent in *On the Boiler* (1938), his last great prose rant against the modern world, such defiance could spill over into a form of barely disguised racism: "The Irish mind has still in country rapsallion or in Bernard Shaw an ancient, cold, explosive, detonating impartiality. The English mind, excited by its newspaper proprietors and its schoolmasters, has tumbled into a hot-bed harlot." (Yeats, 1938: 31)

In point of fact, as *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) repeatedly demonstrates, Shaw himself was better than Yeats at distinguishing English from Irish, not least in showing how the terms were subject to comic reversal. Broadbent, the English entrepreneur, is more sentimental than the Irish, and on his first encounter falls in love with an Irish colleen beside the romantic Round Tower in Rosscullen. Doyle, his Irish colleague long domiciled in London, exhibits the hard-headedness associated with the English, and feels compelled to expose illusions in Anglo-Irish relations wherever they appear. When Broadbent refers to "the melancholy of the Celtic race" (a way of thinking advanced by the nineteenth-century French and English Celticists Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold and wittily undermined by Shaw's use of a capitalised k), Doyle comes close to exploding: "Good God!!! ... When people talk about the Celtic race, I feel as if I could burn down London." (Shaw, 1931: 83)

At one level, Yeats's idealism and Shaw's realism suggest opposites, but at another level the fairy king and the man given to wearing fashionable Jaeger suits belong together. There is an extreme quality about both their attitudes, as if the world could be put to rights by climbing on a soapbox (or a disused boiler on Sligo quays in Yeats's case). Unlike Yeats, however, Shaw knew the limitations of his viewpoint, and to counter the "efficient" intellect, his own included,

³ Smith provides a useful introduction to the modernist v perennialist debate about the antiquity or otherwise of nations.

he takes care to foreground the critique of the defrocked priest Father Keegan in *John Bull's Other Island*. An early commentator failed to see anything other than comedy in Shaw's portrayal of Keegan: "a man of God who passes for a lunatic, a mystic who talks to grasshoppers, calls the ass and the pig his brothers, believes like a Buddhist in metamorphosis, and asserts that Hell is on earth!" (Borsa, 1908: 158). But from today's perspective, with his advocacy of green politics and with his attack on "four wicked centuries" of capitalism and "this foolish dream of efficiency" (Shaw, 1931: 174), Keegan sounds like an authentic Shavian mouthpiece.

If Ireland was the subject, London was frequently the location, so, from Shakespeare to Yeats and Shaw, attempts to distinguish the Irish from the English were inevitably shot through with misconceptions. Baptista Boazio's map of *Irelande* (1599) speaks louder than words. As with other maps of Ireland in the sixteenth century, the perspective is from London with the South of Ireland to the left and the West at the top. More than his predecessors, Boazio attends to the Irish dimension and takes care to provide a glossary for placenames in Irish, but, with its decorative and reassuring depiction of landscape, the map resembles a London estate agent's brochure complete with symbols of the Crown and quiet backwaters for prospective planters to hunt and shoot and fish.⁴ The task, therefore, that befell subsequent generations in Ireland was to right the map as it were, reclaim the land, and re-establish a way of seeing adjacent but not necessarily hierarchical relationships between Britain and Ireland.

In tracking the development of cultural nationalism we need to bear in mind that from the outset the knife cut both ways, that passionate realism frequently accompanied passionate idealism, and that Irishness was at once a natural feeling and a contestable concept—and it was rarely resolved by thinking of some happy mean. Whatever "Judge Eglinton" claims in "Scylla and Charybdis", the 'balancing' episode in *Ulysses*, the truth in this matter was almost certainly not "midway" (Joyce, 1986: 9: 1018). Joyce approached the question from the safety of exile but he too blew hot and cold. He was, as he describes Shem in *Finnegans Wake*, "An Irish emigrant the wrong way out" (Joyce, 1968: 190: 36). The double emotion is also in evidence in *Ulysses*, a novel set in Dublin in 1904 and published in Paris in 1922. Ironically—and this has only become apparent with the passage of time—by confidently proclaiming its independence of Britain at a time when Ireland was deeply divided and looking inward, Joyce injected a note of optimism across Europe. If the world is ashen, Joyce seems to say, it is also all that there is, and what he reveals is not so much paralysis or backwardness as a world teeming with language and life.

In the well-known scene in Barney Kiernan's pub in the 'Cyclops' episode of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom is forced to defend himself against the charge that he is not really Irish: "What is your nation if I may ask?". And the answer the modern-day Macmorris gives to the "Citizen" is the deflating, moving, utopian endstop which draws attention to the etymological roots of the

⁴ For an informative discussion of Boazio's map, see J.H. Andrews, *Shapes of Ireland: Maps and Their Makers 1564-1839* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1997), 75-85.

word nation in **natio** or birth: “Ireland, says Bloom. **I was bom here.**” This is Joyce providing another angle on the **meaning** of attachment, a word that in one sense is simply functional (**attach** this to...) but in another sense **does service** for **some** of our most powerful emotional 'attachments'. In 1999, the Thatcherite English politician Norman Tebbit **famously** suggested a **loyalty** test: in the **contest** between England and India at cricket, who do Indians living in Britain support? If he had **been** an Indian living in Britain, Bloom, the dry-eyed citizen, would **have** failed the test miserably, getting excited about neither **team** but anxious about the weather or his wife or **drumming** up business or something **else beside** the point.

