Church & State

An Irish History Magazine

And Cultural Review Of Ireland And The World

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Brendan Clifford

Historic Destinies

Some Fine Gael TDs who voted for abortion complain that they are being denied Communion in the Catholic Church, and their complaints are treated by the *Sunday Independent* as having legitimate grounds. But it is well-known that the Catholic Church regards abortion as a form of murder. So we cannot see what their legitimate ground for complaint is.

When this journal was launched almost forty years ago, its first difficulty was in establishing public awareness of the distinctive spheres of Church an State in order to establish some actual space between them.

The distinction between Church and State is very much a Roman Catholic distinction. It did not exist in many of the major cultures and religions of the world. It was a Christian innovation. And, if a distinction is to be made between Christianity and Roman Catholicism—and it is made very sharply in the British part of Ireland—then it was a Roman Catholic innovation. When England broke with Rome and became Protestant—that being the order in which it happened—it abolished the distinction between Church and State. The Church was a Department of State under Henry 8 and Elizabeth. When James 2 tried to restore the distinction he was driven out of the kingdom.

The unity of Church and State was central to British development after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. That Revolution was Glorious because it restored the totalitarian unity of Church and State, with the State in command and capable of generating and manipulating religious fanaticism. The Penal Law system of British rule in Ireland was a consistent manifestation of the Protestant unity of Church and State.

The outcome of the Reformation in the one country where it became a World Power was an absolutist nationalism that became an absolutist Imperialism.

For one generation in the middle of the 17th century the Protestant religion had a go at running the state. The result was the Cromwell fiasco. Thereafter the State ran the religion. The clergy of the Church of England were not allowed to meet in Assembly for many generations, lest they should endanger the moral totalitarianism of the State. The Church was run by its Bishops, who were members of the governing system, appointed to their Sees by the Prime Minister acting in the name of the Crown.

The religious system of the State was gradually loosened up. Enthusiastic Protestants who had doctrinal disagreements with the Established Church and refused to toe the line were allowed an outlet for their energy in the expansion of the Empire—which in the first instance consisted largely of the slavery business, which was thrown open to Free Trade by the Glorious Revolution. Then, as they became a more important element in the economy, they were allowed to hold minor offices in public administration by making a token gesture towards the Established Church once a year.

But these were developments within the consolidated nationalist-Imperialism of the Protestant State.

In Catholic Europe relations between Church and State were regulated by Treaties (Concordats) between national Governments and a religious authority lying outside the State. Under this arrangement the Catholic Church within a particular state was neither free to do as it pleased, nor subject to the direction of the State, nor at the mercy of the Pope. Rome acknowledged that the local State had a legitimate interest in the affairs of the Church within its borders, and the State acknowledged that Rome likewise had a legitimate interest. And Rome was willing to make similar arrangements with States that were not Catholic.

The possibility of making such an arrangement arose within the UK after the 1800 Act of Union removed the controlling apparatus of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland and the national development of the native population began. The natives asserted themselves as Catholics because it was as Catholics that they had been disfranchised, plundered, and generally put upon.

Henry Grattan, who had tried and failed to persuade the Protestant Ascendancy Parliament to admit Catholics to the Constitution, proposed an Emancipation Bill in the Westminster Parliament in 1808. It included the condition that the Government should have a say in the appointment of Catholic Bishops in Ireland. A list of possible appointments would be given to the Government, and it might strike out any it considered politically subversive.

There was nothing at variance with Roman practice in this condition. Grattan had cleared it with the Irish Bishops. They had all been educated on the Continent because of the Penal Laws and took it for granted that some such condition should be imposed.

There was a rebellion by the Dublin Catholic middle class against this condition, sparked off by Walter Cox in his *Irish Magazine*. But this was national dissent against the Act of Union, rather than an expression of absolutist Catholicism.

The dispute on this issue ran on for 20 years, until Daniel O'Connell intimidated the Government by a credible threat of mass rebellion into conceding unconditional Emancipation, which put Rome in the anomalous position of being freely in control of its Church in Ireland.

At various points in this Veto Controversy the possibility of a Concordat between Whitehall and Rome was considered. It was not liked by Irish national sentiment. But the basic reason it was not attempted was that English ruling circles recoiled from the prospect, 300 years after Henry 8 made himself Pope, of once again establishing a formal agreement with Rome about the conduct of their internal affairs. They remained in the grip of the nationalistic totalitarianism of the Reformation event in which their Empire had its origin.

Their refusal to feel out the possibilities of a Concordat was neither rational nor pragmatic. It was a moral/emotional reflex, to which they sacrificed the possibility of curbing nationalist development in Ireland with authoritative assistance from Rome.

Rome had not actually had free control of the Irish Church until around this time. Until the late 18th century the Stuart Monarchy, though overthrown and in exile, had been the intermediary between Rome and Ireland. It was the British Government of the 19th century that placed Rome in unmediated authority over the Irish Church.

And then British Governments, having refused a Concordatist relationship, still attempted to curb Irish nationalist

development by use of Rome. It simultaneously assisted and complained about the increase of the influence of the church in secular affairs.

The final act of British statesmanship in Ireland was to split Sinn Fein in 1922 by negotiating a deal with the Collins/ Griffith group and establishing them in power on the condition that they make war on those who refused the deal, and the threat that it would itself make war on the whole lot if this was not done. The Catholic Bishops facilitated Britain by excommunicating those who actively opposed this 'Treaty', thus driving out of public life at a critical moment the element which had shown itself least susceptible to Episcopal authority.

That is how we got the 'Free Church in a Free State'.

Democratic states are governed by public opinion. But how is public opinion formed? It does not arise directly from the public. The 'public' in the mass does not give rise to opinion capable of directing states. Public opinion is opinion formed through the operation of organised bodies which divide the public and make it capable of political action.

In England democracy was established by the gradual phasing in of increasingly wider circles of the general populace into political structures of party politics formed within a very small ruling class which had governed for a century and a half before the first franchise reform in 1832. The populace, as they were admitted to these structures, became the political public and formed opinions about the conduct of the state under their influence. In British history there is no Year Zero in which an unstructured populace is confronted with the task of conducting government.

In Ireland the bulk of the population was excluded from public affairs during that century and a half, under the Penal Laws, and the small class which constituted the public of the state in Ireland was not an elite of the general population, but was an alien stratum whose relation with the general population was merely exploitative.

When that long exclusion of the Irish populace from British public life ended under O'Connell's leadership, they turned, under his influence, against British government of Ireland rather than to participation in it.

The sheer military power of Britain, and its willingness to use it brutally, made Irish independence a hopeless cause. Therefore the organised demand came to be for a measure of Irish devolved government subordinate to Britain. A disciplined Home Rule Party monopolised Irish political representation outside of eastern Ulster for a generation, from the 1880s to 1914. That Party won all its elections but its electoral victories were entirely disconnected from government.

Democracy is the election of a Government by the populace. Voting in elections which do not have the function of establishing a Government is something else. And it gave rise to a blind party loyalty by the mass, instead of compelling them to form contentious practical opinions about policies to be implemented in government if the election was won.

The cultivation of blind loyalty in the mass of the people to a process of voting disconnected from government led to their going blindly into the British Army for war in 1914, led along by the vacuous Utopian slogans specially devised for them.

In 1918 the newly-reconstructed Sinn Fein Party contested the Election with the object of forming a Government. That was the founding act, in Ireland, of democracy properly so called.

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Sinn Fein won he election, formed a Government according to its mandate, and defended its Government against British efforts to wreck it. I know of no grounds to suppose that the 1919 Government would not have taken root as an orderly system of state if Britain had not been determined to wreck it at any cost.

The wrecking attempt became effective in December-January 1921-2. A section of Sinn Fein was induced by a carrot and a cudgel to allow itself to be installed in a new Government on British authority, armed and financed by Britain, and, under the stimulus of the same cudgel, to make war on its colleagues of 1919-21 who disagreed.

It is tempting, under the influence of British patronage, to assume *a priori*, that the Treaty War of 1922-3 must have been the expression of differences within the Government of 1919-21 which had been papered over and had come to the fore under pressure. But I could find no evidence of such differences.

If the Treatyites had been fighting for the Crown on principle, and had gained a resounding electoral majority for that principle in the 1922 Election, the outcome of the War would not have been as it was. The Treaty War would have been an authentic civil war and the victors would have dominated the post-War situation ideologically and culturally, as well as militarily.

But it was not an authentic Civil War fought over some great principle which the victors put into effect. The victors, impelled into war by an outside force, cut themselves off from their roots by fighting the war. They were no longer Sinn Fein at the end of it. They had to find a new ideal and a new source of popular sentiment. And they were given it by the Catholic Hierarchy.

The Hierarchy had never recognised the binding democratic force of the 1918 Election or the legitimacy of the Government based on it, and in some areas Decrees of Excommunication were issued against the Volunteers who defended the Republic against the British terrorism. And then the Church Hierarchy gave general support to the Treaty against the Republic and excommunications were freely issued.

Professor Tom Garvin (UCD) takes no account of this when expounding his theory that excessive religious influence on the State and society kept Ireland poor when it might have been rich (in *Preventing The Future*, 2004).

Growing up in rural Ireland, into my twenties, I was entirely unaware that I lived in a poor, isolated, introverted, backward country that was all of these things because it was Catholic. I was hypersensitive to religion. From the age of thirteen, when I first had reason to think or act on it—when, in a sense, I first became aware of it—I couldn't stand it. I was in the midst of it. It was going on all around me. But there was an awful lot more than religion going on. And rural religion was relaxed and non-intrusive. But then a great missionary effort was launched from the cities to bring the peasants to proper order. I observed this for about eight years in the 1950s, as an insider who was detached from the general flow of things only on the single point of religion. So I know how much else there was besides religion in rural Ireland—which was then the major part of Ireland.

When I first saw Dublin, in the mid-1960s, I could hardly believe what I was seeing. The city seemed to be a Church and its precincts.

After I strayed into left-wing politics I came across the notion that Garvin has made a literary career out of. It was a notion that resentful dissidents griped about in pubs, but gave no public expression to.

A group of us, urged by Pat Murphy who knew Dublin from the inside and had contempt for its Public House anti-clericalism, decided to express public dissent. We published a magazine called *The Irish Communist*, as a red rag to a bull. I was arrested selling at the GPO and taken to Store St. Having arrested me, the Guards did not know what to do with me. It was obvious that there must be something wrong about publicly selling a magazine called *The Irish Communist* but they couldn't figure out what it was so they just let me go.

Then Dennis Dennehy got himself imprisoned for homelessness and went on a hunger strike carefully timed to be at a critical point when the 50th anniversary of the First Dail was being commemorated in the Mansion House. He did so explicitly as a Communist, and made a point of directing his action against the bourgeoisie of the Georgian Society. He emerged from Mountjoy as the Communist folk-hero of the soulless Dublin housing estates.

Then Pat Maloney brought a legal action against a Cork hospital over the proposal to site a religious statue in the grounds of a public hospital.

It was by actions such as these that secular space was established and a public awareness was created that the *Free Church in a Free Stat*e, deriving from the Treaty War, could not last.

M.J.F. McCarthy of Midleton is now being discovered by some belatedly daring academics. We published selections from his assault on the Church in the 1970s. But there was one point on which we had to disagree strongly with him—that the Catholic Church, and the resources 'wasted' on Church building, was the reason why Irish society was not obsessively capitalist. It seemed to us that it was the cultural inheritance from Gaelic society that was inimical to an English-style preoccupation with the capitalist market, and that it was as a modernising, i.e. pro-capitalist, influence that the Church had gained influence in the mid-19th century.

It is interesting to recall that the one institution of the Church which Mc Carthy admired was the Christian Brothers.

I wrote a book about the great dispute between Catholics and the appointment of Bishops, *The Veto Controversy* that raged from 1809 to the late 1820s. The publishers tried to get it reviewed but no bourgeois publication would deal with it.

A Belfast bookshop, Mullan's, stocked it. The initial stock sold out very quickly. The management refused to re-stock it. (Mullan's no longer exists. Like the Belfast Department Stores of those times, it has made way for the international chain stores.)

In the early 1970s I wrote a series of articles for this magazine under the title, *The Rise Of Papal Power In Ireland*. It showed that the Free Church In The Free State had not existed from time immemorial but was a construct of the mid-19th century—made possible by the victory of the Anti-Vetoists in the Veto Controversy. These articles were issued as a pamphlet in 1979 on the occasion of the Pope's visit. It got one review, in *Books Ireland*, by a priest. All he said, as far as I recall, is that it was not helpful.

Professor Garvin has published an essay entitled entitled *Turmoil In The Sea Of Faith: the secularisation of Irish social culture, 1960-2007*. (It will be found in *Turning Points In 20th Century Irish History*, edited by T.E. Hachey, published two years ago.)

Garvin's account of a *"secularisation"* process that has been going on

since 1960 makes no mention of the public defiance signified by the publication and sale of *The Irish Communist* in 1966, the mass breakthrough in public opinion in Dublin achieved by Dennis Dennehy in 1969, or to the launching of this journal in 1973, or Pat Maloney's unprecedented legal action.

And what else was there? We did what we did because no one else was doing it.

The shock effect of *The Irish Communist* was not felt in the capitalist economic system but by the Catholic religious order of things. If there had been a secularising bourgeois intelligentsia active in public life, it is unlikely that we would have done many of the things we did. And it would have made no sense at all for us to use our very limited resources in the production of this journal.

But Garvin says that secularisation had been in process since 1960! How did we miss it, and waste our resources in duplicating it?

And how did Garvin miss it? His title implies that it was there, but it isn't to be found in his article.

I suppose this is modern scholarship, in which the title is really what counts.

Garvin quotes a 1962 survey of opinion in Dublin which showed 90% thinking the Church was a force for good and over two-thirds thinking that, if they followed the advice of the priests, they could hardly go wrong. Few people were educated beyond the age of 13, and their education was controlled by the clergy. This brought it about that: *"The Irish democratic process was heavily tinged with theocracy, for the overwhelming reason that the majority wished it to be that way"* (p156).

The Christian Brothers were especially effective in generating the theocratic mentality, with—

> "a potent mixture of authoritaran Christianity, a sometimes rabid patriotism, and a rigid puritan lifestyle. An instantly recognisable political style combining a bullying for of argument with holier-than-thou postures, characterised some of the products of their schools" (p158).

Clerical control was supplemented by the activity of lay organisations, such as the Knights of Columbanus, which *"controlled official and unofficial systems and acted as what might be best termed para-clerics"* (p158). Secret unbelievers *"kept their opinions strictly to themselves and even joined the Knights or similar organisations for safety's sake"*.

I know nothing about the Brothers from direct experience. We didn't have them in Slieve Luacra, where all education way lay, and where the small, local secondary schools I knew of were businesses conducted by local private enterprise.

Histories published within the last 20 years assert that the Brothers were responsible for the mentality that gave rise to the Easter Rising. I went into the matter and found that the Brothers were enthusiastic Redmondites in outlook from 1914 to 1916. But, being broader-based in the world than Redmond's Party, and having an interest in the world that was not locked into the British war effort, they applied the central reason given as making the War necessary—the sanctity of declarations of Neutrality—as a general principle not limited by British Imperial interest, and therefore they observed that Britain did to Greece what Germany did to Belgium.

I was so impressed by what showed up under my investigation of the Brothers that I collected their War commentary and published it.

The only sense I could find in the assertion that they produced the 1916 generation is that they gave a good education to the lower strata of society, which otherwise would not have had it, and made them capable of availing of opportunities opened up by the Rebellion. They certainly did not incite rebellion.

I then made a point of asking people of a later generation if they had been educated by the Brothers and how they regarded it. Invariably they said they had been given a good education which they could not have got otherwise—an education which made them effective in the society in which they lived. So I understood why McCarthy admired them. After all, disbelief is not the only virtue.

I don't know what went wrong after that—supposing it did go wrong. I suppose it was the subversive effect of the rather vacuous ideology of Vatican 2 on the system of Pius IX and Vatican 1.

Garvin does not say if he was educated by the Brothers, and, if not, where his information about them comes from. His mindset strikes me as being like that of a disillusioned believer.

He appears to see the theocratic democracy as being based on education that ended at the age of 13. That is contrary to my experience. I worked with people whose education, like mine, ended at 13 or earlier, and there was nothing I couldn't talk about with them. People who went off to be educated in city Colleges became certain about things that most people who were not educated took with a pinch of salt. And those who went on to University became omniscient in these matters.

And the policing of these things was not done by the Parish Priest—who never bothered me—but by the educated laity, urged on by missionary activity from the cities.

When I decided to leave Slieve Luacra, it was the pious pressures from the cities forcing their way into the country that I was leaving. Therefore the last place I would have thought of going to was Dublin. I did not go to see Dublin until almost ten years after I had left Ireland. It was as I expected, only more so.

But if secret unbelievers kept their opinions to themselves and joined the Knights for cover, how could there be a secularisation process? The answer is that there wasn't.

And I wonder how Garvin knows that secret unbelievers joined the Knights?

Gene Kerrigan, the Leftist journalist who made a career in Establishment journalism, explained about 25 years ago that there was n need for anybody to disadvantage himself career-wise by taking issue with the Church from a secularising standpoint because the position of the Church would be undermined by external forces, chiefly by globalist capitalism. Something like that has happened. This meant that there was none of the development than an internal secularising movement would have caused. The middle class did not do what, according to the classical liberal conception of things, it was their historic destiny to do. Insofar as that was done, it was BICO that did it. Then, when the Church was down, the bourgeois liberals kicked it.

Back in the mid-seventies there was an influential bourgeois-academic variant of Marxism called Althusserianism. One of its central precepts was that there was a *"radical absence of memory"* between successive modes of production. Since human existence depends very much on memory, this implied that there was no continuous human existence in history—and therefore, in a sense, there was no history, only the illusion of it.

