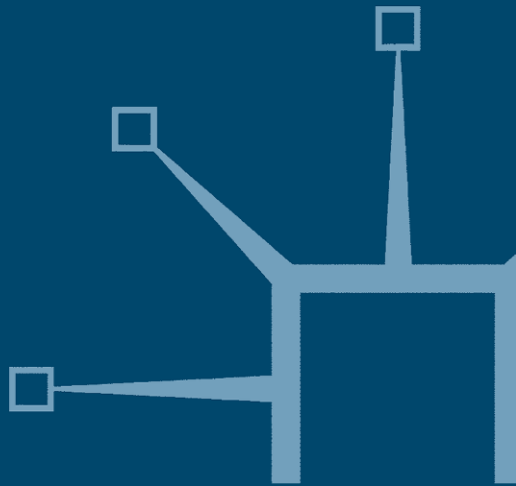


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Edited by

Mary McAuliffe, Katherine O'Donnell and Leeann Lane



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Palgrave Advances in Irish History

Edited by

Mary McAuliffe

Teaching and Research Fellow, Women's Studies, School of Social Justice, University College Dublin

Katherine O'Donnell

Head of Women's Studies, School of Social Justice, University College Dublin

Leeann Lane

Co-ordinator of Irish Studies, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin City University

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Editors' Foreword

Mary McAuliffe, Katherine O'Donnell and Leeann Lane

The *Palgrave Advances in Irish History* gives a much-needed historiographical and interpretative overview of Irish history from 1601 to the present. The chapters are thematic, focusing on established subdivisions of the field. The authors consider those histories that focus on the decades and centuries after 1601 and the defeat of the Gaelic Earls at the Battle of Kinsale. Aimed at advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students, scholars and general readers it outlines the contours and key debates and methodologies in the field and offers frameworks for future developments.

While there has always been a large amount of history written in and about Ireland much of it has focused on the (putative) nation state and relations with Britain. It has only been in very recent decades that substantial work has been written by social and cultural historians, involving methods and archives not traditionally employed by political historians. The book consists of ten chapters with a preface by Professor Nancy J. Curtin that introduces the book and situates the work within the contexts of the discipline of Irish history and the current international development of Irish Studies.

The chapters are thematic rather than chronological as this enables a study of the connections, contradictions, interactions and disruptions that might be lost in a chronological survey. Each chapter gives a critical appraisal of the findings, themes, debates and methodologies of a particular aspect of Irish history-writing. Contemporary political crises and their ensuing cultural debates have informed, energised and polarised the writing of Irish history. The delineation of how political agendas have impacted on both the writing and reception of Irish history is the central theme for all of our authors.

An interesting aspect of this volume is that besides its focus on political histories it offers a comprehensive account of Irish history in its manifold aspects, such as identity, labour, local, institutional and women's history and history of the Irish population and diasporas, sexuality and culture, language and traditions. This work is a welcome introduction to the wide-ranging and dynamic writings of a younger generation of historians.

Preface

Nancy J. Curtin

We might date the beginning of modern Irish historiography in 1936 with the founding of the journal *Irish Historical Studies*. The challenge then was to nurture a scientifically based history, to cleanse the historical record of its mythological clutter, to engage in what one of its eminent founders, T. W. Moody, later called ‘the mental war of liberation from servitude to the myth’ of Irish nationalist history, by applying value-neutral methods to the evidence, separating fact from destructive and divisive fictions.¹ With the confidence of positivist science behind them, generations of historians trained by the deliverers T. W. Moody, R. Dudley Edwards and D. B. Quinn proceeded to scratch beneath the surface of the received past, producing a history that was technically impressive, but that had become disassociated from popular collective memories, depriving the Irish people of the ‘beneficent legacy’ of a national history. At least this was the charge of the Rev. Brendan Bradshaw in a provocative article in 1989 that launched the so-called revisionist controversy.² The good news is that it is all over. The Irish state has heeded the call for a more ‘usable past’ by its assertive sponsorship of the commemorations of the great milestones of the Irish past, such as the Great Famine, the United Irishmen’s rebellion of 1798, and more recently the Rising of 1916. Such efforts have employed and encouraged the work of professional historians, making it accessible for the Irish at home and abroad. There are many reasons for these commemorations, not the least being the ending of conflict in Northern Ireland and with it the fear that the past was too contentious and politically threatening.

The impact of the revisionist debate on the history produced in the academy, however, is rather difficult to trace. Most of the chapters in this volume refer to the controversy but less as a point of departure to situate the newer work in Irish history and more as a simple chronological or developmental marker. While at times the revisionist debate was characterised by bitterness and distortion, ultimately it led to a close examination of the practice of Irish history and a growing awareness among those practitioners that the history they were writing needed to transcend the nationalist preoccupations of many anti-revisionists and the excessively empirical tendencies of the revisionists. What was tedious about the controversy was a tendency to situate it in a simple

Irish–British polarity. What followed though, and indeed, was certainly in progress under the radar of the adversaries' scrutiny, was a flowering of Irish history in multiple varieties, as fully displayed in this refreshing and useful collection of essays.

One of the reasons for the growing irrelevance of the revisionist/anti-revisionist debate has been the recent tendency to challenge the nation as the basic and ascendant unit of analysis for historians across the profession. History has always been one of the more secure disciplines in the academy, and the assumption that its practice was best undertaken and understood in an exclusive national framework had long gone unquestioned. So British, American or Irish historians could wallow in their exceptionalism and empiricism while other disciplines, some equally entrenched in the academy, and others battering at the gates, began to focus on transnational and cross-disciplinary questions. Literary studies and anthropology, for example, appropriated history, and attempted, to the outrage of so many historians, to inject it with some theoretical authority and utility. Structural changes in the academy, like the relative decline of history faculty positions in relation to rising student populations, induced employers, demanding more bang for their buck, to hire in regional or global fields, or at least to expect that their national historians would spread out. Innovative interdisciplinary programmes – American Studies, European Studies, Medieval Studies and even Irish Studies – contended with established traditional disciplines for students and college resources. This is not to say that national history has lost its high position. It just has to make room at the top for competing approaches, and inject itself with a little theoretical or methodological relevance. These essays demonstrate that Irish historians have responded with alacrity to this challenge as a constructive opportunity. This response has had to address two basic questions. Firstly, how, spatially and theoretically, should the Irish historian situate his/her national unit of analysis? And secondly, how has the Irish subject been constructed through that space as well as through time?

