FINDING HAPPINESS IN THE POOR, HUMBLE COTTAGE

"CONTENTED POVERTY" IN IRISH NOVELS

FROM FAMINE TO FREE STATE

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

Drew University in partial fulfillment of

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ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Letters Dissertation by

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This dissertation seeks to explore the differences in representations of poverty in Irish novels and British novels between the time of the Famine and the independence of Ireland (1845-1921). It looks at how poverty was represented in Irish and British novels published between those times by both male (Kickham, Banim, Carleton, Dickens, Thackeray) and female (Somerville, Martin, Gaskell, Brontë) authors. For consistency of subject matter, I restricted the Irish texts to those novels which were not only published between those dates but were also set in Ireland after the Famine.

This study pursues several questions: In what ways were the Irish representations of poverty different from the British ones? What accounts for those differences? Why have the Irish texts declined precipitously in popularity while the British ones have not? How are Irish representations of poverty from this time different from modern Irish representations of poverty? What accounts for those differences?

Previous research has tended to look at the content of the Irish novels in primarily economic or political terms. While economics and politics are certainly major factors, they do not explain the pervading differences in perspective, nor do they take into

account the psychological effects of the Famine and generations of oppression leading up to it on the authors and their audiences. In this dissertation theory that the Irish approach is marked by multigenerational effects of communal Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder brought on by a long history of hardship and brought to a peak by the horrors of the Famine is investigated. The connection between such PTSD and the values present in the Irish novels which differ from those in the British ones is explained. Those values affect the way poverty is represented as well as other aspects of the way characters' behavior is depicted.

This dissertation also explains how and why the values of the Irish culture at large underwent a change from the turn of the century to the end of the period under analysis, and how and why those changes account for a subsequent drop in popularity for some of the most popular Irish novels ever written.

For Pepe
who taught me never to quit

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Chapter 1

ENGLISH POVERTY VS IRISH POVERTY

There have been great volumes of scholarship written about the Famine itself since the 1980s (Fegan 12). Those attempting to document a cohesive history of the event have tried various approaches touching on the fields of statistics, political science, economics, and psychology (14-16). It is important to recognize a difference between discussion of the Famine and discussion of the literature of the Famine period. While many historians favor one dominant filter through which they view the event and its aftermath, analyzing the literature of the period can be more problematic.

It can be difficult to discuss values and psychology as the communities and characters in the literature are not real. It can be difficult enough to diagnose a patient with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), for instance, when that person is living and present with the psychologist. It is highly problematic to assert such things about people who died a century before the analysis and who left, in most cases, nothing personal for the psychologist upon which to base his or her analysis on (journals, etc). Characters in novels are not real people, and so they defy that kind of analysis altogether; that is not what I am attempting to do here.

But while it would be inappropriate to psychoanalyze fictional characters, or even the authors themselves, psychological principles can provide illumination for the missing pieces in discussion of Irish literature. Deborah Peck investigated the traumatic effects of the Famine for her Clinical Psychology dissertation (Valone & Kinealy 395). Her work on the multigenerational and community effects of the Famine form a major part of this analysis. Again, it must be said that I am not using her thesis to analyze the characters in the novels nor to analyze the authors as individuals, but I recognize that the authors were Irishmen who lived

through the Famine, as were their audiences; they are not exempt from the effects Peck describes, at least in a general sense.

Taking what was quite possibly the most popular Irish novel of the nineteenth century, Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1873) (Murphy 79), it is surprising how a sharp decline in popularity has resulted in the text almost falling into obscurity. The same can be said of the other popular works by William Carleton and Michael Banim as well. Modern scholarship, such as can be found in Philip O'Leary's *The Prose Literature Of The Gaelic Revival* (1994), tends to criticize the literary merit of those works. But the merit (or lack thereof) of the works is unchanged from when they were first published. They were phenomenally popular at the outset, and for a very long time, and then their popularity seemed to evaporate. So what happened?

The works demonstrate a value system that is at odds with the values found in British novels of the same period. These values cover both a behavioral code as well as views on class and poverty. It is my contention that this value system led to the works' initial popularity as well as their modern decline. The values at work in the British novels are also evident in American literature (which is beyond the scope of this survey) and in much of modern Irish literature. I contend it was that shift in cultural values, brought on by industrialization, urbanization, and "cosmopolitanism," which caused works such as *Knocknagow* to decline in popularity among the Irish reading public in the middle of the twentieth century.

This analysis will provide an overview of the difference between the Irish value system and the British value system in their respective literatures. It will then substantiate the existence, pervasiveness, and influence of those values through firsthand accounts of Irish community life at the time of the Famine. Afterwards, it will uncover the origins of the Irish values in light of Peck's psychological argument (rooted in centuries of oppression and poverty and reinforced by

the trauma of the Famine). The two chapters after that will cover the presence of those values as evident in the Irish literature itself by taking a close look at Kickham's novels and then other popular Irish works. The final two chapters will cover the breakdown of the traditionalist approach to national identity and the rise of the modernist/socialist approach, asserting that this exchange of dominance in Irish culture accounts for the shift in popularity of the literature.

In the period between the Great Hunger and the birth of the Irish Free State (1845-1921), Irish writers affirmed a fundamentally different perspective of poverty than did their English counterparts. This difference of perspective was due to a combination of cultural factors which can be traced to the effects of the Famine and systemic oppression of the Irish psyche.

For three hundred years prior to the start of the twentieth century, English writers employed a particular type of device in order to manufacture happy endings in novels and plays. The main character (most often, but not always female) would be introduced to the reader in more or less pitiful circumstances, fall in love above her station, grasp at a higher caste life in an effort to win her love's attention or proposal, fail miserably, fall into despair, discover something that qualifies her for a change in class, marry the object of her affection, and live happily ever after in high status and material comfort.

It is critical to remember that the happy ending was not the important point *per se*, but rather the happy ending could be employed as a gauge to determine which characters get "rewarded" and which ones do not. Those characters which are rewarded at the end of the novels are those which best exemplify the virtues valued by the culture. In this way, one can determine which values are being reinforced and which perspectives were being validated.

This standard plot given above was indicative of English values in several ways. First, there is an endorsement of the importance of class and social respectability. This is not to say

merely clean, moral living, but an inherent social distinction which placed greater value on a mediocre, titled woman than an intelligent, courageous, moral peasant. As these distinctions were beyond one's control at the time of birth, it was regarded as a tragedy that an intelligent, courageous, moral (and, almost universally in such stories, beautiful) young woman should have the misfortune of being born a peasant or, in the case of Burney's Evelina, to a disgraced family. It was a tragedy in the sense that nothing was to be done about it, not that there was an inherent injustice in the system. Since social rules required the woman be from a titled family in order to marry a titled gentleman (with one of whom the heroine invariably falls in love), and such a title could not be bought or earned, a lower social status would prove as much a blockade to the happiness of the heroine as the hatred between the Montague and Capulet.

Situations such as this were occasionally solved by the discovery of noble lineage, as was the case with Radcliffe's Ellena in *The Italian* (1797). Because it would have been too incredible to have the heroine merit the bestowal of a title (and this would also send the message to the peasant readers that joining the nobility was possible — something to be discouraged), an existing title had to be discovered.

Second, the lack of a fortune in a family provided a bar to marriage if the desired spouse was of a markedly higher class. Occasionally, the heroine (or hero) would attempt to appear to possess such a fortune (Fanny Burney's Evelina) or actually acquire one (Charles Dickens' Pip) in order to impress the object of his or her affection. This would always end in embarrassment. Social and economic mobility of that kind, even as late as Dickens, was virtually impossible in English society, and the disaster that accompanies the dissolution of such ambitious plans also served to discourage the peasantry from grasping at things above their station.

A lack of fortune was somewhat easier to remedy in the making of a happy ending than the lack of a title. In many cases, a windfall inheritance (either an old, unclaimed estate or an unexpected death at the end of the novel) provides the means by which a character can rise to another caste. Sometimes, like Pip's second fortune in *Great Expectations* (1861) or Elizabeth Gaskell's Jem's Canadian homestead in *Mary Barton* (1848), a store of wealth is generated through trade or profession by the character himself. This avenue was typically only open to men, both in the real world as well as in fiction. A fortune amassed through trade, while respectable, was seen as inferior to a fortune generated through possession of land. This can be seen especially in the case of Pip, who enjoys a stable and respectable life (with the implication that he will then be able to win the hand of Estella) by the end of the novel through his own hard work, but it is a life which lacks the status he enjoyed when his fortune was the result of a mysterious benefactor. It should be noted that even then, Pip would become the master of quite a bit of land should he go on to marry Estella, who was by that point a widow and in possession of Miss Havisham's estate.

Both of these scenarios (possession of title and windfall inheritance) had the effect of privileging things that were beyond the ability of the character to create through his or her own enterprise. The Irish had long suffered because of these values, and thus held them in great disdain. The Penal Laws for generations prevented the Irish from making fortunes through enterprise while simultaneously dispossessing them of their land. The damage was so long-standing that it could not be repaired in one generation after Catholic Emancipation came in 1829, prior to the Great Hunger.

Because of the assumed impossibility of economic and social mobility, Irish works of the time approached happy endings differently. Often, happiness was achieved without the

acquisition of a fortune (by either voluntary or involuntary means), and definitely without the possession of a title. Bessy Morris in Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1873) gives a very typical answer when she agrees to go back to Ireland with Mat, leaving behind the material comfort she has found in America with the words, "I have often thought of that poor cabin, as you call it, and felt that if ever it was my lot to know happiness in this world, it is in that poor cabin I would find it" (596). In *Sally Cavanagh, or The Untenanted Graves* (1869), Sally Cavanagh finds her happy ending in death — Irish life had grown so sorrowful and unbearable (eviction, the death of her children in the workhouse, etc), that she only finds respite in the grave. Kickham pulls off what would be a tragedy to an English audience but is an understandably comforting one to an Irish audience.

But what accounts for this difference? There are several factors. The first is the near-universality of Irish Catholic poverty after the destruction of the Irish nobility in the seventeenth century and earlier. Even poor Englishmen could look to English nobles and wealthy merchants to see material comfort existed within their own ethno-religious cohort. The Irish were able to draw no such comparison. Irish noble and aristocratic classes had been gone for some time, and in their absence, harsh Penal Laws reduced the native Catholic population to grinding poverty. Where wealth existed, it was possessed by faceless, absentee landlords or an aristocracy which did not share the general population's religious or cultural affiliation. Because the poverty was so universal, the opportunity for social mobility nearly impossible, and efforts to change the system by force so repeatedly disastrous, a kind of acceptance developed whereby the poverty was taken to be an immutable part of life. The Irish had grown so used to finding contentment in other things (family, friends, music, storytelling, religion, etc) that as long as one's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, and leisure were met, everything else was considered luxury or

extravagance. Lusting after such things was seen as a form of hubris or greed, and an invitation to misfortune.

This acceptance even carried over to the horrors of the Famine itself. As Declan Kiberd put it, "Under far less provocation, the English would have resorted to outrage and war upon all authority, but most Irish bore their pains with mute patience…" (*Irish Classics* 276). This is not to say that the pains of long-term oppression and Famine cataclysm were borne with universal passivity among the Irish -- no, there were indeed many uprisings throughout the centuries in response to those circumstances. Even the Famine itself was a contributing factor to the abortive rising of 1848, which only failed to materialize as a major revolution due to British counter-intelligence and policing rather than apathy on the part of the outraged population (*Repeal and Revolution* 280). Still, much of the revolutionary fight seems to have been taken out of the Irish in the wake of the failed risings of 1798 and 1803.

The Famine (1845-52) caused the death or emigration of approximately one quarter the population of Ireland and set in motion a pattern of emigration that would halve the pre-Famine population by century's end. The unrelenting horrors of that period had a psychological impact on the country as a whole which lasted for generations (Peck 164-5). Part of this impact was a silencing effect on discussion of the horrors of hunger and poverty that had been endured. Given that the mundane poverty endured by the Irish in the last half of the nineteenth century paled in comparison to the starvation, evictions, and death of the Famine, it seemed natural not to complain about it if one was not going to complain about the disaster a generation or two before. Kiberd supports the idea that this famine was different, even though it affected a similar proportion of the population to that which took place in the previous century:

> All commentators agree that whereas the people recovered after the earlier famines, this one was different. 'It was not that it made them that lived after poor,' said Malachi Horan, one farmer in the Dublin Hills, 'for God knows they were used to that but it made them so sad in themselves.' (*Irish Classics* 279)

He argues that this famine initiated a multigenerational response which Deborah Peck goes on to investigate. In many ways, those who came out of the Famine did so as a broken people, largely bearing poverty and pains with bowed heads. This effect was not universal, nor was it permanent, but it did last much longer than the generation of those who directly survived the Famine. Peck deals with this issue in greater detail, and it will be treated in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Lastly, the poverty in Ireland was primarily rural where the poverty in Britain was primarily urban. Urban poverty existed in Ireland, to be sure, but rural life was seen as more essentially Irish. Because large-scale industry had been hobbled by government policies, the wave of socialism so popular on the Continent and in Britain had not quite taken root in Ireland. Socialist philosophy brought with it class envy and an antagonist/victim view of poverty. As industrialism took root in Ireland toward the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so did socialism, and these viewpoints began to change to ones more analogous to their English counterparts. That shift may have been delayed by the use of a rural ideal by the cultural revivalist and independence movements in the latter half of the nineteenth century which equated "Irish" with "rural." Still, by the time of the Easter Rising in 1916, there was a strong, Continental-flavored socialist movement proliferating, and by the 1930s, modernization, industrialization, socialism, and the "typical" English view of poverty and class had taken hold in Irish society and literature.

The English Values

There are a number of values that inform the treatment of poverty in English novels of the period in question. As with the Irish novels, there are values present in the dominant culture which color the way poverty is understood as well as the behaviors that are to be encouraged through example by rewarding the characters who practice them and punishing the characters who do not. In some respects, the values are very different. Where similarities exist, the foundations of the values are different.

Like the Irish, the English affirm hospitality, but for them it is more a social expectation than a community duty. When characters refuse to be hospitable in English novels, it typically shows up as an offense against social expectations and good manners. This even includes characters' dress, as dressing outside of one's class (either above or below) is an outward sign of one's membership in a particular class. Because the class system was part of the system of aristocracy/monarchy, failing to adhere to the associated expectations would be a serious social offence, and the social expectations of class are one of the dominant values in the English texts. As Suzanne Daly puts it in an article for *Victorian Studies*, "the cultural work that Victorian novels attempt to do; in marking fine distinctions of social status and individual taste, they communicate what might be termed an ethics of style" (273). Characters as expected to know their places and act accordingly. These expectations include not only good manners generally, but showing proper deference to superiors and support of the aristocratic class system that is fundamentally a part of the monarchy are part of being a "good" Englishman. Support in the novels needn't necessarily be understood as patriotic or political digressions, but rather willing participation in the system. Bound up with a code of ethics, this is more properly termed "propriety" in this discussion.

In an example from Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, Daly notes that "Mrs. Kirkpatrick's 'genius for millinery and dress' is...of ambiguous value: it is a feminine virtue taken too far and...is problematic. By allowing its possessor to appear better than she is, it functions as a form of deceit" (274-5). Note that there is a difference between the hard-working peasant who wishes to join the middle class and the brilliant seamstress who wishes to dress above her station. While ethical ambition is shown positively throughout the British novels time and again, there are lines that should not be crossed. Attempts to place one's self by appearance in a class above one's own is "deceitful." In this way, Rose's reluctance to marry Harry because she does not feel equal to what would be her new society as his wife in *Oliver Twist* is ethical, as is John Osborne's forbidding his son, George, from stooping to marry the penniless Amelia in *Vanity Fair* (1848). Both of those examples will be dealt with in greater detail.

The English texts may also seem similar to the Irish ones through their encouragement of generosity. There is a fundamental difference underpinning it, however. For the English, what is encouraged can more properly be termed "charity." The important difference is that charity carries with it a social dimension. A superior shows charity to an inferior. Because material wealth is part of what determines one's social standing in English society, it would be impossible to show charity to an equal (that would be generosity). Daly again notes that:

> Benjamin Disraeli's 1845 novel *Sybil* is generally understood to promulgate Disraeli's political vision, in which a genuinely superior aristocracy is to supervise a social compact between rich and poor. To point up the failings of the present aristocracy, Disraeli contrasts the histories of several noble families… Disraeli suggests that...tainted roots may be transcended by the adoption of correct attitudes and actions toward the poor and the working classes. (275-6)

But it is not only material charity (such as when materially comfortable Amelia lavishes "poor, friendless" Becky Sharp with fine clothes in *Vanity Fair*), but also to a sense of duty to take care of those of lower rank and station as a parent would take care of a child. This has particular implications for industrial Victorian novels:

> This model of aristocratic ethics then serves to define the ethics of mill ownership as well: they begin and end with the owners' responsibility to the workers they employ. Thus the dishonest practices of the mill owners Shuffle and Screw are contrasted with the enlightened system put in place by Mr. Trafford, the younger son of an old family of "gentle blood", who practices benevolent paternalism, housing and educating his workers and providing them with safe working conditions. (276)

The factory owner can be seen as a kind of British analogue to the Irish landlord in the role they play in the lives of the characters on which the narratives focus. In both cases, they wield great power and authority over the lives of the more central characters, and when behaving unethically, they can be the single-handed ruination of those workers or farmers. The difference is that the British value system expected the owners to "care for" the (presumably less capable) workers in a patronizing way, while the Irish value system evident in the texts did not expect the landlord to "care for" the tenants in the same manner (by educating them, for example). In short, the English expected all good (Protestant) Christians to show charity to the lowly and less fortunate; the Irish expected everyone to be generous with his or her peers. That's not to say that there are no examples of charity in the Irish novels, but if the Irish value of generosity were followed in all cases, wealth disparities in the community would be less and "charity" would be less necessary.

In stark contrast to the Irish texts, the English ones value ambition and enterprise. In other fields, this is sometimes termed the "Protestant Work Ethic," but it really runs deeper than that. Regardless, the English view it as such, and it as a point of pride to be ambitious and hard working. These are values of an industrial society. Material ambition and hard work facilitate the growth and functioning of such a society. To the degree that there was a religious component, it was that material comfort was seen as an outward sign of God's favor for right living. Since ambition and hard work also facilitated the accumulation of wealth (through blessing), both, exercised morally, were considered an ethical imperative. The justification was twofold: hard work brought God's blessings, and God's material blessings allowed one to be charitable to the poor (one's Christian duty). Working hard and being charitable, along with supporting the established church (and disdaining the Roman one) constituted English expressions of piety.

Like the Irish, the English believe their homeland to be a special place to live, but for different reasons. The English prize their homeland because they see it as the crown civilization in the world. Time and again, England is contrasted with its colonies and the rest of Europe (especially France) through its superior enlightenment, wealth, independence, and order.

Thus, the English values we see inherent in the culture and encouraged through the texts are charity (Kiesling 220), propriety (Frost 255), ambition and enterprise (Bratlinger 282), and championship of civilization and the barbarity of the wider world (Bell 283).

As Charles Kickham will be explored as the primary Irish author through which the Irish values find their voices, Charles Dickens may be considered to play that role for the English values. Their respective cultural values are shown through the writings of their compatriots, but in both cases to a lesser degree than their own. For this reason, greater weight of analysis will be

afforded to Kickham and Dickens, and more of their texts will be analyzed. Dickens occupies this place because poverty and urban life figure so prominently as themes in his works. Thus, it can be argued that his texts typify the English values, and the other texts demonstrate that those values were not limited to Dickens' works.