In Ireland in recent times, insofar as bourgeois liberal academia influenced things, there has been a radical absence of memory, not between successive modes of production—because it was capitalism then and it is capitalism now—but between successive phases of fashion.

The Minister for Education—one of the BICO campaigns was for an Education Act but we do not recall getting any support from Ruairi Quinn—wants to abolish history from the schools. And in the light of the vastly expanded role which schools have come to play in life during the past forty years, that is tantamount to trying to abolish history. No doubt he was a secret unbeliever. His time has come and he sees that history is just packed full of the wrong stuff.

But Professor Garvin is a historian, and historians can hardly be against History. Carroll Professor Roy Foster was. He praised Edna Longley's plea for amnesia. But that was only a feint. He wanted to displace Irish history with English history of Ireland.

Professor Garvin seems to be attempting something different. He is aware of what is supposed to be the historic mission of the middle class intellectual and he is trying to create a false memory of there having been at least a pathetic attempt to accomplish that historic destiny, if only by means of mental reservation.

Conor Lynch

This article first appeared in
Labour & Trade Union Review,
September 2005.
Conor died in 2012.

The War On Islam

John Lloyd of the *Financial Times* wrote an article for the *Guardian* (10.08.05) defending the British Government's response to the London bombings. He begins by describing the State's measures as being against:

> "…the cheerleaders for one or other brand of Islamo-fascism which, were it to come with a swastika armband or a Ku Klux Klan hood, we would have no hesitation on condemning."

Islamo-fascism is a 'buzz-word' used in those liberal-left circles which supported the war on Iraq. It is designed to label an enemy in terms that conjure up an image of wickedness in the minds of right (or rather, left) thinking people. Nothing necessarily wrong with that (there's a war on, after all.) But 'Islamo-fascism' is meaningless and is a barrier to thought about either Islam or fascism, and is probably designed to be such a barrier.

Among other things fascism was racist. In none of its manifestations can Islam conceivably be described as racist. I can imagine no system of beliefs less conducive to racism than Islam (and I very much include socialism). Islam has a big problem with Official Judaism's support for Israel, but it has never been anti-Jewish. Its historical heartlands—Spain and the Ottoman Empire—were the safest havens that Jews have ever found.

Fascism was imperialist (and at the same time anti-imperialist). Fascism developed in states which largely missed out on capitalist imperialism. It resisted encroachments by established imperialist states with a view to becoming strong enough to join them. Does Iran want to conquer colonies? Does Pakistan? Does Libya?

Is Islam anti-socialist? Yes, in so far as socialism manifested itself as an atheistic creed. But where Islam has secured a strong base its instincts are far more socialist that anything being promoted in the world by Britain and the United States.

What Islam certainly is is a system of universally applicable beliefs—much as Catholicism is (at least in theory). And there lies the problem. Liberal capitalism, still led ideologically, and often physically, by Britain, felt that with the fall of the Soviet Union it would sweep all before it. Until it met Islam.

Blair swears that he is not involved in a crusade against Islam. (Bush says this also, but hardly even pretends to mean it. He really does embarrass the sophisticated liberal Imperialists—but they need his Air Force.) The propagandists for liberal Imperialism, like John Lloyd, claim that there is merely a war on terror, a war on any unrepresentative, extremist, element within Islam. But that there is this great majority of moderate Muslims that we should all be friends with.

They are having a rough time finding these moderates and when they do find one he usually goes off the next day and says the wrong thing. A moderate Muslim is someone for whom Islam is a matter of private faith, something that moves him to have a chat with God on a Friday. (This was how Catholicism was viewed. And Catholics only got rights insofar as Catholicism as a system of universal beliefs, opposed to those of liberal capitalism, appeared to be abandoned.)

A moderate Muslim can also be a bent Muslim. The trouble is that bent Muslims seem to have an exaggerated idea of how much money the US has to throw around. And so the bent Muslim doesn't come cheap. Look how much he got for Saddam's sons (and his fourteen year old nephew) and how much he is being offered for Bin Laden.

Watching CNN and the BBC trying to take sides in the recent Iranian presidential election was comical. They wanted Rafsanjani to be the moderate, which he wasn't, and the Mayor of Teheran to be the extremist. All they could find was that the Mayor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was a poor man and Rafsanjani was rich. And that settled the matter!

Thus far there is a debate within Islam about the best means to resist (though not, for some reason, to defeat) liberal capitalism. No substantial element exists within Islam which is opposed to such resistance. And the consensus at the moment seems to be that there is a role for many different tactics. But of 'moderate Islam' there is hardly a sign.

Liberal capitalism can have no limits set against it expansion. And it is therefore at war with Islam and not just with a minority within Islam. And until socialism takes a closer look at its origins within liberal capitalist philosophy, and accepts a world which is diverse and a better place for being diverse, it will continue to gravitate towards the liberal capitalist/imperialist camp. *

Eoghan Ruadh Ó Súilleabháin

Two Songs

A ghaibhne Chláir Fódhla

(To a blacksmith who presented him with a spade)

A ghaibhne Chláir Fódhla, mo chomhairle anois déanaidh
Gan dul i gcomórtas le leomhan na féile
Tá fadhairt mhaith tar meón aige i gcóir go rígh-ghléasta
Is ós cionn na hinneónna is ró-bhreágh í a éirim
Nó ar prásáil an teallaigh is deas é gan dabht
Nó ar chlár bhidhis go greannta ag cur slachta ar gach ball
Is ceárdaidhe gan easbaidh é mo phreabaire gabha
Is lúthmhar mear gléasta é chum órd bin do phléascadh
Tá inntleacht tar meón aige is eólas a chéirde

Ye blacksmiths of Ireland, my advice now take / not to compete with the lion of generosity / He has a fine furnace superbly prepared in readiness / it is over the anvil fine is his power / or for welding nicely by heat he is surely fine / or on the vice-table neatly finishing each piece / My lively blacksmith is a craftsman without defect / He is strong, lively, well-prepared to strike a sweet-ringing sledge-blow / He has outstanding intellect and knowledge of his trade.

Is é ghníos ar dtúis gach ball úrlais do lucht saothair
Idir leaba suic, calltar Dutch, Gallda nó Gaedhealach
Coir tarraingthe ar treabha chnuic is leabhar-stoc na cléithe
Gach máinlead le foghluim is slabhra an tsuirbhéara
Déanann sé rinn do shior-scoth gan cháim
Don chuileann chruadh-shuidhte's é líomtha chum báin
An tsluasad, an píce, is gan amhras an sleághan
Ráca an gáirneóra, líoghan ró-dheas na saora
An tromán do toirnóir, 's an billeóg don chaolach.

It is he who first makes every tool-part for labourers / ploughshares and coulters—Dutch, English or Irish / the hauling gear of the hill plough and the long shaft of the harrow / every mallet with knowledge and the surveyor's chain / He makes an edge for a fine blade flawlessly / for the fast-set holly-tree, and it sharpened for the field / the shovel, the pike, and of course the shlawn / the gardeners rake, the fine trowel of the mason / the wheelwrights whorl, and the slasher for bushes.

Is céardaidhe ró-néata é, is déaieann sé crúdh deas
Do huntéir an fhiadaigh nó do dhian-each an cúrsa,
Spuir ghreanta 'gus béalbhac do shrianta 's an triúmpa
Déanann sé an rinch, an hing 's an compass
An cúib, na mirréirí, is béama na meadha
Ancaire círigh do luing is do bhád
An fearsad don túrna, an screú-pin, 's an cárda
An méaracán do'n táilliur, an tsiosúr 's an tsnáthad.

He is a fine tradesman, and he makes a good shoe / for the hunter of the chase or the strong steed of the course / a finely wrought spur and a bit for the bridle, and the buckles / the stirrup for the saddle, the fishing hook and the trumpet / He makes the wrench, the hinge and the compass / the coop, the mirrors, and the beam of the weighing scales / the serrated anchor for ship and for boat / the spindle for the spinning-wheel, the screw-pin and the carder / the thimble for the tailor, the scissors and the needle.

Is cliste é mo leómhan chum gunnaidhe do dhéana
Piostail is leabhar-chlaidhimhis bóltaidhe do gheibhinn
Na springionna cóistidheus na róthaidhe do ghléasadh
An scian ghéar, an cut líomhtha, an róistín 's an cail-bhior
Déanann sé an calabar, an speal 's an corrán
Ráparaidhe fada chum treascartha namhaid
Rásúiridhe greannta chum action as láimh
An tarachair 's an cleabhear 's an t-iarann don phlána
Taistil na líonta is na cíora cómálta.

My hero is accomplished at making guns / pistols and graceful swords and bolts for lock-ups / at preparing coach-springs and wheels / the sharp knife, the filed bill-hook; the grid-iron and the slender spit / he makes the callipers, the scythe and the sickle / the long rapier for downing enemies / razors finely made for action of the hand / the auger, the cleaver and the iron of the plane / the flax hackles and the combing instruments.

Níl aon bhall úrlais' dhá bhfuil ins an tsaoghal so
Ná déanann mo lúbaire lúthmhar mear éadtrom
An broad axe 's an screudóg, scian fonnsa an chúipéara
An sádh agus an giústa dís úcairidhe is caorach
Déanann sé an phiocóid, an corrán 'san tlúdh
Gach faision ar ghlasaibh chum dóirse do dhúnadh
Marc ioscaid agus ceathramhan agus coir chum cnó phléascadh
An meanaidhthe, an casúr, 's an pinsiúr don ghréasaidhe.

There is no implement in this world / that my swift, nifty, agile stalwart does not make / the broad axe and the screw, the hoop-knife of the cooper / the saw and the tankard, the fuller's shears and the sheep shears / He makes the pick, the sickle and the meat-hook / household grates, the poker and the tongs / every fashion in locks to secure doors / the branding iron for ham joints and beef quarters, and a gadget for cracking nuts / the awl, the hammer and the pincers for the cobbler.

Do rinn sé dham sciuirse do rain dheas chuirealta
Bhí leabhar leathan ciumhasac 's go héadtrom so-sháidhte
Gan rian buille an uird, acht í mín deas plátáltha
'S mar mheasaim ní lúbfadh 'san úir le fear láidir
Le fuaim gach aon bhuille ba bhinne í 'ná an chreidhil
'S 'ná ceól-sidhe na cruinne dá spreagadh le meidhir
'S 'ná Meirgin an sír-leómhan do sheinm ceol suain d'Argus
Ós cionn na hinneona gur b'iongnadh gan cháim í.

He made me a weapon of a nice tillage spade / it was elegant, broad, flanged, light, easily driven / without mark of the sledge blow, but it smooth and nicely platelike / and as I see it, a strong man would not in the soil / with the sound of every blow it was sweeter than a bell / and than the fairy music of the whole world being played with delight / than Orpheus playing sweetly on harps / than Meirgin the true hero who played a lullaby for Argus / over the anvil so that it was a wonder it was flawless.

Slán agus céad leis gach aon stair dar thógais
'S chum árd-tallaidhe tréana do shéadais go módhamhrach
'S chun Pádraig na féile glan glégeal an t-óig-fhear
Is ceárdaighe ró-néata é in éirim 's in eolas
Ag Droichead Abhann Uí Cheárna tá an rábaire grin
An gabha cliste is áiline 's is bhreághtha ins an ríoghacht
Beirimse an bárr dó go bráth is arís
'S é Bhulcan gan dabhat é, is bronnaimse suae dhó
Gur buaidheadh leis gan amhras an mhodhamhail-bhruinneall mhaordha.

A hundred farewells for every story you told / and for every great roaring fire-blast you blew (with your bellows) methodically / and to generous Patrick, the pure, bright young man / he is a truly accomplished craftsman, in intelligence and in knowledge / at Sixmilebridge is the sporting fellow / the cleverest, finest, most splendid blacksmith in the kingdom / I award him supremacy forever and ever / He is a true Vulcan, and I grant him sway / may he win without doubt the modest, gracious maiden!

In praise of Mr. and Mrs. Aldworth

(From *"New Ireland"*, September 1916.
The Aldworths employed Eoghan for a while)

Thalia, the Muse of Mirth
In lyric strains is now alert,
She will in rhyme sublime desert
To congratulate bright Aldworth;
With his brilliant spouse, that beauty rare,
Whose features are supremely fair,
Encircled by the Graces gay,
And to display each blooming ray
Ten thousand Cupids round her play,
With virtuous grace adorning.
The harpsichord, guitar and flute,
All notes in alt and sharps acute,
She plays with admiration.

Her genius height sublimely soars
In learning and the limning lore,
Her parts excel Peruvian ore,
Great Damer's store and ten times more
Than the riches of the Grand Seignor,-
She's the flower of all the nation.

Loud huzzas and music high
And sound of trumpets reach the sky
And flags of peace in air to fly
To welcome home those darlings
Whose merit met with laurel rays
In charity and virtuous days,
They surely are Dame Nature's pride,
The orphans' guide, who ne'er denied
To see the poor with alms supplied
In raiment, food and sterling.

Tuneful birds their notes convey,
And warble on each verdant spray,
The fishes in the water play
Without dissimulation.

Their shrubberies, the rarest seen,
Embellished with each evergreen,
Here curious trees their bloom disclose,
And Floras chose to take repose
In Annsgrove where sweet odour flows,
To proclaim their consolation.

The goddess Hebe shares her youth
In this place with rays uncouth;
Her golden age reigns in truth
To complete their consummation.

Here Bellona is robed in white,
Here Vitula views delight,
The Paphian Queen and Juno's theme
With the gods convene to deck the scene
And Annsgrove for their seat ordain
To unite in exultation.

Their extraction high I need not name,
Refulgent lines of Thebe supreme,
That wafted on the wings of fame
By bard and antiquarians.

Nobles great who gained renown
And blended with the British crown
Friends unto their countries' cause
Without applause ...
In English and in Irish laws,
And never create variance.

May halcyon days, and ease and health
A blooming, sweet peace and mirth
Grace divine and shining of wealth
Make my theme exalted.

May the Father, Son and Holy Ghost
In every island, clime and coast
Protect and aid this happy pair
That's kind, sincere and debonair;
Which all Ireland do revere -
And thus we'll toast those darlings.

Séamas Ó Domhnaill

Eoghan Ruadh Ó Súilleabháin
1748—1784
Aspects of his Life and Work
Part 10

The Blacksmith and the Mason

Eoghan's Blacksmith song and his song concerning the Aldworths may at first glance appear to have little in common. But there are a few similarities. For instance they are both praise songs and they are both intended for singing in taverns. They are both possibly written for a reward; one for a free spade and one for a teaching position. It is likely also that they were both written in the early 1770s. There are other links about which I'll talk later on but in the meantime I"d like to make a few comments in relation to each of the songs in turn.

I don't know the air to the Blacksmith song but I think you could try it to the air of the Bold Thady Quill:

Ye maids of Duhallow who're anxious for courting
A word of advice I will give unto ye
Proceed to Banteer to the athletic sporting
And hand in your names to the club committee

This song is often played by West Cork weddings bands for waltzing. Although the tune doesn't exactly fit the Blacksmith song it may help to lift it out of the dry ink for you.

The opening words are worth examining; the first of which is simply the letter "a" which is used when addressing someone. Dinneen's Dictionary defines it technically as an interjection which precedes the vocative case. HM Queen Elizabeth of England used the vocative case very well when she formally addressed President McAleese during her state visit in 2011: *"A Uachtaráin agus a cháirde"* (President and friends).

The second word is *"gaibhne*: blacksmiths". A single blacksmith is a *"gabha"*. In modern Irish the word is pronounced like "gowa". The name of the Pogue, Shane MacGowan could be anglicised as John Smith (Smithson). *"Gabha Dubh"* can be used to distinguish a blacksmith from a *"Gabha Geal"* which is a locksmith or a silversmith. The word is shared with other Celtic languages but pronounced with an *"f"*. The Cornish Rebellion of 1497 was lead by a blacksmith, Myghal Joseph, *"An Gof"*.

"Clár Fódla" is a poetic name for Ireland; *"Clár"* meaning a level surface, a board, a plank, a table, a flat country, a large district, a chess board. . .

Seathrún Céitinn DD (Geoffrey Keating) in his history of Ireland, *"Foras Feasa ar Éireann"*, states that Ireland has had a total of 14 names:

> "An cúigeadh hainm, Fódhla, ó bhainríoghain do Thuathaibh Dé Danann, d'á ngairthí Fódhla; is í fá bean do Mhac Cécht d'ár bh'ainm díleas Teathúr"
>
> "The fifth name was Fódhla, from a queen of the Tuatha Dé Danann, who was called Fódhla: it is she was wife to

Mac Cécht, whose proper name was Teathúr."

Blacksmiths are widely regarded as having supernatural powers in Celtic, Nordic and Classical mythology and indeed there is one reference in the Blacksmith song to Vulcan who is known in Irish as *"Gabha Ifrinn"*, the smith of hell. Except for this one reference however there is nothing else of the supernatural or the mythological to be found in the Blacksmith song. Instead there is an emphasis on technology and technological terms. It is a testament to Eoghan Ruadh's genius that he was able to set down specific terms in Irish in relation to a field that was not his own. The capacity to absorb foreign terms and to create new terms as necessitated by technological developments was one of the important but under-regarded features of Irish civilisation.

I found this useful definition of a *"term"* on Wikipedia: A word that in specific contexts is given a specific meaning, a meaning that may deviate from the meaning the same word has in other contexts and in everyday language.

For more than one thousand five hundred years new terms have been created in the Irish language and others have been imported to deal with developments —social, political, ecclesiastical and technological.

Here is an example of foreign terminology used in a poem about India written in the 9th century AD by Airbertach Mac Coisse:

Ro- fess a maith as cecht aird,
a magnéit, a hadamaint,
is a margréit a hur i n-or
a hór is a carrmocol

"Its goods are known far and wide / its magnetite, its adamant / from land to land its pearls / its gold and its carbuncle" (James Carney).