To insist on his point —**and insistence** is largely his point — Joyce then produces one of the many Rabelaisian satirical lists that thread their way though this episode as the Citizen and his associates berate Bloom for his non-Irishness:

The muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth attributed to Solomon of Droma and Manus Tomaltach og **MacDonogh**, authors of the Book of Ballymote, was then **carefully** produced and called forth prolonged admiration. No need to **dwell** on the **legendary** beauty of the cornerpieces, the acme of art, wherein one can distinctly discern each of the four evangelists in **turn** presenting to each of the four masters his **evangelical** symbol, a bogoak sceptre, a **North** American puma (a **far** nobler king of beasts than the British **article** be it said in **passing**), a **Kerry** calf and a **golden** eagle from **Carrantuohill**. The scenes depicted on the emunctory **field**, showing our ancient duns and raths and cromlechs and **grianauns** and seats of **learning** and maledictive stones are as **wonderfully** beautiful and the pigments as delicate as when the **Sligo illuminators** gave **free** rein to their artistic **fantasy** long long ago in the time of the Barmecides. Glendalough, the **lovely** lakes of **Killarney**, the **ruins** of Clonmacnois, Cong Abbey, Glen **Inagh** and the Twelve Pins, **Ireland's** Eye, the Green **Hills** of Tallaght, **Croagh** Patrick, the brewery of Messrs Arthur Guinness, Son and Company (Limited), Lough Neagh's banks, the vale of Ovoca, **Isolde's** tower, the Mapas obelisk. Sir Patrick Dun's hospital, Cape **Clear**, the glen of Aherlow, Lynch's castle, the Scotch house, Rathdown **Union** Workhouse at Loughlinstown, Tullamore **jail**, **Castleconnel** rapids **Kilballymacshonakill**, the cross at Monasterboice, Jury's Hotel, S. Patrick's Purgatory, the Salmon Leap, Maynooth college refectory, Curley's hole, **the** three birthplaces of the **first** duke of Wellington, the **rock** of Cashel, the bog of **Allen**, the **Henry** Street Warehouse, **Fingal's** Cave —**all** these moving scenes are **still there** for us today rendered more beautiful **still** by the waters of sorrow which **have** passed over them and by the rich incrustations of time. (Joyce, 1986: 12: 1421-1464).

Against such a list, the claims of Bloom to being Irish seem **idle**, at least at one **level**. Even if the reader has never visited it, **s/he** **knows** that the Maynooth college refectory can **hardly** compare with the **monastic** ruins of **Clonmacnois**, that the mention of **Guinness's** brewery must mean that other watering-holes are **also** listed (the Scotch house, Jury's Hotel), that Curley's hole must be vulgar (it is in fact the name of a bathing-place at Dollymount north of Dublin), that the three birthplaces of Wellington must include the stable that forms part of his reputed answer to the question about his Irish origins: "If a gentleman happens to be born in a stable, it **does** not follow that he should be called a horse". Joyce's move is calculated to **amuse** by playing with (but not destroying) the idea of nationalism and identity. Nothing we **surmise** —**Ireland's** natural beauty or her distinctiveness or indeed Bloom's otherness — merits so much adulation or attention,

unless it is to **parade** the Citizen's soiled handkerchief bearing "the rich incrustations of time".

At one **level** this is Joyce's **retort** to one-eyed nationalism (and to the burgeoning mass tourist trade); at another **level** it is Joyce ruthlessly mocking the pretensions of the Revivalists. But his critique goes **further**. Nationalism, as the civic nationalist understands better than the ethnic nationalist, needs to address **matters** which are at once more mundane and more problematic: the prosaic, **unheroic nature** of everyday life, the relationships between father and son, between the body and the mind, the increasing opposition in bourgeois society between the citizen and the artist, the **issue** of marital infidelity and sexual **desire**, humour. Such issues, Joyce seems to imply, cannot be enlisted into a party political programme or, indeed, made much sense of in the context of the colonial encounter between Britain and Ireland. **And** the point is made without any passionate pleading on Bloom's part: the Odyssean hero is unceremoniously ejected from the cave by the Cyclops, but he has a home to go to and he cannot be driven out of the 'nation' to which he has **laid** claim.

WHAT IS A NATION?

According to Virginia Woolf, literature occupies common ground which is open for **all** to trespass on freely: "It is not cut up into nations; there are no wars there." (Woolf, 1992: 168) What she doesn't say is that culture doesn't just occupy but constitutes a **site** of struggle. Woolf, though, **makes** a telling observation, and its **relevance** can be felt today as it was in 1940, when such an essentially pacifist sentiment belonged to a wider strategy of resistance. But if Britain had **been** overrun by Nazi Germany, then her image of the common ground would **have been** effectively destroyed, and the **call** to trespass would **have become** part of a more militant form of resistance. Yeats **stands** on the opposite hill. "There is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature." (Yeats, 1989: 30) Born into a country that was perceived by many of its people to be occupied by a foreign power, and convinced that art was not "tribeless, nationless, a blossom gathered in No Man's Land (Yeats, 1907: 324), Yeats spent a lifetime **determined** to reclaim independence and to 'nationalise' **writing** in Ireland.