Whereas Irish writers typically introduced their settings with a description of humble and contented material poverty in a beautiful landscape, poverty took on a different character in English novels. In *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens introduces the reader to the industrial town of Coketown:

> It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (*Hard Times* 27-8)

That is quite a contrast to the idyllic settings of the poor peasants in Irish novels. Dickens' world is an urban one full of factories and soot and grime. It is "savage" and anonymous and inhuman. It is a joyless place of unending tedium. Still, it is far more pleasant than Gaskell's description of Manchester in *Mary Barton*:

> [Berry Street] was unpaved: and down the middle of a gutter forced its way, every now and then forming pools in the holes with which the street abounded. Never was the old Edinburgh cry of 'Gardez l'eau!' more necessary than in this street. As they passed, women from their doors tossed household slops of *every* description into the gutter; they ran into the next pool, which over-flowed and stagnated. Heaps of ashes were the stepping-stones, on which the passer-by, who cared in the least for cleanliness, took care not to put his foot… You went down one step even from the foul area into the cellar in which a family of human beings lived. It was very dark inside. The window-panes many of them were broken and stuffed with rags, which was reason enough for the dusky light that pervaded the place even at mid-day. After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so fœtid as almost to knock the two men down...to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up… (Gaskell 59-60)

One must go not to the Irish fiction, but to the accounts of Famine-era sod dwellings in order to encounter any comparable description of impoverished human abodes. While that level of horror was not typical for the impoverished characters of Charles Dickens -- not even Fagin's dank hideout -- it was also not intended to be a description covering all of Manchester for

Gaskell. Regardless, the heart of the working-class areas of the industrial cities of Britain were portrayed in undesirable or grisly terms.

Elizabeth Gaskell herself owns that she is writing with an agenda in her preface to *Mary Barton*. Not only did she have her own particular way of viewing the lot of the working classes, but she also discusses what those classes themselves were feeling.

> I had always felt a deep sympathy with the careworn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want; tossed to and from by circumstances, apparently in even a greater degree than other men… I saw that they were sore and irritable against the rich, the even tenor of whose seemingly happy lives appeared to increase the anguish caused by the lottery-like nature of their own. (1)

Gaskell also frequently includes working class song lyrics in the text. She begins chapter 6 with the lyrics to "Manchester Song," in which the rich are said to "know little" about the troubles and hardships that make up daily life for the working class (57).

This is a far cry from the Irish view, as will be shown in subsequent chapters. There is a sense of antagonism present which is not typical for the Irish writers. For the Irish, Peck's fatalism might be considered "lottery-like," but they received the resulting difficulties with a sense of resignation and contentment. This was due in large part to the Irish view that the difficulties came from God, while the English viewed the difficulties as coming from a parasitic upper class and rigged system (in urban, industrial poverty stories) or evil people wronging the protagonist (in stories set not in cities, focused on the working class).

As with Gaskell, Dickens focuses on the disparity between rich and poor as an issue of injustice. In *Hard Times*, the sympathetic hero (or one of the heroes), Stephen Blackpool, is

trapped in a terrible marriage, in love with a virtuous woman, and unable to get a bill of divorce because he is not wealthy enough to pay the required fees. He lays out his problem to Bounderby and implores "show me the law to help me!" (*Hard Times* 76). Bounderby responds "There *is* such a law...but it's not for you at all. It costs money. It costs a mint of money" (76). And with that, Blackpool is condemned to a miserable life and a broken love, all for the want of money to avail himself of a law accessible to those of higher class.

For Dickens, the disparities are not the fault of industrialism, but of the prosperous classes in the system. He makes this particularly evident through the discussions of Gradgrind and Bounderby, and how they process every aspect of life through cold, hard facts and statistics. As Patrick Brantlinger notes in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*:

> Dickens believes that the factory owners, their allies, and also their opponents, all use political economy and "tabular statements" to excuse their moral and legal failures, and he also believes that such scientific mumbo jumbo glosses over suffering and blunts love and generosity. It is this, and not the evils of machinery or of capitalism, which is the main theme of Hard Times. (282)

English poverty seems to fall into one of three categories either externally inflicted like the boss on the factory worker, due to irresponsible lifestyle where wealth has been wasted or through some other wrong but never is there a sense of contented poverty where is it acceptable. In chapter 55 of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray shows the material downfall of the Crawleys. This was due to a combination of the above factors. While they were not factory workers, Rawdon did dissipate his wealth through bad living while his wife, Becky, acted in reprehensible and immoral ways. Thus, their fall from wealth into poverty is depicted as doubly just.

In chapters 63 and 64, Thackeray gives a detailed description of how Becky tries to cope with the loss of everything that took place in chapter 55. She is all-consumed with manipulating and scheming, to the point that she "forgot" about her son (Thackeray 750). She manages to wrangle better fortunes from time to time as she flits around Europe attempting to flirt and lie her way up the ladder, but her gains are never permanent. She always remains who she is, and so she cannot be permitted to truly profit from her behavior in the end.

While there are numerous novels of Dickens' that deal with the theme and subject of poverty, perhaps none is more associated with them in the popular imagination than *Oliver Twist.* The narrative begins with an immediate description of a workhouse. Oliver's first clothes show that he is a workhouse orphan, and they immediately place him in class. The external markers that place one in one's class are tremendously important to one's lot and opportunity. Dickens notes,

> Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; -- it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have fixed his station in society. But now he was enveloped in the old calico robes, that had grown yellow in the same service; he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once -- a parish child -- the orphan of a workhouse -- the humble, half-starved drudge -- to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none. (*Oliver Twist* 5)

Dickens communicates in one paragraph the consequences given to one's class in English society, but it also shows how flimsy and superficial was the construction of it. Old Sally states in her deathbed confession, that "They would have treated him better if they had known"

Oliver's true class (*Oliver Twist* 196). This is illustrative of Gaskell's "lottery" concept, and was a hallmark of the views of poverty for those focused on urban, industrial poverty.

There was another English view of poverty which affirmed the aristocratic elements embedded in the culture. In those cases, poverty was seen as punishment for wrong living, and those of a higher class were considered "betters" to those of lower classes. While there is some overlap between the two, I will endeavor to break up the discussion of the texts so as to categorize them into these two groups most clearly.

Descriptions of intense and miserable poverty abound throughout the narrative. This was not the "contented poverty" of the Irish novelists: "There was no fire in the room; but a man was crouching mechanically over the empty stove. An old woman, too, had drawn a low stool to the cold hearth, and was sitting beside him. There were some ragged children in another corner; and in a small recess opposite the door there lay upon the ground something covered with an old blanket…" (*Oliver Twist* 41). In the end, an influx of wealth makes for a happy ending. Removed from poverty by external forces, Oliver finally gets to have a happy existence. It allows Oliver to get his friend out of poverty. Wealth is ever the reward and poverty the thing to be escaped. Harry renounces a bright future to marry Rose, which is a possible exception to the English sense of ambition.

Rose's marriage, however, can be considered a draw. She does not come into possession of material comfort or wealth beyond that which she had, and Harry does give up quite a bit that he had in order to win her heart. She does wind up in material comfort similar to what Mary Barton finds in Canada, although it does represents less of an increase for Barton. Rose's end place is still about the same.

Monks is given a half share of the inheritance. It was not required be given him, but was Mr. Brownlow thought that it will help him turn his life around, and Oliver was to get far more, even in half, then he ever imagined would ever be his lot. Oliver readily agrees; he is a good person, so he wants to help. However, due to Monks' character, he goes to the new world and squanders all his wealth. He is given it but doesn't get to keep it in the end because he is not the type of character Dickens wants to reward. This sort of seeming-reward-that-is-squandered-by-unworthy-characters comes up in other novels, both Irish and English. Monks then died in prison far from home: a fitting end. Mr. and Mrs. Brumble get their reward by being reduced to pauperism and losing all their station and offices and eventually find themselves in the very same workhouse they used to administer, providing an example of material loss as punishment for bad behavior.

Elizabeth Gaskell also writes with the urban/industrial English mindset regarding poverty and class. In *Mary Barton*, John Barton says of his daughter, "...I'd rather see her earning her bread by the sweat of her brow, as the Bible tells her she should do, ay, though she never got butter to her bread, than be like a do-nothing lady, worrying shopmen all morning, and screeching at her pianny all afternoon, and going to bed without having done a good turn to any one of God's creatures but herself" (Gaskell 10). While John Barton desires his daughter to act according to the values of the British working classes, other characters aspire to act against them, becoming precisely the kind of leeches Barton hopes Mary will never be.

Becky Sharp is shown throughout the entirety of *Vanity Fair* to be a reprehensible person, and thus deserving of all the misfortune that befalls her. Over the course of the narrative, she breaks every conceivable rule of propriety. She is disrespectful to her teacher, she has descended from low-class performers and artists, she attempts to cover up her real parentage and

claim nobility, she is disrespectful to her husband, she is a bad mother, she manipulates family and friends for material gain, and she engages in improper relations with men (again, for material and status gain), and the possibility that such flirtations crossed the line into marital infidelity on at least one occasion is implied. English novels frequently feature a reprehensible villain, but Dickens' Fagan, Brontë's Heathcliff, and even Thackeray's own Old Man Osborne (characters who commit evil deeds and attack the protagonists) do not evince the presence of the full diapason of socially unacceptable characteristics as does Becky Sharp.

In Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, John Sedley agrees that his son Jos should "marry whom he likes" (Thackeray 61) when his wife complains that the woman Jos loves (Becky Sharp) is an artist's daughter. While this may seem like permission to marry below his station, Sedley goes on to state that his main reason for accepting Jos' preference is that his son is stationed in India, and he'd rather Jos marry Becky than a girl he might meet in India, giving him interracial grandchildren. It is also shown throughout the first half of the novel that he has no respect for Jos as a man, and thus marrying anyone and starting a family would be a good step toward manliness.

The same is not true for George Osborne. His father pushes him always toward high standards of English masculinity and status-seeking. When the Sedleys are financially ruined (due in no small part to John Osborne), the engagement between George and Amelia must be broken off. The fortune was everything in the arrangement (Thackeray 199).

Ambition runs through the novel at all turns, in both good and bad ways. After John Sedley is ruined, his subsequent businesses keep failing. This is not seen, as it would be in an Irish novel, as an indictment of ambition in general; indeed, he was socially expected to do

something to rebuild his estate. He was just very unlucky. At no point is it suggested by other characters or the narrator that Sedley should simply content himself to his new lot.

Like her father, Amelia can't seem to bring in any money through her artwork or offering to tutor others. She's helpless to remedy her own poverty. This leads her mother, especially, to the opposite of the Irish "contented poverty." "The bitterness of poverty has poisoned the life of the once cheerful and kindly woman. She is thankless for Amelia's constant and gentle bearing towards her; carps at her for her efforts at kindness or service: rails at her for her silly pride in her child, and her neglect of her parents" (575).

In *Oliver Twist,* questions regarding Rose's birth stand a chance of derailing the marriage with Harry, the man that she loves. Harry insists he loves her regardless of her birth or wealth. Rose insists that she could never participate in his "noble pursuits," and that

> "The prospect before you...is a brilliant one; all the honours to which great talents and powerful connexions can help men in public life are in store for you. But those connexions are proud, and I will neither mingle with such as hold in scorn the mother who gave me life, nor bring disgrace or failure upon the son of her who has so well supplied that mother's place [meaning Harry]. In a word...there is a stain upon my name which the world visits on innocent heads; I will carry it into no blood but my own and the reproach shall rest alone on me." (*Oliver Twist* 290)

Rose herself turns Harry down because of her background. She does not want to pass on her disgrace nor to bring him down as he soars to a social sphere beyond her abilities. She loves Harry, but she is willing to limit her aspirations to less than she would most like them to be because she consents to the labels and expectations of society. Rose knows her place, and she

feels it would be wrong to try to escape it. This is not for the same reason that the Irish eschew social ambition. No, Rose is not in danger of mistreating those who currently share her station, but she feels the restraint of propriety to be worth submitting to.

John Barton tears into the scant and begrudging charity from the rich. Note how dire the need for the charity is described:

> And what good have they ever done me that I should like them?... If I am sick, do they come and nurse me? If my child lies dying...does the rich man bring the wine or broth that might save his life? If I am out of work for weeks in the bad times, and winter comes, with black frost, and keen east wind, and there is no coal for the grate, and no clothes for the bed, and the thin bones are seen through the ragged clothes, does the rich man share his plenty with me, as he ought to do, if his religion wasn't a humbug? (Gaskell 10-11)

John Barton accuses the rich of heartlessness. He essentially calls them murderers and their religion useless. He describes not the generous hospitality of the Irish, but a charity for the desperate necessary for sustaining life. The English view is clearly one of dependence. The Irish would applaud giving to those in need (as the Famine travel literature throughout the next chapter shows), but the Irish ideal is generosity between equals. In a generous community, it is hoped that the community members never reach the level of desperation Barton describes.

In *Vanity Fair*, the good William Dobbin gets more esteem from his schoolmates after he stands up in the fight, but he is also rewarded with two guineas and is sure that he comes home in a topcoat after the holidays. The rise in esteem is not enough, there has to be a material rise too. Dobbin is perhaps the best man in "Vanity Fair," but in the end it is not his honor or love for Amelia that makes as much of a difference as the fact that he bought her back her piano.

Amelia always knew Dobbin loved her, but it was only after she understood that it had been him and not George who bought the piano for her when her parents' estate was liquidated that she is willing to give up on the memory of George and embrace Dobbin.

Dobbin provides a similar happy ending for Amelia by arranging things so that Osborne is reconciled to Amelia and writes her and her son into his will. Even though Amelia is living with relative comfort in the care of her brother, Jos, her ending cannot be truly a happy one unless there is a large influx of wealth in the form of Osborne's will. Surely, she could have married Dobbin and lived comfortably with a good man, but that would be an ending after the Irish style. Just as Dobbin had to earn respect along with two guineas in the beginning, Amelia must have all that and the inheritance that was denied her husband. The fact that Amelia, as described throughout the novel, might well have been content without the money is no matter; Thackeray must see to it that the fortune is rectified in order to fully reward the virtuous Amelia. In the end, even the pitiable Young Rawdon inherits Queen's Crawley, seemingly in compensation for being abandoned by his dissolute father and reprehensible mother.

The Irish Values

The Irish texts, in contrast, affirm and encourage hospitality and generosity (Lysaght 403), "contented poverty" and unpretentiousness (O'Leary 451), and the specialness of Ireland, cruelty of the wider world (including Irish cities), and a strong sense of community (O'Leary 415-6).

The specialness of Ireland was introduced time and again through an emphasis on rural life. As I will demonstrate in greater detail later, the Irish national identity became bound up with the rural peasantry. Maurice Harmon, writing in *Studia Hibernica,* recognized that "the

sense of the rural background is particularly strong in modern Irish writing and in twentieth century thinking about the development of modern Ireland" (Harmon 105). The ubiquity of rural-set novels in this period complements the reinforcing of Ireland as a special and highly desirable place to live. This is also tied to the strong sense of community which was seen as both a source of support (both materially and emotionally) as well as identity and groundedness (O'Leary 415-6).

The hospitality and generosity the Irish show in the texts is not merely a form of good manners, but it is a duty to one's community and strangers (Ferris 294). To the Irish, the sense of community they enjoyed was tremendously important (O'Leary 435). Because the organization of society was primarily rural and agrarian, people heavily relied on each other for goods and services, as they were not available in abundance or from a variety of sources as they would have been in cities. In addition, the mismanagement of the colony by the English made poverty ubiquitous, so that resources were scarce. The expectation of common Irish hospitality, which was "the provision of hospitality-particularly food, drink and tobacco," was part not only of daily life, but codified into the unwritten rules of the wake and funeral social ritual (Lysaght 403). Sharing was not just polite; it was a duty.

The value of "contented poverty" discouraged material ambition. This was not due to laziness or incompetence, as the English continually alleged but was instead due to two factors. The first was that the system established by the English was rigged so that ambition on the part of the Catholic Irish could not succeed. Ambition required risk, but the fruits of success would be taken from the Irishman who attempted enterprising behavior. This will be explained in great depth in a subsequent chapter, but suffice it to say that there was no benefit to risking one's resources to acquire more (investment of capital), since the system would only allow one to lose,

never win. The second was that ambition was considered to breed pretentiousness. A poor farmer aspiring to increase his social class through wealth, or who re-settles in the city, would act selfishly and hold his current peers with disdain. Both of those elements would be offenses against his duties of generosity and community and are thus a form of dysfunction or "corruption" (O'Leary 451).

Ireland was seen as special, primarily because of the sense of community, but also the beauty of the place. Time and again this value is affirmed by the lamentations of characters faced with emigration. They routinely wax poetic about the beauty, but it is made clear that the breaking of familial and community bonds through distance is seen as the real tragedy. This is compounded by the supreme legal penalty short of capital punishment being "transportation" -- the sending of a convict to the other side of the planet, as far away from Ireland as possible, never to return. While most Irishmen in the countryside (both in reality and in the novels) had never been outside the immediate vicinity of their parishes (much less having seen part of the wider world), there was a certain knowledge that outside of the tight community at home, people would be uncared for, taken advantage of, and treated harshly.

There was also a sense of fatalism brought about by frequent tragedy, systemic poverty, and, ultimately, the horrors of the Famine. This contributed to the religious fervor of the rural Irish and their devotion to religious practices (*Irish Classics* 286).

Differences Even In Their Similarities

While there are certain elements that seem to run similarly in the two sets of literature, there is much contrast between them. In one of these elements, namely a lack of pretentiousness in lifestyle, the differences are stark. Irish novels sometimes contain characters who are well-to-

do, such as Jemmy Burke in William Carleton's *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* (1848). Jemmy has a large homestead and farm and plenty of wealth which are never threatening to be lost. He is described as living a simple lifestyle, with the farm in relative disrepair (as opposed to ostentation). He vocally maintains that he is no "gintleman" often, but he is upright, moral, and generous. His simple ways, rural sensibilities, and country speech are all points used by his pretentious son, Hycy, and his own wife, to ridicule and disrespect him. While some of his simplicity of temperament is played for mild comedy, he is endorsed as a good man by author and other characters alike, and his values are generally seen as laudable. In the same novel, the M'Mahons have two farmsteads that place them far from poverty, yet they live simple lives and do not consider themselves above their neighbors in value or status.

Similar characters in English novels are used as evidence of something being gravely wrong with either themselves or the general situation. Characters are expected to act in according to their classes, and when they do not, it is a dysfunction. In *Vanity Fair*, Pitt Crawley is a farthing-pinching miser who doesn't offer his guests food or allow fires to be kindled on cold days. He has an estate and is the son of a baron, but he lives austerely to the point of being a miser. In *Wuthering Heights* (1847), when Hindley Earnshaw shuts the household off from the social world and acts similarly to Pitt Crawley, it is not because he is thrifty (in fact, he's quickly dissipating his wealth through alcohol and gambling), but because he has descended into madness and despair after the death of his wife. When he takes over Wuthering Heights after Hindley's death, Heathcliff continues the worst of the isolating mores of Hindley, only without wasting the wealth he has. His behavior is evidence of neither thrift nor madness, but of sheer, antisocial evil. Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* has similarly shut herself off from the world, locking her beautiful household and fine things away from the social world of her class.

She has worn the same dress for decades not because she is thrifty, but because she has been driven mad by lost love, as with Hindley Earnshaw.

In a similar way, the material comfort afforded to the characters who are rewarded in the end of English novels sometimes amounts to little more than restoring some fortune which had been unjustly taken from them. What, then, is the difference between the M'Mahons getting back Ahadarra and Carriglass and Cathy Heathcliff and Hareton Earnshaw getting back their ancestral estates of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights? The difference lies in what losing and regaining those fortunes meant in the first place. When the M'Mahons were dispossessed, the greatest tragedy was not poverty, but the prospect of having to leave Ireland (a prospect that drives Tom into his grave). The family was going to emigrate to America. While they were doing so with broken hearts, they expected to be able to rebuild comfortable lives there once free to enjoy the fruits of their own labors. The tragedy was not poverty or destitution, but rather it was leaving behind the land, the community, and (for some) the objects of their romantic affections. When Hareton and Cathy are deprived of their family estates by Heathcliff, they are reduced beyond destitution to ignorance and slavery. The loss of those estates was a supreme moral dysfunction and an irrevocable calamity (irrevocable, that is, unless the estates could be restored, which they were).

So there were behavioral values and outlooks on class which were somewhat peculiar to the Irish, and both the values and the philosophy showed up in the literature. When read against British novels written during the same period, the contrast is stark. These values represented not only local customs, but they were survival mechanisms. The values developed in response to centuries of poverty and oppression. When the Famine struck in all its horror, those who practiced those values were aided in their physical and emotional health. That is not to say that

they allowed the survivors to remain unscathed, but they did allow those caught in the worst of the circumstances to have a better chance of survival.

