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The Republic aims to provide a forum for discussion, debate and analysis of contemporary and historical issues. Irish and international matters across a range of disciplines will be addressed. Republican ideas and principles will shape and inform the contents of the journal. Our aim is to serve a general rather than a specialist readership.

The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily represent those of the Ireland Institute.

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THE COMMON GOOD

EDITORIAL

Since the 1920s anti-intellectualism has been an unfortunate feature of Irish culture and there has been a neglect, almost hostile at times, of thought and ideas. This has been the case within republicanism, as much as elsewhere, in this period.

It is time for us to move forward and begin to construct an environment in which intellectual work is respected and encouraged, and ideas and thinking can flourish. Too often in discourse the words ‘theoretical’ and ‘academic’ are used to silence and disparage. While some academics have brought this upon themselves by élite, obscure or trivial intellectualism, too often, systematic thinking is pushed aside in favour of action that is not informed by theory.

The idea that intellectual work, ideas and theory are somehow unimportant or removed from the ‘real world’ is as unhelpful as it is unreasonable. There is something immature or irrational about a society that believes it can dispense with theory and analysis. Contemporary culture increasingly privileges emotion, impulse and gratification over thought and reflection. But if action is not rational, if it is not informed by reason and reflection, how can it be either meaningful or purposeful?

Another aspect of the anti-intellectual culture is the lack of real engagement and debate. The idea that we need to listen to the other side of the argument and respect the views of those we disagree with seems alien to us. When we encounter arguments that conflict with our own, denial and dismissal are often the response and name-calling may follow. Yet how can we develop any idea or theory without subjecting it to challenge and counter-argument? Listening only to those we agree with and views which bolster our own leads to stagnation, shallowness and plain wrongness.

Modern republicanism owes much to eighteenth-century enlightenment thinking and its culture of reason. Reason, science and rigour demand that we hold only views and opinions that can withstand challenge and contradiction. We can learn much more from challenge and opposition than from voices of agreement. The comfort and self-justification that comes from being in agreement is poor substitute for critical thinking and self-

examination. Finding arguments to support our own case and refute others, or even admitting that our arguments may not stand up to examination, might be more difficult, but, surely, it is also more rewarding.

This issue of *The Republic* looks at republicanism as a body of ideas about politics and society. The articles include an overview of republican thinking from its earliest roots up to the present; several essays on different periods in the development of republican thinking in Ireland; and articles from the perspective of the English, French and U.S. experience of republicanism.

Our contributors were asked to ignore the demands of narrative and concentrate instead on ideas and thinking. In planning the issue and seeking authors, we had a broad idea of the outcome we expected—and, although our guidelines specified a critical approach and a refusal to unquestioningly accept established versions, we did expect a somewhat simple vindication of republicanism and our idealistic view of it. Fortunately, the authors took us at our word and the result is a collection of essays that are challenging and provocative.

The reader of this issue is going to be challenged in many of the ways we have talked about. No reader is going to agree with all of the articles; very few are going to agree with everything in any one of them. Some readers are going to be angered by some of the interpretations and arguments. Others will reach for the easy term of abuse and dismiss, without further thought, that which challenges their preconceptions.

The editors are more than happy with these articles, irrespective of our personal views and beliefs. We are certain that much can be gained from careful reading and consideration of the arguments and opinions presented. Reading with reason and thought, we can confirm and adapt those of our ideas we find supported, jettison ideas which no longer stand up, and incorporate new ideas into our thinking. This is the intelligent, republican approach. It is time to put anti-intellectualism behind us, and for ideas and theory to flourish in Ireland.

Freedom as Citizenship: The Republican Tradition in Political Theory

ISEULT HONOHAN

Introduction

What it means to be a republican is a contested matter. In Ireland, republicanism may be associated with physical force separatism and cultural nationalism, as well as a certain revolutionary austerity and authoritarianism. These partly reflect its genesis in eighteenth-century republican movements, which included revolutionaries as diverse as Jefferson and Robespierre; its growth in the age of European nationalism; and its expression in a constitution influenced by a hierarchical religious idiom. But republican ideas have broader foundations and a longer history than any of these. In this article I survey the central ideas of republican political theory in some of their diverse historical expressions, and outline some of their contemporary claims to attention. These suggest that republicanism speaks also to our current perplexities in the Ireland of the Celtic Tiger, judicial tribunals, immigration and increasing cultural diversity.

Republican ideas have a denser meaning than simply the form of government in which power rests with the people instead of a monarch. It should be said that there are almost as many hues of republican thought as there are of liberalism, socialism or conservatism. But all republican arguments seem to spring from a sense of the ineluctable interdependence of human beings, whose survival and flourishing depends on the kinds of social frameworks they inhabit, and who have common, as well as separate and conflicting, interests. The political question with which republicans are concerned is what kind of *freedom* is possible in the light of this interdependence, and how it may be realised. Freedom is understood as a political achievement, not a natural possession of individuals. It is inherently fragile, and requires not only a strong legal framework, but also the civic engagement of citizens, who can come to recognise and act to sustain those interests they share with others. But common interests are easier to overlook and therefore more vulnerable than individual interests; this gives rise to corruption, the key republican

problem. Freedom requires political equality and rests on two dimensions of active citizenship—civic virtue and political participation. Citizenship entails responsibilities as well as rights; self-governing citizens achieve the chance to exercise some collective direction over their lives, rather than complete self-sufficiency.

There is a coherent, though not always continuous, tradition of political thought, often referred to as ‘civic republicanism’, that stretches back to roots in ancient Greece and Rome, and reached its fullest expression between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, when it influenced both American and French revolutionaries. After a period of relative eclipse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the clash of liberalism and socialism dominated the field of political ideas, it is once more the subject of lively debate among political theorists today.

Ancient antecedents: Aristotle and Cicero

The republican tradition has clear antecedents in the classical world of Greece and Rome. While the Athenian *polis*, or city-state, of the fifth to third centuries BC is usually identified as the cradle of democracy, certain key features of republican thinking also crystallised first there¹. Citizens—native-Athenian adult males, irrespective of wealth—formed a self-governing body. In contrast to slaves or the subjects of a monarch, who were both subject to the will of a master, self-ruling citizens were free. Their freedom was exemplified in their equal right to speak in the assembly and serve in office, and their equality before the law. In principle, in the *polis* matters were settled by discussion and decision of all the citizens, not by force. Political equality was realised by appointing people to office for short terms in rotation, often on the basis of lottery. Thus each had a chance—and a duty—to participate in the decisions and practices that framed their lives. There was no state separate from the people. Politics played a central role in a citizen’s life. As the leader Pericles is quoted as saying, ‘We do not say that a man who has no interest in politics minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all’².

The philosopher Aristotle, though sceptical about the equality of all citizens and the direct democracy of the Athens of his time, saw the logic of this form of government. Living in a political community, people can deliberate rationally, among equals, about better and worse ways of organising social affairs. It is in this sense that we can understand his famous statement that ‘man is a political animal’.³ A *polis* is an association which allows people not just to survive, but to develop themselves. He defined a citizen as someone who participates in deliberating, serves in office, and defends the *polis*. His favoured form of government is a ‘mixed government’, which combines elements of

democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, rather than any of these forms individually. Yet ordinary citizens have an important contribution to make in political life, since they have both a variety of perspectives to bring to bear on political deliberation, and personal experience as the end users of political decisions. The person who wears the shoe is the one who knows if it fits. However, he stressed the need for citizens to participate reflectively and to take into account the welfare of the polity as a whole, not only their own particular concerns. In politics, citizens deliberate on and realise the common good they share as members. Citizens of a *polis* are free because they are not subject to a master. Since government is necessary, being free is better understood as ‘ruling and being ruled in turn’ than as not being ruled at all. While freedom excludes domination by another human being, it does not exclude the extensive rule of laws. Whereas a modern neo-liberal perspective sees law as sometimes necessary, but, nonetheless, as always infringing on freedom, for Aristotle law guarantees freedom from personal domination. But laws are not enough to constrain human beings to act well, unless they are absorbed along with education, so that citizens faced with practical choices are naturally inclined to act in the right way.

Aristotle also saw that socio-economic conditions affect the success of the *polis*. Small states in which citizens know one another will be better able to generate common concern and accountability. Inequalities between citizens tend to undermine their political equality and destabilise the *polis*. So he endorsed redistributive measures to counteract this, such as public provision of land or employment, and payment for participating in the assembly and serving in office.

Yet Aristotle offered just two cheers for republican life. He assumed that a somewhat static view of human nature determines the goals of political life, dictating, for example, that some people—non-Greeks, slaves and women—were not rational enough to be capable of citizenship. In addition, while he saw life in a *polis* as providing essential opportunities for self-development, he saw political participation as, ultimately, less fulfilling than the philosophical life of contemplation.

Republican themes were further developed in the larger and more aristocratic Roman republic, notably in the writings of Cicero. Later republican thought has inherited a great deal from Roman sources. The term republic itself comes from the Latin, *res publica*, the public concern; as Cicero put it, the republic is the people’s affair: ‘*res publica res populi*.’ For him, too, the political community is the most important kind of association, and freedom is contrasted to slavery. But reflecting both Rome’s less democratic political institutions and its extensive system of law, he saw freedom as related less to actual participation in self-rule than to the legal

status of citizen and the existence of laws to which all are subject. ‘The law is the bond which makes us free.’ The preservation of property was a central feature of this law. On the other hand, Cicero spelled out more clearly than Aristotle that political life is inherently more valuable than philosophy, and elaborated on the duty of political actors to be concerned with the public good, rather than their own personal aggrandisement. When political life in the republic was threatened by the warlords Caesar, Anthony and Octavian, Cicero advanced an ideal of the active statesman who engages in political rather than military activity, puts duty to the republic before personal concerns, and values honour and respect more than material rewards. He set out ideal virtues of citizens that became the basis for the key republican notion of *civic virtue*, or public spirit: justice, prudence, moderation, and courage. ‘We must be more eager to risk our own than the common welfare, and readier to fight when honour and glory, than when other advantages are at stake.’²⁴ He also recognised obligations to human beings more widely (as Roman citizenship was not limited to those who were genetically or culturally Roman). But his republic was still exclusive, and he had no doubts as to the manly nature of these virtues, implicit in the word *virtus*, derived from *vir*, the Latin for man as distinct from woman.

Aristotle and Cicero together provided many of the common elements that were to frame later republican thinking: the intrinsic value of membership and participation in a political community; freedom, contrasted to slavery, as a political achievement, guaranteed by the rule of law and ‘mixed’ government; the need for a virtuous citizenry, shaped by laws as well as good institutions; the state as a bounded community of citizens who share common goods, distinct in form from family and voluntary associations. The differences between the two thinkers are also reflected, right up to the present, in differing emphases on participation or the rule of law respectively, as constituting republican freedom. For both, however, the value of political freedom was derived from the more important goal of the pursuit of the good, or virtue in the largest sense.

Classical republicans: Machiavelli and Harrington

For more than a thousand years, after the Roman republic was succeeded by the rule of emperors, there was little scope for republican thought or practice. Most, though not all, mediaeval political thinking supported the rule of monarchs rather than the people. An exception was Marsiglio of Padua, who defended popular rule both in church and state. As independent city-states, such as Florence and Venice, emerged in the late middle ages and were threatened by native nobilities and foreign invasions, politicians and thinkers turned to their classical texts for advice

on running and maintaining a free republic. From this they forged an original theory, which we now know as ‘classical republicanism’.

Writing in the early sixteenth century, as Florence was about to fall irrevocably under the control of the Medici family, Machiavelli (now associated primarily with his analysis of power in *The Prince*) expressed a clear preference for republican government. He sees ordered social life as fragile and ephemeral, subject to cycles driven by necessity and chance, which can only be tamed by dynamic political action. In his *Discourses* he argues that republics are better able to deal with this, because they are more flexible, and, while they last, they allow greater freedom and prosperity for citizens. Without envisaging an Athenian direct democracy of all, he advocates a significant stake for citizens in political power in a state where the people ‘neither arrogantly dominate nor humbly serve’.⁵ Rather than pure democracy, this mixed government, or balance of interests between nobles and people, constrains each of them from pursuing purely sectional interests. This is not a harmonious process, as even when they intend the common good each faction interprets it differently, but the struggles between them favour freedom rather than endangering it.

The republic still needs citizens who have virtue—who put the common good ahead of their own particular interests, are prepared to perform political and military service, and to limit their desires for material wealth. Corruption is the most immediate threat to the republic. This is the tendency to decay, a natural hazard of a ‘body politic’, like any other body. It is accelerated by those who promote their individual interests at the expense of the public good, or who fail to support it actively. Since people will not be automatically public-spirited, a variety of measures to elicit such civic virtue are necessary. Political life should be open to all, and exemplary contributions to the republic rewarded by honour and glory. But such public spirit needs stronger measures—laws, civic education, military training and a civic religion—to keep corruption at bay, and severe sanctions to deal with those who are corrupt. No contribution can be set against penalties deserved for political wrongdoing.

Machiavelli thus redefines the central republican concepts of virtue and freedom. He distinguishes citizen virtue from goodness and godliness; citizens need to adopt a tougher, more heroic, approach to politics, to do whatever is necessary to maintain the republic; humility and other-worldliness only make the world a prey to the wicked. Machiavelli has to be seen as ‘a republican for hard times’, for whom this approach is the only way to sustain political and personal freedom alike.⁶ His idea of freedom allows for the pursuit of a variety of personal goals, and is not determined by a fixed account of human nature.⁷ For citizens do not

subordinate themselves to an entity over and above them; they come to see their deepest interests as those of citizens, bound by a deep commitment to a particular place and people, and the political way of life that they share. This is only possible where they are relatively equal. Finally, while Machiavelli thinks of the republic as a small city-state, he thinks it possible, or even necessary, for it to expand, and does not define citizenship in exclusively racial or cultural terms.

The issue whether a republic can be successfully established in the larger territorial states with which we are familiar was tackled by James Harrington, who brought republican ideas further into the modern world. He wrote his *Oceana* in the 1650s, the period of the English commonwealth (then the standard translation of *res publica*, conveying well the centrality of the common good) after the execution of Charles I. He challenges arguments that government of any kind erodes freedom equally, and that we must recognise a single central sovereign if we want peace. He insists that the citizens of a republic are freer than subjects of a sovereign, because they are not vulnerable to the arbitrary will of a ruler. In a republic all are subject to law; citizens are not subject to arbitrary decrees, and may have a say in making the law. He characterises a republic, memorably, as ‘the empire of laws and not of men.’⁸ Self-government rests on the rule of law and balanced institutions, including a considerable level of popular participation. Mixed government means the balance between two assemblies—a senate (to deliberate) and a popular assembly (to decide). However, because the citizens of a large state are ‘too unwieldy a body to be assembled’, Harrington introduces complex procedures of representation, through a combination of election and lottery among citizens mustered in the militia. Harrington relies more on these institutional procedures and sees less of a contrast between Christian and civic virtue than Machiavelli. So he is more optimistic about the possibilities of sustaining a well-designed republic. A crucial part of his scheme depends, however, on guaranteeing the political equality of citizens by limiting economic inequality. Only those who can be independent of the will of others are capable of citizenship. This has two implications: firstly, those whom Harrington and his contemporaries were unable to think of as independent—for example, women and servants—are excluded from citizenship. Secondly, those who *are* citizens must be protected from the effects of economic inequality by an agrarian law limiting the accumulation of property through inheritance.

Classical republicanism establishes political freedom as the primary value in republican thought, supported by a specifically *civic* virtue. It presents an ideal of active citizenship, which, in beleaguered circumstances, meant military service at least as much as political participation.

But it allows for some degree of diversity, and stresses the collective capacity of civically virtuous citizens to avoid arbitrary rule, to be self-governing, and shape their own destiny.

We gain an idea of just how distinctive this theory was by comparing it with another theory being developed at roughly the same time. This is the theory of natural rights and contract, expressed with different emphases by, for example, Hobbes and Locke. In this perspective, freedom is defined as a natural property of individuals, and the purpose of government is to protect individual rights and interests rather than to promote the common good. To protect the more basic rights of life, liberty and property, people should be prepared to give up their right to self-government. In this view, freedom does not require self-rule in the sense of a say in the laws to which people are subject, so much as limits on the power of government.

A kaleidoscope of new republican views emerged to grapple with the application of republican ideas to large commercial societies. Some questioned the value of civic virtue, pointing out that commerce flourished in markets where individuals pursued their own interests, rather than the common good. Others tried to combine individual rights and limited government with the republican themes of civic duty or virtue, and participation in self-government.

Expanding the republic: Rousseau and Madison

Two particularly important reformulations of republican thought emerged in the eighteenth century: Rousseau rearticulated an ideal of a small republic of free, virtuous, self-governing citizens, from a modern concern for individual freedom. Madison, on the other hand, reworked republican ideas extensively to fit them to the large commercial republic actually under construction in the United States.

As author of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau may initially appear to be a theorist of natural rights, but he subjects the theory to a far-reaching critique. Natural freedom is only a potential which requires political realisation. Real freedom is 'living according to a law that one makes for oneself'. But individuals are profoundly interdependent on others for their capacities and their achievements. This has negative and positive dimensions. Corruption and inequality exactly parallel social progress, and are rooted essentially in *amour propre*, that is, vanity or psychological dependence on the opinion of others. This, not political authority, is also the fundamental threat to freedom. The question is whether there can be a political society that translates the potential for freedom in all individuals into a social system that does not oppress them: 'how to find a form of association which will defend the person and goods of each member with

the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with others, remains as free as before.⁹ Since humans must live in society, freedom needs to be politically realised as collective self-rule. Rousseau appropriates for the people the notion of sovereignty, previously claimed by monarchs. In the social contract the people are free insofar as they retain and exercise their right to self-rule. In this way citizens are wholly dependent on each other collectively, but not on particular persons. As citizens, then, they must consider the common good, or ‘will the general will’, when making political decisions. This does not amount to a populist or majoritarian dictatorship—majority votes which are just an aggregate of individual interests represent only ‘the will of all’, and are no better than any sectional interests, failing to express the general will directed to the common good.¹⁰ In addition, the people should not take decisions on particular cases, which should be delegated to administrators.

Like Aristotle and Harrington, Rousseau is keenly aware of the way in which political equality is undermined by economic inequality. While property is an expression of freedom, there must be constraints on its unlimited accumulation. ‘No citizen should be so rich as to buy another, and none so poor that he is constrained to sell himself.’¹¹ In addition to relative equality, Rousseau’s republic requires close bonds between the citizenry, generated in part by education and collective activities, which replace the military drill of classical republicanism. But while it was neither essentially totalitarian nor militaristic, Rousseau’s republicanism specifically excluded women from citizenship. What was corrupt for men—depending on the opinion of others—was virtuous for women, who should be dependent, staying at home to support and rear republican citizens. ‘What will people think? is the grave of a man’s virtue and the throne of a woman’s.’¹² For this he was taken to task by Mary Wollstonecraft, who outlined an account of republican virtue that would apply to men and women alike as equal citizens. Finally, Rousseau, himself, was torn between his idea of a republic in which citizens became wholly absorbed in collective life, and the ideal of individual self-reliance he portrayed in his *Emile*.

Although Rousseau failed to reach a consistent theoretical solution, he posed the central problem of combining individual freedom with social interdependence. He himself did not hold out much hope for the future of republics. With the possible exceptions of Corsica and his native Geneva, most states were too large, and their people too irrevocably corrupt. He was opposed to violence, but the contrast he drew between the possibility of human freedom and the actuality of domination and corruption fuelled the outrage of the French revolutionaries, who implemented a republic inspired by, but remote from, his ideal.

A quite contrasting approach was adopted by James Madison, writing during the debates on the ratification of the American constitution in the 1780s.¹³ For him, freedom is the security of individuals and their property from arbitrary interference, and is achieved through legal and constitutional measures rather than through the active participation of all the citizens. But he still thought of government as a process of collective self-determination, in which realising the common good of citizens requires civic virtue.¹⁴ He argued that freedom and civic spirit can coexist in a form of government that combines federalism, representation and separation of powers. In a large federal state, the particular interests, or factions, feared by previous republicans tend to cancel one another out. Unlike Rousseau, he did not address the issue of economic inequality as a political issue, although he was aware that it gives rise to factions. His radical departure from previous republicanism was in redefining a republic as a form of government based on *representation*, and in distinguishing it from democracy in which the people govern themselves. The danger of an ignorant or biased majority is reduced when the people are represented indirectly through a process which distils out the able and public spirited. This, at least as much as the problem of large numbers, is the reasoning behind Madison's elaborate systems of representation, including electoral colleges and other indirect election procedures (and excluding lottery). The problem of corruption is further contained through a reworked form of mixed government: the 'separation of powers' between federal and state governments, between congress, president and courts, and between Senate and House of Representatives. Thus Madison advanced a republican theory that, as well as encouraging public spirited citizens, relies heavily on institutional solutions.

In this expansive phase, then, at least two very different answers were offered to the problem of creating republics in large commercial states—one resting more on institutional machinery, and the other more on civic-spirited participation. Madison's theory dovetails with the liberal goal of limiting government power. The success of the American revolution and the excesses of the French revolution gave powerful support to the more liberal example. The issue seemed almost closed by Benjamin Constant's contrast between 'the liberty of the ancients' (participation in public power) and the 'liberty of the moderns' (private enjoyment of independence).¹⁵ Yet significant republican ideas were subsumed in different forms into liberal, socialist or nationalist thought. The republican insights of social interdependence and the political effects of economic inequality were taken up by socialists; the idea of balanced government and the rule of law by liberals; and the idea of collective self-government by nationalists. But, even as the right to vote was extended to

women and the working class, the idea of the value of active citizenship, in the forms both of political participation and civic virtue, was sidelined.¹⁶

Republican ideas today

Since the global realignment of the 1990s, republican ideas have been experiencing a revival. Although socialism appeared to have been routed by liberalism, a variety of voices have expressed concern that freedom is not realised simply by removing government controls, that some important issues are misrepresented as a battle of sectional interests, and that for many people citizenship lacks any real meaning.

Republicanism has appeared to have something to offer to these concerns. But there are certain difficulties with any simple revival of the tradition. While not the forerunner of totalitarianism it has sometimes been made out to be, we have seen that in some expressions it has been open to the charge that it is oppressive, exclusive, militaristic or masculinist. In addition, republican ideas were mainly developed in smaller, more homogeneous societies. It has to be shown that their contemporary expression is not just idealistic and nostalgic. With these difficulties in mind, republican ideas are being rearticulated today in each of the areas of *freedom*, *active citizenship* and the basis of political community in *interdependence*.

While this cluster of ideas forms the basis of a coherent theory, there are significant differences of interpretation and emphasis between interpreters. For some more ‘procedural republicans’, the focus is primarily on securing legal guarantees of freedom from domination, which they understand in a much broader sense than neo-liberals.¹⁷ More ‘communitarian republicans’ emphasise the public-spirited commitment of citizens to supporting the common goods of their political community.¹⁸ For others again, who may be termed ‘strong republicans’, political participation is intrinsically valuable as realising freedom.¹⁹

Freedom

‘Freedom’ is a widely, perhaps the most widely, endorsed value in contemporary societies. But superficial agreement masks deep divergences on how it should be interpreted and realised. Republican theory offers an alternative perspective on freedom to the neo-liberal view which became entrenched in the Thatcher and Reagan years, received a further boost with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, and is very widely expressed in debates, for example, on the organisation of new information technology and the internet. In the neo-liberal view freedom is something which individuals possess to the extent that they are not interfered with; and the principal threat to that freedom is government.

The problem with socialism was too much government control; freedom is maximised if government activity is reduced to the minimum. Freedom demands privatising and deregulating, paring down or contracting out public services, and, above all, cutting taxation and increasing individual disposable income.

But contemporary republicans have argued that the liberal concern for interference fails to take account of serious threats to freedom, which do not always come from the state.²⁰ We have seen that in the republican tradition freedom is contrasted to slavery or the domination of one person by another. Anyone subject to the arbitrary power of others is systematically unfree, even if in practice these others do not interfere because they are well-disposed or remiss. Such people are unfree even when not actually interfered with, whether they be slaves to a master, subjects to a monarch with arbitrary powers, wives to husbands, or asylum seekers to immigration officials. Freedom is limited if persistent fear of arbitrary interference forces people to adjust their actions to avert the threat of violence and ingratiate themselves with the powerful.

So realising freedom requires political intervention to limit domination. For civic republicans, the idea that freedom is maximised by limiting government and reducing taxation is far too simplistic. Republican freedom is consistent with being subject to fairly extensive systems of law and taxation if these give stronger guarantees against the arbitrary exercise of power by, for example, employers, officials, teachers or policemen. An effective system of law guarantees freedom. But the state also can be a source of domination, so guarantees against arbitrary interference (in the form of statutory procedures, systems of accountability and opportunities to contest government decisions and policies) are essential. If government must play a role in securing freedom, there must also be safeguards against its acting in an arbitrary manner.

Many thinkers in the republican tradition also emphasised the importance of the conditions necessary for freedom. In particular, they stressed that economic inequalities make some people disproportionately dependent on others. Whereas classical communism tended to focus on economic equality *per se*, and to see abolishing private property as the solution, republicans see a right to property of some kind as part of the conditions of political equality. But a concern for the political effects of economic inequality supports significant redistributive measures to provide for the development of citizen capacities. The right of private property has been politically constructed and sustained, and does not constitute an absolute right to unlimited accumulation. Likewise, the right of freedom of expression is based on the interest in political equality, which justifies, for example, limiting private campaign financing and the

extent of individual media holdings.

Citizens can be secure in their freedom only if they are part of a political system that limits personal domination. But laws alone cannot achieve this. This leads to the second point. Government and laws alone are ineffective without a political culture in which norms are, for the most part, observed in practice. Here, the unfashionable idea of civic virtue, or a standing commitment to the public good, comes into play. This kind of commitment can reasonably be expected only from those who can participate in determining how the common good is defined. These are the two dimensions of active citizenship.

Active citizenship

a) Civic virtue: ‘Is there no virtue among us? If there be not we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks, no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea.’²¹

The Irish economic success of recent years is sometimes contrasted with the string of political scandals which continue to shock and entertain. Ireland is not the only country in which standards in public life have become an issue. What started as an investigation of a few individuals has expanded into a network of tribunals where a range of public figures and public servants have been subject to investigation. It now appears that not only a few egregiously corrupt individuals, but pervasive attitudes and practices, undermined the public interest in, for example, good planning and equal subjection to the law on taxation. Corruption has always been a central concern of republican thought. However, legislation alone will not prevent corruption. While procedures for greater accountability are essential, volumes of ethics legislation and strings of inquiries will not safeguard the common good if there is no sense of common concerns and politics is understood as a market place for pursuing individual interests.

Republican citizens are expected to take account of the *common good*, not just their own individual interests. Is this necessarily oppressive? This depends on how we understand the notion of the common good. There is the traditional, rather authoritarian sense of the common good, with Aristotelian and religious roots, which is embodied in the Irish constitution and assumes a naturally determined goal or purpose of human life. In the modern world we cannot assume agreement on a single hierarchy with authority to specify the common good. But there is another sense, of *shared* goods, which citizens enjoy only as citizens, through the social practices in which they participate. These common goods are not fixed and predeterminate. In fact, they may be better characterised as common

concerns, about, say, the environment, culture or heritage, on which people will, necessarily, have different opinions. Thus contemporary republican proposals to reinstate concern for the common good in politics include an emphasis on broadening participation in deliberation on how these goods should be interpreted and realised. While classical republicanism and its Jacobin followers were less sensitive to the potential dangers of oppression and exclusion in a political community, in contemporary civic republicanism there is a strong emphasis both on personal freedom and on active deliberation on what is in the common good in any instance.²² Moreover, republicans do not assume that all political action to realise the common good is to be taken by the state, nor that common interests override all individual interests.

The requirements of civic virtue may often be less heroic than was envisaged by Machiavelli, but no less important. Republican citizens may not be asked to die for their country any more often than liberal citizens. But they are expected to be informed about it, to take account of common concerns, to recognise some limits to the pursuit of individual interest, and, when engaging in political affairs, to be open to exchange with other opinions. These are the preconditions of freedom. Republicans do not substitute duties for rights, but see them as correlated. As one contemporary theorist puts it, ‘unless we place our duties before our rights, we must expect to find our rights themselves undermined’.²³

b) Participation: It is not then inherently oppressive to see politics as concerned with the common good and civic virtue. But calls to virtue and criticisms of citizen apathy are not well grounded unless ordinary citizens are given a larger voice in decision making. So, contemporary republicans will be suspicious of those communitarians who recommend citizens to take up responsibilities without emphasising too the conditions of non-domination and political equality, and the need for spaces in which citizens can contribute to determining how common goods are realised in politics.²⁴ Citizen commitment is reinforced by the sense of efficacy achieved in political participation. This means that as well as strong procedures for making officials accountable and policies contestable, republican politics also needs a participatory and deliberative form of democracy. Though often advocated separately, the two dimensions of active citizenship—civic virtue and participation—are mutually implied.

The sort of participation which advocates of deliberative republicanism propose is not more-intensive opinion polling or aggregating individual preferences on a wider range of issues. The logic of politics is different from that of the market, where the interaction of immediate individual preferences determines outcomes. There are areas of life which we need

to organise differently. Individually rational market choices (like the record car purchases of 2000) can lead to outcomes—in traffic and pollution—that are optimal for no one. As Pitkin puts it, ‘What distinguishes public life is the potential for decisions to be made not merely in the name of the whole community, but actually by the community collectively, through participatory public action and in the common interest. What distinguishes politics is action—the possibility of a shared, collective, deliberate, active intervention in our fate, in what otherwise would be the by-product of private decisions. Only in public life can we jointly, as a community, take charge of the history in which we are all constantly engaged by drift and inadvertence.’²⁵ Deliberative politics requires people, when they are considering political issues, to take a broader and more reflective view. It requires of participants that they are prepared to enter into discussion with others, to explain their position and to be open in principle to modify it. But as feminists and multiculturalists have emphasised, in order to respect political equality, deliberative politics needs to expand the kinds of institution and of discourse beyond the legal and parliamentary forms which have prevailed up to now.

Yet deliberative republicanism does not imply that continuous direct participation should replace all forms of representation. Participation may be intrinsically valuable, but it will not be the most important aspect of most people’s lives. It does suggest that public spaces of deliberation, formal and informal, need expansion and support so that government policies may be developed not just out of a bargaining process between individual or sectional interests, but through a process of deliberation on what is in the best interests of all. We need more formal public spaces in which citizens have a real voice in decisions that affect them. In Ireland this would mean, for example, the creation of a genuine regional system, a fundamental reconstruction of the local government system to devolve more local power down to local levels and provide for more participation in workplaces, schools, hospitals and so on. Some more-informal spaces exist to some degree already—and in Ireland parts of the media have played a remarkable role in sustaining these. But such spaces are threatened by commercial pressures, and some voices can make themselves heard better than others.

If politics is about addressing common concerns, the question ‘common to *whom?*’ becomes crucial. What are the grounds for defining the political community? This is the final aspect of republican thought to which I now turn.

Interdependence as the grounds of political community

Republican thought has a distinctive position on the basis and limits of

political community. While liberals see this as grounded in consent and loyalty to the political institutions of a society, nationalists see it as grounded in a common identity. Both of these views are problematic. It is hard to see institutions alone as a reliable focus of loyalty. On the other hand, to say that a political community needs to rest on a pre-political cultural or ethnic community is also problematic, since states rarely coincide with nations and, however borders may be redrawn, cultural minorities will almost certainly remain.

Republican citizenship is distinct from liberal and national citizenship. A republic is a political community of those who have not necessarily chosen one another, but have grown together historically, who share a wide range of reiterated interdependencies and the possibility of collectively shaping their future. This kind of interdependence often results from subjection to a common authority: the republican hope is that the people can assume such authority themselves.

The republican tradition, then, grounds membership in the interdependence and mutual vulnerability of people who share a common fate and common concerns. The republic envisaged by Machiavelli, Madison or the eighteenth-century revolutionaries was understood in terms of those who shared a common political life, rather than in terms of cultural homogeneity. The 'patriotism' which these thinkers endorsed originally meant a commitment to the common good of the community in contrast to the self-interest of individuals or groups, not to the citizens of other states. While republicanism and nationalism are often closely associated, they have conceptually distinct bases. Republicanism is based on interdependence rather than commonality. By contrast, the key feature of nationality is a sense of a common identity; whether based on ethnic, cultural or linguistic grounds, this is often rooted in an 'imagined community', and does not intrinsically require interdependence in practices between co-nationals. Where nationality is the basis of citizenship, commonality rather than interdependence is what counts; thus, for example, ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union were granted citizenship on moving to Germany, which Turks living in Germany for many years were not eligible to claim.

It is true that nationality has come to be one of the strongest sources of identity for people, and that states of all kinds have tended to rely on these pre-political allegiances to generate commitment. But it cannot be the primary ground of political community.²⁶ The right of collective self-determination presupposes that the unit to be self-determining is clearly identifiable. There is, however, no clear formula for determining the relevant constituency of concern to determine the boundary of a political community. For republicans this is a practical matter which should depend

on levels of interdependence; structures for non-domination and collective deliberation are important for those who have to live together, even if they differ in fundamental cultural beliefs and practices. A sense of ‘identity’ is not enough in itself to justify limited commitments. As Vaclav Havel put it in an address to the Czech people, ‘identity is above all an accomplishment, a particular work, a particular act. Identity is not something separate from responsibility, but on the contrary is its very expression.’²⁷ Identities are not set in stone; to claim a certain identity does not alter the fact that those who are different but interdependent can either build, or fail to build, on their historical situation and to realise better possibilities for the future.

All political units are bounded, in the sense that those who are members are distinct from those who are not. But republican citizenship is less exclusive than nationality. Based on interdependence in practices rather than pre-political identity, it can encompass more diversity of ethnicity and culture than a nationally based state. While nationalists offer a separatist solution to diversity, liberals (and French republicans) offer a neutralist one. This aims to create a public realm that is ostensibly neutral and distinct from any of the particular cultures contained within the state, and to confine difference to the private realm. But recent debates on the inclusion of women and minorities have shown that in practice ‘neutral’ public realms privilege the majority culture. In republican politics, by contrast, the substance of political life is determined in deliberation, not on grounds of an assumed neutrality or predetermined common interest. By rooting politics in interdependence rather than commonality, it offers a better way of dealing with the cultural and moral differences that are pervasive in modern society.

It may be argued that the republic, a political community united around deliberatively determined common goods, is necessarily an exclusive unit; citizens have rights and obligations that non-citizens do not share. The republic is a particular and bounded community, but it is in principle less sharply bounded and more extensible than nationality, since interdependence is a matter of degree and can be constituted by multiple and overlapping relationships. This suggests, for example, that a republican polity may adopt policies towards immigrants different from a nationalist polity. Rather than being radically exclusive, its relatively substantial ties between citizens are compatible with recognising obligations to non-citizens with whom they may be interdependent in other ways.

Just as interdependent individuals can never be wholly self-sufficient, so modern states cannot be wholly sovereign in a world of economic and cultural globalisation, where there are many interdependencies that transcend state boundaries. The idea of a republic outlined here is

compatible with constructing different levels or frames of politics, conceived as forums in which those who face common concerns may have some say in the forces which shape their common future—whether it be local or regional, for example, at the level of Scotland or Corsica, or transnational, like the European Union or the Council of the Isles.

Conclusion

This whirlwind tour of republican theory presents one interpretation of its common themes and internal tensions. It may not offer a panacea for our political ills. Some republican critics of society, from Rousseau to Sandel, have not themselves been optimistic about restoring a political community based on civic virtue. Yet, even if the ideal cannot fully be realised, the ideas provide an important corrective to the widespread but practically problematic assumptions that freedom is a matter of non-interference, politics is the institutionalised conflict of interests, and political community must be rooted in nationality. Republican ideas have a keen edge which we can apply to current debates: conceptions of freedom and citizenship richer than that of mainstream liberalism, but less homogenising than nationalism and other forms of communitarianism.