In "What Is A Nation?", a famous **lecture** delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1882, the nineteenth-century Breton Celticist Ernest Renan **provides** a succinct definition of a key term when thinking about cultural nationalism:

A nation is a **living** soul, a spiritual **principle**. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other **is** the present. One is the common possession of a rich **heritage** of memories; the other **is** the actual consent, the **desire** to **live** together, the **will** to preserve **worthily** the undivided **inheritance** which has **been** handed down. Man **does** not improvise. The nation, **like** the individual, is the **outcome** of a **long** past of **efforts**, and **sacrifices**, and devotion. (Renan, n.d.: 80)

In many respects the best adjective to encapsulate Yeats's attitude to Ireland is devotion: he was devoted to its cause as if to a person or a church. Almost as if he knew his remarks would be

applied to Ireland, Renan introduces between effort and devotion the word that has haunted modern Irish nationalism, namely sacrifice. Renan's emphasis on a living soul and the **desire** to live together **shifts** the debate about nationalism away from the externalities of territories, nation-states and maps, and redirects it decisively towards cultural expression and subjective commitment. As a Frenchman, Renan has in mind the disputed territory of Alsace-Lorraine, but his remarks **have** a wider application, and, while the terms are not Yeats's, the sentiments are.

With its ancient idealism, Ireland for Yeats was a spiritual entity, its history a "living stream", as he calls it in "Easter 1916". Behind its history, dating back to the **Druids** and beyond, was "a **great** tapestry" (Yeats, 1977: 513) which even Christianity could not obliterate. Its oral tradition contained a folk imagination and a store-house of memories unique in modern Europe. Renan's notion of an undivided inheritance was **also** important for Yeats and it belongs with his championing of the imagination of the poor and with his search for Unity of Culture. The past was critical for cultural nationalists, who, under the twin emotionally charged **principles** of preservation and possession, transformed the enthusiasm of the antiquarian and academic interest into a more active engagement with the present. For Renan, a nation is like an individual; for Yeats, a nation is a family, complete with children whose limbs occasionally, as during the Easter Rising, "run wild".

E.J. Hobsbawm distinguishes two stages in the history of nationalism, one ethnic, the other civic. Civic nationalism, which owed much to the citizen state of the French Revolution, flourished in the period 1830-70. It operated a "threshold principle", insisting that only nations with large populations and territory were entitled to form independent states. It was followed by an ethno-linguistic nationalism in which smaller groups, on the basis of ethnic **and/or** linguistic **ties**, **laid** claim to independence. Ethnic nationalism flourished in the period 1870-1914, and then resurfaced in the **last** decades of the twentieth century. According to Hobsbawm, the passage from civic-democratic to ethno-linguistic nationalism was marked by "a sharp shift to the political right of nation and flag" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 102).⁵ Like Renan —**but** unlike Joyce— Yeats was an ethnic rather than a civic nationalist. If he had spoken Irish he would **have been** doubly so. But, as he **later** acknowledged when tempted to vaunt the "Irishry", Yeats was restrained by English: "Then I remind myself that ... I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser, and to Blake, perhaps to William **Morris**, and to the English language in which I think, speak, and write, that **everything** I love has come to me through English." (Yeats, 1968: 519) Like Renan, Yeats was a "tissue of contradictions", "a member of the romantic school, protesting against romanticism" (Renan, 1892: 65). The idea of the good citizen, however, he attacked with the fervour of an ethnic nationalist, bracketing him with "comfort and safety, and with vulgarity and insincerity" (Yeats, 1901: 98). He admired Romantic Ireland, not its opposite, which he identified in "September 1913" with the lower middle class, fumbling in a "greasy till" or adding "the halfpence to the pence". What he valued most was strength of personality and individual

⁵ For a trenchant critique of Hobsbawm, see Jim MacLaughlin, *Reimagining the Nation-State: The Contested Territories of Nation-Building* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 101-15.

heroism, or as Renan once remarked in his autobiography: "I only care for characters of an absolute idealism." (Renan, 1892: 113) His nationalism was never pure therefore and he would have had difficulties subscribing even to the "simplest definition" propounded recently by Perry Anderson (following Thomas Masaryk, the Czech national leader): "any outlook that treats the nation as the highest political value" (Anderson, 2002: 5).

‘DO NATIONS HAVE NAVELS?’

Historical definitions of nationalism are still the subject of disagreement among the experts. In a recent eloquent summary, Anthony D. Smith inserts a **frame** around the topic:

A single red line **traverses** the history of the modern world **from** the fall of the **Bastille** to the fall of the **Berlin Wall**... The name of the red line is nationalism... Historians may differ over the exact moment of nationalism's **birth**, but social **scientists** are clear: nationalism is a modern movement and ideology, which **emerged** in the latter half of the eighteenth century in Western Europe and **America**, and which, **after** its apogee in **two** world wars, is now beginning to decline and give way to global forces which **transcend** the boundaries of nation-states. (Smith, 1998: 1)

The **neatness** here commends itself. But not everything **began** in the eighteenth century. Irish claims to nationhood stem from a much **longer** history, and for **Northern** republicans such claims did not come to an end **in** 1989. In a witty Tree-of-Jesse passage in his nineteenth-century historical novel *Glenanaar* (1902), Canon Sheehan underlines the **essential** unity of Irish history governed in this case by the revenge motif:

Cromwell begat massacres and burning; and massacres and burning begat reprisals; and reprisals begat Penal Laws; and Penal Laws begat insurrection; and insurrection begat the Union; and the Union begat outlawry; and outlawry begat Whiteboyism; and Whiteboyism begat **informers** and judicial murders; and judicial **murders** begat revenge. (Sheehan, 1920: 129)⁸