If Irish history is to be seen as having relevance to other histories and disciplines it must shed its limiting parochialism and so-called exceptionalism. The Irish experience is too particular, so it is assumed, to conform to general patterns and can, therefore, safely be ignored by British, European or colonial historians.³ It is to address this marginalisation that historians have been widening the spatial arena in which Irish history would be situated. One time-honoured but hardly uncontested approach has been to see Ireland as a colony in the Atlantic World. This has been countered by those who see the

structures and dynamics of Ireland as more akin to European society. And most recently, others still will argue that Ireland must be seen as part of an Anglo-Celtic archipelago – the New British history. Constitutionally, Ireland has been everything – a colony, a kingdom, a province and a republic, but each status has been complicated by the presence of another. Thus, as a colony Ireland was a little too proximate and shared many of the characteristics of a frontier borderland, as a kingdom it was less than sovereign, as a province it was less than integrated and as a republic it was a little too colonial.⁴ Of course all national histories are particular in their way, but by casting Ireland in a larger spatial unit of analysis, what might appear as anomalous might be both typical and illuminating.⁵

Connecting things Irish to more ubiquitous global processes involves not only looking outwards but also looking inwards, to the construction of the Irish subject. History is about nations but it is also about people, how they see themselves in relation to their families, their communities, their churches, their states, how they experience quotidian life through generations, through opportunities and setbacks, how their expectations and aspirations are nourished or limited. A truly usable past should be, as E. P. Thompson has enjoined, one that ‘helps us to know who we are, why we are here, what human possibilities have been disclosed, and as much as we can know of the logic and forms of social process’.⁶ And this challenge, of necessity, is interdisciplinary.

History, one of the oldest and most complacent of academic disciplines, is, ironically, a hotbed of disciplinary hybridity. The denizens of history departments engage in political history, economic history, social history and one could go on. Interdisciplinarity is hardly new. But the challenge coming from the interlopers in literary and cultural studies or anthropology who have questioned the practice of history as too empiricist and transparent in its treatment of the sources, has been regarded by some historians as an irritant.⁷ But even when the challenge has been perceived as hostile, it has stimulated engagement. And much of the historiography highlighted in these essays, shows considerable receptivity to the theoretical and new methodological possibilities staked out by such identity-interrogating approaches as postcolonialism and feminist theory. Postmodernist theory in general has significantly questioned the possibility of simply recovering the past, the essence of the traditional historian’s *métier*. The empirical enterprise of narration is no straightforward method, complicated as it is by the subjectivity and context of the historian and the limits of the remnant historical record.

And yet, what the editors and contributors to this volume have done is not only to engage with new approaches, but also to validate and reinvigorate the scientifically based methods lauded by modern Irish history's founders. In addressing contested questions of whether Ireland was or was not a colony, whether the default position in Anglo-Irish relations is conflict or integration, whether the Act of Union was catastrophic or beneficial to Ireland, Irish historians are responding to the old injunction to think globally and act locally. Historians apply their empirical training, scour the archives, reclaim new sources and ask new questions, questions specific to Irish history but also those that resonate with other disciplines, national histories and general processes.

Palgrave Advances in Irish History carries tremendous expectations and potentially hazardous burdens. Such a guide should mark the contours and key methodological and substantive debates and developments in the field as well as point to the most fruitful avenues of future research. It should be an introduction into the field for students and interested amateurs, while at the same time offering the professionals, the Irish historians, but also those scholars in other fields and disciplines, a more sophisticated engagement. By charting the course of Irish history-writing over the last several decades this book does all that, but is perhaps more remarkable for what it does not do. It offers no new orthodoxy about how Irish history should be practised, but rather a methodological and theoretical pluralism with a purpose. These chapters focus on the full range of subfields within Irish history, not only the standard political, social and economic histories, but also the histories of gender and sexuality, institutions, the diaspora, identity construction and the arts. Even that is not an exhaustive list, and readers may well quibble about what is excluded or included. Readers may also question the conclusions drawn by the various contributors on the state of their art. But a purposive pluralism relishes dialogue rather than imposing boundaries or limits. And where the tendency of the new approaches has been to challenge disciplinary and national boundaries, they have also, as these chapters reveal, challenged internal boundaries. Methodological and archival innovations in one subfield may inspire adaptive and fruitful responses within another subfield. This volume is organised in separate chapters, but they are also contiguous. And so this volume showcases the full range of Irish histories.

As an American-born historian of Ireland, working in a North American university, and directing an interdisciplinary Irish Studies programme, I fully welcome this extraordinarily useful, thoughtful and nearly comprehensive collection. Its pedagogical uses are obvious

and abundant, but I also learnt a lot about the practice of my craft in subfields different from my own. But mostly I felt a pride in and enthusiasm for the variety of Irish histories being written. In conversation with my colleagues in other fields or disciplines, I can refer them to this volume for the interesting ways in which Irish historians have been interrogating the concept of the diaspora. Or I can recommend as a model of interdisciplinarity the chapter on art and culture. Mostly I can say anything you are doing, we are doing too, and in ways that may inspire you. Come take a look.

Notes

1. T. W. Moody, 'Irish History and Irish Mythology', *Hermathena*, cxxiv (Summer 1978), p. 8.
2. Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvi, no. 104 (November 1989), pp. 335–6. The most important contributions to the controversy have been reprinted, Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938–1944* (Dublin, 1994). Also see D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996). For my own contribution, see Nancy J. Curtin, "'Varieties of Irishness': Historical Revisionism, Irish Style", *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, (April 1996), pp. 195–219.
3. The most stunning example of such omission may be Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992).
4. See, e.g. Andrew Murphy, 'Reviewing the Paradigm: A New Look at Early Modern Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 31, nos. 3–4 (Fall/Winter 1996), pp. 13–40; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992); Jane Ohlmeyer, 'Seventeenth-Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories', *The American Historical Review*, 104, no. 2 (April, 1999): pp. 446–62.
5. See, for example, the comparisons that have been forged by Irish and Indian historians: C. A. Bayly, 'Ireland, India and the Empire: 1780–1914', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Ser., vol. 10 (2000), pp. 377–97, and Michael Silvestri, "'The Sinn Féin of India': Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal", *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 39, no. 4 (October, 2000), pp. 454–86.
6. Dorothy Thompson (ed.), *The Essential E. P. Thompson* (New York, 2001), p. 455.
7. See, for example, Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000).