Notes

¹ If democracy is understood in general terms as government by the people, republicanism means more specifically government in the interests of the people, or in accordance with the common goods they share as members of a political community. Thus they are distinct but tangentially related ideas. To the extent that modern accounts of republicanism take the people to be the best judges of what is the public interest, they have radically democratic implications.

² Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1964).

³ Aristotle, *Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1981).

⁴ Cicero, *On Duties*, p. 33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991).

⁵ N. Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, I. 58 (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

⁶ H. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press 1984).

⁷ I. Berlin, 'The Originality of Machiavelli' in *Against the Current* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1979). Q. Skinner, 'The Republican idea of liberty' in G. Bock, Q. Skinner and M. Viroli (eds.), *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

⁸ J. Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992).

⁹ J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1968), p. 60.

¹⁰ Rousseau's suggestion that those who disobey the laws can be 'forced to be free' is unfortunate, even if he means by this that they follow their own real interests as citizens. Even if civic virtue and freedom converge, virtue cannot be imposed. The phrase has exposed republicans to accusations of doublethink.

¹¹ Rousseau, *Social Contract*, p. 96.

¹² Rousseau, *Emile* (London: Everyman), p. 328.

¹³ A. Hamilton, J. Jay and J. Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor 1999).

¹⁴ Thus one important dimension of the current republican revival takes the form of arguments by U.S. constitutional lawyers, showing that the interpretation of the U.S. constitution primarily in terms of reconciling conflicting interests and protecting individual rights—and not as collective self-determination and supporting common goods—is a twentieth-century phenomenon. C. Sunstein, ‘Beyond the republican revival’, *Yale Law Journal* 97, 1988, pp. 1539-1590. See also Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent* (below).

¹⁵ Benjamin Constant, *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988).

¹⁶ An important exception was Tocqueville, who, while essentially a liberal, emphasised the contribution of widespread civic activity in his *Democracy in America*.

¹⁷ P. Pettit, *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997).

¹⁸ M. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1996).

¹⁹ H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1958); *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin 1978). B. Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press 1984). H. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press 1984). C. Taylor, ‘Liberal politics: the public sphere’ in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

²⁰ Pettit, *Republicanism*.

²¹ Madison, quoted in Sandel, p. 132.

²² See also I. Honohan, ‘The common good and the politics of community’ in J. Dunne, A. Ingram and F. Litton (eds.) *Questioning Ireland* (Dublin: IPA 2000).

²³ Q. Skinner, ‘The Republican idea of liberty’ (op. cit.), p. 309. On one view, republicanism may be more compatible with a form of liberalism other than the neo-liberal and neutralist positions I have criticised here. It did not emerge as an anti-, but a pre-liberal theory, articulated before the sovereign state became the focus of politics. It does not dismiss personal freedom and rights, but grounds these less naturalistically.

²⁴ For an example of a call to civic responsibility, see President George W. Bush’s inauguration speech of January 2001, which indeed follows a pattern set by John F. Kennedy: ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.’

²⁵ H. Pitkin, ‘Justice: between public and private’, *Political Theory* 9, 3: 1981, p. 344.

²⁶ But see C. Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press 1993), for an argument that in the modern world the nation is the political community in which a republic can exist.

²⁷ V. Havel, *New York Review of Books*, March 5, 1998, p. 46.

Republicanism and Separatism in the Seventeenth Century

TOMÁS Ó FIAICH

This article first appeared in 'Léachtaí Cholm Cille' II Stair, 1971. It is reproduced with the permission of An Sagart, Má Nuad and Pádraig Ó Fiannachta.

Consequently it has been thought that all this would be settled by having the enterprise carried out in the name of the liberty of the fatherland and of oppressed religion and by establishing as the government a Republic, which should be so called on its flags and in its commissions ... For Ireland to take the name and title of Republic appears to be the best way to carry out this diversion with all possible success and safety ... It is simply noted that this insurrection which the natives of that country wish to carry out, should be proclaimed as being for the purpose of establishing the country as a free Republic and in order to make the Catholic religion there free, absolutely ... let him (i.e. the pope) send special delegates to all the Catholic kings and princes of Europe, earnestly urging them to help the said Republic of Ireland.

These phrases are culled not from the autobiography of Wolfe Tone, the father of Irish republicanism, nor even from a document belonging to the end of the eighteenth century, when republicanism was in the ascendant in the United States of America and in France. They were written as long ago as 1627, when only two republics of note existed in Europe and it was proposed that Ireland should become the third. The long document which has been quoted seems to have been the first in our history to put forward a republican form of government as the objective of an Ireland fighting for her freedom—the first document, in fact, which uses the then unfamiliar and unhallowed title of 'Irish Republic'.

In setting out to investigate the background to this first proposal for the setting up of an Irish republic and in sifting whatever evidence may exist to suggest support for this republican objective among some Irishmen of that era, it is necessary first of all to establish the criteria whereby seventeenth-century republicanism can be tested. Some of the more prominent characteristics of nineteenth-century Irish republicanism are simply not applicable two hundred years earlier.

The seventeenth century was still an era of religious wars throughout Europe, as much in Ireland as elsewhere; it is therefore too much to expect to find an Irish leader of that era proclaiming that he aims to unite protestant, catholic, and dissenter under the common name of Irishman. The seventeenth century was the era *par excellence* of plantations in Ireland; it would be somewhat premature therefore to expect those who were expelled from their lands to say to the new settlers: ‘Welcome to Ireland; you are now just as Irish as we are’. The seventeenth century still held on to the age-old distinction between the ruling classes and the working masses; democratic ideas were no more likely to turn up in Ireland therefore than in contemporary France or Spain. Such significant features of the nineteenth-century republican tradition as its undenominationalism, its supraracialism or its egalitarianism obviously cannot serve as a yardstick.

What then would make a man an Irish republican in, say, the year 1650? I suggest that he might have some claim to the title if he were a separatist, seeking to break completely the connection between Ireland and England; the credentials of such a one should therefore be examined further. He could also have some claim to the title if he were anti-monarchist, even if he did not advocate separation from England, provided the government of England were itself republican. He would have a full claim to the title only if he were both of these, i.e. if he wanted Ireland separated from England and placed under a republican government of its own. The present essay will therefore examine in detail the background to the 1627 proposals, which were explicitly republican in the sense of being both separatist and anti-monarchical; it will then take some account of later viewpoints which were either separatist without being anti-monarchical, or anti-monarchical without being separatist.

The 1627 proposals arose out of a plan to bring the Irish regiment in the Spanish Netherlands to Ireland to overthrow English rule there. During the reign of James I, the deep enmity between England and Spain, which had filled a large part of Elizabeth’s reign, had given way to a new friendship which, it was hoped, would be sealed by the marriage of the king’s son—the future Charles I—to the daughter of King Philip III. But in 1623–4, shortly before King James’s death, the marriage negotiations broke down, and a renewal of the war between England and Spain seemed imminent. For Irishmen in the Spanish service the possibility of a renewal of hostilities seemed like a heaven-sent opportunity to regain what had been lost at Kinsale only two decades before.

During the years of peace between England and Spain, the Dublin administration had sometimes encouraged the activities of Spanish recruiting agents in Ireland, as young men of military prowess seemed less

dangerous on the continent than at home. Out of such men had been formed, in 1605, the Irish regiment commanded in turn by two sons of Hugh O'Neill, Henry and John. As a boy of eight, John had been brought by his father to the Spanish Netherlands at the flight of the earls, and left in Louvain for his upbringing and education. After his father's death in Rome in 1616, he assumed the title earl of Tyrone, which was recognised by the Spanish crown. At the Flight too, the infant son of Rory O'Donnell had been brought to Louvain, and Spain acknowledged his right to be called earl of Tyrconnell after his father's death. He was seven years junior to young O'Neill, but as he grew to manhood he was not slow to claim that he was as much entitled to command an Irish regiment as the earl of Tyrone.

The regiment formed part of the Spanish garrison in the modern Belgium; as such, it took part in the final stages of the war against the Dutch up to the truce of 1609, and in the early stages of the Thirty Years War from 1618 on. By the 1620s, therefore, there was available to Ireland something which she had never previously possessed in her history—a body of a few thousand professional soldiers, trained in the best European army of the day, tested in numerous engagements and still linked by close ties to the homeland. It was inevitable that the suggestion would be made that Spain could most effectively attack England by invading Ireland, and that she now had a body of troops available, unlike the survivors of the Armada or Don Juan del Aguila's reluctant army, who would know the country, its language and people and were eager to be given the task of invasion.

It is difficult to say who was the first to come up with the suggestion of an invasion of Ireland by the Spanish-Irish regiment. There are some hints that it was made by an Irish Cistercian, Fr. Paul Ragget, a few years previously, but as Spain and England then seemed far from war, it got little hearing. From 1625 on, however, the idea was pressed unceasingly on the Spanish authorities by two groups of Irishmen in the Low Countries, a group of ecclesiastics of whom the most notable was Archbishop Florence Conry of Tuam, and a group of Irish officers in the Spanish forces of whom the best known was Major Eugenio O'Neill—Owen Roe.

When the plan was first brought to the notice of the Infanta Isabella, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, by King Philip IV in September 1625, she showed no enthusiasm for it and pleaded a lack of shipping as the main reason why it could not be embarked upon that year. Undaunted, however, by this initial reaction, the plan's sponsors decided to appeal to the king of Spain in person. It is not surprising therefore that the Brussels archives record in 1626 that Archbishop Conry is going to Spain 'on business'. A month later Owen Roe O'Neill applies to the Infanta for

leave of absence from his regiment, as he, too, has to go to Spain 'on business'. Owen Roe reached Madrid before the end of 1626 and Conry perhaps at the same time, or at latest in early January 1627. It was Conry's final departure from the college he had founded for the Irish Franciscans in Louvain. He was already a man in his late sixties, and he remained in Madrid to press the invasion at court. He died in Madrid in 1629 and it was only in 1654 that his remains were removed for reburial in St. Anthony's, Louvain.

The plans presented by Conry and Owen Roe in Madrid have not yet turned up in the Simancas Archives, but they are known to us through the summaries of them which were forwarded to Brussels and are now preserved in the *Archives Generales du Royaume* there. They were calendared by the late Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., in his fascinating book on one group of Irish exiles who never forgot their motherland, *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders*. Conry proposed that the landing should take place at Killybegs, but, to that end, Teelin Bay should also be captured and fortified. In addition, it would be advantageous to occupy the port of Derry 'which has good walls and only one piece of artillery for its defence'. The earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell should be in command of the expedition, but, to prevent jealousy between them, they should be promoted to be generals on an equal footing, 'as one will never serve under the other'. Neither of them should be declared General of Ulster, where the possessions of both lie. The Irish regiment in Flanders should be divided into two regiments, with the earl of Tyrconnell in command of the new one and Walloon soldiers should be drafted in to bring both regiments to full strength. No Englishman or Scotsman should be allowed to go on the expedition, nor any of the anglicised Irish in Flanders. When the earls reach Ireland, they should write to the principal gentlemen of the other provinces calling on them to unite and free themselves from the heretical and tyrannical yoke. The letter should emphasise what can be done by unity, as is seen in the case of the Dutch, who have been able to hold out against Spain in a country less than a quarter the size of Ireland.

Much of 1627 was taken up in negotiations between Madrid and Brussels about the expedition. Eleven ships were prepared for it at Dunkirk, and September was fixed as the date of its departure. But there were still grave problems to be overcome as to the extent to which Spain was prepared publicly to be identified with it, and in respect of the double leadership which had been proposed for it.

Regarding the first, the Infanta suggested that the Irishmen should not bring their banners with them, but should sail as if they were a disbanded regiment returning home. In case of failure, the expedition would not then redound to the discredit of Spain. This would mean, of course, abandoning

the proposal to bring 2,000 Walloon soldiers along, and the Irish were reluctant to accept this reduction in their numbers.

The problem of the double leadership was even more insoluble. It was pointed out in Brussels that to send the two young earls on the same expedition as leaders would be to court disaster, as they could not abide each other. Brussels therefore opted for O'Neill alone. Madrid, on the other hand, probably because Conry had remained there as adviser, was led to believe that O'Donnell was the better man and should be placed in supreme command—O'Neill could follow later with the reinforcements. But there was a third possibility which might still allow the two of them to be sent together—provided they were first linked in a bond of lasting friendship and indissoluble union.

Cherchez la femme, the exercise might have been called, if it had been embarked on in France rather than in Spain. The lady in the case, however, was no exotic *femme fatale* from the continent, but a girl in her late teens whose antecedents bring us back home to the very gate of Maynooth College. At the flight of the earls in 1607, Rory O'Donnell, earl of Tyrconnell, had gone off in such a hurry that he had no time to send a message to his wife, Brigid Fitzgerald, who was on a visit to her family at Maynooth. She was the daughter of Henry, the 12th earl of Kildare, who had actually received his death-wound fighting against Hugh O'Neill in 1597; her mother was an English woman, Lady Francis Howard, a close friend of Queen Elizabeth and a member of the state church. Viceroy Chichester immediately wrote to her and demanded that she reveal all she knew of her husband's departure, but she claimed that he was already gone when she received a message from him, brought by an Irish-speaking friar, which was interpreted for her by another priest in broken English as they walked together into Moyglare garden. Perhaps Brigid Fitzgerald herself was not as ignorant of things Irish as she would have wished the Viceroy to believe. O'Curry MS. 59, in Maynooth College Library, contains an exchange of poems in Irish between herself and Cúchonnacht Maguire, the Fermanagh chieftain who had got the earls safely out of Ireland. The poem put into the mouth of Cúchonnacht was edited by T.F. O'Rahilly in *Dánta Grádha*, and was probably composed by the family poet Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa; Brigid's reply was published by An tAth. Donnchadh Ó Floinn in *Irisleabhar Muighe Nuadhat*, 1953, and contains a reference to the lady's name in the final quatrain:

Mo shloinneadh ní chluinfe cách
 uaimse go dtí an lá iné;
 atá mh' ainm, gidh bé lér b'áil'
 ar mhnaoi do mhnáibh fhlaithis Dé.

While it is unlikely that the poem was composed by Brigid Fitzgerald—even the scribe shows his disbelief by the heading, ‘*Brighid inghean Iarla Chille Dara cct más fíor*’—she was certainly not as isolated from the Gaelic world of the Ulster chieftains as her ignorance of her husband’s departure tended to convey.

After the flight, Chichester sent her to London where she bore her absent husband a young daughter, who became known as Mary Stuart O’Donnell. The little girl was brought up by her grandmother in England until, in her teens, she was being pressed to join the state church and marry an English nobleman. She decided to fly to her brother the young earl of Tyrconnell in Brussels. Disguising herself as a young man and taking the name Rudolf Huntly, she rode on horseback with two other girls from London to Bristol, got safely across to Ireland, and sailed for the continent. Her ship was driven as far as Cadiz, from which she sailed once more for the Netherlands, only to be forced by a storm into La Rochelle. Proceeding across France, she arrived safely in Brussels where she met her brother for the first time. The Abbé Mageoghegan, in his *Histoire d’ Irlande*, written in France in the eighteenth century, may have been guilty of some exaggeration when he described how her fame went all over Europe and she was compared with Eufrosina of Alexandria, Aldegonde and other christian virgins of antiquity. But her adventures made a fine story, and almost overnight she became a heroine of catholic Europe. Her life story, written in Spanish by Albert Henriquez, was published in Brussels in 1627, and in the following year a French translation by Pierre de Cadenet was published in Paris. The papal nuncio in Brussels soon brought her arrival there to the notice of Rome:

A sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, a young girl of seventeen, of pleasing appearance, has come to Brussels.

Perhaps the nuncio was not the best judge of a lady’s age, but since her father had left Ireland in September 1607 and the nuncio wrote in January 1627, he must have underestimated it by a couple of years. Next month, Pope Urban VIII wrote her a long letter of praise and consolation. From our point of view, the important thing is that she arrived in Brussels in the middle of the negotiations about the proposed invasion of Ireland.

As soon as Archbishop Conry heard about her arrival, he was quick enough to perceive that here was the *ancilla ex machina* who might provide the required bridge between O’Neill and O’Donnell. ‘Let the king of Spain’, he wrote in March 1627, ‘get the Infanta to treat of bringing about a marriage between the sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, who has lately fled from England and the earl of Tyrone, and let his Majesty give her a dowry, since her brother cannot do so’. Tyrone was then twenty-eight

years old, about nine years senior to the girl who, it was hoped, would become his bride. But Mary Stuart O'Donnell had no ambition to play the role of a Countess Markievicz in the first Irish republic, and she was not going to be swept off her feet by an O'Neill, any more than by an English noble man. Hence, the Infanta replied to Madrid in the following month (April 1627):

It was proposed that I should bring about a marriage between the earl of Tyrone and the sister of the earl of Tyrconnell, so as to join them in closer friendship ... this marriage has been treated of, but the sister of Tyrconnell has declared that she has no wish whatever to marry Tyrone.

So the earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell had to be joined together as military leaders rather than as brothers-in-law. It was to get out of the quandary about the two leaders—and, in the event of success, the two potential candidates for the throne of Ireland—that an Irish republic was proposed: 'The earls should be called Captains General of the said republic and ... one could exercise his office on land and the other at sea'.

The republican proposals are contained in a long document drawn up by the king's ministers in Madrid, and forwarded to Brussels with the approval of Philip IV. The document is dated 27 December 1627 in Fr. Jennings's summary of it, though, on internal evidence, the date 21 December 1626 would have suited it better. As Owen Roe O'Neill was certainly in Madrid in that month and made a good impression there, it is not unlikely that the main proposals contained in the document were discussed with him and, indeed, some of them may have originated with him. They included the following points:

- 1) An Irish parliament should be set up after the insurrection in the country: 'Each one of the nobles, provinces or principal cities, which shall have taken part in the insurrection, shall name deputies who will attend the headquarters of the army or court to vote the measures and assessments which shall have been decided upon'.
- 2) After the landing, it should be made clear that the expedition has come not to conquer the country for any other prince or for the earls themselves, but for the Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. (The terms kingdom and republic are three times combined in the document; on all other occasions the term used is republic alone).
- 3) All catholics should be excommunicated who will aid the king of England or his allies.
- 4) Agents should be sent to seek help from the pope, the emperor, the duke of Bavaria and the princes of the Catholic League in Germany, the duke

of Saxony, the king of Poland, the king of France; from Venice, Savoy, Florence and other parts of Italy; from Scotland (where a rebellion might be brought about), the Hanseatic cities, Holland (where the emphasis should be that the new republic is only doing what the Dutch had done) and the Palatinate; their principal ambassador should be sent to Spain. If the Irish have not suitable men for these tasks, they could be given the use of some Jesuits.

It was a boldly conceived scheme to make the Irish cause a great international issue and get the backing of all catholic Europe for it. But the plan never really got past the drafting stage, for, despite a British raid on the Spanish seaport of Cadiz in 1625, no full-scale war between Spain and Britain ensued. The king of Spain, never too optimistic about the plan's chances of success, was unwilling to make the Irish cause his own as long as Spain was officially at peace with Britain.

Hence, young O'Donnell, instead of sailing for Killybegs, remained on in the Low Countries, where he finally got his own regiment in 1632 and later married the daughter of the Count de Boussu. On a visit to the Madrid court, he was made a Knight of Alcántara. In a naval engagement against the French off Barcelona in the summer of 1642, he and thirty of his regiment were drowned. '*Do chualabhair féin dar ndóigh bás Iarla Tíre Conaill*', wrote Owen Roe's wife to a priest-friend in Ireland on 16 September of that year, and the letter is now in the Franciscan House of Studies, Killiney.

As for young O'Neill, his career, too, was cut short in somewhat similar fashion. He travelled to Madrid in 1630 with another detailed plan for the invasion of Ireland by his regiment, but the commissioners appointed to examine it thought the time was not ripe for its execution and suggested that he be given a rise in his pay. Having failed to secure the hand of Mary Stuart O'Donnell in Brussels, he became acquainted with her cousin, Isabel O'Donnell, in Madrid. Although he did not marry her, she bore him a young son who was christened Hugh Eugene O'Neill and legitimised by the king of Spain. Isabel later became a nun in the convent of *La Concepción Real de Calatrava*, but had to leave the convent because of ill-health. In Madrid, O'Neill was made a Knight of Calatrava, and became a member of the Spanish Supreme Council of War in 1640. Having had his final offer to bring his regiment to Ireland rejected in 1639, he was ordered to march instead against the Catalonian rebels, and, on a hill outside Barcelona, the last surviving son of Hugh O'Neill was killed in January 1641. Thus perished in the vicinity of Barcelona, at the very time when they were most needed in Ireland owing to the rising of 1641, the two men who were in the running for the post of taoiseach of the first Irish republic.

In several respects, the 1641 rising adhered closely to the proposals drawn up in 1627. It included an insurrection at home, the return of many officers and soldiers of the Irish regiments in the Spanish Netherlands, the setting up of a representative national assembly, the appointment of Irish agents to foreign courts, the emphasis on religious freedom for Catholics, the seeking of aid from the papacy, and the employment of spiritual sanctions against Catholics who would take the English side. Yet it departed from the earlier proposals in one important feature—there was no longer any mention of an Irish republic as the aim. Striving, as it did, to maintain unity between the Old Irish and the Anglo-Irish on the basis of their common Catholicism, the Confederation of Kilkenny stressed the things which united the two sides rather than what divided them. Any tendency on the part of some of the Old Irish to be less than enthusiastic in their loyalty to the Stuart throne was therefore submerged in the Confederation's motto, as inscribed on its seal: *Pro Deo, pro Rege et Patria, Hibernia unanimes*. Yet an occasional voice was still raised which questioned the *pro Rege* part of this motto.

The most forthright exposition of the separatist viewpoint in the 1640s came again from the Iberian peninsula. It was contained in the *Disputatio Apologetica*, written in Lisbon in 1645, by the Co. Cork Jesuit, Conor Mahony. Mahony was born in Muskerry, probably in 1594, and became a student of the Irish College in Seville about 1614. He was ordained priest in 1619, before he had completed his theological studies. The college had just been taken over by the Jesuits, and in the following year Mahony found himself in grave danger of expulsion. Yet he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Lisbon on St. Patrick's Day, 1621, and within two years was appointed Prefect of Studies in the Irish College of that city. A Master of Arts and of Theology, he had a distinguished teaching career in the Azores and in Portugal, before being appointed to pastoral work in Lisbon in 1641. By the time he came to write his *Disputatio Apologetica* therefore Mahony was a mature man of about fifty, with long experience of travel, study and teaching behind him.

His short tract of 130 printed pages consists of two parts, the *Disputatio* and the *Exhortatio*. In the former, Mahony outlines the four main grounds on which English kings claim to be kings of Ireland—conquest in a just war; the bull of Pope Adrian IV; acceptance by the clergy, nobles and people of Ireland; and prescription. He then proceeds to demolish each of these arguments in turn, leaning heavily for his historical knowledge on Peter Lombard's *Commentarius* and Philip O'Sullivan's *Compendium* (published in Lisbon in 1621), but quoting also from Bede, Giraldus Cambrensis, Camden and Stanihurst. In theological matters, he shows intimate acquaintance with Suarez, Bellarmine, Molina and all the big

names of the counter-reformation, and supplies exact references throughout his work. Like most Irish catholic writers of his period, he accepts the view that Henry VIII, in marrying Anne Boleyn, was marrying his own illegitimate daughter, a view found also in the *Aphorismical Discovery*, in John Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus*, and so vividly expressed in verse by the author of the *Síogaí Rómhánach*:

Ní airmhím Énrí an chéadfhear
Do lig go truailli uaidh a chéile
Ar Anna Builín a iníon chéanna.

Having answered to his own satisfaction the arguments of English apologists, Mahony then goes on to assert that even if the English kings had once been legitimate sovereigns of Ireland, the clergy, nobles and people of Ireland had the right to depose them as soon as they became heretics and tyrants. He adduces many examples of the deposition of sovereigns from the Old Testament, the history of Rome, the history of various European states, and even from earlier Irish history. In the church, generals and bishops can be deposed, and even the pope could be deposed for heresy. Just as the Catalonians rejected the rule of Philip IV in 1638 and the Portuguese proclaimed their independence of Spain in 1640 (and chose the duke of Braganza as their new native ruler), so also the Irish in 1641 and up to the time of writing, have resisted the injustices imposed upon them, and would be justified in shaking off completely the yoke of their heretic king.

The *Disputatio*, on its own, was a well-argued contribution to Irish political thought and reasonably restrained in its language. It was in the *Exhortatio* appended to it, however, that Mahony really let himself go. Having reminded his readers of how the Israelites had chosen a king and taken possession of the land of Palestine, and having recalled the sufferings of eight Irish archbishops and five bishops under heretical kings, he exhorted the Irish to imitate the Israelites and choose a native catholic king:

My fellow Irishmen, you have splendid leaders in war, well skilled in military science and very brave soldiers, who in numbers and courage are much superior to their enemies. Our Ireland, a most fruitful and fertile kingdom, abounds in food for times of war and peace. You have many fine cities e.g. Wexford, Waterford, Galway, Limerick. The whole kingdom is surrounded by the sea, so that the enemy can enter only by some harbours which can be properly defended. What therefore remains to be done? From the premises already stated, draw your own conclusions ... Get to work, my fellow Irishmen, and complete the work of your defence and of your liberty already begun, kill the heretics your enemies and drive from your midst those who support and aid them. You have already slain 150,000 of the enemy in the past four or five years from 1641 to 1645. It remains for you to kill the rest or expel them from Ireland.

Mahony's separatism is obvious in many passages of his work, but, more influenced as he was by what had happened in Portugal than by what had taken place earlier in Holland, he opted for a monarchical rather than a republican form of government for the new Ireland.

Mahony's inflammatory tract soon came to the notice of the English ambassador in Lisbon, Sir Henry Compton, who complained about it to the king of Portugal, and the latter issued two decrees in 1647 prohibiting its circulation in his kingdom. Copies of the book were circulating in the same year in Ireland, where the Ormonde faction claimed that it was being used by the Old Irish of Ulster in an effort to make Owen Roe king of Ireland. Although Mahony, himself, never revisited his homeland before his death in Lisbon in 1656, his book caused much controversy at home and was publicly burned on a number of occasions. A few copies survived the flames, however, and in a recent Hodges Figgis catalogue the price quoted for the only copy of the original edition on offer, in a contemporary vellum binding, is £105. A reprint appeared in Dublin in 1826, of which a copy may be seen in the rare book case of Maynooth College Library.

Owen Roe O'Neill would undoubtedly have repudiated Mahony's religious intolerance, yet, despite his acceptance of Charles I as king, there were times during the 1640s when he was not far removed from Mahony's separatist position. This was particularly the case after the Inchiquin peace of May 1648, which O'Neill refused to accept. Several proclamations issued against him by the new Kilkenny Assembly in the autumn of that year accuse him of seeking to separate Ireland from the English crown, the most explicit being one, dated 30 September, declaring him 'a Traitor and Rebell against our Sovereign Lord the King':

... the said Owen O'Neill in breach of the said trust, having proposed unto himself by force of the army under his command, to destroy the present and to introduce a new and tyrannicall government over the lives, estates and liberties of his Majesties faithful subjects, and to alienate them from the Crown of England ...

During 1648–9, Owen Roe was in constant negotiation with Cromwellian leaders such as Monk, Jones and Coote, from whom he occasionally received supplies of arms; through his envoy in London, the Abbot Crilly, he sought to make a permanent peace with the parliament and offered to join the parliamentary side on certain conditions, pointing out that he had experience of various forms of government on the continent; the Vicar General of his Ulster army, Edmund O'Reilly, later Archbishop of Armagh, was accused then and later of Cromwellian sympathies. When one places these episodes in O'Neill's career against the background of his earlier association with the republican proposals of 1627, the words which Seosamh Mac Grianna puts into his mouth in 1648

are, perhaps, not as incredible as they appear at first sight:

Tá an Chomhdháil marbh agus tá Éire scoite ó Shéarlas ... Rachaidh ceannphoirt na hÉireann in aghaidh Chromail agus is dóiche gur ar ár gcraobh féin a thitfeas a chloí. Beidh cruinniú na gCeann Feadhain ann nuair a bheas an cogadh thart agus as sin a thiocthas Poblacht na hÉireann.

I wonder if it was the Irish people's bitter memories of Cromwell and their first republican experience that prevented the few small seeds sown in the 1620s and 1640s from producing further shoots of separatism and republicanism for many generations to come. Be that as it may, the Old Irish soil in which they had been planted no longer took kindly to them after the restoration, and the Old Irish catholics were as staunch as the Anglo-Irish in their ill-fated devotion to the Stuarts. One would have imagined that when William and James were engaged in deadly combat, a new Conor Mahony would have arisen to say: '*Iustissimam habetis causam postulandi et accipiendi regem aliquem Catholicum, ex fratribus vestris Hibernis*'. But while the poets still sang of Ireland's sovereignty which had to be restored, they placed most of their hopes in the *Rí thar tuinn*, and no scholar or political leader arose to formulate in plain unpoetical language the type of self-government to which the Irish nation should aspire.

It only remains to suggest a few general conclusions which seem to flow from our consideration of the subject:

- 1) The few instances of 'republicanism' or 'separatism' which occur in seventeenth-century Irish history were not a native growth. The only Irishmen who toyed with such ideas at the time were those who had been abroad, and they took their inspiration from the countries with which they were familiar—the Brussels-Louvain circle from Holland; Mahony from Catalonia and especially from Portugal.
- 2) While separation from England was to a certain extent implied in every proposal for the invasion of Ireland by a continental power, the explicit republicanism of the 1627 document seems to be quite unique in that century. But it was put forward not on the basis of political theory, as a system preferable to monarchy, but as a practical solution to the difficulty of having two potential sovereigns available for the new Irish state.
- 3) Since the relationship between Irish separatists and the catholic church has not always been a happy one in more recent centuries, it is interesting to note that in the seventeenth-century manifestations of the separatist idea, priests played a significant part.
- 4) Despite a careful examination of seventeenth-century source-material

for the slightest trace of republican ideas—not, indeed, to dislodge Wolfe Tone from his position as ‘Father of Irish Republicanism’ but to provide it, perhaps, with some native grandparents as well—it must be confessed that, with his colleagues Napper Tandy and William Drennan, he remains at the head of the line.

Note

All the documentation in connection with the 1627 invasion is contained in B. Jennings (ed.), *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders 1582–1700*; see also B. Jennings, ‘The Career of Hugh, son of Rory O’Donnell’, in *Studies*, XXX, 1941; and Micheline Walsh, *The O’Neills in Spain* (O’Donnell Lecture – N.U.I.).

For fuller information on Mahony than is contained in T. L. Coonan, *The Irish Catholic Confederacy and the Puritan Revolution* and J. P. Conlon, *Bibliog. Soc. of Ireland*, VI., I am indebted to Fr. Francis Finnegan, S.J.

Theobald Wolfe Tone: An Eighteenth-Century Republican and Separatist

THOMAS BARTLETT

*This discussion of Tone's thought, unless otherwise stated, is drawn from my
'The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist'.*

Was Theobald Wolfe Tone the first Irish separatist and the father of Irish republicanism? At one time, Tone's claim to these designations appeared so strong that further inquiry appeared redundant. After all, his declaration that his life's object had been 'to subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils and to assert the independence of my country' spoke out so categorically as to preclude all further discussion. Similarly, in his speech at his court martial in November 1798, Tone had stated, 'From my earliest youth I have regarded the connexion between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation; and felt convinced that whilst it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy'. However, his assertion of a life-long commitment to separatism, and indeed to republicanism, has received short shrift from his biographers. The late Frank MacDermott's tart rebuttal of Tone's claim to being a life-long separatist—'the facts furnish all the comment that is necessary'—was later amplified by Tom Dunne, who cast Tone as an unanchored misfit, an 'outsider', who longed to find 'an acceptable career, a meaningful role, some fulfillment of the expectations natural to a member of the colonial élite', and who, through 'alienation and despair' became a separatist and a revolutionary.² Tone's most authoritative biographer, Marianne Elliott, too, claims that Tone's conversion to separatism was almost wholly a product of his American exile of 1795–6, and was thus, not only comparatively late in the day, but represented 'a case of necessity as much as choice' and was even 'an accident of character as much as of timing'. In addition, Tone's scattered references to the 'New Ireland' that would be brought about once French victory had

severed the link with England have suggested to some writers that he was prepared to envisage not so much an Ireland independent, separate and free, but rather a French military colony—a sort of ‘Hibernian republic’, a sister satellite to the other wholly-owned subsidiary republics of *La Grande Nation*—in which there would be laws restricting press freedom, and in which the existing social order (and distribution of property) would be safeguarded. ‘The very same laws which under the English constitution I regard as tyrannical and unjust’, Tone had noted complacently, ‘I would in a free republic preserve and even strengthen’.

As with Tone’s separatism, so too his republican credentials have been called into question. One writer has pointed to Tone’s enthusiasm for colonial enterprises in the South Seas, to his unabashed admiration for French aggression, to his loathing of the new American republic, and has even underlined his fondness and sympathy for both George III and Louis XVI; his conclusion was that such attributes hardly seem in keeping with the common perception of true republican principles. Another biographer has noted Tone’s lack of interest in Irish cultural matters—Irish music, history, language and literature left him cold; Tone’s patronising attitude towards catholics in general, but towards, especially, ‘Poor Pat’ (Tone’s term), the prisoner of war, easily enticed into French service for a bottle of wine and a tumble with a *fille de joie*.³ Tone, it has been remarked, may have turned his back on the ascendancy, but he certainly did not reject the outlook of easy cultural superiority that was inseparable from it.

Moreover, Tone’s biographers have been at pains to stress that his ideas (and he was not a systematic thinker) contained little that was new or even unconventional. His *Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791), for example, ‘said nothing new and owed much to ideas then in general circulation’, comments Professor Elliott; and there was little that was novel in those other notions linked to his name. The necessity for a strategic alliance with catholics in order to pursue parliamentary reform had been clear since the early 1780s; the desirability of a drastic reduction of English influence in Irish affairs had, likewise, been a common aspiration long before Tone came on the political scene; even Tone’s complaints about the poor figure Ireland cut in international affairs had been anticipated by Sir Laurence Parsons (an ascendancy politician but no revolutionary) and, indeed, by others. Instead, what has been stressed are the elements of adventurism, giddiness, militarism and even opportunism in Tone’s personality and career. All in all, Tone, we are told, was largely marginal to the 1790s: he was *not* the founder of the United Irishmen, *not* the architect of the United Irish-French alliance, *not* the sole United Irish representative in Paris, *not* a player in the 1798 rebellion. Nor, for that matter, was he marginal only to the 1790s, for it has been further argued

that for most of the nineteenth century Tone languished in comparative neglect until he was plucked from obscurity by Patrick Pearse in 1913 and declared to be ‘the greatest of Irish nationalists ... the greatest of Irishmen’. Such provocative claims invite a further reflection on Tone’s thought and achievements; on examination, we may find that his claim to novelty as well as consistency, in both the areas of republicanism and separatism, are rather stronger than his critics maintain.

At the outset, it is clear that Tone’s republicanism must be firmly located in the eighteenth century and judged by the criteria of his period, rather than by the standards of later generations. However, when we come to define what was meant by republicanism in the late eighteenth century, we find that there was little agreement even among ‘republicans’ on the central elements of their creed. Tom Paine, author of *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man*, and thus a player in both the American and French revolutions, noted that ‘it has always been the political craft of courtiers and court government to abuse something which they call republicanism: but what that republicanism was or is they never attempt to explain’. And yet, it could be claimed that republicans had only themselves to blame for these attacks, for they themselves were notoriously vague as to what they meant. No less a personage than John Adams, one of the ‘founding fathers’ of American republicanism, confessed in 1807 that he had ‘never understood’ what a republic was and ‘no other man ever did or ever will’. For example, it was notorious that republicans espoused contrary views as to whether a republican form of government was more suitable to a small country or to a large one; they disputed whether a republic would have a propensity for peace or for war (the Renaissance republican, Machiavelli, had appeared to endorse both propositions); contradictory viewpoints were also voiced on the question of whether a republic would foster commerce or seek to restrain economic growth; and there was little agreement on such weighty matters as equality and representation. Nor, indeed, was there a consensus on the question of whether a republic had to adopt a specific form of government. Provided the ‘common weal’ was pursued, and ‘commonwealth’ was for a long time the usual translation from the Latin *respublica*, there was much scope for discussion and dissension.