Chapter 2

THE IRISH WAY OF LIFE

But where do these differing values come from? Why should the Irish approach to class, ambition, or life in general be so fundamentally different than the English one? The different ideologies did not develop in a vacuum. Indeed, they developed over a long period of oppression and institutionalized poverty, and they became cemented in the culture as they showed themselves to be the keys to survival during the Famine. It is also important to understand that there were, pursuant to Deborah Peck, two kinds of survival: there was the practical, biological survival (ensuring food, shelter, and necessities enough to continue living) as well as psychological survival. In order to understand why one set of values is in many ways so opposite the other, one has to look into how they may have benefitted its adherents in practical ways.

Granted, some of those values (such as discouraging ambition) may seem, *prima facie*, to be the very definition of impractical or unbeneficial. However, it must be remembered that the circumstances of life in Ireland were themselves fundamentally different than those in England. Peck was right to recognize the traumatic effects of the Famine. This is only part of the picture. The Great Hunger needs to be seen not as a single, cataclysmic event, but rather as the culmination of centuries of national trauma and systemic oppression. While I argue that these values were those cherished by Great Hunger survivors because they helped them to survive, by no means do I assert that they exclusively owe to the cataclysm their existence. Indeed, all of the values which follow in this discussion had been present for generations prior to the outbreak of the Famine.

In his book detailing what he witnessed while personally overseeing a relief effort for The Society Of Friends (Quakers), Englishman William Bennett published his letters and commentary under the title *Narrative Of A Recent Journey Of Six Weeks In Ireland* in (1847). Through his observations (and those of others in similar positions), one can see how each of these Irish values ensured some form of survival for their adherents and how reliance on them solidified into almost-religious doctrine during the Famine, even when the values themselves carried over as cultural mores from previous hard times.

The values of hospitality and generosity go hand in hand. One would think that in a place where resources and comforts were scarce, the dominant values would be secrecy, privacy, and hoarding. Those things would be natural human inclinations under such circumstances. No doubt, many people made attempts to conceal what they had to avoid the obligation to share. The values of hospitality and generosity were ideals, though. If everyone hoarded their meager resources all the time, the misery and death would have been far greater, even in the years prior to the Famine.

The Famine was so devastating because it was leveled against a people who were already on the brink of survival. Essentially, most Irish did not individually possess enough resources (and certainly not varied enough to provide comfort beyond mere survival) to shut themselves off from their neighbors. In effect, it provided a kind of barter system for filling in the gaps when it came to the resources one possessed. In the normal, lean times prior to the Famine, such hospitality and generosity provided a way to ensure comfort and build a sense of community (human relationships and socialization are also essential to happiness). In the terrible times of the Famine, this system could mean the difference between life and death. Knowing that your neighbor would offer some of his resources to you in time of direst need was a great inducement

to offer the same to him when you had some to spare. There was also a religious component to this, but that will be discussed separately.

One of the first things that strikes Bennett about the Irish people is their "simple but hearty hospitality, with the greatest unwillingness on their part to accept of the smallest return" (Bennett 15). Everywhere he goes, he is treated warmly, and finds local people willing to guide him to this place or that, and often they would remain with his party and escort them to the next place after that. In addition, they would refuse payment for doing so. Granted, those weren't the most destitute (those people were begging and would have refused nothing), but there was no ill-feeling toward the foreigner (an Englishman, no less) and representative of a Protestant denomination (albeit not the Established Church). The help he was giving (clothing, seeds, money, and agricultural expertise) was not typically given by him to individuals in need, but rather the supplies (or slips to claim a quantity of them) were given to those coordinating relief efforts, so it cannot be said that the people in question had just received (or expected to receive) some material help from the man and his party.

As further evidence that the Irish were not simply trying to gain favor with an impressive and strange visitor, Bennett's observations indicate that this kind of generosity was common even among their own. He notes that "orphaned little relatives [were] taken in by the equally destitute, and even strangers, for these poor people are kind to one another to the end" (28). It is noted in other examples of travel literature that "If work to a considerable extent could be provided for the able-bodied, they would do much towards relieving others, for whatever be his faults, the poor Irishman cannot be accused of indifference to the claims of his helpless neighbor" (Tuke 29).

Hospitality and generosity were essential to survival in such times, and so these values were fostered by the society at large. This fostered a strong community bond, which also enabled survival and became a deeply held value of its own. These acts of kindness weren't exactly *quid pro quo*, as that would not have been generous, but it did develop into a kind of barter system. Bennett noted of one small home that "Their neighbours had probably built them the cabin in four and twenty hours ; expecting the same service in turn for themselves should occasion require it, -- which a common necessity renders these poor people always willing to do for each other" (Bennett 23). This hospitality and sense of community (and many of these other values as well) would carry on from one generation to the next, long after the Famine itself had passed out of living memory. They became insisted on precisely because, at its worst, the Famine was so terrible that it was stressing even those traditions most favorable to survival to the breaking point.

> There existed considerable remains of clanship among these mountaineers. He described them as a highly moral, a careless, but a peaceable and contented race, with great kindness and simple hospitality, and strong family attachments ; but now the bonds of natural affection were fearfully broken and destroyed, under the pressure and sufferings of their present calamity. (130)

That the social system did not entirely break down was due to the tremendous value that was placed on keeping it up, in much the same way that the soldiers still shaved in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. There, it was to provide a continuity of military discipline (and it also enabled the men to feel human despite the misery, shortage, and squalor in which they lived), but for the Irish it was to keep up practices that enhanced the chances of survival for the greatest number of people. Under those circumstances, generosity and hospitality were not just

moral, Christian things to practice, but they were actions which, if rendered today for one's neighbor, might prevent one's own children from starving to death three months hence when fortunes were reversed. Indeed, while help was sent (at times more effectively than at others) from outside Ireland, Bennett had to remark on its limited effectiveness: "The streams of individual and public charity have been noble ; but what are they to the enormous gulph [sic]?" (66).

Such reliance on community was already well established before the Famine. Due to the long-term poverty and deprivation, the Irish were already accustomed to sharing with their neighbors. For instance, Bennett had been told "...that there was but one hat in the whole island of Achill, some time ago, which was considered common property, and he who wished to visit the main land regularly borrowed" (48). It is perhaps significant to note that these long-impoverished islands were predominantly Irish-speaking, and there is no verb "to have" in the Irish language. Possession is shown through prepositions, depending on the thing being possessed. In the case of a hat or similar physical article, the item would be "at" the possessor ("*Tá an hata agam*" -- "The hat is at me" or "to me"[1]). To say something is "mine," the expression is "*liomsa*" ("with me" in the emphatic form). Thus, material possessions are understood to be at you only for a time, and yours only while they are literally with you. That is not to say that the Irish did not have a concept of personal property, but that it differed in some fundamental aspect from the English concept. The desperation of the Famine raised such practices from the level of convenience to that of survival.

Given that such levels of poverty had been common for centuries, it seems as if the Irish had given up on the thought of ever changing it. Whenever agitators for change crossed into open rebellion, the results were always disastrous for the Irish. With each crushing defeat came

[1] All Irish Gaelic translations throughout this work are mine unless otherwise noted.

even more onerous restrictions and insults from the state. This cycle of events helped to foster an acceptance of one's condition, provided one's condition permitted one's basic needs to be met, it seemed best to not worry one's self about grasping for more. Thus, the values of "contented poverty" and an aversion to ambition and pretentiousness were a form of protection from inviting even greater hardship through risk-taking.

Bennett notes that these were people who were used to suffering and want. Time and again, he refers to them with terms like "patient endurance of sufferings" (*v*) and "They did but rarely complain" (28). He argues that such poverty had been their state for so long that "We thought there were exhibited marks of a longer period of neglect and degradation ; as if these poor islanders had never known any other state, and expected nothing better" (72-3).

Thus, the dominant solution to almost certain depression was almost Buddhist. If one did not compare one's self to one's neighbors, and one did not aspire to achieve greater status or material wealth, then one wouldn't be faced with the crushing weight of want. The result of this mindset was to produce a "contented poverty" in which people satisfied themselves with having their basic needs met (and a few simple pleasures) and a marked unpretentiousness. Bennett remarked that this "simple and kind-hearted peasantry" (15) maintained a kind of "friendly equality" (15). Both of those mindsets allowed for the "patient endurance of the people, under unheard-of privations and sufferings" (47). That is not to say that the battle of will required to maintain such a mindset was easy. He insisted that "I believe we have no idea of the daily exertion, self-sacrifice and agony of spirit they have to go through" (51).

The country poor were well acquainted with the attitudes of people who thought themselves their betters simply because of their class or education. Not only could such people be tiresome and insulting, they (like Feathertonge and Hycy Burke in *The Emigrants of*

Ahadarra) were often the cause of untold misery. Thus, the simple people of the countryside held an appeal in their frankness that was refreshing even to an Englishman. Bennett recounts how "A gentleman who got up on the coach, full of the one-sided views and oblique mode of reasoning so common among a certain class, had no chance with [Bennett's guide] in an argument, on the subject of Ireland's grievances. He quoted Latin and Shakspere [sic] with great fluency and appropriateness" (6). Here Bennett does show that the Irish did not have a lack of respect for education and learning. Again, to reference *The Emigrants of Ahadarra*, the schoolmaster quotes Latin with such frequency that it becomes comical, but he is still represented as a good character amid the unfolding of tragic events. The hedge schools of the countryside did provide a Classical education to many, so learning was certainly respected. What was not respected were the people who used such education to disparage others. As was demonstrated through characters in Kickham's *Sally Cavanagh* (1869), it was feared that when a poor country person would attempt to rise in class, the temptation to put on airs and disparage or insult his former neighbors was great. It seemed that in this way, one might draw a sharp delineation between the new persona they were trying to adopt and their former self belonging to a lower class.

But the idea that some Irishmen would seek to rise in status or wealth on the backs and necks of their fellow countrymen and former neighbors was not rare. The land agents are a prime example. William Carlton, while not entirely excusing the absentee landlords, at least mitigates their responsibility. They do not have kinship of blood with the oppressed people, and in many cases they are enabling the oppression through neglect and ignorance. The land agents get no such pass in his mind. They *should* be feeling solidarity with the Irishmen in town.

Bennett identifies another culprit, perhaps even worse in the eyes of the impoverished Irish: the gombeen. "The Gombien man" (6-7), which is more commonly spelled "gombeen" in English, owes its etymology to the Irish term *gaimbín*, or "monetary interest." These usurous middlemen, themselves native Irish, were proof that ambition to rise leads Irishmen to take advantage of their peers and countrymen by becoming a gombeen. Many who would not defraud another were still induced to consort with gombeens in an effort to increase their station. Such contracts almost always ended in disaster for the borrower. Thus, it was best to avoid them altogether.

In *Irish Classics*, Declan Kiberd discusses the role of the gombeen men. They were not merely opportunists, but they constituted a whole class unto themselves.

> But Ireland produced not so much a middle class as its caricature: the middlemen, the consumerist parasites. In other lands, the bourgeoisie not only acted as a buffer between poor and rich: they also help to referee the very conflict between them. In Ireland, however, the middleman class simply fed like leeches off such conflict and had, in fact, a vested interest in its exacerbation. (*Irish Classics* 271)

The niche they occupied, according to Kiberd, prevented a healthier middle-class from developing. They were themselves, of course, products of the system under which they formed as a class. Not only were they a symptom of an unjust and broken system, but they could only exist under it; therefore, as Kiberd noted, they functioned to support the status quo out of self-preservation.

As the gombeen men were often the only opportunity for raising capital for expansion or improvement of one's farm, attempting to make such a rise was seen as making a pact with the devil. This also supported the notion of contented poverty. If one's needs were met, one could

simply carry on indefinitely (or until an unprecedented blight wiped out one's lone staple crop). If one sought to rise, consorting with a gombeen would often result in one being turned out of one's farm and reduced to destitution for his troubles. Thus, the philosophy went, it was better to simply leave well enough alone and not think too hard about "what might be if...".

Even if one managed to make improvements by raising money through thrift during good times rather than taking money from a gombeen, a successful undertaking might equally bring disaster. Bennett writes that the Irish were incentivized to improve their lots as little as possible, as quietly as possible.

> Whatever little bit of ground they may reclaim around the cabin is necessarily done as much by stealth as possible ; and the appearance of neglect and wretchedness is naturally carried out to the utmost ; for should there be any visible improvement, down comes the landlord or his agent, with a demand for rent. (Bennett 23-4)

It should be noted that this state of affairs was not indicative of isolated incidents, but rather it was characteristic of the system as a whole. Others on journeys similar to Bennett's observed as much:

> From the last mentioned cause particularly, the poor peasant, having, in many instances only a verbal agreement for his ground, is deterred from making any improvement in his condition, by the knowledge, founded on experience, that if he improves his farm or build a better cabin, he will, most likely, without any remuneration for his expenditures, be turned out of possession, or be forced to undertake an increased rent… (Tuke 41)

Thus, if one could continue to live in relative comfort by foregoing any improvement at all, that would be best. There was no incentive to improve the land and raise more crops, because all the surplus (and then some, often) would simply be taken from the farmer anyway. There was no good reason, then, to undertake the extra work and risk.

This was not an imaginary fear, either. It comes up again and again in the literature, with Tom Hogan (*Knocknagow*) and Bryan M'Mahon (*The Emigrants of Ahadarra*) providing just two of many examples. Bennett relates firsthand experience when,

> A poor man got up on the coach who held 1 ½ rood taken from the bare bog, for which he paid 30*s*. at first; built himself a cabin, and was now raised to 35*s*. ; and did not doubt he would have his rent again raised or be turned out, if he *improved it any more*. His immediate landlord paid 7*s*. 6*d*. ℘ acre, *under lease.* (8-9)

Bennett's conclusion is inescapable. He attributes to these practices the Irish attitudes which lead inexorably to allegations of sloth and laziness. But, "...it is not surprising that the Irish peasant has been kept at the lowest verge of pauperism ; for all inducement to industry, beyond the barest living, is in fact withdrawn" (8).

Even accepting charity might be risky. Bennett lamented that the seeds he came to distribute might come to naught: "I conversed with him about the objection raised against doing anything for the poor peasantry in the way of providing them with seed, on the ground of its being likely to serve the landlord only, who would come down upon the crop" (50). Many tenants were already in arrears, just waiting to be evicted. If more food was raised, rather than allow it to feed the starving family, the agent was more likely to swoop in and claim it in the form of back rent. Thus, the malnourished farmer would have put in all the extra physical labor

of planting and harvesting only to have the food taken out of his mouth. Eviction after that would be almost inevitable (if death did not come first).

In spite of all that, emigration was not undertaken lightly. Ireland was seen as a special place, due in large part to the aforementioned sense of clan kinship and tightly bonded community. There were many (like many characters in the novels) who chose to stay and brave death rather than emigrate. Bennett recognized how this community bond made for a sense of duty to neighbor: "Some have been ready to fly their homes in terror and despair, but for the paramount sense of higher duty and kindred compassion" (51). Many Irish could not leave behind kith and kin in the name of individual survival. How, in such a community, could one flee to America in the name of survival, knowing one was leaving behind everyone known and loved to starvation and death?

That is not to say that emigration was rare. Not by any means. The Irish left by the millions—2.1 million between 1845 and 1855 ("Famine Emigration"). By the time the Famine was over, the population was quartered, and by the end of the century, it was half what it was before 1845 (*A Death-Dealing Famine* 151). The numbers are somewhat hazy, particularly for the millions of anonymous deaths and unmarked graves, but it is reasonable to state that the depopulation had a drastic effect not only in the years of the Famine but in the decades afterward as emigration escalated (Somerset Fry 238).

By and large, it was not the poorest who left. They couldn't afford to go. Some landlords cleared their land and booked cheap passage on coffin ships heading to New Orleans and Charleston, but for the most part, the destitute were stuck. Even among those who could manage it, some sort of assistance was necessary (Moran 13). Bennett notes this as he illustrates the terrible effect such a drain of manpower and enterprise was having on the kingdom.

> The obvious strength of the country is departing with those who go. They are in no case -- except where assisted by the landlord, or other funds -- the very paupers. These have not the means. But they are just those who still have a little left, able and calculated to do well with a fair chance and encouragement, and are going to enrich other and better constituted lands, with the same materials beneath their feet. (53)

In the interpretation of the effect on the country, Bennett is in agreement with Carleton. It was not the weakest who left, but the strongest; not the least capable, but the most capable; not the fearful, but the bravest. The worst part of it all was that it was completely unnecessary. It was the system and laws which made the blight into the famine that it was. Other crops were not damaged as the potato was. The poor, who were those most dependent on a potato diet, were most drastically affected by the failure of the crop (*A Death-Dealing Famine* 91). Centuries of property law which did not respect the Irish on the land as well as over-regulation regarding trade, imports, and exports, made it so that the failure of that one crop starved millions. Bennett correctly perceives the pain the emigrating Irish felt, as he also notes the fact that the island could have supported them all and then some when he states:

> ...and it was an affecting sight to observe numerous whole families, with their worldly ALL packed up on a donkey-cart, attempting to look gay and cheerful, as they cast a wistful glance at the rapidly passing by coach-passengers ‘ and thus abandoning a country which *should* have nourished them and their children. (5) [emphasis mine]

In his letter addressed to the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends in 1848, James Hack Tuke validates such claims from Bennett. Tuke had toured the west of the country in

1847. His letter is designed not only to give the Society a summary of the effects of their relief efforts but also to illustrate the causes of the economic deficiencies. Bennett argues that Ireland should have been able to feed itself and then some. Tuke takes the explanation further.

> By the report of Lord Devon's Commission, it appears that there are in this province 1,906,000 acres (nearly half the whole) of unimproved or waste land, of which 1,156,000 might be drained and reclaimed for cultivation or pasturage, leaving 750,000 acres considered incapable of improvement at a remunerative cost. And let it not be supposed that the other half of the province, described as cultivated, is so in the sense which that term implies in Dublin or England: a well-cultivated farm is as rare in Connaught as the reverse is in the county of Lincoln or in the Lothians of Scotland. Here and there amid the wilderness of waste land and half-cultivated farms… (5)

Tuke argues that mismanagement of the land is the prime reason the famine is so bad for the population. Yes, he readily acknowledges elsewhere that there are other factors (the same as Bennett), but Tuke spends so much time in facts and figures like those above. He asserts that if all the land was under proper cultivation, more than enough food could be grown domestically to feed the entire population.

Terry Eagleton doesn't see it as all bad, at least not from a literary perspective. In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (1995), he looks at the difference in the artistic role of land and nature in both English and Irish cultures: "Ellen Wood has pointed to the close connection in English culture between the aesthetic appreciation of landscape and economic improvement, in the form of 'a new rural aesthetic which deliberately joined beauty with productivity and profit'. The fact that rural improvement in Ireland was considerably less in evidence then may then

inspire a different way of perceiving the countryside" (Eagleton 5). Still, it should be understood that this perspective may make for unique reading, but not for good agricultural practice.

Tuke goes further to say that a tremendous opportunity presents itself in Ireland; "…that to an enterprising farmer of capital these wastes of Connemara offer a highly profitable investment. The security of life is as great here as in England" (6). The land is fertile and plentiful, and the place is as safe as England (the Land Wars had not yet happened at the time of writing). Good management, however, is not practiced; "Out of about 46,000 farms, 44,000 are under 15 acres…" (6). Why should this be?

First, where was one to find "an enterprising farmer of capital?" As Bennett already explained, one would most likely need to strike a deal with the gombeen men to raise the money, and that seldom ended well. Second, there is an indictment of the system: "It must always be remembered how much the division of land in many parts of Ireland, has been promoted by the landlords to increase their own political influence" (6). The wealthy ruling class (often absentee) were playing a political game with the Irish caught in the middle.

Tuke also backs Bennett when he talks about how the landlords' thirst for extracting every farthing of profit from their land actually impeded its overall profitability. There was no incentive for tenants to produce more, even when they could.

> The corn crops, bountiful as they may be, are not sufficient to meet the landlords' claim for rent and arrears contracted during the last two years of famine, and it is at least not unnatural for the tenant to be unwilling to give up that, without which he must certainly perish. In every direction the agents of the landlords, armed with the full powers of the law, are at work----everywhere one sees the driver or bailiff "canting" the small patches of oats or potatoes---or keepers placed over the

> crop, whose charges, in some cases amounting to as much as the rent distrained for, must be paid by the unfortunate tenant. Even the produce of seed, distributed through the agency of benevolent associations, has been totally swept away. (10)

His last indictment there shows the inhumanity of the practice. Even if a starving farmer, unable to raise potatoes due to the famine, accepts charity seeds for turnips, when they are ready, the land agent will confiscate them because of back rent owed to the farmer! The farmers had no incentive to take a risk. "The small farmers of Ireland are, too generally, rack-rented tenants at will, and have no confidence in the justice or mercy of those who have the land in charge" (13).