1

Irish Political History: Guidelines and Reflections

Patrick Maume

Introduction

The political history of modern Ireland has been dominated by the challenge of how to achieve a stable political order whose legitimacy would be generally accepted. For most of the last three centuries it was believed that the struggle for control of the state, and the actions of those who actually controlled it, were the central determinants of the Irish experience. Historians and politicians debated whether the story of the Kingdom of Ireland revolved around the extension of the authority of Crown jurisdiction over the whole island, or whether it was the assertion of legislative independence culminating, for what became the dominant Irish political tradition, in the Republic? For conservatives, Irish problems stemmed from barbaric anarchic resistance to law as such, thereby promoting violence and ignorance and paralysing commerce; if this resistance were ever to prevail, anarchy and tyranny would ensue. Liberals and nationalists, who were overlapping but not identical in their thinking, asked *whose* law was being resisted and whether the 'barbarians' opposed civilisation as such or rather the arbitrary rule of a self-aggrandising elite.¹ For Whigs or nationalists Ireland's religious development was explicable in terms of the effects of state decisions. The Establishment of the Anglican Protestant Church and the accompanying Penal Laws, which impinged on the economic, political and educational freedoms of Catholics from the late seventeenth into the nineteenth century, and official favouritism persisting when formal disabilities had been removed. Economic problems were similarly attributable to past trade restrictions, and their solution (for many) lay in protectionism and histories of the land question were written in terms of land legislation. In the recent past, popular perceptions of

Irish history have been dominated by a 'nationalist-Whig' narrative, which sees Ireland as a single entity pursuing an inexorable struggle to shake off colonial domination, with differences over whether this necessarily required full separation from Britain. The Unionist counter-narrative derived from the conservative view, combining elements of the defence of Protestant ascendancy, a view of Britishness as more conducive to liberal-universalism than Irish nationalism, and Ulster particularism defined in Protestant-Unionist terms. These histories were disseminated through official and unofficial educational systems, the latter operating through a mass print culture and the associational networks which disseminated it, which can be seen as voicing the aspirations of popular audiences, or trying to reshape that audience in respectable terms.

In recent literature it is also possible to distinguish a modernist narrative, which sees the central theme of Irish history as the struggle for economic and social modernisation, a view with roots in both nationalist and liberal unionist historiography, and disintegrationist tendencies which aim to unsettle one or more dominant narratives by recuperating groups or individuals excluded from dominant self-images: feminists, immigrant groups, agricultural and urban labourers, etc. These cannot be separated from the influence of nationalism and unionism; hence, for example, the appearance of rival pro-union and anti-union traditions of socialist history.² Any form of popular history is expressed through a genealogy of political movements with whom the protagonist selectively identifies, finding their experience relevant, and aiming to carry them on to victory. The discipline of Irish history has, since the mid- twentieth century, been marked by a debate on what has become known as 'revisionism'.³ Irish historical revisionism began by challenging the 'Irish-Ireland' tradition of history, which claimed the Irish people are a unified Celtic nation viciously oppressed throughout their history by English/British imperialism.⁴ In understanding the heated nature of discussions of 'revisionist' history, it should be understood that many people in Ireland retain a strong sense of their received version of history as a personal possession, and react angrily to what they experience as attempted dispossession. This derives from such factors as the use of history in ongoing political debates (not least over Northern Ireland), a sense of local identity which remains strong, albeit declining with increased urbanisation and mobility and, especially when dealing with relatively recent events, oral tradition and personal knowledge. An example of these factors is Meda Ryan's defence of the West Cork Irish Republican Army (IRA) leader Tom Barry against Peter Hart's claim that he killed prisoners after the Kilmichael ambush in the War of

Independence.⁵ Ryan also argued that certain killings committed by the West Cork IRA in the same period were not sectarian murders of civilians, as argued by Hart and accepted by many nationalist leaders at the time, but reprisals against spies and informers.⁶ Although Ryan's book contains useful material it assumes Barry and the War of Independence IRA should not be treated as historical figures whose actions can be discussed and criticised; the only legitimate response to their actions during the War of Independence is unqualified identification and uncritical regurgitation of their self-representations into an Ireland changed beyond recognition since they acted or wrote.⁷

Critics of revisionist history, such as Brendan Bradshaw,⁸ complain that it reflects an unrealistic attempt at producing a 'value-free' history, which attempts to be purely factual and morally neutral. In doing so, revisionists evade the violence and suffering which punctuate the Irish experience and the role of human agency in these traumas. This is often extended into accusations of a positivism that assumes everything that happened was inevitable, thereby colluding with power-holders past and present. It is arguable, however, that the historical approach associated with the pioneers of Irish revisionism, T. W. Moody, R. D. Edwards and the journal they founded, *Irish Historical Studies*, is not in fact 'value-free'. On the contrary it could be argued that it reflects an ethical commitment to civic peace through mutual understanding and recognition of the Other based on a common ground of scholarly technique, as opposed to the view that the Other is fundamentally illegitimate and must disappear through assimilation or expulsion. Anyone who has read the urbane sneers of J. P. Mahaffy,⁹ before the foundation of Trinity College, as he insinuated that Ireland was inhabited only by naked savages, or the paranoid rants of Fr. Timothy Corcoran¹⁰ (in the *Catholic Bulletin* and similar publications) maintaining that every Protestant and Unionist must have been in conscious bad faith and that it can never be admitted that a Catholic historian might have been wrong or a Protestant right about anything, will recognise the attractions of such a revisionist commitment in 1938.¹¹

Defences of revisionism should bear in mind that it is misleading to present the historical process as a conflict between unthinking 'tradition' and critical history.¹² There are polemicists who maintain that 'traditional' views must be maintained, even if false, because of the, allegedly, beneficial overall effect of the national narrative¹³ or who see Irish history in terms of a conflict where to admit any correctness on one side denies all legitimacy to the other,¹⁴ but these positions do not exhaust the issue. 'Traditional' views of particular historical events

often arose for concrete reasons, even if they were and are occasionally distorted by being preserved in memory after the circumstances against which they were defined have vanished and been forgotten. For example, mid-Victorian landlordism may not have been as ruthlessly exploitative and tyrannical as generally believed, but anyone who reads the pro-landlord *Dublin Evening Mail* of the 1880s with its sneers at 'a mud-hut franchise' will understand much about why landlordism attracted such hatred. The ironic mode of narration favoured by many revisionist historians is not necessarily morally superior to the tragic or reverential tone of much 'traditional' history; the problem arises when reverence or irony appears not as the outcome of critical thought, but is used to preclude it.