‘What the republicans take themselves to be describing’, notes the modern political theorist Quentin Skinner, ‘is any set of constitutional arrangements under which it might justifiably be claimed that the *res* (the government) genuinely reflects the will and promotes the good of the *publica* (the community as a whole). Whether a *res publica* has to take the form of a self-governing republic is not therefore an empty definitional question but rather a matter for earnest enquiry and debate.’ Viewed in this

light, it is clear that in the eighteenth century a republic was by no means incompatible with monarchy. Machiavelli, the republican and author of the *Discourses*, was also Machiavelli, the monarchist and author of *The Prince*; and the classic republican texts since then—those by the seventeenth-century theorists Smith, Harrington and Sydney—had been equally ambivalent on this question.

Republicanism since the sixteenth century, in the word of one commentator, was ‘more a language than a programme’, and the vocabulary had been one of protest, of resistance to tyrants, and of rooting out corruption and instilling (and installing) civic virtue. It was generally assumed that political virtue and civic virtue would be found most readily, though not exclusively, in a country whose citizens had the predominant part in the election or selection of their magistrate, prince or king; and for this reason, republicans everywhere sought to give a preponderant role to the people. Where the people had little or no say, either because of despotism or corruption, republicans were generally found to be seeking a return to some golden age or, more often, advocating parliamentary reform.

However, if there was little agreement among republicans on the precise form of republican government, there was universal recognition of the spirit which ought to infuse it. From Machiavelli to Paine, and including Milton, Harrington, Montesquieu and Gibbon, republican writers agreed that ‘public virtue is the only foundation of republics’ (John Adams). This moral dimension to republicanism came before everything else: with it, the common good was promoted and liberty protected; without it, chaos and corruption reigned. Republicanism therefore constituted a moral challenge to its adherents, placing a heavy burden on them to live up to its promise.

Where does Tone stand in this brief examination of eighteenth-century republicanism? Tone never claimed to be an ideologue: he wrote, ‘I confess I dislike abstract reasoning on practical subjects. I am buried in matter. When I feel a grievance pinch me sorely I look neither for the major nor minor of a proposition or syllogism, but merely for the proximate cause and the possibility of removing it’. He was far from being a systematic thinker: Hubert Butler, in his elegant essay on Tone, remarks that ‘what made Tone great was that he had no ideology’.⁴ That said, there are good grounds for arguing that Tone had been from an early date a thorough-going republican; at any rate, he was as much a republican as those whose credentials in that respect have never been questioned.

In the first instance, Tone’s language was unmistakably republican, filled with notions of resistance to tyrants and opposition to hereditary

aristocracies, and replete with aspirations to end corruption and promote virtue. In these respects, we can see Tone's indebtedness to that eighteenth-century commonwealthman or republican rhetoric associated with earlier republican theorists. There existed in Dublin a republican coterie in the mid-eighteenth century, which was vital in communicating commonwealthman ideas to a new generation. Tone's faith in parliamentary reform—'with a parliament thus reformed everything is easy; without it nothing can be done'—was wholly republican and recognisably within the republican tradition. His social conservatism was equally in keeping with republican thought as it had developed since the Renaissance; the references in his writings to the men of no property were few and far between (and were in any case ambiguous); and he grew indignant at the charge that the United Irishmen aimed at 'a distribution of property and an agrarian law'. Nor does Tone's preference for 'strong' government call into question his republicanism. His determination to allow 'just and reasonable liberty of the press', but to punish 'libels and calumnies' on the government, was unexceptional, for libel laws—and sumptuary laws and price controls—were part of the republican agenda at that date. Equally, Tone's admiration for the martial virtues, even to the extent of proposing a military colony in the South Seas, should best be seen, not as the negation of republicanism, but, rather, as evidence of 'a continuing mesmerisation with the military vigour of ancient Rome'.

So far as religion was concerned, Tone followed what could be called orthodox republican thought, though, in doing so, he parted company with Tom Paine who ridiculed religion. Tone was no friend to state-established religions, but he believed that religion had a role to play in the republic. He was, like many of the classical republican writers, very hostile to the institutional catholic church and to the papacy, and he saw republicanism with its emphasis on independence and virtue as the perfect antidote to clerical thraldom in Ireland and Europe. It may be suggested that he especially admired the French revolution for its attack on the catholic church, the catholic clergy, and ultimately on the pope himself. Even Tone's apparent sympathy for George III and Louis XVI ought to be seen as in keeping with republican ambivalence where monarchy was concerned, rather than as evidence of lukewarm commitment to republicanism itself. Tone's republicanism was certainly eclectic; but this was because republicanism was itself eclectic at that time. It is only when twentieth-century criteria of republicanism are applied to Tone that he is found wanting. Viewed amongst his contemporaries, Tone is seen for what he was—a recognisable eighteenth-century republican.

In a similar fashion, Tone's contribution to the modern separatist ideal—that Ireland could exist separate from Britain and independent of all other

countries—may have been underestimated. Certainly, separatism, in the sense of merely severing the links with Britain, had featured somewhere in Irish political discourse for several hundred years: but it had been very much a minority demand, typically voiced by religious exiles marooned on the continent. Much more common were the fervent declarations made by Irish ‘rebels’ of loyalty to the English crown and connection. In any case, rarely, if ever, until the late eighteenth century was it envisaged that Ireland could go it alone. Separation from England was commonly seen merely as a prelude to Ireland placing herself under the crown of Spain or France.

Admittedly, some English ministers were convinced that they could hear the authentic separatist note in the rhetoric of the Anglo-Irish opposition spokesmen of the early and mid-eighteenth century. The Anglo-Irish, noted one English politician, ‘were foolishly and seditiously ... everyday aiming at independency’. And Tone himself may have caught something of these fears when he wrote that his ‘great discovery’, that England was the bane of Ireland, could have been found in the works of Swift and Molyneux. But there was, of course, no hint of separatism in the writings of these men: they were concerned to reform and thus strengthen the link between Ireland and England, not endanger, much less break, it. Yet Tone was correct in pointing out that ‘the bare mention’ of a doubt on the subject of the connection between Ireland and England ‘had an instantaneous effect on the nerves of the English government’. Not the least of the ironies to do with modern Irish separatism is that its origins may be located in English neuroses.

Quite why English observers should have considered separatism to be an element within Irish patriotism is something of a puzzle. Anxiety over the ‘true’ nature of the Anglo-Irish connection—was Ireland a colony, conquered province, or sister kingdom?—may have played a part here, and so too, surely, did the English view of the Anglo-Irish relationship as being similar to that between a mother and her child, with Ireland being cast in the role of dependent child. Implicit in this child-colony/mother-country relationship was the threat that the ‘child’ would one day grow up and seek independence and separation. Moreover, by the 1760s, that day when Ireland might seek independence did not appear to be all that far off. Growing Irish prosperity, the apparent removal of the catholic menace, and the concurrent growth of protestant patriotism threatened to undermine Ireland’s continuing subordination to England. The secession of the American colonies, too, might prove contagious; and it was surely in recognition of this threat that, from the 1770s on, there emerged a distinct constituency in British government circles which saw a legislative union, on both financial and political grounds, as the ultimate solution to

the problem of Anglo-Irish relations. Unionism fed on the fear of separation; and that fear, already heightened by the winning of the 'Constitution of 1782', was further fuelled by the failure in the 1780s to repair that dangerously flawed 'final settlement'. But unionism also bred separatism, for the more talk there was of union and the more that option was couched in the Manichean terms of 'union or separation', then the more the idea of separation came to be discussed. Ironically, it was the arch-unionist, the Earl of Clare, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, who did most to propagate the idea of separatism in the 1780s through his scaremongering tactics during the campaign for parliamentary reform and the regency crisis. Years later, Tone would impishly warn Clare that 'stirring the question' of separation might prove unwise, as 'public opinion is an uncertain thing ... [and] it is therefore possible that the investigation may not serve his side of the argument'.

Where does Tone stand in the separatist tradition? Clearly he did not invent the idea: English anxiety, the American example, the growth of unionism, and, latterly, Clare's incautious pronouncements on the subject had kept the matter in the public domain. Moreover, separatism was, if not implicit, then concealed somewhere in the colonial nationalism espoused in Ireland in the eighteenth century. In any case, separatism as a political concept was in the air: when the American colonies had successfully claimed their independence, secession had received its greatest boost since the setting up of the Dutch republic at the end of the sixteenth century. Nor can we accept Tone's claim, made in France in 1796, that he was a separatist from his earliest days. That said, there was a separatist note to his writings, a separatist logic to his actions, and a willingness to embrace the separatist option that together marked Tone out as the first Irish separatist.

Some years after its publication, Tone claimed that in his pamphlet *Spanish War!* (1790) he had 'advanced the question of separatism with scarcely any reserve'. In fact, overtly separatist sentiments were well concealed in this tract. Tone's demand in this short work for a national flag, navy and army could have been accommodated within the existing Anglo-Irish relationship. On the other hand, such appendages were the usual ones for fully-sovereign states, and it is clear that Tone was, in effect, attempting to move the issue of national independence onto the agenda of Irish politics. But he moved very cautiously. In his *Argument*, he started to answer those who claimed that 'Ireland is unable to exist as an independent state', but then, apparently, he thought better of it:

There is no one position, moral, physical or political that I hear with such extreme exacerbation of mind as this which denies to my country the possibility of independent existence. It is not, however, my plan here to examine that question.

I trust that when the necessity arises, as at some time it infallibly must, it will be found that we are as competent to our own government, regulation, and defence as any state in Europe. Till the emergency does occur it will but exasperate and inflame the minds of men to investigate and demonstrate the infinite resources and provocations to independence which every hour brings forth in Ireland. I shall therefore content myself with protesting on behalf of my country against the position as an infamous falsehood insulting to her pride and derogatory to her honour and I little doubt if occasion should arise but that I shall be able to prove it so.

Some months before the publication of the *Argument*, he had written to his great friend Thomas Russell that as ‘for separation ... I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be the regeneration to this country’, but at the same time he admitted ‘that opinion is for the present too hardy’. Tone undoubtedly harboured separatist thoughts from an early date but, while he was prepared to contemplate the hitherto unthinkable, he still remained a reluctant separatist and his advocacy of it was confined to private letters and conversations. It was Lord Clare who brought the separatist option, and Tone’s espousal of it, into the open. Long convinced that the redoubt of the protestant ascendancy could never be captured by storm but only by betrayal, Clare, from an early date, had his eye firmly on Tone, who seemed tailor-made for the role of traitor-within-the-gate. Ruthlessly, he used Tone’s private letter of July 1791 to Russell to denounce all United Irishmen as committed separatists. In July 1793, Tone wrote to the editor of the *Freeman’s Journal* protesting about Clare’s use, or misuse, of a private letter. Tone claimed that he was not a separatist: but his denial was hedged with so many conditions and qualifications as to be quite unconvincing. He accepted that the link could be ‘highly beneficial’ provided there was ‘perfect equality, equal law, equal commerce, equal liberty [and] equal justice’; but so long as the ‘gross corruption in the legislature’ continued, so long as there was a ‘sacrifice of [Ireland’s] interests to England’, then, claimed Tone, the separatist option—‘a question of weighty and serious import indeed’—would inevitably make advances. ‘I for one do not wish to break that connection’, he added piously, ‘*provided it can be*, as I am sure it can, preserved consistently with the honour, the interests and the happiness of Ireland. If I were, on the other hand, satisfied that it could not be so preserved, I would hold it a sacred duty to endeavour by all possible means to break it’.⁵

Even at this stage, surely, Tone knew that the interests of Ireland would receive short shrift from England during the war; that after 1793 the only alternative, as Clare never tired of declaring, was union or separation, not union or reform. Reform to Clare, and increasingly to British ministers, was merely another word for separation. It was Tone’s realisation that

such was the case, that the republicanism which he sought could only be achieved through breaking the link, that drove him along the road to separation. Other republicans, Dr. William Drennan, for example, resisted this logic and sought through their involvement in education and civic improvement to bring about that classical republicanism which alone would 'save the nation'. Drennan, and others, shied away from separatism because they feared that the numerical superiority of Irish Catholics, and, indeed, the very nature of Irish Catholicism, might in fact prevent the realisation of republican ideals if Ireland were to be separated from England. Tone, however, had been an activist on behalf of the Catholics, had been persuaded that they had that necessary capacity for liberty, and was convinced that the perceived repellent aspects of Irish Catholicism would wither away in a republican environment. In any case, the fall of the most Catholic monarchy of France, and the flight of the pope himself, gave grounds for reassurance on that score. However, so long as the connection with England remained, Tone believed that his republican ideals could not be realised. It was, in the end, he believed, English connection, not Irish division, that thwarted the achievement of republicanism: and the English connection therefore had to go.

Notes

¹ Thomas Bartlett, 'The Burden of the Present: Theobald Wolfe Tone, Republican and Separatist', in Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 1–15. Full scholarly support for the arguments advanced will be found in the notes to this article.

² Frank MacDermot, *Tone and his Times*, p. 269; Tom Dunne, *Theobald Wolfe Tone: Colonial Outsider* (Cork, 1982), pp. 16–17, 23, 47.

³ Tone, *Life*, II, p. 64.

⁴ Hubert Butler, *Wolfe Tone and the Common Name of Irishman* (Dublin, 1985), p. 9.

⁵ Tone, *Life*, I, p. 499, (my italics).

The Culture and History of French Republicanism: Terror or Utopia?

JAMES LIVESEY

An everyday republic?

In September 1870, Karl Marx, writing for the International, wrote an address to the French people celebrating the declaration of the Third Republic. Marx had no illusions about the regime, it was a compromise between radicals, moderate royalists and liberals, not the end of history. This alliance had inherited power, rather than achieved it, because of Bismarck's military defeat of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the inability of the royalists to agree on a king. Yet for all its flaws, the republic was genuinely progressive he argued; it was the best that could be expected of a bourgeois society. Marx went on to wag the finger of theory at the French working class, warning it not to upset the apple cart by opposing the necessarily bourgeois republic in prematurely revolutionary action. The republic was the most progressive political form possible in capitalist society, and would provide the context through which true liberty could be achieved.

A year later, Marx was again writing to the French, this time to celebrate the revolution he had warned against the year before: 'What resilience, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians!', he exclaimed. 'After six months of hunger and ruin, caused rather by internal treachery than by the external enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were still not at the gates of Paris! History has no like example of such greatness.' Even the level-headed Karl Marx could be swept away by the romance of revolution. The Paris Commune seemed to evade all the strictures of historical necessity. The Red republic could be achieved without reference to its bourgeois form. Revolution could operate its historical magic and allow the working class of France to escape their historical fate.

As we know, Marx's original anxieties about the possibilities for working class revolution were to be borne out. The Paris Commune he

celebrated was to end in a blood bath of 20,000 activists when Paris fell. His first ideas about the bourgeois Republic were to prove more durable, though. With the notable intermission of Vichy, France has remained a republic since 1871 and the political form has provided the context for impressive sets of reforms. We may still be waiting for the end of history to arrive, but, in the interval, France has maintained steady economic growth rates, integrated large numbers of immigrants and provided an effective social security system for its population. The republic even found a way to embrace pleasure as well as duty: one of the most important achievements of the popular front government in 1936 was the introduction of the two-day weekend. Workers strolling the Champs Élysée on a Saturday symbolised the republican commitment to an equality of pleasures as well as rights. The republic has been so successful that other institutional forms, such as monarchy, have ceased to be politically relevant. Republicanism has become the national political culture. As early as 1880, the *Marseillaise*, previously banned as the anthem of bloody revolution, was embraced as the national hymn, and the *quatorze juillet* quickly became the national day.

French republicanism has not just been institutionally and culturally successful: after the demise of socialism, it is the major, if not the only, intellectual alternative to Anglo-American liberalism. The debate between French republicanism and Anglo-Saxon liberalism has been particularly acute within France itself, where the review *Commentaire* and the members of the *Institut Raymond Aron* have led the critique of republicanism. This very debate, between liberal and republican, is testimony to the health of political life in the country. France continues to attempt to construct a polity around the idea of the citizen rather than the consumer. Republicanism has been challenged from without and even more radically threatened by the violence of its revolutionary tradition, yet it remains the most complex and sophisticated political tradition in Europe.

That citizen of the French republic still largely lives in institutions inspired by the ideas of the Third Republic. Leon Gambetta's Belleville Manifesto of 1869 was radical in its day, demanding universal lay education, the creation of a mass citizen army, separation of church and state, introduction of the income tax, and abolition of the death penalty. All of its major tenets, except abolition of the death penalty, were to be instituted by the rather conservative men who inherited power in 1871. The 'free, compulsory and lay' school was created by Jules Ferry and the schoolteacher became the iconic figure of the republic for generations. The *grandes écoles*, dedicated professional schools, still produce the *élite* that runs the republic, through competitive examination. The heart and soul of the republic is probably the *école normale supérieure* that trains

the literary and scientific intellectuals who give French public life a particular tenor. These institutions, and many others, create a republican mentality, a recognisable political culture that informs the identity of the population and underpins its politics. To understand French republicanism as a lived experience, one just has to study contemporary France.¹

Through its institutions and its culture, French republicanism gives life and meaning to the idea of citizenship. Citizenship extends far beyond participation in the formal political system; in fact, for many French citizens voting is a rather unsatisfactory way of exercising their political role. Instead, citizenship infuses the institutions of daily life, and on occasion can generate extraordinary initiatives on the part of citizens mobilised to address particular problems. This functional, everyday republicanism is tremendously important. Voices within France do question whether French republicanism still has any meaning. If clerics, nobles and right-wing nationalists can embrace the republic can there be any content to republicanism? Yet, viewed from without, it is clearer that republicanism is not an anodyne set of clichés, a ‘museum piece’, as one critic put it. Rather it is the backbone that has given shape to the French body politic in the twentieth century. The adherence of its old enemies to the republic is just evidence of its total cultural hegemony.

Britain provides a good comparison from which we can appreciate the importance of this ideology and set of institutions for France. Both Britain and France have relatively declined as world powers in the twentieth century. This has created problems of identity for English society, particularly. It has also generated an anxious search for Britain’s role in the world. French confidence in its world role, especially given its devastating experience in the Second World War, is astounding by comparison. So is the easy assumption by the majority of French citizens of their national identity and their relatively untroubled participation in the European Union. The objective problems faced by France were and are far worse than those of Britain, which did not have such a direct experience of the German problem. The subjective experience of Britain, and of British individuals, has been far tougher though. Yet empire and nation have proved brittle, and the ‘break-up of Britain’ is widely canvassed. The republic, with its institutions and its citizenry intact, has seen off the worst the twentieth century could throw at it and managed to sustain the curiously conservative, yet adaptive, society that is the French republic.

Beyond consensus

French republicanism is not only this workaday lived culture. French republicanism is also the ‘revolution’. The executions of the communards removed one radical opposition to the emerging Third Republic, but they

could not kill off the revolutionary ideal. The tension Marx felt between the revolutionary romance of the republic and the everyday world of republican institutions remained internal to the republican tradition. Ironically, though the deaths of the revolutionaries inaugurated the republic, the revolutionary moment would save that same republic at vital moments. In the spring of 1898, republican students would leave the 'fortress' of the Sorbonne to fight physically with right-wing nationalists, literally moving from the institutional tradition to the revolutionary tradition. The Dreyfus affair showed that, when threatened, the institutional republicans could rely on the revolutionary tradition to rally even their left-wing political opponents. The class nature of the Third Republic did not deter Jean Jaurès from lending it his support when the issue of justice for Dreyfus was at stake. The revolutionary model of the *levée en masse*, in turn, was to inspire French commitment to defeating the invading Germans in the First World War. Even failed republican initiatives refer to this common ground of revolutionary enthusiasm. When Léon Blum was elected premier of the Popular Front government in 1936, he published *Notre jeunesse*, a memoir of his street-fighting days among the *dreyfusards*, in an attempt to recreate the republican alliance of bourgeois and revolutionary. The importance of this relationship and the consequences if it failed were illustrated by the 'strange defeat' in 1940. The republic was strong and dynamic only when the two wings of the republican church were allied.

Like squabbling sisters, the institutional and revolutionary republics are unhappy with their mutual dependence. Their bad relationship is understandable, as the institutional sister can be something of an old maid and the revolutionary is almost impossible to understand. Moreover, the revolutionary is the elder sibling; in the final analysis, she defines the meaning of republicanism. It is difficult to give a precise meaning to this variety of republicanism because, unlike other ideologies, it is not grounded in a tradition of political theory, but in a political event. Liberalism constructs its genealogy from the natural rights theorists of the seventeenth century, like Grotius and Locke, through Mill, Toqueville and Constant, to contemporary thinkers such as John Rawls. Texts define the meaning of the tradition. This is even more true of Marxism. Republicanism has no founding fathers, no sacred texts; it is instead inspired by the icons, symbols and ideals of the first French revolution of 1789-99.

Republicanism did not inspire the French revolution; one could have counted on the fingers of one hand the republicans in France in 1789. Republicanism instead is an attempt to understand and embody the revolutionary commitment to liberty, equality and fraternity. French

republicanism was a total departure from the 'classical' variety, whose genealogy has been traced from the Italian city-states of the fifteenth century, through the Netherlands and England, to its most powerful expression in the creation of the United States. Classical republicanism was not an egalitarian creed. Citizens in the classical tradition were differentiated by their capacity for *virtù* or public service. There was no contradiction between the tenets of classical republicanism and the adherence of many of the founding fathers of the United States, including Jefferson, to slave-holding. Classical republicanism derived political function from social position. The key text of the Atlantic republican tradition, James Harrington's *Oceana*, identified the land-holding barons as the backbone of the republic. Their material circumstances made them independent and incorruptible, therefore they were uniquely suited to the duties of citizenship. The central intuition of the French revolution was that, despite the obvious social, economic and cultural inequalities generated by modern commercial societies, men should be politically equal. Citizenship was not to be derived from social function; citizenship would rescue men from their alienation from one another in society. The French revolution committed itself to the most untrammelled version of individualism, it promised that man could be regenerated, that is returned to his authentic self, through his commitment to the common good. The republic was, in effect, an afterthought, the political form chosen to give shape to this aspiration after the monarchy had proved incapable, or unable, of realising it.

Quite obviously, the aspiration to create a regime in which the citizenry live free and equal lives, in fraternal solidarity with one another, was not fulfilled in the French revolution and has not been fulfilled since. The revolution, and consequently the republic, never found a stable institutional form. The constitution of 1793, written by Hérault de Sechelles, marked the high point of democratic idealism. It envisaged direct voting by the citizenry at local assemblies to approve or disapprove of the actions of their representatives and acknowledged a plethora of social rights. It remained a dead letter, though approved by a referendum, as the government was declared 'revolutionary until the peace' in September and, after the fall of Robespierre the following year, it was renounced and replaced. Subsequent efforts at institution-building were more successful, but less spectacular. The efforts of the Directory laid the basis for institutional republicanism, but even its most enthusiastic supporter would not have claimed that it entirely fulfilled the promise of the revolution. The revolutionary hope of creating a kind of polity that could overcome the alienating effects of modern economics and society remained and remains open, so the forms of the revolutionary republic remain forever over the

horizon of experience. An essential antagonism characterises the relationship of this revolutionary to her institutional sister. Though she may lend her aid at times, she finds every institution to be provisional and inadequate. The best constantly threatens the complete overthrow of the good.

This contradiction, between the actual institutions that the republican tradition has created and its aspiration to master the problem of modern life through creating a new kind of citizenship, has been at the heart of critiques of republicanism from left and right. Edmund Burke recognised that the revolution would inevitably compromise the ‘little platoons’ of social life in favour of ideals from the very first. He came to see the revolution as essentially evil since it respected no historical experience and rendered every form of life meaningless by putting it in question. Hegel saw the revolution as wrong-headed in a similar way. He rejected Burke’s embrace of social institutions as the basis of meaning; he agreed with the revolutionaries that the forms of civil life were partial and conventional. Instead, Hegel argued that the revolutionaries did not understand that the freedom they sought could not be realised in individuals, but only in the principle of the state. Both Burke and Hegel argued that the revolution was fantastical because it sought to bring into question institutions that, by their nature, were above question and truly authoritative. For the left, Marx famously denounced the idea of citizenship as an illusion. The contradictions in capitalist economics and bourgeois society could not be resolved politically, without a transformation of the social and economic base. Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* developed a critique of the very idea of autonomy that was the goal of the revolutionaries. For them, the ideal of citizenship was impossible and dangerous; it was inspired by the vision of rationality as absolute control, and such control could not be achieved. The very hope of attaining such mastery and its inevitable frustration were, for them, the origin of the ubiquitous murderous-violence in modern life. All of these critics converged on the perception that the utopianism of the revolution was dangerously irrational, though they disagreed on everything else.

The Terror lends credence to the critique of revolutionary republicanism. Between September 1793, when terror was made ‘the order of the day’, and August 1794, 16,564 people were put to death by the state in revolutionary courts and tribunals, for political crimes.² This massively underreports the numbers actually killed in the west of the country, especially in the Vendée, where a peasant counter-revolutionary revolt was put down with appalling cruelty. Nor does it reflect the thousands that were killed in forms of private vengeance during and after the Terror

itself. The numbers, though significant in themselves and for the history of the regions where violence was most acutely experienced, do not capture the historical importance of the Terror. The real significance of the Terror is the manner in which it seems to prefigure the political violence of the modern world. The French revolutionaries were only the first to find themselves driven to systematic political violence as the goals of their revolution receded. Many others have followed in this path. Since revolutionary republicanism did not acknowledge any institution or tradition as inherently legitimate, there could be no legal restraint on its actions. The sovereign will of the people could not be constrained, and so anything was possible since nothing had inherent value. The temptation to coerce fellow citizens to the new millennium was impossible to resist, and this was intensified by the very openness of the republican ideal. The combination of limitless ambition and absence of specific goals meant the republic was without restraints; it could and did become monstrous.

In 1905, Georges Clemenceau, the one-time mayor of the twelfth *arrondissement* of Paris during the commune, future minister of the interior who would fire on striking workers, and latterly premier of France in the First World War, declared the revolution 'a bloc'. By this he meant that one could not disaggregate the elements of the French revolution to choose the features one found attractive. It came as one piece: popular mobilisation, anti-clericalism and terror, as well as the soundly respectable chamber of 1789. He had little time for self-indulgent regret at the violence that had proven necessary to achieve the goals of the revolution. The revolution was 'mother of us all', and you do not criticise your mother. At the other end of the twentieth century such intellectual blackmail can not be tolerated. The horrors of the twentieth century have made the rejection of political violence an intellectual and moral imperative, and undermined any lingering thoughts about the creative potential of violent action. For us, if the revolution really is a bloc, then the revolution must be rejected. If the aspiration to citizenship really does have the murderous logic attributed to it by its critics, then citizenship is a hollow ideal. If the hope of overcoming the alienation and self-estrangement of modern life leads inexorably to terror, then modern persons might be better advised simply to reconcile themselves to their fate. Better oppressed and estranged than to become a terrorist.

A possible republic

Republicanism would seem to be trapped in an appalling paradox. It proposes citizenship as the antidote to the tendencies toward the atomisation of society and alienation of the individual generated by capitalist economics and bourgeois society. Citizenship is a limited and

moderate response to the problem of modernity. It does not reject it; instead, it tries to nuance it, to capture its dynamism to produce flourishing polities. Republicanism tries to create a privileged space within the modern world. It does not promise complete social equality nor absolute justice in economic affairs, rather it brackets those spheres in favour of a political identity that will compensate for and, ideally, transcend those other inadequacies. Through participation in the sovereign power to make the law, individuals can be returned to themselves as dignified autonomous human beings. The cruel irony is that by bracketing society and economics in this way, by restraining itself to questions of politics, republicanism absolutises political identity. The demands of citizenship, posed in this uncontextualised way, can eliminate all other claims from public consideration. Terror occurs when the pure ideal of citizenship meets an economic or social limit that it cannot acknowledge, when the people are given liberty and still insist on bread. Like Robespierre presiding over the Festival of the Supreme Being even as the revolutionary tribunal accelerated its killing, the impulse to create meaningful political identity can become a deadly, self-regarding cult.

The dynamic within republicanism that threatens to pervert its own commitment to liberty has drawn attention from a number of political thinkers. Directly after the revolution, Benjamin Constant argued that it had failed because it had not respected what he termed the difference between the liberty of the ancients and that of the moderns. Constant did not deny the importance of citizenship, indeed he argued that no version of liberty is possible without the commitment of citizens to defend it. However, he asserted that the private enjoyment of particular choices was the more essential idea of liberty for modern people. Isaiah Berlin formalised this insight with his famous argument that no version of what he called 'positive liberty' is coherent. Positive liberty he defined as any particular definition of liberty, such as the equation of liberty with national independence. Independence might be a good in itself, but it was not liberty. Only negative liberty respects and protects the element of choice between competing moral goods that is essential to any real enjoyment of liberty. Berlin's argument asserts that if people are only free to follow the laws, then they are not free at all. It is when the laws are silent that liberty can be exercised.

Republicanism would thus seem doubly damned. Its positive ideal of citizenship offends against negative liberty (no one can be free to refuse to be a citizen), and its inherent dynamic threatens even its own ideals. The inherent logic of a republic is so perverse that the republic is an impossible régime. The difficulties facing citizenship in modern conditions are so profound that it is almost incredible that republics ever

existed. Again paradoxically, it is the very impossibility of the republican model of citizenship that is its saving grace. Republican citizenship is completely unspecified. As we have seen this can have the most deleterious effects; however, it does not have to have these effects. The open demand for civic commitment allows communities to interpret it as they see fit. Republicanism has no determining positive ideal; it demands that citizens engage in public, but is neutral on all the great ethical issues at the heart of modernity. If Berlin demands choice between competing moral goods as an indication of liberty, then no régime is more free than the republic. The republic demands that everyone be a citizen, but the burden of that citizenship is precisely to choose one's side and express it in public. The liberal can guide his or her action by determined rights, the republicans choose their values and risk them in every debate with their fellow citizens.

The unspecified nature of republican citizenship also leaves the revolutionary republican tradition uniquely open to historical contingency. It is at moments like the French revolution, when a population tries and inevitably fails to create a republican polity, that the republican tradition takes concrete form. It is precisely at the intersection of the theoretical demand for a pristine citizenship with the historical efforts to create citizenship that a possible republicanism was created. These concrete images of the republican ideal are necessarily provisional and open to the most intense negotiation; however, they allow republicanism to be more than an aspiration and give it coherence over time. In effect, there are two aspects to the relationship of French republicanism to the revolution. The first is the romance of the aspiration to escape from the conditions of social and economic life; the second is the creation of a specific tradition in the contingencies of political life.

The inheritance of these contingencies to republicanism is too rich and diverse to enumerate fully, but even by looking at only some of the features of historical republicanism, we can see the importance of these contingent moments to the creation of the tradition. The republican has always been a popular régime, associated with the lower classes and their aspiration for equality. This is because the first republicans in the revolution were the *sans-culottes* of Paris. In the summer of 1791, King Louis XVI attempted to abandon Paris and rally a counter-revolutionary movement. After his recapture, the National Assembly decided to brush over his flight and attempt to conciliate him. The *sans-culottes*, the popular radicals of Paris, inspired by the Cordelier Club, instead denounced him and called for the republic. Their campaign was unsuccessful, but a year later they and their allies from the national guard around the country would forcibly remove the monarch by storming the

Louvre palace. The republic was declared a month later by a convention which was called to give moral force to the result of the popular rebellion. The republic was the child of the Paris radicals, and its egalitarianism therefore mirrored their own. The sans-culottes also bequeathed a very direct interpretation of the doctrine of popular sovereignty. In the French republican tradition the people retain sovereignty; it is not located in the constituted bodies. The direct action of citizens always has legitimacy; therefore, a French jury is extremely reluctant to convict José Bové for having blown up a McDonalds. While the act was clearly against the law, the sovereign right of the people to represent themselves in the most efficacious manner is understood to be above the details of any law created not by the people, in any case, but by their representatives. Legality is never an important principle within a revolutionary tradition.

Republicanism inherited far more from the revolution than it contributed to it. Republicanism became a universal tradition, one that sought to appeal to all political communities, because of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Rights had nothing to do with republicanism; rights were a feature of the liberal tradition. One did not have to be a citizen to have rights, even foreigners in a polity enjoyed them. Moreover, the declaration was promulgated long before republicanism acquired any political significance. Rights were declared to be universal and the republic inherited the Declaration, and so had to accommodate it within its practice. The conjunction of the aspiration to citizenship and the language of rights created a model of political rights that was entirely novel and would have the most long-term effects. Jacobinism provided the most comprehensive model for citizenship and for actual political activity. The Jacobin network of clubs all over the country, communicating with one another, co-ordinating their action, and acting practically to create a republic on the ground, became the central historical image of what republicanism demanded even though the inspirations for Jacobinism went far beyond republicanism. Where republicanism could not provide a model for citizenship, the revolution provided actual examples.

The effects of these contingencies on the features of revolutionary republicanism were not all as positive as the co-optation of the language of rights. The only limit on the will of the people that was acknowledged to be legitimate was nature. One could not legislate against gravity, mathematics or biology. Biology was to be destiny for one half of the human race. Citizenship was understood to be a male prerogative because of the role of women as wives and mothers. By a curiously circular logic, masculinity came to be understood in terms of citizenship and citizenship in terms of masculinity. Joan Scott has analysed just how inhibiting this

identification of masculinity and citizenship was to the emergence of a French feminist movement.³ This particular moment in the history of gender became deeply inscribed in the republican tradition, so much so that women were not allowed the national suffrage in France until 1944. However, with this important exception, the content given to revolutionary republicanism has proved to be remarkably fruitful. For instance, slavery was abolished in 1794, largely in response to the efforts of the slaves in the colonies to free themselves, and so opposition to slavery has been an unquestioned element of French republicanism since. Revolutionary republicanism as a tradition has provided a complex set of exemplars and ideas through which subsequent political movements have been able to understand themselves.

Taken as a whole, French republicanism divides into two main traditions, revolutionary and institutional. The revolutionary strand divides, in turn, into an historical movement and a theoretical position. The richness and complexity of French republicanism derives from the interactions and relationships between the various elements of the tradition. It is impossible to represent this tradition as an ideology. It is far better understood as a form of life, an ecology within which a varied set of resources exist from which citizens can construct their political lives. It is not a stable world. The revolutionary demand for a transcending form of citizenship always threatens to subvert the institutions of the republic and even the historical ideals of the tradition. For much of the twentieth century, indeed, the revolutionary moment was lost to institutional republicanism and instead was found in the communist tradition. French republicanism survived this, and still offers us a strong and vibrant perspective from which to understand the modern world and act within it.

The victory of the French soccer team in the World Cup of 1998 illustrated the health of the republican tradition. The multi-ethnic nature of the team reflected the extraordinary abilities of republican France to integrate new citizens; the team was an affront to any idea of ethnicity. Even more telling was the way in which the victory was celebrated. The crowds that spilled onto the streets of Paris chanted slogans of political identity as they massed around the Arc de Triomphe. A visitor to Paris in July of 1998, who had somehow managed to remain unaware of sport, could have been forgiven for thinking another revolution was under way. '*Zidane président*' and '*tous ensemble ... tous ensemble*' could have been taken as cries in support of a revolutionary leadership and reminders of the sovereignty of the people. Looking around, he or she would recognise yet another new version of the people taking possession of the streets of the capital. Not this time the furniture makers of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine or the members of the Cordelier club crossing the river from their

neighbourhood on the left bank; instead, these were *banlieusards* who jumped on the *Métro* at the final whistle. The children and grandchildren of Polish, Tunisian, Algerian and Italian immigrants took possession of the capital as the provincial national guards had in 1792. What was new was the object that they occupied. The crowd did not storm the Bastille; political power was not in question. Instead, it occupied the fashionable western end of Paris, occupying the site of cultural rather than political dominance. Even in a post-modern world of representation, the republican tradition continues to inspire.