It seems that few landlords weighed the profit they'd make off that paltry patch of turnips against the profit to be made off the entire land from a healthy farmer in future years. There seemed to be no inclination to invest in that way, so it was not just the tenants who were afraid to take risks. Common explanations seemed to be that the landlords did not care, that they were too inept to understand it, or that they so mistrusted the Irish that a bushel of turnips today was deemed better than acres of wheat down the road.

Tuke seems to lean toward the explanation that landlords are ignorant of the circumstances on their properties. This may also be considered a form of ineptitude (managing a business from afar and remaining disconnected from even the big-picture issues facing it). The landlord mentioned below was not even an absentee!

> How little the landlords of this part of Ireland are cognizant of the circumstances of the population on their vast uncultivated or neglected estates, may be judges of by the fact that Sir. R. O'Donnell stated in my presence that he was entirely ignorant of the evictions which had taken place in Achill, about 25 miles distant

> from his residence at Newport, although the poor creatures, in coming to the union-house, must necessarily pass through the town where he resided. (12)

Tuke demonstrates that the land is capable of supporting the population. His observations also combat the notion that the Irish people were incapable of working it due to laziness or lack of intellect. "If lands in Mayo were as secure to the farmer as they are on the banks of the Mississippi, I see not reason why they should not be 'settled' and cultivated by the men who are crossing the Atlantic to extend the cultivation and increase the resources of the United States" (13). No, he says that without question, it was the lack of security an Irish farmer had for the fruits of his own labor which prompted him to leave the land idle. He even carries the American comparison further.

> If it be said, as it may with truth be said, that the Irishman in America is moulded by the circumstances that surround him, is it not equally true that he is moulded in Ireland by the circumstances which attend him there? We do not attempt to prove that the Irishman is what he should be, but rather to show of what he is capable. In the social condition of Ireland, the capital and skill of the middle class are absent; there are few to sympathize with or to direct the working part of the community, and there is on their part a want of confidence in the justice of those who are above them. (49)

For centuries, the ruling classes in both Britain and Ireland were able to blame the Irish for their own miseries. But due to the massive emigration during the Famine, there was now ample evidence of what the Irish were capable of if allowed to derive reward from their efforts.

Like Bennett, Tuke also advocates that land be redistributed to more capable hands when a landlord is causing such abject misery through neglect, ineptitude, or apathy: "Erris affords

one of the most perfect specimens of the mischiefs connected with that vicious system, by which landed property remains in the hands of those who are wholly unable to discharge its duties, or even to open the door to allow others to perform them" (23). He does not say this should be done lightly, or that land should simply be distributed to the tenants, but he argues that a moral obligation exists on the part of the landlord for some level of proper management.

These values were not only the result of differences in the cultures (language, religion, etc), but they were the result of different formative experiences for the culture. Some of these values like "contented poverty" resulted in a kind of passivity in the face of crushing poverty and a system which did not allow redress (*Irish Classics* 276), but they also discouraged risk taking which was almost guaranteed to result in loss under that broken system (Bennett 8-9). Other characteristics, however, were rooted in a sort of community PTSD that was the result of the Famine. If there was something of it already present from the preceding centuries (the Acritical Stage described by Peck in the next chapter), the Famine exacerbated it exponentially (the Adaptive Stage also described by Peck in the next chapter). These psychological effects affected the writers and their audiences deeply (as indeed they affected, to one degree or another, the entire nation), and they would last well into the twentieth century (Peck 146).

Chapter 3

THE LONG ARM OF THE FAMINE

In her article, "Silent Hunger: The Psychological Impact of the Great Hunger," Deborah Peck provides a theory that explains the possible reasons behind the sometimes odd treatment of the Famine, economics, and justice in the Irish texts. Her theory also illustrates the ways in which surviving the Famine meant not only physical survival but surviving with an ability to continue psychologically and emotionally functioning in the recovering society afterward.

She claims that the long-term psychological impacts (which she explains in greater detail), are the result of the Famine itself being on a scale of horror that made it "unthinkable history" (143). Throughout the article, she draws many parallels to the Holocaust. Such comparisons are particularly useful, since the Holocaust was similarly massive and horrific for those who suffered in it, and the survivors and their descendants have been studied by modern psychologists. Her conclusion, that "[b]oth perpetrators and victims, for differing psychological reasons and motivations, often vaguely remember the events of genocidal acts" (143).

She defines various stages in the psychological development of the Irish people corresponding to historical events in the colonial period. The period of the Famine corresponds to what she calls the Adaptive stage of the Collective Trauma phase, while the next several generations correspond to the Pre-Critical stage of the PTSD/Recovery phase. As was observed earlier, the values in question did not develop entirely after the Famine started, but they were reinforced, and their influence was increased, by the event. Peck notes, "Ireland, on the eve of the Great Hunger, was immersed in the psychologically toxic and pervasively traumatic

environment of colonialism. In addition to its more well-known economic and politically devastating consequences, colonialism is psychologically significant for its peculiar ability to recruit individuals to participate in their own destruction" (147). Some of the values of the Irish were, according to Peck, psychological defence mechanisms developed during the colonial period in what she calls the "Acritical stage" (146). Peck names others as well, but the ones most relevant to this analysis are: refusal to give up religion, persistence of a separate language, great capacity for sharing, mutual assistance, emotional connection, humor used as indirect anger, ability to survive on few resources, and a great capacity to endure suffering (149).

In the Acritical (pre-Famine) stage, Peck asserts that "sharply defined power inequities are accepted as the 'natural order of things' and unchangeable" (149). This can be considered part of the foundation of Kickham's "contented poverty." In the Adaptive stage (that which coincided with the Famine and its immediate aftermath), there is also a "belief that things are unjust but unchangeable" (149). In the Pre-Critical stage (post-Famine), the people begin to seek change (149). These stages are evident (with some overlap to specific years) in the Irish texts from those periods.

Peck discusses a number of factors that are generally present in the individual psychological response to trauma like famine or genocide. Two in particular, "bereavement overload" and "Learned Helplessness Syndrome" (151), could be at least partially alleviated by adoption of the values in the Irish novels. This is not to say that every single Irishman reacted to the horrors in exactly the same way, nor is it meant to imply that the people somehow took their reaction cues from the novels, but rather that those who survived the trauma and found themselves in Ireland when it was over were those who could most successfully implement them. Peck identifies what she terms "enduring psychological symptoms" of trauma, some of which

directly apply to the Irish texts and values, especially "death imprint," "conflict over intimacy and nurturance needs," and "impaired formulation of the causes of the disaster" (156).

Death imprint is the persistence of horrific mental images of things experienced during the trauma. This is evident in the Irish texts through overcompensation. Most of the imagery is focused on beauty and tranquility. When the Irish authors want to emotionally draw their audience to feel fear, sorrow, or horror, all they need to do is hint at something that was part of life during the Famine. A mention of "workhouse," "eviction," "the grave," or impending loss/departure was more than sufficient to make the audience's blood run cold without the need for explicit description and sensational language like one finds in British authors' descriptions of working class poverty and urban living conditions. Thus, the Irish authors (who also lived through the Famine period) smother their narratives in often saccharine descriptions of peace and beauty while enjoying a great economy of language for evoking horror and sadness when compared to their English counterparts.

As for conflict over intimacy and nutrition, Peck sheds light on several factors. She asserts that during traumatic events such as the Famine, "trust is severely compromised," "as the Famine progressed, severe deprivation degraded even the many formerly personal and positive intimate relationships between neighbors and relatives as people were forced to turn away from helping each other in order to survive," and "Many elderly and sick persons were abandoned as the young emigrated in order to survive. Their emigration created a sense of abandonment among those who remained in post-Famine Ireland" (156).

These elements also show up in the form of overcompensation, but in these cases it was because the values of the society at large were overcompensating. The texts and the culture both came to evince an honor code when it came to promises and duty to family and community. The

audience (and presumably the authors, as well), had almost certainly experienced betrayal by family or community members at some point during the Famine. In addition, those who fared best (who might still be alive in Ireland and reading the novels) were those whose bonds of trust and duty broke down the least.

They still suffered negative effects, however, and this was evidenced in the children who survived the Famine directly and those who were born in its immediate wake. Declan Kiberd discusses the negative effects these strains on trust and family had on the children.

> Father Peter O'Leary wrote in his autobiography...of a contrast in temperament between the pre- and the post-Famine child. The former was alert, humorous and quick to respond...while the latter was hesitant, surly and furtive… He attributed the difference to schooling under the English system, but the toll taken by the Famine on self-confidence was also a major element in the situation. (*Irish Classics* 278)

We can also see in his comments that there are a number of variables when looking at society in this period. This is important to remember throughout this analysis. No one factor or combination of factors was wholly responsible for the effects that will be explored, but rather many things played off of others to produce what was statistically measured and historically evident. Was the effect on the children the result of the English schools, as Fr. O'Leary thought? Was it the result of malnutrition? Strained families and trust? Continuing to live under a governing system Peck described as "toxic" (Peck 147)? The answer is yes to all of the above working in concert. No one of the factors produced the effect in isolation, nor was any one factor so fundamentally necessary that its exclusion would have entirely altered the outcome, yet they were all responsible. As the effects of the Famine on society, the formation of the Irish

value system, and the shifting of that value system are explored, it is essential to recognize that we are not dealing with questions of "either/or" but "yes/and."

Thus, values that were prevalent before the Famine became essential to survival during it. In this way, characters such as Hycy Burke in *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* are easily vilified by showing them to be dishonest and/or undutiful. The British writers may have dishonest or undutiful characters, and some of them may also be villains, but it takes much more than those factors to make them so. Every culture values honesty and duty, as there are many practical benefits to a cohesive society by doing so, but they may differ in the *degree* to which they are valued or the *reasons* why they are so highly prized. Thus, Rebecca Sharp in *Vanity Fair* may be dishonest and Hindley Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* may be undutiful, but they are not villains. No, it takes much more scheming and heartlessness to rise to the level of a Heathcliff or a Mr. Osborne and become a villain. While Hycy does engage in more drastic behavior, his schemes are bound up in dishonesty (framing someone for taking a bribe) and his bad character is reinforced time and again through illustration of how he is derelict in his filial duties to his father.

The lack of food strained relationships and shattered families. Throughout the Irish texts, there is much attention given to food. Good characters are seen to be generous with food, and it is frequently present in scenes to add an element of comfort. Characters talk about food or share important moments while eating. Again, meals take place in the English texts, but contrast the comfort and plenty displayed during the wedding feast in *Knocknagow* with the lack of comfort in Jos' homecoming dinner near the start of *Vanity Fair*. Starvation almost never makes an appearance in the Irish texts (nor is the Famine almost ever mentioned directly). While some scholars, such as Terry Eagleton, note this absence, Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack,

and Lindsay Janssen, in their introduction to *Recollecting Hunger: An Anthology*, state that such a view has been lately contested. Even they, however, offer examples from poetry and "lesser known fiction" (3). Some of the more popular fiction they note still deal with the Famine through a veil (as did *The Black Prophet)*. Even in *Sally Cavanagh*, where Kickham deliberately incorporates scenes of suffering he witnessed during the famine (259), he does it by applying them outside of the context of the Famine, such as with Rose Mulvany in America (259). When "memories" of the Famine are introduced in succeeding generations, it is frequently through the eyes of characters who are evoking a kind of collective memory as they could not themselves have been old enough to remember any of it (Morash 111). Therefore, while it is not correct to say that the Famine was in no way dealt with in the literature of the time, it remains a valid observation that in the more widely read novels, the Famine is either refigured (as some other kind of hunger or of a previous famine) or omitted. In those novels (eg. *The Town Of The Cascades* [1864]), poor characters are typically shown to have an inability to purchase enough tobacco rather than have their poverty shown by a lack of food.

Increasing the sense of betrayal was emigration. Peck analyzes the Famine's psychological effects on both the survivors and their descendants in Ireland as well as those who emigrated. While the psychology of only those who remained in Ireland are germane to analysis of these texts, emigration itself was a major factor in the outlook of those who stayed in Ireland. As Tuke noted above, the most destitute did not emigrate -- they couldn't afford to. No, those who left were those who amassed or conserved enough in the way of resources to be able to afford passage. How could an individual or a family do that? By having more than they needed to survive and keeping it. Emigrants had family members, friends, or neighbors who suffered, and perhaps died, for want of the surplus turnips they concealed in order to sell for passage

money. Likewise, those who remained suffered or watched loved ones suffer after being refused assistance from those who, on the eve of their departure, it was evident had the means to have helped. Thus, emigration was seen as a great evil not only because it tore families apart and carried loved ones far away, but because there was a kind of duplicity and selfishness inherent in the act of leaving loved ones behind to claim a better life for one's self.

And, lastly, Peck states that there developed a sense of fatalism, and that "This belief in the inevitability of tragedy and loss remained well into the latter half of the twentieth century" (157). The foundations of this belief predated the Famine and were essentially a defense mechanism against the senses of hopelessness and impotence. When the Famine struck, a new element was added. People needed to make sense of all the loss, and so many took it to be divine judgement. There were certainly those who identified the cause of the Famine (at least the cause of the massive disruption) to be the actions of the government, but the response such an admission required was rebellion, and the Irish people had seen a failed rebellion in almost every generation for centuries. The two immediately before the Famine, in 1798 and 1803, had disastrous effects on the nation, resulting in the Act of Union and crushing of Ireland's national identity. The rising in 1848, during the Famine, failed to get off the ground and was regarded by many as a national embarrassment. So, while there were always groups which favored political or armed rebellion against the government, the appetite for it among the population at large seemed at an ebb tide.

The British narrative was that the Irish were lazy and incompetent. This naturally did not resonate with the majority of Irishmen. The alternative was that there was a divine hand at work. By appeasing God through a revival of religious fervor and practice, similar tragedies might be averted in the future (offering some sense of control to the adherent), and that all the

suffering had meaning in that it was part of divine justice and planning. This outlook also had the benefit of absolving the survivors of a bit of survivor guilt. Peck notes

> Even among those who might be objectively considered to have behaved heroically, a corrosive sense of guilt emerges, as even a hero would have been incapable of saving everyone. Famines, in particular, are enormously guilt producing as survivors who were capable of sharing their food with others must have chosen on some level to not share their life-sustaining resources. (158)

In this way, those who survived but felt guilt could soothe their consciences by reinforcing the belief that the suffering was beyond their control. They survived because God saw fit to bless them, while their neighbor or cousin did not because God determined to take them.

> The purpose of the immediate Famine survivor's tale was to provide a rational explanation for *An Gorta Mor*. This search for meaning, which is found universally among all survivors of such mass tragedies, erroneously attributed the disaster to the superstitious belief that the Irish had offended God in some way prior to the Famine's arrival. (163)

Such an explanation makes sense for the survivors, but Peck is also careful to show that the effects reached far beyond the survivors themselves. Why would people born after the Famine adopt the coping mechanisms of those who had been directly traumatized? The answer is simply that they were raised by the survivors. The dysfunction (insofar as it can be considered one) of the parents/survivors is imparted to the children because the parents *teach* the children how to cope, and they do the philosophical and moral instructing during the child's formative years. In addition, the tragedy affected the nation as a whole, so it is not a situation where such

values would be reinforced inside the family home but other values found in the community at large. Generally speaking, these values were ubiquitous, with every encounter serving to reinforce them both at home and in society. Having adopted those coping mechanisms and values themselves, the children of the survivors have children of their own and the cycle repeats, perpetuating the psychological artifacts of the Famine event. Thus, Peck argues, the descendants of the Famine survivors tended to perpetuate the survivors' approach to risk, religious devotion, and other values generations after the cataclysmic event itself.

> Following this event, many post-Famine Irish would see God's hand in every disaster and every blessing. This type of thinking would become one of the primary psychological coping mechanisms that Irish survivor descendants would employ during many subsequently tragic events that occurred long after the Great Hunger. In addition, a great sense of fatalism about the world begins to take hold in the Irish psyche. One could say the syndrome of a post-Famine traumatic coping style or "silent hunger" begins here. (164)

Often times, this sense of fatalism or divine judgement served to facilitate the silence. If a nation offended God such that the Famine was sent as divine punishment of Biblical proportion, then it would be an exacerbation of the original offence to complain too loudly. The "appropriate" response to divine castigation was submission, humility, and repentance, not protest. In this way, even those seeking to treat the issues of the Famine found themselves doing so through a veil.

> Carleton's novel reflecting the catastrophe, *The Black Prophet*, has been castigated for its been a dramatic plot, which is accused of undermining rather than embodying its central theme. The suffering of people in the 1840s cannot be

> treated directly in the unfolding tale and so it has to be traced back to an unresolved crime committed twenty years earlier. This has been regretted as a vain attempt to find a sense of chronology, a long-term sense of cause-and-effect, even a hand of God, where there may have been none. (*Irish Classics* 286)

Part of the reason Peck gives for the texts' seeming blackout on all-things Famine-related was that their writing took place in what she calls the "inhibition phase" of the collective psychological response. She defines this phase's characteristics as "reduced talking [about the event] but no reduction in obsessive thoughts; participants also choose to stop listening to other victims" (Peck 159). She also notes that "the Inhibition phase...became the longer-term coping style of the survivors...they began to voluntarily censor their own talking about the traumatic experience" (159). She also rightly notes that "this Inhibition phase could be considered to have continued across more than one generation of famine survivors and their descendants" (160), and, in fact, it covers the entire period under analysis here.

In this way, the authors participate by throwing a tarp over the Famine (even when starting to deal with political issues related to its causes a generation later). In reality, they must, as their audiences are also participating and, by and large, wouldn't choose to read about it. Thus, issues of absentee landlordism, a broken legal system, and economically restrictive regulations are typically framed (when they are discussed in the texts at all) in terms of justice, property rights, and agricultural practices. Their deleterious effects are evictions, emigration, the breaking up of families, and the dissolution of communities -- but never are they credited with playing a role in the cataclysm that took place just a decade or generation (depending on which text) before.

Peck asserts that post-trauma families tended to fall into one of four categories. The value system evident in the Irish texts would help mitigate the negative effects of three of these types (or discourage their adoption). Thus, for those who survived and continued to function in the society, certain values were part of what enabled them to do so: "Victim Families -- identify themselves as victims and have a family system that looks inward and is closed to outsiders" (160). The high value placed on community would help mitigate this to a degree. That is not to say that those who were determined to cut themselves off from the outside could not and did not do so, but with the culture beating the drum of community solidarity, a family would have to try rather hard to become so isolated.

Also present was converse of the "Victims." "Fighters" often exhibited the exact opposite behavior. "Fighters -- are counter-phobically risk-taking, have anti-social tendencies, and are intolerant of weakness" (160). Here is where Kickham's "contented poverty" helps to discourage potentially self-destructive risk taking. The sense of community also mitigates anti-social tendencies. Lastly, there are "Assimilationists -- focus on obtaining the external signs of success; in the process they suffer from a loss of identity and confusion. There is an attempt at passing or pretending to be someone or something else. There is a conflict between external and internal emotional states" (160). Here again we see the benefits of "contented poverty" and sense of community, but the Irish aversion to pretentiousness would also help keep these tendencies under control.