This chapter primarily deals with the modern period of Irish history. It should be borne in mind, however, that until the end of the Union between Britain and Ireland which came into effect on 1 January 1801,¹⁵ Irish political debates often referred back to the mediaeval period, a reflection of the fact that until post-1960s' expansion of higher education and the decline of the institutional churches and of classical education a much higher proportion of the Irish historical profession were mediaevalists than nowadays. James Lydon's *The Making of Ireland* (1998) is an original survey by a mediaevalist which emphasises how issues about the constitutional relationship between Britain and Ireland in the modern period had clear mediaeval precedents, an interesting 'primordialist' corrective to views of Irish history drawing on Ernest Gellner¹⁶ and other modernisation theorists, which depict present-day national identities as by-products of modernity.¹⁷ Other survey works, which are essential to the study of early modern and modern Irish history, include Alvin Jackson's *Ireland 1798–1998: Politics and War* (1999). Jackson places his work in the contested territories of Irish history, within a framework that is chronological and integrates, unusually, a comparative view of Ulster-Scots, Protestants, Unionist traditions and the Nationalist, Irish, Catholic traditions. Paul Bew's *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1783–2006* (2007) is another useful account structured around successive attempts to find a political framework for the reconciliation of the rival communities, with particular emphasis on the use and misuse of the legacy of Edmund Burke. Its treatment of the violence and disasters of Irish history in the period and of the persistent attempts to resolve them lays particular stress on the vast amount of underexamined material on the political histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the continuing capacity of original research to complicate received narratives.

Eighteenth-century Ireland and the Patriot tradition

While the history of eighteenth-century Ireland is still dominated by the political upheavals of its previous decades, a major scholarly gain of the later twentieth century has been the ability to see beyond the retrospective knowledge of the ultimate fate of its governing elite, beyond later attitudes to corruption and religious intolerance, to come to an understanding of how the system worked and appeared to those who ran it.¹⁸ Even the terminology used to describe the eighteenth-century élite is affected by hindsight. The terms 'Anglo-Irish' and 'Protestant Ascendancy' are often used to refer to the Anglican aristocracy alone, whereas 'Protestant Ascendancy' (which W. J. McCormack has shown to have been coined by conservatives in the 1780s) actually referred to the legal supremacy of the whole Anglican community over the Catholics. The position of non-Anglican Protestants was left ambiguous as circumstances dictated; in eighteenth-century usage 'Protestant' often referred to Anglicans alone, hence Wolfe Tone's ambition to unite 'Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter'. Edmund Burke criticised this form of supremacism as unsustainable precisely on the grounds that while Catholic plebeians might be persuaded to defer to a Protestant-dominated aristocracy as their natural superiors, they would hardly extend such deference to their Protestant equals or inferiors. 'Anglo-Irish', an older term could refer to any person of settler descent, and, from the late nineteenth century, was also sometimes used to refer to any Irish speaker of English. The Protestant elite was often referred to (or referred to itself) as 'the Irish nation' – that is, the political nation, those who participated in government and enjoyed civic rights. The Anglican Archbishop John George Beresford, who died in 1862, recalled shortly before his death that when he was a boy the expression 'the Irish nation' had usually been taken to mean the Protestants, whereas now it was usually assumed to mean the Roman Catholics. Many nineteenth-century nationalists (such as Thomas Davis) as well as Unionists such as Thomas MacKnight argued that Ireland could not call itself a nation until the term was used unselfconsciously to include the members of all Ireland's religious communities.

Debate continues about how far eighteenth-century Ireland was either a relatively 'normal' European *ancien régime* society¹⁹ or a dysfunctional colony with a minority ruling by force over an alien majority. Its crimes and vices, however, are increasingly seen in their contemporary context rather than as they appeared in the retrospective gaze of nineteenth-century reformers.²⁰ One of the best introductions to eighteenth-century

Ireland is David Dickson, *Ireland: New Foundations, 1660–1800* (2nd edition, 2000) which provides a welcome synthesis of the ongoing reinterpretation by academics of Early Modern Ireland. One major criticism of a history focussing on the Irish Parliament of the eighteenth century has been that it overlooks the political identity of the Catholic majority and often underplays the appetite for radicalism during this period, particularly in the 1790s. The image of a native people reduced to universal immiseration, found in Daniel Corkery's *Hidden Ireland* (1924) itself reproducing what were seen as the commonplaces of social history, has been challenged by the recognition of the survival of an 'underground gentry' of large tenant farmers.²¹ After years of neglect Irish Jacobitism has been rehabilitated into an exciting avenue of research by authors such as Breandan Ó Buachalla²² and Eamonn Ó Ciardha in his *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685–1766: A Fatal Attachment* (2002). Jacobitism with its ideology of allegiance to the deposed and exiled Stuart kings, is now seen as a serious political project commanding widespread allegiance well into the eighteenth century throughout Ireland, while the existence of agrarian secret societies has been rescued from conservative denunciations and later nationalist/liberal denial, co-option or condescension.²³

The eighteenth-century Patriot tradition, seen by admirers as encapsulated in the relatively autonomous settlement of 1782 known as 'Grattan's Parliament',²⁴ has been debunked so often that it is hard for twenty-first-century readers to realise the nature and extent of its attractions for earlier commentators. Liberal unionists and radical nationalists rapidly pointed out that the eighteenth-century Irish Parliament, dominated by government appointees and representatives of an 'Irish [political] nation' which was predominantly aristocratic and exclusively Protestant, are problematic ancestors for the populist nationalism of the nineteenth century.²⁵ The view that Grattan's Parliament would have repealed all anti-Catholic legislation but for malign English pressure is now recognised as retrospective fabrication. There was significant pressure from Westminster to relax these Penal Laws; the major repeal measures in the 1790s reflected a tactical 'race for the Catholics' with patriots and Westminster competing for Catholic support.²⁶ Jacqueline Hill's study of the Dublin guilds under the unreformed corporation of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shows how their Patriot politics, based on corporate privilege, metamorphosed into support for the Union with Britain as a bulwark of Protestant ascendancy.²⁷

Recent scholars such as Gerard O'Brien emphasise that 'patriotism' was less a coherent position than a rhetoric used by political 'Outs'

to harass political 'Ins' and make themselves worth buying off.²⁸ The representative figure of the tradition may not be Grattan, with his recognition that 'the Irish Protestant cannot be free so long as the Irish Catholic is a slave' but the ruthlessly job-seeking and anti-Catholic arriviste John Foster (1740–1828).²⁹ Modern social and economic historians (notably L. M. Cullen) add that the image of a country raised by Grattan's Parliament to prosperity within a few years, by legislation promoting tillage and encouraging Irish industries and still invoked to support Fianna Fáil's (FFs)³⁰ policies of encouraging tillage and industrial protectionism in the 1930s, underestimates earlier economic development and ignores the influence of demand from an industrialising Britain.³¹ Where then did the glowing image of Grattan's Parliament originate? In the sense of political betrayal and economic decay after the failure of the Union to produce political stability and British-style growth; in the decaying physical relics of eighteenth-century grandeur conspicuous in Dublin; in the fact that eighteenth-century Patriots, unlike United Irishmen, could be presented as respectable models for Irish nationalism within the British system; in the personal cult of Grattan, appealing to constitutional nationalists and liberal unionists cataloguing lost opportunities for an Irish patriotism encompassing (or led by) the landed gentry.³² The image of Grattan as eminently constitutionalist has recently been challenged by Daniel Mansergh, who presents him as pioneering mass mobilisation to bring pressure to bear on administration, and as a half-willing initiator of a radicalisation which escalated into the violence of 1798.³³