Notes

¹ Of course, not every feature of French life is a reflection of republicanism. Scholars identify five other political traditions in the construction of the polity: legitimism, orléanism, bonapartism, liberalism and socialism. The right-wing nationalist and communist traditions have traditionally been more oppositional. John Steinbeck's *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* satirises the varieties of royalism.

² The figures are derived from Donald Greer, *The Incidence of Terror during the French Revolution: A statistical interpretation* (Cambridge MA, 1935).

³ Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge MA, 1996).

‘Ireland Her Own’: Radical Movements in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

PRISCILLA METSCHER

When examining the development of republicanism in nineteenth-century Ireland, we must be aware not only of the elements of continuity in the radical movements of the period, but also of their differences, resulting from specific circumstances and conditions. The first half of the nineteenth century in Ireland was dominated by two socio-economic factors. On the one hand, excessive subdivision of the land among the rural peasantry was accompanied by a tremendous population increase; on the other hand, a general decline in Irish industry in the first decades of the century ensured that the surplus population could not be absorbed into the economic life of the towns. The Act of Union was not the only cause for the decline in industries, but it was a major contributor as free trade between Britain and Ireland was established which meant that Irish manufacturers were no longer in a position to protect the home market from British competition. The huge national debt incurred by the Union also meant that much needed capital for Irish industry was taken out of the country.¹ It was hardly surprising that a mass popular movement should arise, under the leadership of Daniel O’Connell, with the aim of repealing the Act of Union.

O’Connell, despite his radical use of language, was not a radical. He was a landlord who had great respect for the protection of private property and denounced agrarian secret societies for their use of violence. His policy is summed up in a letter he wrote early in 1833: ‘I would not join in any violation of the law ... I desire no social revolution, no social change ... In short, salutary restoration without revolution, an Irish Parliament, British connection, one King, two legislatures’.² Nevertheless, a group of young men were attracted to the Repeal Association who, although staunchly loyal to O’Connell, were prepared to go a step further. To them it was repeal or else separation. They revived the spirit of Wolfe Tone in their newspaper the *Nation*, founded in October 1842. The three young intellectuals were Charles Gavan Duffy, journalist, John Blake Dillon and Thomas Osborne Davis, both barristers. Their object in

founding a newspaper was ‘to foster a public opinion in Ireland and make it racy of the soil’. They paid particular attention to cultivating ‘that pride in self-reliant nationhood which they conceived would be the best means of recreating a United Ireland’.³

The *Nation* certainly set in motion a revolution in national thinking, for it set out to awaken a national consciousness in the mass of the Irish people and to make them aware of their cultural heritage, which had been trampled underfoot by centuries of British domination. ‘By cultivating the collective consciousness of the people, preaching the essential ‘oneness’ of the Nation, and giving each member of the Nation a sense of ‘belonging’, all activities, whether in trade, commerce or the arts, would assume a new coherence as an expression, indeed a celebration of the identity of the Nation.’⁴ One of the most popular features of the *Nation* was its original ballad poetry, dealing mainly with historical themes. The ballads were written to be sung to well-known airs. The mood was martial and inspiring, recalling the deeds of Irish clans, of the Volunteers of ’82 and of the Men of ’98. The *Nation* inspired contributions from women writers. ‘Speranza’, whose real name was Jane Elgee, later to become Lady Wilde, gave vent to her outrage in elaborate verse. ‘Eva’, or Mary Ann Kelly, was to be a regular verse contributor, and in 1848 Margaret Callan, sister-in-law of Gavan Duffy, wrote an article stirring Irishmen to rebellion.⁵ Another purpose of the *Nation* newspaper was proclaimed by the poet Clarence Mangan to be ‘the emancipation of the trampled tenantry’.⁶ One article states: ‘We shall strive not merely to explain the workings of landlord misrule in Ireland, but to show how similar wrongs have been remedied in other countries’.⁷

The most outstanding writer of the *Nation* was undoubtedly Thomas Davis. His teaching was summed up by him in one phrase: ‘Ireland’s aspiration is for Unbounded Nationality’.⁸ At a time when the O’Connellites succeeded in equating nationalism with catholicism, which alienated the protestants from the Repeal movement, Davis, basing his theory on the writings of Wolfe Tone, held that a national movement had to embrace all the people—both protestant and catholic. He abhorred any form of sectarianism. Davis’s nationalism was more cultural than political in as far as he understood the ‘Nation’ not as a historically evolved political entity but as a spiritual, cultural entity, growing out of the recognition of the people themselves that they have a common cultural heritage. This is how Pearse interprets Davis’s understanding of the ‘Nation’ in his own article *The Spiritual Nation*.

Undoubtedly, there are contradictions in Davis’s thought. His concept of the ‘Nation’ was coloured by a conservative form of romanticism which hankered after restoration rather than revolution. He despised the factory

system, lamenting the loss of cottage industry. He wished to roll back the development of industrialisation: 'We prefer the life of the old times or of modern Norway'.⁹ A peasant proprietorship was what he wished for Ireland, but at the same time a national aristocracy 'attached by hereditary achievements to the glory of their country'.¹⁰ Davis did not openly voice any republican views—he was willing to support the demand for a federal government. But if this failed to be achieved, then he would support 'anything but what we are'.¹¹ Unlike O'Connell, Davis was not opposed to Chartism and urged a change of attitude among repealers to the English Chartists. It was Davis's sympathy with the common people which led Pearse to recognise the affinity of democratic spirit in both Tone and Davis: 'There was a deep humanism in Davis. The sorrows of the people affected Davis like a personal sorrow ... he was a democrat in this truest sense that he loved the people, and his love of the people was an essential part of the man and of his Nationalism'.¹²

Even before Davis's untimely death in 1845, a rift had occurred between the Young Irelanders, as the writers of the *Nation* came to be called, and O'Connell. Davis was gravely disappointed with O'Connell's retreat at Clontarf at the height of the Repeal movement's success, and deeply wounded by the accusations of the O'Connellites charging him with anti-catholic sentiments.¹³ The final break with O'Connell came in 1846, and the Irish Confederation was formed in January 1847. 'Young Ireland' of the *Nation* had hoped to create an independent Ireland with a harmonious community including landlords fulfilling their social obligations; but the Great Famine, with its mass starvation and ensuing evictions, soon shattered this idyllic vision and some of the Young Irelanders, most notably John Mitchel, dramatically moved to the left. Concerning the land question, Mitchel was influenced by James Fintan Lalor, the son of one of the leading figures in the Tithe Wars of the 1830s. In a letter to Lalor, dated January 4, 1848, he admits that he was wrong on the issue of 'conciliating classes' and winning the landlords over to nationality.¹⁴ Mitchel insisted that a social insurrection in Ireland was the only possible basis for a national revolution—the insurrectionary upheaval that would end the subjection of the labouring classes would also end the tyranny of the British government that thrived on it.

Mitchel's views on armed insurrection were too extreme for the leaders of the Confederation. The divergence led Mitchel and another radical, Devin Reilly, to sever connections with the *Nation* and to set up the weekly *United Irishman* 'specifically as an organ of revolution', which took as its motto Tone's tribute to the 'men of no property'.¹⁵ In the *United Irishman*, Mitchel expressed his views as the champion of tenant right, the cause of the small farmers. The language he adopted was direct and went

to the crux of the matter. He exposed the evils of the landlord and capitalist systems in Ireland and the exploitation of the labourer as a mere commodity. To him the Great Famine was not a natural catastrophe, but an unbelievable crime perpetrated by the British government, which deliberately made use of the potato blight as the 'best, cheapest and readiest mode of getting rid of what was constantly called the "surplus population" of Ireland'.¹⁶ Repeal of the Act of Union would not by itself be the cure. It required 'the total overthrow of the aristocratic system of government and the establishment of the People's inalienable sovereignty'.¹⁷ Mitchel was convinced 'that while England is at peace with other powerful nations, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make so much as a serious attempt at a national insurrection, in the face of a government so vigilant and so well prepared'.¹⁸ Much impetus was given to Mitchel's teachings by the combined work of English Chartists and Confederates in 1848. Confederate Clubs, formed in England by Irish exiles, joined the Chartist movement, and Chartist associations spread throughout Ireland. Appeals to English and Irish working men to join in common action and achieve 'real liberty and the rights of labour' were advocated.¹⁹

Before the third issue of the *United Irishman* had appeared, the monarchy in France had been overthrown and a republic declared. The 1848 revolution in France sparked off risings in all the main cities in Europe. The establishment of a popular government inflamed all radical minds, no less the Young Irelanders. Mitchel was welcomed back into the Confederation, and even moderates, taking care not to identify their position with that of Mitchel, were caught up in the general mood of defiance. Mitchel praised the new French government for enacting a law guaranteeing 'the right to work' to all and guaranteeing state protection of the rights of the workers as opposed to free trade in labour. His reaction, however, on learning of the June insurrection by workers in Paris was to voice his delight that they had been 'swept from the street with grape and canister—the only way of dealing with such unhappy creatures'. 'Socialists', he exclaimed 'are something worse than wild beasts'.²⁰ This irrational reaction seems hardly in keeping with his otherwise revolutionary language concerning the state of Ireland. Could it be that his revolutionary fervour was basically limited to Ireland and the British connection? That he himself was aware of a possible discrepancy in his thought is indicated by a passage in his *Jail Journal* where he probes into his motivations for supporting the French republic. His '*Doppelgänger*' points out that Mitchel's zeal for the success of the French republic 'is born of no love for mankind, or even of French mankind, but of pure hatred to England'.²¹ The contradictory nature of Mitchel's thought can

further be substantiated by his later support in the USA of the Confederates in the Civil War and of the slave system in the southern states: 'I consider negro slavery the best state of existence for the negro, and the best for his master'.²² Despite his revolutionary rhetoric, Mitchel, unlike Tone and Davis, was not an international democrat.

Alarmed at the developing revolutionary situation in Ireland, the government authorities began to arrest the Young Ireland leaders. In March 1848, Mitchel, Thomas Meagher and Smith O'Brien were charged with sedition. Meagher and O'Brien were acquitted. Mitchel was not so fortunate. He was tried by a packed jury under the Treason Felony Act and sentenced to fourteen years transportation. Mitchel, who had been propagating insurrection, believed that his rescue would be effected by the men of the Dublin Clubs. But Duffy, O'Brien and Meagher, fearing the consequences of an attempted rescue by the Dublin artisans, countermanded all preparations. Thus the original plan to rescue Mitchel and start a rising in Dublin was frustrated. The second plan of a rebellion throughout the country was doomed from the outset. The plan had been to lead revolt in Kilkenny town, take control of Kilkenny, and spread rebellion throughout Waterford and Tipperary where there was a strong tradition of agrarian resistance. However, the Confederate leaders were taken by surprise, as the government suspended habeas corpus. Faced with imminent arrest, they took to the field. O'Brien wandered through the countryside preaching insurrection to a starving peasantry, but refused to allow them to seize the carts of grain passing along the roads on the way to England or to seize arms from the gentry. In quixotic manner, the Confederates under O'Brien tried to rouse the people. The rebellion fizzled out in the last days of July, after an inglorious, brief skirmish with the police in a widow's garden at Ballingarry.²³

After the failure of rebellion in the summer of 1848, James Fintan Lalor, together with a group of young radical intellectuals, including Thomas Clarke Luby and John O'Leary who were later to become influential in the Fenian movement, turned to secret conspiracy, establishing a network of secret clubs. Lalor's conspiracy and attempt to establish a new social-based national movement culminated in an unsuccessful rising on September 16, 1849. Lalor's health declined rapidly, and he died on December 17, 1849. He was perhaps the most consistently radical member of the Young Ireland movement. At Duffy's request, he wrote an appeal to the Irish landlords which appeared in the *Nation* in April 1847, calling on united action of landowners and the people of Ireland to change the social system which had been dissolved by the impact of the Famine. He was soon, however, to formulate his ideas more clearly. What Ireland needed was complete independence, not merely repeal, and the ownership of the

soil by the entire people, not just a small class of landlords.

In the first issue of the *Irish Felon*, June 24, 1848, Lalor states his object: ‘Not the constitution that Wolfe Tone died to abolish, but the constitution that Tone died to obtain—independence; full and absolute independence for this island, and for every man within this island ... Ireland her own—Ireland her own, and all therein, from the sod to the sky. The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland, to have and to hold from God alone who gave it—to have and to hold to them and their heirs for ever, without suit or service, faith or fealty, rent or render, to any power under Heaven’. Independence alone is not sufficient unless it is followed by a radical change in the social order: ‘The principle I state and mean to stand on is this, that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland ... I hold and maintain that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property, not of any one class, but of the nation at large ... I acknowledge no right of property in a small class which goes to abrogate the rights of a numerous people’. Anticipating the policy of the Land League of later years, Lalor worked out a plan of ‘moral insurrection’ whereby the peasants should refuse to pay all rents and taxes until the needs of their families had been satisfied. Peaceful means if possible, force if necessary, was Lalor’s motto. He did not develop a clear strategy concerning the co-ordination of a social and national uprising. He believed, however, that with the accomplishment of a social-agrarian revolution, the foundations of a national revolution would be surely laid. Due to physical disabilities and illness, Lalor was not in a position to lead a mass struggle. He could only give his intellectual support to it. On the whole, Young Ireland failed to grasp the significance of Lalor’s radical programme.

One of the reasons for the rise of the Fenian movement in the 1860s was the failure of constitutional politics in the form of the Tenant League.²⁴ In his book *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism*, John O’Leary comments that ‘the period between the collapse of the Tenant League and the rise of Fenianism was the “deadest” time in Irish politics within my memory and perhaps within the memory of any man now living’.²⁵ His conviction was ‘that we could get from England nothing but what we could wring from her’.²⁶ Only non-constitutional agitation would be efficacious in an unfree country, he believed. At the same time, mass emigration as a result of the Famine meant that there was an Irish immigrant population in the USA, and especially in New York, among whom anti-British sentiment was rife. In addition, there were a number of ‘forty-eight’ exiles who were engaged in fund-raising activities and in planning military expeditions from the United States to Ireland, but they

were entirely unrealistic as no revolutionary organisation existed in Ireland.

James Stephens, who had escaped to France after the abortive rising of 1848, together with John O'Mahony came into contact with red republican clubs and communist secret societies, especially those led by Auguste Blanqui, during their stay in Paris.²⁷ Later, in the 1870s, Stephens was to deny having any socialist tendencies. Of Fenianism he said: 'It was wholly and unequivocally democratic although the utopian or childish theories of continental socialists did not by any means form part and parcel of my programme'.²⁸ Stephens had a deep hatred of landlordism, and his democratic principles were international, not simply confined to the question of Ireland: 'I would fight for an abstract principle of right in defence of *any* country; and were England a republic battling for human freedom on the one hand, and Ireland leagued with despots on the other, I should, unhesitatingly, take up arms against my native land'.²⁹ To him, the struggle for an Irish Republic was part of a broader international conflict in which he saw the British working class, as well as the European revolutionary movements of the period, as allies in the Irish struggle for freedom. Stephens was later to become a member of the First International.³⁰

Although Head Centre for a number of years, Stephens was not essentially typical of the Fenian movement. Others, such as Jeremiah O'Donnovan Rossa, had a much narrower understanding of the aims of Fenianism. The taking up of arms to sustain Irish national identity through heroic self-sacrifice was an important aspect of the movement. Stephens and other leaders insisted on its non-sectarian nature, but within the consciousness of the broad Irish population Fenianism was nationalist and catholic, and it is certainly these two latter characteristics which have been associated with Fenianism down to the present day.³¹ That other aspect of Fenianism, its radical democratic nature and connection with British radicalism, has been largely neglected by historians.³²

Returning to Ireland in 1856, Stephens commenced a tour of the countryside to establish whether the time was propitious for the organisation of a revolutionary movement. He was convinced that any movement to gain national independence must be based on the support of the Irish working people. He did not succeed in winning the former Young Irelander Smith O'Brien over to his idea. O'Brien, who had the unification of the classes in mind, remarked: 'If not supported by the educated and influential classes, the movement could only degenerate into Communism, as there is in the instinct of the *plebs* a tendency to equalisation of wealth and to other impossibilities'. Stephens commented: 'I never counted on what is usually styled "respectable people"'.³³ The actual

Fenian movement was started not in Ireland, but in New York in 1855, with the Emmet Monument Association, which was organising and drilling once a week. This was the organisation from which, according to Joseph Denieffe, sprung a few years later the Fenian Brotherhood.³⁴ Shortly after Stephens's visit to the US in 1859, the American Fenian organisation got under way with the founding of the newspaper, *The Phoenix*, O'Mahony giving it the name Fenian Brotherhood.³⁵ The organisation was established in Ireland on St. Patrick's Day, 1858. Originally named the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, it came to be known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), with James Stephens as chief organiser. The spreading of propaganda was greatly helped by the establishment of the newspaper *The Irish People* in 1863. Like the *Nation* previously, ballad poetry had the merit of immediate appeal to popular feeling, although John O'Leary comments on the low level of poetic style of the majority of contributors.³⁶ Devoy was of the opinion that '*The Irish People* revived the spirit created and fostered by the old *Nation* and the Young Irelanders and carried down their teachings to a new generation'.³⁷

From the beginning Stephens made his aim clear. In his diary he wrote: 'My firm resolution is to establish a democratic republic in Ireland, that is a republic for the weal of the toiler'.³⁸ The IRB, as it was conceived in 1858, was a secret, oath-bound society—a conspiracy the aim of which, generally speaking, was to establish an Irish republic by extra-parliamentary means. Despite Stephens's own opinions on the social question, the struggle was viewed basically as a political one, to free Ireland from foreign control. Although Stephens found the Ribbon societies one of the best recruiting grounds for the IRB, he did not consider the land question a unifying factor. 'I found the labourers and mechanics would never join the tenantry shoulder to shoulder in the enterprise.'³⁹ The leaders of the Fenian movement, both in the States and Ireland, were lower middle-class intellectuals, but the bulk of the movement was recruited from the rural and urban working classes. In contrast to the Young Irelanders, the Fenian movement was very much a lower orders movement. In the USA, the early American Fenians were nearly all manual workers.⁴⁰ In Ireland, Fenians were most readily recruited from among shop assistants and skilled artisans in the towns and from the Ribbon societies in the countryside.⁴¹ Women's role in the Fenian movement was largely supportive. A Fenian Sisterhood existed in the USA, and in Ireland the Ladies Committee did exceptional work in the field of fund raising, especially when arrests began in 1865. Individual women were involved in arms-smuggling.⁴²

The Fenian movement did not have a social revolutionary programme, but its very existence as a working-class revolutionary organisation

presented a challenge to the authority of the protestant ascendancy, the British government, and the catholic middle class.⁴¹ The catholic church, under Cardinal Cullen, condemned Fenianism in no uncertain terms, seeing in it the same revolutionary spirit as in continental revolutionaries.⁴⁴ The Fenians presented a much stronger threat to the British government than the Young Irelanders had. This can be seen in government reaction to Fenian activity. The treatment of Fenian prisoners was, on the whole, much harsher than that of the Young Irelanders. Here, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa is a prime example. Sentenced to hard labour, he described the methods of torture to which he had been subjected in a letter smuggled out of prison. 'I was harnessed to a cart with a rope tied round my neck. This knot was fastened to a long shaft and two English prisoners received orders to prevent the cart from bouncing. But they refrained from doing this, the shaft rose up into the air and the knot came undone. If it had tightened I would be dead.'⁴⁵ Another example is the case of the Manchester Martyrs in 1867. Defended by the former Chartist leader Ernest Jones, all five were finally sentenced to death. One was subsequently pardoned and another sentenced to life imprisonment, but three were ultimately executed, despite lack of evidence. The trial aroused a storm of protest in England and Ireland. The General Council of the International Working Men's Association met in November 1867 to discuss the Irish question and the trial of the Manchester Fenians. There it was stated: 'Fenianism is the vindication by an oppressed people of its right to social and political existence. The Fenian declarations leave no room for doubt in this respect. They affirm the republican form of government, liberty of conscience, no State religion, the produce of labour to the labourer, and the possession of the soil to the people'.⁴⁶ A petition presented to the Home Secretary requesting the commutation of the sentence passed on the Fenian prisoners was ignored by the British government.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels supported the struggle for Irish self-determination.⁴⁷ Although condemning individual acts of terrorism perpetrated by Fenians in England, such as the Clerkenwell explosion in 1867, Marx, Engels and their families supported fully the amnesty movement for the release of Fenian prisoners. On the event of the execution of the Manchester Martyrs, Engels mentions in a letter to Marx: 'I need not tell you that black and green predominate in my home too'.⁴⁸ Here he refers to the sympathy his wife, Lizzy Burns, a working woman of Irish descent, felt for the Fenian movement. The Fenians' connections with the First International (IWMA) is indeed a remarkable chapter in the history of Fenianism. Like the Young Irelanders who looked for support among English Chartists for the Irish cause, Fenians sought an alliance

with the British radical movement. Stephens also had a meeting with the French revolutionary Gustave Cluseret, later to command the army of the Paris Commune in 1871, offering him command of the Fenian forces in Ireland.⁴⁹ In preparation for a rising in early 1867, Thomas Kelly and Cluseret approached the English radical Charles Bradlaugh to secure his opinion on the 'Proclamation of the Irish Republic'.⁵⁰ This document underlines the radical democratic character of the republic they had in mind: 'We aim at founding a republic based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour. The soil of Ireland at present in the possession of an oligarchy belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored. We declare also in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and state'.⁵¹ The final section is an appeal to the English working class to fight alongside them and to take up arms 'in the coming struggle for human freedom'.⁵²

The actual rising when it finally took place on 5 March 1867, was a failure. Stephens had been deposed as Head Centre following his procrastination concerning the date for a rising, which was influenced, no doubt, by the split in the American movement. Cluseret refused to lead a force that was inadequately armed. Godfrey Massey, an Irish-American officer, was appointed to command the Fenian forces, but instead of keeping to a guerrilla strategy, which had been planned as the first stage, he decided to go ahead with a full-scale rising, a recipe for disaster.⁵³ As a military conspiracy, Fenianism was unsuccessful, but the organisation remained in existence, though much decimated, and members of the military council planned the Easter rising of 1916. As a revolutionary idea which had as its base the establishment of a democratic republic, it was to live on and give inspiration to the developing national liberation struggle in Ireland. It was later to inspire the former Fenian Michael Davitt with a policy of 'New Departure', combining nationalism, in the form of Home Rule agitation, with the demand of land for the people in the Land League, and it was to lead to an alliance between republicanism and socialism in Easter Week. We can trace a connection between the Fenian Proclamation for a democratic republic of 1867 and the Proclamation read out by Pádraig Pearse on the steps of the GPO on Easter Monday, 1916.

To a certain extent the Young Ireland and Fenian movements of the nineteenth century were a retrograde step as far as the Enlightenment philosophy of the United Irishmen is concerned. In certain Young Irelanders and Fenians there was the narrowing down of republicanism to a parochial concept of nationalism. On the other hand, however, republican ideals were further elaborated. With the Young Irelanders came the idea of nationhood and cultural identity as essential aspects of republicanism, and the ideas of Lalor and Mitchel that the social question and the

national question in Ireland are inextricably entwined were to influence the political thought of both Michael Davitt and James Connolly. The democratic appeal of Fenianism to the lower classes, and in this respect Fenianism was a greater mass popular movement than Young Ireland ever was, inspired James Connolly to write in *Labour in Irish History*: 'It is no wonder that the real nationalists of Ireland, the Separatists, have always been men of broad human sympathies and intense democracy, for it has ever been in the heart of the working class at home they found the most loyal support, and in the working class abroad their most resolute defenders'.⁵⁴ Connolly was to insist that his concept of a socialist republic concurred with the democratic ideals of past republicans. 'A socialist republic is the application to agriculture and industry; to the farm, the field, the workshop, of the democratic principle of the republican ideal.'⁵⁵

Notes

¹ J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London: Faber & Faber 1969), p. 290.

² G. Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1972), p. 162.

³ T.A. Jackson, *Ireland Her Own* (London: Lawrence & Wishart 1971), p. 230.

⁴ G. Ó Tuathaigh, pp. 186-187.

⁵ T. Keneally, *The Great Shame* (London: Vintage 1999), p. 154.

⁶ C.G. Duffy, *A Short Life of Thomas Davis* (London: Fisher Unwin 1895), p. 71.

⁷ Op. cit., p. 81.

⁸ T.A. Jackson, p. 231.

⁹ S. Cronin, *Irish Nationalism. A History of its Roots and Ideology* (Dublin: Academy Press 1980), p. 73.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 76.

¹¹ Op. cit., p. 75.

¹² T.A. Jackson, p. 231.

In his book *A Soul Came into Ireland, Thomas Davis 1814-1845* (Dublin: Geography Publications 1995), John Molony shows that Davis's concept of *nationality* was not simply that of a romantic dreamer, but in Ireland's situation it was a political force to be reckoned with. To Davis the nation was an amalgam of all its parts (catholic and protestant). His own special mission he saw as helping to create that nation, 'by diffusing in song and story and article the deepest meaning of nationality', (p. 157. See also pp. 142 and 224). Molony points out that Davis never used the word *nationalism*, but *nationality* which was 'not merely a sentiment but a conviction shaped by his own experience as an Irishman exposed to the conditions of his country and her people since the Union'. (Op. cit. p. 99). According to Anthony Smith in *National Identity* (London: Penguin 1991), *nationalism* as a political ideology with a cultural doctrine emerged in the eighteenth century. The idea that each nation had its individual 'genius', its own ways of thinking, acting and communicating, which had to be conserved or even rediscovered was voiced by Montesquieu and Rousseau in France, and by Herder in Germany. The concept of *unity*, particularly in its meaning of social cohesion, 'the brotherhood of all nationals in the nation' (p. 76) was one of the central ideas of eighteenth-century republicanism. The concept of *autonomy* as categorical imperative stems from the German philosopher Kant who applied it to the self-determination of the individual. In the nineteenth century, German writers such as Fichte and Schlegel used the term to refer to

groups, giving rise to a philosophy of national self-determination. (See p. 75).

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford 1993, states that the term *nationalism* as advocacy of or support for national independence was used from the mid-nineteenth century and quotes M.B. Brown: 'The nation state and ... nationalism are inextricably associated with the rise of the capitalist state'.

¹³ C.G. Duffy, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹⁴ L. Fogerty, *James Fintan Lalor* (Dublin: Talbot Press 1921), p. 120.

¹⁵ T.A. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

¹⁶ J. Mitchel, *History of Ireland* (London: Washbourne n.d.), p. 244.

¹⁷ *United Irishman*, April 22, 1848.

¹⁸ J. Mitchel, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

¹⁹ *United Irishman*, April 1, 1848.

²⁰ J. Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (Dublin: Gill n.d.), p. 78.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²² T. Keneally, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

This can be explained, at least partially, by Mitchel's hatred of capitalism, represented by the northern states—his comment that Irish seamstresses and navvies were in greatest need of liberation—and his possible belief that the Irish peasant was worse off than the slave in a southern household.

²³ G. Ó Tuathaigh, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

²⁴ The Tenant Right League of North and South was formed in the 1850s, the chief objects of which were fixity of tenure, lower rents and legal protection for Ulster tenant right. It was a non-sectarian organisation which stressed parliamentary action. The opportunism of the middle-class catholic leaders, its condemnation by the catholic hierarchy and ascendancy landlords alike, led to its final disintegration.

²⁵ J. O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism*, vol. 1 (Shannon: Irish University Press 1968), p. 57.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

²⁷ T.A. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

²⁸ P. Rose, *The Manchester Martyrs: The Story of a Fenian Tragedy* (London: Lawrence & Wishart 1970), p. 80.

²⁹ D. Ryan, *The Fenian Chief. A Biography of James Stephens* (Dublin and Sydney: Gill & Son 1967), p. 84.

³⁰ P. Metscher, *Republicanism and Socialism in Ireland* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1986), p. 118.

³¹ J. Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London: Pluto Press 1994), pp. 37ff.

³² Newsinger has tried to redress the balance by situating the Fenian movement not only in the context of Irish politics and society, but also in that of nineteenth-century British history and the history of the British Empire, (*op. cit.*, p. 3). For information concerning the connection between Fenianism and the First International, see P. Metscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-165.

³³ D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³⁴ J. Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Fenian Brotherhood* (Irish University Press 1969), p. 1.

³⁵ T.D. Williams (ed.), *Secret Societies in Ireland* (Gill & Macmillan 1973), p. 82.

³⁶ O'Leary, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁷ J. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Shannon: IUP 1969), p. 46.

³⁸ D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

- ⁴⁰ E. Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (London: Methuen 1951), p. 145.
- ⁴¹ One of the most remarkable feats of the organisation was the recruitment of Fenians in the armed forces, (J. Devoy, op. cit., p. 130).
- ⁴² R.J. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context* (Dublin: Wolfhound 1998), p. 10.
In his book, Comerford diminishes Fenianism as a revolutionary movement, placing it on the level of 'colliery brass bands and the beginnings of association football'. Fenianism (spelt significantly throughout with a small 'f') is reduced to a leisure pursuit and its importance as a broad, radical political movement is minimised. This revisionist work reveals a conservative hostility towards anything radical and detracts from an otherwise important contribution to an empirical knowledge of the movement.
- ⁴³ J. Newsinger, op. cit., p. 32.
- ⁴⁴ Op. cit., p. 38.
- ⁴⁵ *Marx and Engels on Ireland* (London: Lawrence & Wishart 1971), p. 383.
- ⁴⁶ Op. cit., p. 369.
- ⁴⁷ Marx considered that it was 'in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland'. Op. cit., p. 162.
- ⁴⁸ Op. cit., pp. 145-146.
- ⁴⁹ J. Newsinger, op. cit., p. 51.
- ⁵⁰ Op. cit., p. 54.
- ⁵¹ R. Kee, *The Bold Fenian Men*, vol. 2 of *The Green Flag* (London: Quartett Books 1976), p. 38.
- ⁵² Loc. cit.
- ⁵³ J. Newsinger, op. cit., p. 56.
- ⁵⁴ J. Connolly, *Labour in Irish History* (Dublin: New Books 1973), p. 127.
- ⁵⁵ J. Connolly, *The Workers' Republic* (Dublin: Three Candles 1951), pp. 50-51.

The English Republic

DOROTHY THOMPSON

By the second half of the eighteenth century, England must have seemed the European country most likely to dispense with monarchical and aristocratic government. English kings had been by-passed, dethroned, even decapitated for the protection of the protestant faith and the sanctity of parliamentary government. Legitimacy in English monarchs came second to adherence to acceptable political and religious views. The ruling house of Hanover was unpopular with many sections of the populace, a populace notorious for its and unruly and levelling behaviour. A cheap and expanding press fed a sophisticated and organised public opinion among the lower orders. In 1779 increasing concern with political and clerical authority erupted into major riots against catholic relief and against the refusal of parliament to modify the relief bill in response to mass petitioning. The riots, which took the name of the instigator of the petitions, Lord George Gordon, also took in attacks on poll booths and prisons, the symbols of state power. Two hundred people perished in the military confrontation by which the rioters were brought to heel, and other European states, particularly France, where central control and policing were more powerful, looked on in horror. By the opening of the twentieth century, however, the death of a monarch brought hundreds of thousands of mourners into the streets in England, and by the close of that century Britain was one among a group of north European countries in which a stable democracy existed under a monarchical system.

It is one of the curious aspects of British history that there has not been in England, at least since the seventeenth century, a republican party. What is more, there has been little consideration of republican thought in England by historians of modern Britain. Most of those who have written on the subject have equated anti-monarchism with republicanism, a slip in logic which is easy to make. As recent history has shown, however, hostility to the present incumbent of an office may reflect a lofty ideal of the office rather than hostility to the office itself. (I have to confess that while I have been following much of the discussion about the monarchy that has gone on in the popular press in recent months, I have not read it

all and may well have missed some of the arguments). It remains the case that hostility to the crown in English history has more often been in the name of an alternative candidate for the throne than of the abolition of the institution. In this connection, too, much of the writing has been more concerned with attacks on individual monarchs than with actual republicanism. Thus Anthony Taylor, in his work on British anti-monarchism since 1790,¹ devotes the few pages he gives to Ireland to demonstrations of hostility to individual monarchs rather than to that part of Britain and Ireland in which practical republican tactics and ideals of republican government can be seen to have developed in the years under consideration. Mocking or subversive attacks on individual monarchs may be made for a variety of reasons or based on a variety of readings of the symbolism of the crown and its rituals. The positive establishment of a republic may be a good distance away from mere carping at individual monarchs.

The great republics in modern times have, for the most part, been established as the result of the overthrow of despotic, often foreign, domination. The republican spirit inspired the movements of opposition to monarchical or imperial power, as well as forming the political philosophy of the governments that replaced them. The American revolution threw off the power of the British crown; the French revolution of 1789 overthrew a crown and aristocracy based on privilege and oppressive power. In the course of the nineteenth century, the French people asserted the values of republicanism against oligarchy and empire. In the twentieth century, Ireland and India established republics as the result of throwing off imperial domination by Britain. In all these examples republicanism represented a positive alternative to monarchical or imperial rule, not simply the abolition of monarchy. The British Commonwealth of the seventeenth century, set up after the power struggle between parliament and the monarchy, and the republicanism of Thomas Paine, expressed in part as a defence of the American and French revolutions in the eighteenth century, were both resistant to authoritarian forms of church and state, and were also the expression of an alternative, more democratic and rational idea of government.

Traditionally, English public-schoolboys have been educated largely through the classics—the grammar from which their schools got their names, and the literature and histories of the Greek and Roman empires. The idea of the republic came into their early education and vocabulary. By the seventeenth century, the word meant, according to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, ‘a state in which the supreme power rests in the people and their elected representatives or officers as opposed to one governed by a King or the like’. This definition may be said to include

both the classical ideal of the republic and the emerging non-monarchical ideas of the Europe of the time. Both these are positive notions of participatory government by citizens and not simply systems without a monarch at their head.

What I want to consider here is English (not British) republicanism and republicanism rather than anti-monarchical activity. The two latter, of course, are not mutually exclusive, but it must be noted that, while republicanism is by definition against the institution of monarchy, anti-monarchical demonstrations are by no means always in the name of republicanism. Even Paxton's lines in praise of Cromwell use the terminology of royalism: '*The best of princes England had was the Farmer of St Ives*'.

Modern English republicanism begins with Tom Paine. After the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, when the throne was brought within the compass of the law and limited in its powers, radical reformers until Paine emerged tended to include a constitutional monarchy as part of a reformed and widened constitution. The chief spokesman for universal suffrage in the eighteenth century was Major John Cartwright. According to the memoir written by his daughter:

Although in forming a new government in another part of the world Major Cartwright would certainly have preferred a form of government as simply republican as would be consistent with security from anarchy, he never wished, in his own country to interfere with its ancient constitution.

Many reformers based their claims for a wider extension of the franchise on a mythical conception of 'pure' Saxon government in which the king took the counsel of all his subjects, or on pre-Norman monarchs, from Boadicea to Alfred the Great, who had led struggles for English or British freedom against foreign invaders. A constitutionally constrained monarchy was included in most reformers' vision of change. Much anti-monarchical rhetoric since then has had this image of the constitution behind it and has demanded better behaviour from the monarch rather than the abolition of the institution. Paine's first broadside against the British monarchy in his *Common Sense*, published in America in 1776 and supporting the republican ideals of the rebellion, was contested among radical and Jacobin circles in England who looked to the pure constitution of Alfred for their model. 'Much as we respect the opinions of Mr. Thomas Paine', wrote John Baxter, 'we cannot agree with him that we have no constitution'. This contradiction—between the idea of a constitution which would be modified and extended but retain its monarchical character and the ideal of a remodelled republic based on American republicanism and the French revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality and

fraternity—was present at the beginning of the nineteenth century and has been present in the arguments of radical reformers ever since.

