

# Modern Ireland Notes

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# 1 Week 1

## 1.1 Wednesday 1/17/24

- We study history through geography which can be messy due to changing borders
- Ireland is a simple, single geographical area
- The island is split between Northern Ireland (UK) and the Republic of Ireland (EU)
- Northern Ireland
  - The North of Ireland
  - The North
  - Ulster
  - The Six Counties
- from 1801–1922, “Ireland” is a legally distinct space within the fluid spaces of the UK and the British Empire
  - The Irish Free State/Saorstát Éireann
  - Éire
  - The Republic of Ireland
  - The Irish Republic
  - The South
  - The 26 Counties
- The further west you go, the less dense the population becomes
- Ireland is officially bilingual

- Who and Where and the “Irish Nation”
  - The Irish nation is a quasi-geographical term, but it resists any simple geographical definition
  - And we are not studying “Ireland”, the geographical space, we are studying “Ireland”, the demographic, social, economic, political, and cultural phenomenon
  - “Irish” history is inseparable from “British” history
  - By 1860, the most Irish city in the world, by population, was New York
  - today  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the population of “Ireland” were not born on the island of Ireland
  - Ireland, for the entirety of our period, was a part of global capitalism, part of broader trends in European and global politics and culture
  - “Ireland” is fluid and messy

## 2 Week 2

### 2.1 The Irish Famine

- For a variety of reasons, european populations grew rapidly from about 1800 onwards
- urbanization and industrialization also started to grow from around 1850
- potatoes (and meat) are central to these developments
- potatoes are a low-labor crop that solve the “bottleneck” problem of urbanization
- blight starts in belgium and subsequently spreads across greater europe
- Why is it so bad in Ireland
  - too many people in rural communities, with entire sections of the Irish population dependent on one single crop
  - lack of knowledge about alternative food production
  - A spike in crop prices prior to 1846
  - The Fungus/Water problem
  - patterns of land-ownership and small farms
    - \* the Rundale [Roinn Dáil] and Clachan systems of shared land usage
    - \* not all farms/leases are passed on via primogeniture
  - The Corn Laws (1846) and Free Market Liberalism
    - \* June 1846, new Liberal government formed in London
    - \* “The Irish died of political economy” -John Mitchel
  - “Malthusian” conceptions of the Catholic Irish
    - \* Did the Irish bring this on themselves?
    - \* Maybe famine, emigration, and mass death will be good in the long run?

- \* Malthusian Definition - “Malthusianism is the theory that population growth is potentially exponential, according to the Malthusian growth model, while the growth of the food supply or other resources is linear, which eventually reduces living standards to the point of triggering a population decline”
- The lack of transport infrastructure
- Famine is a “mechanism for reducing surplus population” and “the judgement of God sent the calamity must not be too much mitigated. ...the real evil is with which we have to contend in not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse, and turbulent character of the people” -Charles Trevelyan (1807-1866), Asst. Secretary to the Treasury and high-ranking civil servant tasked with overseeing response to the famine
- British Relief Association gave approx. £400,000 to Ireland (\$ 34m in inflation-adjusted terms)
- Myths and Common misconceptions about the Famine
  - Did Ireland export food during the Famine?
    - \* Yes, but it also imported a lot of food. The net answer is “No”
  - Was this an act of genocide?
    - \* It probably doesn’t meet the level of agency required to be classed as such
  - Did the Irish flee on “Coffin ships”?
    - \* The class divides between who does and does not emigrate, really complicates this
- Long Term Impacts of the Famine
  - An immediate population decrease of about 20
    - \* 1841 census — 8.18 m
    - \* 1851 census — 6.55 m
    - \* evenly split between deaths (starvation and starvation-related diseases) and immigration

- \* 1847 is the worst year for Famine, and high-levels of death continue until 1851
- Emergence of an Irish diaspora, mainly in settler-colonies of the anglosphere world
- out-migration remains a fact of life in Ireland until 1980s
- The Famine precipitates a linguistic shift from Irish to English
- The famine will become a major “event” in Irish popular memory, feeding into a narrative about British cruelty and the dangers of lacking national sovereignty, even if this is not fully reflective of sentiments, attitudes and developments at the time
- It precipitates a Devotional Revolution in Irish life
- The Devotional Revolution is linked, in complicated ways, to a broader shift in the class structure and patterns of land-ownership in post-Famine Ireland; a more confident Catholic rural bourgeoisie starts to emerge out of the Famine, they legitimate their status via Catholicism, they see Catholicism and Irishness as linked categories (you can’t be one if you’re not the other?) and they are the ones who fund the Church. This is the social class that will come to dominate “Ireland” by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Devotional Revolution
  - A psychological response to the trauma of the Famine?
  - Overseen by Paul Cullen, a cardinal appointed by Rome in 1850
  - Cullen sides with “Ultramontane” Catholicism rather than “Gallican” Catholicism
  - A qualitative and quantitative change in the nature of the Catholic priesthood in Ireland
  - The “sins” of “drunkenness, women, and avarice” are purged
  - Larkin quotes a report that there are “few practical Christians” among the Catholics of Dublin as of 1852
  - Only a  $\frac{1}{3}$  or so of Catholics attended mass on Sunday prior to 1850
  - questionable how many “Catholics” were Catholic in strictly doctrinal terms