The United Irishmen

The United Irish Society, founded as a reformist movement and which developed into the secret society behind the great Rising of 1798 was, for a long time, too sensitive a topic for direct discussion after its defeat. Loyalists fitted the rebellion to the template of accounts of seventeenth-century conflicts which depicted Irish Protestants as victims and Catholics as perennial persecutors, while liberals (and many surviving rebels) attributed it to official provocation. A countervailing tendency towards romanticising the rebels as selfless heroes developed with Young Ireland³⁴ and the belated gathering of oral testimony by figures such as R. R. Madden and Luke Cullen.³⁵ This became dominant in the later nineteenth century, encouraged by celebrations of the 1898 centenary as a nationalist counterblast to Queen Victoria's 1897 Diamond Jubilee. The Wexford-born Franciscan friar P. F. Kavanagh produced

a *People's History of 1798* combining criticism of the United Irishmen as a secret society with exaltation of those Wexford priests (a small minority condemned by their bishop) who participated in the Rising. This 'priests and people' interpretation dominated commemorations in 1898 and 1948.³⁶ The first major post-independence narrative history of 1798, *The Year of Liberty* (1969) by Thomas Pakenham, is shaped by the Northern Troubles and emphasises violence and bloodshed.

The run-up to the bicentenary in 1998 produced a wide range of new publications.³⁷ One of the dominant interpretative frames was supplied by Kevin Whelan. Whelan argued that accounts such as Pakenham's were distorted by reliance on loyalist propaganda, apologetics emanating from liberals and defeated rebels and retrospective accounts by Catholic populists, all of whom had a vested interest in downplaying popular politicisation and portraying the rebellion as a spontaneous uprising by ignorant and bigoted (or peaceful until provoked) masses. Instead, Whelan argues, the Wexford Rising was a planned mobilisation by a pre-existing organisation. Whelan's villains are the Dublin Castle administration, presented as manipulating if not actually creating Orangeism, as well as the Catholic hierarchy and Daniel O'Connell, for propagating a specifically Catholic version of Irishness which Whelan sees as displacing the Enlightenment views disseminated by the United Irishmen and – it is implied – only recovered again in the 1990s.³⁸ Another of Whelan's contributions to the ongoing and unresolved 1798 debate, the *Fellowship of Freedom: The United Irishmen and 1798* (1998) reflect the changes in historiography around United Irishmen research and writing. He includes and expands on work by academics such as Nancy J. Curtin,³⁹ allowing for the appreciation of the success of United Irishmen propaganda and other aspects such as the role of women in Irish radicalism, the influence of freemasonry and the influence of the United Irishmen on social and cultural thought. Curtin's work is seen as one of the most sustained and comprehensive reassessments of the subject in her detailed analysis of the United Irishmen and their success in enlisting mass, popular support.

Another pupil of L. M. Cullen, Tom Dunne, argues that the Whelan interpretation is unrealistic in assuming that the Catholic peasantry either had no political culture of their own or were entirely transformed by a few years of United Irish propaganda. He states that considerable evidence exists of more atavistic, and perfectly understandable, popular attitudes based on memories of conquest, dispossession and religious persecution, and that the good intentions of the United Irishmen and the atrocities and propaganda of the loyalists cannot obliterate the

consequences of invoking widespread popular violence.⁴⁰ Much of the scholarship on 1798 concentrates on why the Rebellion took the course it did. While works by Whelan, Cullen, O'Flanagan and others⁴¹ are invaluable the most detailed account of the Rebellion in Wexford can be found in Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising: Wexford in 1798* (1995). A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Summer Soldiers: The 1798 Rebellion in Antrim and Down* (1995), deals with Ulster while Kildare and Wicklow are the focus of Liam Chambers' *Rebellion in Kildare, 1790–1803* (1998) and *The Rebellion in Wicklow, 1798* (1998) by Ruan O'Donnell respectively. Ian McBride's *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (1998) discusses how far the particular form which the United Irish movement took in Ulster was influenced by specifically Presbyterian beliefs.

The Union and O'Connellism

Moving on from the historiography of the 1798 Rebellion, two interpretative frameworks are discernable in discussions of Irish politics under the Union, recuperating debates that took place throughout the Union's existence. Liberal unionists such as William Cooke Taylor argued that the Union had been unavoidable and it could be saved by constructive unionist politics.⁴² Nationalist accounts emphasised the corruption which smoothed its ratification and argued that its co-option by Ascendancy, post-Union resistance to Catholic Emancipation and the general tardiness of reform were inevitable, not only because of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice in Britain, but because the sheer difference between Ireland and Britain made their political cultures incompatible. The debate, about the extent to which the corruption used to secure the Union exceeded contemporary standards of political manoeuvre, is continued by G. C. Bolton, Patrick Geoghegan and David Wilkinson.⁴³ A useful summary of the Act and its historiography is Michael Brown, Patrick Geoghegan and James Kelly's (eds) *The Irish Act of Union, 1800: Bicentennial Essays* (2003). The London-Irish Liberal journalist, Richard Barry O'Brien, is now chiefly remembered as the official biographer of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891), but his contemporary political significance rested on his voluminous compilations, which documented the repeated blocking of reforms within the Union by landlord interests and which argued that Liberal principles logically entailed granting the desire of the Irish majority for autonomy.⁴⁴ Liberal Unionists such as Thomas MacKnight put forward a rival narrative which listed reforms undertaken by Liberal governments under the Union and arguing that

only by its continuation could Ireland be preserved as a viable polity, since the alternative was sectarian civil war and economic ruin.⁴⁵ The central problem with these arguments was that the inability of Unionists to secure mass political support outside Ulster after the extension of the franchise in 1885 meant that such 'constructive Unionism' implied a form of 'enlightened despotism' hard to square with liberal principles. For an intensive meditation on the workings and long-term consequences of the Union the most comprehensive works are Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland: The Union and its Aftermath* (1977) and *States of Mind* (1985). For a view which emphasises the limitations and hypocrisies of British Liberalism as applied to Ireland, see the writings of J. J. Lee, such as *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848–1918* (1973).