Edmund Burke, who had welcomed the American revolution, was moved by the French revolution to reject constitution-building in favour of more gradualist reforms. The French revolution had set a new precedent by overthrowing a system of absolute monarchy, privileged aristocracy, and an authoritarian church, and writing a new secular constitution based on the concept of citizenship, which meant equality before the law, freedom of worship, and the diminution of local control by landlords and large property owners. It was in response to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790, that Paine wrote his *The Rights of Man*, published in 1791 and 1792. This became, and has to a degree remained, the main British text for a republican programme which rejects any kind of monarchy in favour of the concept of a written constitution based on the values which inspired the French revolution. Indeed, it went in some ways further than this in a second part enunciating a concept of social responsibility for the care of the old, the sick and others without means of support, which presaged in many ways the social democratic, republican programmes of nineteenth-century European reformers.

In his recent work, Anthony Taylor has suggested that historians of British radical movements have concentrated too much on Paineite republicanism and have, thereby, missed an important form of 'populist' republicanism. This he discerns in the knockabout anti-monarchism of the popular press in the nineteenth century and in the republican political rumblings in the 1860s and 1870s, some of which found a parliamentary voice opposing grants to the Queen's children on occasions such as royal marriages. In the decade following the death of Prince Albert, when the queen retired and withdrew from all public duties, there was certainly an outbreak of anti-monarchical squibs and pamphlets, and the need for a monarch was questioned when the country was clearly managing very well in her majesty's absence. But the very history of these outbreaks and the profile of their rise and fall illustrate rather well the basic differences between republicanism and criticism of particular members of the royal family. When the royal profile was raised by the illness of the Prince of Wales and the picture of the queen, his mother, watching at his bedside, there was an outbreak of popular support for the monarchy which effectively wiped out the upper levels of the republican movement in parliament and demonstrated a profound concern with the actions of, in Bagehot's famous words, the 'retired widow and ... unemployed youth'.

The draconian suppression of popular political movements in England during and immediately after the wars of the 1790s, and in the first decades of the nineteenth century, were inspired by fear of the influence

of French revolutionary ideas in England. The wartime measures of the Combination Laws and the Six Acts were followed in the post-war years by the hanging of the leaders of the Pentridge rising of 1817, the Peterloo massacre of 1819, and the public execution of the leaders of the Cato Street conspiracy in 1820. For a time, all movements for reform of parliament, let alone of the establishment of a republic, were forbidden and suppressed. Gradually, however, movement for parliamentary reform took off throughout Britain and Ireland. Extra-parliamentary pressure was a major force in bringing about the first Reform Act, of 1832, which gave the suffrage to property other than that based on land ownership. In the years that followed the Act, those who were still excluded from the franchise formed the massive nationwide Chartist movement which demanded universal manhood suffrage and the granting of full citizenship to all men. Supporters of the Paineite republican tradition played an important part in Chartism, but they were only one of a number of democratic plebian traditions which came together in the movement. It may be noted here that the Paineite tradition had always been presented in terms of male citizens. I have argued elsewhere that the exclusion at all influential levels of political discourse of the idea of female citizenship was in fact an important element in the stabilisation of the monarchy under the long reign of Victoria. In an age in which women were effectively excluded from public political life, the image of a monarch outside and above politics was more sustainable when that monarch was a woman.²

In the Chartist movement, Paine's was a name that was honoured. His birthday was celebrated with feasts and pie suppers, and his works enjoyed an enormous circulation, being published in Welsh as well as English. Nevertheless, Taylor is probably right in seeing his influence on precise political programmes and pronouncements as being limited. Neither his republicanism nor his deism were ever dominant in the programmes or the rhetoric of the Chartists. Its popular appeal still included christian rhetoric and constitutional arguments based on the idea of the corrupt Norman yoke and the ideal purity of the Saxon heritage. For example, one of the leading Chartist intellectuals, Samuel Kydd, took the pseudonym 'Alfred' for his history of the Factory Movement and its fight against the exploitation of child labour. The most detailed set of political demands actually offered to parliament by the Chartists was in the second petition of 1842 and its important preamble. As well as the six points—universal (male) suffrage, secret ballot, abolition of property qualification for standing for parliament, payment of MPs, equal electoral districts, and annual parliaments—the preamble included the demand for the repeal of the 1801 Act of Union with Ireland and the 1834 Poor Law Amendment

Act and criticism of the money paid to the queen, her consort and the king of Hanover (her uncle who had assumed the crown of Hanover from which Victoria was excluded by the Salic law governing the German throne, which excluded women from the royal line, and who still received a handsome payment each year from British funds). These huge payments were compared with the few coppers a day on which many of her subjects were forced to live. There was, however, no suggestion of a demand for her abdication, let alone for the abolition of the monarchy. Indeed, Chartists on occasion appealed to the queen to dismiss her ministers when they feared an attack on their organisation and meetings, and not a few seem to have believed, mistakenly, that she had personally intervened in 1840 to secure the commutation of the death sentences on the Chartist leaders of the Welsh rising of 1839, the one seriously organised outbreak of violence in the Chartist years. In the autumn of 1839, thousands of Welsh iron-workers and miners marched on the town of Newport and were defeated by the armed garrison there. The death sentences on the three chief leaders, John Frost, Zephania Williams and William Jones, were commuted to transportation for life after a nationwide petition for mercy. Ironically, it was neither the queen nor the Whig government leaders who procured the commutation, but the recommendation for mercy of the presiding judge, Chief Justice Tindal, which the premier, Lord Melbourne, himself totally committed to carrying out the death sentence, felt could not be ignored.

The Chartist paper, the *Northern Star*, did indeed publish squibs against the 'royal tax-eaters' which their queen was constantly bringing into the world, but this was hardly republicanism. Peter Murray M'Douall, an expert in these anti-royal jibes, also published in his *Chartist and Republican Journal* a 'Poetical Petition to Queen Victoria on Behalf of the Oppressed Working Classes of Great Britain and in Demand of their Political Rights and Liberty'. This address was criticised by W.J. Linton, a republican of the Paineite or Mazzinian variety, but it does, in fact, seem to represent a general Chartist desire to exploit all constitutional means to get their petitions heard. Disraeli, whose picture of Chartism in his 1844 novel *Sybil or the Two Nations* is one of the most politically sophisticated of all the 'Condition of England' novels, has his girl factory workers invoke the presence of a queen on the throne to justify their own active participation in Chartist politics.

There certainly were committed republicans in the Chartist movement, men like W.J. Linton and W.E. Adams. These men propounded a republican ideal based on citizenship and on the tradition of the Commonwealthmen of the seventeenth century and the writings of Paine and Giuseppe Mazzini. Their contemporary model was the Italian's idea

of a republic, set up in defiance of royal and papal rule and based on the ideals of democratic secular government and of the commitment of citizens to a pure and honest society. Republicans of this sort were, however, as Taylor says, a small minority, almost a sect. Later in the century, they were to dismiss with scorn the ‘republicanism’ of parliamentarians like Dilke and Chamberlain, who based their opposition to the monarchy on the inadequacy of a particular contemporary ruler.

The Chartist attitude was, in general, more pragmatic. Ernest Jones, one of the intellectuals of mainstream Chartism, assumed a generally anti-monarchical view among his readers. His long poem *The Revolt of Hindustan*, written while he was in prison for sedition and published in 1851, predicated the rise of a new ideal republic on the overthrow of the British Empire, which was to begin with a revolt in India. Among the many evils of the old imperialist nation that were to be overthrown was the monarchy:

*Royalty, that dull and outworn tool!
Bedizened doll upon a gilded stool—
The seal that Party used to stamp an Act
Vanished in form as it had long in fact.*

Jones dedicated his poem to ‘the people of the United Queendom and of the United States’: the latter, ‘free citizens of the republic’; the former, ‘unenfranchised subjects of the monarchy’.

Although clearly of republican sympathies at this time, Jones, who never defected from his general position on universal suffrage and Irish independence, was able, in a famous defence of democracy in a debate with Professor Blackie of Edinburgh in 1867, to concede that ‘there may be democracy under a king as well as under a president’. He refused comparisons between France and England:

France, where licentious tyranny mocked at every virtue and trampled on every right, and Britain, where the virtues of the throne are but an emblem of the virtues of the nation; between the land of Charles the Ninth and Louis Quinze, and the Empire of Elizabeth and Queen Victoria.

Here again he was linking the current female monarch with a queen who had reigned in the quasi-mythical period of England’s true greatness.

The resurgence of parliamentary republicanism during the period of the queen’s retirement from public duties after her husband’s death, and the more radical outbursts among working men and women in response to the Paris Commune of 1870 have been studied by several historians.³ This was perhaps the period in the nineteenth century at which Painite republicanism and ‘populist’ anti-monarchism came together for a time. It appears, however, that the surge of popular monarchism which came with

the illness and recovery of the Prince of Wales in the winter of 1871 effectively killed both the small parliamentary support and the wider public discontent with the monarch's behaviour. It may be noted again that much of the criticism of the crown, even in this period of consciously republican politics, was concerned with the expense of the queen and her family rather than with the validity of the institution.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, English Labour politicians have often made vaguely republican noises. Left-wing intellectuals, from positivists such as Frederick Harrison and Edward Beesly, to William Morris and the members of the Socialist League, believed in the ideal of a secular republican form of government. After the death of Victoria, however, republicanism never appeared in the programme of any of the political parties. Perhaps it has been seen as a possible diversion from the more urgent matter of attacking a system which had to be overturned in its entirety before it could be reformed. As an editorial in the Socialist League journal, *Commonweal*, declared in 1887:

We assume as a matter of course that a government of privileged persons, hereditary and commercial cannot act usefully or rightly towards the community; their position forbids it. [But] as to mere politics, Absolutism, Constitutionalism, Republicanism have all been tried in our day and under our present social system, and have all alike failed in dealing with the real evils of life.

The word republicanism, then, has been used in England with two distinct meanings. One of these proposes an alternative structure for a democratic state, the other simply the abolition of the monarchy. In modern England, it is said that members of parliament may be found in all three of the main parties who would welcome the abolition of the monarchy. Whether these people hold a common vision of an English republic, however, is open to question. The abolition of some of the hereditary votes in the House of Lords without a clear set of proposals for an alternative democratic second chamber reveals some of the problems of abolishing a part of the old constitution without considering its replacement. Few people regard the present mixture of hereditary voters, placemen and women, superannuated politicians, and wealthy business persons as more democratic than the old hereditary lot. The reform of the House was not informed by any kind of republican spirit.

This spirit, indeed, would appear to be the main element missing from the contemporary debate. It is all too easy to make out a case against monarchy. It is expensive, non-modern, produces public figures who give the country cause for alarm and embarrassment, and much more. But is there a robust, democratic spirit in the wings, waiting to direct and inspire the national conscience when the royals are deprived of that function? Criticism of the members of the royal family is rife in today's political

atmosphere. Nevertheless, the outbursts after the death of Princess Diana and, perhaps even more, the space given in all the press, broadsheets as well as tabloids, to the activities of her elder son suggest a strong current of popular monarchism to which Labour as well as Conservative politicians subscribe avidly. A strong and positive vision of a renewed democratic republic does not seem to have a place in contemporary English politics. On the contrary, radical intellectuals, even 'republican' intellectuals, now seem to have abandoned the traditions of earlier generations and joined the queue of actors, cricketers, arms dealers, failed politicians, dodgy businessmen and party funders to accept honours from the royal hand, some of them given in the name of the British Empire. While this atmosphere continues, an English Republic is not on the agenda.

Notes

¹ Anthony Taylor, *Down with the Crown* (London: Reaktion 2000).

² Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* (London: Virago Press 1990). New edition due in early 2001.

³ Royden Harrison, 'The Republicans: A Study of the Proletarian Left' in *Before the Socialists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1965); and Fergus D'Arcy, 'Charles Bradlaugh and the English Republican Movement 1868-78' in *Historical Journal* XXV, 1982.

From Deference to Citizenship: Irish Republicanism 1870–1923

PATRICK MAUME

Irish nationalism and republicanism are often treated as transcendent phenomena to be glorified or condemned, but, while taking account of the abiding issues, it is also necessary to understand what they defined themselves against in any particular period.

Deference denied

The first of these was an *ancien régime* ideology which presented society in terms of patronage, dependence and hierarchy. The monarchy stood at the apex of a state viewed in familial terms ('family' could be defined by household membership rather than blood relationship). For much of the nineteenth century, landlords exercised many administrative functions later lost to central administration or local government, and surplus sons of the gentry enjoyed privileged access to administrative jobs. On a social level, such functions as harvest dinners for larger tenants and ceremonial addresses by tenants at points in the landlord's family cycle reasserted paternalist claims.

The paternalist self-image, always wishful thinking, was further vitiated by the famine and the increasing distancing of the élite from plebeian recreations and moral economy. It was subverted by nationalist movements not only through physical force and boycott but by orchestrated withdrawal of deferential courtesies; and occasions on which ceremonies associated with deference took place were appropriated to honour nationalist leaders whose authority was based on the popular will, just as nationalist and catholic monuments contested public space with architectural expressions of state and landlord authority.

The image of the virtuous, self-reliant, moral, patriotic peasant was a conscious riposte to conservative images of peasant irresponsibility and deference. Peasant virtue was alleged to reflect productive labour, contrasted with a self-indulgent, aristocratic leisure-ethos. Republican pastoralists projected this ideal onto the existing rural population; they recognised tensions between tenant farmers and labourers and the political

passivity of farmers with something to lose, but believed these could be resolved by politicisation. Republican activists attempted to absorb local agrarian societies into the wider movement, despite fears that absorption might work in both directions.

The whig failure

One way to equal citizenship might have come through popular liberalism defined against a tory landed class; its possibilities were indicated by recurring alliances between liberals and constitutional nationalists and accusations by separatists that constitutionalists were liberals rather than nationalists. However, the shadow of the famine, deindustrialisation and earlier attempts to 'marketise' landholding prevented such political assimilation. Liberals (whose leadership remained heavily aristocratic until the 1880s) too often dismissed Irish demands for special treatment as demagoguery and were reluctant to make concessions until agitation was too widespread to be disregarded. Irish police employed political surveillance and *agents provocateur* to an extent unknown in contemporary Britain; nationalists quoted British denunciations of continental political policing as tyranny and compared liberal denunciations of Neapolitan prisons and advocacy of Italian national self-government with practices in Ireland.

Outside Ulster, liberalism became associated with upper-middle-class 'whigs', whose political brokerage provided certain benefits for previously excluded clients but easily shaded into self-seeking, and the project of creating a biddable catholic ruling class by many of the higher clergy. 'Whig' ability to win support through brokerage was also limited by a sense that catholics were discriminated against as catholics in a British polity which saw protestantism as the basis of autonomous citizenship and intellectual and economic progress. The idea that independence would mean freedom to be catholics coexisted with secular nationalism and reinforced separatism by grassroots 'faith and fatherland' sentiments, despite republican anticlericalism and the hostility of the higher clergy. Meritocracy made headway against patronage, but too many potential meritocrats and followers saw this as widening clientage rather than genuine reform for the administration to acquire a genuine popular base.

Decay, anger and self-help

Many young nationalists associated their disadvantages facing institutionalised patronage structures with national economic decay and attributed Irish poverty to British exploitation, which divided the nation by corrupting sections with hollow privileges. This angry association of

political corruption and looming national extinction found expression in the writings of John Mitchel. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century of all shades shared Mitchel's rage at the contrast between whig promises and the state of the nation. In his final manifestoes, denouncing corruption and declaring Ireland could be saved if the Irish willed it, Pearse echoes Mitchel.

A canon of nationalist literature, centred on the writings of Young Ireland, was disseminated through publications such as the Sullivan brothers' *Irish Penny Readings* and *Speeches from the Dock* or popular papers like the weekly *Shamrock*, providing a framework through which populist newspapers interpreted current events. Reading rooms and debating societies provided social outlets as well as political expression. A culture of artisan self-help, overlapping with male social networks, produced a separatist subculture consciously defying the control of authority figures in church and state. The self-disciplined citizen soldier was contrasted with the mercenaries of the government and defined against the urban lumpenproletariat as well as the idle aristocracy. The GAA reflects this resistance to absorption from above and below. Most games excluded by the GAA ban were seen as upper-class; the exception was soccer, associated with degenerate anglicised lumpenproletarians.

Secrecy versus politicisation

The need for revolutionary movements to gain recruits and publicise the cause coexisted with the need to organise in secret. This was less problematic at moments of political upheaval, when success seemed imminent; in more quiescent times the IRB maintained organisational continuity, but was hindered by internal rivalries, infiltration, and the problem of maintaining support when there seemed no hope of victory in the near future. At such times, republican commitment reflected the life-cycle, with members falling away as the prospect of revolutionary change seemed remote and they acquired family responsibilities. The republican movement consisted of a shifting body of younger activists and a core of older figures whose long-term commitments involved considerable sacrifice. Critics saw republicans as irresponsible adolescent fantasists; purists saw constitutionalism as corruption and republican heroism incarnated in the lifelong commitment of such figures as John O'Leary or the London-based Fenian, Mark Ryan.

Some separatists, as well as most constitutionalists, thought secrecy demoralising and contrary to the ethos of citizenship. In 1848, Mitchel attributed the failure of the United Irishmen to their operation as a secret society and declared victory inevitable if the Irish people scorned temporising and openly defied British rule; he was transported to

Australia. Sixty years later Griffith declared he had no secrets for spies to uncover and proclaimed ‘treason’ openly; Griffith’s paper was occasionally seized by the police before 1906 (failure to take more drastic action reflected political space won by nationalists since 1848). Some later separatists subscribed to the Mitchelian view for political or religious reasons; when final victory seemed imminent after 1916, some Sinn Féin leaders argued that a secret society was unnecessary once mass support was secured.

Economic citizenship

Separatism often involved rejection of economic liberalism. Most nationalists (and some unionists) believed that the early nineteenth-century deindustrialisation of Ireland could have been prevented by tariffs, that Irish workers and employers shared a common interest in the well-being of Irish firms, and that an Irish state would promote the national economic interest rather than any section. It was believed republicanism implied social equality. The Belfast Fenian Frank Roney joined the IRB because he believed the poverty he saw in Belfast slums could not exist in a republic. (His exile to America disabused him of this belief). The Invincible P.J.P. Tynan argued Home Rule could not solve Ireland’s problems because it precluded industrial development through tariffs. Belief in a developmental state was compatible with a ‘producerist’ alliance between Irish employers and workers (often seen in terms of conflict between those who made things—farmers, labourers, manufacturers—and ‘parasitic’ importers and distributors, who aped aristocratic scorn for ‘trade’). However, it was often equated with socialism by later writers who included Irish capitalists in the parasitic classes, sought to construct a socialist republican pedigree from the nationalist canon, and called socialism the natural corollary of republican equal citizenship (while traditional nationalists, not always insincerely, proclaimed that British workers would prove no less manipulative towards their Irish allies than British whigs).

Similarly, the attraction of republicanism for some elite women in the period reflected hostility to the aristocratic view of woman as ornament. Despite its limitations, the classical republican image of heroic domesticity, servicing the male citizen-warrior and the next generation of citizens, could be extended to justify political and economic activity in defence of the ‘hearth’, metaphorically extended to the whole nation. Here again, towards the end of the period, the possible full implications of equal citizenship were advanced.

Twins

For most of the period 1870–1922, republicanism was overshadowed by the Irish parliamentary party. The two movements had more in common than often realised. Throughout the period, constitutional nationalists joined separatists in commemorating the Manchester Martyrs (whose anniversary on 23 November became a major nationalist anniversary) or demanding amnesty for prisoners—the amnesty campaign of the late 1860s and early 1870s was a seed-bed of the Home Rule movement as well as a means by which the IRB regrouped. The Irish party often presented itself as part of a constitutional tradition going back to Grattan and O’Connell and distinct from the separatism of Tone and Young Ireland. It was also possible (especially for members who had been Fenians) to see the Irish party as heirs to the Fenians, achieving their aims by different means. The ‘other’ against whom many Irish party supporters defined their nationalism was not so much the IRB remnant, as the ‘whigs’ and ‘Nominal Home Rulers’ displaced from parliament in 1885 but retaining influence through economic, professional and political patronage; internal party divisions were characterised by accusations that the opposing faction had reverted to ‘whiggery’.

The role of the IRB in the Land League at local level (especially in its Mayo birthplace) remains underexplored. Leading IRB Land Leaguers believed the British government was so dominated by the landed classes that it would never make serious concessions to the tenants; hence, land agitation would automatically produce separatism. This underestimated the willingness of Gladstone to make concessions in his 1881 Land Act, which detached many farmers from radical agitation. The land campaigns succeeded in partially paralysing the administration and to some degree creating alternative power structures such as ‘Land League courts’, but the campaign of 1881–2 while the main Parnellite leaders were interned in Kilmainham, though showing Ireland could not be governed without some concession to Parnell, degenerated into sporadic, unco-ordinated violence and failed to produce a viable alternative strategy or leadership.

The flight of many radicals after the Kilmainham Treaty and the Phoenix Park murders strengthened Parnell’s parliamentarian control of the movement. The artisan separatist tradition survived, Irish-American groups continued to mount dynamite attacks in Britain, and an IRB tradition mixed with ‘Whiteboyism’ survived in areas such as mid-Clare and east Galway where the land struggle was particularly bitter—but these were weak, ill-directed, and increasingly penetrated by government agents. Their main importance lay in the creation of new martyrs and their use against constitutional nationalism by unionists. Meanwhile,

accommodation and intimidation of conservative forces within catholic Ireland which were too powerful to be destroyed, an aggressive campaign against the administration of Ireland (in particular the administration of justice), and the extension of the franchise by the Third Reform Act gave Parnell a stronger electoral mandate and, by British terms of reference, a clearer claim to represent Ireland than any previous nationalist leader.

‘Union of Hearts’?

Gladstone’s response to the 1885 election—willingness to offer greater Irish autonomy than any mainstream British politician had previously considered—suggested Irish concerns might possibly be accommodated within a British framework. Gladstonian liberals and even nationalists claimed Home Rule would produce a ‘Union of Hearts’ more enduring than an incorporating union based on coercion. As most of the liberal aristocracy finally defected to the conservatives, Michael Davitt—already active in British radical campaigns—proclaimed that ‘British Democracy’ and the Irish people faced a common struggle against privilege. (A few Party supporters were republicans but not separatists, advocates of a federal British republic). Richard Barry O’Brien, a former Fenian sympathiser who moderated his views after the reforms of the first Gladstone government convinced him some Englishmen recognised Irish grievances, published books upholding Gladstonian claims to represent the liberal reform tradition (as against liberal unionists) by arguing that liberal policies in Ireland were blighted by unwillingness to accept the logical conclusion of trusting the people. The Plan of Campaign land agitation, whose objectives included showing that Ireland would be ungovernable without Home Rule and keeping local activists occupied, consolidated Irish support by displaying parliamentarians as martyrs, although some separatists regarded their brief imprisonments as cheap and showy in comparison with the long suffering of Fenian prisoners.

This strategy had its limitations. The plan structures were damaged by mismanagement and countered by ruthlessly-enforced emergency legislation. Liberals made electoral use of the plan, but only a few radicals were prepared to endorse outright defiance of the law and Parnell privately doubted its wisdom; the agitation provided unionists with additional ‘evidence’ that Irish nationalists were too barbaric to be acceptable political partners, supported by copious recital of agrarian violence and mutual denunciations by Irish and Gladstonians. Unionists proclaimed that nationalist majorities in ‘the south and west’ did not constitute a distinct nation which could override law-abiding citizens who knew how to run the country; the view that Ulster unionists were not a national minority but a separate nation was occasionally canvassed,

though it did not become central until the dismantling of the landlord position and the persistence of the Home Rule demand further undermined southern unionism. Most fatally, the 'Union of Hearts' project rested on an unrealistic assessment of the ability of Gladstone to convert the British public to Home Rule, masked in the short term by the vigour of the Gladstonian crusade.

Whigs or nationalists?

The Parnell split exposed the equivocations behind 'Union of Hearts' rhetoric. Parnell claimed anti-Parnellite willingness to sacrifice their leader at Gladstone's dictation, showed they had been corrupted by 'whiggery', like earlier 'Nominal Home Rulers'. By allying with the IRB remnant, attacking the prospective limitations of Gladstonian Home Rule (whose details had been left vague to focus on the principle), and taking up such causes as amnesty for the dynamite prisoners of the 1880s, which anti-Parnellites could not endorse unreservedly without alienating British opinion, Parnell emphasised gaps between nationalist and liberal expectations. The factionalisation deriving from the split permanently damaged parliamentary nationalism, and Parnell's death elevated his final tactics into lasting principles for those who wanted more than British statesmen would give.

The anti-Parnellites were weakened by Gladstone's failure to secure a British mandate for Home Rule, the refusal of the liberal government of 1892-5 to set aside the law of property (to prevent evictions) or to reinstate the evicted tenants of the plan (whom Parnellites described as sacrificed for a liberal election slogan), and the refusal of Home Secretary Asquith to amnesty the dynamite prisoners (some of whom went mad in prison). Parnellites pioneered tactics later used by Sinn Féin against Redmondites, asking why anti-Parnellites did not use the balance of power to obtain all their demands, supporting the Home Rule Bill in principle while publicising its limitations as proof of liberal treachery and anti-Parnellite folly, and accusing anti-Parnellites of 'whig' corruption in securing government jobs for supporters. When, after Gladstone retired, the liberals were routed in the 1895 general election and many liberals (including Asquith) spoke of dropping Home Rule, the Parnellite critique seemed vindicated.

One possible development from that critique was rejection of parliamentary action as corrupting and unworkable; the post-Parnellite republican self-image stressed uncompromising principle and attributed parliamentary factional divisions to abandonment of principle for personalised leadership. Abstentionism, intermittently advocated by nationalists since the union, became the crucial dividing line marking refusal to play

by the rules of the British political system; Griffith frequently stated that if Parnell failed to keep his followers from being corrupted by Westminster, lesser men could not succeed. The amnesty question provided a rallying-point for separatists as well as Parnellites in the 1890s. At a meeting to welcome released dynamiters (including Tom Clarke) in 1897, Willie Redmond declared that if war came, an unfree Ireland would support Britain's enemy.

The Irish party continued to hold itself aloof from state occasions and proclaim that British sovereignty in Ireland could have no legitimacy until it recognised the expressed wish of the Irish people for self-government. It was reunited in 1900 by opposition to the Boer War (when its open rejoicing in Boer victories and British defeats went beyond all but a few of the most radical British pro-Boers, though seen as insufficient by separatists, who took hope from British diplomatic isolation and military incapacity against guerrillas) and renewed land agitation in the west, though these were assets of diminishing value. Despite some suppression of newspapers and imprisonment of MPs, a new Land Act removed the edge from agitation; the political and economic decay of landlordism, symbolised by land purchase and the institution of elected local government, allowed the extension of nationalist influence, but also stimulated new accusations of whiggery and corruption from those unsatisfied with its exercise.

The separatist revival

From the late 1890s a newer generation of separatist activists, whose involvement began with the political Sunday schools for children and literary clubs operated by separatists in the 1880s, came to maturity.¹ The most prominent of these, Arthur Griffith, is not usually thought of as a republican, yet for most of his career he proclaimed himself to be one. 'Sinn Féin' reflected the slogan 'Ourselves Alone', used by Young Irelanders to attack O'Connell's liberal alliance. His Hungarian policy was presented as the policy for a new Parnell, to be supported by republicans as a stepping-stone. (Griffith's attempt to assert continuity with Parnell as well as the IRB tradition irritated younger purist republicans, too young to have experienced the split. From 1907 these organised in groups like the Dungannon Clubs, associated with the revitalised IRB). Griffith argued that victories claimed by the Irish Party were achieved by the people themselves and frustrated by a self-serving parliamentary élite; the people could be free and prosperous if they ceased to collude in their own oppression.

Griffith was suspicious of cultural nationalism because of the clearly-visible hopes of some of its clerical and aristocratic supporters that

deference and privilege might be rehabilitated as Gaelic traditions and separatism silenced as a colonial imposition. The republican ethos of active citizenship distrusted the idea that cultural production could be judged by criteria separate from patriotism; the Gaelic League, the GAA and the Literary Theatre were regularly reminded that they owed their origins, and much support, to the assertion of a separate Irish nationality and must subordinate themselves to that project.

From 1905–6 scattered Sinn Féin councillors appeared in areas with separatist traditions or local factional disputes. Sinn Féin was strongest electorally in Dublin where there were significant numbers of separatists, dissent was harder to suppress, and a focus was provided by campaigns against Dublin Corporation vested interests and councillors who supported loyal addresses when the monarch visited Dublin. Such visits, defended by their advocates as providing employment—Castle patronage was used to win support from tradesmen, employers put pressure on employees to join loyal demonstrations, and professionals anticipated honours in return for displays—were seen by separatists and many constitutionalists as ‘political souperism’.

The end of a project

From 1906, with a new liberal government committed to limited devolution, the Irish party extended its influence in the Irish administration. Such brokerage, however, could be seen as renewed ‘whig’ corruption, while the party was also tarred by liberal reluctance to meet all its demands. The introduction of a new Home Rule Bill after the abolition of the Lords’ veto boosted Redmond’s prestige, but where Gladstone presented Home Rule as a moral crusade, Asquith made a political bargain. Distrust of the liberals reflected not only the government’s maladroit response to Carsonism but also knowledge that a few years previously many liberals wished to abandon Home Rule. The Irish Volunteers represented not only the small republican cadre but also wider fears that Ireland’s interests were being unacceptably compromised.

Redmond’s support for the war assumed that with Home Rule conceded, Irish nationalists must unequivocally accept the status of equal citizens within the United Kingdom. Redmond and Clarke might still have agreed that an unfree Ireland should support Britain’s enemy, but differed about whether Ireland was free. Redmondism grew more problematic as the government proved insufficiently responsive to nationalist concerns, and the 1916 rising brought tensions within the Redmondite position to breaking-point. Failing to secure immediate Home Rule except on politically impossible terms, the Redmondites found themselves saddled with responsibility for the government’s actions and accused of

‘whiggery’. A rival political leadership, beginning with a new amnesty movement, crystallised around the old Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer leadership and defecting party activists; and with a liberal-conservative coalition in power and emergency legislation, disused before the war, extended and enforced on a scale unseen for decades the separatist critique of parliamentary strategies seemed vindicated. The threats of famine and conscription, the longstanding tendency to enforce conformity upon minorities, and the first-past-the-post electoral system sealed the fate of the Irish Party.

Triumph or disaster?

The explicit republicanism of post-1917 Sinn Féin reflected the belief that British politicians had shown themselves untrustworthy and that compromise led to disempowerment and defeat. Attempts by élite groups to broker a dominion settlement in 1919–20 were dismissed by Sinn Féin as surrender. Once more, nationalists erected alternative administrative structures and tried to make the country ungovernable; delinquency of older control structures and the increased role of nationalists in local and national administration fatally weakened the government apparatus and made the shadow government more effective than its precursors. Government reprisals and repression provoked increased resistance, and Collins’s squad proved more effective than the Invincibles or Devoy’s assassination squad of the 1860s. Armed resistance was strong enough to make reconquest prohibitively expensive for Britain, but not to achieve complete victory; once again nationalist Ireland split on the issue of compromise.

The Treaty debate revolved around sovereignty because this symbolised significant social divisions within Ireland as well as the separatist interpretation of recent history. The support given to the Treaty by most of the professional and business classes allowed opponents to see it as representing recrudescing ‘whiggery’, which would corrupt the new state. Mary MacSwiney’s prediction that the Viceregal Lodge would become a centre of social, political and moral corruption rested on the belief, shared by most Sinn Féiners, that this had happened with the Redmondites. Such fears were strengthened when the new government responded to language reminiscent of unionist appeals to order, as it crushed republican guerrillas with measures which often flagrantly breached the rule of law.

The new government could also be seen by pro-Treaty IRB veterans, including former republican critics of Griffith, as asserting the difference between the use of force for clear-cut political ends and the pre-political banditry which at times had been absorbed into the physical-force movement and at other times threatened to dominate it; a difference

denied by aristocrats and unionists. The fear that ‘Mexican politics’ would reduce the new state to anarchy and starvation if the new state hesitated to assert its authority where the old order had collapsed was very real in 1922. The authoritarian attitudes noted by John Regan in the new ruling class of the 1920s were, nonetheless, restrained by a sense that to impose dictatorship in the name of good government would vindicate unionist slanders that the Irish majority were unfit to govern themselves.

The institution of a responsible government after the fall of the union was an achievement easily discounted in retrospect. The failure of many hopes associated with independence, the persistence of poverty and class division, and the view that the harsh economic policies of the 1920s reflected the influence of pro-British special interests alienated many Treaty supporters and allowed the Republican tradition to be claimed by a Fianna Fáil party advocating the cross-class, producerist social republicanism of traditional nationalism and by a smaller physical-force movement reverting to the élitist conspiratorial methods of the pre-independence IRB.

Note

¹ Matthew Kelly, *Historical Journal*, September 2000, pp. 729–50.

Change and Continuity: Republican Thought Since 1922

BRIAN HANLEY

*I am grateful to Joost Augusteijn who let me read a copy of his forthcoming *Political Violence and Democracy. An analysis of the tensions within Irish republican strategy, 1913-2000*. Thanks also to Anna Bryson for commenting on an earlier draft of this article.*

When writing about the development of republican thinking in Ireland from 1922 onwards one is immediately confronted with a problem. Since the civil war the term has been largely used to describe those who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty. But important sections of the pro-Treatyites saw themselves as no less republican than their opponents. Similarly, the term may be used to describe those who rejected de Valera's break with Sinn Féin in 1926. But equally, those who followed de Valera and today constitute the largest political party on this island, term themselves *the* republican party. Today it is commonly used to describe supporters of Sinn Féin, but many outside their ranks would also claim the title. To confuse matters further, the idea of republicanism has in many peoples minds become associated with narrow nationalism. Partially, this is due to the influence of an anti-republican bias within sections of the media and society generally, but I will argue that it is also because republicanism (or at least a variant of it) was official state policy in this country from the 1930s until the 1970s. For the purposes of this article I include all who describe themselves as republican. I will attempt to justify this approach by arguing that all variants of republicanism have shared similar features at various stages. Irish republicanism is a complex phenomenon. Since 1922 it has been capable of including both radical and conservative elements; of being both inclusive and xenophobic; of promoting a critique of Irish society and of accommodating itself completely to the status quo. Republicanism has at various stages adopted socialist rhetoric; at others it has used the language of the far right. While campaigning for the end of discrimination and repression in one sphere, it has often ignored it in others. While at times being insular, it has always been influenced by

ideas from abroad. While this is primarily a study of ideas, ideas are inseparable from the context in which they were formed. Innovation or change in republican thinking has almost always come about as a reaction to defeat or stalemate.

In 1922 the most obvious problem facing republicans was that the majority of the electorate had accepted a settlement which fell far short of a republic. Of course, there were genuine problems with the circumstances of the Treaty election, the most important one being that it was fought under the threat of an 'immediate and terrible war' and hence it can be argued that it was undemocratic itself. The argument that the civil war was fought between pro-Treaty democrats and anti-Treaty would-be-dictators is simplistic and deeply flawed.¹ However, it is unquestionable that a section of republicanism in 1922 was not in the least bit concerned about the views of 'the people' it was supposedly speaking for. One response was to see the Treaty purely in terms of treachery, of a leadership bought off by 'fancy diplomatic language' and a populace duped into supporting them. To some the only policy to counter this was a military one, and indeed it is possible that a resolute anti-Treatyite military offensive in the summer of 1922 could have defeated the government forces. However that would have meant that republicans would effectively have had to rule a largely hostile population with military force. This situation did not arise, but little thought seems to have been given to it by republicans before or since. The belief that military force represented the only proper response to conditions of stalemate or defeat has continued to exercise a hold over republicans until the present day. It is important to restate how little partition was discussed during the debate on the Treaty. Such division as there was over the border did not cause the civil war. Southern republicans paid comparatively little attention to that issue until the late-1930s.