Like the Old Testament Jews, the Irish are tied to a patriarchal sense of history, and, whether they are heroes or victims, engraved on their culture is the word continuity. "Keep the **fires** of the nation burning" was Parnell's phrase used as a motto by *The Spark*, a revolutionary newspaper in the years leading up to the Easter Rising. In *Ireland A Nation* (1919), Robert Lynd, sketched in the background to Easter 1916 with four chapters on "The Historical Thread". In the Irish context, the sense of nationhood is not so **much** discovered as stimulated by contact with oppression and prejudice. When asked to identify his nation, **Macmorris** —his **petulance** a sign of **some** latent nationalism — reflects in part the expected Elizabethan response, that the Irish

⁸Canon P.A. Sheehan, *Glenanaar: A Story of Irish Life* (1902; London: Longmans, Green, 1929), 42. A little later in the novel, the pattern is rehearsed using opposite terms, with the word **Union** capitalised: "[J]ustice begat **confidence**; and **confidence** begat toleration; and toleration begat mutual understanding; and mutual understanding begat **love**; and **love** begat **Union** which we **all** desire." (page 72)

fought for Ireland, not for **Kings of England**.⁷ Such inconvenient attitudes are frequently overlooked by theoreticians of nationalism, but what is striking about an older generation writing about the Easter Rising is their frequent recourse to the **issue** of social inferiority. "Those who had **been** bred in an atmosphere of social inferiority began to come into their own," writes M.J. **MacManus** in his biography of **de Valera** (1947: 347). In an article entitled "A Terrible Beauty is Bom" and published in the *Irish Times* in 1975, Liam de Paor offers a similar observation: "The self-contempt, which is apparent in so many Irish expressions of political and social ideas from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, was suddenly checked." (De Paor, 1998: 143) **And Ernie O'Malley** in the classic account of the **War of Independence** also speaks of "self-respect", to which he adds the soldier's supplement: "Only by fighting had Ireland ever gained its own self-respect." (O'Malley, 1967: 50)

However, it is the case that the eighteenth century **injected** something special into Irish nationalism, and this in two respects: one is the civic nationalism of the ruling group, the Protestant Ascendancy, and the other is the emerging ethnic nationalism associated with the Catholic dispossessed **majority**. According to the historian **George O'Brien**, in eighteenth-century Ireland there were two nations—"the **historic** and the hidden", one associated with the Protestant Ascendancy, the other with Catholicism (O'Brien, 1936: 74). The modern face of Dublin, with its beautiful Custom House designed by James Gandon overlooking the river and its **fine** eighteenth-century squares and town-houses, was constructed in this period, and it gave expression to a civic pride worthy of the city that **was** ranked second to London in the **Kingdom**. That it was based in part on dispossession of the **majority** population—the Penal Laws denied Catholics access to the professions, to education, and even to training their own clergy in Ireland—**ensured** that modern Irish nationalism **was** impelled more by dreams of the future than bricks and mortar of the present.

As for Smith's metaphor of birth, this is especially persuasive, as we **have seen** with Joyce's Bloom, in the Irish context. The subtitle of 1922, Tom Garvin's classic study of Irish nationalism, is "The Birth of Irish Democracy" (Garvin, 1996). More recently, in his discussion of the Belfast Agreement, Rick Wilford quite naturally has a section entitled "Difficult Birth" (Wilford, 2001: 6). Modern Ireland has witnessed at least two **colossal births**. There was a **short-lived** birth in the eighteenth century with the Irish Parliament which met on College Green in Dublin from 1782 until 1800 when the Act of **Union** returned Ireland to rule from London. **Known** to history as Grattan's Parliament, it was the inspiration largely of Irish Protestants who took their cue in part from the American War of Independence and from the French Revolution and the Rights of Man. **Outside** Parliament, it was accompanied by a more militant **form** of nationalism, and in 1798 the Protestant-led United **Irishmen** under the leadership of Theobald Wolfe Tone took **up arms** to break the link with Britain. The Rising was suppressed, and, two

⁷ J.O. Bartley speculates that Macmorris belonged to one of the older settler families in Ireland who substituted the Gaelic 'Mac' for the Norman 'Fitz' in their surnames. He may also have been educated in England. See *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1954), 16.

years **later**, the Irish Parliament was abolished by the Act of Union. The second birth had a long gestation period but it was delayed for over a century or more **until**, if we **listen** to Yeats, the Easter Rising of 1916 —**not** for nothing **does** Yeats's poem end on a famous birth-note, resonating not only against 1916 but **also** 1798. The birth pangs to the new Ireland included not only the **Land War** (1879-82) **and** the Home Rule Bill of 1886, but **also** smaller affairs such as the activities of the '98 Centennial Commemoration Committee, whose executive included the old Fenian **John O'Leary**, Maud Gonne, and Yeats himself.