The campaign for Catholic emancipation is often personified in Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847), obscuring his numerous allies. One of the key works which allows a comprehensive overview of O'Connell and Catholic Emancipation is Fergus O'Ferrall's *Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy* (1985). The starting point for any modern study of O'Connell is the eight volumes of O'Connell's correspondence edited by Maurice O'Connell (1973–80) and also his *Daniel O'Connell: The Man and his Politics* (Dublin, 1990). This provides the basis for Oliver MacDonagh's classic biography *O'Connell* (1991).⁴⁶ O'Connell's parliamentary career is generally regarded as more anti-climactic; though he allied with the Whig Party (especially after 1836) and secured legislation on tithe and local government, the value of these concessions was limited by conservative resistance and the Whigs themselves, who generally viewed O'Connell with contempt. Later separatists argued that while O'Connell advocated non-violence he might not have obtained those concessions without the peasant resistance, and noted that while refusing office himself he secured it for others. This reveals a tension in the interpretation of Emancipation; from a primarily nationalist standpoint, office-taking under the Union represented corruption, but it could also be seen as breaking traditional Tory-Orange dominance of administration and fulfilling Catholic Emancipation. Angus D. MacIntyre's *The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish Party, 1830–1847* (1965) deals specifically with O'Connell as a parliamentarian. Desmond Keenan's *Ireland 1800–1850* (2001) and *The Grail of Catholic Emancipation* (2002) are more sceptical studies, which draw heavily on the Whig-liberal unionist newspaper the *Dublin Evening Post*.

Irene Whelan has shown that the decisive factor in driving Catholic bishops to supporting O'Connell's populist agitation for Catholic emancipation was the fear that resurgent Evangelical Protestantism might

gain sufficient influence to put the power of the state behind Protestant proselytism.⁴⁷ Thereafter a significant theme of episcopal politics was the desire to improve Catholic representation within the administrative apparatus and create a Catholic professional class responsive to the wishes of the hierarchy. Secondary schools such as Clongowes⁴⁸ aimed to create such an élite, even if their products tended to move across Europe and the Empire rather than remain in Ireland. The attendant struggle for a Catholic University was an attempt to supervise all stages of the professional formation of such a class; and the unwillingness of any British government to recognise such an institution reflected the limitations of any attempt to underpin the Union by co-opting the Catholic clergy. This is extensively detailed in Donal Kerr's *Peel, Priests and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1841–46* (1984) and also in his work *Nation of Beggars? Priests, People, and Politics in Famine Ireland, 1846–1852* (1998).⁴⁹ This administration-centred 'Catholic Whiggery' existed throughout the Union, in shifting an unstable combination with various shades of nationalism and liberal unionism; the bishops were unable to provide stable mass support for such an elite, while nationalists such as Charles Gavan Duffy (1816–1903) and A.M. Sullivan (1829–84) argued that 'faith and fatherland' were better served by the nationalism of a predominantly Catholic people than by a self-serving elite, who would inevitably ingratiate themselves with existing power structures and betray clerical patrons once these were of no further use to them.⁵⁰ The result of these tensions and compromises, as well as the Catholic faith of the majority and the commitment of Catholic religious, was a major Catholic clerical role in the administration of Irish social policy that survived for most of the twentieth century.

The nineteenth-century historiography of O'Connell tended to be based on the image of O'Connell as a specifically Catholic and clericalist hero-figure or on the Young Ireland critique of him as a great man corrupted by autocratic leadership, a desire to make deals with Whig administrations to obtain jobs for relatives, and a 'morbid' fear of bloodshed. The critical view was strengthened by the defeat of the Home Rule party by Sinn Féin, who presented themselves as heirs to Young Ireland and cast their constitutionalist opponents as neo-O'Connellite job-hunters. An extreme expression of this interpretation is the view that O'Connell's campaign for Catholic Emancipation merely benefited West-British Catholic jobbers whereas national independence would have automatically brought religious equality.⁵¹ The 1905 publication of O'Connell's youthful journal, which revealed that he had been

alienated from Catholic orthodoxy for a period, began a renewed interest in O'Connell as reforming radical and democrat in Sean Ó Faolain's popular biography *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell* (1938); its highpoint is Maurice O'Connell's edition of the *Liberator's* correspondence and Oliver MacDonagh's standard biography.

The possibility should be considered, however, that this version of O'Connell is oversanitised, in regarding the *Liberator* primarily as a liberal, glossing over his verbal violence and in presenting O'Connellism as an extension of O'Connell. While much research needs to be done on O'Connell and his politics, one of the best recent assessments of these is Oliver MacDonagh, in his 'O'Connell's ideology' in Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds) *The Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c. 1750–1850* (1997).⁵² Relatively little work has been done on the relationship between O'Connellism and the 'tithe war' of the 1830s, and how this fed conservative-Protestant narratives which looked to the return of a Conservative government, expectations which were disappointed by the unwillingness of the Peel government of 1841–6 to embrace Protestant exclusivism.⁵³ Also of real interest to researchers are the social networks that drove O'Connellite mobilisation, which is part of the more recent approach to O'Connellism emphasising popular mobilisation and political symbolism being developed by Gary Owens.⁵⁴

The Young Ireland tradition and the Famine

The Young Ireland movement of the 1840s⁵⁵ is of interest for its impact on later generations through its didactic mass nationalist literature. The contrast drawn by Young Irelanders such as Thomas Davis between their role as educators (through *The Nation*⁵⁶ newspaper) and O'Connellite reliance on a single arbitrary leader also highlights the political role of newspapers in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ireland. For most of the Union period (and to some extent beyond it) conservative newspapers enjoyed disproportionate success because of their attractiveness to advertisers. The tension between newspapers as political vehicles and commercial entities is an abiding theme of Irish media history, with recurring rivalries between journals whose primary aims were political, or educational, as their conductors might have it, acquiring both support and constraints from a political movement (the *Nation*, *United Ireland*) and those which enjoyed more commercial success but were constrained by fear of political hostility; for instance, the *Freeman's Journal* before its capture by the Irish Party, the *Irish Independent* under

the Murphy dynasty. The growth of literacy led to an expanding newspaper market; Mary-Louise Legg has charted how expansions in local newspaper titles coincided with the major political agitations of the O'Connell era and the 1880s.⁵⁷ The last major political newspaper conceived as the vehicle for a movement was FFs *Irish Press* (1931–95), a direct response to the perception that newspaper opposition was a major hindrance to the growth of the party;⁵⁸ although party 'house journals' survived at the end of the twentieth century, newer media reduced them to niche operations.