Another response to the establishment of the Free State was a more thoughtful one. This view, popularly associated with Liam Mellows, saw the defeat as the result of the anti-Treatyites failure to present an alternative to the Irish workers and poor. People had been expected to rally to defend the *Republic* without any idea of how this republic would make any difference to their daily lives. The only answer was for the anti-Treatyites to go 'back to Tone ... relying on that great body the men of no property'. This belief in an essential connection between republicanism and social change, has with occasional differences of emphasis, been a left-republican article of faith since the 1920s. Critics of this view have noted that there was in 1922 no essential connection between the two.² The anti-Treatyite forces contained many who had no interest in social change, and indeed some who were arguably more conservative than some

of their pro-Treaty opponents. Large numbers of the urban workers and rural poor showed little sign of instinctive solidarity with the anti-Treaty side, with many joining the ranks of the National Army and probably many more spurning both sides. However, whether it be termed left, social or socialist, this variant of republicanism has had an important influence on most republican thinkers in the twentieth century.

A further response, already in existence in 1922, but which became more evident in future years, was the notion of republicanism as an almost secular religion. An element of this involved devotion to the memory of martyred dead, isolated from wider society and awaiting the reawakening of the nation through some dramatic act. Loyalty to the *Republic* was expressed through the commitment to abstention from parliament north and south. This approach was influenced by a profound, but widely accepted, misreading of the popular reaction to the 1916 rising, and has achieved a limited but occasionally influential following.³ This view was represented by the Sinn Féin organisation during the 1920s and 1930s.

A much larger grouping was one in which the influence of all the latter ideas were apparent, but which realised that isolation and decline would be its lot unless it was prepared to take drastic steps. That grouping, which actually contained many of the most forward thinking republicans of the period, was one which would eventually emerge as Fianna Fáil and constitutional republicanism. This ideology was flexible enough to incorporate both radical and conservative ideas, and appeal to a broad spectrum of southern Irish society. There was, initially, comparatively little emphasis on partition, and the use of force to end it was ruled out as early as 1931. (De Valera had ruled it out even earlier, in August 1921). Their economic policy was, ironically, tied to the old Griffith-Sinn Féin idea of economic self-sufficiency. (Indeed, the extent to which Griffith's key ideas remained influential among republicans is often overlooked). This view was to inform the 'Boycott British' campaigns of the IRA during the 1930s, the economic policies of Fianna Fáil until the 1950s, and, indeed, republican thinking on economic matters until quite recently.

Republican ideology since 1922 has been dominated at various stages by one or other of these ideas, and sometimes all of them have co-existed together. There are two other areas where republican thinking has been incomplete.

For long periods republicanism has had difficulty dealing with the existence of unionism in the north-east of Ireland. Overall the tendency has been to believe that unionism would disappear during the struggle for a united Ireland, or when a united Irish republic was achieved. On occasion elements within republicanism have adopted less benign interpretations and seen the unionists as a 'settler class'. Remarkably little

thinking has been devoted to the subject, given its importance to any all-Ireland republican project.⁴

The revival of the Irish language has been associated with all variants of republicanism for the last 80 years. Only Fianna Fáil have had the long term period in office necessary to oversee a revival, which patently failed to occur. Large numbers of republican activists have had little or no knowledge of Irish, and many have only had the opportunity to learn it while in prison, whether in the Curragh during the 1940s, or Long Kesh more recently. However, no republican thinker to date has suggested that the Irish language is irrelevant to the republican project.

1932 saw both the triumph of constitutional republicanism, with the election of the first Fianna Fáil government, and also the highpoint of radical republican influence within the IRA. Fianna Fáil's victory was widely perceived, both domestically and internationally, as the precursor of a renewed conflict with Britain or a wholesale purge of pro-Treatyite supporters. Neither occurred and Fianna Fáil's ideology, while still rhetorically republican, shifted from an emphasis on the nation to the state. Now, demands for land redistribution, nationalisation and disbanding of the Special Branch became unreasonable. Cumainn were censured for pestering the government with their 'local' problems, and disgruntled activists accused of tacitly aiding Ireland's enemies. This process was not an easy or uncomplicated one, as within Fianna Fáil there was still substantial rank and file adherence to a more radical republican view, but by 1937 the ideology of the largest republican force in Ireland had shifted from critiquing the Free State to becoming its foremost defender. Partition was implicitly recognised by the 1937 Constitution and whatever difficulties the catholic church had previously had with Fianna Fáil were solved with its recognition as the 'guardian of the faith professed by the great majority'. This is not to argue that there were no positive benefits from the first Fianna Fáil administrations—there certainly were. In public housing, pensions and social welfare a real difference was made to the lives of thousands of people by the new government. But in ideological terms commitment to radical republican change was replaced by nationalist state-building. However, glorification of the military past was to remain a strong element in Fianna Fáil's public pronouncements.

The highpoint for radical republicanism, represented mainly by the IRA, was from 1929 to 1934; the zenith was the organisation's launch of the Saor Éire programme in 1931. That programme, with its demand for the 'possession and administration by the workers and working farmers, of the land, instruments of production, distribution and exchange', marks the furthest leftward that any republican organisation has travelled. The IRA of this era presented a radical critique of both states in Ireland. It was

committed to revolutionary change, envisaging the republic it sought as one where poverty would be eliminated, where social injustice would be tackled, and it explicitly addressed itself to Ireland's urban and rural poor. Its newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, was notable for the large number of women writers it employed, and for its coverage of international affairs. Anti-British revolts were obviously celebrated, but so were revolts against the French in Africa, and the US in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union received very favourable coverage. The IRA was not an inward looking organisation in those years and was never narrowly focused on partition to the exclusion of other issues. Indeed, one of its most bitter campaigns was not an armed one, but an electoral challenge to the northern Nationalist Party during 1933, which saw the IRA win a seat in South Armagh and make serious inroads into Joseph Devlin's vote in West Belfast. This electoral campaign was mounted because the IRA believed that large numbers of northern protestants could be broken from unionism. Indeed, the IRA saw the Nationalist Party and the Ancient Order of Hibernians as sectarian organisations playing into the hands of unionism.⁵

IRA radicalism was not solely the result of the influence of prominent socialists such as Peadar O'Donnell—the organisation's Chief-of-Staff, Moss Twomey, and other leading figures shared the belief that the national revolution must accomplish radical social and economic change. But this radicalism co-existed with a belief that only military force would accomplish the task, and there was an influential section of the leadership who believed that the IRA should not possess any social policy and whose attitudes often betrayed a contempt for the 'opinion of the mass of the people.'⁶ The IRA remained dominated by the view that its chief role was to prepare for an armed uprising and that politics were secondary.

There was an intensely anti-communist atmosphere in Ireland during the thirties, despite the tiny numbers of actual communists. The catholic hierarchy's denunciation of the IRA for its Saor Éire programme, allied to a suspicion of communism among many of its rank and file, gradually forced the organisation to water down its radical rhetoric.

The organisation split in 1934 with the most prominent socialists leaving to form the Republican Congress, which declared that an Irish republic would not be realised unless capitalism in Ireland was 'uprooted'. It is too simplistic to see this split as dividing socialists from apolitical or right-wing militarists. Many of those associated with the IRA's radical policies remained within the organisation. Among those who left there remained a commitment to armed force, as was seen in their attempts to form a citizen's army. The Congress, too, would split at its first conference, between those demanding a specifically socialist programme and those favouring a united front of republican forces. O'Donnell and

others influenced by Communist Party thinking favoured the united front approach. They believed that Fianna Fáil would ultimately fail to satisfy the republican aspirations of its followers and could be outflanked by radical republicanism. Their opponents argued that only the call for a Worker's Republic could rally both workers and small farmers in the south and, crucially, both catholic and protestant in the north. Both viewpoints were increasingly marginalised by the late 1930s.

In later years the radical republican tradition of that period was largely forgotten by republicans themselves. In fact, it has often been the 1940s that were remembered and romanticised. By the late 1930s the dominant ideology within the IRA was one of militaristic obsession with the striking of a blow to ignite public opinion behind a new campaign. From this period on partition was to become the focus for militant republicans, in a way it had not been until this stage.⁷ The tragicomic dimension to the handing over of power by the surviving members of the Second Dáil to the IRA Army Council should not blind us to a very real shift in IRA thinking. Now, the conservative views of Sinn Féin came to dominate IRA pronouncements. While few within republicanism are prepared to acknowledge it, this shift included the adoption of fascist rhetoric in republican propaganda. While not arguing that the majority of 1940s IRA members were ideologically sympathetic to the Nazis, a section of their leadership certainly were, and were prepared to welcome Axis troops in Ireland as 'liberators'. What that would have meant in reality is depressing to contemplate.⁸

This bitter period of internment, executions and isolation again forced a shift in republican thinking. The pragmatists who had left the IRA in 1938 were the core around which the next constitutional challenge to Fianna Fáil would be built.⁹ Clann na Poblachta's ideology was a combination of Fianna Fáil's discarded radical baggage from 1932 and a novel disdain for civil war politics. Radical proposals were accompanied by pious declarations of anti-communism to ward off the inevitable 'red scare'. In a departure from republican orthodoxy, Clann na Poblachta not only recognised the Free State, but also supported its declaration as a Republic. This was combined with militant anti-partitionist rhetoric, and with the proposal that northerners be allowed representation in the southern parliament. There was also an enthusiasm for US foreign policy on the part of some of the leadership, which sat uneasily with sections of the rank and file. Also uniquely, the party opposed the compulsory teaching of Irish. Fianna Fáil, too, embarked on an anti-partitionist crusade at this point, and for several years declarations fulminating against partition were an integral part of political discourse in the south.

Non-constitutional republicanism also adjusted to changed circum-

stances following 1945. While rhetorically refusing to countenance recognition of the southern state, in actual fact the adoption by the IRA of Army Order No. 8, forbidding armed conflict with the Garda and National Army, was implicit recognition that the situation was different south of the border. A smaller number went further and recognised the Republic of Ireland, even to the extent of taking a seat in its upper house, while continuing to plan an armed campaign in the north. From then on the militant republican tradition stressed 'freeing the north' above all else. In many ways republican ideology during the late 1940s and early 1950s was simply a more aggressive version of official state rhetoric about the north. There was no longer any attempt to present an alternative vision of a republican Ireland. Indeed, in many aspects, the conservatism of early 1950s Ireland was mirrored in a more extreme form by the republican movement. More, not less, censorship of 'foreign' literature was demanded by the republican press. The 'inextricable intertwining of catholic tradition and Irish separatist thought' was celebrated. Republican writers warned of a supposed 'judeo-masonic' influence in the British government.¹⁰

The south was still seen as being under the thumb of Britain despite having been able to maintain its neutrality during the Second World War. The logical outcome of the exclusive concentration on partition was the border campaign. Following the campaign's failure, the blame was placed on the southern population's obsession with 'secondary issues', which, in the Ireland of the 1950s meant unemployment and the likelihood of emigration.¹¹ The existence of a hostile unionist population in the north was essentially ignored.

Many republicans, especially those who grew up in the north, have difficulty understanding how, until the 1970s, the southern education system, the press and to a lesser degree the catholic church promoted a version of republicanism. That meant learning by rote the history of past oppression, associating Irish nationality completely with catholicism, and accepting that, bar the six counties, freedom, as visualised by the 1916 rebels, had been achieved. To the thousands of young Irish people who took the boat to Britain in those decades, republicanism must not have seemed very inspiring at all. This was exacerbated by the fact that the republican movement did not present an alternative vision of Irish society, generally suggesting that the only problem that existed on the island was that of partition. This in turn dovetailed neatly with all the southern political establishment's, but especially Fianna Fáil's, periodic rhetoric about re-unification.¹² When revisionism got into its stride during the 1970s it had a ready audience because so much of what had been presented as republicanism was based on false premise. It has taken

almost two decades for critically minded historians and writers to confront this.¹³

The trauma of the events of 1969 has inevitably coloured perceptions of the ideological reasons behind republicanism's political development during the preceding years. An influential section of the IRA responded to the failure of the 1956-62 campaign with a rediscovery of the Republican Congress tradition; they also listened to the advice of intellectuals schooled in the communist Connolly Association in Britain. Republicanism, they argued, had to confront social and economic problems if it was to make itself relevant to the majority of Irish people, north and south. A variant of the 'stages theory' was developed, which saw campaigns for democratisation as stepping stones to the fight for the republic. In the south this would mean alliances with 'progressive' groups around issues like housing and land rights; in the north, crucially, it meant helping initiate a campaign for civil rights. This type of campaign, it was believed, would undermine unionism and also be capable of attracting protestant working class support. If there was to be armed activity, it would now be as part of a 'National Liberation Front'. These developments were also obviously influenced by the international climate: the Vietnam War intensifying, anti-colonial struggles developing in Africa, and the student movement in Europe and the US.

This theory fatally underestimated both the intransigence of the unionist regime and the support for unionism among the protestant working class. When violence returned to the north in 1969, there were already many within the republican movement extremely critical of the new direction. However, many of those who had earlier left in protest over 'communistic' teachings may have just become a historical curiosity had the north not exploded.

The eruption of violence after 1969 was presented by what became the Provisionals as just another phase of the struggle against Britain. But, in reality, it was light years away from the ideas behind the border campaign. Young men and women who came to republicanism because their streets were under attack, found themselves in alliance with those who believed that the last legitimate election in Ireland took place in 1918. The escalation of inter-communal and nationalist-British army conflict from 1970 onwards masked very wide differences within the ranks of what emerged as Provisional republicanism.

Initially, the events in the north saw a brief re-emergence of militant anti-partition rhetoric in the south, but without any broader vision outside aiding 'our people' in the north. Indeed, some of those prominent in promoting this view had been centrally involved in suppressing the border campaign. As the northern conflict settled into a brutal routine, little more

was heard from them.

The first to ideologically take stock of the new situation were the Official republicans. For a variety of reasons, there was a realisation that military struggle was proving insufficient and becoming counter-productive. The effect that the republican armed campaign was having on the unionist population was taken into account for the first time. A decision was taken to call a cease-fire, although supporters of the organisation continued to be involved in armed activity for several years afterward and, despite claims of having left militarism behind, the imagery of the supposedly non-sectarian working-class armed struggle waged from 1969-72 continued to be a feature of the Official republican self-image until well into the 1990s.

Ideologically, Official republicanism during the early 1970s developed from a range of often conflicting ideas. The strand that eventually emerged as dominant adopted a world view more common in European communist parties and, indeed, held on to it longer than most of them. Domestically they began to argue that Irish industrial underdevelopment was not due to rule by British imperialism but to a 'lazy bourgeoisie' who refused to carry out their historical task of creating an 'Irish industrial revolution', thereby also producing an Irish industrial working class, who would then push through a socialist revolution. Mechanistic in the extreme, this theory saw US rather than British imperialism as the major threat, while also welcoming international investment to help create an industrial Ireland. Diligent work in urban areas of the south eventually paid dividends in terms of working class support. However, the departure from what they saw as traditional republicanism also eventually led many of them to denounce their former comrades as 'fascists'. Some eventually came to regard unionism as a more progressive ideology than nationalism. Any one of a number of individuals who argued for a greater understanding of the northern nationalist position were condemned as fellow travellers of the (Provisional) IRA. The national question was increasingly seen as largely irrelevant because there were, in fact, two nations in Ireland. This view at least recognised that there was opposition to a united Ireland from northern protestants for reasons other than mass delusion or false consciousness, but, taken to its extreme, it denied that any serious problem had ever existed for northern catholics. In practice, it meant that partition was accepted as logical. These views became influential within wider society due to the prominence of their proponents within the media and academia. However, they were never fully accepted by many of the organisation's rank and file, who continued to endorse some form of socialist republicanism, however vague. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989-90 had a major effect on this tradition. The majority

of its leading figures used the opportunity to jettison what was seen as embarrassing historical baggage and join the ranks of mainstream social democracy.

Within Official republicanism, a minority had rejected the ending of an armed campaign and continued to support the idea of an armed 'National Liberation Front'. Again, the legacy of the Republican Congress was employed, but from the beginning this minority was so mired in conspiracy and militarism that, by its nature, it was confined to a political ghetto. The history of that organisation would point to socialist republicanism being no guarantee against descent into tragic bloodshed.

Among Provisional republicans, thinking in the early 1970s was dominated by belief that a rapid military victory was inevitable. With victory, in theory, so close, the need for political thinking was initially neglected. A blueprint for a federal Ireland, with four local assemblies and a high degree of decentralisation and vaguely defined as 'democratic socialist', was promoted as an alternative to partition. This 'Éire Nua' would also ease unionist fears it was thought, offering a large degree of autonomy within Ulster. However, it is fair to say that military rather than political concerns dominated the movement until it became bogged down in an increasingly sectarian conflict in the mid-1970s. Younger northern activists increasingly began to set political policy, arguing that a 'long war' was in prospect during which a degree of popular community support would be necessary to maintain the struggle. The federalist idea was seen as an unnecessary concession to unionism and eventually dropped. There was bitter hostility towards the 'collaborationists' in mainstream nationalism, north and south. Support was loudly expressed for international liberation struggles, and socialist republicanism was again brought to the fore. There was a conscious playing down of the movement's 'catholic' image and a new interest in the area of women's rights. Following the long agony of the 1981 hunger strikes, there was a rise in both the numbers of young people attracted to the Provisionals and in support for Sinn Féin electorally in the north. The need to maintain that support and increase it in the rest of Ireland would lead to the eventual abandonment of abstentionism.

Political growth in the south came to be seen as crucial, especially as it was still seen as a 'neo-colony' of Britain and therefore its population should have been able to identify easily with the northern struggle. This by the 1980s was simply not the case. The Republic of Ireland was clearly an independent state and the majority of its population did not regard themselves as oppressed by Britain. They had no automatic identification with northern republicans at all. Ending abstention did not guarantee popular support or electoral success. Indeed, by the late 1980s it was

becoming apparent that use of the 'Armalite' was denying the movement success at the 'ballot box'. That was an extremely difficult reality for republicans to face. Right through the movement, from the era of 'Éire Nua' to that of the new socialism of the 1980s, there was a universal acceptance of militarism, if not a belief in outright military victory. But by the early 1990s, it was clear that outside of key areas in the north, there was no mass support, indeed only disapproval, for this tactic. The reasons for this are complex. Censorship (including self-censorship) and the dominance of anti-republicanism in the media are part of the answer. But there was a deeper reason. Aside from arguably 1970-72, there was never widespread support for an armed campaign amongst the majority of people on the island.

Most republicans have seen the military campaigns from 1916 onward as part of different phases of 'the struggle'. But there is a sense that they only appear that way to republicans. 1916 took place in different conditions from 1919; 1939 was completely different to 1969; and so on. The context changes, and republican ideology eventually changes with it. What has brought about the latest developments in republicanism is recognition of that; they are also a response to stalemate, if not actual defeat. They, surely, cannot represent a victory, in that, objectively, much that has for years supposedly justified an armed campaign has been abandoned: the most glaring example being the new recognition that a united Ireland will only occur with the consent of the north's unionist population. The international background to these events has been largely ignored, but it clear that the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the moves toward settlements in South Africa and the Middle East influenced republican thinking.¹⁴

Mainstream republican thinking is now dominated by the belief that electoral success, north and south of the border, will make a movement towards an all-Ireland republic more likely. Whether this will be the case is open to question. Along with this there is the implicit acceptance of the belief that demographic changes will help bring about a united Ireland in the not too distant future. This belief is unproven and, surely, undermines the republican vision of unity between 'catholic, protestant and dissenter'. There remains a strong glorification of militarism, and this is not confined to those determined to continue some form of armed campaign, however futile that may be. Militarism has always led to a hostility to debate and criticism because it is believed that these aid one's enemy. Ironically, the strongest critique of militarism has come from republicans opposed to the Good Friday agreement.¹⁵ There is also an increasing tendency to see republicanism and nationalism as identical.

Republicanism since 1922 has grappled with the legacy of the civil war.

It has been bedevilled by a failure to understand that its strength is that it is a democratic, secular ideology. The continuing existence of partition has meant that often republicanism's focus has been solely on national reunification, not on a constructive critique of both states. Perhaps now we can take advantage of the space provided by journals such as this to discuss how relevant republicanism will be for Ireland in the new century.

Notes

¹ The most recent exponent of this view has been Tom Garvin. See his 1922—*The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin 1996). For an opposing view, see John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936* (Dublin 1999). For an important look at attitudes to partition during the Treaty debates see Eamon Phoenix, 'Michael Collins and the Northern Question' in Doherty and Keogh (eds.), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (Dublin 1998).

² See Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic, Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937* (Oxford 1994), esp. pp. 29-65.

³ This is the belief that the rising was a deliberate blood sacrifice with no popular support, which led to a 're-awakening' of national spirit following the executions of its leaders. As Joseph Lee has noted, this interpretation suits both revisionist opponents and republican supporters of the rising. See his *Ireland 1912-1985, Politics and Society* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 24-38.

⁴ See a thoughtful article on the subject by Sinn Féin's Mitchel McLaughlin in *An Camhéachta*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1991).

⁵ This is not to argue that sectarianism did not exist within the IRA, but that it was of marginal influence in that period. The reader should also note that the IRA candidates stood as 'Republicans', not as Sinn Féin with whom the IRA had poor relations in this period.

⁶ Quote from Sean MacBride at the 1934 General Army Convention. For a more extensive discussion of IRA radicalism, see my 'Moss Twomey, Radicalism and the IRA—a reassessment' in *Saothar* (2001, forthcoming).

⁷ See for example the verdict on the period from *The Last Post* (Dublin 1985): '1923 to 1940 [was] a valley period ... [of] inactivity, playing with politics'. Sean Russell's status remains high among traditional republicans, yet the evidence points towards he and his allies sabotaging the IRA's military plans in 1938 and then launching their own disastrous campaign.

⁸ 'Ireland's Answer' July 25, 1940. There are numerous examples, including support for Nazi anti-semitism, in IRA publications of the period, especially *War News*.

⁹ The first Clann na Poblachta national executive contained seven former leading IRA officers, including two former Chiefs-of-Staff and two former Adjutants General.

¹⁰ See the *United Irishman* newspaper, September 1950, October 1952 and January 1956.

¹¹ *United Irishman*, March 1962.

¹² This is not to argue, as some have, that the southern education system produced the modern IRA. In fact, excessive nationalist teaching probably alienated more than it inspired.

¹³ Early critics of revisionism tended to suggest that there was no problem with traditional nationalist orthodoxy. A more nuanced approach is noticeable in, for example, Máirín Ní Dhonnchada and Theo Dorgan (eds.), *Revising The Rising* (Derry 1991).

¹⁴ See quote from Danny Morrison in Richard English, 'Left on the Shelf' in *Fortnight*, no. 388, September 2000.

¹⁵ The Irish Republican Writers Group and their magazine, *Fourthwrite*.

‘The Red-Crested Bird and Black Duck’— A Story of 1802: Historical Materialism, Indigenous People, and the Failed Republic

PETER LINEBAUGH

Some of the ideas of this essay were germinated with Iain Boal as we followed Tecumseh’s route along the Thames (Ontario) and the Scioto (Ohio), then developed at Professor Louis Cullen’s modern history seminar, Trinity College, Dublin (November 2000), and subsequently clarified in discussion with Staughton Lynd in Youngstown, Ohio.

‘... he had heard his father say she was a spoiled nun and that she had come out of the convent in the Alleghanies when her brother had got the money from the savages for the trinkets and the chainies. Perhaps that made her severe against Parnell.’

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York, 1916).

1. Introduction

I write in the aftermath of the November 2000 US election whose corrupted result has thrown a mantle of suffused silence upon the once garrulous republic. More immediately, I write in the week that the indigenous people of Mexico, led by those of Chiapas, left the forest and marched to the city, where they entered the congress of the Mexican republic and made their voices heard after centuries of silencing. In north America, we are once again revisiting under the leadership of ‘the people of the colour of the earth’ the political meaning of a republic and the lineaments of US imperialism. What follows are some notes designed to help us to escape the impasse of the imperialist pall of silence and to renew, if possible, the discussion of historical materialism with its *raison d’être* of equality of goods within the earthly commons.

Col. E.M. Despard, the United Irishman, was executed in February 1803 for conspiracy to topple the British crown and empire. Long regarded as an adventurer, if not crazed, did he not know that revolution in France, England and Ireland was over? [Having served with distinction in the

British army in the West Indies, Despard was suspended on a frivolous charge. Seeking compensation, he was later thrown into prison. On his release, he formed a plot to assassinate the king. Along with six associates, he was drawn on a hurdle, hanged and beheaded.] I shall bring together three texts from the years 1802–03 with a view to exploring some of the forces at play in the period (what is it that we do not know?). The texts are, one, ‘Lithconia’, a political romance appearing in United Irish circles of Philadelphia; two, a study of the Ohio Indians by Constantin Volney, the French intellectual and ideologue; and three, some Indian stories which were published in the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* by John Dunne.¹

These will help us understand the full expanse of revolutionary discussions because, like Despard, both Dunne and Volney brought to Europe from indigenous America messages which renewed European debates at a tender point: private property. The appropriation of common lands by private proprietors was challenged in practice by the commoners of those lands and in theory during the French revolution, during the United Irish rebellion of 1798, and by the indigenous people of the American Great Lakes or the *pays d'en haut*, as the region has been termed by Richard White.² It is White, also, who introduces the idea of the village republic to characterise the mixed human settlements of the middle ground, autonomous from European empires or USA. In Belfast, you could read that the Indian villages of the Old Northwest (Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana) were also places of runaway slaves.³ In Ireland, Kevin Whelan in an essay on the United Irishmen and popular culture calls attention to ‘the republic in the village’. Thus, from opposite sides of the Atlantic, scholars recently have applied the expression ‘republic’ to settings where it had not heretofore been applied, and in doing so its meaning has been enlarged.⁴

It so happens that Friederich Engels located in precisely these years the appearance of both the modern working class and the birth of socialism, though this, to be sure, in its utopian rather than ‘scientific’ form. According to Engels, modern socialism is the direct product of the recognition of class antagonism between proprietors and non-proprietors; it also appears as the logical extension of the principles of reason, equality, and justice of the French enlightenment. Against the rampant crime, prostitution and cheating of the time, Engels delighted ‘in the stupendously grand thoughts and germs of thought that everywhere break out through their phantastic covering’. Engels found the birth of the industrial working class in 1800-2. He neglected women workers, the slaves of the plantations and the indigenous peoples. Their unpaid labours provided essential products to capitalism. The women reproduced labour-power.

The slaves produced sugar. The indigenous people preserved the ‘natural’ products (the animals of the forest). In all three cases, their labours appeared as free gifts—gifts of love, gifts of race, gifts of nature. The master narrative is merely the narrative of the masters: the mistresses, the mastered, and the masterless have a story to tell. We have a century of scholarship about African-American slavery; we have the scholarship of women’s history; and we have the ‘new Indian history’. None of this did Engels have or know.⁵

He does not recognise the stadialism [the theory that history can be divided into a sequence of stages, progressing forward from a state of nature to civilisation] of the Scottish enlightenment.⁶ The problematic of historical stages was developed in the Scottish enlightenment by, among others, Adam Ferguson, David Hume, William Robertson and Adam Smith, in the aftermath of the defeat of the Scottish highlanders who, according to theory, were living somewhere between the savage and the barbarian stages and thus their defeat was inevitable and progressive. Savages, as hunters and fishers, were without property; barbarians, as pastoralists and herdsmen, had moveable property; only civilization depended on real estate. As Ferguson expressed it, echoing Rousseau, ‘He who first said, “I will appropriate this field; I will leave it to my heirs”, did not perceive that he was laying the foundation of civil laws and political establishments’. Ferguson might have added that this same act of appropriation was that of a patriarch or that the patrilinear succession of private property required the monogamous marriage with its gothic opacity and subordination of women to a ‘separate sphere’.⁷

2. The Lithconian republic

Jefferson, at the head of the party of republicans, was swept into the White House in the election of 1800. He allied with the Indian-haters and secessionists of the western frontier who were in the midst of the 40-year war (1772–1812) to take the Indian lands of the old northwest. In 1801 he outlined his dream of a white continent that could not contemplate ‘either blot or mixture on that surface’. The years 1802–3 were decisive in the formulation of his Indian policy—trade monopolised at federal factories, inevitable ties of indebtedness, surreptitious and violent alcohol dealing, the depletion of forest resources which had sustained the fur trade, introduction of patriarchal agriculture, land cessions, forced removal if incorporation was resisted, and acquisition of the whole northern continent. A recent scholar concludes, ‘the Jeffersonian vision of the destiny of the Americas had no place for Indians as Indians’.⁸

Jefferson was a scholar as well as a land-grabber. His only publication provided a studious investigation and stratigraphic analysis into the Indian

burial mounds that used to characterise the north American human landscape.⁹ He also collected Indian vocabularies as a means of investigating the origins of Indian peoples (he had twenty-two of them in 1803), though there is no evidence that he spoke any Indian language. Duplicitous, subtle, implacable, a secret land speculator, a ruthless zealot with the appearance of benevolence, his smile surely was a sign of danger. He was Chief of the Long Knives who chopped up history into fixed stages.

During the 1790s students at Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, and William and Mary read Volney, suspected authority, and believed that ignorance, fear, poverty, and superstition were rooted in political and ecclesiastical authority.¹⁰ Elihu Palmer published *Principles of Nature; Or, a Development of the Moral Causes of Happiness and Misery among the Human Species* in 1801. 'Reason, righteous and immortal reason, with the argument of the printing types in one hand, and the keen argument of the sword in the other, must attack the thrones and the hierarchies of the world, and level them with the dust of the earth; then the emancipated slave must be raised by the power of science into the character of an enlightened citizen ...', wrote Reverend Robert Hall in his *Modern Infidelity Considered with respect to its influence on Society* (1801). American deists campaigned for freedom of conscience, abolition of slavery, emancipation of women, universal education, and the end of economic privilege. Deism 'solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and draws whole nations to its standards'. With class privilege threatened, Jefferson and Volney, once deists themselves, attempted to cover their tracks.

Before 1798, the United Irish were curious about the American Indians; afterwards, as exiles, they had opportunity to learn from them. 'I will go to the woods, but I will not kill Indians, nor keep slaves', vowed Archibald Hamilton Rowan.¹¹ John Binns 'expected that among the people, even in the large towns, I should occasionally meet one of our red brethren with his squaw lovingly on his arm. I expected to find the white men so plain and quakerly in their dress that I had the lace ripped from my neckerchiefs, and the ruffles from my shirt'. It was known in Ireland that many white men disguised themselves as Indians, especially around the Great Lakes; well-enough known for Waddy Cox to report it without surprise.¹²

The Temple of Reason was first edited by Dennis Driscoll, an Irish exile of 1798.¹³ The editor after April 1802 was John Lithgow. Taking a leaf from the book of Thomas Spence, whose 'Spensonia' advocated a system of common ownership of land and resources, Lithgow named his political romance 'Lithconia'. It was a coded intervention in an international political discussion. 'Equality: A Political Romance' began to appear in

The Temple of Reason on 15 May and thenceforth for seven numbers into the summer of 1802. The editors dedicated it to Dr. James Reynolds of Co. Tyrone, the United Irish emigré who on the occasion of George Washington leaving office said there ‘ought to be a jubilee’, at a time when the term referred to a) release from debts, b) return of land, and c) abolition of slavery—a precise program to satisfy frontiersman, Indian, and slave.

With blithe disregard of the prevailing orthodoxy, the author merely inverted the stadialist fairy tale of orthodox opinion. ‘The Lithconians are not a people that are progressing from a state of nature, to what is vulgarly called civilization; on the contrary, they are progressing from civil society to a state of nature, if they have not already arrived at that state: for in the history of the country, many and surprising revolutions are recorded.’ Its history began as ‘a small island in few leagues from the continent of Europe’. Love, friendship and wealth are attainable for all. Prostitution is removed by the abolition of private property and the patrilineal lines of descent. ‘Here the laws do not make the trembling female swear to the father of her child.’ Dancing on the green commences every day at four o’clock. Music is the principle branch of liberal education. A printing press is open to all in every district. There is no money in the country. The lands are in common, and a few hours of labour is required of all. As for children, ‘no such words as *mine* and *thine* are ever heard’. No markets, no shopkeepers, no debtors, no creditors, no lawyers, no elections, no embezzlement, no theft. Machines are permitted; railways are widespread.¹⁴ ‘The laws are not contained in huge volumes—they are written in the hearts of Lithconians’ (an antinomian view propounded by William Drennan).

The Temple of Reason folded on 19 February 1803, three days before Despard suffered his last and a day after Jefferson privately wrote his extraordinary letter to Benjamin Hawkins about the Indians: ‘I have little doubt but that your reflections must have led you to view the various ways in which their history may terminate’. The best that the Indians can do is to sell their land and become US citizens. The chiefs can get rich, the men will take the plough, women give up the hoe, exceptional souls may go to college, and the whiskey keg is full for the rest.¹⁵ The hanging and decapitation of Despard, the closing of *The Temple of Reason*, and the termination of Indian history (at least as imagined by President Jefferson) thus all took place within a few days of each other. This is not to say that European proletarian insurrection, or American utopian socialist discussion, or native American resistance were crushed—no, not at all—but it is to suggest linkages among the three themes to a common project. A recent scholar dismisses the work as a ‘utopian socialist’ tract.¹⁶

Certainly, the authors of *Lithconia* did not think it was impractical: ‘The genuine system of property to be spoken of, as no visionary phantom, but as a good, which might be realised’.

3. Tecumseh and the commonist project

The French revolution went about as far as it could in the summer of 1793 when, on the one hand, it restored communal lands without respect to gender and inclusive of domestics and labourers but, on the other hand, in March 1793, it prescribed the death penalty for whomsoever should propose an agrarian law. Although the idea of levelling distinctions based on wealth could be found in the *cahiers de doléance* of 1789, the exploration of proto-communism could not begin to be aired until after the proclamation of the republic and the execution of the king. *The Manifesto of the Equals*, intending to establish ‘The Republic of Equality’, addressed the ‘People of France’ in 1796: ‘*the land is nobody’s personal property. Our demand is for the communal ownership of the earth’s resources*’. Gracchus Babeuf (1760–97) wrote of this republic, ‘such a régime will sweep away iron bars, dungeon walls, and bolted doors, trials and disputations, murders, thefts and crimes of every kind; it will sweep away the judges and the judged, the jails and the gibbets—all the torments of body and agony of soul that the injustice of life engenders; it will sweep away enviousness and gnawing greed, pride, and deceit ... ; it will remove—and how important is this!—the brooding, omnipresent fear that gnaws always and in each of us concerning our fate tomorrow, next month, next year, and in our old age; concerning the fate of our children and of our children’s children’.¹⁷

The Poor Man’s Catechism in Ireland (1798) called for a return of the common land—‘It is not possible that God can be pleased to see a whole nation depending on the caprice and pride of a small faction, who can deny the common property in the land to his people, or at least tell them, how much they shall eat, and what kind; and how much they shall wear, and what kind’—and, in *The Cry of the Poor for Bread*, John Burk wrote, ‘oh! lords of manors, and other men of landed property, as you have monopolised to yourselves the land, its vegetation and its game, the fish of the rivers and the fowls of heaven ... in the present condition of things can the labourer, who cultivates your land with the sweat of his brow, the working manufacturer, or the mechanic support himself, a wife and five or six children?’ Such voices were silenced in Ireland after 1798 but not in America where, in 1803, Joseph Brant, the Iroquois leader, wrote,¹⁸ ‘... we have no law but that written on the heart of every rational creature by the immediate finger of the great Spirit of the universe himself. We have no prisons—we have no pompous parade of courts ... we have no robbery

under the colour of law—daring wickedness here is never suffered to triumph over helpless innocence—the estates of widows and orphans are never devoured by enterprising sharpers. Our sachems, and our warriors, eat their own bread, and not the bread of wretchedness ... The palaces and prisons among you form a most dreadful contrast. Liberty, to a rational creature, as much exceeds property, as the light of the sun does that of the most twinkling star: but you put them on a level, to the everlasting disgrace of civilization ...’.