- The Devotional Revolution was bound up with a transport/infrastructure Revolution
  - \* prior to the 1840s, there were not enough roads, railways, or harbors to deliver Famine aid or to minister to congregations
  - \* by c.1875, it was easier to travel around Ireland
  - \* the Church also greatly expanded its capital assets
- Necessitated the end of “Stations”
  - \* “Private” masses are a contradiction in terms, in Catholicism
  - \* A greater level of public surveillance of Catholic populations by the clergy
  - \* more ability to incorporate lower social classes in Catholicism
- The trope/cliché of Famine-era Ireland as a society starkly divided between landlords and tenants
- often becomes a moralizing account about cruel landlords and victimized tenants
- A very Broad Outline of the Class Structure of Famine-Era Rural Ireland

**Landlords** Tended to be protestant but not exclusively so

**Secure Landlords** Will probably survive the Famine

**Insecure Landlords** Will probably no survive as a “class”

- Tenants

**Secure Tenants** Will probably survive, and even benefit in the long-term, some emigrants come from these families. Religiously mixed

**Insecure Tenants** Will not probably survive as a “class”, liable to emigrate or, if they stay, become déclassé. Emmigration often funded by landlords. Mostly “Catholic”

- Sub Tenancy class

**Sub-tenants and landless poor** Not likely to “survive ”, in either meaning of the term. Not likely to emigrate. Almost exclusively “Catholic”

- Catholicism and the New Irish Catholic Rural Bourgeoisie
  - Late Marriage and Primogeniture
  - Catholicism and public morality
  - Priests as enforcers of the social order
  - The Church as a place to park excess population (as priests and nuns) [alongside emigration]



## 2.2 Irish Diasporas

- Some quick facts about Irish migration to North America in the 1840s/1850s
  - Two methods of traveling
    - \* Conventional passenger ships [can have multiple destinations]
    - \* Empty lumber ships [almost always going to Canada]
  - These are pre-steamboat ships
    - \* must follow trade-wind routes
    - \* 5 weeks to Canada, 6 week to U.S.
    - \* Australia takes  $3\frac{1}{2}$  months
  - Conditions can vary widely depending on length and ship [which in turn are determined by the wealth of the passenger]
    - \* Cramped conditions, poor food supply, disease are all part of this
- Diner's Main Arguments
  - The absence of “food” in Irish-American memories and the low impact of Irish food on American cuisine (in comparison to Italian, Jewish, Chinese, or Mexican migrations)
    - \* A function of poverty?
    - \* A reaction to anti-Irish sentiment?
  - The Gendered Nature of post-1847 Irish migration
    - \* you can tell a lot about immigrants' goals by looking at *who* immigrates
  - Anti-Irish sentiments and the female caricature of “Biddy”
  - Linguistic racism
  - Did county-level identities trump national identity for Irish immigrants?
- Some Problems with Diner's Work
  - The problems of “Bleak Nostalgia”
  - The problem of collapsing together vastly different times in Irish history

- What is “traditional” Irish food in 1847 (or anytime afterwards)
  - \* Irish foodways have been disrupted and remade both by Famine but also by the country’s status within the British Empire
  - \* “Genuine Irish Tea”
- A broader problem of Irishness and whiteness?
- Whiteness
  - Whiteness is a constructed phenomenon; it is also a dynamic and expansive one. Whiteness can expand and contract to include and exclude entire groups of people
  - whiteness is “intersectional”; Irish migrants in the 1840s were seen as not white/off-white, because of their extreme poverty or because of their Catholicism. As they became wealthier and as Catholicism became more accepted in the US, their whiteness stopped being called into question
  - but whiteness also cuts across class; as with nationalism, white supremacy encourages all members of its imagined community to assume that they have shared interests due to a shared race or ethnicity (and thus to ignore class differences, gender differences, etc.)
  - The State plays a key role in creating and re-creating race
    - \* eg, The Naturalization Act of 1790 and the work of the Federal Housing Administration (founded in 1934) formally worked to define who was white or who gained materially by virtue of their whiteness; mass incarceration and contemporary housing practices do the same but in an informal and ostensibly race-blind way