The coming of Christianity meant more than just the adoption of the Roman script. Ecclesiastical terminology was incorporated into Irish through broadening the semantic scope of native words, direct translation or the adding of Irish prefixes or suffixes to Latin words. Examples of imported Latin terms are: *Sagart* (priest)—sacredos; *Aifreann* (Mass)—offerendum; *Peaca* (sin)—pecco, and *Paidir* (prayer)—prex.

Even though there was no University in Ireland there was native learning alongside the Church learning and Irish scholars travelling abroad gave the Irish schools a high reputation.

The coming of the Normans caused a great expansion of the number of legal and administrative terms in particular but in addition terms relating to building, food, fashion and military affairs.[1]

Eoghan goes into some detail listing various types of plough and plough components which in an agricultural economy prior to the combustion engine was the source of wealth.

Apparently the type of plough used in Europe did not change much from Roman times down to the 1600s when the Dutch made significant improvements. In the 1730s Joseph Foljambe from Rotherham in Yorkshire patented a new style of plough. This was constructed of wood, like the standard plough, but the fittings and coulter (cutting blade) were made of iron and the mouldboard and ploughshare were covered in iron plates. It was lighter than the traditional plough and could be easily worked with a pair of horses. It came into general use in Britain around 1760 and remained in use until the advent of the tractor. When Eoghan Ruadh was writing, probably in the early 1770s it is probable that imitations of the Foljambe plough were being made by local blacksmiths in poor districts such as western Ireland. There is a similar case in the Philippines today. There you will often see a sign saying "Vulcanisation Shop" outside a tin shed on the side of a busy street. The men there will not only fix a burst tyre but will ingeniously improvise any spare part for you on the spot. In Cork we'd say they were *dawfaking* it.

The Aldworth song is sung to the tune of the Princess Royal which is a kind of hornpipe. Eoghan used this tune often for his English language songs.

In Greek Mythology, Thalia (Abundance) was one of the three Graces or Charites with her sisters Aglaea (Splendour) and Euphrosyne (Mirth). They were the daughters of Zeus and either Eurynome or Eunomia goddess of good order and lawful conduct. Thalia was the goddess of festivity and rich banquets. The Greek word "thalia" is an adjective applied to banquets, meaning rich, plentiful, luxuriant and abundant.

The term Halcyon Days comes from the name of Alcyone who was daughter of Aeolus, the God of the Wind. Her husband was Ceyx. As gods they committed sacrilege by referring to themselves as Zeus and Hera for which they suffered death. When Alcyone's husband Ceyx died in a shipwreck, Alcyone threw herself into the sea. Out of compassion, the other Gods then turned the pair into Kingfishers. When Alcyone made her nest on the beach, waves threatened to destroy it. Aeolus restrained his winds and made the waves be calm during seven days in each year, so she could lay her eggs. These became known as the "halcyon days", aorund the Winter Solstice, when storms never occur.

The Irish word for Kingfisher is *Gabha Uisce*: "water smith".

William Shakespeare places the phrase Halcyon Days on the lips of St. Joan of Arc, "la Pucelle":

> "Dauphin, I am by birth a shepherd's daughter, my wit untrained in any kind of art. Heaven and our Lady gracious hath it pleased to shine on my contemptible estate: Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs, and to sun's parching heat display'd my cheeks, God's mother deigned to appear to me and in a vision full of majesty will'd me to leave my base vocation and free my country from calamity.
>
> "Her aid she promised and assured success in complete glory she reveal'd herself; and, whereas I was black and swart before, with those clear rays which she infused on me that beauty am I bless'd with which you see. Ask me what question thou canst possible, and I will answer unpremeditated: my courage try by combat, if thou darest, and thou shalt find that I exceed my sex. Resolve on this, thou shalt be fortunate, if thou receive me for thy warlike mate…
>
> "… Assign'd am I to be the English scourge. This night the siege assuredly I'll raise: expect Saint Martin's summer, halcyon days, since I have entered into these wars."
>
> Henry VI Act 1.[2]

Annesgrove is an estate near Castletownroche. The original house was occupied by Colonel Richard Aldworth in the latter part of the 18th century. It is surrounded by famous gardens which are open to the public during the Summer.[3] Mrs. Elizabeth Aldworth, 1695-1775, was born the Elizabeth St. Leger and was known in her time as "The Lady Freemason", and was the first recorded woman to be initiated into Regular Freemasonry. She married Richard Aldworth in 1713. The Aldworths had settled in County Cork in

the early 17th century and intermarried with the St Legers of Doneraile as well as other landed families.

Eoghan Ruadh wrote a total of three Blacksmith songs. one is addreessed to his friend Séamas Mac earailt:

A chara mo chléibh, 's a Shéamuis ghreannmhair ghrádhaigh
D'fhuil Ghearaltaigh, Ghréagaigh, Éachtaigh, airm-nirt áigh,
Maide glan, réidh, i ngleas bíodh agat im rámhainn,
Is mar bharra ar an scléip cuir léi go greanta an bacán.

"O friend of my bosom, and O humorous, affable Séamus / of the blood of the noble accomplished, soldierly, triumphant Geraldine / Set a sound, steady handle in my spade / and to crown the escapade, attach to it neatly a treadle."

The other third song is also addressed to a Séamus but his surname is not given:

A Shéamuis, déan dam arm na bhfód
Sciuirse ghléasta dhéanfas grafadh 'gus rómhar
Stiuir ghlan éadtrom i bhfaobhar, i dtaitheach 's i gcóir
Nach túttach gné is bhéas néata tarraingthe i gcló.

"O Seamus, make for me the weapon of the sod / a well-prepared implement that will perform grubbing and filling / Of clean light appearance, in edge, in power and in readiness / Not rough in appearance, and which will be neatly formed to shape."

All three of the blacksmith songs were originally edited by Fr. Patrick Dinneen. Risteard Ó Foghludha however left them out of his 1937 edition. He states that he didn't bother with *"A Shéamuis Déan Dam"* because it related to North Munster, a place where Eoghan Euadh never travelled. I'm not sure how he makes out that the two Seamus songs are from North Munster. Perhaps there are some dialect clues that a scholar of Ó Foghludha's ability could recognise. On the other hand, *A ghaibhne Chláir Fódhla* does clearly mention Sixmilebridge which is in East Clare (hurling country). I am at a loss to know how Ó Foghludha can say with certainty that Eoghan Ruadh never travelled in North Munster. It is a fact that the architect, John Rothery, who designed and built Newmarket Court for the Aldworths and Doneraile Court for the St. Ledgers also designed a Big House called Mount Ievers which is located within a mile of Sixmilebridge.

There is every indication that a network or networks of landed families operated in Munster in the 18th century, in which a vital role was played by intermarriage but also by their involvement in Freemasonry. The Aldworth/St. Ledger/Ievers network was Protestant, whereas the Nagle/Hennessy/Matthews network was Catholic. Eoghan seems to have moved in the sphere of these networks.

Other families in whose sphere of influence he moved were the Herberts and Cronins of Kerry and the Sullivans of Tullylease, near Charleville.

There is an overlap between Jacobitism and Freemasonry which needs to be investigated in order to get to understand the life of Munster in Eoghan's day. Dear Reader, if you happen to know anything about either of these subjects I'd be obliged if you could drop me a line at jimaricel@eircom.net.

NOTES

[1] Úna Bhreathnach and Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín (2008): 'Téarmaíocht na Gaeilge: turgnamh in vitro', Taighde and Teagasc 6. http://www.focal.ie

[2] The Feast of St. Martin of Tours, Martinmas is 11 November.

[3] http:// landedestates.nuigalway.ie /LandedEstates

MORE NOTES

The following Notes to Part 9 were inadvertently omitted during layout.

[1] If learners of Irish like you and me were to be honest we would always have to acknowledge the debt we owe to Daniel Corkery for opening up the world of Irish literature with his 1925 classic, "The Hidden Ireland". Nothing like it has been attempted since that time. It would be hard to find anyone who would have the knowledge and ability to attempt it, unless John Minahane would take on the task.

[2] The 2nd verse also has eleven syllables while the 3rd has eight. From then on the verses have 11 and 8 syllables alternatively.

[3] If you are one of those people who did King Lear for your Leaving Cert rather than Hamlet I'd better explain that Prince Hamlet and his friend Horatio were walking in a graveyard and saw some grave diggers at their work with a load of skulls and bones thrown about. Hamlet picks up a skull and the gravedigger tells him that it belonged to Yorick who was the court jester when Hamlet was a child.

[4] In Jacobite terms, Bonnie Prince Charles, younger brother would have been King Henry IX of England, II of Ireland and I of Scotland.

Wilson John Haire

Tribute to a Poet

Padraic Fiacc

Patrick Joseph O'Connor (aka Padraic Fiacc) was born on the 15th of April 1924 in Elizabeth Street in the Lower Falls Road, Belfast. His early years were spent in the house of his maternal grandparents in East Street in the Market's area of Belfast.

His mother's family, the McGarrys, had been driven from their home in Lisburn by a loyalist sectarian mob in 1920 with their furniture piled in the street, along with a piano, and burnt.

His father Bernard, though he came from a prosperous family of shopkeepers from County Cavan, made his way to Belfast to work as a barman and became active in the IRA. Finding himself in the impossible situation of being under Stormont, with its draconian methods of the oppression of the then Catholic minority and with the Irish Free State having given up on the Northern Catholic, he opted for emigration to New York. He was reluctantly joined, in 1929, by his wife Annie Christina and their three sons, including Patrick who was five years old.

As this family was being united in the New York of 1929, my own father, aged 29, was after seven years getting ready to leave New York because of the Wall Street Crash. He stayed on a year until 1930 working in hotel kitchens without wages and being paid in meals. On one very long day he had walked thirty miles through New York State in the search for work. He was a skilled carpenter but would have worked doing anything. I mention this because he had related to me many times the New York of the 1920s and with those memories I could guess the situation of the O'Connor family. Maybe the five year old Padraic Fiacc and my father crossed paths?

Padraic Fiacc is in his 90th year of life now though I haven't been able to find out where in Belfast he might be

living now. He has again slipped into obscurity as has his poetry. Most of it is out of print and what was remaindered from the publishers is now selling on the Internet at inflated prices.

That is not to say Padraic Fiacc has been ignored—he had a lengthy interview on BBC N.I.under the title of: *Lost Voice of Controversial Belfast Poet: Padraic Fiacc.* He has had a lengthy mention in *Poetry Ireland* under the title of: *Odd Man Out: Padraic Fiacc.* He has been published by Blackstaff, the Belfast Protestant publisher. He gets a lot of cover in The Free Library on the Internet. Someone has taken the time to write him up in Wikipedia.

A plaque in recognition of his talent has been screwed to the wall in The John Hewitt pub in Donegall Street, Belfast, at which event he was present some years ago. Though he has stayed well clear, in his writing, of the Heaney, Longley, Muldoon, Mahon, Simmons and Hewitt group of Northern poets, they have paid tribute to him at one time or another. In 1969 his collection of 41 poems entitled *Black Stream* (1947—1967) was published by the Dolmen Press, Dublin.

They had previously appeared in the Irish Times, The Irish Bookman, The Irish Press, The Irish Independent, Poetry Ireland, The Honest Ulsterman (a Northern Protestant publication), Threshold, New Irish Writing, The Kilkenny Magazine, as well as being broadcast on BBC. N.I. He has also been included in the important post-War anthology *New Irish Poetry* in the USA. Dolmen Press in 1969 was the first time to publish him in book form. The selection covers a span of two decades and includes seven poems from the unpublished collection: *Woe To The Boy* for which he was awarded the 1957 *Æ Memorial Award*. He also received the *Poetry Ireland Award*, 1981. He is a member of Aosdána, the Irish Arts Academy.

His books are:

Woe to the Boy (1957)
By the Black Stream (Dublin. The Dolmen Press, 1969)
The Wearing of the Black (Editor: The Blackstaff Press, 1974)
Odour of Blood (Kildare, The Goldsmith Press, 1977)
Nights in the Bad Place (Belfast, The Blackstaff Press, 1977)
T*he Selected Padraic Fiacc* (The Blackstaff Press, 1979)
Missa Terribilis (The Blackstaff Press, 1986)
Ruined Pages: Selected Poems (edited by Gerald Dawe and Aodán Póilin) Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1994)
Semper Vacare (Belfast, The Lagan Press, 1999)
Red Earth (The Lagan Press)
SEA—Sixty Years of Poetry (edited and illustrated by Michael McKernon) MH Press, 2006
In My Own Hand—poems written in the poet's own hand. Multimedia Heritage, 2012

References:

Brown, John. In the Chair: Interviews with Poets from the North of Ireland, Salmon Publishing, 2002.
Fiacc, Padraic. Ruined Pages. Selected Poems. Ed Gerald Dawe and Aodán Póilin. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1994.

Padraic's background:

His father Bernard managed to start up two shops in New York and seemed to be doing well enough to hire a maid. But during the Wall Street Crash in 1929 and the aftermath at the beginning of the 1930s Bernard lost everything and took to heavy drinking which further impoverished the family. Moving from Manhattan to be now brought up in the notorious crime-ridden Hell's Kitchen district of New York Padraic took to writing plays and poetry. He was befriended by Padraic Colum, the poet who became his mentor, and suggested he change his name to Padraic Fiacc.

Colum, in a loose Irish translation is *Padraic the Dove* while the other Padraic became *Padraic the Raven*. Colum proposes he *"dig in the garden of Ireland"*. He enrolled in St. Joseph's Seminary, New York, and studied for five years under the Irish Capuchin Order. Unhappy at the thought of leading the life of a priest he left and returned to Belfast in 1946. He immediately began forging a reputation as a poet, appearing in *New Irish Poets* in 1948. His poetry has been described as: *"evocative, pungent and disconcerting with a deep dimension in his worrisome imagination"*. He is said to be out-of-kilter with the ethics of the time to the *"sombre mainstream of Irish verse"*. That sounds good to me. A number of University-educated critics seem desperate to place him in some kind of literary straitjacket: The online *Free Library* says:

> "Taking its title from James Joyce 'Tilly' Fiacc's first book is a microcosm of Irish poetic practice from the revival mode of Colum, Austin Clarke and the aspirations of an 'Irish Mode' to the first real instances of his own highly distinctive and problematic style of the seventies and thereafter—a fragmented, jagged speech-based poetry that propels images at the reader as an installation, relying upon intuitive aural patterns and cadences."

Wasn't 1970s Belfast the upping of the Republican struggle which gave Fiacc's poetry its warring, staccato tone? When Fiacc says in one of his poems from the collection *The Black Stream.*

"A boy with a husky voice picks a fight and kicks a fin down home in pain."

This is seen by our critic from the Free Library as:

> "The landscape of the poem is by now familiar to audiences well-used to the gritty realism of post-sixties television and portraits of working-class city life found in such ground-breaking contemporaneous fiction as Alan Sillitoe's The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1959). Fiacc's poem is probably closer however to F.L. Green's classic novel Odd Man Out (1945) and its 1947 film version by Carol Reed. Opening with the view of inner city Belfast the poem's flashback is of ghostly presences and echoes."

I think Fiacc's poem is closer to life in Catholic West Belfast than to life in an English city. That husky voice of the boy kicking a tin down a street (called a *finn*) is indeed a boy with a husky voice. But his huskiness is due to not having proper clothing in winter. He is probably wearing a very cheap jersey without a coat, a jersey so thin it was called a spit-through. He would have been plagued with a sore throat due to the cold weather. In this boy's area he had to be on the look-out for the armed *polis* who often dished out a slap on the back of the head to any kid pointing a home-made wooden pretend-gun at them, as kids are apt to do. Two complaints from those boys now adults—one being a best friend of mine—who came from the Falls Road when one of these slaps to the base of the skull was rendered by an RUC man maybe weighing 18 stone and standing over six feet. Some of them were remnants of the old RIC with Southern accents and put into Catholic areas and the city centre because they would not be tolerated in Protestant areas. The Falls population made fun of their accents saying things like:

'Would ye be in the movement?' (IRA)

Sometimes there was an upside. One notorious Catholic RUC man had a field day at a football match between Linfield (the Blues, a Protestant team) and a Derry Catholic team. Fighting broke out after one match and our Catholic mountain-man cop was in there with his baton to lay it only on the heads of the Blues supporters. When asked why he did this by a reporter he unashamedly said his baton was of greenheart wood and could he tell it what to do. He flourished in

this manner until he retired South of the border. I think Stormont was desperate to tolerate this behaviour in order have a few token Catholics in the RUC.

Some Northern critics of Fiacc, though appearing to be patronising, have called his poetry a Catholic viewpoint. But Northern Ireland being what it is there can be no universal voice, only the other nation's opinion—the Protestant one.

Fiacc is saying the Catholic has been marginalised, oppressed and treated as a second class subject, with no hope of changing this lot through constitutional means, therefore only war can make changes. To most Protestants this is a blatant nonsense.

This is the Northern Catholic Fiacc describes:

"Cold, lost, not predicable
Poor, bare, crossed in grain
With a shudder no one can still."

Some critics say this is Fiacc himself, by way of avoiding and disowning the general malaise of the Northern Catholic population at the time. Yes, Fiacc is such a Catholic. This is why he cannot belong to any group of poets in the North. They do not know or feel what he knows as an untutored poet, as they look for universal values in humanity in order to avoid the tragedy of the English artificially -created sectarian Northern Ireland.

Yet another critic working for the BBC and the N.I. media pronounces Fiacc as being the *The Patron Saint of the Insane*. If he is, then who did it to him? Like the time his best friend when visiting him at his home in Glengormley, in the suburbs of Belfast, steps out of the door, walks a short distance and is murdered by a loyalist death squad. Maybe they thought he was Padraic Fiacc? After that he had a nervous breakdown and his marriage broke up.