Tecumseh [a leader of the Shawnee who believed that the land belonged to all Indians and who wanted to create an Indian nation stretching from the Appalachian Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico] refused to enter the house of Governor W.H. Harrison in August 1810, insisting on meeting in the open air. ‘The earth was the most proper place for the Indians, as they liked to repose upon the bosom of their mother.’ Reposed, he spoke eloquently, and his words were translated in an English diction whose origins arose in the seventeenth-century transformations of land associated with enclosures and the resistance to them. ‘You wish to prevent the Indians from doing as we wish them, to unite and let them consider their lands as the common property of the whole’—as militants had argued for three decades.¹⁹ ‘Since my residence at Tippecanoe, we have endeavoured to level all distinctions, to destroy village chiefs by whom all mischiefs are done. It is they who sell the land to the Americans.’ ‘The way, the only way to stop this evil is for the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be now—for it was never divided, but belongs to all. No tribe has the right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers ... *Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth?* Did not the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his children?’ The resonances with the seventeenth-century revolution in England become explicit: ‘when Jesus Christ came upon the earth you killed Him and nailed Him to the cross. You thought He was dead, and you were mistaken. You have Shakers among you and you laugh and make light of their worship’.

Tecumseh was killed in battle on the River Thames, Ontario, in 1813, but his brother, the one-eyed prophet Tenskwatawa, escaped to Canadian exile. In 1824, a young proto-ethnologist of the Indian Department sought him out to answer a government questionnaire. He was now an object of study. Stories and dreams, once so powerful, had lost their force. Nevertheless, Tenskwatawa attempted to tell a story; stories could be tested against action, but in defeat they lose the sense of belonging to history and become timeless traits of the *sauvage*, as if the story too were dead. Volney announced the return of the *sauvage*. ‘These men’, he wrote ‘are in the actual state of wild animals’. But which animals?

4. Turtle's students: Volney the apostate

Constantin-François Volney [a French scholar and zealous reformer, elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1789 and later thrown into prison until the downfall of Robespierre], a conscious victor of history's stages, rode no triumphal chariot—he was wrapped up in a blanket at the back of a wagon bouncing through the forest, on the road from Cincinnati up to the Maumee River that General Wayne had made three years before. Riding in 'a convoy of money', he feverishly clung to his portable escritoire, his pens and ink bottles. Back at Fort Vincennes, he got his ethnology from a liquor salesman and refused to leave the palisade to converse, himself, with the beseeching Indians. He observed, in disgust, an Indian stabbing his wife to death 'within twenty steps of me' and assumed his reader would not wonder whether he intervened to stop it. But he had fallen ill, unable to complete his rendezvous with William Wells, the interpreter and 'white Indian'. His own English was shaky. He returned east, seasick on Lake Erie, his researches brought to a halt, and memories of ghastly filthy settlement behind him. He is a globaliser. A savant, an ideologist, Napoleon will be his employer. He was looking for land and 'at the same time correcting prejudices formed during a period of enthusiasm'. He has apostatised.

His revolutionary 'enthusiasm' was expressed in *Ruins; Or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires*, published in 1791, which provided a narrative of human history without gods or magic and placed the people at the centre of hope against the cupidity and perfidy of the rulers, be they priests, soldiers, or lawgivers. Furthermore, the book put the origins of civilisation in the Nile, a view unaccepted by subsequent European historiography, and thus the book was kept in print by pan-African publishers, while it dropped out of print by white publishers. This was the book beloved by the Shelleys, Percy and Mary. Mary wrote of Dr Frankenstein (1817) who created the monster without a name. 'My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? When did I come? What was my destination?' Engels would recognise the dawning of class consciousness. Is he the industrial working class at the moment of its making? Is he the racial 'other' at the moment of expanding slavery? The monster escapes, and at the window of a lonely mountain cottage he listens to the poor cottagers read Volney aloud, learning of the extermination of the first peoples of America, the dispeopling of Africa and the sale of its inhabitants, and 'the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty'. The monster listened and wept.

Volney's tears, by this time, were dry. He embarked in 1795 for

America, to find an asylum for his declining years. Once there, he decides to remain in consequence of ‘the facility of acquiring landed property’. Volney is obsessed by property. No right of property exists among the savages, he says. ‘The land ... is undivided among all the nations, and remains in common’, as is still the case in parts of France, Spain, Italy and Corsica. He refers to Sir John Sinclair’s *Essay on Commons and Waste Lands and the enclosures of England and Scotland*. ‘The abolition of these commons should everywhere be the first law.’ Agriculture, industry, and individual and national character depend on enclosure. ‘The most radical and active cause [of barbarism and savagery] is the undivided and common state of the greater part of its territory.’²⁰

He published *Tableau du climat et du sol des États-Unis d’Amérique* in 1803, which was translated into English by the novelist Charles Brown the following year. It has the warmth of an investor’s report. The background is knowledge that climate and weather are, to a degree, affected by human action; the clearing of woods, especially, affected soil temperature, inland breezes, and the fluctuation of seasons. Drought keeps pace with clearing.²¹ The gothic is the attitude of overwhelming forces of death, famine, war, and pestilence. Charles Brockden Brown published a gothic novel called *Edgar Huntly or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1801). It compares and contrasts parallel stories of an Irish immigrant, Clithero, who assassinated his landlady’s brother and believed he had killed her, and a Pennsylvania Indian-killer, Edgar Huntly.

He has an eight-page appendix vocabulary of the language of the Miami Indians. He had nine or ten visits in January and February 1798. ‘This incident furnished me with a more fortunate opportunity, than I could have expected, not only affording me an interpreter to communicate my ideas, but the mouth of a native to give me the sounds in all their purity.’ The collecting of words like this already objectifies and distances Little Turtle [a leader of the Miamis, who fought many battles against the Americans and also led a united group of Indian tribes including Shawnee, Delaware and Wyandots]: his language is not a means of dialogue or an exchange of meanings; it is a bunch of sounds for unilateral appropriation. The European has ideas, and the Indian has sounds.

Wells describes the ‘middle ground’ or the many whites who join the savage life—children, Canadians, ‘men of bad character’, and libertines. The village republic is a political unit whose members originated from several tribes or ethnicities. These are not the imaginary *sauvages* of Rousseau or Chateaubriand. They are without hierarchy, order, or authority. The architecture is frame and bark; its people are European and Algonquian.²² Women would determine whether hostages were an acceptable alternative to war. The village republics contained runaway

slaves, too. Thus the first article of the 1785 Treaty of Fort M'Intosh provided that the Indian sachems provide three hostages until prisoners had been returned to the US, *white and black*. Thus the image of common children from a common mother expressed the heterogeneous nature of kinship. The Indian confederacy of 1786 met at Brownstown, where Brant enunciated his famous principle of Indian unity and common land as a 'dish with one spoon'. To Volney it was all separate: isolated dishes with many knives and forks. 'They live wholly in their feelings, little in remembrance, not at all in hope.' 'Theirs in fact is an extreme and terrible democracy'. 'These men are actually in the state of wild animals and birds ...' Which is it, actually, animals or birds?

Volney praises Turtle, who 'has been led by the nature of things, to discover the essential basis of the social state in the *cultivation of the earth*, and, as an immediate consequence, in *landed property*'. Volney claps his hands and turns to Rousseau, 'who maintains that the deprivation of the social state originates from the introduction of the right of property'. The true picture of savage life, Volney says, 'is a state of non-compact and anarchy, in which wandering, unconnected men are moved by violent necessities'. 'After this let sentimental dreamers come forward and boast the goodness of the man of nature.' Volney had a bad experience in the prisons of the Jacobin republic.

Will Napoleon honour the land transfers of the revolution? Will Washington and Adams open the Ohio to the unpaid veterans, who showed in the Whiskey Rebellion that instead of fighting the Indians they might fight the great landowners like Washington? Will Pitt authorise the parliamentary enclosure acts? Will the sugar plantations of the slaves still grind amid the transfer of flags from one to another European? Was the terror of the Orange Order enough to hold back the advance of an outraged peasantry, whose independence was reduced to service occupations? Will the Act of Union guarantee private property from the fairies of the night?

5. Turtle's students: John Dunne the antiquarian

John Dunne spoke at the Royal Irish Academy on Dawson Street, Dublin, in May 1802. John Dunne was the son of a native of Lurgan, Co. Armagh, who became a dissenting minister at Cooke Street, Dublin; a class-mate of William Drennan; a graduate of Glasgow University; a leading member of the bar; and a member of the Irish house of commons for Randalstown, Co. Antrim from 1783–97, under the patronage of John O'Neill, a whig.²³ He became a unitarian, and, like Coleridge and thousands of others of the hopeful young, he was filled with projects for changing the world. Let Archibald Hamilton Rowan introduce him further: 'disgusted by the turbulent and sanguinary scenes of civilised life at a time when his profes-

sional reputation would have seated him on the bench, he was led by a romantic wish to become acquainted with men in the savage state. Accordingly he crossed the Atlantic, and for a time conformed to the manners and customs of an Indian tribe'.²⁴

The guns between France and Britain were silent in May 1802. The Peace of Amiens brought a lull in the struggle between the European titans, though not in the agony of the slave revolts of Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue, nor the nocturnal arson against the machines of industrial England, and the groans remained from the prisons and exile. A year earlier, the first parliament of the 'United Kingdom' met: Dunne was speaking to Irishmen who had their independence taken away (the Act of Union went into effect a year earlier, January 1801), a final act against the bid for freedom launched in 1798, which was crushed with greater casualties than were visited on France by the Jacobin terror. If the French revolution offered a universal ethical reprise from the *ancien régime* in its slogans of possibility—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—these same slogans had to be translated, as it were, into the vernacular of other countries if their universality was to be realised. In Ireland this became the project of the United Irishmen, whose demands for the emancipation of Catholics and independence from England were formulated within the effervescence of cultural nationalism—the harp re-strung at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792, the folk songs, *Éireann go brách*, and an antiquarian validation of a vernacular Gaelic civilisation. Ledwich published a second edition of *Antiquities of Ireland* in 1803, as part of the response to the scholarly work of the Catholic Committee, which was active in discovering and preserving Gaelic culture. Gaelic antiquaries were assisted by Anglo-Irish liberals of the Royal Irish Academy, which encouraged Celtic studies since its founding in 1785. They used the remote past to achieve social and civic parity; it proved that they were at least on the same footing as the conquerors.²⁵ Ledwich argued that the association of Gaelic, Catholic and radical political views was dangerous. The project was defeated by government in London and Dublin in policies of maleficent sectarianism, military repression and cultural regression.²⁶ The political diaspora followed, to the mines of Prussia, to the factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire, to become hewers of wood and drawers of water in London, vanished in the fleet, or exiled in America. Off the banks of Newfoundland, near the end of his voyage of exile, James Orr (1770-1816), United Irishman, sang:

How hideous the hold is!—Here, children are screaming,
 There, dames faint, thro' thirst, with their babes on their knee;
 Here, down ev'ry hatch the big breakers are streaming,
 And, there, with a crash, half the fixtures break free:

Some court—some contend—some sit dull stories telling—
 the mate's mad and drunk, and the tar's task'd and yelling:
 What sickness and sorrow, pervade my rude dwelling!—
 A huge floating lazar-house, far, far at sea.

Drennan's *Letters of Orellana, an Irish Helot* (Dublin, 1785), which began as a series of letters in Belfast, took its name from indigenous Americans. 'The freedom of your present mutilated constitution is only to be found in the Utopia of a fanciful Frenchman, or the political reveries of a Genevan philosopher. By those wretched multitudes, I swear, who wander with their fellow bruits through the fertile pasturage of the south, by those miserable emigrants who are now ploughing a bleak and boisterous ocean—the democratic spirit of the constitution is no more!' Contrast Drennan's generosity (exiles and 'fellow bruits' are within the constitutional pale) with the Irish barrister, Herman Blennerhassett of Co. Kerry, a visitor to Paris in 1790 and 'thoroughly read in the political writings of Voltaire, and a disciple of Rousseau'. In 1798, he purchased an island in the Ohio River, 'lucrative in the hands of a capitalist, with 40 or 50 negroes, who would engage in raising hemp or tobacco'. He was explicitly praised as an Indian fighter.²⁷

Dunne knew 'from a thousand sources' that they hunted and fought and sported. But did they also exercise memory, invention and fancy? Did they laugh and weep at fictitious tales? Did they conjure up 'the forms of imaginary beings to divert and instruct them'? He obtained the friendship of Little Turtle, who adopted him 'according to their custom, in the place of a deceased friend, by whose name I was distinguished ...' Thus, like Lord Edward Fitzgerald who received a Seneca name, *Eghnidal*, in Detroit in June 1789, John Dunne now possessed a dual identity. 'I wish I could make the Indians here speak', he lamented to the academicians. Their discourses are forcible, feeling, and expressive in tone. 'The Indian lyre is unstrung', he writes, alluding to the slogan of the United Irish of cultural liberation, the harp restrung. 'How then can I exhibit examples of Indian speech?' Dunne spends several weeks at Niagara Falls, where he is moved to compose poetry in the Algonquian language. He searches for insight into 'the workings of the Indians mind'. Little Turtle could extend his imitations even to animals.

The Indians are degenerating and wasting away; in half a century they will be extinguished. He hopes these stories 'may furnish an additional motive to treat them with humanity'. 'It is a part of the destiny of an unlettered people, to write their memorials with the pen of a stranger. They have no alternative, imperfect representation, or blank oblivion.' But of whom are we speaking? 'Who are these evanescent tribes? And in what class of created beings is posterity to place them?' He does not answer the

questions; he records their answers. The Abenaki will say he is *the man of the land*; ask the Illinois, he will say he is a *real man*; ask the Algonquin speakers, they will say they are *doubly men*. The Spaniards will say *barbarian*, and the Canadian will say *savage*. Ask the wise men of Europe who, though they have never even seen the smoke of an Indian village, will 'dogmatise and write volumes upon their nature, powers and capacities, physical, moral, and intellectual; these men will tell you they are *an inferior race of men*'. 'To what opinion shall we hold? What constitutes a man? What energies entitle him to rank high in his species?'

At first he compares the Indians to Homer, or rather to the precursors of Homer. The stories might have 'beguiled the hours at the ships or the tents at the Scamander', the river of Troy flowing into the Hellespont where two continents meet.²⁸ Homer is the poet of the heroic stage of history, 'while the Indian is yet in his infancy, and in the gristle' (scant agriculture, poor pasturage), using a phrase of Americans that Burke employed a few years earlier: 'a people who are still, as it were in the gristle not yet hardened into the bone of manhood'. The transition from the woods to the farm was also an ancient figure of rhetoric of Cicero and Horace. Corresponding to the economic bases in this transition, there loomed above, so to speak, a cultural superstructure of the transition from song to writing or from speech to letters. Eloquence, said Cicero, not reason, drew men from sylvan retreats to build the city. Orpheus, claimed Horace, sang men from roaming the woods to the building of the city. Dunne tells several stories. One is a racial one of envy and colour change. Another is sexy but is in Latin. A third is a trickster tale. However, it is the first story I want to tell.

6. The red-crested bird and black duck

A man separated himself from 'the society of his fellows, and took up his abode in a desert place, in a remote part of the wilderness'. He hunted by day, and in the evening he imparted a portion of food to his brother whom he had imprisoned in a gloomy cave. 'This unfortunate brother, from having his hair of a fiery red, infectious to the touch, was known among the men of his nation by the name of the red man.'

The younger brother is the figure of dispossession in societies where primogeniture prevails such as Europe. The infectious red hair is symbolic of ethnic origin and of the Jacobin revolutionary who wore the *bonnet rouge* or red Phrygian cap of liberty, which had made its appearance as a signifier of revolutionary militance in the early months of the French revolution. In the contest of symbols for dominance over the head, it had replaced the crown. Indeed, a 'battle of the bonnets' in October 1793 pitted *républicaines* of the Club of Revolutionary Women, who boldly

wore the cap of liberty, against the Jacobin men, who feared that the demand for pistols would follow.²⁹ The title page of the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* portrayed two women, Britannia and Liberty, seated next to a pike with the *bonnet rouge* on top.

After many winters, the hunter grew lonely. He went to a village. He approached a wigwam on its perimeter, and, finding a widow, he presented her some deer-meat for dinner. The next day he hunted and brought her a whole deer, and invited her to share it with the villagers. It was given to be understood ‘in whispers by the women that a great hunter whom she was bound to conceal, who appeared to come from some distant country, was the providore of her bounty’. His presents ‘excited the curiosity of the whole nation whose joint efforts scarcely equaled the success of this single hunter, notwithstanding their superior knowledge of the best hunting grounds’.

Let the solitary hunter stand for the isolated individualist: the ‘providore’ of prolific productivity, the yankee, the capitalist, the inventor, the symbol of the industrial revolution. At the same time, the Indians had two things to sell—furs and land—and each became their undoing. Furs were traded for alcohol; land bribed away. The Indians are the first example Thomas Malthus provides, in 1798, of his population thesis that ‘misery is the check that represses the superior power of population and keeps its effects equal to the means of subsistence’. Women, children, and the old are the first to suffer, he argues, in this ‘rudest state of mankind’ or ‘the first state of mankind’, where hunting is ‘the only mode of acquiring food’.³⁰ By 1803, this was no longer possible. The actual conditions of the forest hunt in the lands of the Ohio, Monogohela and Wabash were of diminishing game and severe competition of hunters, red and white. In fact, in 1798, the Indians of the Ohio were in an advanced politico-economic relationship with imperial Europe, considerable commodity trade, capital intensive agriculture, massive drug addiction (alcoholism), and incubatory racial separations. Malthusian law is not a demographic hypothesis but an episode in a fictional narrative of termination.

The hunter expressed his desire for a wife, and the chief’s brother obliged his wish to form an alliance with his sister. They married; they feasted; ‘thus the moons rolled away’, until he returned to take her away to ‘the seat of solitude’. Again, he passed the days hunting. She noticed that after dinner he tiptoed away, carrying the tongues and marrow of the animals he killed. Not many days passed before her worry grew, and, against his commands, she stole away to the spot where she had seen him descend into the cavernous prison. His brother heard her approach. ‘The sound of her feet upon the hollow ground, roused the half torpid senses of the subterraneous inhabitant and drew forth his groans’. She recognised

him as a brother. 'She learnt his story, she wept over his sufferings, she administered to his wants, her conversation like a charm gave him new existence.' She induced him to clamber out into the sunshine.

The 'underground' was a vivid reality to the miners of the industrial revolution, and it was a figure of speech of the repressive years of the first decade of the nineteenth century, applied to the Luddites. We can compare him to the Irish political prisoners of St. George who will be released in June 1802 or to Michael Dwyer in the caves of the Wicklow mountains. Much of the chase in *Edgar Huntly* takes place underground, in mountainous caverns or caves. According to a note to the public at the beginning of the novel, it is such settings of the western wilderness as well as Indian hostilities that must distinguish American literature.³¹ The 'underground' and the 'wilderness' thus possessed both a geological or geographical presence and a construction of political imagination.

Her humanity was engaged: she separated the clotted knots of his hair; she removed the clammy concretions on his forehead. An alliance, in effect, is made between the dispossessed younger brother, the figure of the Jacobin or the United Irishman, and the woman seeking her own subsistence and longing for her own community of women's labour.

Her husband observed her hands stained with red. She sank into despair, to be roused when her husband held before her, suspended by his long red hair, the severed head of her brother. The air resounded with her screams. He fled into the moonlit forest, coming at length to an ancient oak hollowed by lightning, where he hurled the head with its fiery tresses. Then, with wolfish yelps, he began to transmogrify, 'adding to his nature what alone was wanting, the shape and figure of a wolf'. *Homo homini lupus*. She has lost the source of her food. His productivity still depends on murder and oppression. 'Some human beings must suffer from want', Malthus concluded. 'All cannot share alike the bounties of nature.'

Indeed, on the frontier, far from the plantations of Monticello, the merchant houses of New York, or Independence Hall of Philadelphia, 'murder', to quote Richard White, 'gradually became the dominant American Indian policy'. The *lex talionis* prevailed. Whiskey was the poor man's medium of exchange, solace, capital investment and drug to deal to his enemies. Volney observed it with disdain, disgust and distance. John Heckewelder, the Moravian missionary, wrote, 'when the object is to murder Indians, strong liquor is the main article required; for when you have them dead drunk, you may do to them as you please'. Lithconia mocked the subject: '... murder was but a lean trade, though it was, of all others, the most honourable'. Jonah Barrington recalled the first two questions of a young man: What family is he from? Did he ever blaze?³² General Wayne encouraged dueling in the army of Ohio—for instance,

Lieutenants Bradshaw, a gentleman physician, and Huston, a weaver, both Irishmen, killed each other in a duel.³³

Meanwhile, the days passed in near lifeless despair. She heard a distant sound. She listened, she was aroused, she recognised the voice of her brother calling. He was telling her where to find berries. She ascended the tree and with a cord of twisted bark drew forth the head. She placed it in her bosom, and he became her counsellor, providing subsistence by felling deer or caribou with a glance of his eye. 'The storm was now passed over, and a better world seemed to open through the separated clouds. The wants of hunger supplied, the fears of danger banished ...' She only missed 'the cheerful buzz of the village, the labours of the field sweetened by the converse of her companions'. This is the collective labour of the commons, practiced in the Great Lakes, Ireland, and England alike, prior to enclosures, clearance, and conquest. The absence of the market, the entirely incidental character of private tenures, and the communal work with hoes and digging sticks is the picture of women among the Seneca people.³⁴

The red man attempted to deflect her attention: 'Did he show her the beauties of the wilderness, she was blind; did he warn her of the dangers of the frequented village, he spoke to the winds'. He relented on condition that she hide his head from the view of all mortals. So, clasping 'the friendly head still closer to her bosom and associating it with her heart', she made her way to a village. Her longing for the village was thus a return to a specific culture, the village republic of the *pays d'en haut*.

Charles Brockden Brown worked with this theme in *Edgar Huntly*: his two protagonists, the Irish cottier and the frontier squatter, had distinct relationships to women who control the land. Clithero was beholden to Mrs. Euphemia Lorimer, an absentee landlady in Dublin, who, having his parents for tenants, promoted him to steward. In contrast, Huntly's parents had taken lands from the Delaware Indians (or Lenape people) who murdered his parents but without regaining their land. His uncle squatted on the clan's village and drove them into Ohio. Refusing to budge was only Old Deb, or 'Queen Mab', who maintained her sovereignty by weeding her corn and keeping companionship with three domestic wolves. Towards the end of the novel, the two themes are brought together as Clithero finds shelter in Queen Mab's mountain hut, and Huntly seeks to protect Euphemia Lorimer, now resident in New York as her own country 'contained a thousand memorials of past calamity, and ... was lapsing fast into civil broils'. Queen Mab, it transpired, had directed underground attacks to recover her people's patch of the commons, while Mrs. Lorimer formed connections with capital-appropriating wealth in Ireland, India, and America.

In the village, she joined a numerous assembly of women gambling. A brooch, a ring, and the 'trinkets and chainies' were at stake. Enticed by the passion of play, the inevitable followed: her cloak opened and the head dropped from her bosom down a hill into a river below. As she chased after it, she saw the head transform itself into a rare bird whose dusky plumage was surmounted by a tufted crown of red feathers, while she, herself, was transformed into a black duck. Among the Miami, Dunne explains, the red-crested bird is the forerunner of calamity, while the black duck is so despised that its feathers are never used for totems of war but it is only devoured as food, and then only in 'seasons of extreme famine'.

'What constitutes a man? What energies entitle him to rank high in his species?' Who are these evanescent tribes? And in what class of created beings is posterity to place them?' These were Dunne's questions; Volney's conclusion: 'These men are actually in the state of wild animals and birds ...' It is a story of mutilation and of organic, inter-species reproduction. In the context of diminished game reserves, considerable corn production, and strategic reliance on European trading items, it is unpersuasive to pass off the story as one belonging to a society of hunters and gatherers, though certainly the nativist revivals (Neolin in the 1760s, Handsome Lake in 1802, Tenskwatawa in 1809) resisted the fur trade.

Gambling is the agent of corruption. Commodity exchange and the appeal to fortune subverted the community that she had hungered for. But the magic of the story is one of transformation and continuity: the Jacobin *sans-culottes* and his nurturing female sister persist, despite money, despite decapitation. The possibility of insurrection remains; survival even in famine is possible. Little Turtle and his people knew famine and defeat (Battle of Fallen Timbers 1794), and the listeners to Dunne's story remembered the famine of 1800–1 in Ireland, the killing of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the defeat of the Wexford Republic of 1798. We have listened to a story among the defeated.

7. Whose story?

Whose story was this? Little Turtle, the Miami chief, spoke to John Dunne, the jurist of Armagh, and between them was William Wells, interpreting. When we learn that Wells was captured in 1784, as a thirteen-year-old boy, by the Miami Indians, who raised him and named him *Apeconit*, meaning 'wild carrot', on account of his red hair, we realise there is another story here than the one Dunne is telling in Dublin. Further, when we learn that William Wells also married a chief's daughter, Manwangopath, or Sweet Breeze, the daughter of Little Turtle, the story-teller himself, it is clear that the story of the red-crested bird and black duck is also a complex story of a multi-ethnic family from the border

country.³⁵ John Dunne was thus present at an intimate family gathering. It was also a political family. In October 1791, Little Turtle defeated General Harmar twice, and then, in November 1791, with war whoops sounding like the ringing of a thousand bells, the governor of the Northwest Territory, General Arthur St. Clair, and his army of the Federal Government of the USA succumbed to Little Turtle and the braves who followed him. The battlefield casualties were found with earth placed in their mouths; thus did the warriors of Little Turtle try to satisfy the land-hunger of the Long Knives.

Satisfaction was short-lived. In 1794, the Indians of Ohio were decisively defeated by 'Mad' Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Fallen Timbers (Toledo, Ohio), and Wells, now working for the Americans, led a team of eight translators at the 1795 Treaty of Greenville that grabbed the land that became the fat State of Ohio (1803). On the one hand, he had to make comprehensible such abstract redundancies as 'the said Indians do hereby cede and relinquish forever' or racial categories like 'any citizen of the United States, or any other white person or persons'. On the other hand, he had to provide legal abstraction or equivocation 'to bury the hatchet' or 'to collect the bones of your slain warriors [and] put them into a deep pit'.³⁶

The Turtle addressed President Jefferson in January 1802, translated by Wells. Jefferson preferred, despite his leadership of the Republican Party, the patriarchal family as his model of close human encounter; here he could rule, unopposed by different opinions. So, of the 26 paragraphs of the speech, 24 begin with direct address of 'Father', one begins 'my Father', and one begins 'My Father and Brothers'. The volume of rum into the region, essential lubrication to the land cessions, doubled between 1800 and 1803.³⁷ 'Father, When our white brethren came to this land, our forefathers were numerous, and happy, but since their intercourse with the white people, and owing to the introduction of this fatal poison, we have become less numerous and happy.' 'Father, the introduction of this poison has been prohibited in our camps, but not the towns, where many of our hunters, for this poison, dispose of not only their furs, etc., but frequently of their guns and blankets and return to their families destitute.'³⁸

The Turtle died in 1811 at Well's house, asking only to be taken outside to die in the orchard. Wells himself painted his face black, as was the Miami custom when facing certain death, and was killed in 1812. As his niece watched on, a warrior chopped off his head, and another cut out his heart and devoured the organ of courage. 'The spirit, the true life of any animal, resided in the heart and blood of the beast.'³⁹ Wells was an intermediary and a great translator. He once spoke in the Wabash language to a large bear he had wounded. The Moravian missionary, John

Heckewelder, asked him what he said. 'I told him that he knew the fortune of war, that one or the other of us must have fallen; that it was his fate to be conquered, and he ought to die like a man, like a hero, and not like an old woman; that if the case had been reversed, and I had fallen into the power of my enemy, I would not have disgraced my nation as he did, but would have died with firmness and courage, as becomes a true warrior.'

In 1802, he was appointed to issue treaty annuities and promote 'civilisation' among the Indians. He had to share authority with the factor of the Indian trading house at Fort Wayne, John Johnston, who was an Irishman. Born in 1775 near Ballyshannon, he came to USA in 1786, moved to the Alleghenies and became a provisioner of oxen and pack horses to the Americans.⁴⁰ In 1801, as the Quakers began their work among the Miamis, Johnston married a Quaker woman. Their ploughs were furnished by the Society of Friends and a £100 gift from an ancient female friend from Cork. In 1802, Johnston opened the book containing the first records of the fur trade at Fort Wayne (\$13,320 = deer, raccoon, bear, otter, beaver, mink, muskrat). His second marriage was to a Chippewa woman. Their daughter, Jane, married Henry Schoolcraft, a prodigious collector of Algonquian tales, who, after an evangelical conversion, became a violent critic of Indian superstition and sloth. Schoolcraft advocated Indian removal: the tales collected dust on the shelf, and the marriage fell apart.

Wells, Turtle and Dunne understood one another. Just as Lord Edward Fitzgerald learned something from Joseph Brant about 'the dish with one spoon'—a unified Ireland of catholic and protestant; so, about ten years later, John Dunne brought back to Dublin something about survival and transformation in a period of traumatic catastrophe. His writing style is refined, conscious of high decorum. The style of abstractions was that of universals, supposedly unavailable to savages. The style of 'particles' (conjunctions, prepositions and connecting adverbs) was the style expressing relations among substantives, and again was believed to characterise the superior mind of Europeans. Primitive language was concrete not abstract, emotional not reasoned, metaphorical rather than systematic.⁴¹ It is more than an act of translation; it is a deliberate cultural decision with political implications. He writes in the prose of the authentic nation, like that of his class-mate at the University of Glasgow, William Drennan. Dunne wants his listeners to pay attention to the story. To Dunne, such stories in the first place prove that the Indians are of advanced mental development, contrary to the view of European philosophers. In the second place, those who excel in narrative invention and embellishment have a character comparable to the minstrels of Europe. Finally, the subject, manner, image and lesson prove them 'to be the spontaneous productions of the soil'.

The stadialism of Jefferson and Volney has not been transcended, though it has been refined with racial determinants in the nineteenth century and structures of rationality in the twentieth century. Johannes Fabian showed that the European travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries assumed an equivalence between ‘further away’ and ‘longer ago’. Darkest Africa, deepest Amazonas, dreaded Mississippi, and desperate Pacific islanders were both geographic regions and stadial episodes of time. In contrast, Fabian propounded a notion of undistanced, coeval time, with a shared present.⁴² As George Caffentzis has written, ‘Only by acknowledging that intellectual transmission is not simply a matter of diffusion from centre to periphery can the stages metaphor be transcended’.⁴³ (It was Brecht who said that wisdom was passed by word of mouth, and that new transmitters passed the old stupidities). There was an active argument; an energetic discussion. The reality was contested. The complacent acceptance of multiple discourses is a sophisticated elision if not élitist evasion of that conflict.

In the terms of Volney and Jefferson, the red-crested bird and black duck might have evolutionist, scholarly interpretations, but they would not be part of a dialogue: the Indians were defeated at Fallen Timbers, their land was taken at the Treaty of Greenville, their stories now were groundless. To an Irish audience, in the throes of the loss of political independence, widespread famine, recurring pestilence, and repression of spirit, the story had a totally different meaning. James Connolly wrote, ‘the sympathetic student of history ... believes in the possibility of a people by political intuition anticipating the lessons afterwards revealed to them in the sad school of experience’.⁴⁴ What Connolly meant by sympathy or intuition, Luke Gibbons finds, ‘these agrarian reformers were captivated by the co-operative potential of Irish agriculture, and looked to the existence of a pre-conquest Gaelic commonwealth, a form of Celtic communism, to establish a native pedigree for their co-operative ideals’.⁴⁵ Time is non-linear, if not coeval.

If we jettison the evolutionary scheme of stadialism, does history revert to ‘a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence’, as Engels feared? Though the industrial proletariat was in the gristle itself, at the machine in the factory of the city, it had allies among the slaves in revolt, the indigenous people in retreat and the commoners in resistance. Adding them surely alters the dialectics. Older cultural forms like the animal tale gathered a magical political realism. The cultural nationalism could not easily be expressed when the grounding of it was being ‘ceded and relinquished forever’, a bird-and-duck phrase of its own. *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*, Marx quoted to explain the equivalence of the slave trade and the labour market, of Kentucky with Ireland—the names are changed but

the story is told of thee.⁴⁶ Dunne helps us to understand that the allegory is a code of survival. It can be understood as an appeal to the materialist world (described in words of substantives) that is historically shared among the *res publica*—hoes, dishes, spoons, ducks, or birds.

Notes

- ¹ John Dunne, 'Notices relative to some of the Native Tribes of North America' in *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. IX (Dublin, 1803).
- ² Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge UP 1991).
- ³ *The Northern Star*, 17 March, 1792.
- ⁴ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830* (Cork University Press 1996).
- ⁵ Friedrich Engels, *Socialism; Utopian and Scientific*, appeared in French in 1880, and in English in 1892.
- ⁶ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia 1983).
- ⁷ Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1992), p. 135.
- ⁸ Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1999), p. 11.
- ⁹ David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books 2000). Jefferson began writing *Notes on the State of Virginia* in 1781, but they were not published until 1787.
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- ¹² R. Dismore, in *The Irish Magazine*, vol. III, January 1809, p. 36.
- ¹³ David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Dublin: Four Courts 1998), p. 115.
- ¹⁴ In truth, in 1802 the Surrey railroad opened, the first plate-edge iron railway for the public.
- ¹⁵ Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball (eds.), *The Political Writings of Thomas Jefferson*.
- ¹⁶ Michael Durey, 'John Lithgow's Lithconia: The Making and Meaning of America's First 'Utopian Socialist' Tract', in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, XLIX 3, July 1992.
- ¹⁷ John Anthony Scott (ed.), *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf before the High Court of Vendome* (University of Massachusetts Press 1967), p. 58.
- ¹⁸ William L. Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanegea*, 2 vols. (N.Y., 1838), II, p. 481.
- ¹⁹ Logan Esarey, I, p. 459 (Joseph Barron is the translator). John Sugden, *Tecumseh: A Life* (New York: Holt 1997), p. 204. Dowd, op. cit., p. 140.
- ²⁰ Here his path crossed with Napoleon and Buonarroti: Napoleon dissolved Babeuf's conspiracy of the equals; Buonarroti defended the 'ancient customs'. Volney tried to establish 'a rural establishment of a singular kind'—a plantation? Yes, he purchased in 1792 a domain, 'Little India' it was called, for cotton, coffee and sugar cane.
- ²¹ Clarence Glacken, *Traces from the Rhodian Shore* (1967).
- ²² Richard White, op. cit. Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (1969), pp. 24–29.

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- ³⁶ Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, four volumes, vol. IV (Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1973).
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- ³⁸ Leonard U. Hill, *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis* (Ohio: Piqua 1957), p. 17.
- ³⁹ Dowd, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.
- ⁴⁰ Leonard U. Hill, *op. cit.* John Johnston, *op. cit.*
- ⁴¹ Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), chapter one, *passim*.
- ⁴² Johannes Fabian, *op. cit.*
- ⁴³ George C. Caffentzis, 'On the Scottish Origin of 'Civilization'', in Silvia Federici (ed.), *Enduring Western Civilization: the Construction of the Concept of Western Civilization and Its 'Others'* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger 1995), p. 33.
- ⁴⁴ James Connolly, *Erin's Hope* (1896).
- ⁴⁵ Luke Gibbons, *Field Day*, volume II, p. 954.
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Civic-Republican Citizenship and Voluntary Action

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The following article is an edited version of the paper that Fergus O'Ferrall presented at the Fourth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector, held in Trinity College, Dublin in July 2000. (The complete text of the paper, including extensive footnotes, is available from The Republic.)

