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## Guest Editor's Introduction

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## Guest Editor's Introduction

IN *ULSTER AS IT IS*, Thomas MacKnight, editor of the *Northern Whig*, described late nineteenth-century Ulster in the following terms: “The plain, the undeniable truth is that there are two antagonistic populations, two different nations on Irish soil.”<sup>1</sup> While rarely described in such a reductionist fashion, the two-traditions paradigm has proven to be uniquely powerful over the past century, providing the framework for much of the analysis of Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism. In recent years, however, an increasing number of scholars have challenged this approach, showing how variables such as class, denomination, gender and regional variation complicate the two-nations model. Work on unionist identities has been particularly fruitful of late, a fact that can be traced to the confluence of three overlapping themes. Within Irish Studies, scholars have shown a greater appreciation for the complexity of Irish identities, a trend no doubt shaped by the Northern Ireland peace process and the ongoing socio-economic transformation of the Republic. This has coincided with the advent of the “New British History,” with its emphasis on the construction of national identity and the evolution of Britishness within the context of the dynamic interplay of the four nations of the British Isles.<sup>2</sup> Finally,

1. Quoted in Sean Farrell, *Rituals and Riots: Sectarian Violence and Political Culture in Ulster, 1784–1886* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 174.

2. For a good introduction, see Jim Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom, 1660–1800* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), particularly vii–xv. For landmark studies see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University

the rise of Atlantic History has opened new vistas for Irish Studies.<sup>3</sup> This has been particularly true in diasporic studies. Of course, scholars have long recognized the centrality of emigration to the modern Irish experience. Despite the rich quality of much of the work on emigration, however, scholars have only just begun to explore the impact that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century emigration had on the formation of unionist identities.<sup>4</sup> In short, this is a very exciting time and this issue of *Éire-Ireland* reflects both the dynamic quality and the promise of much of the new scholarship.

One of the leading characteristics of recent work on unionism has been an increased recognition of the complexity and diversity of unionist political and cultural identities. This has moved scholars toward perspectives that transcend traditional disciplinary lines. With this in mind, we start with Patrick Maume's essay on Standish O'Grady. Using a wide variety of journalistic sources, Maume paints a nuanced portrait of this always mentioned but rarely analyzed figure, suggesting that O'Grady's efforts to reconcile unionism and nationalism through an eclectic but synthetic and ultimately insightful body of work merit more considered scrutiny. In "An Open National Identity," Karen Vandeveldt explores another aspect of turn-of-the-century cultural history. Examining the work of the Ulster Literary Theatre, Vandeveldt shows how Rutherford Mayne and Gerald MacNamara used regionalism, social realism, and humor to entertain audiences in Belfast and Dublin during the tense political climate of 1910–20. Here we find biting satirical portrayals of unionism (and nationalism) that manage to navigate that fine line between effective satire and con-

Press, 1992); Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

3. For an excellent introduction to the current state of Atlantic History, see David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2002), 11–27.

4. Kerby A. Miller and Bruce D. Boling with Liam Kennedy, "The Famine's Scars: William Murphy's Ulster and American Odyssey," in Kevin Kenny, ed., *New Directions in Irish American History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 36–60. For a model study, see Miller, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Also see Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of the British Atlantic World, 1689–1784* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

trovery—an impressive achievement in that most contentious period. Much of this same political strife can be seen in Maebh O'Regan's essay on the Irish painter Richard Moynan. Analyzing Moynan's political cartoons of the late 1880s, O'Regan shows how his work documents some of the central tenets of unionist ideology. If, as Declan Kiberd argues, a cultural struggle over the nature of Irish identity preceded the political and military revolution of 1916–23,<sup>5</sup> then perhaps we should pay more attention to the works of people like Moynan, who articulated a potent unionist message through his artistic medium.