Some of the more loyal Protestants within my N.I. extended family have unashamedly said to me:

"We don't trust Catholics."

My answer has been. *"You have a fuckin" good reason not to!."*

There are Catholics and Catholics but again to that more loyal Protestant there are only Catholics. Which takes me to the late Seamus Heaney. What a pity he went to further education and then to university and then to all those elite American universities and lost the raw edge of his Northern oppressed Catholicism. Yet he was still a Catholic and they who kept at least part of him Catholic were the sectarian Protestant university coteries to be found in Canadian and US universities who were aggrieved when Heaney got the Nobel Prize for literature when it should have gone to one of their own, especially one candidate, who shall remain nameless, but who was educated at the Belfast Academical Institute (Inst), came from a British military family and has a wife who loathes everything Catholic and writes scurrilous article about the Republicans.

Though Heaney said his passport is green and he will not raise a glass to toast the Queen he did in the end when she visited Dublin. He was also presented to the Duke of Edinburgh who is said to be fond of his poetry. Later he was offered the post of Poet Laureate of England, which he turned down. Of course rising to such heights (or lows?) you are bound to meet up with these people. It would then be very awkward to say your passport is green and you can neither toast or shake hands with them when a Government with green passports invited them in the first place. It sure can be a dilemma sometimes—the wearing of the green.

I feel sorry for Seamus, he got himself into a corner and with the winning of the Nobel Prize he was never going to get out of that corner. I remember a strange thing he said to someone who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature a couple of years later. His comment was: "Poor you". This remark was interpreted at the time as meaning the recipient would now have to compete against his/her self in order to show they were worthy of the prize.

Heaney might have taken a lesson from Martin McGuinness who, after shaking hands with the Queen, answered a heckler in the street saying: "I am still a Republican." I can imagine Padraic Fiacc shouting that no matter what elite he meets.

Unfortunately Heaney was not a Republican. But to loyal Ulster he was going to be forever a Catholic, and maybe a secret Republican (can you trust them?) and all the handshaking with the monarchy would not alter that. It was the boys from Inst who should be shaking the hand of the Queen.

So I still feel a certain amount of guilt as a Catholic in not backing Seamus Heaney. To most Catholics his winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature was a victory for the Northern Catholic over their oppressor and a grave disappointment for loyal Ulster. Witness the hullabaloo in Dublin when the elite made a grab for his fame as something that belonged to them. I suppose loyal Ulster was saying you can have him down there and all other fenians from here. I didn't notice First Minister Peter Robinson down in Dublin.

It has been suggested that, in a collection of poems, *Station Island*, Heaney struggled with himself, torn between the voices of his own people and his desire to be a literary personage. He chose to be famous. On re-reading 'Station Island' I agree with this view and the hell of it all is he might haves still gained all the prizes if he gone for the voices of his own people for he was good imaginative poet.

Now papers like the UK *Guardian* are out to rehabilitate Heaney for the benefit of some of those doubting Northern Catholics. One of their correspondents has gone through his entire work to pick out a few references to what is English aggression and would-be domination while at the same time saying he was anti-war, on that universal scale again.

Padraic Fiacc has had no such crisis of conscience—free as a bird to say what he likes and feels.

5th September 2013

For another view of Heaney, see Eileen Herlihy's tribute in the October *Irish Political Review*. **Ed**

Walter Cobb

Upon the Deaths of David Frost and Seamus Heaney

Frost Over Beowulf

Imagine at the Pearly Gates of Heaven
Celebrities expected, two quite separate
(They thoughtlessly will go and die in waves, not well spaces out)
Now one arrives, with an angelic choir
"And which one is it?" asked poor Saint Peter
"The satirist who became a tricky creep?
"Or the gifted poet who dared not speak home truths?"
He looked at Byron on the sidelines, who said nothing.
Then heard they a quite distant heavenly choir
Of angels singing out of tune, but very brashly
"That was your death that was
"It's over but it stung"
"Right" said Saint Peter, "I used to watch that show
"The best he ever was involved in.
"And so the nearer fellow must be

fine-versed Famous Seamus."
More loudly "Come in, man of verse, and welcome
"Old Beowulf is very keen to meet you"
And quietly to Byron he did add
"Watch Frost and stop him interviewing too much
"But give him one yourself if that's your fancy".

Notes

I found myself inspired to this poem by the coincidence of Seamus Heaney and David Frost dying at much the same time. I quite liked Heaney's*Beowulf* and didn't know much else about him. But I heard it said he did indeed *"not speak home truths"*, being deeply evasive about the long struggle going on in his native Belfast.

My own work borrows ideas from Byron's comical *"Vision of Judgement"*, which can be found at [http://petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/the_vision_of_judgement3.pdf] and is much funnier than anything I could ever write.

Donal Kennedy

Sighing For Duelling Pistols

Whenever I read damned fool commentary on Daniel O'Connell I sigh for the time when every gentleman worthy of the name kept at least one brace of duelling pistols. But alas, I'm no gentleman, nor even a scholar, and must rely on my laptop to secure satisfaction

.Some time back Fintan O'Toole wrote in *The Irish Times* that O'Connell had been written out of Irish history. Some time later that newspaper .sought suggestions for naming the new bridge over the

Liffey, so, inspired by O'Toole's complaint I wrote to his Editor suggesting it be dedicated to his forgotten hero. But my suggestion wasn't published.

Of course, Dublin has long had an O'Connell Bridge, spanning the Liffey, an impressive boulevard leading to it, named after O'Connell, which has hosted an O'Connell Monument carrying his likeness.

Dublin's main cemetery in Glasnevin contains, together with the remains of many hundred thousands of other decent people, those of great numbers of outstanding persons in many walks of life. Dwarfing all memorials there is a Round Tower built over O'Connell's grave. Other Irish cities and towns have streets, squares and other public places dedicated to O'Connell's memory.

For the best part of two hundred years a major school in Dublin, O'Connell Schools, has flourished. It was the Alma Mater of at least 2 Taoisigh, John A Costello and Sean Lemass, the renowned comedian Jimmy O'Dea, and,for a time, not often acknowledged, James Joyce. The school was recently the scene of one of the silliest, if not infamous commemorations in world history.

O'Connell, who once killed a man in a duel, and whose family for over a century smuggled young men to France to fight in its Irish Brigade, is reputed to have said that the freedom of Ireland was not worth the shedding of a drop of blood. O'Connell said a lot of things in his long career, in the Courts, in Parliament, in private meetings and in public, even "Monster" meetings, in Irish (his native language) and in English. He tailored his speeches according to his aims and his audiences and organised masses of common people on an unprecedented scale. Like Parnell and de Valera and Gerry Adams in later years he earned the hatred of *The Times*. No greater compliment is possible.

But erstwhile supporters whom he derided as *"Young Ireland*" after the *"Young Italy"* movement, split with him. Amongst them Thomas Francis Meagher whose speech on *"The Sword*" is an eloquent and principled defence of its use in a good cause. Meagher played a hero's part in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

But back to Dublin's O'Connell Schools, where there was recently unveiled a plaque commemorating an ex-pupil killed serving with the British Air Force in the Second World War. The late British historian A.J.P. Taylor maintained that the Air Force was founded as a terrorist body. The British magazine *History Today*, founded by the renegade Irishman Brendan Bracken, carries, in its June 2013 issue, a 1923 photograph of a burning Iraqi city following an RAF raid and says it was the custom of their pilots to machine-gun women and children during their *"policing"* of that country. This was some fourteen years before the Luftwaffe bombed Guernica and the genius of Picasso ensured that that later atrocity was not forgotten.

Anyhow the ex-pupil honoured by O'Connell Schools was Brendan Finucane, known to his comrades as "Paddy Finucane" and referred to, in his end of war speech as "Paddy Finoocane" by Winston Churchill, and held up by him as a "good" Irishman to differentiate him from the "naughty" Irish who served their own country.

The O'Connell school event was organised by an ex-pupil, a Dentist, not, as one might imagine, some pig-ignorant oaf. His oration praised Finucane's blowing numerous Germans to Kingdom come, and said that he had thus served Ireland's freedom. I read the report in the *Irish Times* which did not appear to note the irony. I can think of a genuine Patrick Finucane, a more deserving subject for Irish commemoration and international respect.

In praise of a speech by Enda Kenny, which I'd be surprised if he wrote himself, *Irish Times'* Political Correspondent, Stephen Collins, invokes, you guessed it, Daniel O'Connell. It was a speech where O'Connell praises the separation of Church and State. O' Connell had been hailed as *"The Liberator"* not in the derisive way he had himself christened the *"Young Irelanders*", but in earnest. The title had been bestowed on Simon Bolivar, who had used the Sword to wrest territories from Imperial Spain and shed blood with the same instrument.. O'Connell had used no sword, shed no blood nor wrested a square inch of territory from Imperial Britain. The oath which O'Connell took to enter Parliament did not require him to abandon his Catholicism, but did require him to uphold the Protestant Succession, and to grass on anyone trying to upset it.

O'Connell died on a Pilgrimage to Rome, where the Pope held not not only the Keys of St Peter, but Temporal Power over a significant swathe of the Italian Peninsula. Whilst most of his mortal remains lie in Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery, O'Connell's heart remains in Rome in accordance with his wishes.

In Ireland great oceans of blood, and other matter, were shed, not in warfare, but in 'Famine', as *"the Bloody Flux"* as Dysentery was then called, led waste to the nation, and agricultural produce which would have prevented the catastrophe was escorted to the docks for export, escorted by the bayonets, swords, and other weapons of Britain's Imperial Troops.

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VOX

Churchill's Poisonous Legacy
Cosgrave
An Irish Miracle
Carmona
Funerals
Archbishop Eamon Martin
Abortions
Peter Sutherland
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Catholic Press?

PAT

CHURCHILL'S POISONOUS LEGACY:

Memo to Sir Henry Trenchard, concerning Iraqi resistance to British rule in the 1920s:

> *"I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas… I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes, to spread a lively terror."*

{Source: Churchill paper 16/16-War Office. Quoted in Martin Gilbert's official biography}

Again, later (memo to RAF planners):

> "…it is absurd to consider morality on this topic… "

The topic was contained in an earlier minute to General Ismay:

> "I want you to think very seriously about this question of poison gas. We could drench the cities of the Ruhr, and many other German cities besides (with poison gas) such that most of the civilian population would be left requiring constant medical treatment… if we do this, let us do it 100 per cent. I want this studied in cold blood, and not by that crowd of psalm singing uniformed defeatists… of course, I will have to square this with Uncle Joe and the President." {Prime Minister's personal minute to the Chiefs of Staff, 1944}

> "Thus, in each case, spake the only Nobel winner with his own statue in Parliament Square, London : Winston Spencer Churchill." (Joe Cully, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, *Sunday Business Post*, 1.9.2013)

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COSGRAVE

> "Fianna Fail is not the party of Eamon de Valera or Sean Lemass. Labour is not – never was – the party of James Connolly. But Fine Gael is recognisably the party of W T Cosgrave. It has as firm a grip on the middle-class vote as it ever did" (James Downey, *Irish Independent*, 10.8.2013)

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AN IRISH MIRACLE

—Church seeks divine aid to save Ireland—

> "Ireland will be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on August 15 and placed under her divine protection and care. The first time this has been done here.

The Catholic Church is confident the Consecration will lift the black clouds of despair and hopelessness blighting the country.

The Consecration, which will be carried out by all of the country's Catholic Bishops acting in communion with one another will take place at Knock Shrine, during the annual Novena to Our Lady of Knock.

Historically, countries which were on their knees economically, politically and morally—and who carried out the Consecration—experienced a dramatic change of fortune soon afterwards.

In 1931, Portugal was in a dire state with the communist regime gearing up to mimic the tactics of dictator Joseph Stalin in Russia.

The people were also desperately poor and labouring under the yoke of a collapsed economy and unjust laws. However, when the ecclesiastical act was performed by Cardinal Cerejeira and all the Portuguese bishops, the country soon after experienced a renewal in the Church, State and economy. The Communist Government disintegrated, seminaries were filled at an astonishing rate and the country prospered economically." (Tom Prendeville, *Irish Examiner*, 12.8.2013)

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CARMONA

> "However Carmona, a Catholic, had gone along with Salazar on nearly all the key issues, while balancing intra-dictatorship internal politics between monarchists and republicans, clericals and anticlericals. On the basis of Salazar's ideas and policies and Carmona's political arbitration, the dictatorship finally began to take doctrinal and institutional form, as defined by Salazar in key speeches of May 28 and July 30, 1930. He indicated that the regime would create a corporate republic based on a strong state. Such a system would transcend military dictatorship, and grounded in patriotic unity and the moral doctrines of Catholic corporatism, provide cooperation and stability without indulging in the glorification of authoritarian rule found in Fascist Italy or Bolshevist Russia. An amorphous political organization, the National Union, was then formed along the lines of Primo de Rivera's late Patriotic Union, to provide semi-organised citizen support for the regime.
>
> "Anti-government conspiracies and revolts persisted. A plot by the Democrats and other groups was aborted in mid-1930, but Madeira, the Azores, and Portuguese Guinea were held briefly by military rebels in April 1931. An uprising in Lisbon in August 1931, the twenty-third anti-government revolt (not counting minor conspiracies and bombings) in twenty-one years, cost eighty lives before it was put down.
>
> "One of the great strengths of the dictatorship lay in the fact that most Portuguese opinion was weary of politics and after the vicissitudes of two decades was largely willing to accept a regime that could bring peace and stability. Despite the pressure which his financial policies placed on much of the population, especially the lower classes, Salazar pursued his program with little deterrence, completing the balancing of state finances and the stabilization of Portuguese currency. In July 1932 his tutelage of the government finally became official when he replaced the ailing Domingos Oliveira as prime minister. The way had been cleared for the institutionalization of the Portuguese "New State" (A History of Spain and Portugal, Vol. II, Stanley G. Payne).

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FUNERALS

Eulogies including songs, poems and readings which are not within strict religious guidelines are to be banned in one of the country's largest Catholic dioceses.

Bishop of Meath Dr Michael Smith has issued the new directive to priests in his diocese, which includes most of counties Meath and Westmeath, plus parts of Offaly, Longford, Louth, Dublin and Cavan.

The bishop warned against *"dumbing down"* at Catholic funeral services, and emphasized that priests must uphold the *"integrity of the Mass"*.

Appreciations or eulogies should not take place in the church, he says.

However, they may take place after the Rite of Committal in the cemetery or at a later stage.

The guidelines also state that secular songs, poems and texts, devoid of a Christian content are out of place in the funeral liturgy. (*Irish Independent*, 12.8.2013)

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ARCHBISHOP EAMON MARTIN

"The future leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland has said he was disappointed by Enda Kenny's description of himself as 'a Taoiseach who happens to be a Catholic and not a Catholic Taoiseach'.

"Speaking on BBC Ulster's 'Sunday Sequence' radio programme, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh said the Taoiseach's words seemed to suggest that you could not be a Catholic and a politician and carry your faith-based views at the same time as your views, needs and responsibilities as a politician.

"Archbishop Martin said that there were those who wanted the 'voice of faith and religion relegated to the privacy of our homes and churches'." (*Irish Independent*, 12.8.2013)

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ABORTIONS

"Despite what the scaremongers say, it won't result in unnecessary abortions in this part of Ireland. It is likely that the suicidal who can afford it will go abroad for abortions.

"Few of those who can't will go through the proposed proceedings, and those who do are unlikely to get the go-ahead.

"But having what is proposed on our statute books will make us an international laughing stock" (Joe Foyle, Catholic commentator-*Sunday Business Post*, 30.6.2013).

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PETER SUTHERLAND

"Weeks after mixing with the great and good of the Bilderberg group, Peter Sutherland has been recognised by another famous institution steeped in privilege and mystery: Oxford University. The former chairman of Goldman Sachs has been awarded an honorary fellowship by St Benet's Hall, one of the university's many colleges, in recognition of 'his commitment to the academic and educational ambitions of the Hall'.

"His alma mater, UCD, must be getting vaguely annoyed at this stage. He has already been awarded an honorary fellowship by Oxford's Institute of Economics – so this makes two awards from a university he didn't go to.

"The former Attorney General has given generously to Oxford, as well as to UCD, where he donated ¤4 million towards the college's impressive new law school.

"He's also endowed a Chair of European Law at UCD.

"We bet Trinity wishes they'd get a similar donation." (*Irish Independent*, 2.8.2013).

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POLITICAL PARTY

Church Gate Collections

"Shamefully, many with low morals in high places still deem it acceptable to canvass and campaign around religious locations. Promoting their ungodly policies—*policies that are intrinsically immoral and detrimental to Irish society*—Catholic congregations are forced to run an annual gauntlet of political party bucket-shakers, standing at the entrance of parish churches and halls.

"*These revenue drives are massive money-spinners—last year Fianna Fail raised almost €250,000 from church gate collections, mainly in rural counties such as Donegal, Mayo and Galway.*

"Sadly, the appalling shadow of clericalism also looms large over our hallowed doorways. As in the past, a silent minority continue to cherish and cultivate close connections with those holding political sway, disregarding the laity's concerns and true Gospel values. (*Pamphlet distributed with Parish Newsletter from Cathedral of St. Eunan and Columba, Letterkenny, Parish of Conwal & Leck, Summer 2013*)

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CONGRESS COSTS

Catholics raised almost half of the €9.5 million it cost to stage last year's 50th International Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin.

According to documents filed with the Companies Office, individual parishioners, church organisations and the religious themselves donated close to €4.3 million between 2009 and 2012 to enable Ireland to host the first International Eucharistic Congress here since 1932.