What exactly was born at Easter 1916 was not at the time—or indeed since—very clear. Ray Ryan places two dates round his recent study of Irish and Scottish culture and nationhood "1966-2000", 1966 being the fiftieth **anniversary** of the Rising and the year which **also** witnessed the destruction of Nelson's Column. In a curious 'reverse-swing' sentence, designed it has to be said to **draw** connections, he inadvertently reveals something of the **confusion** that continues to **surround** the Rising: "When an attempt is made to cleanse the landscape of nationalism ... it is hard not to view the process as the psychological equivalent of blowing up Nelson's Column: removing the visible indications of an oppressive past is no guarantee that liberty can mean liberation." (Ryan, 2002: 290-1) In *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (1998), David Fitzpatrick divides his material chronologically into two halves and, as if in doubt, calls the first "What Revolution? Ireland 1912-1922". Sean O'Casey, who refused to submerge his socialism under nationalism, remained sceptical: "Things had changed, but not utterly; and no terrible beauty was to be born. Short Mass was still the favourite service, and Brian Boru's harp still bloomed on the bottles of beer." (O'Casey, 1980: 3) In *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985), the Ulster Protestant McIlwaine dismisses the Rising as a post office robbery with the spineless Fenians walking in to post a letter and kicking out **all** the female counter assistants: "Disgrace to their sex, the whole bastarding lot of them, I say." (McGuinness, 175) *Dublin Opinion* in the 1930s **carried** a sketch by Charles E. Kelly of an election rally. **A** bed is hauled toward a podium where an elderly politician is speaking. "What's this?" **the** politician wants to **know**. "It's the bed you were under in 1916!" is the reply from the crowd (Collins & Kelly, 1937: 172).

The more lofty view is that when the Proclamation of the Republic was read out by Patrick Pearse on the steps of the General Post Office on Easter Monday 1916, the event marked **the birth** of the Irish republic. In answer to Ernest Gellner's unorthodox question origins and the body politic—"Do Nations Have Navels?"—the Irish nationalist could **legitimately** reply yes, its spot being identical to the General Post Office (Gellner, 1997: 90-101). Certainly, everything conspired to mark the occasion. The colour was appropriately **green**, the place a non-military building in the centre of Dublin, near Nelson's Pillar, **in the heart** of Joyce's Hibernian metropolis, the destination and departure-point for the **newly-laid** tram system, and the time was **the most important** feast in the Church's calendar. "**Surrection!**" is Joyce's word for the event in *Finnegans Wake*, a combination of insurrection and resurrection. "Eireweeiker to the wohld bludyn world" (Joyce, 1968: 593: 2-3, 6-7). From Eire to the whole bloody world. Tellingly, the

author of "Easter 1916" did not avail himself of the Christian significance of the **Rising** but for his famous collocation "terrible beauty" took his cue from the Godless Nietzsche. The older Joyce, however, with his Catholic background intact, could see the liturgical significance of the Proclamation, that it was indeed like the Pope's Easter message to the world "*Urbi et Orbi*" (to the city of Rome and the world), only this time the city was *bludyn*, an anagram of Dublin, and the reception (*Earwicker*, the **earwig**) possibly weaker than when it was first heard on the airwaves, as it were, in 1916.

1890s: WINDS OF CHANGE

To return to the 1890s, the **clarion-call**, the wake-up call, for modern Irish cultural nationalism was made by Douglas Hyde in a famous essay entitled "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland" (1892):

I have no hesitation at **all** in saying that every Irish-feeling **Irishman**, who hates the reproach of **West-Britonism**, should set himself to encourage the **efforts** which are being made to keep alive our once great national tongue. The losing of it is **our** greatest blow, and the sorest **stroke** that the **rapid** Anglicisation of Ireland has inflicted upon us. **In** order to de-Anglicise ourselves we must at once **arrest** the decay of the language. We must bring pressure upon our politicians not to snuff it out by their tacit discouragement merely **because** they do not happen themselves to understand it. We must **arouse** some spark of patriotic inspiration among the peasantry who still use the language and put an end to the **shameful** state of feeling ... which makes young men and women blush and hang their heads when overheard speaking their own language. (Hyde, 1894: 136-7)

The wake-up call worked, for as Horace Plunkett noted in his Preface to *Ireland in the New Century* (1904): "Those who **have known** Ireland for the last dozen years **cannot have failed** to notice the advent of a wholly new spirit." (Plunkett, 1905: x.) Or as George Moore impishly suggested in conversation with Edward **Martyn**:

"Ninety-nine is the beginning of the Celtic Renaissance," said Edward.

"I am glad to hear it; the Celt wants a renaissance, and badly; he has **been** going down in the world for the last two thousand years." (Moore, 1911: 42)

The year following Hyde's essay, an Irish-language organisation, the Gaelic League, was founded to foster the **growth** of the Irish language, and language **classes** assembled throughout the country. According to Hyde, Ireland's distinctiveness resided in a series of cultural markers to which he was keen to see a return: Irish surnames and Irish first names, Irish place-names, Irish traditional music, Gaelic football, Connemara home-spun **tweed**, **Anglo-Irish** literature rather than **English** books. "Every house should **have** a copy of Moore and Davis." (Hyde, 1894: 159) What he **feared** most was a "nation of imitators ... alive only to second-hand assimilation" (Hyde, 1894: 160). Interestingly —**and it is an insight rarely noticed**— behind Hyde's **insistence**

on Irish distinctiveness was also an awareness that Ireland was "the most assimilative ... nation in Europe" (Hyde, 1894: 160).

Language and culture provided the driving force behind claims to nation status. Hyde had suggested how the present could be transformed through active participation by the people. In 1894 Plunkett founded the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society to enable small farmers to pool resources and to benefit from the establishment of creameries (arguably one of the most distinctive features of Irish rural life in the twentieth century). It was a time for the practical imagination to flourish, for the spread of all things Celtic, for Celtic crafts, Celtic lettering and borders, for Irish books, for completing a task pioneered, as Jeanne Sheehy reminds us, by antiquarians from the 1830s (Sheehy, 1980: *passim*). Given this background, it is perhaps not surprising to learn that Yeats, the greatest poet Ireland has ever produced, the visionary with the dark dreaming eyes, not only helped found the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904 but, as a Senator in the 1920s, also chaired the committee that decided on the design of Ireland's currency.