## 3 Week 3

### 3.1 Fenianism

- Zooming out to a much bigger scale of Irish history
  - c.430s — Christianization of Ireland
    - \* Over time, Irish Church becomes autonomous of Rome
  - 1155 — *Laudabiliter* [praiseworthy] Letter of Pope Adrian IV to Henry Irish
  - 1169 — The “English” carry out an “invasion” of “Ireland”
  - c.1300 — Actual English rule has shrunk back to The Pale, the Greater Dublin area
    - \* The rest of Ireland is nominally English territory but effectively independent
  - 1518 and 1529 — Start of the Lutheran and Anglican Reformation
    - \* The new danger is that Ireland is a potential ally and/or backdoor for French or Spanish Catholic invasions
  - 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries — Plantations of Ireland
    - \* Planting English people into Ireland to serve as the new ruling class
    - \* Earliest plantations are uneven if not a failure
    - \* It is the plantations of 1620s and 1650s that really “succeed”
  - c.1700 onwards — Penal Laws
    - \* Voting, inheritance, conversion, firearms, religious practice, education and preaching, land-ownership, professions
    - \* Mainly anti-Catholic but also initially targets Presbyterians
    - \* Why don’t they work?
    - \* end c.1780s

- Alternative Timeline for Modern Irish History
  - 1782 — Founding of Grattan’s Irish Parliament: a “Patriotic” parliament, for which only Protestants could vote
  - 1791 — Founding of the United Irishmen
  - 1798 — United Irishmen Rebellion
  - 1800 onwards — Low-level agrarian violence remains a constant force in Irish life
    - \* Whiteboys, Peep o’ Day Boys, Molly Maguires, Captain Rock
    - \* Very ritualized violence, within circumscribed limits carried out by secret societies
    - \* very hard to study
  - 1800/1801 — Act of Union; Ireland comes under direct British rule
  - 1803 — Robert Emmet leads a failed rebellion
  - 1822 — Establishment of the Royal Irish Constabulary (7 years before the Met. Police in Britain)
  - 1823 — Founding of the Catholic Association
  - 1829 — Election of Daniel O’Connell, Catholic Emancipation Act [O’Connell dies in 1847]
  - 1831 — First national schools established in Ireland (1870 for England and Wales and 1872 in Scotland)
  - 1842 — Founding of the *Young Ireland* rebellion; *Young Ireland* is dissolved next year
  - 1858 — Founding of the Irish Republican Brotherhood [also called the Fenians]
  - 1867 — Failed Fenian Uprising
  - 1873 — Founding of the Home Rule League/Home Rule praise-worthy
  - 1878 — IRB starts the “New Departure”
  - 1882 — Home Rule Party transformed into Irish Parliamentary Party

- **19<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland is a place defined by low-level violence, secret societies, militarized policing, & social engineering**
- How do we define these concepts
  - Patriotism
    - \* Loyalty
    - \* Pride
    - \* Celebration
  - Nationalism
  - Republicanism
    - \* Unity
    - \* By the people
    - \* Anti-Monarchist
    - \* Educational
- The Irish Republican Brotherhood [The Fenians]
  - Founded in 1857
  - Organized as a secret, Oath-bound society
    - \* Can be placed into the broader context of secret society violence and earlier Irish nationalism
    - \* But is also a very European phenomenon and is perhaps an importation of American republicanism via the Diaspora
    - \* What is the view of the Catholic Church on secret, oath-bound societies?
    - \* What are the challenges when studying an organization that remains intentionally secret?
  - The name “Fenian” invokes ancient Irish mythology (and a very romanticized ancient Irish warrior masculinity)
    - \* Fian(na) is Warrior(s) in Irish
  - IRB Violence
    - \* 1866 & 1870–71 — Fenian invasion of Canada
    - \* 1867 Rising is poorly organized and a failure

- \* carries out actions in England also (Manchester Martyrs in Nov. 1867 and Clerkenwell bombing in December)
  - \* 1881–85 — Fenian Dynamite Campaign
  - \* 1882 — Irish Invincibles, a breakaway from the IRB, murder two British officials in Phoenix Park in Dublin
  - \* Is this terrorism?
- Irish nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century develops along two broad strands
  - Physical-force republicanism, that seeks a complete break with British rule and is open to the use of violence
  - Constitutional nationalism, more moderate in aims and methods
    - \* Both are “Catholic”, in ideology and membership
    - \* Neither are hermetically sealed from the other
  - Along with unionism (which develops a similar moderation/violence divide), these remain the dominant strands of Irish politics, at least until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps up until today

## **3.2    *wednesday***