The event in June 2012 – which drew more than 100,000 Catholics from 120 countries – came in under budget and generated an estimated ¤33 million in spin-off revenue for the Irish economy, the congress's former programme manager Anne Griffin told the religious website Catholicireland.net.

A quarter of the funds raised for the event came from individual benefactors here and abroad, while just under a third, or 30%, of the operating costs were generated during the event itself.

There was even a bit left over to put towards the next national Eucharistic Congress to be held here, the details of which have yet to be announced.

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CATHOLIC PRESS?

"Catholic writers hurting church credibility Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has hit out at some Catholic writers who he said lack basic Christian charity.

"He also criticised elements of the Catholic media who he said were damaging the credibility of the church.

"In an address yesterday to the 'Faith of Our Fathers' conference in Kilkenny, organised by the 'Catholic Voice' newspaper, the Archbishop criticised the "growing tendency" towards 'tabloidism' in sectors of the Catholic media in Ireland.

"Accuracy is more important than the exclusive 'scoop', which may often be unfounded," he said. (*Irish Independent*, 14.9.2013)

He hit out at the *"worrying phenomenon of blogs, which are not just partial but at times very far away from the charity with which the truth should be expressed"*.

Catholic journalism, he warned, must not amount to *"conformism"*.

Responding to the archbishop's criticisms, the Editor of the '*Irish Catholic*' newspaper, Michael Kelly, told the *Irish Independent*: *"The role of a Catholic journalist is a difficult one."*

He rebuked those in leadership in the church saying often they would prefer if Catholic newspapers simply reported on *"the opening of a new parish centre or reported word-for-word the homilies of bishops"*.

He said there was *"little appetite"* among the church leadership for the sort of probing journalism that asks the questions that need to be asked.

"The archbishop speaks of a lack of charity. I would say journalists feel this lack of charity too, sometimes from those who are in leadership positions in the church…"

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John Minahane

The Spanish Polemic on Colonisation
Part 2

Bartolomé de Las Casas
as Colonial Reformer

Unless we make contact with extra-terrestrials, it will never again be possible to meet new people. That is to say, people whose history, language and culture are entirely unknown to us, and who themselves have no acquaintance with our world. That was the strange experience of many Spaniards in the years after 1492. They were entering a new world. It may be interesting to compare some of their writers with Gerald of Wales, the 12th century Anglo-Norman writer who encountered Ireland.

When a French-speaking aristocracy, based in England and Wales, set out to conquer Ireland in 1169, they knew where they were going. Ireland was known, had been known from time immemorial. Besides, it was part of Christendom, and it had an important place in the English political and cultural history absorbed by the Anglo-Norman intellectual elite .

First of all, Christianity, with its common Latin language, linked the two islands. Saint Patrick, Ireland's most important Christian missionary, was a Roman Briton. About a century after his death Irish Christianity was in full bloom, whereas the christianisation of the Anglo-Saxons was just beginning. Irish missionaries played an important part in this conversion; it has been argued that for most of the 7th century *"Anglo-Saxon England was a cultural province of Ireland"*. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* has much to say about Ireland, including the fact that a good many Englishmen went there for religious study and to live the monastic life. However, a few centuries later the pendulum had swung back, and it was Ireland that was considered mission territory. In particular, Irish marriage customs were considered scandalously unChristian. The Anglo-Norman conquest was therefore justified, licensed by the Pope, and accepted (however grudgingly) by Irish clerics, as a Christian missionary enterprise.

As for political links, some chroniclers claimed that the kings of Ireland paid tribute to King Arthur. In Christian times English kings had been known to attack Irish territories (Ecgfrith of Northumbria, 684). English princes and nobles who lost out in dynastic battles might end up in Irish exile, or *vice versa*. There was also a kind of connection forged by the slave trade. Irish raiders made many swoops upon Britain, during one of them seizing Patrick. Later on, they were able simply to buy the slaves in Bristol—say, in the 11th century, when Bishop Wulfstan denounced this trade. According to Conor O'Mahony (1645), *"there was scarcely any Irishman of moderate means who did not have one or more English slaves"*. A synod of the Irish Church in 1170 seems to have decided that the invasion was a judgement of God upon the Irish for this vicious practice and demanded that all English slaves should be freed.

Ireland was known. But how well? Did even an educated 12th century Anglo-Norman know much more about Ireland than a Spaniard in the 1490s knew about the Tainos of Hispaniola? No one had written an adequate guide to Ireland. The subject was not entirely untouched, but *"no writer had comprehensively treated of it"*, Gerald of Wales claimed, writing about 1180. And so this masterly writer invented Irish sociology, and much else besides.

After a topographical description and a selection of marvellous things and miracles of the saints, he considered the people. They were, he thought,

> "barbarous both in dress and mental culture... A rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living like beasts... Abandoning themselves to idleness, and immersed in sloth, their greatest delight is to be exempt from toil, their richest possession the enjoyment of liberty..."

The kings had a taste for luxury items, but they knew they would never acquire them unless some foreigner imported them, because the Irish were so idle. For that reason they had licensed some settlements of Viking traders. There were seams of precious metals on the island, but no one mined them. *"Even gold, which the people require in large quantities, and still covet in a way that speaks their Spanish origin, is brought here by the merchants who traverse the ocean for the purposes of commerce."*

Why were the people so uncultured? One reason was isolation: they were practically in a different world.

> "As the people inhabit a country so remote from the rest of the world, and lying at its furthest extremity, forming, as it were, another world, and are thus secluded from the civilised nations, they learn nothing, and practise nothing except the barbarism in which they are born and bred, and which sticks to them like a second nature. Whatever natural gifts they possess are excellent, in whatever requires industry they are worthless."

Over time this ignorant indolence had become a permanent, self-perpetuating quality of the Irish people, and they never made the normal progress of other peoples.

> "In the common course of things, mankind progresses from the forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social condition of citizens, but this nation, holding agricultural labour in contempt, and little coveting the wealth of towns, as well as being exceedingly averse to civil institutions, —lead the same life their fathers did in the woods and pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits or learn anything new."

But were they not Christians? The whole island had indeed been converted in the distant past. And that being so—

> "it is wonderful that this nation should remain to this day so very ignorant of the rudiments of Christianity. It is indeed a most filthy race, a race sunk in vice, a race more ignorant than all other nations of the first principles of the faith. Hitherto they neither pay tithes nor first fruits; they do not contract marriage, nor shun incestuous connections; they frequent not the church of God with proper reverence."

It was their custom to debauch *("I will not say marry")* their dead brothers' wives, in which instance they were copying the vices rather than the virtues of Old Testament Jews.

One major problem was that the priests did not preach and correct the people. There was a bias towards passivity in the Irish Church. Nearly all the bishops were elected from monasteries and continued afterwards in the mentality of monks. Even the saints had not done the hard and dangerous job of preaching. *"All the saints of the country were confessors and none martyrs, a thing which it would be difficult to find in any other*

Christian kingdom." Currently, the clergy in general were not an impressive body. They did quite a lot of fasting, but after their fasts they habitually got drunk. In the clergy as a whole *"there is very little grain, but much chaff"*.

While Gerald in some ways is far ahead of his time, his ideas are rather undeveloped. He says that the Irish *"live like beasts"*, but draws no conclusions from this. He denounces them for their vices, yet they seem to be only quantitatively worse than others. Gerald cannot, of course, make the two very special accusations: human sacrifice and cannibalism. Even sodomy does not seem to be relevant here. The most lurid accusation of sexual irregularity (cohabitation with sisters-in-law) comes with an acknowledgement, which cannot help but be mitigating, that the Old Testament Jews had done the same. In another book Gerald gives five reasons why the kings of England have a right to possess Ireland, but (unlike, say, Francisco de Vitoria's arguments for the Spanish conquest of America) none of them amount to saying that the Irish need to be saved from themselves or each other.

But of course, these ideas could be added to, supplemented, revised, creatively applied. They were rediscovered in Elizabethan times and printed, and in that context they were explosive. Gerald himself tells us that he was criticised by contemporaries for believing tall tales about the bearded lady, the wolf that spoke to the priest, and so on. No one seems to have cared about his view of the Irish people. But in the 17th century a whole series of Irish writers attacked him, sometimes at enormous length, because what he said had implications for how the Irish were to be treated and governed.

*** *** ***

The discovery of America *"gave a new world to European curiosity"*, Samuel Johnson said. And especially to Spanish curiosity. Sixteenth-century Spain produced many equivalents of Welsh Gerald, and some of them might have scorned the original Gerald as a lazy incompetent who had left his work half-done. For example, he had virtually ignored the history of Ireland in its Christian period, though surely this ought to be of interest. By contrast, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, less than 40 years after the conquest of Peru, produced a detailed history of the Incas from the year 565 to 1533. He knew that the Indians kept detailed historical records and, through interpreters, set about collecting them.

> "By examining the oldest and most prudent among them, in all ranks of life, who had most credit, I collected and compiled the present history, referring the sayings and declarations of one party to their antagonists of another party, for they are divided into parties, and seeking from each one a memorial of its lineage and of that of the opposite party. These memorials, which are all in my possession, were compiled and corrected, and ultimately verified in public, in presence of representatives of all the parties and lineages, under oaths in the presence of a judge, and with expert and very faithful interpreters also on oath, and I thus finished what is now written."

The 41 witnesses, representing the 12 *ayllus* or clans of the Incas, unanimously approved Sarmiento's history, which the author believed *"will make all the nations of the world understand the judicial and more than legitimate right that the king of Castille has... to these kingdoms of Peru"*. We are told how the first Inca introduced a fabricated religion of which he himself was the prophet, and how all his successors were tyrants—the Incas, says the Spaniard Sarmiento with no trace of irony, always established their rule by violence, *"not by the election of the people"*. The history was read out over a number of days to the 41 witnesses, who made only minor corrections regarding place names and personal names. *"They expressed their belief that no other history that might be written could be so authentic and true as this one..."* Maybe they didn't know what would happen to them if they expressed any other belief, or if they tried to make major amendments. Or maybe they did know.

Nevertheless, this elaborate process shows how much the Spaniards—the King, his Ministers and his bureaucrats; the Catholic Church and its relevant branches—wanted detailed knowledge. Mainly they wanted to know what kind of people lived in the Indies; whether and how they could be made Christian; whether they could be enslaved or should be free, and if they were to be free, then to what degree, having regard to the legitimate interests of the King of Spain and his colonists. Behind these questions was another which was less often asked: whether the conquest, or conquests, could be justified at all.

Columbus had instant answers for such questions, which we find in his first letter to the King of Spain (February 1493). The Admiral imposed his own inspirations on everything. To the end of his life he insisted he had found a way to India (and we have all inherited his fixed idea in the common terms *"West Indies"*, *"American Indians"*). Landing on the Caribbean islands, he first of all claimed them for the King of Spain with a ceremonial raising of the flag, *"and no one contradicted me"*. Then he named them—though the locals gave them other names, he adds as a point of interest.

As for the Indians, the most important thing was that they did not have iron and they had lots of gold. They possessed neither fighting capacity nor fighting spirit, being extremely timid. They went around naked. Though ruled by kings, they had no developed State forms or cities. However, they did have a structured family life. Most adults were monogamous, while kings and nobles were allowed up to twenty wives each. I was unable to establish, Columbus says uncharacteristically, whether they have some form of private property. (The pioneering sociologist can't discover everything at once.)

The Indians thought that Columbus and his men, too exotic to be human, must have come from the sky. However, they did not have any system of idolatrous religion; Christianity appeared not to present them with any great difficulties and they showed interest in it. They seemed to be highly intelligent and perceptive, and yet because of their timidity they could easily be controlled by a handful of Spaniards. They would have to be converted to Christianity, and they would need to be taught that they must exert themselves to provide for the King of Spain and the Spaniards those things which they had in abundance and which the Spaniards urgently needed. Apart from that, the King of Spain could have as many heathen slaves as he liked. (Here Columbus may have been thinking of the fierce cannibal Caribs whom the friendly Indians had told him about, and their Amazon girlfriends who lived on a special island of women.)

Columbus had raised all the issues, at least implicitly. One of his first critics was Queen Isabella, who demanded to know what right the Admiral had to make slaves of some of her vassals and bring them from their native countries to Spain. The Spanish State did not intend to leave Columbus, or any colonist, to his own devices. That was made very clear after the Admiral's third voyage, when he was arrested in Hispaniola and brought back to Spain in chains.

Prior to that, in 1499, Columbus had

established the institution which Bartolomé de las Casas spent half a century fighting to abolish: the *encomienda*, which assigned particular Indians to particular colonists for forced labour. It was not the Admiral's first choice. He had tried to establish a system whereby the Indians paid tribute, either collectively or individually, but that didn't work, so he went two-thirds of the way to slavery. Maybe he would have gone the whole way if Queen Isabella had not freed the slaves he had taken to Spain.

Las Casas was a friend of the Columbus family, and he is the main source for the details of the first voyage. Late in life, in his *History of the Indies*, he praised the Admiral for his incredible industry, ability and courage. But he also denounced him for *"the injuries, wars and injustices, captivities and oppressions, seizures of lordships and states and lands, and deprivation of liberty and countless lives inflicted upon the kings and natural lords, and on young and old"*. Columbus had never had *"any jurisdiction whatever over them, or any just cause; he was closer to being himself a subject of theirs, since he was in their lands, kingdoms and lordships"*.

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Bartolomé de Las Casas was born in 1484 in Seville. On his father's side he was descended from *conversos*, i.e. Jews who had converted to Christianity. Some of his admirers and some of his detractors have tried to relate this to his political career, but there does not seem to be any evidence of how he felt about his origins.

His father was an unsuccessful merchant who joined Columbus on his second voyage. When he returned, one of the presents that he gave his son was an Indian slave. Afterwards, finding that his business in Spain still didn't prosper, he went back to the Indies with a new Governor, Nicolás Ovando, in 1502, and this time Bartolomé went also. He was about 18 and it seems he had already become a cleric on the lowest level (taking the tonsure). Later he became a priest, but when or where is unclear. He performed his first Mass on Hispaniola in 1510.

For about 13 years he was an ordinary colonist, farming and doing some business as a merchant. He insists that he treated his Indians well, but he did require them to till his land and dig for gold, and like everyone else he neglected the duty of making them good Christians. Whether as an armed or an unarmed cleric (it isn't clear), he participated in military campaigns, and he was present at one appalling massacre of Indians which Ovando engineered by treachery —it was like what would happen in Ireland a few decades later, at Mullaghmast. After the slaughter some fugitives were rounded up and dispensed as slaves, and Las Casas received one. (We know all this from his own testimony.)

Ovando, apart from being a mass murderer, was a sociologist. As Governor his original instructions were to abolish the system invented by Columbus, whereby Indians were assigned to colonists for forced labour. Instead he was to establish a PAYE system: all Indians were to become State employees and would pay a regular tribute from their daily wages. A year was sufficient time for Ovando to convince himself that this could not be done. He successfully applied for new instructions permitting him to assign the Indians to the colonists. The new royal order said:

> "Because of the excessive liberty the Indians have been permitted, they flee from Christians and do not work. Therefore they are to be compelled to work, so that the kingdom and the Spaniards may be enriched, and the kingdom Christianised. They are to be paid a daily wage, and well treated as free persons for such they are, and not slaves."

Such was the formula, apparently crisp and clear. In practice, it proved to be about as clear as the paradox of the barber of Seville, who shaves every man in Seville who does not shave himself.

The colonists were rough customers. An analysis of the *encomenderos* (official beneficiaries of forced labour) in Panama in 1519 showed that a third of them were peasants or artisans, with a lesser group of small merchants and bureaucrats. Slightly more than half were professional soldiers and sailors, many from the lesser gentry or *hidalgo* class (*hidalgo* is from *hijo de algo*, "son of something"). In general, the *hidalgos* wanted big winnings (as Cortés once contemptuously pointed out, prior to his Mexican expedition, when someone offered him a piece of land), while the peasants wanted to be something like *hidalgos*. Their rightful reward for the difficulties and dangers they had surmounted was that they should never again have to work. Nobody wanted to be a Spanish peasant in America.

Much like the typical 19th century English capitalist, the 16th century Spanish colonist did not care about his labourers' welfare. The Indians were not owned, so they could not be sold or passed on to heirs. They could only be used, or used up. And so they were worked to death.

Ovando, while administering this system, may have realised that the massive Indian death rate would present long-term problems. Anyhow, on his own initiative he selected the two Indian chieftains who seemed to have adapted best to Spanish ways, absorbing Spanish culture, and he gave each of them an Indian labour force to manage independently, just like a Spanish colonist.

> "Ovando granted them a repartimiento of Indians, so that they might live like other Spaniards, and favored them in every possible way. What happened when they were left to their own devices? One chieftain was habitually drunk with his wife. The other proved such a poor manager that he and his wife ate in one day the food laid away for a week. Neither couple showed any interest in mining gold or in ordering their Indians to do so. Instead, they passed their days dancing, drinking and doing “other contemptible things” as of old."

This pilot venture was sustained for six years, and then finally the Indians were deprived of their *repartimientos*. *"Thus the first sociological experiment in America ended"*, Lewis Hanke remarked.

But while the experiment was still going on, the existing colonial practice was publicly condemned. Dominican preachers in Hispaniola challenged the colonists. Las Casas later reported what they said:

> "By what right or justice do you keep these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people, who dwelt quietly and peacefully on their own land?... Why do you keep them so oppressed and weary, not giving them enough to eat nor taking care of them in their illness? For with the excessive work you demand of them they fall ill and die, or rather you kill them with your desire to extract and acquire gold every day. And what care do you take that they should be instructed in religion?... Are these not men? Have they not rational souls? Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves?... Be certain that, in such a state as this, you can no more be saved than the Moors or Turks."