If Moynan's political cartoons often featured a series of well-rehearsed Irish stereotypes that reinforce some of the less attractive elements of unionist ideology, the next two essays celebrate the complexity and variety of nineteenth-century liberal unionism. In "The Mild Irish Girl," Thomas Tracy examines Lady Morgan's vision of a radically reworked union and the dialogue her work initiated. Exploring Morgan's efforts to reshape gender ideals to promote real and substantive partnerships (a not too veiled metaphor for a revamped Anglo-Irish relationship based on justice and respect), Tracy shows how Maria Edgeworth and other nineteenth-century writers attempted to domesticate the national tale by equating Gaelic Irish culture with antidomesticity and promoting a set of Burkean ideals that better fit their conservative agenda. Anne Oakman also explores liberal unionist efforts to reform the union. Analyzing the travel narratives of Somerville and Ross, Oakman shows how the two famous travelers reworked gender and linguistic unions to better reflect the complexity of the Ireland they knew—essential steps in their efforts to advocate for a broader political union.

The past decade has seen startling developments in unionist politics and the next four essays explore a number of facets of contemporary unionism. In "Dead Men Talking," Tom Herron takes issue with previous interpretations of Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*. Rejecting readings that stress the play's reconciliatory vision, Herron instead sees the play as a modern-day version of a medieval dance of death, an uncompromising portrayal of

5. Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage Press, 1996), 196.

an entire culture repetitively enacting its own empty demise. Analyzing unionist politics from a very different angle, Henry Patterson examines the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), focusing on David Trimble's efforts to reform the party into a sectional force that would better appeal to middle-class suburban conservatives. As Patterson notes, Trimble's endeavor to rework the UUP on the basis of the "New Unionist" program has serious implications for contemporary Northern Ireland, a point that supporters of the peace process would do well to confront. Looking at the other end of the unionist political spectrum, James McAuley explores the recent success of the Democratic Unionist Party, showing how the party has benefited from the destabilizing impact of the peace process, a climate that has made its forceful advocacy of the "politics of the past" more appealing to broader unionist constituencies. Finally, Gary Peatling examines the relationship between unionists and the internationalization of the Northern Ireland peace process. Rejecting the popular notion that this has been a uniformly positive development, Peatling argues that the unbalanced nature of external support has unsettled many unionists, creating further obstacles that threaten the very survival of the peace process.

The final two essays show some of the promise held out by efforts to look at the development of unionism from broader transnational perspectives. In "Orangeism in Scotland," Joseph Bradley explores the Orange Order's complex place in Scottish political culture. Examining a wide variety of Orange sites in Scottish society, ranging from the processional tradition to Glasgow Rangers, Bradley concludes that Orangeism in Scotland is primarily centered on fundamentally Scottish issues (thus serving as a nice example of the hybrid complexity of national identity in the British Isles). Our final essay, Kerby Miller's "Belfast's First Bomb," shows how transatlantic correspondence can be used to inform and recast our portrait of the nineteenth-century evolution of Ulster unionism. Centering his analysis on an early nineteenth-century letter written to an Ulster Protestant emigrant in upstate New York, Miller forcefully argues that Anglican landlords used a wide variety of hegemonic pressures to silence the class and denominational struggles that characterized Ulster Protestantism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the 1830s these voices fell silent, a development that redounded much to the benefit of the conservative élites who would dominate nineteenth-century unionism.

This project never would have been completed without the help of dozens of talented individuals. Although it is never sufficient payment, I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge the various people who helped get this issue to print. First of all, I would like to thank the authors for their talent, hard work, and professionalism. Maebh O'Regan deserves special mention for her efforts to secure a copy of Moyan's *Death of the Queen* for the cover. Editors Jim Donnelly and Vera Kreilkamp were essential to the success of this project, providing patience and information whenever needed (and both were needed in ample supply). At the College of Saint Rose, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of History and Political Science, who have worked so hard to craft a congenial and stimulating work environment. My special thanks go to Alan Thornton, who adapted to my constant efforts to stretch the definitions and duties of a graduate assistant with grace and ability. Finally, I would like to thank the journal's readers, whose support for Irish Studies makes all of this possible. This is a rich collection of essays, and I am sure that you will find much of interest in the pages that follow.

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

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*Éire-Ireland* seeks contributions for a special issue on Ireland and gender, scheduled for publication in Spring 2006. Submissions should be mailed to the guest editors:

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