1. 'Uno vivere civile e politico'

(i) *Aristotle's paradigm*

Aristotle's *Politics* and *The Nicomachean Ethics* are seminal texts originating a body of thought about the citizen and the citizen's relation to the common good (the *res publica*) and about the republic (or *polis*) as a community of values. From Aristotle, we can trace this body of thought as it develops (and changes with the context) through Cicero in Roman times, to the civic humanists and Machiavelli in the Renaissance, to Harrington in the seventeenth century, to Rousseau, Montesquieu and Paine in the eighteenth century, down to modern civic-republican thought as expressed by Hannah Arendt and, more recently, by Oldfield, Dagger and Pettit. Central to this civic republican tradition is the doctrine of '*uno vivere civile e politico*', to use a phrase of Machiavelli, meaning a particular political and civil way of life based upon the practice of active citizenship.

For Aristotle, 'states of character' arise out of activities, as when a person becomes just by doing just acts. Virtue is a 'state of character' built upon actions done at the right time, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive and in the right way. The key point is that these actions are *voluntary*. Virtue is only displayed in actions that are voluntary as opposed to actions done under compulsion or in ignorance: 'the voluntary is that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances'. Aristotle argued that choice after deliberation was crucial to our use of 'practical wisdom' (the power of deliberating how a state of being which will satisfy

us is to be brought into existence).

For Aristotle, the ideal constitution of a state would be one in which every citizen achieves well-being (*eudaimonia*), and the distribution of such well-being is essentially a matter of social justice. Virtuous action is what the person with ‘practical wisdom’ would choose: judgement is acquired by moral discipline, practice, and experience. Aristotle sees human beings as ‘political animals’ who by nature require to develop virtue with, or in association with, other people if they are to achieve human well-being. The ideal state he defined as ‘a community of equals, aiming at the best life possible’; a citizen was someone who participated in ‘giving judgement and holding office’.

The citizen takes part in the determination of the general good, enjoying in his own person the values made attainable by society while contributing by his political activity to the attainment of values by others. Seeking the common good was clearly of a higher order than seeking particular goods for one’s own enjoyment. The pursuit of virtue was not opposed to, or even separate from, the pursuit of self-interest *properly understood*, for in pursuing the natural goal man fulfils his nature and achieves well-being. By serving others, he best develops himself.

Aristotle conceived of a *politeia* (a constitution involving the formal distribution of authority) to make decisions within a universal decision-making process in which all citizens are participants: this was possible because the process of making a decision was so complex that it could be decomposed into a number of functions and each of these entrusted to a particular group. In this way, the *politeia* became the paradigm of a society organised in such a manner that any theoretically conceivable group had opportunity to contribute to decisions in the way for which it was best fitted, while any individual citizen might contribute many times over, both as a member of any specialised group for which his attainments might qualify him and as a member of the *demos*, the citizen body as a whole to which all belonged.

(ii) *The transmission of the Aristotelian paradigm*

The transmission of the Aristotelian paradigm from Aristotle’s period, 384-322 BC, to the twenty-first century is a story of intense periods of articulation and practical achievement, followed by long periods of eclipse. A key period for republican thought is that dominated by the writings of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC), including *The Republic*, *The Laws* and *On Duties*. Cicero is heavily influenced by Greek thought, including that of Aristotle.

Cicero’s use of *res publica* is important to understand: it means literally ‘the public thing’; in his book *De Republica* (*The Republic*) Cicero defines

res publica as '*res populi*', 'the thing of the people'. It can simply mean nation, community or political community. But it can also mean the Roman Republic: the Roman *res publica* is contrasted with the monarchy that preceded it. Again, the phrase may refer to the public political activity that was for Cicero the essence of the free republic. Cicero can describe himself as having been completely devoted to *res publica*, that is, to public life. So he uses *res publica* to refer primarily to different aspects of one and the same thing: a type of political activity that constituted the political community at its best. He interprets the virtues in terms of the obligations of role and relationships: obligations to other individuals or to the *res publica* as a whole. The subject of *The Republic* might be defined as *de optimo statu civitatis et de optimo cive* ('on the best condition of the state and the best citizen').

Cicero's subject (the 'Ideal State' and the 'Ideal Citizen') leads him to an urgent defence of the life devoted to public service against the Epicurean view that the wise man will preserve his freedom by remaining in a private station. Cicero argues that the desire to make life better for others is implanted in human nature. He advances the well known republican formula of the mixed or balanced constitution, which predominated in political thought and, indeed, republican thinking until the late eighteenth century. The latter part of *De Republica* has come down to us in a very fragmentary condition. It seems to have discussed education and the influence of the arts. There was also a long discussion of the 'Ideal Citizen', taking as models the great Romans of old with their conception of civic and military glory through public service.

One of the most formative developments in historical research since the 1960s has been the rediscovery of the importance of the political ideas associated with Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and the Italian city-republics of the sixteenth century. The seminal work of J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner has provided the requisite historical foundation for the revival of civic republicanism in the 1990s. The last thirty years have seen great advances in Machiavellian scholarship and that concerned with civic humanism in general. In 1970, Bernard Crick had perceptively observed that Machiavelli's 'main substantive preoccupation, indeed his good obsession, was with the conditions for republican government'. The tradition of civic republicanism, recovered by Skinner, Pocock and others, provides, after Aristotle and Cicero, a further basis for developing a normative theory of voluntary action as active citizenship.

Voluntary action in this tradition may be best understood as an expression of active citizenship of a political order of free and equal citizens; an order conducted according to laws which rest upon the deliberation and free consent of those citizens. The early modern

republican theory associated with Machiavelli and Florentine political thought embraced the *res publica* or Aristotelian *polis* in a way which ‘was at once universal, in the sense that it existed to realise for its citizens all the values which men were capable of realising in this life, and particular in the sense that it was finite and located in space and time’. This republican theory has left an important paradigmatic legacy in western political thought: the Italian city-republics provided the historical basis for what Held describes both as ‘a distinctive new trajectory in civic life and political ideas’ and as the ‘reforging of republicanism’.

These city-republics, beginning with Marsilius of Padua (1275/80–1342), marked the first occasion in post-classical political thinking when arguments were developed for and on behalf of self-determination and popular sovereignty: that the highest political ideal is the civic freedom of an independent self-governing people. The early modern republicans traced their thinking back to the ancient Roman Republic, as Viroli notes in his key work on Machiavelli:

Niccolò Machiavelli was the restorer of the Roman conception of politics as civic wisdom—that is, the idea of politics as the wisdom of the citizen whose aim is to preserve the civil life—and the founder of the theory of modern republicanism based upon this conception.

Held analyses the early modern republican tradition and identifies two strands: ‘civic humanist republicanism’ (or developmental republicanism) which is contrasted with ‘civic or classical republicanism’ (protective republicanism). The first, ‘developmental’ republicanism, stresses the *intrinsic* value of political participation for the development of citizens as human beings, while the second, ‘protective’ republicanism, emphasises its *instrumental* importance for the protection of citizens, especially their personal liberty. Rousseau, in the eighteenth century, is the exemplar *par excellence* of the first while Machiavelli is that of the second strand.

A citizen is one who participates in the civil community, either in government or in the deliberative or judicial functions of the polity. Citizenship is the means to involvement in a shared enterprise orientated towards the realisation of the common good, and political participation is the necessary vehicle for the attainment of the good.

Niccolò Machiavelli is a pivotal figure in regard to the fate of this key doctrine. Machiavelli sought to locate in such civic involvement the pre-conditions of independence, self-rule and glorious endeavour (civic glory) in the context of the realities of the new emerging European political order. Contemporary scholars, like Skinner and Pocock, give appropriate stress to Machiavelli’s *The Discourses* (as opposed to *The Prince*, which for too long was taken as Machiavelli’s major contribution). Machiavelli

linked the classical emphasis on the primacy of civic life directly to the requirements of 'power politics': he is the father figure of 'protective republicanism' as a model of democracy. Political participation is a necessary condition of liberty. The republic, as Bernard Crick has written, was to Machiavelli 'the best of all possible worlds and he tried to show that it had to be and could be, not merely should be, remarkably tolerant of internal conflict and dissent'.

Machiavelli uses '*republica*' in two senses as Crick has noted; as a general word to stress, in the old Roman sense of *res publica*, the things that are common to a people (the systematic relations of régime to society) and, in a narrower sense, a republic specifically of the Roman kind—based upon '*uno vivere civile e politico*', a political and civil way of life or the practice of citizenship; '*uno vivere civile*' is an independent community with its own laws.

Such a community requires *virtù*, a word which conveys 'a whole classical and renaissance theory of man and culture'. Essentially it implies a specifically civic spirit—a quality of mind and action central to citizenship. It implies a *political* morality based upon spirited action. For Machiavelli, key questions to ask are: does a state have *virtù* among its inhabitants or not? Have the inhabitants relapsed into *ozio* (indolence or corruption)? Are there in a word citizens? Viroli argues persuasively that Machiavelli's treatment of political virtue 'can be grasped only if we read it as connected to his overarching commitment to the principle of the rule of law. The political virtue that he invokes and tries to revitalise is the energy, the courage, the craft that serves to institute or restore the rule of law and civil life'.

Machiavelli stresses the rule of law—living under laws to which citizens have freely given their consent—in order to avoid a condition of dependency.

Dependency causes fear, because to be in a condition of dependency means to be under the permanent possibility of being coerced and oppressed. And fear generates servile habits which are incompatible with the status and the obligations of a free citizen.

Viroli demonstrates in a way which is quite original in Machiavellian scholarship that love of country (patriotism) is the passion which, according to Machiavelli, moves citizens to pursue the common good, to resist tyranny, to ward off corruption and to keep alive a free and civil way of living:

Like Roman republican philosophers and historians, he interprets it as being *charitas reipublicae* and *charitas civium*—that is, a compassionate love of one's fellow citizens and of the institutions, the laws, and the way of life of the republic,

which gives the citizens the lucidity to see the common good and the strength to carry it out.

For Machiavelli, ‘the political man’ is ‘a magnanimous soul who commits himself or herself to goals that go beyond the horizon of self-interest, family, or social group but encompass the entire political community, the republic at large’. In early sixteenth-century Florence, public rhetoric, philosophy and historiography were ‘pervaded by the Aristotelian and Ciceronian interpretation of politics as the *Respublica*—that is, a community of free and equal citizens living together for the common good under the rule of law—and by the ideal of the political or civil man, understood as an upright citizen who serves the common good with justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance’.

(iii) *Republican thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*

In 1945, Zera S. Fink published *The Classical Republicans, An Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth Century England*. In this pioneering work, Fink traced how classical republican political ideas, associated particularly with Machiavelli, were adopted, adapted and modified in seventeenth-century England. The key figure in this context is James Harrington, the author of the republican utopia *Oceana* published in London in 1656. John Milton and Algernon Sidney were also significant in defending republicanism on the abstract ground that it was implied by natural law and the sovereign power of the people. Harrington stood alone among the political writers of his time in seeing that government is determined both in its structure and in its working by underlying social and economic forces, especially the distribution of property, particularly property in land. Harrington drew heavily upon the examples of the Venetian republic, Machiavelli and Aristotle to outline his ‘equal commonwealth’ which, he argued, alone of all forms of government permits liberty and gives adequate scope for true statesmanship and public spirit. His political ideal was the ancient republic under aristocratic auspices.

Seventeenth-century classical republican thought proved very influential in Britain and what was to become the United States of America in the eighteenth century. The lasting significance of the seventeenth-century classical republicans is that they provided the conduit for republican ideas from early modern times into the modern era of democratic radicalism. The key idea here is that of the independent citizenry—‘a republic of freeholders’—shaping civil and political life. Republicans were utterly opposed to any citizen being dependent upon others.

As Pocock has observed of *Oceana*:

Harrington conveys what was to be perhaps his chief gift to eighteenth-century political thought: the discovery of a means whereby the country freeholder could equate himself with the Greco-Roman *polites* and profess a wholly classical and Aristotelian doctrine of the relations between property, liberty and power.

The Aristotelian concept of citizenship was transmitted through the identification of freeholder with citizen. Harrington's influence is evident in what might be called the 'semi-republican' flavour of English eighteenth-century political thought, notably that associated with 'country' versus 'court'. 'Country' ideologues saw contemporary politics in classical terms, with the crown-in-parliament standing for the mixed constitution, the freeholders of the shires for Roman citizens, and the court and national debt for the 'luxury' and 'corruption' that proverbially destroyed all free states. The presence of this vocabulary made it easier for American revolutionaries to see a republic as the constitutional solution to their problems on the larger scale, rather than seeing republics as exclusively belonging, as they had in the past, except for Rome, to smaller states.

In order to do so, however, American republicans absorbed eighteenth-century political philosophy, especially that of Montesquieu (1689-1755). He identified republican states with the principle of virtue, and, as Shklar says, he 'delegitimised' monarchical ideology which had sought to take over republican virtues, 'by exposing it as essentially fraudulent'. While Montesquieu never assumed that republican forms of government would apply to large modern states, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1762) recreated republicanism to fit the modern world. Rousseau's intensely republican book embraced the Aristotelian paradigm of citizenship with its great themes of liberty and virtue. Rousseau positively asserts that it is only through living in civil society that men can experience their fullest freedom.

As social beings, human beings are citizens and must act as citizens. As citizens, each is equal to the other, and, as a body, they collectively determine the laws they are going to live under and acknowledge an obligation to obey. In this way they free themselves from their dependence on others' wills: they achieve both civil and moral liberty and, in the process, realise their full human potential for happiness as morally autonomous beings.

In the period of the 'Atlantic Revolutions' republican political thought was rapidly put into practice: the idea of the representation of the people's will in a representative democracy predominated over the classical view of active citizenship of earlier republican thought. As Held has noted,

from the early nineteenth century the meaning of the concept of liberty changed:

Liberty progressively came to evoke less a sense of public or political liberty, 'the right of the people to share in the government', and more a sense of personal or private liberty, 'the protection of rights against all governmental encroachments, particularly by the legislature'.

Republicans now differed as to the relative emphasis they placed on 'virtue' in the citizenry as opposed to institutional 'checks and balances' in preserving liberty. However, in the early example of the new Republic in America there is evidence that political and intellectual leaders worked hard to inculcate the 'civic virtues' in their fellow countrymen and countrywomen. This was especially a feature of educational reform, but also the arts, literature, drama, architecture and the use of symbols were employed in developing the virtues believed necessary to the survival of the Republic. It was believed that unless sufficient numbers of citizens were willing to put public interests before their own private interests the common good could not be achieved. The new American Republic was a novel experiment, and it needed the virtues of civic republicanism.

2. Voluntary action and civic republicanism

The modern civic republican tradition provides a theoretical basis for a developed form of participatory democracy: civic republicans emphasise the intrinsic value of political participation for the participants themselves as 'the highest form of living-together that most individuals can aspire to'. This presents a challenge to the very privatised and impoverished view of what it means to be a citizen long accepted and still current in democratic societies; civic-republican insights may be associated with 'civil society' theorists, who argue that it is in the voluntary organisations of civil society that citizens learn the virtues of mutual obligation.

There is increasing support from different democratic political traditions and theories for the belief 'that citizenship must play an independent normative role in any plausible political theory and that promotion of responsible citizenship is an urgent aim of public policy'. One important instrument of such a policy would be the promotion of voluntary organisations for public benefit, enabling citizens to identify with the *res publica*.

The dynamic open-ended possibilities of civic republicanism allow for the fullest development and expression of voluntary action through active citizenship. As Fontana has concluded, 'the true heritage of the bourgeois liberal republic is not so much what it has achieved, but the chances it leaves open'. A republican state 'must connect with a form of civil society

in which republican values are firmly entrenched’.

A republic is founded upon a constitutional order of equal citizens:

The republic sought to found its authority on *lex* rather than *rex*, and *prudentia* rather than *providentia*. It called for a theory investing humans with the ability to inaugurate new orders in the realm of secular history. This ability became identified with the Latin term, *virtus*, a reworking of the Greek term, *arete*, meaning the power by which persons act effectively in a civic context. It is a form of civic action largely influenced by the Aristotelian conviction that political and social association are natural to human beings ... In short, virtue is acknowledged as a moral and political relationship of citizenship, a relationship in which each citizen agrees to rule and be ruled in such a way that one’s own civic virtue is intimately bound up with that of one’s fellow citizens.

Richard Dagger has shown that liberalism and republicanism may be blended successfully and that the republican-liberal conception of citizenship ‘links our enduring concern for self to the public life of a deliberative citizen’. Dagger argues ‘that the republican-liberal citizen is someone who respects individual rights, values autonomy, tolerates different opinions and beliefs, plays fair, cherishes civic memory and takes an active part in the life of the community’. The nature of these virtues indicates that much of the cultivation must take place in families, neighbourhoods, churches, the workplace and in voluntary associations of many kinds—in brief in what has come to be called ‘civil society’; as Dagger observes, ‘republican liberals will want a thriving civil society’. It is important therefore to increase the number and enhance the power of voluntary associations that connect the private and public aspects of life. Dagger concludes:

Civil society can indeed promote the public good by serving as a buffer between the individual and the state. But this is not all that it can or should do. Civil society must also be civil in two senses of the word. First, it must promote civility in the sense of a decent regard for the rights and interests of others, including their right of and interest in autonomy. Second, civil society must promote civility in the sense of civic responsibility—of citizens working together for their common good. In both ways, civil society teaches the civic virtues.

The twentieth century saw the arrival of universal franchise in liberal democracies. In the twenty-first century, the challenge will be to translate this ‘formal’ citizenship into an active citizenship based upon an ideal of civic participation which integrates and involves ordinary people in a democratic republic. It is the people who should govern all aspects of their society which directly concern them. Participatory democracy requires to be developed to supplement formal representative democracy. As Charles Leadbetter has stated, ‘civic spirit’ is ‘the big idea for a new political era’. The values cherished by people in society are fostered and preserved not

simply through formal institutional arrangements (such as free elections between competing parties) but also through the exercise of virtue or civic spirit—a willingness to set the good of others above one's private desires or individual interests. The exercise of such virtue can only be done in cooperation with others. This is at the heart of classical civic republicanism: the common business (*res publica*) of the citizens should be conducted by them for the common good. Civic republicanism developed from the belief, developed in the sixteenth century but drawing inspiration from the ancient world, that the state should be an integral part of a free, flourishing society, by acting in the interests of all and being guided by the active participation of its citizens. Voluntary organisations are vital for the development of the kind of political culture which is able to sustain a free public life through active citizenship.

Hannah Arendt (1906-75), who, like Mill, was aware of the novel and spontaneous possibilities inherent in voluntary action, also saw politics as a peculiarly open-ended and unpredictable activity. Arendt favoured what she usually spoke of as 'public freedom': the direct participation in politics by ordinary citizens. Arendt, as Canovan observes:

Rethinks politics itself, focusing attention on the plural and spontaneous nature of action ... she stresses the openness of the future, the capacity of political actors to make new beginnings and do the unexpected. She had faith in the permanent possibility of action by those who choose to accept their responsibility as citizens. She was aware that even when the outcomes of political action are desirable, they are also contingent and fragile, dependent on the continuing action of those who care about the political realm.

Arendt's work is important for a revitalised concept of active citizenship because she recognised 'that it is plurality—the fact that we are all the same precisely in being *different*, and that each of us is capable of acting spontaneously and of thinking our own thoughts—that is at the heart of being human, and that finds its clearest expression in politics'.

Plural viewpoints and plural initiatives are at the heart of politics, and this, Arendt felt, had been ignored by political philosophers and in political theory. As Canovan states, in the Arendtian view, the ability to act, inherent in human beings, is the key to politics:

When we act, we reveal that we are free beings, as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King did in the American South, and as Lech Walesa and his comrades in Solidarity did in Poland. So utterly unpredictable are such actions that Arendt describes the capacity to act as 'the one miracle-working faculty of man'. As the place of action, politics is also the arena in which freedom in this characteristically Arendtian sense of beginning something new can be most fully displayed and enjoyed.

This action is always *interaction*: we take initiatives that need the co-

operation of others, and Arendt's work directs us to rediscover the possibilities of action amongst citizens.

Arendt's message is therefore that ordinary citizens can be free and powerful; not by waiting for something in authority to give them power, but by having the courage to act in concert and create their own public space. Such spaces do not need pre-existing institutions, but come into existence among those who act together.

This vision of public-spirited citizens and their creative functions is fundamental to a flourishing democratic society and has tended to be ignored until recently in mainstream democracy theory. Arendt's contribution is to provide an historically informed philosophical underpinning to the vital role played by voluntary action in society. She sees such action as lying in the capacity that belongs to all individuals for starting something that had never existed before and so to realise both power and freedom: her stress on spontaneity and calling the new into existence is crucial and distinctive to the citizen's role in Arendt's version of republican freedom. As Jeffrey Isaac has noted, there are many similarities between her conception of civic engagement and that of Havel. Arendt believes that citizens have the capacity not just to choose between prescribed alternatives, as in representative democratic systems, but in co-operation and solidarity with others to call entirely new possibilities into existence: they have the role of *initiative* rather than simply the role of *choice*; in this she clearly recalls the Tocquevillean view of democracy.

Appendix: The Civic-Republican Tradition and Related Texts

	Author	Key texts
B.C. 384-322	Aristotle	<i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i> <i>Politics</i>
106-43	Cicero	<i>The Republic</i> <i>The Laws</i> <i>On Duties</i>
A.D. 1275/80-1542	Marsilius of Padua	<i>Defensor Pacis</i>
1469-1527	Machiavelli	<i>The Discourses</i>
1611-77	Harrington	<i>The Commonwealth of Oceana</i>
1689-1755	Montesquieu	<i>De L'Esprit des Lois</i>
1712-78	Rousseau	<i>The Social Contract</i>
1737-1809	Paine	<i>Common Sense</i> <i>The Rights of Man</i>
1805-59	Tocqueville	<i>Democracy in America</i> ¹
1806-73	Mill	<i>On Liberty</i> ²
1906-75	Arendt	<i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> <i>The Human Condition</i> <i>On Revolution</i>
1978	Havel	<i>The Power of the Powerless</i>
1990	Oldfield	<i>Citizenship and Community</i> <i>Civic Republicanism in the Modern World</i>
1997	Pettit	<i>Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government</i>
	Dagger	<i>Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism</i>

Notes

¹ Tocqueville was, as he described himself, 'a liberal of a new kind'; he has an essential place in civic-republican literature for many reasons including his insights into the effects of the growth of democracy upon liberty which he regarded as 'a sacred thing' and his debt to Rousseau.

² Mill, much influenced by Tocqueville, has an important place in the civic-republican pantheon because he sought to provide a 'civil or social liberty' in *On Liberty* and he emphasised certain classical republican features in the liberal polity he outlined.

Republicanism and Nationalism: An Imagined Conflict

DALTÚN Ó CEALLAIGH

The Ireland Institute has taken a worthy initiative in launching a new magazine entitled *The Republic*.¹ Ironically, however, the introductory article, ‘Beyond Nationalism: Time to Reclaim the Republican Ideal’, is counter-productive from a republican standpoint, insofar as that aims to advance to the fullest extent the rights of the Irish nation and of its citizenry.

The article commences with a statement of the need to undo the ‘confusion of republicanism with nationalism’. What ensues is an imagined conflict between the two positions rather than a clarification of content and compatibility. The source of the difficulty is established early on by rejecting the approach of ‘nationalisms’ or, put less academically, denying the fact that there are different kinds of nationalism.

As an ideology, nationalism generally emerged in modern history in the form of movements against empire, through the assertion that nations have the right to independence.² (Later, they would be alternatively described as anti-imperialist, although that epithet can be attached to other and complementary stances as well).³ The nation was defined in terms of a socio-cultural entity, although with various mixes and emphases, ranging from the heterogeneity of the Swiss to the virtual homogeneity of the Hungarians, to take but two examples. In other words, the movements in question were not just civic in being comprised of citizens or those thus seeking citizenship instead of subjecthood; they were also ethnic in the delineation of the particular groups of citizens or would-be citizens concerned—therefore the description nationalist.⁴

But while all nationalists hold that the nation should be self-governing, in respect of how it should be so, there are of course varieties of nationalism, just as there are of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. On the right, there is fundamentalist and conservative nationalism; on the

left, liberal and socialist nationalism. In Irish circumstances, the fundamentalist would insist on a catholic nation, while the conservative wants *laissez-faire* economics and has a narrow perspective on civil liberties; the liberal is more flexible on the economic front but is safe on civil liberties, while the socialist is also secure on the latter and advocates democracy throughout the socio-economic system.

It is this refusal to accept that there are varieties of nationalism which leads to the blanket statement that: 'Nationalism categorises the world only in terms of nation and nationality. It ignores other categories such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and more'. True of some nationalists, perhaps, but not of others. Following on from this, it is averred: 'If there is a conflict based on gender or class, in what way can an appeal to nationality as arbiter resolve that conflict? The only answer it can find is one which is already contained within the nation, and it is this which inclines nationalism towards conservative and authoritarian solutions and a propensity to favour the powerful and privileged'. The fact that some nationalists ally the drive for national freedom with a commitment to domestic change is overlooked. Next, we hear that: 'Culture from outside the nation will seem alien and to some degree will be interpreted as threatening to the national culture'. Again, true of *some* nationalists. Apart from that, shades of the old and spurious opposition of nationalism versus internationalism (repeated elsewhere) when in reality they can be two sides of the same coin: for instance, in culture, treasure quality in your own and augment it with quality from others. At the same time, if external culture is that of an imperial power and being imposed on a nation while that nation's culture is being extirpated, resistance to attempted substitution, as distinct from worthwhile addition, is only natural.

The article may also be the victim of its own abstract categories. Insofar as nationalism is to be defined as dealing only with the national aspect of things, that does not mean that the nationalist, when confronted with certain problems, refers just to the nation for their solution. But even this distinction is somewhat limiting; not infrequently, the nationalist wants to be self-governing precisely for the purpose of changing some things within the nation—e.g. nationalism with a view to modernism! Or put yet another way, nationalism can not only sit easily alongside domestic transformation, sometimes it is seen as a necessary condition for its achievement. Such nationalism is not therefore defined merely by the national *as it is*, but also by how it can and *ought to be*. These considerations are where the varieties identified above come in.⁵

'Nationalism, it is argued, is simultaneously liberating and oppressive, cosmopolitan and chauvinistic, democratic and undemocratic. The usefulness of a concept which can contain such opposing meanings at the

one time is doubtful.’ Here, there is reference not only to the blurring of distinctions among different sorts of nationalism in regard to the objects of independence, but also to the blurring of the contrast between imperialism (or colonialism) and nationalism, insofar as the first often rests on the alleged superiority of one nation over another or others. But this may be said to be not primarily a conceptual so much as a terminological dilemma (and not altogether a contingent one), of which more below.

Not surprisingly, given what has gone before, the article proceeds as follows:

... while nationalism offers a convenient unifying point, its programme of building a nation state is essentially conservative and runs counter to the other transformative trends. Ironically, the nationalist part of the [national]⁶ movement [!] proposes to build a state which is the mirror image of what the struggle is against: it is only the nationality of the state which will be different.

Reconstructed in a more precise political fashion, it might run like this (note emphases):

... while nationalism offers a convenient unifying point, a programme for some of building a nation state is essentially conservative and runs counter to the other transformative trends. [Not ‘ironically’] the *right-wing* part of the *nationalist* movement proposes to build a state which is *in its socio-economic character* the mirror image of what the struggle by *left-wing nationalists* is against: it is only the nationality of the state which will be different.

And, one might add, the persons who govern it. Also it is declared: ‘Neither democracy nor the republic refer to the nation or nationality’. That may be so semantically, but how are they to be made politically concrete other than by resting on the nation? Or are we back to Austro-Marxism with its hope of transmogrifying an empire into a republic with whatever contemporary equivalent is chosen—the EU perhaps?

We are next informed that: ‘Attaching rights and obligations to a common citizenship leads to more open and democratic outcomes than attaching them to nationality’. Once more, false antithesis raises its head. There is no necessary ‘either/or’ here. One has rights both as a member of a nation and as a citizen, and the two cannot be divorced if democracy is to be fulfilled in the real world. One has rights as an *Irish* citizen or as a *French* citizen, and so on. Some of these rights are human and universal (freedom of conscience), others are more particular (use of a specific language).⁷ Another illustration of sweeping false antithesis is the following: ‘The right of the nation to be self-governing is placed above the right of each person to be self-governing, and the welfare of the nation, which usually means the interests of the dominant section ...’ This might describe the position of Griffith; it certainly would not that of Connolly.

There is then the conclusion: 'While republicanism rejects the idea that nation and nationality should be the basis for political organisation, or that nation should be equated with the state, it does respect and welcome them as forms of community and identity'. One wonders where this leaves the United Nations and its premise of self-determination? Of course, nations and states, given geographic and demographic factors, cannot always be congruent, even after self-determination, and the rights of national minorities, where they exist, should be respected. But that does not take away from the fact that, in the modern world, the nation is the principal determinant of the state. To some extent, it depends here on what is meant by 'political organisation' and being 'equated with the state'. Insofar as it is a protest against forced homogeneity and intolerance, that is unobjectionable. However, as it stands, the statement perpetuates the failure to distinguish between the approaches of right and left-wing nationalism.

It is true that, whatever about its origins, nationalism as a term has by now, unfortunately, owing to sloppy usage in both academia and journalism, become convoluted for many in its general significance. This is not entirely accidental. If, in *international* relations, for instance, the nation is taken, on the one hand, in an egalitarian way as a justification for independence and, on the other, in a superior way for domination, and 'nationalism' is used to describe both situations, then meaning is blunted and has to be qualified by referring to democratic or aggressive nationalism.⁸ (Previously, the first would have simply been nationalism and the second imperialism.) It may be that, in global political discourse, such a point of required qualification has been reached. But let us at least acknowledge that and not persist in the obfuscation that there is only one 'nationalism', either domestically or in international relations. An excellent example in international relations of convenient obfuscation was when Britain attacked Egypt in 1956 and said it was standing up to nationalism in much the same way as it had stood up to Hitler!

We must also be conscious of a usage deriving specifically from Irish history. With capital initials, 'Nationalism' and 'Republicanism' came to have respectively right and left-wing connotations because, more latterly, of the Redmond-Griffith and Pearse-Connolly spectra. But the nomenclature of parties or constellations of same should not bedevil political analysis. The fact is that Redmond was a home rule nationalist, Griffith a duo-monarchical nationalist, Pearse a democratic republican nationalist, and Connolly a socialist republican nationalist. However, the nationalist-republican dichotomy of nomenclature was perpetuated in the partitioned six counties with the continued existence of a Nationalist Party and the alternative of the Republican Movement. Yet, properly speaking, in Ireland, all republicans were nationalist, even if not all nationalists were

republican. (One suspects that the article is significantly affected by this dichotomy and also by the influence of ultra-leftism).

Subsequent to 1921, however, every form of Irish nationalism in time became in effect republican, if only with a small 'r', because being a nationalist region or co-player in empire was no longer an option, and nobody seriously suggested that an independent Ireland should be a monarchy in its own right rather than some kind of republic, whether or not the word was to be used in the official title of the state. Currently, SDLP politicians are wont on occasion to stress that they are republican as well as nationalist. (In the contest for support that is taking place in the north, the intelligent riposte for Sinn Féin would be to underline that it is nationalist as well as republican).

Moreover, if there is a contemporary, broader *terminological* problem with nationalism, republicanism is not without its difficulties either. We have referred to the classical denotation of nationalism and agree, in the same classical vein, that 'a republic without democracy would not be a republic', that it has got to do with 'the welfare of the people' and that it enshrines the principles of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. But how many 'republics' are, or have been, capable of such attribution? And what about some 'republicans', whether those in the US or the neo-fascist *republikaner* in Germany? Is it any surprise that people now also talk about *democratic* republics (even in official title) and conservative and radical republicans? Republic now often just conveys that the head of state is not a monarch, although he or she may be the vilest of dictators. Does that beg the challenge that we must seek to recover the original and essentially progressive nature of republicanism? Is there not then also the challenge of recovering the original and essentially progressive nature of nationalism?⁹

In that sense, if republicanism and nationalism are to be compared, we should be explaining where they overlap and combine to eventuate in the enlightened result of a national republic.¹⁰ The ideological struggle here is not *between* nationalism and republicanism, but *within* each and to produce the best of both; we don't want nationalism without meaningful democratic content, and we don't want republicanism without meaningful social content.¹¹ Counter-position of nationalism and republicanism instead of selective synthesis is the real confusion, and one which can only be damaging to advanced politics in the north, in particular, and throughout the island in general. The proper objective, not least in the context of the threatening super-state of a post-Nice EU, is no less than republican nationalism—which is the first step towards republican internationalism.

Notes

¹ No. 1, Dublin, June 2000.

² Although an independent nation state logically need not be internally democratic or liberal, nationalist movements tended to embody these perspectives.

³ For example, persons in metropolitan countries opposing their own nation's expansionism.

⁴ However, 'colonial nationalism' did not include aboriginal peoples, and certain examples of 'internal colonialism' can be found elsewhere. For example, some of the south Slavs, sympathetic to the Hungarians in their resistance to the Austrians in the mid-nineteenth century, resiled when they found out that the borders of the old Hungary were to be maintained and would still incorporate them.

⁵ This has been particularly so in the case of some African and Asian nationalist movements.

⁶ As the movement is defined in the preceding sentence.

⁷ If there is a tension between the civic and the ethnic in Ireland today, the real one is clearly between unionism/loyalism and nationalism/republicanism, at least in terms of community and identity, requiring, among other things, confirmation that fidelity to reformation protestantism does not demand union with Britain and attachment to Tridentine catholicism is not a condition of Irish independence. Otherwise, the cultural content of Irishness in the civic-ethnic continuum should be a matter of choice.

⁸ That is, apart from fundamentalist/conservative and liberal/socialist 'nationalisms', all of which are at least anti-colonialist (although some would say not all are anti-neocolonialist).

⁹ At the same time, this is more of a problem in international debate, because, while that can feed back into discussion on this island (as the article in question demonstrates), generally speaking, Irish people do not find in nationalism a suggestion of fascism or view republicanism as a neutral description when it comes to consideration of the radical.

¹⁰ Connolly warned against 'Nationalism without Socialism', just as he was opposed to nationalism without republicanism. But it was not a case of socialism *instead* of nationalism, any more than of republicanism *instead* of nationalism. D. Ryan (ed.), *Socialism and Nationalism* (Three Candles 1948).

¹¹ One could add that a specific task is: getting *militarism* out of republicanism and *hibernianism* out of both.

Finbar Cullen writes:

Daltún raises many interesting points. At the beginning, he establishes that the essential feature of nationalism is that it bases the political organisation of society on ethnicity. This is the source of the problems: it gives political expression to divisions between, and solidarity within, ethnic/national groups.

The ‘nationalisms’ argument is a vehicle to rescue ‘left-wing nationalists’ from these problems. But is nationalism itself the source of the left-wing, right-wing, or liberal in the various ‘nationalisms’? Is it not the socialism, conservatism, or liberalism that is attached to nationalism in these cases that distinguishes one from the other, while the nationalism is the same in all of them? It is this undifferentiated shared nationalism that allows national movements to contain such contradictory and opposed factions.

The compromise platform that the contradictory factions share is the programme of nationalism: the construction of a nation-state. This almost always involves the deferment of radical social and economic policies in the interest of ‘unity’. And it is why national movements reproduce the type of nation-state that already exists—the mirror image of the colonising/oppressor state.

Are national movements anti-imperialist? ‘Imperialism’ is often used as another word for colonialism. A more critical usage defines a world system which incorporates peoples and countries into a globally-organised capitalism. Those national movements which are anti-colonial (many are not) rarely have difficulty accommodating themselves to imperialism—claiming a stake in the system is often the principal objective.

As for Connolly, this much is clear: he was no nationalist. Unlike many of his followers, he had no illusions about nationalism in power: ‘Nationalism without Socialism ... is only national recreancy. It would be tantamount to a public declaration that our oppressors had so far succeeded in inoculating us with their perverted conception of justice that we had finally decided to accept those conceptions as our own ... Let us never forget that he never reaches Heaven who marches there in the company of the Devil.’

READERS’ FORUM

The Republic welcomes responses to the articles published in its pages. Responses should be short (less than 300 words), and the editors reserve the right to shorten or omit any such contribution where the exigencies of space require it.

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