If the nation for some was a practical venture, for others it remained essentially of the future. In "Nationality or Cosmopolitanism", Yeats's occult friend George Russell suggests another take on nationalism—an imagined community that Benedict Anderson might well have included in his influential study of the topic:

Every Irishman forms some vague ideal of his country. born from his reading of history, or from contemporary politics, or from imaginative intuition; and this Ireland in the mind it is, not the actual Ireland, which kindles his enthusiasm. For this he works and makes sacrifices.... We are yet before our dawn.... We can see, however, as the ideal of Ireland grows from mind to mind, it tends to assume the character of a sacred land. (Russell, 1921: 5)

As can be observed in the various extracts in "1890s: Shadows, Moods and Arguments", the first section of my Cork Reader, for the generation that created the modern Irish Revival in the 1890s and 1900s, Ireland was both an idea and an ideal. Appropriately, the (vague) umbrella title for a 1901 collection of essays by Moore, Hyde, Russell, O'Grady, D.P. Moran, and Yeats, was *Ideals in Ireland*.

Everything—especially the past—pointed to the future. On their estates in the west of Ireland, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn planned with Yeats and Moore the establishment of what would become a national theatre. Every folktale collected by Yeats and Lady Gregory was further ammunition in the struggle for separate identity. When Moore returned to Dublin to live in 1901 he painted the door of his house in Ely Place green as if nationalism was now on the agenda, his own included. His collection of stories *The Untilled Field* (1902), whose title was taken from Shelley's revolutionary poem "Sonnet: England in 1819", was his contribution to the future, couched as a critique of the Irish present. Russell gendered the discussion by comparing the national spirit to "a beautiful woman" who "cannot or will not reveal itself wholly while a coarse presence is near, an unwelcome stranger in possession of the home" (Russell, 1901: 22). At Kilteragh, the house he had built at Foxrock near Dublin in 1906, Plunkett entertained all the

leading opinion-formers and social reformers from Britain, Ireland, and the United States including his cousin the novelist Emily Lawless, Russell, Shaw, H.G. Wells, W.T. Stead, Lord Grey, the U.S. Commissioner for Foresiry Gifford Pinchot, J.P. Mahaffy, the Provost of Trinity (Digby, 1949: *passim*). Even commemorations such as the 1798 centennial celebrations were in essence about the future, as indeed were popular ballads such as Ethna Carbery's "Rody McCorley", whose second stanza was no doubt a comfort to those who died "today" for "Mother Ireland":

**Oh Ireland, Mother Ireland,
You love them still the best,
The fearless brave who fighting fall
Upon your hapless breast;
But nevera one of all your dead
More bravely fell in fray,
Than he who marches to his fate
On the Bridge of Toome today. (Carbery, 1902: 82)**

Carbery believed in "thinkin' long", the title of a poem told from a female perspective about a young man who went away to fight for the "soul of Ireland (Carbery, 1902: 67). Memory and rehearsal were in the air, filling the heads of poets with dreams of battles and men of action. In the first poem of Yeats's *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), the invisible army of the Sidhe or fairies are gathering again while in the apocalyptic poem "The Valley of the Black Pig" "unknown perishing armies beat about my head" (Yeats, 1903: 1, 35). As if to complement Yeats's Nineties swirling white-and-gold cover design, Carbery's *The Four Winds of Erinn* (1902) carried a more focussed Celtic lettering and motifs. But, as the martial lines of "Rody McCorley" convey, the verse was no less forceful in its clamour for resolution outside of poetry. In "Mo Chraoibhín Cno" (my cluster of nuts or brown-haired girl), a poem which includes the line "Oh! famine-wasted, fever-burnt, they faded like the snow", Ireland is addressed directly as both an invocation and a challenge:

**A Sword of Light hath pierced the dark, our eyes have seen the star.
O Mother, leave the ways of sleep now days of promise are:
The rusty spears upon your walls are stirring to and fro,
In dreams they front uplifted shields Then wake
Mo Chraoibhín Cno! (Carbery, 1902: 9)**

Even what appear to be fairly empty symbolic phrases had the potential at this period to become weapons in a (future) war. Thus, *Sword of Light*, translated into Irish as *An Claidheamh Soluis*, was the title of the Gaelic League newspaper founded in 1899 and edited by Eoin MacNeill and, later, by Patrick Pearse. Constantly, throughout Carbery's volume, what we have displayed is a barely disguised form of political rallying, from the Dedication to the Gaelic League of

Argentina, to the phrase at the end of "Shiela Ní Gara" how "the hour is drawing near", to the lament for the Irish emigrant in "The Passing of the Gael", which ends with the line "Oh! Kathaleen Ní Houlihan, your way's a thorny way!" (Carbery, 1902: 110). If such forms of expression seem less persuasive to us today, that is because in part political independence was followed almost immediately by civil war and in part, after the demise of 'the 1860s generation', it became increasingly unfashionable to address Ireland in such symbolic terms.⁸

ENGLISH AS WE SPEAK IT IN IRELAND

Checking himself as if to confirm his first impression, Broadbent in *John Bull's Other Island* imagines Haffigan speaks in the true brogue: "But he spoke — he behaved just like an Irishman." To which Doyle, in one of the most apposite speeches in the play, replies:

Like an Irishman!! Man alive, don't you know that all this top-of-the-morning and broth-of-a-boy and more-power-to-your-elbow business is got up in England to fool you, like the Albert Hall concerts of Irish music? No Irishman ever talks like that in Ireland, or ever did, or ever will. (Shaw, 1931: 81)

Part of the achievement of cultural nationalism in Ireland has been to fill the stage with authentic Irish voices so that today Doyle's venom seems slightly misplaced if only because the Broadbents of this world have largely disappeared. Indeed, with the advent of the Chieftains and other performers, there is also nothing fake about Irish concerts in the Albert Hall —though what Shaw would have made of Riverdance is another matter. If elsewhere in postcolonial literature, the Empire Writes Back — an expression which has been used to characterise the way colonised, or former colonised, people have written about the struggle for redress, to get their own back — in Ireland the issue takes on a different character, of the Empire Talking Back, and this is especially true of Irish drama.

'Back' is the crucial word with both Wilde and Shaw, whose one-liners reverberate around the stage at times like lost boomerangs. "As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life." So Algernon observes at the beginning of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), where the double meaning of forte — as both strength and loudness — and the opposition between science and Life with a capital letter anticipate two key devices in the play, namely doubling and contrast or similarity and difference. "The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!" (Wilde, 1976: 321, 326) Here is talk — or, what amounts to the same thing, dramatic monologues — spilling over from afternoon tea in West London studios and drawing rooms, polished and elegant, designed as much to impress as to carry a social message.

⁸ Carbery, along with Alice Milligan, founded in 1896 the Northern nationalist newspaper with its traditional image of Ireland for a title — *The Shan Van Vocht* (Poor Old Woman). The "1860s generation" is my own term, but it is not without interest to note the names of those mentioned in this article who were born in this decade: Hyde (1860), Katharine Tynan (1861), Yeats (1865), Carbery (1866), Alice Milligan (1866), George Russell (1867), "John Eglinton" (1868), Constance Markievicz (1868).

The dialogue keeps running as if it were a non-stop performance, banishing all doubt or embarrassment or depth of character. Drop the 'a' and you have the name Ernest, keep the 'a' and you have the combination of moral attribute and the contemporary gay scene. Let the audience determine where to place the significance, whether it's Worthing where he wrote the play and after whom presumably Jack or John is named, or bunburying which covers a multitude of sins for the more conventional Algemon or the more deviant Ernest.

By all accounts, Yeats was Wilde's equal as a conversationalist, but he needed the help of Lady Gregory to mould his dialogue into something which could pass for natural speech on the stage. On a famous occasion when he was wintering with Ezra Pound at Stone Cottage in Sussex during the Great War, the American poet thought he heard the wind blowing down the chimney but then realised it was "Uncle William" upstairs composing "that had made a great Peeeeeacock / in the proide of his oiye".⁹ Yeats was compelled, as he tells us in one of his retrospective essays, to *hammer* his thoughts into unity (Yeats, 1973: 263); they rarely came like leaves on the tree. He enjoyed more success with poetry than dramatic dialogue, for the lyrical impulse there found its natural outlet where the emotional charge is held down or embedded by syntactic structures which are closer to written than to spoken English. In recalling the mood of the years 1892-1902, Yeats chose for his title "Dramatis Personae", as if indeed everyone was playing a part. In a revealing sentence comparing his own "sensuous, concrete, rhythmical" mind with Moore's, which was "argumentative, abstract, diagrammatic", he explained: "In later years, through much knowledge of the stage, through the exfoliation of my own style, I learnt that occasional prosaic words gave the impression of an active man speaking." (Yeats, 1936: 52)

Wilde, for Yeats, was the active man, a judgment which seems a little surprising today, but then Yeats understood better than most commentators Wilde's personality and formative Irish background. "We are too poetical to be poets," Wilde told Yeats in the late 1880s. "We are a nation of brilliant failures, but we are the greatest talkers since the Greeks." (Yeats, 1977: 135) In Robert Sherard's *The Life of Oscar Wilde* (1906), the remark is prefaced by the observation: "Speaking of the Irish, he once said, referring to himself, in that self-accusing way which was one of the pathetic traits of his character..." (Sherard, 1906: 295). For Yeats, it is not so much a personal as a national trait on display here: "He commended and dispraised himself during dinner by attributing characteristics like his own to his country...". Wilde's remark struck a chord with Yeats who in the early 1920s (when he wrote "Four Years 1887-1891") was constructing a system in which to place historical periods, personality types, and exemplary individuals. But, interestingly, when we read *A Vision* (1925), the Irish dimension tends to be lost in the much larger cycles of Western history, and Wilde appears at Phase Nineteen, along with Byron, d'Annunzio, "and a certain actress", where the Will manifests itself as Assertive Man and the Body of Fate as enforced failure of action (Yeats, 1977: 147-8).

The attempt to bring into the same field of play —as here between the Irish and the

⁹ *Lines from Pound's Pisan Cantos. See my Yeats's Worlds: Ireland, England and the Poetic Imagination* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) for copy of original typescript (page 175).