While later generations did take a more aggressive stance on resistance than the Famine generation (the Land War a generation later, and the Easter Rising a generation after that), and they (especially the Easter Rising generation) were, at least in some quarters, more apt to decry the government response as a calculated act of genocide (Fegan 14), the event represented a

problem for those trying to form a new national identity and bid for independence. Peck states that "Here we see the intergenerational dynamics of the transmission of the victim's guilt feelings about the original event turned into survivor descendant's shameful feelings about the powerlessness of the victims. The result is the omission of certain facts from the collective memory of the original event" (Peck 167). Kiberd agrees that this survivor guilt had the effect of occluding much of the discussion about the horrors of the Famine and in-depth exploration of the issues involved: "Famine memories were occluded, of course, for many reasons. The traumatic scenes witnessed were bound to create a sort of denial in many who felt guilty simply for having survived a holocaust that left so many loved ones dead" (*Irish Classics* 279). He does, however, differ from Peck (perhaps more semantically than practically) in insisting that the literature of the period suffered from this sense of "occlusion" rather than outright "silence":

> Occlusion, not silence, is the real condition of the mid-nineteenth-century Ireland. There was no silence about the Great Hunger in the literature of the period. Irish language poets...could not bring themselves to accept a merely scientific explanation for all the suffering in the failure of one vegetable plant: what they saw, instead, was the hand of God terribly testing a people before their inevitable triumph and justified deliverance from bondage. (279)

He is advancing an interpretation remarkably similar to Peck's in the sense of fatalism or view of the Famine as a divine hand, but he states that the Famine was indeed dealt with in the literature. His argument, that the discussion was present but veiled, is not incompatible with Peck's assertion of "silence." The rest of Kiberd's observation, that the Famine represented not so much a divine punishment, but a divine test or refinement, would serve later nationalist interpretations of the event, but this will be explored more fully in a later chapter.

In short, it is difficult to generate the national pride required for an independence movement while basing national identity on the outrage of an event that casts the nation as powerless and shamed. Cusack and Janssen, in their essay "Death in the Family: Reimagining the Irish Family in Famine Fiction, 1871-1912," call it "the formative trauma at the heart of modern Irish history" (7). It was for this reason that many of the physical reminders of the famine, such as the workhouses and graveyards, were readily abandoned and permitted to fall into decay ("The Great Irish Famine" 245). It is challenging to establish a cohesive narrative that affirms both victimization as well as empowerment. The solution, then, is to create a new national myth that emphasizes the outrage required to build up support among the people while minimizing feelings of powerlessness: "...groups can fabricate a history that never occurred almost as a cover story for what did occur. This is often called 'myth making'" (Peck 167).

Terry Eagleton, in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, affirms Peck's position:

> A nation, like an individual, has to be able to recount a reasonable story of itself, one without either despair or presumption. As long as it veers between idealization on the one hand and disavowal on the other, it will behave exactly like Freud's neurotic patient, afflicted by reminiscences. It will be incapable of working through the traumatic moments of its history, which must then either be jettisoned from the narrative in a strategy akin to what Freud calls 'secondary revision', or remain as a stone to trouble the living stream. (Eagleton ix)

Not only does a nation need to have a story of its origin and place which affirms itself, but often this story can serve to make it neurotic when it is conceived under, or in response to, traumatic circumstances. The idea that a community can have psychological responses to trauma similar to those experienced by individuals is central to Peck's argument.

Peck goes on to state that the myth-making is not limited to groups trying to establish a national narrative. Families and communities would do the same, and this would, in part, be fed by the need to mitigate survivor-guilt. She states that, "There are numerous examples of Great Irish Famine descendants creating myths about how the Famine happened somewhere else and did not affect them or their family in any significant way" (Peck 167). Thus, an individual or a family could explain their survival because "it wasn't as bad here." This can be seen when tragedy is shown in Kickham's novels. Emer Nolan, from Maynooth University, notes: "It is noteworthy that crucial incidents of cruelty, eviction, or forced emigration are often narrated primarily through the consciousness of observers who witness or recall the suffering of other members of their community, usually neighbors" (Nolan 109). Even fictional tragedy is rarely experienced directly through the sufferer, but most often through an observer watching it inflicted on an "other." That certainly drew on the divine providence narrative, and it alleviated the need to explain why one's own family was particularly special enough to have merited such blessing. In such an approach, it was not the surviving family's specialness that merited divine favor, but the luck (fatalism) that placed the family in a location which God smiled upon, for reasons that could never be known or explained.

In essence, the Famine broke the culture. It decimated the Irish-speaking population in a number of ways, and it caused cherished values to be called into doubt. The Famine was a huge destabilizing force, even where it appeared to increase stability (such as with the core value system already described). As I have noted, there were manifold reasons why the observed effects of the Famine materialized, and many scholars have their favorite culprits. That said,

> All commentators concur on one point: that there was a breakage. Some blame this on the Famine, some on emigration, some on the virtual collapse of the Irish

> language. The 1840s have been identified as the cut-off decade. The cultural gap that opened between an Irish-speaking past and English-speaking present has been dramatized in various ways. (*Irish Classics* 277)

The response to the shaking of the values, as we have seen, was essentially to double-down on them. By shifting those values toward the center of national consciousness through literature and social consensus and becoming more insistent on them as part of the national character, the pre-Famine value system found itself strengthened for a time. The language, however, experienced the opposite phenomenon.

The Irish-speaking population had declined by the eve of the Famine to 4.1 million Irish speakers out of 8.17 million people, or roughly 50% (Hindley 15). By the end of the cataclysmic Famine the figures were 1.5 million out of 6.5 million. Continued emigration during the succeeding generation meant that by twenty years after the Famine, the ratio had dropped to only 818 thousand speakers out of 5.4 million people (19).

Not only was the language weakened in terms of actual number of speakers, but it was weakened even more by a precipitous decline in status:

> Irish had become, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, the badge of a beaten race. If anything, the incidence of Irish speakers was underreported in the census of 1851, which recorded just 23 per cent of the population as Irish-speakers, despite the fact that about four million (or 46 per cent) had been registered in 1845. (*Irish Classics* 281)

What Kiberd notes above is that the decline in the number of speakers was not entirely due to death and emigration, but also to great numbers of speakers who no longer wished to be identified as such. Even though Peck does not include this in her lists, this is another Famine

effect that would last well into the 1990s. By the time of the birth of the Irish Free State, Irish attitudes toward the language had grown so negative as to be outright violent:

> Formerly many people might have been noticed, especially young men and women, wearing a gold ring on their dress in the streets of the bigger cities and towns. This was to show that they spoke Irish and wished to be addressed in that language. It was observed that many of these people came to a violent end, and the wearing of this ring was consequently to some extent discontinued. (Hyde 536)

The Irish people began to lash out at aspects of their own culture. This may seem contradictory at first, but the post-Famine period was full of contradictions. Ireland itself was a schizophrenic place. There were at least three Irelands during the period leading up to and immediately succeeding the Famine.

The first was the Protestant Anglo-Ireland. This group made up the minority of the population, but had most of the economic and political power. The Protestant Anglo-Irish tended to view themselves as British, and they regarded most of their countrymen with a sense of distrust and otherness. A combination of widespread anti-Catholic bigotry and fear of living in an Ireland under the control of their long-repressed Catholic countrymen meant that many wished to see the Anglicization process be completed as swiftly as possible. This belief was not universal among the country's Protestants, as individuals will always differ in specific philosophies and actions, and indeed some of the greatest supporters of Irish independence and culture were Protestant Anglo-Irish. Among the average citizens and politicians, however, it was fairly widespread.

The Catholic Anglo-Irish made up the largest segment of the population. These were Irishmen who spoke only English and had adopted many British customs and fashions. They had a contentious relationship with the Irish-speaking community. This group, while having greater access to economic opportunity due to proficiency in the dominant language of the island, was still largely poor when compared to their social counterparts in Britain.

When it became evident that the Irish-speaking peasant was to be put forward by the cultural revivalists and the nationalists as the idealized Irishman, this group was left in an odd place. While the Anglo-Irish made up the majority of the population, they were being passed over in the definition of what it meant to be Irish. The Anglo-Irish were indeed made to suffer economically and legislatively for being Irish, but the new national identity told them they weren't good enough to be considered Irish by the intellectual and political leaders of their day. That this made for ill-feelings (and perhaps occasional violent reactions such as was described by Hyde above), seems almost natural.

The struggle to establish a national identity that reflected the majority of the population is the subject of the last two chapters of this work in much greater detail.

The Gaelic-speaking Irishmen made up a significant portion of the population of the countryside. This is not to imply that all, or even most, rural Irishmen were Irish-speakers, but it is this group that forms the basis of the stereotypical resident of rural Ireland. When it would come time to establish a national image, this group would be romanticized into the ideal. Their actual living circumstances, even before the Famine, were far from ideal. This group was the poorest of the poor, and the most cut off from education, economic opportunity, and legal redress.

They knew that it was their lack of proficiency with English that placed them in such precarious a position. If they hadn't already known it before the Famine, it was certainly clear afterward. This group would be responsible for inflicting metaphorical violence upon itself as Kiberd noted in *Irish Classics* above. This group recognized the value of English proficiency not only in Ireland but as a tool for emigration to the most common destinations for those leaving the island (England, Canada, Australia, and the United States). Sometimes, drastic measures were undertaken to ensure that their children attained fluency in English, and that they themselves would increase their own proficiency. They saw continued use of the Irish language as an obstacle to that, and so they sought to shed their identification as Irish-speakers—that is "…parents came to see it as a handrance to the prospects of their children and deliberately excluded it from their homes" (Hindley 13). This had been a trend even before the Famine, but the self-reported census figures above demonstrate how the "…reluctance to admit to a knowledge of Irish because it was associated with illiteracy and low social status," in other words, a process of disowning the Irish language and purposely altering one's personal identification (as an English-speaker) escalated after the cataclysm (15).

In all three cases, there was a tendency to downplay or avoid the Famine as a subject. For some Anglo-Irish Protestants, there was a vested interest in not acknowledging reason to alter the system under which they had benefitted for so long; for the Irish-speakers, there was the sense that the Famine was a mark of shame on their community specifically, and for the Anglo-Irish Catholics, as well as the other two groups, there were PTSD-induced psychological coping mechanisms at play. This meant that the way the Famine was dealt with did not reflect the reality of the event or the effect it had on the nation.

Kiberd's analysis, that "The problem with this version of culture was that it seems to wish the gap that was the Famine away. It occluded a horrific event of the recent past, as surely as a later generation of revival writers would surpass and thereby occlude the achievements of the mid-century figures" (*Irish Classics* 278), observes that there were ways in which the "occlusion" (or, in Peck's terminology, "silencing") of the Famine may not have served the nation or the literature well.

So we have seen that there were values held and behaviors practiced by the Irish that were different from their British counterparts of the same class. We've seen how those values and behaviors offered benefits to those who held them through oppression and cataclysmic famine. Through the multigenerational PTSD theories of Deborah Peck, we've seen that they were deeply ingrained by the trauma of the Famine and encouraged in its wake. How, then, do they become relevant to the literature?

The Irish novelists were themselves affected by the Famine, either through direct or close observational experiences. Their audiences certainly fell into many of Peck's categories. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate how the values and attitudes made their way into the literature (and, consequently, made the literature popular because of their presence) is to look at the most popular novel of this type from this period: *Knocknagow* (Murphy 79).

Chapter 4

CHARLES KICKHAM, THE QUINTESSENTIALLY IRISH NOVELIST

Kickham's Knocknagow, the Quintessential Irish Victorian Novel

After its publication in 1873, *Knocknagow* became the most popular Irish novel to that point. It would be difficult to overstate its popularity. The novel went through seven editions in its first eight years and twenty seven editions in 62 years (Ó Faolain). It was even made into a feature-length silent film in 1918. James Murphy notes, in *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland 1873-1922*, that late-nineteenth century surveys consistently returned *Knocknagow* as far and away the most popular Irish novel (79).

Writing in 1941, Seán Ó Faolain argues that the reason *Knocknagow* was so successful — indeed, far more successful than any other Irish novel, including Kickham's others — was that it simultaneously presented the Irish character in a positive light while offering a pleasant setting during bad and contentious times. He notes that the Famine was among these reasons, and Deborah Peck would agree. She asserts that one of the effects of the Famine's trauma was to cause the Irish to bury their memories of it. Yes, it was acknowledged that the event took place, but it was usually cast as something that happened to other than one's own family, while in reality there was not a household on the island that remained untouched. She argues that such a surprising response was a natural psychological response to the trauma (155).

Knocknagow came during what Peck identifies as the "inhibition phase" of the response to the disaster. She states that:

> During this long-term phase, survivors become overwhelmed with information on the gruesome details of the traumatic experience. It is during this phase that they

> began to voluntarily censor their own talking about the traumatic experience. (159)

She goes on to argue that they go so far as to ignore the testimony or experiences of other survivors, and that this phase persisted for several generations (160).

But while he may have been the most popular novelists, and *Knocknagow* one of the most popular novels, neither status was based on intrinsic literary merit. Paul Davis characterizes it thusly:

> Yet even a nationalist interpretation [of Kickham] reveals doubts. While the reservations seem mainly literary, there are hints of more profound concerns -- although there is an obvious reluctance to articulate them clearly, Yeats concedes that Kickham's 'books are put together in a haphazard kind of way -- without beginning, middle, or end'. Daniel Corkery regards Kickham's writing as 'only good in parts, and not great anywhere'. Kiely concludes: '[s]ophistication, particularly literary sophistication, was, to put it mildly, no part of his make up' and [writing in 1966] admits '*Knocknagow* may not be the greatest novel of the Irish nineteenth-century nor the novel of that period that has most relevance to our own times'. Even R V Comerford questions Kickham's literary merits. (Davis 161)

So if the novels are so riddled with literary fault, why might Kickham have achieved the standing he did? Was it merely because he was home-grown and other, better writers (such as Dickens) were not? This can hardly be the case since those same critics endorse the greater merits of other Irish authors writing before the Famine (Edgeworth, John Banim) as well as after (Carleton). Irish audiences had "better" Irish authors at their disposal, if nationality was going to

be a primary factor in their enjoyment of reading material. No, there had to be something else about Kickham's novels, and *Knocknagow* in particular, which captured the attentions and affections of Irish readers.

Neither was it the inclusion of particular subject matter. There were many issues facing Ireland, and while the novels are not devoid of them, but there was not a cohesive and coherent treatment of them, nor were particular popular solutions put forth.

> The flawed construction of Kickham's novels may result from the inclusion of too many themes -- including the Land Question, which, itself, is more than a single problem with a single solution. In *Sally Cavanagh*, 'that shapeless novel', Kickham stresses that the law is the main tool of institutional violence… Kickham's sentimentalized view of rural tenants is to the fore but lacks the immediacy of Carleton's descriptions. Although Kickham provides sufficient details, the scene is not contextualized Unlike Carleton, Kickham does not provide much breadth of analysis; readers are encouraged to feel unconditional sympathy… (168-9)

Kickham gave his audience something beyond narrative artistry. He gave them themselves as they wished they were. By presenting characters and communities in such ideal terms, he was participating in the formation of a national identity at odds with the negative depictions of distinctive Irish life typically on display in English literature.

In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton lays out a rather interesting argument that the odious Heathcliff may not have been a gypsy after all, but Irish. He recounts the possibility that Emily Brontë's brother may have passed along descriptions of Irish refugees from

around the time *Wuthering Heights* was still being written, and that those descriptions found their way into the character of Heathcliff.

> By June 1847, according to one historian, three hundred thousand destitute Irish had landed at the port. As Emily Brontë's biographer comments: 'Their image, and especially those of the children, were unforgettably depicted in the *Illustrated London News* -- starving scarecrows with a few rags on them and an animal growth of black hair almost obscuring their features'. Many of these children were no doubt Irish-speakers. A few months after [Brontë's brother] Branwell's visit to Liverpool, Emily began writing *Wuthering Heights* -- a novel whose male protagonist, Heathcliff, is picked up starving off the streets of Liverpool by old Earnshaw. Earnshaw unwraps his greatcoat to reveal to his family a dirty, ragged, black-haired child who speaks a kind of 'gibberish', and who will later be variously labeled beast, savage, lunatic and demon. It is clear that this little Caliban has a nature on which nurture will never stick; and that is simply an English way of saying that he is quite possibly Irish. (Eagleton 3)

With such negative depictions of the Irish common throughout popular literature of the time, it should be easy to see the appeal of Kickham's tame and romantic peasants.

It should be noted at this point that Heathcliff's identification as someone vaguely Irish, presented to an English audience, carries implications for the English views not only of the Irish themselves but also of the Famine. Terry Eagleton asserts that Heathcliff may be a kind of personification of the Famine itself, and not just what the English thought to be the negative qualities of the Irish character.

> Heathcliff is a fragment of the Famine, and goes on a sort of hunger strike towards the end of his life, as indeed does Catherine Earnshaw... The hunger in *Wuthering Heights* is called Heathcliff -- 'a creature not of my species', as Nelly Dean frostily remarks, with his 'half-civilized ferocity'. But the hunger in Ireland was rather more literal. (Eagleton 11)

Of course, as is evident from Bennett and Tuke's narratives, to many in Britain, the Irish character and the horrors (and perhaps existence) of the Famine were intrinsically linked. When English politicians or newspapers admitted the Famine was happening at all, they tended to evince the popular opinion that either the Irish brought it on themselves through bad character, that it was divine punishment for bad or immoral character, or that it was a divine blessing in that it would put an end to the divisions and violence inherent to Irish society by forcing groups to associate with their enemies out of common survival and amounted to a grand opportunity to "civilize" the place (Fegan 36). The most ambitious would roll all three views into a single, unified theory.

While not the only, or even the most mainstream interpretation of Heathcliff, Eagleton's theory (of Heathcliff as proxy-Irishman and proxy-Ireland) may have some interpretive merit. He carries it out much farther in two instances that bear mentioning. In the first, he notes that Heathcliff is a curious character who can be understood to evolve in the way(s) the English had seen Ireland evolve over the last generation:

> Heathcliff...is a notoriously split subject...he goes through the motions of undermining the ruling order from within… Heathcliff starts out as an image of the famished Irish immigrant, becomes a landless labourer set to work in the

> Heights, and ends up as a symbol of the constitutional nationalism of the Irish parliamentary party. (Eagleton 18-9)

The comparison does not end there, however, not by any means. Eagleton carries it out to great detail, showing that Heathcliff's evolution as a character follows not only the macro-changes that affected Ireland's political trends, but also the micro-changes to the political and economic landscape of the island:

> Like those Redmondites who were both ranchers and rebels, Heathcliff is oppressor and oppressed in one body, condensing in his own person the various stages of the Irish revolution. As a child he is a kind of Defender or Ribbonman, chased out of the Grange in a minor rural outrage because the landlord thinks he is after his rents. He then shifts from rural proletarian -- a dying breed in post-Famine Ireland -- to rural bourgeois, cheating Hindley out of his possession of the Heights; and in this, one might claim, he recapitulates the drift of the Land League, which originated with the laborers, cottiers and smallholders of Connaught only to end up in the pockets of the conservative rural middle class. Once installed in the Heights, Heathcliff becomes a 'pitiless landlord' himself, and sets about dispossessing the local landowner and taking over the Grange. (19)

While Eagleton's theory regarding Heathcliff may offer an interesting interpretive approach to possible influences of the Famine even on British literature, a strong case can be made that the great detail in the observation above is incidental, and we are capable of reading back into the text greater detail with historical hindsight than Brontë is likely to have intended (or, as would have to be the case with the Land League, *predictive!*). In this way, Eagleton's Heathcliff is more of a curious connection than the purposeful idealization of the peasants and

communities in *Knocknagow*. Even if Heathcliff was meant to embody negative British attitudes toward the Irish, they did not form them but followed them. Kickham could be argued to be "formative" to the idealized rural image. He may not have single-handedly created it, but he certainly helped solidify them in the popular imagination of the Irish.

What's more, Kickham's idealized communities (while still far from perfect) modeled the social values and traditions the Irish cherished. While that was the strength of his appeal, it would also be the weakness, as there would come a point when the Irish would begin to see themselves differently and cherish different values. Then, Kickham would be a relic of a bygone romantic age, and the national identity he put on display would be precisely the sort that the Irish themselves would be seeking to reframe and bury. In his own age, and for the first twenty or so years of the twentieth century, however, Kickham was telling the Irish exactly what they wanted to hear.

Emer Nolan argues that Kickham's novels did precisely that and more. She states that not only was he depicting a positive image of Irish life and culture, but he was offering an escape as well as helping to codify a national identity:

> He thus lends momentum to a developing ideology of national solidarity, which should not be judged merely in the light of later religious and political orthodoxies. To live the past as it never was is to live the future; in this, Kickham's pastoralism is based not just on a sanitized version of the past, but it retains a political and utopian dimension. (Nolan 124)

That offering of escape is just as important as the positive image. For the struggling tenant farmer who lived under the shadow of eviction (if not his own, then that of kin or neighbor), reading about an idyllic place, and inhabiting it in his mind, might have been just as

important to his emotional survival. Thus, Nolan argues, pains were soothed and a new national identity came to be built on it.