In 1945 the centenary of Davis's death attracted more official attention than the centenary of the Famine, but the Young Ireland cult had already become fossilised through the demise of the Union and land system against which they defined themselves and through the appearance of more recent and prestigious literary and political heroes, even if some of these, such as Pearse, removed certain Young Ireland writers from their context to exalt them as preachers of a timeless 'Gospel of Nationality'. Present-day interest in the Young Ireland movement is stronger among North American and Australian scholars than in Ireland. The major recent study of the movement is by the Tasmanian scholar Richard Davis, and Young Ireland exiles play a central role in Thomas Kenneally's popular account of the post-Famine diaspora in *The Great Shame* (1989).⁵⁹ Such accounts along with the biographies of Thomas Davis by the Australian John Molony, *'A Soul Came into Ireland': Thomas Davis 1814–45* (1995); and the American Helen Mulvey *Thomas Davis and Ireland* (2003), do not fully escape patterns laid down by nineteenth-century idealisation. A better approach might involve placing the Young Irishlanders in relation to the Irish Whig and Tory intelligentsias of their day. The latter have been intermittently explored, the former almost entirely neglected; researchers would need to assess the options open to these young activists and the context within which they defined themselves.

The overshadowing of the Famine by Young Ireland was partly due to an impulse already visible in such works as John Mitchel's *Last Conquest of Ireland – Perhaps* (facsimile 2006) indicating a sense of the Famine as a humiliation and defeat and an attempt to present the Young Irishlanders' 1848 rebellion,⁶⁰ however ramshackle and abortive, as a redeeming gesture of defiance. This overshadows the extent to which many Young Irishlanders feared popular violence before the uprising and, after its failure, felt disgust that the people had not followed them.⁶¹ Mitchel also attempts to redeem the Famine by attributing it to British malevolence – part of a struggle that is still going on and can

therefore still be redeemed by victory.⁶² Nationalist (especially separatist) commentators on later near-famines, such as those of 1879 and 1899 in Connacht, both of which provoked major land agitation, often blurred the difference further by assimilating the whole of Ireland to the poorest regions of the West and speaking as if the Famine was still going on; for example, food exports during the First World War were presented by separatists as potentially (and deliberately) producing a new Famine. This trope declined with the recession of the Great Famine into history and with the new Irish state's experiences of administrative responsibility. Traces recur in some material from the 150th anniversary commemorations presenting Ireland and the Irish diaspora as suffering an ongoing psychological trauma traceable specifically to the Famine. Mitchel's conspiracy theory, though almost universally rejected by scholars, starts from a *prima facie* case also put forward, without the same conclusion, by the Irish Conservative (and subsequent Home Rule leader) Isaac Butt⁶³ – how could so many have died, in a short period of time, 1845–9, in part of the wealthiest state on earth? How was it also that British policy was based on the concept that Ireland should pay for itself, rather than being a charge on the whole United Kingdom? The Mitchelian view that no reform could be expected from the landlord-dominated British government was challenged by land reform from the 1880s but survived in popular culture and the Republican subculture. Modern Famine scholarship was initially dominated by an administrative perspective, visible in the O'Neill and Edwards volume of 1956 and inspired by the move from published to archival sources;⁶⁴ this has been supplemented by studies of political and literary culture analysing the factors which shaped official famine policy and the nature of contemporary responses.

The predominant academic view until the early 1990s was that while the official response to the Famine had often been shortsighted, nevertheless, the Famine was an unavoidable Malthusian catastrophe, a view underlying the contemporary official response. Cormac O Grada, however, argued that Irish society was adapting before the Famine (albeit slowly and painfully); while significant population decline and emigration were unavoidable, the Famine itself was caused by the unpredictable appearance of the blight.⁶⁵ This implies government could have made more difference. A principal symbol of the shortcomings of government policy was Treasury Secretary Charles Trevelyan, chief coordinator of official relief schemes and author of the principal government apology, to which Mitchel's work is a riposte. Trevelyan as chief villain was popularised by Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great*

Hunger: Ireland: 1845–1849 (1992) but this has recently been challenged by Robin Haines.⁶⁶ The Famine anniversary of the mid-1990s raised public consciousness and produced a great deal of local material. Christine Kinealy's studies of the administration of relief and the sufferings of its recipients were particularly outspoken in condemnation of official attitudes.⁶⁷ Peter Gray in *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society 1843–1850* (1999) explored the sources of government policy, arguing that a 'providentialist' blend of loosely evangelical religion and belief in the laws of classical economics as divinely-ordained, restricted government willingness to intervene.

Fenianism and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)

Attempts to recreate a constitutional nationalist party based on the tenant right issue broke down through personality disputes, sectarian tensions and the willingness of some leading party members to accept office under a Liberal Government.⁶⁸ Some Liberal commentators argued that the 'shock therapy' of the Famine had in fact produced beneficial long-term economic results which were making the political assimilation of Ireland within the Union possible. These predictions were rapidly falsified by the appearance of a new radical nationalist organisation, helped by the growing political and economic clout of the Irish emigrant community in America. Founded in 1858, the underground separatist IRB⁶⁹ maintained a continuous existence until 1924. Much of the early literature on the movement consists of participant memoirs placing the organisation in a heroic light; this was echoed by many writers in the mid-twentieth century, encouraged by the role of the early twentieth-century IRB in the independence struggle and its participants' emphasis on continuity with the older rebellion. This was reinforced by well-researched biographies, such as Marcus Bourke's *John O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism*, (1969) in the years around the 1967 centenary of the Fenian Rising. A rival tradition treating Fenianism with pity or derision derived from loyalist and constitutional nationalist writers; already visible in the late Victorian and Edwardian period it was forced into occlusion by events after 1916 but revived in recent decades, partly because of the use of police files – which display considerable contempt for their subjects – as a major source. Leon O Broin, who produced the first full narrative history of the IRB, uses administrative sources but is generally reverential.⁷⁰

A sharp dose of demythologisation was administered in the 1980s by R.V. Comerford, much of whose work explores the full range of

mid-century Irish political activity obscured by later theories of nationalist 'apostolic succession'. Comerford argues in *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848–82* (1985) that the IRB of the 1860s is best viewed as the product of that particular time and place. He writes that most activists were primarily interested in recreation and social self-assertion, and that much sympathy for Fenianism arose after it was safely defeated and available for co-option.⁷¹ Comerford has been challenged by John Newsinger and other critics, often from leftist or republican perspectives, who argue that the personal risk and sacrifice involved, at least on the part of core activists, indicate serious ideological commitment.⁷² The combination of high membership turnover with a highly committed core is common among radical groups, so the two views are not necessarily contradictory. Owen McGee's recent history of the IRB reflects extensive knowledge of the source material and desire to rehabilitate the 'forgotten generation' of Irish-based IRB activists who emerged after 1867 and who were sidelined by Parnellism and displaced by younger separatists before the 1916 Rising. McGee, to some extent, applies the Whelan thesis to the late-Victorian IRB, presenting the participants as genuinely secular republicans, outmanoeuvred and written out of history by Catholic-constitutionalist politicians whose sensibility influenced even the following generation of republican-separatists.⁷³ As with Whelan, this can be criticised as projecting contemporary secularist attitudes onto the past.