Greeks, failures in action but great talkers, character and action, personal and national, aptitude and writing, art and life, sincerity and the doctrine of the mask — is what distinguishes Wilde and Yeats. If Wilde had lived into middle age and was asked to systematise his thoughts, scattered as they are amid hundreds of aphorisms, his whimsical instinct would have got the better of him. When *Salome* ran into problems with the Censor in 1892 on the ground that it introduced Biblical characters, Wilde declared in an interview he would settle in France: "I am not English. I am Irish — which is quite another thing." (Harris, 1918: 125-6) It is this spirit of whimsy which resurfaces in the incident when Beckett was asked by a French interviewer if he were English: "Au contraire" was his answer. Most commentators infer that Beckett is defining Irishness by what wasn't English, but I think it isn't so much the contrast on display here but Wilde's "quite another thing". The contraire is thus closer to contrary. Wilde and Beckett are defining themselves not by the idea of a conventional opposite but by something wholly different. Because he was governed by systems of contrast which worked against the exercise of free will, the single-minded Yeats never got close to such a position. For Yeats, the Irish, like Berkeley, are not-English, but this is not Wilde's "quite another thing".

In the sucking stone sequence in Molloy (1954), Molloy at the seaside is deeply perplexed by a logistical/mathematical/philosophical problem about how to suck in turn sixteen different stones, which are distributed equally in the four pockets of his greatcoat, without sucking them twice. After over two thousand words of deliberation seeking a solution, he confesses: "But deep down I didn't give a tinker's curse", throwing away all the stones but one, which he then proceeded to switch from one pocket to another before either losing it or throwing it away or swallowing it (Beckett, 1977: 69-74). Behind everything Beckett wrote is the stance, attitude and identity embodied in his "au contraire". When stop-searched he has an answer, just as in history, when questioned by the gentry and those in authority, the Irish country people knew how to answer back by recourse to the unexpected. Beckett's Irish voice constantly intrudes into his writings.¹⁰ In his reference to a "tinker's curse", he switches to an informal register. Elsewhere in this sequence Molloy reaches a temporary solution which he describes as "sound", another commonly heard word in Ireland expressing approval for a person or an action. Always his language is more than simple texture or local colouring and seems to belong to a form of slippage, an Irish sense of defiance that can then be seen as underlying all his work.

By the time Beckett put pen to paper, the English reader had been banished from over the shoulder of the Irish writer. This above all else was the great historical achievement of the Revival from the 1890s to the 1920s. That it wasn't effected all at once is clear from Somerville and Ross's humorous portraits of Irish speech in the stories of *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* (1899), where substituting 'i' for 'e' in words such as devil and tent and an apostrophe for the 'g' in words ending in -ing, inserting 'h' into words such as porter, true and drive, adding a few "says I to meself", and spelling words as they might be pronounced such as "obstackles" — all convey the attitude that Irish country people were still fun to listen to and to ridicule. The

¹⁰ *All That Fall* (1957) is Beckett's most Irish play in the sense in which Irish voices can be heard throughout.

breakthrough came with Hyde's translations of the love songs of Comaught, which paved the way for the Kiltartanese dialect of Lady Gregory and the speech of Synge's plays which was "as fully flavoured as a nut or apple".¹¹ It was then possible for 'home-grown' writers such as Padraic Colum and George Fitzmaurice to provide a double-take on the deprivation of their fellow-countrymen without the need to humour or defend, and in Fitzmaurice's case in heightened language we associate with Synge. A telling phrase from the opening scene of *The Dandy Dolls* (1914) encapsulates a whole moment. A stranger enters inquiring for the man of the house, and, when informed by Cauth Carmody that her husband is "engaged", he replies: "What sort of talk is that in a cabin black with soot?" (Fitzmaurice, 1967: 21).

Cultural nationalism is a useful umbrella term, but, as we have seen, it has a complicated history and groundwork. Virtually no Irish writer from Jonathan Swift to John Banville sings from the same hymn-sheet. There is of course a chorus which can be heard singing at times in unison as in the 1890s, but, in spite of the cul-de-sac represented by the Civil War, what is worth stressing are the different voices, some oppositional, others muffled and indistinct, which belong to the development of cultural nationalism. Hyde advocated the anglicisation of Ireland but resigned from the Gaelic League when it took a political turn; Yeats never learnt his national language, thought in separatist terms, but all the time wrote in English. Moreover, we shouldn't forget that some voices in certain of their works resist incorporation into something called 'Irish cultural nationalism'. This is particularly so with someone like William Orpen, who is justly regarded as one of the leading modern Irish artists, but whose most remarkable series of sketches — *An Onlooker in France 1917-1919* (1921) — grew out of a British Government commission to act as a Great War artist. Interestingly, the first building to be completed after the destruction of O'Connell Street during the Easter Rising was Clery's department store, which was modelled on Selfridge's in London, itself designed by the American architect Daniel Burnham and in the modern Chicago manner.¹² Of the figures mentioned in this article, O'Grady, Moore, Plunkett, Eglinton, Russell — all for one reason or another abandoned Ireland for England, but the ideals of cultural nationalism lived on, and from their exiled status in Devon and Paris, O'Casey, Joyce and Beckett breathed new life into the matter of Ireland.

¹¹ This was the phrase Synge himself used in his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, and he is really talking about his own work. Examples of Hyde, Lady Gregory, and Synge can be found in my *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century: A Reader* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000).

¹² See Sean Rothery, *Ireland and the New Architecture 1900-1940* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1991), 76-8. In Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), Henry — on instructions by Michel Collins — buys a suit in Clery's after the funeral of Thomas Ashe in 1917 (see p. 191). I think this must be an error on the author's part.

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