> *Knocknagow* in particular, the most popular Irish novel of the nineteenth century, is the outstanding Irish example of what Doris Sommer has described in the context of Latin America as a "foundational fiction," or romantic novel of national consolidation…[His] optimism requires a suppression of much of the actuality of Irish historical experience, which is accompanied by the rendering of Irish customs as immemorial. This was an important step in the mutation of history into "traditional" culture, a suitably sanitized version of which would eventually become official in Catholic-dominated independent Ireland. (103)

While she acknowledges that Kickham's novel (and the image of the Irishman it idealizes) would remain popular into the middle of the twentieth century, she is right to point out that it was so in "Catholic-dominated" Ireland. The religious traditionalists also tended to be the cultural and social traditionalists, and Kickham was playing a tremendously important role in the formation of that "traditional culture." As will be shown in the final chapter, when other competing ideologies undermined aspects of those "traditional" agrarian, contented values (and, eventually, traditional Catholic values as well, although that would take many decades longer), Kickham's vision fell out of favor and would, in some quarters at least, be held in outright disdain as inauthentic and limiting.

Given Kickham's history as a revolutionary, one would expect that the outrages of the Famine, such popular ammunition for revolutionaries of this period, would have featured more prominently in his novel. Kickham made pikes and rang the warning bell for the 1848 rising (Comerford 21-2), provided rhetorical support for the Irish Papal Brigade (51-2), became

involved with the domestic (55) and international Fenian movements (61), as well as having served time in prison for his involvement, and continuing to play an important role in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (119). One would reasonably expect that his novels would have a polemical quality, but Nolan notes that,

> The most extraordinary feature of this novel for many of its readers is the *disjunction* between its depiction of an Irish rural idyll and historical actuality. This is all the more surprising given Kickham's public, political affiliations… But in his fiction, often dismissed as blandly pastoral, Kickham endeavors to preserve a notion of an Irish sacred space of endearing "home affections" that not even the worst of British imperialism could penetrate. (110)

In light of Peck's research, however, we see why it did not. While those agitating for independence used the British policies during the Famine as a rallying cry, the average Irishman was deeply invested in ignoring it. Had Kickham laced *Knocknagow* with references to the horrors of the Famine, it might have become popular in revolutionary circles, but it would not have achieved the popularity it enjoyed in homes across the island. Piaras Béaslaí, a later member of the IRB and the writer of one of the introductions in the text, notes the divide between Kickham's politics and his writing when he states, "If the work constitutes a terrible indictment of...landlordism...this is purely incidental. There is no propagandism in the book… Though he had taken part in a revolutionary movement, he does not obtrude his politics in his novels" (viii). In fact, Kickham's narrative as a whole shows characteristics of "contented poverty." Davis asserts that, "Ultimate advocacy of the *status quo* is perhaps the most surprising thing about Kickham. By implication, this means that everybody should remain in their existing circumstances" (Davis 187).

Instead, Kickham focuses on questions of land, leases, and landlords. Even then, he does so in moderate ways. The very first character introduced is Mr. Henry Lowe, nephew of the absentee landlord and a decent fellow throughout the novel. Indeed, he is written so neutrally the the reader is invited to project himself onto the character and experience (at least at the outset) the community of Knocknagow through his eyes. Both Lowe and the reader are welcome strangers in the lovely community. In his introduction to the work, Béaslaí actually criticizes Kickham for "failure" to flesh out the character more (ix).

In the end, Garrett Butler, the landlord is shown in a positive light:

> Butler is a decent, old fashioned landowner. Indeed, after having played a part in the tale disguised (not unusual in agrarian novels) as a musician, he appears as an enlightened landowner. He decides to remove the bad agent, Beresford Pender, and make up for his own former shortcomings as a landowner: 'I fear I have much to answer for, for all the wrong that has been done in my name' (*Knocknagow*, p.561). (Davis 172)

Not only does he paint the landowner in "enlightened" terms, the very language Kickham uses in his dialogue reinforces his distance from the bad deeds and the guilt of the middleman. He owns that he has "much to answer for" but he does not name his own neglect or his direct responsibility for allowing Pender to continue in his position as long as he had. No, the wrongs were "done in [his] name," with all the implication of the passive construction intentional.

> Lesser landowners -- like Lloyd, who is 'strongly condemned for the way he manages his property' (even though Benedict Kiely sees him as 'the amiable Protestant landlord') and Somerfield who 'thinks the more independent the tenantry become, the harder it will be to manage them' (*Knocknagow,* p. 423) --

> are the real enemy. Somerfield advises Butler not to give new leases to tenants but it is a different matter when he wants one himself...Somerfield and his cohorts seek to prevent tenants having leases in order to grab land for themselves. (173)

Davis' observation above shows a common belief held by both Kickham and Carleton, namely that the home-grown middlemen were the ones doing the worst damage and causing the most injustice. The petty Irish landowner, trying to put on airs to compensate for being the lowest rung of his class, would injure his tenants just as much as an absentee landlord would do through neglect, and the Irish landowner's guilt would be that much the greater because he shares Irish blood with his tenants, sees the effects of his policies, and administers them directly. The absentee could at least claim ignorance of the worst effects or his own responsibility in causing them. The land agent, similarly, was bound to the tenants he grieved through national kinship, saw the effects of his actions, was responsible for their direct administration, and failed to stand up for his countrymen to his absentee employer, who might relent in some areas if he knew the true state of things. Add to that the agents who engaged in fraud in order to line their own pockets, and one could see how the contempt reserved for them might be greater than that for the landlord himself. And the last of the middlemen, not mentioned by Davis, but no less indicted by the values according to which the other two are found guilty, are the infamous gombeen men. They also take advantage of their own countrymen, but to make matters worse, they profit precisely because they target the most vulnerable of them. Those who were able to scrape together enough capital to make some improvements, would seek out the gombeen men for loans to raise the rest. Thus, even worse than the most destitute, they were risking all they had and taking on insurmountable debt besides.

While Béaslaí attributes the novel's popularity to the "realism" with which the Irish audience saw the positive attributes of the community and characters (viii), Murphy argues that it was *Knocknagow's* validation of the assumptions of middle-class Ireland which brought its success (*Catholic Ireland* 80). He implies that the Irish were a bit conservative and parochial in their outlook and that they favored literature that "mirrored" those values. While this may be true to a degree, it is really in the intersection of his and Peck's theories that one finds the fullest explanation of *Knocknagow's* success. Murphy does recognize an "ambivalence" in which "it encourages anger against injustice and yet...it soothes that anger with music. It allows the coexistence of alternative models of Irish society. It raises the specter of apocalyptic conflict only to hold it at bay with music" (*Catholic Ireland* 86).

In *Irish Novelists & the Victorian Age*, Murphy again focuses on the role of music for diffusing conflict in the novel, but he attempts to turn the novel into an indictment of the land system in a way with which Béaslaí would disagree (*Irish Novelists* 129). He notes a stress placed on monetary wealth which does not exist in the way he tries to cast it. Murphy argues that the novel represents a "critique of a system in which economic insecurity ensures that money comes before everything" and that this is "centrally illustrated by [Kickham's] repeated presentation of love and marriage as being radically subservient to economic advancement" (*Irish Novelists* 129). The counter to Murphy's argument is seen most vividly in the love story of Mat and Bessy, arguably the most central to the development of the plot, when Bessy agrees to go back to Ireland with Mat, leaving behind the material comfort she has found in America with the statement, "I have often thought of that poor cabin, as you call it, and felt that if ever it was my lot to know happiness in this world, it is in that poor cabin I would find it" (*Knocknagow* 596). There are many other instances of such sentiment, such as the priest's critique of

marriages for money and Mrs. Kearney's speaking highly of the poor men the wealthy Armstrong sisters married (*Knocknagow* 81), and others.

Sally Cavanagh, The Unhappiest Happy Ending

Published years before *Knocknagow*, in 1869, *Sally Cavanagh* was Charles Kickham's first novel. While it never achieved the status of *Knocknagow*, it is still one of the better-known novels of the period. It was written while he was serving a sentence of penal servitude for his involvement in an abortive Fenian uprising in 1865. He had participated in small ways to aid the 1848 uprising, and he had been writing shorter political works between those dates. Upon returning to Ireland in 1869, *Sally Cavanagh* was published, and Kickham continued his political activities by helping found the IRB. It may seem natural, then, that the political overtones of *Sally Cavanagh* are much more prominent than those of *Knocknagow*.

Many, such as James Murphy above, argue that *Sally Cavanagh* is so very sad, and that it is that quality which kept the work from being as popular as *Knocknagow*. That may be true, as far as it goes, but it should by no means be taken to undermine the novel's similarities to *Knocknagow*. *Sally Cavanagh* came before *Knocknagow*, but it is more political. Still, the most political aspects of the text are allegorical in nature (with Sally representing Ireland and Grindem representing the land system), and class envy does not play a major role, even though poverty figures into the novel extensively.

Criticism of the land system comes early enough, with Connor Shea remarking that while he is fortunate to have a lease, the landlord has the rent set so high that it is only because Connor is also paid as a caretaker that he is able to keep up with it (*Sally Cavanagh* 3). One might be

tempted to immediately pounce on that as a foundation for class envy — Connor admits that he is trapped in his circumstances by the rich landlord's hand in his pocket. Shortly thereafter, however, Conner is reminded that he "ought to be a happy man...with such a fine family; and gitting on so well in the world, too" (5). Far from dissenting, Connor agrees and adds that he was "thankful...moreover, when [he] see[s] such poverty around [him]" (5). Kickham characterizes the population by saying, "Devotedness...free from all selfishness — is by no means uncommon among the peasantry of Ireland" (7). The community is poor, but tight-knit, and he is able to find joy and blessing aplenty in his family and the home he does have. Indeed, his misfortunes (and especially Sally's) will ensue when he grasps at raising his station.

This selflessness and closeness of the community was reinforced when Brian Purcell says that he would have lent Connor Shea whatever money he needed, even if he needed to go into debt himself to do it (19). There was a corporate mentality to the use of resources in the community. Though all were poor, who among them could suffer destitution or misery as long as he was himself a man worthy of friends. Thus, there was a reward for being a good friend to one's neighbors, and the knowledge that in one's hour of need, one's neighbors would be good friends in return.

It must be noted that Connor does not simply choose to bid for a better life. His greedy landlord finds ways to gouge him for rent and costs until the bill reaches a level where he cannot meet the demands. It should be noted that the landlord does not do this evil thing because he's rich, nor because he's a landlord (although he is allegorically the personification of all that is wrong with the land system), but because he's evil and greedy. Greed, it should be remembered, is against the behavioral code the Irish prize, regardless of the wealth possessed or poverty experienced by the greedy man.

Shortly thereafter, a wealthy woman is shown to be callous and uncaring when her carriage disables the donkey cart of a poor family (26). The primary purpose of this passage, however, is to give Brian the chance to talk to the family to further background exposition and for him to be praised as "always ready wid a helpin' hand for the poor" (27). We discover soon afterward that the wealthy young woman, Miss Evans, had started out poor and been raised in station by a windfall. No sooner had her fortunes changed, than she went from loving Brian Purcell to thinking him beneath her, and so she is revealed to be an example of what happens when ordinary country folk manage to increase their wealth considerably. The implication is that it was only on account of the money that she was able to become the ugly person she had and that all concerned would have been better off had she never received it (30).

In a further discussion of Miss Evans, people who "give themselves such airs" are called "upstarts" by Mrs. Purcell, who added, "'Tis all the same...they were poor, and they got rich, and the people they were glad to set their traps for [meaning Mr. Brian Purcell, of course] while they were poor, they forgot that they ever knew, now that they are rich" (45). Miss Evans is guilty of breaking the Irish behavioral codes of generosity, compassion, and unpretentiousness ("unpretentiousness" being a kind of opposite to Kickham's "discontented poverty"—something I call "contented poverty" throughout this analysis). She was changed when she came into the money and left her class. The escalation of her station gave her what she needed to reject her old neighbors and lord it over them with pretentious airs.

Such an attitude shift was to be expected. In both the British and the Irish novels, the poor that rise to a new social network are insecure in their position and ashamed of their former relations. They attempt to show themselves worthy of their new associates and status by mistreating or neglecting their former friends and relations. Such behavior is as evident with

Dickens' Pip as it is with Kickham's Miss Evans. Time and again, she is shown to be impatient, uncaring, and vain (61).

Somewhat later, Miss Evans has second thoughts about Brian Purcell. Her Irish nature briefly resurfaces, and her thoughts sound like Bessy. "Yes — she admits to herself — she *could* love him as she could love no other man. Suppose he would fly with her to that great young nation of which he was so enthusiastic an admirer" (87). She is on the cusp of a realization that would allow her to truly be happy (and, given that he still has strong feelings for her, Brian, as well). If she could but set aside her vanity, pride, and airs, she would be able to secure a proposal from Brian Purcell quite easily. The embers of his love were never fully extinguished, so it would not be too difficult to stoke them into a flame once again had she but the will to do so. She obviously has the desire yet.

However, her reflections are immediately clouded by her newly twisted values. "With his talents might he not rise to a height that would satisfy even her ambition?" (87). She can't restrain her ambition, even though she tries to check it. "Or if he did not, would she not be happier with him under an humble roof than she ever could be with another in the lordliest hall?" (87). That is the point at which her thoughts most closely approach Bessy's reply to Mat. However, after that, she shows her true colors again, "But why not share that humble home with him in Ireland? No! she never could. She, who had already climbed so high, and felt as if her foot were on the necks of those who tried to keep her down! A farmer's wife! She clenched her hand as her fancy called up a supercilious nod from a certain carriage to the wife of 'one of Mr. Grindem's tenants.' It was not to be thought of" (87). She continues in this vein until the narrator interrupts her: "Worldliness was not born with her; but probably it was early instilled into her. This, we believe, is one of the curses of *discontented* poverty" (88). It is important to

recognize that a distinction is drawn between poverty and *discontented* poverty. Poverty (also distinct from destitution) was acceptable as long as the poor were contented with it. Poverty such as in the novel was exceedingly common in Ireland. As long as one was good to family and friends and participated in the life of the community, one would not be destitute. His or her essential needs would be met, and attempts to grasp for gain beyond that was both ingratitude and pretentiousness. If one lusts for more for one's self, even once one's basic needs had been met, was that not simply greed? If the simple, Irish life was not good enough for one despite being good enough for all those who surround one, was that not pretentiousness?

Trying to change one's station invited disaster and misery. Connor's departure for America left his family open to all the misery that would follow. Earlier on, we are given a story to foreshadow both the concept of misery following emigration and the character of the ending of the novel as a whole.

In the tale of Rose Mulvany's fate, the innocent girl goes to America where she is forced to turn to prostitution in her destitution. While she is escaping unrequited love and not primarily fortune hunting, the Irish felt there was something very special about Ireland. Emigration was to leave the magic of that place. Brian Purcell sums it up when he laments that "the strength of the old land is wasting away, and her children are wanderers and outcasts all over the world" (180).

When Rose's old love finds her in the brothel, he regarded it as his Christian duty to try to save her (128). She, in her shame, asks him to never inquire after her again, but confesses (after a lengthy conversation), that "Something tells me *that I am saved"* (132). The letter relating the story goes on to say that she has found her way to the care of the Sisters of Charity and is mending her broken life (132). We later discover that Rose went on to turn down a

marriage proposal from a wealthy merchant and instead to remain with the Sisters of Charity, becoming a beloved member of their community (229).

Rose makes a decision much the opposite of Jane Evans', and she is rewarded. Even though Rose falls terribly ill, she dies in the arms of one of the nuns while she is in a state of grace (231). To further diffuse the sadness of her parting, it is made clear that she is content with her lot (in much the same way as others were expected to be content in their poverty), and she is rewarded with a good death. That may sound like small consolation to a modern reader, but this was a "happy" way for her part of the tale to draw to a close. Brian Purcell regards it as such, and it is intended that the reader should, as well. Sally will be similarly rewarded.

Sally Cavanagh's misfortunes were brought about by the breaking of the Irish code of conduct (greed and envy, on the part of Grindem) and emigration (of Connor). She is reduced to destitution (as opposed to simply typical Irish poverty), and has to struggle with the horrors of the death of her children. This drives her into madness, which is a pitiful condition, but it insulates her from the true horror. She cannot claim the bodies of her children, which have been buried anonymously in a mass grave, but she believes that she has them. She constructs five graves, which she guards, and this provides her comfort. As an additional comfort, her madness leads her to believe that she is visited by the spirits of her children. Grindem is visited by divine justice in the form of a debilitating stroke, and further justice is dispensed when he is killed by an accident initiated by his own cruel actions. This spares Sally's husband, Connor, from committing murder in retribution, which he was on the verge of doing at that moment. Sally, longing for her husband and children in her delirium, is brought back to her now-secure home, where she regains her senses long enough to recognize her husband, exchange loving words, and see that one of her sons still survives. Actually living life in the years beyond would be full of

sorrow and nightmares, but that she is able to die at that moment, she dies content. Even her husband recognizes it is best, "I b'lieve 'tis a mercy to have her go" (239). The narrator reiterates, "...few will think he was not right when he said it was 'a mercy to have her go'" (240).

In these ways, *Sally Cavanagh* exemplifies the same values as the archetypical *Knocknagow* and rewards characters that exemplify those values accordingly. That the "happy ending" isn't all that "happy" by our modern standards is due more to a shift in the cultural values of the audience.

For The Old Land

The last of Kickham's three "contemporary" novels was published in 1886 in serial form (in novel form in 1887) (Commerford 207), several years after his death (His last novel, *The Eagle of Garryroe* [1920[2]], takes place in 1798). *For The Old Land: A Tale Of Twenty Years Ago* was also his most political work, but it could not compete for popularity with *Knocknagow*. One can't help but wonder if the reason Kickham's least political novel was his most popular (and vice-versa) was due to the aversion Peck noted to analysis of Famine-related issues. This does produce a sort of conundrum. Ireland was both very politically volatile and complacent throughout this period. Political movements for Home Rule and the repeal of the Act of Union (and eventually independence) drew many dedicated supporters. At the same time, those who actually participated in these movements (especially the more violent ones) were a minority. It seems that the majority of the population only celebrated leaders and supported causes after their movements failed. The ultimate expression of rebellion against the system, the Easter Rising in 1916, enjoyed almost no popular support at the time, with hecklers actually turning out in the

[2] First published posthumously

streets during the start of the week. Yet, the status of glorious martyrs would be conferred on the leadership after the Rising had failed and they had all been shot. The days of O'Connell's "Monster Meetings" were over before the Famine and the failure of the 1848 rising. Indeed, an Irishman could be forgiven for thinking contentious political movements never brought anything but pain and trouble in their wakes.

But in a way, such thinking is tied to the Famine-reinforced values described by Peck. A political or revolutionary struggle is naturally a form of ambition and risk (and ones which almost never paid off for the Irish in centuries of painful attempts). If the population at large was generally risk-averse and eschewed grand ambitions, then such a neutral political approach would also make sense. Again, none of this is to say that all Irishmen thought or acted in exactly the same way. There would always be support for political and revolutionary movements, and their supporters would try to make up for their comparatively small numbers with energy and zeal. That said, neutral, romantic *Knocknagow* would always be far more likely to find its way onto the mantle of the rural farmer than a novel whose final quarter was dedicated to a discussion of good and bad legislation out of Parliament. Add to that the fact that by the time *For The Old Land* was published, two subsequent Land Acts made Kickham's political critiques largely (though not entirely) irrelevant, and it was clear that the novel would never become as well known as the other two.