An issue such as this had to be referred to Spain, where it started an unending argument and produced some immediate results. Ambitious theoretical statements were made about the nature of the Indians, their freedom and its

limits. For example, one of the King's preachers *"proved dialectically that although the Indians were free, yet idleness was one of the greatest evils from which they suffered, and it was the King's duty to help them overcome it"*. And therefore, although they were free, they had to be kept in some kind of servitude. Aristotle's idea that certain peoples were naturally slaves had just been rediscovered and was coming into fashion, though the Spanish theologians were cautious when they applied this to America. More positively, although only on paper, there was a set of laws which codified the treatment of the Indians in detail and aimed to protect them from abuse (the laws of Burgos, 1512). Finally, there was one of the most ludicrous examples of official hypocrisy of all time: the *Requirement*, invented by the theologian Palacios Rubios.

The *Requirement* was a formal declaration which legally had to be read out to Indians before war could be waged on them. Beginning with a short history of the world, it went on to the foundation of the papacy and Pope Alexander VI's donation of American territories to the King of Spain. The Indians were then told that they had two immediate obligations. Firstly, they must acknowledge that the Church, with its high priest the Pope, was supreme lord of the world, and that the King of Spain as its representative was lord of American territories. Secondly, they must permit the Christian faith to be preached. If they immediately gave these guarantees, they would be treated well. But if they refused, a destructive war would be waged and they themselves, their wives and children would be enslaved. (I should point out that while the Spanish officially considered the enslavement of peaceful people unjustified, it was generally agreed that slaves could be taken in "a just war".) It was not stipulated that this *Requirement* had to be translated into Indian languages.

At that point an argument began in Spain which continued in full spate for half a century, with Los Casas at the centre of it for much of that time. Official Spain was unsure. It was never able to feel sure, down to the time of Philip II. Plans, experiments and policies were introduced, withdrawn, re-introduced and re-withdrawn, over and over again. The argument in progress undermined previous findings and the given topic might have to be investigated again. For example, the question of whether the Indians, treated as fully-free workers without an imposed labour system, would dig for gold.

Las Casas took about three years to be convinced of what the Dominicans were saying. Then he separated himself from the existing state of affairs, giving up his *encomienda* to the Governor. Allying himself with the Dominicans, he came to Spain to press for a reform of the system. He had a powerful case and could hope to find supporters at the highest levels of Church and State, as indeed he did. Logically, neither Church nor State could be as short-sighted as the colonists in the Indies. No benefits would come to either Church or State from the destruction within one generation of the gold-digging labour force and the potential Christian flock.

Las Casas tried to work out practical alternatives for carrying out colonisation and spreading Christianity. His first idea was cooperativism. The Spanish colonists should be made to form communities, with the community being responsible for all the assigned Indians. If no one had individual control of Indians and each colonist received a share of the community proceeds, he thought the irresponsible and destructive employment of Indians would stop. Negro slaves should be imported to do the heavy work for which Indians weren't sufficiently robust, for example in the mines. (In his old age Las Casas bitterly regretted this proposal, but for most of his life he held the conventional Spanish attitude that the negro slave trade was legitimate.)

Another idea was for family associations. Each Spaniard would be given five Indians, with their families, to live under his direction. The Indians would pick up the habit of working from Spanish example, the sons and daughters of the two races would intermarry, and the land would flourish.

These ideas were variants on the *encomienda* system. But Las Casas soon went on to propose something like the colonisation schemes that were carried out in Ireland seventy years later, though in a different spirit. Groups of actually-working Spanish peasants would form independent communities, living side by side with the Indians and inspiring them by example to imitate the Spanish way of life. This idea, or something like it, was already in the air in Spain.

In the meantime, Las Casas kept demanding that something be done about the system that existed. He made a strong impression on the Regent of Spain, who gave him the grand title of Protector of the Indies. But since there were sharp conflicts of opinion, the Regent also appointed a commission of Jeronymite monks (believed to be more impartial, the Franciscans being pro-colonist and the Dominicans pro-Indian), who had powers to free the Indians from the *encomienda* system, if appropriate, but first they were supposed to discover what the true situation was. In Hispaniola they duly interviewed the twelve oldest Spanish inhabitants and the clerics.

> "Those who have been accustomed to think that the questionnaire system is a post-war scourge invented by American sociologists and educationists to annoy their colleagues will be interested to know that Spanish colonial government frequently used this method in the sixteenth century. Of the seven questions put to each witness, the third one struck at the heart of the matter: "Does the witness know, believe, or has he heard it said, that these Indians, especially of Hispaniola and women as well as men, are all of such knowledge and capacity that they should be given complete liberty? Would they be able to live *políticamente* as do the Spaniards? Would they know how to support themselves by their own efforts, each Indian mining gold or tilling the soil, or maintaining himself by other daily labor? Do they know how to care for what they may acquire by this labor, spending only for necessities, as a Castilian laborer would?"–"

The findings of the survey showed that none of the colonists believed that the Indians were capable of being Spanish peasants, if left to their own devices. They were idle, they were vicious, they didn't want to see Spaniards, they had no sense of value, they didn't like digging gold, they didn't learn, and so on. One cleric observed that *"inasmuch as Indians showed no greediness or desire for wealth (these being the principal motives impelling men to labor and acquire possessions) they would inevitably lack the necessities of life if not supervised by the Spaniards"*. Several respondents mentioned the unsuccessful experiments made by Ovando. Indians seemed to be able to live satisfactorily as Indians, but not as Spaniards. The Franciscan Provincial said that (1) very few Indians knew how to earn their keep and raise crops; (2) if the Indians were allowed to live independently their numbers would increase sharply; and (3) if they were kept in the *encomiendas*, only about ten per cent of them would be left within twenty years. There was a single white blackbird, a Dominican, who said that

the Indians were ready to live the good life in liberty.

The Jeronymites eventually freed one single solitary Indian, and went home.

From the mental atmosphere of the highly colonised world of 1935, Lewis Hanke commented:

> "Probably this wholesale indictment of Indian character was substantially true—a tragic example of that hopeless disorganisation which usually results when a civilised nation tries to impose its customs upon a primitive people... Sixteenth century Spaniards suffered from none of the doubts which afflict modern colonial administrators as to how far it is desirable to Europeanize natives. The problem has not yet been resolved and while present day anthropologists sympathetically study the complexities of primitive peoples, governments have not yet been convinced that the system and standards and values of the West should not be urged upon "backward" natives instead of allowing them to develop within their own culture stream." (Fifty years later Anthony Pagden of Cambridge, writing *The Fall of Natural Man*, thought the significance of Las Casas was as a pioneering anthropologist.)

The view from the other side is expressed in a history of Cortes's conquest of Mexico, originally written in the Indian language Nahuatl. The author describes the reaction of the Spanish invaders when Montezuama, through his envoys, sent them presents.

> "They gave the Spaniards banners of gold, banners of quetzal feathers, and collars of gold. And when they had given these, the Spaniards had smiles on their faces, they were very happy, they were delighted. Like monkeys they held up the gold, as if they had a sensation of pleasure, as if their hearts had been renewed and lighted up. They thirst mightily for gold, their bodies stretch out for it, they are wild with hunger for it. Like ravenous pigs they crave gold."

—With a bit more sophistication, that's how the world was going to be.

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In 1520 Las Casas was given royal permission to colonise northern Venezuala with actually working Spanish peasants along a stretch of 270 leagues, with an option to extend his triumphal progress right down the west coast of South America. In the meantime, orders were sent to the authorities not to carry out violent actions of any kind against the Indians in the territory to be colonised. All that remained was to find the peasants and transport them. Las Casas was fortunate in that he managed to organise an amnesty for any recruit who had been involved in the recent revolt of the *Comuneros* (against the new King Charles V and his Flemish court, in defence of traditional regional rights). With this incentive he made up his numbers.

When he arrived in Puerto Rico with 70 peasants, he found that an army was just about to set off to attack Indians in his allotted territory. Reacting to raids by Spanish slavers, the Indians had killed some Dominican priests, and now there would have to be retaliation. Las Casas left Puerto Rico and went to Hispaniola to try to stop this vicious circle. Having patched up a compromise, he returned to Puerto Rico, to find that his peasants had vanished: they had quickly acquired a better appreciation of American possibilities and were off to seek their fortunes. Las Casas went to a Franciscan monastery as a temporary base, but even there he could not escape from the spiral of violence. After conflicts between the Spanish and the Indians—the Indians attacked the monks and killed some of Las Casas' few followers—the Spanish then began a large-scale slave-taking trawl through the territory. The attempt at peaceful colonisation was an unmitigated disaster.

Las Casas then retired from the world for the best part of ten years. The Dominicans of Hispaniola were anxious for him to join their Order, and in 1522 he did. He seems to have spent the next few years quietly studying. As he must soon have realised, the Dominicans could give him the intellectual weaponry to argue the case of the Indians with anyone, on any theoretical level. From 1527 he began writing his *History of the Indies*. In the early 1530s he returned to the great Spanish argument, which hadn't ceased.

His first ambitious theoretical work, which he wrote in the 1530s, was entitled *On the Only Method of Attracting All Peoples to the True Religion*. The only method was the peaceful method. Among other things, Las Casas draws upon historical precedent, taking the examples of France, Spain and England, to argue that peaceful conversion is not just not exceptional, it's actually the norm. Looking at the chapters of the book that have survived, one finds that his main authorities are the Old and New Testaments, St. Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, the canon law decretals and the Roman civil law, and Aristotle. Apart from that he cites Boethius, Bede, the various Church Fathers, occasionally Cicero, occasionally some other scholastic theologians such as Scotus or Gerson, and a few other well-established writers of the past. Those seem to be enough. The speculations about Thomas More's *Utopia* and so on, which his most recent biographer Lawrence A. Clayton (an irritating professor who is trying too hard to impress his students) keeps forcing into his muddled narrative, are based on nothing. Las Casas never seems to refer to contemporary writers. as his editor Lewis Hanke points out. They would appear to have nothing to contribute to the earth-shaking argument he's making: that what we consider the most precious things in culture can be transmitted to those who don't have them without forcing them down their throats.

(To be continued)

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Desmond Fennell

The Real History of Europe

My first book, 54 years ago, was a travel book that began its itinerary in Vienna. In those days it was still rare for Irish people to travel on the Continent. In the Preface, reflecting on the relationship between the Irish and modern Europe, I wrote: *"We Irish are regarded as an ancient people, but we are also very young and new. The modern world has made itself without our asking."* One of the respects in which Europe has done this is in the work of giving European history a shape. Between the seventeenth century and the early twentieth, a standard narrative was established which has remained essentially unchanged. Irish historians, involved defensively in domestic history, played no part in that work. So if now, at this late stage, an Irishman who is an ardent lover of Europe and its history challenges Europe's standard manner of narrating that history, and wants it somewhat differently done, it should not be surprising.

I believe that Europe, like the civilisations that preceded it which left behind sufficient historical records—like Rome, Greece, Babylon, Egypt, China—deserves to have its story told straightforwardly and as truthfully as possible before it, in turn, passes into history. In this respect we have not been served well by those contemporary historians who entitle their books 'History of Europe'.

If we are not presented under that title with an account of the land and climate between the Atlantic and the Urals, and a story of what happened in all of that from prehistory to the twentieth century—as happened a few years ago in a big book published in London—we certainly have the following experience regularly. We open the book to an account of something called in every European language 'The Middle Age' (in English, eccentrically, 'Middle *Ages*', but no matter). Formally this is the start of the story but its self-description says it is the middle of it. Is the story to be told perhaps in the manner of a modernistic novel with the middle of the narrative coming (clever!) *before* its first part? A brief investigation finds that this is not the case. The first chapters deal mainly with Goths (Visi- and Ostro-), Vandals, Huns, Avars and others, peoples with whom Europe in no period, let alone its middle one, had anything to do. Nor, indeed, do these chapters appear to be recounting the 'middle age' of *any* history known to man..

The 'middle age' in question turns out to be simply the way that orthodox European historians name the thousand years *between the end of the Roman Empire in the West in the 5th century and the end of the first age of European history around 1500*. In the matter of serving intelligibility or logic of the historical narrative, they might as well have called this stretch of historical time the 'humpty-dumpty age'! Clearly, if we are at this late stage to have a real history of Europe, one which is in fact what it purports to be, the first step will be to get rid of the narrative boorishness that, beginning with something called 'The Middle Age', arrives after centuries of extraneous narrative a*t the beginning and first age of Europe*.

Pressing also for removal is that recurrent feature of the conventional history of Europe that presents myths as reality. Nothing wrong with myths in themselves: they are a device by which people who want to give special importance and meaning to an event, prehistoric or historical, do so figuratively rather than literally. But they are by definition not history, not what a great historian called *wie es eigentlich gewesen*—'as it really was'.

Beginning in northern Europe in the eighteenth century, but preponderantly in the nineteenth, backward-directed historical myth-making worked powerfully. Its agents were Protestants and classical Liberals who, having created or accepted the myth of Modernity and Progress, wanted to show themselves and their era as heirs to modernising and progressive pioneers whose heads touched the sky; men who by their action and their minds liberated mankind from the thraldom and darkness of the Pope, the Catholic Church and clergy of any hue, along with Superstition and Tradition of all kinds. To this end, as historians of Europe, or simply as writers about that history, they created a 'post-mediaeval' European history that had been launched, liberatingly for Europeans and mankind, by three mythical events: 'the Renaissance', 'the Reformation' and 'the Enlightenment'. As an endeavour by those who engaged in it, it is understandable, but its creations are useless to real history.

It is not true that, first in fifteenth-century Italy, then in Europe generally, there was a rebirth of high culture, artistic achievement and intellectual vigour after a long. dark period when these were absent. It is not true that 'the Reformation' was an event in *European* history: that at a certain point in the sixteenth century Europe rejected the Pope and opted for a Protestant reform of Christian faith and practice more in keeping with the Gospel. And it is not true that from the end of the seventeenth century to the French Revolution, leading European minds experienced a degree of insight equivalent to that which the Buddha achieved and which pious Buddhists aspire to.

So it is necessary in the real telling of European history to eschew a narrative which presents or suggests those untruths. Primarily this would be so as to keep to the true story. But it would also render more acceptable to the rational reader a story that in narrating the French Revolution must mention its savagery, and in narrating twentieth-century Europe must advert to the fact that this great civilisation produced the century most destructive of human life in human history. In both instances a story to be told in no moralistic vein but simply to nourish and fortify ourselves and future generations with our true story.

It would begin as follows.

The First Age

(c.1050 to c.1500 AD)

The name

The word 'Europe' originated in an ancient Greek myth as the name of a Phoenician princess whom the supreme god Zeus, in the form of a white bull, carried off from her homeland to Crete. There in human form he mated with her, producing three noble sons who on their deaths became the judges of the underworld. In ancient Greek, and later, Roman times, geographers used the word to describe the western part of the Eurasian land-mass stretching from the Atlantic to somewhere in the Caucasus or in what we now call Russia. In the sense that came to predominate—namely, a group of culturally and politically distinct peoples sharing a territory and a common civilisation, something like Ancient Greece but located in western Eurasia—it began to take shape in the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD.

The curtain-raiser

Three centuries earlier there had been what might be called a curtain-raiser. It

was around the time that Islamic civilisation, having absorbed the high culture of ancient Greece and Alexandria, was entering its golden age under the Abbasid Caliphate which ruled from Afghanistan to Spain. Of the Germanic peoples who had conquered most of the territory that previously formed the Western Roman Empire, the Franks, with their capital in Paris, controlled the largest area. In 771, after centuries of warfare among themselves and with others, Charles, later surnamed 'the Great' and in French called Charlemagne, became king and, following the death of his co-ruling brother, sole ruler. During his reign, which lasted until his death in 814, Europe had, so to speak, a false start.

The Franks were Christians and they imposed Christianity, by force if necessary, on any people they conquered; the death penalty for paganism was abolished only in 797. Twenty-four years before that, in 773, Pope Hadrian I had appealed to Charles for help against the Germanic Lombards who, established for two centuries as rulers of most of Italy, had occupied the city of Rome. Charles entered Italy with an army, defeated the Lombards, declared himself their king and reaffirmed the Papal sovereignty over central Italy which had been guaranteed by his father Pepin the Short. Most of Italy belonged thenceforth to the Frankish realm.

Having established his capital at Aachen in northwest Germany, Charles extended Francia, as the realm was called, beyond the Saxons and Frisians to the border with Denmark. He incorporated the Bavarians and established a defensive march in Austria. Defensively again, beyond the Pyrenees, he fortified a Spanish march to prevent the Islamic Moors, who ruled most of Spain, from ever again pushing north into Francia, as they had done in 732 when Charles' ancestor Charles Martel had repulsed them at Poitiers. (It was from that Charles that the dynasty was named 'Carolingian'.) On Christmas Day, 800, in Rome, Pope Leo III crowned Charles as "Emperor of the Romans". This action caused much displeasure in the surviving Eastern Roman Empire (called Byzantium by western historians) which was ruled from Constantinople, where the Empress Irene was considered sole Roman emperor. But some years later Constantinople recognised Charles as co-emperor.

Charles' reign and that of his son and successor Louis the Pious were marked by a cultural revival in which the Church was the main agent, with its bishops and abbots working under the king-emperor's patronage. As the chief architect of this revival, Charles was able to draw on the intellectual resources not only of Italy, but also of Christian Ireland and of north-east England previously christianised by the Irish. The palace school which he established was headed by the English deacon, scholar, and theologian Alcuin of York. The practical emphasis was on establishing, in place of many variants, authentic texts of the Bible and of religious rituals and on spreading literacy, good Latin, and knowledge of elementary mathematics.