The land question and Home Rule

The alliance between Parnellite parliamentarians, the IRB and land agitation after the agricultural downturn of the late 1870s produced the almost uniquely effective nationalist political machine of the 1880s. Earlier nineteenth century grassroots agitation was driven by separatists who believed, as did the conservatives of the *Evening Mail*, that the British parliament would never undercut the rights of property.⁷⁴ However, the unexpected willingness of Gladstone to make concessions to tenants and his subsequent embrace of Home Rule gave constitutional nationalism a degree of credibility never anticipated by radical separatists. This led some later commentators to see the post-1886 Home Rule alliance as 'natural'; the attempts of the 1880–5 Gladstone government to contain agitation by force as well as concessions, and the opportunistic nature of the embrace of Home Rule by most of Gladstone's lieutenants are relatively under-emphasised by scholars, yet provide much of the explanation for the willingness of the Parnellite minority to resist

Gladstone and the anti-Parnellite majority in the 1890 split. Much academic history from the mid-twentieth century focussed on the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)⁷⁵ led by Charles Stewart Parnell⁷⁶ and subsequently by John Redmond. This reflected, among other things, the literary impact of the 'Parnell myth' deriving from contemporary Parnellite propaganda and taken up by Yeats and Joyce and the importance of the Irish Question in late Victorian and Edwardian British politics. This led to an extensive literature surrounding the upheavals it produced in the British political system. Much of this literature reflected the tendency of British liberal historians – such as J. L. Hammond⁷⁷ – and some Irish historians who regretted the violence of 1916–23 and the limitations of the successor states to suggest a Home Rule parliament might have allowed gradual and peaceful transition to independence and a society more receptive to outside influences and less defensive.

The 'lost opportunity' historiography had two principal foci – the defeat of Gladstonian Home Rule and the later career of John Redmond. The first major study of the IPP as a whole was Conor Cruise O'Brien's *Parnell and His Party* (1957), covering the years 1880–90.⁷⁸ The great pioneer of the academic study of the IPP was F. S. L. Lyons, whose works included the first full-scale biography of Parnell since Barry O'Brien (there had been several shorter lives), a biography of John Dillon, *The Fall of Parnell* (1960) and a survey *Ireland Since the Famine* (1971) which became a widely used school and college textbook.⁷⁹ His works, like Cruise O'Brien's study and the studies of ecclesiastical high politics by Emmet Larkin,⁸⁰ reacted against the supporters of the 'Parnell myth' who viewed the anti-Parnellites as cravenly subservient to Gladstone and the Catholic bishops. Instead these works emphasise the rational motivations of anti-Parnellism and the extent to which Parnell's refusal to accept majority rule can be seen as undermining his own achievements and anti-democratic. The Parnellite view that the anti-Parnellites were not a majority of Irish nationalists because they had ceased to be nationalists strikingly recalls later claims by hardline Republicans. Lyons' *The IPP 1890–1910* (1951) was the first account of a period traditionally overshadowed by the intense activity of the late 1880s and the years before the First World War.⁸¹ Margaret O'Callaghan's *British High Politics and a Nationalist Ireland: Criminality, Land and the Law under Forster and Balfour* (1994) is an interesting critique of the 'lost opportunity' view of the Parnell movement which argues that even before the split created by the divorce case, British Unionism had successfully countered the Gladstone–Parnell alliance by presenting the land agitation and its parliamentary allies as essentially

criminal rather than political. McGee's IRB history takes a similar view, though his revival of the contemporary separatist claim that even the Gladstonians never intended to implement Home Rule and supported it merely to divert Irish nationalist opinion from more radical options has not found general acceptance.

In many respects Lyons' works have not stood up well to subsequent research; he takes a Westminster-centred approach which downgrades such phenomena as the 'Ranch War',⁸² and his memoir-based framework draws less deeply on archival material than appears at first sight. These deficiencies have been addressed by younger scholars. Alan O'Day, for instance, also takes a Westminster-centric approach but in a variety of authored and edited volumes explores his material more deeply and widely than Lyons.⁸³ Paul Bew's major contributions have been to conceptualise the nature and limitations of the relationship between the Irish Party and agrarian politics throughout its existence, and the limitations of its attitudes to the Unionist minority; his view of Parnell as a fundamentally conservative figure trying to retain some role in Irish life for his class by detaching it from the unsustainable land system remains dominant.⁸⁴ There were numerous publications on Parnell around the 1991 centenary of his death. The major recent contributions to the Parnell literature have been Frank Callanan's study of the Parnell Split and a biography of T. M. Healy.⁸⁵ Callanan's strongly researched rehabilitation of the Parnellite perspective emphasises the vitriolic Catholic-populist invective deployed by the anti-Parnellite Healy, whose verbal savagery tends to be overshadowed by the high-politics approach of Lyons and Larkin, but which was central to the Parnellite image of martyrdom, and the irresponsibility and incompetence displayed by most of Parnell's lieutenants-turned opponents. It is debatable (and probably unknowable) how far Callanan's view of Parnell as engaged in a visionary attempt to coalesce disadvantaged groups against the dominance of the conservative Catholic-farmer and professional ethos represented by Healy represents a projection of later concerns; a more cynical reading of Parnell in an opportunistic struggle for personal power cannot be excluded. David Lawlor's *Divine Right? The Parnell Split in County Meath* (2007) is a useful local study of the most notorious example of anti-Parnellite clerical electoral intimidation, though greater contextualisation would be needed to sustain its claim that Meath was typical of the country as a whole. Dermot Meleady's *Redmond: The Parnellite* (2008) which covers its subject's career to 1900 in the first volume of a projected