That said, the novel is still full of examples supporting the Irish values mentioned earlier. From the start, we see the fatalist attitude and an indictment of material ambition (even when it's successful) "'We're not lucky at all,' she continued, wiping her eyes with her apron. 'Look at the Cormacks rolling in riches, and when I came here first what had they?'" (*For The Old Land* 6). Here Mrs. Dwyer manages to roll her fatalism and criticism of the wealth of the Cormacks into

as many sentences. It's not clear at first that Mrs. Dwyer does not speak out of envy *per se*, but she goes on to criticize what she sees as the methods by which the Cormacks built their wealth and the lifestyle they live:

> "...it was Ned Cormack's grandfather's first cousin that made the old kitchen chairs that were here when I got married, and that they used to go about selling them at the fairs, with a lame mule that had only one ear. And nothing would do for Ned but to go all the ways to Cork for a wife ; a lady out of a boarding-school, if you please. I declare," continued Mrs. Dwyer, with a scornful laugh, "she used to be afraid of the cows; and to see her with her gold chain and her sunshade coming out of a thatched cabin ! Everyone said she'd break Ned Cormack, horse and foot." (6-7)

Through Mrs. Dwyer, Kickham also shows how a predisposition toward pretentiousness makes one's life hard. The Cormacks came from humble beginnings, but Ned thought himself too good to take a wife from the community. He went to the city to pick a boarding-school trained woman who has expensive tastes that do not fit with the rest of the community. When her husband reminds her that "...she didn't," (7), Mrs. Dwyer shows her fatalism again when she retorts that it was only, "Because he was lucky" (7). She goes on to criticize the way the Cormacks pinch their pennies, which she implies is the primary reason why they have them:

> "And look at her with her covered car and her outside car, and nothing to trouble her but reading books and playing music, and going out to drive like a lady when the horses wouldn't be a work ; I declare she walked to Mrs. Costelloe's wake rather than stop a plough from the seed-sowing. I'd stop fifty ploughs...sooner

than I'd trudge like a beggar to any decent woman's wake ; yet you'd think 'twas Lady Oakdale they had, there was such respect for her." (7)

Both go on to state that Mrs. Cormack is a good and kind woman, but the criticisms of pretentiousness and ambition stand, all couched in a fatalist description of the family's comparative luck. For his part, Ned criticizes Delahunty later for being a spendthrift when he says, "Men who began at the beginning, and lived over their shops till they had made their fortunes. They did not commence with a country house and a carriage, like Delahunty" (35).

It should be remembered that none of these characters are villainous or without redemptive qualities. Ned, who had been criticized by Mrs. Dwyer for pretentiousness now levels the charge at Delahunty, who throws money around (he was earlier said to have paid a boy a half crown to watch his horse). There is a line between generosity and putting on airs, and that line is in motivation. The boy was not starving, so the large tip was a bid for attention, as are the extravagant living quarters.

When Rody Flynn has a similar conversation with Con Cooney, "...you were always a fool--always a spender--never thinking of the rainy day. Now you see the difference of it" (99). We can see here that, much as the Irish observed a disinclination to ambition and material acquisition, they did not encourage idleness. Con defends himself by saying, "I always worked hard… I was neither an idler nor a drunker ; an' I always went to my duty" (99).

Disdain for idleness (and drunkenness, which was idleness coupled with the expense of the liquor) can be traced back to the Famine-reinforced value of community membership. If one worked and produced, one was contributing to the local economy in the sense that there was more food/goods/services available to others, not to mention that one was putting one's self in a position to be selected as a spouse by another member of the community. As long as marriages

were conducted from within the community, there was little need to lose members through emigration (either to another country or another town) or bring in outsiders whose values might not mesh with the local culture (as Ned Cormack was criticized for doing in the beginning). In addition, much as those who lived through the Great Depression developed a reputation for conserving resources, those who lived through the Famine encouraged a "waste not; want not" lifestyle. The reason for this was twofold. First, it meant that one would not be left destitute when inevitable tragedy struck; and second, it meant that one did not find one's self in debt, which was the primary justification for eviction and emigration when the bailiffs came in the night.

Rody doesn't let up when he says, "But you spent every sixpence faster than you could earn it. You should have as good a suit of clothes as the rich farmer's son--an' you got them on credit. I'll engage you're in debt, an' how are you to get out of it with this [now injured] hand?" (99). Here the explanation is made clear. Con may not be an idle drunkard, but he's in debt, and why? For having pretentious notions that he wanted to be seen in fine clothes!

The Irish disdain for airs stemmed, naturally, from the class system enforced by the gentry. At one point, Bill Keerawan advises Con Cooney not to refer to another tenant as "Mister" (170). When asked why, Bill responds by telling him that "'Nothin' sets the masther wild like Mistherin' a tenant. Unless a landlord happens to be a lord or a sir, he can't stand Mistherin' a tenant, for you could say nothin' greater than Misther to himself'" (170).

The fatalism inherent in the text is really brought out in the exchange between Rody Flynn and Davy Lacy. Davy enquires about the possibility of someone marrying one of the Cormack daughters. Rody answers, "'Not the least...They're too high for that now. 'Tis strange what ups and downs is in the world. Some gettin' rich and some gettin' poor ; an' some keeping

on the same level for generations. I of'en tried to find out the explanation of it, but I couldn't. A good deal depends upon the sort of a wife a man gets'" (111). Davy agrees with this view, and Rody continues, "'I saw instances in the Queen's County of the stupidest men I ever knew prosperin' in the world, an' really intelligent men hardly able to live'" (111). Prosperity or poverty were seen as just some of life's "ups and downs," and reward fell not to those who worked hardest or were most intelligent, but arbitrarily.

We find the values endorsed in other small ways throughout. Twice, characters are credited for overlooking the lack of a dowry for a prospective wife. O'Keefe for thinking of marrying Alice Cormack "without a penny" (125-6) and Con Cooney not caring that Julia Flynn's father can't pay a dowry (189). Ireland's specialness is brought out when it is said that "There's no such country in the world as Ireland" (114). Along that same vein, and similar to Mat bringing Bessy back to Ireland in *Knocknagow*, a plan is established to retrieve the entire Dwyer family from New York and return them to their old homestead (344). Not only is that an endorsement of Ireland's specialness and the heart-wrenching evils of emigration, but it was undoubtedly the fantasy of many in Kickham's audience who had to watch loved ones cross the ocean, only ever to receive their letters back again.

In an extended scene, Ambrose Armstrong travels all the way to New York in order to surprise the Dwyers with a visit. At first, they ask if he had been forced to emigrate as well. What follows is a scene bursting with impossibly high levels of happiness and deliverance (346-9). While such scenes rarely, if ever, played out in reality, Kickham does use it to show what can be done if a landlord is good. Secure in a long lease with a just landlord, Martin Dwyer excitedly tells Armstrong of all his plans for the land in the coming year (348) and "for the future--what he would commence to do at once, and the wonderful things he would do

'hereafter'" (349). Dwyer was returning to his very same farm. He obviously had good ideas to work the land. Why had he not done so already? The landlord's practices offered him no incentive to do so.

Kickham was not simply indulging Famine-era hopes with his novel. He had a political message in all of them, but it was in *For The Old Land* that he really lays out specific views. When Mr. Armstrong purchases the farms of several local tenants, becoming their landlord, he says how he approves of "long leases" (344) like his father, a former land agent. Long leases for tenants would be a key step to giving tenants the security they'd need to make improvements on their farms. If they had a short lease (or worse, a verbal lease), any improvement would quickly result in an increased rent, which in turn could lead to eviction.

Ned Cormac remarks after Armstrong leaves, "He could *rob* me if he wished. And I can't see how this Land Bill could save me, even if it becomes law" (346). Of course, by the time the book was written, the proposed Land Bill was already law (the story taking place twenty years before publication). Cormac was right; the law would not have been any real protection for him. He was very fortunate that his landlord was both an old friend and an honorable man determined to place community justice over profits.

Naturally, such an approach would never work, and Kickham doesn't pretend otherwise. While he does affirm that there are good ways to act as a landlord and bad ones, Armstrong's approach was what was required to set things "right" in the novel for the other characters. He was brought to the brink of bankruptcy, however. He explains that, "it is more costly to live now than it used to me. I find I must either sell my property or my pony" (372).

The Land Act of 1870 did have a moderately redeeming quality, although it was of almost no practical use. Kickham uses Armstrong to explain, perhaps in the hopes that more

people would take advantage of it. When Armstrong tells Ned Cormack of his idea to divest himself of his holdings by selling the tenants their farms, Cormack is understandably incredulous. First, that Armstrong was in earnest, but second, that he could possibly ever manage to buy his own farm from the landlord (373).

Armstrong has three solutions, the first two being to borrow money or to help each other:

> "Nonsense," Mr. Armstrong replied, rather impatiently. "And even if you had to borrow the money you could better afford to pay the interest than a poor man like me. But instead of borrowing I expect you will help Martin Dwyer to purchase his farm also. My only difficulty will be with Con Cooney. But I think I can manage that also, as Joe can lend him one hundred pounds and take the interest in grazing." (373)

His solutions (which are really Kickham's) rely on the Irish value system. While he recommends borrowing money, he is certainly not talking about making a pact with the gombeen men or putting one's self dangerously in debt. Ned Cormack had the Dwyer farm during their absence, and after Armstrong bought them both, he asked Ned to relinquish his rights to it. Ned did so because he loved the idea of helping his old friends, the Dwyers. In an act of community generosity, Ned would help the Dwyers again with the raising of the money they will need. In a strange twist, his near-bankrupt landlord affirms that Ned is in a better financial position than himself. If one looks at the kind of borrowing that is endorsed, one can see that the money is to come from within the community itself. A neighbor will loan Con the money, and he'll accept payment of interest in grass to graze his animals. Such an arrangement would mark a return to the pre-Famine barter system that broke down at the time Bennett and Tuke were writing.

Ned Cormack still can't fathom making it work, however. He protests, "Where on earth is all the money to come from ?" (374). Here is where Armstrong (and thus Kickham) advocate a measure that could make all the difference. Cormack is correct in that the ability to purchase, even with borrowed money, one's farm outright was beyond the ability of most tenants. Armstrong explains, "Two-thirds of it [will come] from the Board of Works… We must see what virtue is in the 'Bright Clauses'" (374). The "Bright Clauses" of the Land Act were a provision that allowed tenants to get low-interest loans from the government in order to purchase their farms provided the landlord was willing to sell and that they could raise one-third of the funds themselves. George Shaw-Lefevre noted, in his reports to Parliament and the Statistical Society of Ireland, that, "The success of these clauses, under which four thousand tenants had become owner in fee of their farms...was in striking contrast to the almost total failure of the clauses of the Irish Land Act" (Shaw-Lefevre). Despite the promise such terms held, very few tenants actually took advantage (or were able to take advantage) of the Bright Clauses. Kickham seems to be offering a way, but even one-third of the money was too much for most tenants, in the rare cases when landlords were willing to sell.

In all, while *For The Old Land* was the most artistically accomplished of Kickham's three contemporary novels (Comerford 204), it would be the "happy," romantic, least-political *Knocknagow* which would stand as the favorite among Irish audiences. In that novel especially, Kickham avoids sensationalism, violence, and politics as one of his goals was to reframe Ireland and Irish life differently than English writers who presented pictures of violence, immorality, and barbarism (Nolan 117). Nolan also echoes Peck when she states that

> ...the real truth of [Sally Cavanagh's] situation lies in the graveyard and the lonely "untenanted graves" of the novel's subtitle, rather than at her artificially

> reconstructed hearth. This is what the community insists on repressing, for the purpose of its own survival as well as that of the victim… Kickham also deploys [narration techniques that complicate keeping accurate track of time] to help us to apprehend the peculiarly nonprogressive temporality of trauma. (114)

The picture Kickham paints of Irish community life does stem from a perspective greatly altered by trauma, the trauma of the Famine. He was, however, not the only popular novelist. According to some scholars presented here, he wasn't even the most artistically accomplished (although he did seem to be giving his readership what they wanted most effectively). Other novelists dealing with similar themes (novel-length tales of Irish rural life set in Ireland after the Famine), and so they certainly bear analysis. I assert that the values present in Kickham's novels were not solely his domain and were instead common to the sensibilities of the Irish reading public (if not also the authors themselves) and thus present in the popular novels of the day.

Chapter 5

OTHER POPULAR WORKS OF THE PERIOD

In his novels, William Carleton waxes political considerably more than Kickham ever undertakes to do. In so doing, Carleton is very forward when it comes to fixing blame for the pitiful state of living circumstances in Ireland at the time (at the time of writing, the Great Hunger was in full swing). Despite this, he still does veil his most direct treatment of the Famine. *The Black Prophet*, which is an 1845 novel about famine, is set not in the Famine events of its time, but rather in a previous famine of two generations before. "Although ostensibly writing about an earlier famine of 1804, Carleton is really referring to the 1840s" (Davis 116). Why the re-setting? When Victor Hugo set *Les Miserables* in a previous revolution to the one happening at that very time, or Arthur Miller couched his criticism of McCarthyism in the Salem witch trials of *The Crucible*, the reasons were very obvious. It could be very dangerous to one's safety or freedom to have run afoul of the authorities over those issues. Such was not the case during the Famine. There was open criticism of the government's response in newspapers, speeches, and even the floor of Parliament itself. Terry Eagleton makes the following observation regarding the reluctance to deal with the subject in literature that would seem to an outsider to be prime ground for covering it:

> ...there are a number of curious literary near-misses. William Carleton's novel *The Black Prophet*, published during the Famine, concerns a previous such disasters; Yeats's play *The Countess Cathleen* treats of famine, but of no specific one; Patrick Kavanagh's poem *The Great Hunger*...uses famine as a metaphor for sexual and spiritual hungering. (Eagleton 13)

The re-setting of the novel had more to do with Peck's assertion of collective PTSD. The author did not need to provide the authorities with distance from the horrors for his own sake; he needed to provide his audience with distance from them for their own. Davis notes this, when discussing a period between Carleton and Kickham in which agrarian literature declined in publication. One can hear echoes of Peck when he states that "Ireland had been so traumatised by the events of the famine that any contemporary fictional representation of it would have seemed distasteful" (Davis 155). Again, Eagleton weighs in, agreeing with Peck's principles:

> Where is the Famine in the literature of the Revival? Where is it in Joyce?... Wilde, Moore and Yeats are in full flight from Nature, towards whatever style, pose, mask or persona might seem its antithesis; and the more choice recuperates this naturalistic region for the ends of art, the more obtrusively artificial that redemption becomes. If the Famine stirred some too angry rhetoric, it would seem to have traumatized others into muteness. The event strains at the limits of the articulable, and is truly in this sense the Irish Auschwitz. (Eagleton 13)

But he is rather forward with his depictions there and his criticisms of the system in his contemporarily set novel, *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* (1848). His criticisms are not based on pure class warfare, however. The landed class are shown to be responsible for the misery, but only through honest neglect and not greed or malice. Indeed, Carleton goes on to show that the negative effects of neglectful landlords were only made possible through the actions of greedy and malicious Irishmen of all classes (and in some cases necessitated by a system devised and supported by self-seeking Irish Ministers of Parliament). In particular, he criticizes the "middleman system" with all of its home-grown land agents and gombeen men. A big part of this problem is the fact that they lack "long term interest" in the land they are involved with

(Davis 117). The gombeen does not care for the success of the farmer; indeed, he may profit even better if he bleeds him dry and seizes what is left. The land agent is no better in that there is no penalty to him if all the tenants should be evicted and replaced with others. Even if the estate was mismanaged, as long as the agent brought in the rents (or served the evictions) he was secure in his salary, and if he could cheat the tenants, there was very little risk to himself as the likelihood of the landlord finding out was slim. The tenants would typically be unable to reach him directly, and with so many no-lease holdings, the tenant might not even know he was being cheated (or if he did, he would have no legal recourse).

The actions taken by the likes of the well-off Hycy and the impoverished Hogans can be attributed to a desire to raise one's station or exact cold-blooded vengeance, respectively. In both cases, those characters (complicit with several others like Feathertonge the agent and Teddy Phats, the illegal distiller) are guided by blatantly immoral characters and are not a result of nor explanation of their wealth.

Despite the injustices inherent in the broken system, Carleton is just as harsh with the societies formed to address them politically or violently. To him, the Land League, the Whiteboys, and the Ribbonmen were little better than the Orange Order (126-8), save that the Orangemen had the protection, if not the consent, of the law. According to Davis, "Whiteboys and Repealers are equally responsible for the country's plight while landowners attract little criticism" (128). He felt that both the violent (Whiteboys) and the political (Repealers) organizations were only taking advantage of the people in other ways, as were the clergy of both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland (129). He felt that such organizations' violent actions had "nothing to do with land ownership or religious enmity, it is vindictive violence used to terrify and control tenants. Ribbonism is presented as being more concerned with the

settlement of personal scores than with the real interests of the tenants" (135). To him, all the organizations were simply out for themselves.

The text starts early in its descriptions of the glories of the Irish landscape (Carleton 493). This is a theme to which Carleton returns often, especially as the tale winds down. *Emigrants* is, without question, an affirmation of the value that Ireland is the best of all places, and to be forced to leave the land (as crushing force is the only thing that could induce an Irishman to do so) is a fate, literally, worse than death. Tom M'Mahon, who later relishes finding a grave in Ireland on the eve of emigration, relates the Irish perspective of the rural countryside and "home."

> "I was in Dublin, thin, all the way," replied the farmer, "strivin' to get a renewal o' my laise from ould Squire Chevydale, the landlord ; an' upon my snuggins, Peety, you may call a journey to Dublin an' home agin a tough one--devil a doubt of it. However, thank God, here we are at home ; an' blessed be His name that we have a home to come to ; for, afther all, what place is like it? Throth, Peety, my heart longed for these brave fields of our--for the lough there below, and the wild hills above us ; for it wasn't until I was away from them that I felt how strong the love of them was in my heart." (501)

It is important to note at this point that Dublin was as foreign a place as a rural Irishman could go without actually leaving the island. The city had long been the seat of English power, but was also the most steeped in English ways. For Tom, going to Dublin was akin to leaving Ireland itself for a time.

Other writers at the time sought to drive home the sense of alienation and anonymity that awaited any country peasant unfortunate enough to find himself attempting to call city streets his home. Often times, the characters' names (or lack thereof) drove this point home:

> ...urban alienation is even more devastating for Ó Conaire's Gaeltacht exiles who...find themselves trapped anew in the specious freedom of urban indifference, a point the author underscores by either leaving his city characters nameless or by identifying them mostly or solely by descriptive epithets like "The Big Man"... By contrast, the names of his rural people, names like Nóra Mharcuis Bhig...identify not only the characters as individuals, but also their roots and place in wider community. No such community is possible for his city people, who are painfully unable to establish any real communication or intimacy with the masses that surround them. (O'Leary 425)

Considering that the traditional Irish values included being grounded in a tight sense of community, urban characters without names were the very personification of anonymity, impersonalness, and intimidation.

Tom goes on to escort Peety into the house, where Tom's family reacts with much relief that he has returned home. They further desire that he should never again undertake a journey away, regardless of the necessity. "...let what will happen, you must stay wid us" (Carleton 502). To this, Tom readily agrees. "Indeed an' I never *knewn* how I loved the place, an' you all, till I went ; but, thank God, I hope it's the last journey ever I'll have to take from either you or it" (502).

His granddaughter, Dora, later explains to Bryan,

> "...but for all that I'd rather bear anything in my own dear country than go to a strange one. Do you think I'd not miss the summer sun rising behind the Althadawan hills? an' how could I live without seein' him set behind Mallybeney? An' then to live in a country where I'd not see these ould hills, the green glens, and

> mountain rivers about us, that have all grown into my heart. Oh, Bryan, dear, don't think of it—don't think of it." (603)

Certainly, Ireland is more to her than simply a beautiful landscape. It is a place that is intertwined with her very heart. Unlike her grandfather, she does resign herself to the necessity of leaving (He dies of a broken heart at the prospect, and he is happy to do so as it means he can be interred next to his beloved wife. He'd rather be dead in Ireland than alive anywhere else.).