Monasteries were encouraged to make copies of patristic and classical Roman writings, thus preserving them for later centuries. This copying adopted a beautiful new script, Carolingian Minuscule, which became the basis of the later printed alphabet. Additionally. Charles established a regionalised administration and improved the economy by maintaining a degree of public order, building roads and reforming the currency. In the palace school and in court circles the term 'Europe' was current as a description of Latin Christendom, which was virtually identical with the Frankish empire. A court poet described Charles as *'rex pater Europae'*, king father of Europe.

After Charles' death in 814, his son, Louis the Pious, maintained the empire in face of Viking attacks from the sea. After his death with three sons living, the process began which made Charlemagne's empire a mere curtain-raiser for Europe; a false start rather than its beginning.. Because Frankish tradition imposed partible inheritance among living sons, there was a tripartite division of the realm. After a brief civil war, Charles, Lothair and Louis agreed in the Treaty of Verdun to divide the empire into three kingdoms. The divisions, longitudinal from north to south, produced West, Middle and East Francia. Lothair, as the eldest and king of the middle kingdom, bore also the title of emperor. Through several subsequent generations, revised partitions together with territorial breakaways would transform West Francia into the kingdom of France, East Francia into the kingdom of Germany, and erase Middle Francia as an entity. At the same time, a 're-balkanisation' into lordships of various sizes and kinds was occurring.

In the latter part of Charlemagne's reign sea-faring warriors and traders from Denmark and Norway, called Vikings or Norsemen, had become an aggressive presence in the North Sea and North Atlantic. They travelled in distinctive longships which had a shallow draught that made them easy to beach and usable in rivers as well as on the sea. Their lightness made them easily portable. In England, Scotland, Ireland and northwest France, the Vikings raided monasteries for their treasures, often killing the monks. Emboldened by the death of Louis the Pious in 840 and the quarrels that ensued, they attacked Rouen and, using the Seine as a highway, besieged Paris until they were bought off with gold. It would be the first of four attacks on the city by the Norsemen. Ultimately the West Frankish king Charles the Simple, tired of buying them off, would agree to yield to the Norseman Rollo the territory thenceforth called the Duchy of Normandy on condition that he would be baptised a Christian and guard the estuaries of the Seine from further attacks.

From Ireland, the Isle of Man and eastern England to Iceland, France and Scandinavia the Vikings established a network of trading settlements, often trading in slaves, many of whom they brought back to their Scandinavian homelands. This western trading network was linked with an eastern one, established mainly by Swedes called Varangians, that reached through the lands of the Eastern Slavs to the Middle East and Constantinople. In the course of this eastern penetration a principality called Rus after a Varangian people was established in Kiev. Converted to Orthodox Christianity, it would ultimately, after an invasion by the Mongols, become the Russian zardom centred on Moscow.

In 924 the Frankish imperial title had fallen vacant. Thirty-eight years later, in Rome in 962, Pope John XII crowned the German king Emperor of the Romans, thereby initiating a quite different story.

Making a secure space for Europe

Throughout the tenth century Viking aggression, with attendant settlements, continued in the West. Both would continue well into the eleventh century. For a time, from 900 to 955, even more serious disruption was caused by a Central Asian people, the Magyars (also known as Hungarians), who after a long migration had settled in the Pannonian Plain on both sides of the Danube and raided westwards. Clearly, before any new civilisation could be established, stability must be restored.

The Magyars defeated a Bavarian army and a Frankish army led by the then emperor. In the following years they made powerful looting raids into Germany, through France as far as Spain and into Italy. In 955 their incursions into the West were stopped by a decisive defeat at the Lechfeld near Augsburg at the hands of Otto I, Duke of Saxony and King of the Germans. It was as a consequence of this that Pope John XII conferred on Otto the vacant Roman imperial crown. Thereafter, the Magyars, having withdrawn to their base territory, roughly present-day Hungary, concentrated on building a Hungarian state. In 1001 their leaders accepted Christianity, made Stephen I their first king, and were confirmed in their territory by the Pope.

About ten years before that, beginning in Aquitaine and than spreading to other parts of France and beyond its borders, the Peace of God movement had emerged. Bishops and abbots summoned assemblies of villagers, lords and knights to meet in the presence of saints' relics. The assemblies were made to swear to keep the peace. the nobles to refrain from killing unarmed clergy and civilian men, women and children. As this movement continued into the eleventh century it was seconded by a Truce of God movement which became one with it. The Truce of God was a commitment to refrain from fighting on holy days and on Fridays. In Germany efforts were made to ensure that the Emperor's duty to maintain the *Landfriede* or peace of the realm became more fact than theory. In Anglo-Saxon England similar efforts were made to make the legally stipulated 'king's peace' a reality. All these efforts failed to produce decisive results, especially in France; but they at least made commonplace the doctrine that violence could not run rampant and that there were ethical limits to what powerful armed men might do. A decisive reduction of wars among the nobles had to wait until the summoning of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II in 1095 induced many knights and their retinues to set out for Jerusalem.

In the course of the eleventh century Viking maritime activity diminished and gradually ceased. Many Vikings had settled permanently abroad, merging with the local Christian population where such existed and in Iceland founding a new Norse nation. Others remained in Scandinavia to enjoy their accumulated wealth. Christianity had been making inroads there, and now strong Christian monarchies emerged in each of the three nations. The fact that these nascent nation-states forbade the enslavement of Christians removed much of the incentive for trade. In 1066 the now French-speaking Norse of Normandy invaded and conquered England and established a ruling dynasty.

Growing in the form of Latin Christendom was the community of nation-states that would make Europe. In 1095 even Scandinavia sent contingents to join the first European joint venture, the First Crusade.

Stephen Richards

The Jazzman Cometh

Quite a number of the Irish Counties could be said, naming no names, to have a very positive self-image and a gift for PR. We do love to hear from them. They know who they are, but this song isn't about them. I could name some of those that aren't in this category, the ones that could be called the quiet sisters; and among them I think particularly of Longford, Roscommon and Leitrim, with their small towns of the type celebrated by the poet and spy John Betjeman. My memories of Leitrim include the scenic Glencar area and the metropolis of Manorhamilton, county town I suppose, and back in 1995 when I was last there the main street could have been used as a 1950s film set.

Leitrim used to be the poorest state in the Union, the Irish equivalent of Arkansas. I don't know if that's still the case. I do know that the Celtic Tiger with a last futile swish of his tail deposited a huge number of new houses across its rough pastureland around 2006-07. Leitrim was supposed to be the coming place. Speculative builders speculated and lost their shirts. It's estimated that the County won't need any new housing stock for the next fifty years. Where the new inhabitants were going to come from, where they were going to find jobs and how they were going to pay their mortgages were questions never answered, and possibly never asked. The final outcome of this splurge of economic activity was a less attractive landscape, now littered with ghost estates, and a lot more eggs in Nama's basket.

Eighty years ago there were currents of a different—less materialistic—kind energising the local population. I have no intention of plagiarising Cathal Brennan's article in *The Irish Story* around July 2011, easily found on-line, so I'll try to limit my narrative and move on to rigorous analysis, profound reflections, etc.

The Silent People No More

Step forward Leitrim, for you too had your hour. In 1934, indeed on New Year's Day, the parish priest of Cloone, Peter Conefrey, started an anti-jazz agitation. This was kicked off by a sort of mid-Winter mini-Twelfth, a procession to the Canon Donhue Memorial Hall in Mohill, with bands and banners and three thousand followers. The movement was so potent that it led very shortly afterwards to the enactment of the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935. This has the look of a highly successful peasants' revolt, that intimidated Fianna Fail Ministers in Leinster House into stupefied silence.

Conefrey himself was full of positive motives. He was a strong supporter of the Irish language and traditional music and dance. Jazz was the enemy because it introduced an alien element into the life of the nation that would if unchecked supplant the wholesome recreations of the people. The Irish would be disorientated by the loss of the forms of indigenous cultural expression.

Ironically it would seem that the word "jazz" is itself an Irish loan word adopted by American English. The expression *"all that jazz"* may have preceded the application of the word to that particular fusion of black American and Jewish music that became jazz. It's said that Louis Armstrong loathed the word. He had an alternative of his own, which I've forgotten.

He couldn't have loathed the word

any more than Conefrey and the Leitrimites loathed the thing itself. They latched on to the tide of disquiet caused by the revelations in the Carrigan Report of 1931 with its references to *"the new phases of popular amusement… carried out in the Saorstat in the absence of supervision, and of the restrictions found necessary and enforced by law in other countries"*.

Radio Days

The quintessence of these new cultural abuses was the phenomenon of jazz. Just one year after the inception of Radio Eireann (then known as 2RN) in the *Irish Radio Review* of March 1927 a regular, anonymous contributor opined as follows:

> "I know that my feet will begin to tap the floor if I hear a jazz-band strike up a tune. I know that the natural instinct is for me to move my body in all sorts of ridiculous ways that my ancestors discarded years ago. But I ask, is that all that jazz can do? Can it not wake other animal instincts in me? Has it not other than 'nigger' qualities? I for one do not want to ape the nigger. I wonder if all those who profess to go into an ecstasy when they hear the haunting strains of the 'Hoola-Hoola Blues', or such-like clap-trap, know that it is nothing short of a reversal to the primitive, when they allow themselves to be carried away by such arrant nonsense" (cited by Johannah Duffy, *Jazz, Identity and Sexuality in Ireland during the Interwar Years*).

The racist language here is shocking to our ears but might not have turned many heads in the Anglosphere of the day. Black American culture as typified by jazz was the demon lurking at the door. The *Leitrim Observer* of 20th January 1934 went further in an opinion piece. The non-Gaels were consigned to gradations of moral turpitude. In an article addressed to *"the Gaels of Breffni"* it was declared:

> "Let the pagan Saxon be told that we Irish Catholics do not want and will not have the dances and the music that he has borrowed from the islands of the Pacific. Let him keep them for the 30 million pagans he has at home… The West, we are sure, will not now slumber but rush forth again to expel the last and worst invader—the jazz of Johnny Bull and the niggers and cannibals"

This article is quoted at more length in *The Irish Story*. For all its offensiveness there is a sort of honesty, even an innocence, about it. The author tells us clearly what's on his (I would guess it's a his) mind, with no fear of being had before the bar of *bien pensant* opinion. We're more nuanced now, and we make sure, except for the incontinent tweeters, that the things we say in private to like-minded associates aren't shouted from the rooftops.

Of course the very arrival of the radio into Irish homes had a transformative impact comparable to that of the internet, and unleashed a number of unintended consequences. But for the radio, the impact of fiddling *emigres* Michael Coleman and James Morrison would have been a lot less, and the Sligo style might not have achieved the dominance which, for better or worse, it did. Being able to listen to traditional musicians from all over the country from the comfort of your own home rather than having to cycle to a house party ten miles away to hear some local average Joe may have been a liberating experience, but it presaged the first chinks in the sociable culture of the Irish countryside.

We can't easily think ourselves back into the mood of those early radio days. I would guess that the disembodied voice, with its Oxford or educated-Irish tones, was treated with what we would now see as a ludicrous respect. What rattled the Irish Hierarchy was that, in any conflict with the teachings of the Church, the disembodied voice might win. No boundary could be set to the march of a technology; no nook or cranny of people's lives would be safe from it, hence the obsession with control of the medium. If American jazz bands could be heard over the airwaves in the depths of rural Ireland, then, as with the builders of the Tower of Babel, there would be no limit to what the godless forces in high places could do. Jazz was shorthand for a modernity that was going to wreck the cultural integrity of the Irish Free State before it had properly got going.

MacEntee On The Bold Step

And so there was the bizarre spectacle of a senior Fianna Fail politician, Sean MacEntee, being held to account for his social and listening habits from the depths of Leitrim at that same meeting in January 1934. According to Sean Og O Ceallaigh, Secretary of the Gaelic League,

> "Our Minister for Finance has a soul buried in jazz and is selling the musical soul of the nation for the dividends of sponsored jazz programmes. He is jazzing every night of the week… As far as nationality is concerned the Minister for Finance knows nothing about it. He is a man who will kill nationality, if nationality is to be killed in this country." (By *"sponsored"* programmes was meant the practice whereby companies whose brands were advertised would pay the production costs of programmes carrying those ads.)

The O Ceallaigh message was endorsed by Conefrey later that same month of January 1934:

> "We all agree that Mr. MacEntee has a past record of which any Irishman should feel proud, but why should he stain that record now by indulging in this jazz dancing? This is not what he fought for and this is not what Pearse and O'Rahilly died for. He is a Minister of the State and should lead in giving the good example."

Crehan's Lament

Leitrim marched on Washington, with the result that the Public Dance Halls Act was enacted in the Dail the following year, without any debate, and it has never been repealed. Even in 1982, according to music collector Breandan Breathnach, the relevant files had not been made available to the public. Having said that, Breathnach thought the Act was passed in 1936, so he may have been searching in the wrong year!

1935 was the year the music died, according to veteran Clare fiddler Junior Crehan in an article for *Dal gCais* in 1977. Crehan has been widely quoted and he's worth quoting again:

> "But in 1934 [sic] both Church and Government dealt a severe blow to country life. For a long time the Church had been against the country-house dance. They put forward many reasons for their attitude. They claimed that the house dances were places of misconduct, that there were no proper sanitary conditions and they seemed to be fearing greatly for our morals. The Government thought that some of the money collected at these dance-tournaments was going to illegal organisations. Both Government and Church seemed to think that the country people were making fortunes out of the dance-tournaments; but in fact the most that was ever made at one of these was four or five pounds which were badly needed. In 1934 {sic} the Dance Hall Act was passed. The Act banned the house dances and anybody holding such a dance after this was brought to Court and fined. The clergy started to build the parochial halls to which all were expected to go and the Government collected 25% of the ticket-tax. In these halls modern dance bands played a different type of music for a different style of dancing—Foxtrot, One-Step and Shimmy-shake. But country people

found it hard to adjust and to them the dance halls were not natural places of enjoyment; they were not places for traditional music, story-telling and dancing; they were unsuitable for passing on traditional arts. The Dance Hall Act had closed our schools of tradition and left us a poorer people. In addition to this, in the 40's, the rate of emigration increased rapidly. The youth saw nothing in their own country but poverty, and Government and Church collected their Dance-Hall dues from a falling population. The countryside was once more going through that terrible silence which it had suffered after the Famine, the silence of a departing people and a dying of music and song. These were indeed the black Forties.

"As a musician I played at many house dances and there was nothing there but innocent fun with fathers mothers brothers and sisters present. Nor was there anything wrong with our morals in those days, something I could not say about today. All in all, a fine job was made of our morals, customs and culture and the country house was finished."

Crehan continues, with some pathos:

"It was this loneliness that I felt most of all; there was no one to swap tunes with, very few to talk about music, and the flag floors were silent. In corners, in attics, and on shelves, fiddles and flutes lay gathering spiders and cobwebs. There was no heart to play and I remember finding it a struggle to take down the fiddle and play a few tunes to oblige a neighbour. There seemed to be no point in it; the music was slipping away in spite of us."

Other Voices

Crehan was far from being some lone, localised, eccentric. Here is Lucy Farr, originally from Ballinakill in Galway, who later settled in London:

"And that was the most awful crime against the Irish music that anyone could do. The priests, you know, they were vicious then. Oh yes, they'd condemn the late nights for stopping people coming to mass on Sunday because they were 'up all night the night before' playing this awful music. But it never stopped any of us coming to mass on a Sunday" (quoted in *Blooming Meadows*, ed. Fintan Vallely and Charlie Piggot)

Helen Brennan in *The Story of Irish Dance* (1999) tells of an interview with Jimmy Ward of the Kilfenora Ceili Band around 1970:

"In Jimmy's kitchen I listened fascinated as a whole world unfolded. He talked of a 'fund-raising dance' during the 1930s when the 'detectives'—members of the police force based in the area—raided the house and every man was punched and kicked as the dancers were ejected from the premises. Jimmy was spared a beating that time as he was a visiting musician from a different part of Clare. The police action was taken ostensibly on foot of the recently enacted Public Dance Hall Act".

Tom Munnelly at the Crossroads Conference of 1996 comments, more specifically about the dancing:

"Bear in mind that one of the dances which drew down this self-righteous wrath were the set dances which are now the epitome of traditional social dancing in Ireland. They had already been in Ireland a century or so when the Gaelic League wanted to replace them with 'traditional' dances that they had just invented themselves"

That opens up a whole new aspect, namely the extent to which the Gaelic League and the language enthusiasts accelerated the process by which some of the older dances were lost. By insisting that dance tutors were Irish speakers, the local dance schools often excluded the older, monoglot, teachers who were familiar with the more traditional dances.

Consequences

How should we respond to this? While Crehan's language in particular is emotive and there may be some overstatement, he does seem to be describing a phenomenon that went far beyond his own subjective experience.

Not only is he wrong about the year, like Breathnach, but he is also wrong to assert that the Act prohibited country house dances. This point was expressly clarified by the Attorney General, if it needed clarification. But the correct legal interpretation was of little account when the local clergy, supported by the local Gardai, behaved as if it applied to public and private gatherings alike. This is the heart of the problem. We're presented with a scenario where the State was oppressing the people of the State, with no dissenting voice raised by the people's representatives. The gun that was meant to be turned on an alien immoral musical culture nearly did for the indigenous musical culture that it aspired to protect. As the late Fred Trueman would have said, I just don't understand what was going on out there. The music of the parochial halls may not have been jazz in the classical sense, maybe more like ragtime or swing. But what it certainly wasn't was Irish. The Act didn't apply under the blue skies of freedom in the Six Counties, so I wonder if some native musical energy was retained that was lost elsewhere. In and around Sliabh Luacra, I believe, the Act was simply ignored.

Some of those dance bands presumably morphed with the passage of time into the *ersatz* country and western bands of the late 1950s and the 1960s, the showbands, those bands I used to listen to on a pirate radio station called (for some reason) Radio Scotland when I was eight or nine and we didn't have TV, those bands that frequented the late Sammy Barr's Flamingo ballroom in Ballymena and the Arcadia in Portrush.

Sean O Riada, in his series of RTE radio talks first broadcast around 1960, about which I wrote previously, was particularly sniffy about that Johnny-come-lately instrument the accordion, to be distinguished from the concertina so ably played in Clare and other western counties. I'm not sure about the history of it, but it seems plausible that the accordion came in around the 1930s or early 40s. With little or no artificial amplification it would be impossible for a lone fiddle or flute (or even fiddle and flute) to create a sufficiently joyful noise in a cavernous parochial hall. So some of the bands would have morphed into ceili bands with the accordion as the powerhouse of the sound.

The Guiding Hand

Crehan's lament also leaves one wondering to what extent the tirade against jazz was (on the part of the hierarchy at any rate) camouflage for something else, namely a determination to leave no aspect of parish life free from Church superintendence. Traditional music was all very well, but how dare the people think they could insouciantly organise their own entertainment without the guiding hand of the Church. Indeed, if it weren't for the Church, they would just all live chaotic lives, would be out till all hours and would lie in bed on Sunday mornings when they should be at Mass. It reminds me of the 1987 movie, *Matewan*, set in a West Virginian mining community in the late 1920s, where the miners all lived in accommodation owned by the company and got paid in tokens redeemable only at the company-owned store.

As for why the Church would want to behave like this, various explanations may come to mind. it's best explained by my patent new sociological theory, which I call the Jolene Principle. Jolene,

readers will recall, is the eponymous anti-heroine of the song by Dolly Parton, the woman whom Dolly is begging not to take her man. And then comes the killer line:

"Please don't take him just because you can."

This encapsulates the human, not just female, tendency to walk over the top of other people, to abuse them, to humiliate them, for no reason other than that the opportunity is there and the sanction isn't. Institutions, including Governments and multi-national corporations, as well as individuals, can be just as wilful as any Jolene. I've encountered one or two Jolenes on the Bench from time to time. The Jolene Principle may also be called Original Sin, but I doubt somehow if that's a concept that would win much acceptance in peer-reviewed journals.

The People Knuckle Under

The next question is, in the case of the Church, what was the source of the power? And, in the case of the people, why the curious passivity, or tractability? After all Jolene had a few factors in her favour, such as chestnut hair and eyes of green. From my outsider's perspective I can't think of what would have been the equivalent pulling power in the case of the Catholic Church. I can only surmise that the world of the Free State must have been exhilarating for the clergy. They now had a captive nation, unencumbered by the old Dublin Castle Government and by bothersome Northerners, which they could remake as a model Catholic society. The anti-jazz agitation started up less than two years after the great Eucharistic Congress of 1932, so the hierarchy was filled with post-Eucharistic *chutzpah*. There was no great vested interest with the power base or the confidence to challenge the Church.

And as for the people, in this Genevan world of the Church authorities being backed up with the sword of the civil magistrate, maybe there wasn't much they could do, but I'm not sure about that. For the previous 90 years the Irish Catholic citizenry had had a raw deal. First the Famine, the abortive Young Ireland Rising, the Fenian movement (another false dawn), the Home Rule agitation with its long and winding road that led only to the disaster of the Great War. The War of Independence didn't achieve independence, just a quasi-independence at the other end of a senseless Civil War. And, after that near-century of agony, of rising up against the Famine and the Crown, it seemed that the country people couldn't be left in peace. This time it was their own Church, which they had supported sacrificially, that turned on them. Could a people that had resisted the British Empire in its pomp not have put the clergy in their place?

I think there must have been a fear of sticking out like a sore thumb in the community, and behind that a fear of hellfire. If the besetting sin of Protestantism is its devaluing of the Church, the Catholic tendency is to make the Church, however novel or capricious its teaching may appear, the ultimate arbiter of right conduct, beyond reason (the criterion of liberal Protestants) or revelation (that of conservative Protestants). If you believe that the Church, rather than Jesus Christ, is Noah's ark, and outside it there's no salvation, then you'll be more inclined to toe the line. You don't assess the teaching of the Church against the benchmark of scripture, you do the converse.

What a shock it must be for elderly present-day Catholics, who toed the line doggedly through Vatican I and Vatican II, to hear Pope Francis declaring that even those who don't believe in God at all will be *"forgiven"*, as long as they have tried to live decent lives, or lived according to their consciences, or some drivel like that. Not only is it not now necessary to be a Catholic to get to heaven, you don't even have to be a Christian at all. And, from both a Catholic and Evangelical perspective, what a dreadful lack of self-knowledge it betrays. As if any of us lives according to the modest demands of our own consciences, let alone the somewhat more exacting standards of the Sermon on the Mount. The Catholic faith, for all the criticisms people like me might level against it, had some notion of grace, that came down from St. Paul and St. Augustine. Now the Pope has declared Christianity to be nothing more or less than a religion of works.

But I'm departing from my theme. The other curiosity is what exactly the new-minted Fianna Fail Government thought it was doing. I was under the impression that Fianna Fail knew how to keep the Church in its place without creating a scene. The Censorship legislation was enacted at the very dawn of the Free State in 1923. Yet here are the tribunes of the people, a dozen years later, behaving in an absolutely supine manner in the face of an assault by the Church on the cultural life of the people. I would really like to hear some answers about this.

Just One Generation

Roll on to 1971. The Beatles have come and gone, but Vatican II is in full swing, as are Thin Lizzy, Van Morrison and the late great Rory Gallagher. In just about 35 years the cultural landscape of Ireland has been transformed. The Church may have succeeded in dishing the country house, and setting back the cause of traditional music, but as for the tide of modernity with its accompanying moral permissiveness, the Church's finger in the dyke hasn't succeeded in keeping out the deluge, so the Church is deciding to go with the flow, to adapt to the culture and not to confront it. And jazz is beginning to be a pursuit for retired civil servants, balding and grizzled.

In August 1971 the All Ireland Fleadh, organised by Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (the Comhaltas), was due to take place in Listowel, County Kerry. But they issued a statement postponing it. This is the statement they put out:

> *"Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann* is a cultural festival of international repute. It attracts many thousands of people for the three-day programme. Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann was anxious that a prolonged and extensive festival of this kind in one part of Ireland would not be used by the British media to detract from, minimise or ridicule the struggle which exists in another corner of our country.
>
> "The decision to postpone the Fleadh Cheoil was taken as a result of the extenuating circumstances which exist in the six occupied counties. The introduction of internment without trial; the reported brutality by British soldiers; the non-recognition of the Stormont regime by the nationalist population have brought about unparalleled conditions in the North Eastern part of this country.
>
> "Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann could not divorce itself from the situation as it exists at the present time. We wish to demonstrate our solidarity with our fellow Irishmen in the North at this decisive hour; we wish to associate with and involve ourselves with them and indicate our concern for their plight.
>
> "We were fully aware that when we made our decision, which was accepted and endorsed by the Fleadh Cheoil Committee in Listowel, that it would entail hardship, inconvenience and disappointment. These consequences are indicative of the magnitude of our decision and we hope that they will help to underline the seriousness and urgency of the present conflict. We are confident, also, that that there are very

few Irish people who would not willingly deny themselves the anticipated achievement or enjoyment at the Fleadh Cheoil in the hope that it would contribute to a last and just solution to the national problem.

"While CCE may not concern itself with party politics, it does not deny itself the right to national aspirations. Traditional music, song and dance are marks of nationhood and we view them in this context. As it is people who primarily constitute the nation and evolve its character, we cannot—and will not—in this time of emergency withhold our measure of support for the Northern population."

CCE Humbug

If this verbiage was vegetation it would be enough to choke a donkey. It has all the hallmarks of a committee production. It could be a textbook example of how big words tend to obscure meaning. Of course the Irish people who were overlooked in this windy tirade were the Northern Protestants. It didn't matter that traditional music had a strong foothold within that community, where it was played simply for enjoyment and not as part of any national struggle. The CCE didn't seem to care about alienating these musicians, or about the principle of sheer enjoyment. While they may not have meant it, they were giving the strong impression that the music was just incidental. Where it could help the struggle, well and good: where it was perceived to be getting in the way of the struggle, then it would have to take a back seat.

Nigel Bouiller in his fine book on the fiddle tradition of Mid and East Down (*Handed Down*, 2012, Ulster Historical Foundation) notes that news of the CCE *fatwa* didn't get to some of the fiddlers around Comber, who rather pathetically went down to Listowel in ignorance of it, while others went in defiance of it. While some leading musicians in the Protestant community, such as the late Alex Crawford and also I think John Kennedy, stayed within CCE, the organisation did lose some credibility at that time.

Even in the supposedly less hot-headed days of 2013 the CCE was heavily conflicted about the *Fleadh* coming north of the border for the first time, to chime in with the City of Culture year in Derry. The objectors felt that to hold the event in the North would be somehow giving prestige and legitimacy to the UK bit in the City of Culture. No doubt these same people call the Ulster Fry the Occupied Six Counties' Fry! The *Fleadh* went ahead in the end, and was a tremendous organisational, artistic and commercial success.

Despite the best attentions of its friends in the Catholic Church and the Republican movement, Irish traditional music has continued its resurgence over the last forty years. So the story has a happy ending. The cultural fragility is all on the Protestant side. When cultural phenomena are hijacked by activists with a different, political, agenda (including at times by those wielding inappropriate state subsidy) it's like the kiss of death. What replaces culture is posture, a sort of sloganising shell, with the kernel gone. But that's for another day.

Seán McGouran

Zimbabwe

The Guardian Encounters Mugabe's Real Reputation

The Guardian's G2 section (18.03.13) carried a very odd report (labelled *Fashion*), *Why is 'Mugabe chic' so popular in Zimbabwe?* It is described as *""dictator chic""*, by David Smith, or his sub editors, despite the fact that President Mugabe is a member of an elected party (ZANU-PF) and his Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, is the leader of another elected party, the Coalition for Change. Smith writes that this is not *"only a fashion statement but an act of rebellion in major cities where denigrating 'Uncle Bob' or 'the old man' has become almost de rigeur"*.

The newest item is a cap with *"1924"* on it—Mugabe's birth date. Smith writes that possibly *"far from being a liability, the 89-year-old's status as Africa's oldest leader is a point of pride"*. It may well be. Africans don't have the currently fashionable (Anglosphere) attitude to age. Being ancient of days is respected, and for a man in his ninth decade Mugabe seems remarkably vigorous and clued-up. And he is of the generation that made Zimbabwe independent. Other elements of this fashion trend include Mugabe's signature on various items of clothing. A very attractive mixed double ('models' presumably—leading one to wonder how this isolated allegedly dour Marxist 'dictatorship' acquired an obviously flourishing fashion industry—'clothes horses' are the end of the process) model t-shirts and jerkins with the signature all over them.

The fashion *House of Gushungo* is behind all this—apparently the *"signature appeals to a particular group, typically around 30 and running their own business, who feel they are doing just fine under his 33-year rule"*.

David Smith and the Editors of the *Guardian*, appear not to realise that this (apparently tangential) item has exploded decades of UK Government-inspired 'gray propaganda' to the effect that Zim was backward, dictatorial, and an economic basket-case. We've all experienced BBC television operatives standing in front of market stalls groaning under the weight of beautiful fresh food telling us, gravely, that the supermarkets are empty.

This short article rather fizzles out, partly because it is unable to explain where all these successful thirty-somethings come from. Where did they acquire their education? Where did they get the skills to design, and to market, this shmeer? Is it because Mugabe (an Irish Christian Brothers' product) took education seriously and encouraged the development of any skills and talents pupils may have had, whether it was farming, fashion or nuclear physics? We can only hope that 'Mugabe chic' comes to Europe.

VOX PAT continued

FR. FLANNERY

"A priest threatened with excommunication has called on the Catholic Church to openly debate whether clerical celibacy has contributed to the number of clerics who abused children." (*Irish Independent*, 9.9.2013)

Fr Tony Flannery – a co-founder of the Association of Catholic Priests, which has more than 1,000 members – said the lonely single lives that priests lead result in an *"inevitable"* struggle over sexuality.

Fr Flannery has been suspended from ministry and threatened with excommunication by the Vatican over his stand on mandatory clerical celibacy, contraception and women priests. He is one of the first priests to publicly question a possible linkage of celibacy and clerical abuse.

"Meanwhile, Archbishop Pietro Parolin, a Vatican diplomat who will next month become the Pope's deputy as secretary of state, said that the principle of celibacy among Catholic clergy was *"ecclesiastical tradition"* rather than *"church dogma"* and therefore open to discussion." (*Daily Telegraph*, London, 12.9.2013)

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VOX

Bishop John Dignan

Heaney

PAT

FORGOTTEN PATRIOT:

John Dignan, Bishop of Clonfert,
13 June 1880 - 15 April 1953.

Dignan was a native of Ballygar, County Galway. He was educated at Esker, near Athenry, later attending St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, where he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Clonfert on 6th September 1903. In 1919 he became administrator of the parish of Abbey, Loughrea, becoming its parish priest in 1921.

While there his house was raided and bombed by the Black and Tans, who stole his property. He was targeted as he was a supporter of the Independence movement. He was absent at the time of the raid.

On 24th March, 1924 he was appointed Bishop of Clonfert.

The diocese of Clonfert was one of the twenty-four dioceses established at the Synod of Rathbreasail in 1111, and its boundaries were fixed at the Synod of Kells in 1152. During the Reformation, the Bishops changed their allegiance back and forth between the Pope and the Crown. After the Reformation, there were parallel apostolic successions.

In the Church of Ireland, the title continued until 1625 when it united with Kilmacduagh, forming the united See of Clonfert and Kilmacduagh.

In the Catholic Church, the title remains a separate bishopric.

> "Throughout his life he was a staunch supporter of the Independence movement. As a young priest, Dignan threw himself wholeheartedly into the Sinn Fein movement and in 1916 he was one of the staunchest supporters in Co. Galway. In 1917 he became President of the East Galway board of Sinn Fein executive and later he was a central figure in the organisation of the Sinn Fein courts in the county" (*Irish Press*, 13.4.1953)

Acknowledging congratulations from Sinn Fein on his appointment as Bishop of Clonfert he wrote:

> "I stand where I did in 1918. I believe as strongly as I did then in the right of Ireland to secure that right {self determination}. I have not deviated one half inch from the stand I took then but as a democrat I feel bound to obey—and obey I do—the rule of the majority … (*ibid.*)
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> "Much as I regret that the majority did not vote in 1923 as it did in 1918, this does not prevent you from using moral and peaceful means to persuade the people to go back to the position they occupied before the Treaty was signed" (*Irish Press*, 13.4.1953).

In 1936, he was invited by the Fianna Fail Government to serve as Chairman of the Committee of Management of the National Health Insurance Council. He served in that capacity 1936-1945 and in 1944 produced what was known as the Dignan Report, referred to by many people at the time as the Beveridge Plan, in which he envisaged a new and greatly improved national health insurance society in charge of all health service in the country.

Dr. Noel Browne, the former Minister for Health in the first Inter-Party government, 1948-51, found a strong ally in the person of Bishop Dignan.

> "The Chairman of the National Health Insurance Council, Bishop Dignan, had said about it {the Dispensary Service}, 'The Poor Law system is tainted at its roots now, as it was when introduced, of destitution, pauperism, and degradation.' Bishop Dignan was the only member of the hierarchy to write to me approvingly of the scheme. {Browne's Mother and Child scheme}." (Noel Browne, *Against the Tide*, Gill and Macmillan, 1986, p.156).
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> "Throughout the controversy, Bishop Dignan of Clonfert remained a firm friend and supporter of mine, and warned, 'You cannot win against the Catholic hierarchy. A few months, a year at the most, and you and your scheme will be forgotten. Look what happened to Parnell" (*ibid.* p. 171).
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> "In spite of the opposition of the bishops, many members of the Catholic clergy warmly welcomed the main proposals of the scheme. Bishop Dignan, of the National Health Insurance Board, had expressed his disgust with the 'pauper' nature of the dispensary service. Indeed the then Minister for Health, Mr. MacEntee, had sacked him for his outspokenness in protesting against the quality of poor law medicine" (*ibid.* p.173/74).
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> "Aodh de Blacam was an ardent admirer of de Valera, and wrote under the pen name 'Roddy the Rover' in *The Irish Press*. A large, gentle and charming man, he was a convert to Catholicism. As my speech writer on non-political matters it was his job to research the history of a person, a site, a building, or institution, and work up a speech for me. On a journey across Ireland to lay the foundation stone at Ballinasloe/Portiuncula Hospital, I had not time to glance through my speech until just before I stood up to speak. Incredulously I heard myself orating, *'Nisi dominus domum aedificat frustu laborant qui aedificant*' (Unless the Lord build the house, the builders labour in vain). The audience was astounded. Were they by any chance at High Mass by mistake? The hospital was to be run by the Franciscan nuns and the whole speech was in similar devout and reverential style… A shame-faced Bishop, Dr. Dignan, followed me with a few unspectacular mundane words of welcome. A good friend, he smilingly complained to me, 'Dr. Browne, I should have made your speech, and you mine'…" (Noel Browne, *Against the Tide*, Gill and Macmillan, 1986, p.202).

"The Encyclopedia of Ireland" (2003); *"A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800"* (2003); Boylan's *"Dictionary of Irish Biography"* (1988); *"The Oxford Companion to Irish History"* (1998) make a not a single reference to Dignan.

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HEANEY

> "In 1994, a year before he was made a Nobel laureate, Heaney was asked whether his poetry suffered as a result of academia. “For better or worse—I now feel for worse, earlier on I felt for better—I believed that poetry would come as a grace and would force itself through whenever it needed to come”, he said"
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> (Victoria Ward, *Daily Telegraph*, 31.8.2013). Seamus Heaney : born 1939, died 2013).

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