Carleton does not stop at sentimentality, however. He has practical reasons why emigration should be seen as an evil by all Irishmen. In one of the first instances where he digresses from the narrative to give political instruction for a page or so, he says

> Placed as the country was, emigration went forward on an extensive scale,—emigration, too, of that peculiar description which every day enfeebles and impoverishes the country, by depriving her of all that approaches to anything like a comfortable and independent yeomanry. This, indeed, is a kind of depletion which no country can bear long; and, as it is, at the moment we are writing this, progressing at a rate beyond all precedent… (534)

He traces what he sees as the causes of the poverty (absenteeism, inattention and neglect on the part of the landlords, subletting, political corruption, political involvement of the Catholic priests, and neglect of the Irish MPs in Westminster to look after Irish interests). In *almost* all of these, he is in complete agreement with William Bennett. Indeed, Carleton sees in the massive emigration a disaster of multi-generational proportions brewing. Aside from that practical consideration, the romantic view of Irishmen toward their own country makes the circumstances downright heartbreaking. Such a reality calls into question the popular American notion that Irish immigrants came to the U.S. full of hope and excitement over the opportunities that

undoubtedly lay in store. No, as Carleton would have it, they left with heavy and broken hearts, and only after having been forced to do so when faced with certain beggary and death if they stayed any longer. He recognizes the dissonance and attempts to reconcile it:

> It has been often said, and with great truth, that no man is more devotedly attached to his native soil than an Irishman; yet it may reasonably be asked, how this principle of attachment can be reconciled with the strong tendency to emigration which characterizes our people. We reply, that the tendency in question is a proof of the love of honest industry, enterprise, and independence, by which our countrymen, when not degraded by neglect and poverty, are actuated. (535)

The "love of honest industry, enterprise, and independence" also seems to be at odds with much of what was observed by Bennet and also what comes up time and again with characters in the literature. How does one reconcile a love for those things with a seemingly anti-industrious value at the heart of "contented poverty"? Kickham demonstrated the answer with Tom Hogan, and Carleton does make similar observations to Bennett when he states, "We allude to the nefarious and monstrous custom of ejecting tenants who have made improvements, or, when permitted to remain, making them pay for the improvements which they have made" (535).

> Hogan is a good tenant who suffers dreadfully from institutional violence. He works hard to improve his farm but, since the law is on the landowner's side, every improvement he makes -- at his own expense -- only provides an excuse to raise his rent. Hogan's improvements do not secure his tenure; ironically, by making his farm more valuable, his own position becomes more precarious. (Davis 169)

The practice of raising rents on tenant-improved properties comes to be at the heart of how Bryan M'Mahon is to be put out of his beloved Ahadarra. As this incident is one of the principle drivers of the events in the plot, it bears taking a moment to recount the state of things at this point in the novel. Desiring to compete with Bryan M'Mahon for the affections of Kathleen Cavanagh, or ruin him (and break her heart) if he cannot sway her, Hycy Burke conceives a villainous conspiracy. He gets the Hogans to set up an illegal still on the property of Ahadarra, which is a townland unto itself. He then informs Old Clinton, the man charged with catching illegal distillers, that the still is there. When caught, Bryan finds himself subject to the fine. The law at the time fined not the owner of the still, but the entire townland upon which the still was found. This was in an effort to make the land hostile to the distillers. The effect was, however, that many people with no hand in the illegal activities found themselves fined. If the townland was held by a single owner, the massive fine was levied against him alone. The wording of the law provided a tremendous opportunity for an unscrupulous person to ruin his enemies by setting up a still in some obscure corner of a large property and then informing on it in this fashion (Carleton 554).

This plan does not exactly work, however, as Bryan succeeds in getting the fine reduced due to the circumstances of his well-known, good character. It can only be reduced to fifty pounds, but that is enough to do it. The next part of the plot involves the landlord being manipulated into raising the rent on Ahadarra rather than keeping it the same (which was his father's dying promise). To complete his malicious plan, Hycy then frames Bryan for taking a bribe of fifty pounds, thus putting him out of his property and disgracing him in Kathleen's eyes all at once. Relevant to the raising of the rent, however, Bryan relates:

> Here, now, is a notice to quit my farm, that I have improved at an expense of seven or eight hundred pounds, an' its now goin' to be taken out of my hands, and every penny I expended on it goes into the pocket of the landlord or agent, or both, and I'm to be driven out of house and home without a single farthing of compensation for the buildings and other improvements that I made on that farm. (602-3)

Thus we can see that it often did not pay to make improvements to the land. Enterprise and industry were functionally penalized. Time and again, Carleton lays out arguments that it would work to the landlords' benefit to have tenants that are encouraged to invest in the property -- that by taking less rent than they could, the tenants would be encouraged to improve their properties, which would ultimately work to increase the overall profits to the landlord in the long run. To apply a modern economic term, it would almost seem that Carleton had stumbled upon the rent equivalent of the Laffer Curve.

Carleton is very deliberate in laying the blame at the feet, not of the upper class, but of the agents (greedy middlemen) and Irish MPs (distant governing class). The degree to which he argues the wealthy landlords are responsible (and he does say that they have responsibility), they are only passively so. Thus, by driving emigration, these circumstances rob the landlords of their most industrious and enterprising tenants -- the ones they should be most eager to keep.What's more, he argues that it is not only against the landlords' interests to force out such tenants (supporting the notion that the landlords are not conscious of what is being done on their estates), but it creates a waste of wealth (of all kinds) for the nation.

> This perpetually recurring calamity [penalizing improvements] acts with a most depressing effect upon those persons in the country who have any claim to be considered independent. It deprives them of hope, and consequently of energy,

> and by relaxing the spirit of industry which has animated them, tends in the course of time to unite them to the great body of pauperism which oppresses and eats up the country. (571)

So Carleton begins by showing how even industrious and motivated Irishmen are discouraged to the point of giving up such values by this system. This plays directly into the Irish value of "contented poverty" and eschewing ambition. One shouldn't perceive those values as an indictment of the Irish. Indeed, their practitioners were right. The system was rigged to destroy those who improved too much. "Injustice is inherent in the land system: if [a tenant] does not improve his holding, it will not produce enough. Yet when he improves it by hard work, using his own money, he receives a demand with menaces" (Davis 116). An Irish tenant could continue on in his inefficient way, or he could go to great expense and toil to drain, grade, clear, and improve the property only to find himself put out of it altogether after his rent was raised. It did not register with the landlord (most of whom rarely, if ever in their lives, had set foot on the property or even the island of Ireland itself) that allowing the hard-working tenant to farm the improved property would be to their *mutual* benefit.

> But let us not be misunderstood. This evil alone is sufficiently disastrous to the industrial energies of the class we mention; but when, in addition to this, the hitherto independent farmer has to contend with high rents, want of sympathy in his landlord, who probably is ignorant of his very existence, and has never seen him perhaps in his life; and when it is considered that he is left to the sharp practice and pettifogging, but plausible rapacity of a dishonest agent, who feels that he is irresponsible, and may act the petty tryant [sic] and vindictive oppressor if he wishes, having no restraint over his principles but his interest, which, so far

> from restraining, only guides and stimulates them;—when we reflect upon all this, and feel, besides, that the political principles upon which the country is governed are those that are calculated to promote British at the expense of Irish interests—we say, when we reflect upon and ponder over all this, we need not feel surprised that the prudent, the industrious, and the respectable, who see nothing but gradual decline and ultimate pauperism before them—who feel themselves neglected and overlooked, and know that every sixth or seventh year they are liable to those oppressive onsets of distress, sickness, and famine—we need not, we repeat, feel at all surprised that those who constitute this industrious and respectable class should fly from the evils which surround them, and abandon, whilst they possess the power of doing so, the country in which such evils are permitted to exist. (Carleton 571-2)

Carleton again lays out his indictment of the land agents as the most directly responsible for the calamities facing the Irish. The landlord does not escape some degree of blame (but through his neglect, as opposed to malice), nor do the representatives in government whose laws create the structures of the system and whose reluctance to change them perpetuates it. Carleton expands on his discussion of the emigrants themselves to note that the most irrepressibly motivated, those who were industrious or ambitious, and not content to pretend they weren't, were the ones who took the tremendously bold step to leave their country for another. Thus, the "best and brightest" of the Irish are either induced to hide their talents, become beggars, or emigrate. One must ask whether the creation of the American industrial juggernaut, with all its improvements to works, invention, expansion, and energy, was not itself a direct result of receiving the most highly motivated Irishmen to her shores by the millions.

> It is upon this principle, or rather upon these principles, and for these reasons, that the industry, the moral feeling, the independence, and the strength of the country have been passing out of it for years—leaving it, season after season, weaker, more impoverished, and less capable of meeting those periodical disasters which, we may almost say, are generated by the social disorder and political misrule of the country. (572)

In closing this section, Carleton echoes Bennett's sentiments again in saying that all of that waste amounts to a national calamity. While Bennett's observation in his conclusion had to do with the waste of vast amounts of material wealth[3], Carleton is primarily concerned with the loss of energy, industry, and motivation – something that would come to be called "brain drain" when addressing Irish emigration in the 1980s.

As if to drive home the purposefulness of eschewing blame based on class, Carleton treats the readers to an exchange between the Catholic, Irish-interest-supporting politician and landlord, Chevydale, and the Protestant and Union-supporting politician, Vanston:

> "...we, the landed proprietors of Ireland, should awake out of our slumbers, and forgetting those vile causes of division and subdivision that have hitherto not only disunited us, but set us together by the ears, we should take counsel among ourselves, and after due and serious deliberation, come to the determination that it is our duty to prevent Irish interests from being made subservient to English interests, and from being legislated for upon English principles."
>
> "I hope, Chevydale, you are not about to become a Repealer."

[3] "With an immense amount of labour lying idle, which might be applied to the equally idle soil, the waste of national wealth is beyond calculation" (Bennett 140).

"No, sir; I am, and ever have been sickened by that great imposture. Another half century would scarcely make us fit for home legislation. When we look at the conduct of our Irish members in the British Parliament—I allude now, with few exceptions, to the Repeal members—what hope can we entertain of honesty and love of country from such men? When we look, too, at many of our Corporations and strike an average of their honesty and intellect, have we not a right to thank God that the interests of our country are not confined to the management of such an arrogant, corrupt, and vulgar crew as in general compose them. The truth is, Vanston, we must become national in our own defense, and whilst we repudiate, with a firm conviction of the folly on the one hand, and the dishonesty on the other, of those who talk about Repeal, we shall find it our best policy to forget the interests of any particular class, and suffer ourselves to melt down into one great principle of national love and good-will toward each other. Let us only become unanimous, and England will respect us as she did when we were unanimous upon other occasions."

"I feel, and am perfectly sensible of the truth of what you say," replied Vanston, "and I am certain that, in mere self-defence, we must identify ourselves with the people whose interests most unquestionably are ours."

"As to myself," continued Chevydale, "I fear I have much to repair in my conduct as an Irish landlord. I have been too confiding and easy—in fact, I have not thought for myself; but been merely good or evil, according to the caprice of the man who managed me, and whom, up until now, I did not suspect." (630)

Several very important things are allowed to come out in this lengthy exchange, which is more for the benefit of demonstrating politics to the reader than for anything to do with the plot. Carleton is showing that a politician does not need to support Home Rule ("Repeal" [of the Act of Union]) in order to be a good representative for the Irish people. He is showing that one needn't necessarily be Catholic in order to do so either (and so priests preaching support from the pulpit for Catholic candidates based on what we would today term "identity politics" did not necessarily guarantee good representation). Most importantly, Carleton is showing that the wealthy, landowning class is not greedy or mean by nature or necessity, but have in their ranks decent, moral men who are simply inattentive to their own and their tenants interests (which Carleton argues are one and the same), and rely too much on greedy, unscrupulous agents to carry out the day-to-day business of their estates. This is very different from the urban, industrial view of poverty where the factory owners are wealthy because they put profits first and grow rich on the broken backs of their workers.

A lack of love for his native soil is one of the many ways Carleton casts Hycy as a villain. It seems that he goes out of his way to show Hycy flaunting every single cultural and moral value possible short of outright murder (although his plotting is almost directly responsible for Tom M'Mahon's death). Here, Hycy is shown to disparage not only the religious tradition of keening at a funeral, but the entirety of his cultural patrimony:

> "Curse that keening, what a barbarous practice it is!"... "All stuff," replied the accomplished Hycy, who, among his other excellent qualities, could never afford to speak a good word to his country or her people. "All stuff and barbarous howling that we learned from the wolves when we had them in Ireland." (564-5)

Hycy is accused of many other things, including disrespect to his parents (he openly ridicules his father every time they speak, and addresses both parents as Mr. Burke and Mrs. Burke). He constantly pressures his father for money to fund his profligate lifestyle, and when his father tries to cut him off, he orchestrates a robbery where Bat Hogan breaks into his parents' house and steals the money for him. He is said on several occasions to relish eating meat on Fridays, and he even does so purposefully because the tavern where he likes to treat his friends to dinners gives him free pepper and sauce with the meat on Fridays (this is an age before refrigeration, remember). Much is made of people who think Hycy a "gintleman," and the term is used disparagingly by the more intelligent, moral characters.

The pejorative use of "gentleman" is not to be confused with "wealthy" (again, eschewing class envy), but rather it is evidence of a kind of pretentiousness. Jemmy, Hycy's father, is a decent man who is honest and generous and avows, "I'm no gentleman," often. Hycy's mother is very keen to side with him against Jemmy every time, as he is her favorite (they have another son who is absent for most of the narrative), and she wishes to foster Hycy's maintenance as a "gentleman." She (and the Cavanaghs who pressure their daughter, Kathleen, to marry Hycy instead of Bryan for the status it would bring) are examples of how being impressed by people putting on pretentious airs leads one astray morally and often works to their detriment through association with bad company. Mrs. Burke is perhaps the worst offender in this, after Hycy himself. She has been known to be charitable with her wealth, but out of vanity and desire for flattery (495). The M'Mahons, on the other hand, are happy to feed the illiterate Peety, when he drops by, "for the credit of the house" (520). Much is made of the morality of the M'Mahons, especially Bryan, and their declaration, far from seeking flattery, is an example

of the kind of community bond and spirit of hospitality that often times made the difference between life and death during the Famine (502).

In the end, everyone gets their just desserts: Bryan is exonerated and marries Kathleen, the rents are reduced and the family gets to keep the farms (all part of the landlord, Chevydale's desire to reform his business practices and become a better landlord, as his father was), the Hogans are transported to the penal colony in Australia, never to return and vex the parish, Hycy runs away and dies an ignominious death as a result of his profligate lifestyle, and all the other characters with sweethearts get to marry the objects of their affections. One may look at the death of Tom M'Mahon as a needless tragedy, but Carleton is careful to demonstrate that he was absolutely driven to despair and incapacity by the death of his wife to the degree that his decline and imminent death was inevitable. In a way, even without the threat of emigration, he would be happiest in the ground next to his wife -- much like Sally Cavanagh and her lost children.

The Real Charlotte (1894), by Edith Somerville and Violet Martin (under the pseudonym Martin Ross) also portrays these values, but not to the degree found in the male authors. This is indeed very curious, and one is left to question whether the difference in focus is the result of the difference in the gender of the authors. Both of the women (who were cousins) were born into declining gentry (Lewis vii), but one does not find upper class values of wealth present. It is for this reason, I assert that where one would expect to see a difference in values related to class, one finds similarities with the other Irish works. Where one does find a difference, it is in the focus, which I attribute to gender. Therefore, one still finds the same values regarding class and poverty as with the other Irish authors, but with great expanses of narrative in between occurrences where no details relevant to those issues are present. Their focus is primarily on the emotions of the characters (especially romantic ones), and the complex web of social

machinations set into motion as each of the characters tries to capture the object of his or her affections. One would have a hard time discerning whether the great detail of description given to emotions and social interactions over circumstances and events is because the authors themselves had such a focus (Lewis makes much of their similarity of circumstance with Francie Fitzpatrick throughout the introduction), or whether they simply adopted it because they saw their audience as primarily female and primarily sympathetic to poor Francie. That is not to say that events (such as the capsizing of the boat) are light on detail, but by and large detailed descriptions are reserved for what characters are thinking and feeling or the social implications of their conversations. The treatment of the relevant passages of the text will therefore be rather comprehensive.

The narrative opens with a description of urban gloom and ugliness in Dublin. The summer day is described as "all that is hot, arid, and empty," while the houses are, "browbeating each other in gloomy respectability" (Somerville & Ross 3). The rest of the description continues in this fashion, full of "dullness," "emptiness," "dirt," and "ugliness" (3). Already, the authors (natives of the Galway and Cork countrysides) are setting up the typical Irish preference for the rural over the urban.

It has been noted several times before that another hallmark of the Irish value of class is that those who are fortunate do not attempt to place themselves above those who are less fortunate. The attitude that seems to be encouraged is summed up by the old proverb, "it is not upper class [nobility] or lower class [baseness] but up a spell and down a spell."[4] This certainly sums up Sommerville and Martin's families' fortunes as well as those of Francie (and others) in the novel. When speaking of Sunday-school, Francie's mother is described as a class-egalitarian in attitude:

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[4] *Ní huasal ná íseal ach thuas seal agus thíos seal*

> Certainly the excellent Mrs Fitzpatrick, of Number O, Mountjoy Square, as she lay in mountainous repose on the sofa in her dining-room, had no thought that it was derogatory to the dignity of her daughters and her niece to sit, as they were now sitting, between the children of her grocer, Mr Mulvany, and her chemist, Mr Nolan. (3)

While most of the narrative focus is on Francie throughout the story, the main plot-driver is the title character, Charlotte Mullen. She is not a role model for the reader. She is ambitious, greedy, and selfish. She promises her dying aunt that she will take care of her young cousin, Francie Fitzpatrick, whom she despises. The aunt wants Charlotte to use some of her inheritance to "look after her" (10). Charlotte not only fails to honor her promise, but it becomes evident that her grief, if ever actually genuine, was short-lived. Her lack of esteem for Francie aside, Charlotte puts her inheritance to further her ambition. She is determined to use her ruthless management skills to make of Tally Ho a prestigious estate, to collect a debt of favors, and eventually to capture a husband who will enhance her own social standing (13). She is completely given to her ambition in stark contrast to the generosity, honesty, and contentedness typically affirmed by Irish leading characters.

Other characters even criticize her actions, including Roddy Lambert, the man Charlotte hopes to capture for herself after indebting him to her through the lending of money. "He thought it was time for Charlotte to do something for her own cousin's child, and no such great thanks to her either, seeing she got every half-penny the old woman had" (32). It should be noted that those thoughts of Roddy's were shared with the reader as part of a conversation with his wife. Charlotte was chasing after a man who was already married, and who sets about trying to break up the marriage and instigate his wife's death (226-32).

Her plan is not permitted to succeed, and in her efforts to sow discord and wreck marriage opportunities that arise for Francie, Charlotte winds up driving Francie and Roddy together, resulting in a marriage announcement that surprises even herself. It is then that she becomes truly dangerous.

> A human soul, when it has broken away from its diviner part and is left to the anarchy of the lower passions, is a poor and humiliating spectacle, and it is unfortunate that in its animal want of self-control it is seldom without a ludicrous aspect. The weak side of Charlotte's nature was her ready abandonment of herself to fury that was, as often as not, wholly incompatible with its cause, and now that she had been dealt the hardest blow that life could give her, there were a few minutes in which rage, and hatred, and thwarted passion took her in their fierce hands, and made her for the time a wild beast. When she came to herself she was standing by the chimney-piece, panting and trembling; the letter lay in pieces on the rug, torn by her teeth, and stamped here and there with the semicircle of her heel; a chair was lying on its side on the floor, and Mrs Bruff was crouching aghast under the sideboard, looking out at her mistress with terrified inquiry. (300)

Charlotte, for a time, loses all self-control and is reduced to an animal. From this point, she internalizes that pain, allowing it to embitter her and drive her to develop an elaborate plan to destroy Roddy's estate, fortune, and reputation to repay him for what she perceived as a personal slight as well as to ruin Francie's happiness -- something she had wanted to do previously on general principle but now sought to undertake for naked revenge.

Thus, Charlotte not only violates the Irish values of "contented poverty" (which should be relatively easier for her than most of the characters in these novels as she is not actually poor, just not as well-off as she would like), but also of hospitality (she takes in Francie for a time so as to better mistreat her), generosity (she makes predatory loans to old friends in need), compassion (she is ruthless in dealing with her tenants in arrears), and basic Christian morality (having designs on another woman's husband and bearing false witness regarding Francie's friendly letters to her husband in a successful attempt to harry that woman into an early grave).

Having broken every rule of virtue the Irish value, Charlotte cannot be permitted to succeed in her plans. In fact, it is one final breach of good conduct that causes her to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. In the end of the novel, Roddy Lambert comes to Charlotte for a loan to cover the money that he "borrowed" from the Dysart estate he was managing without Christopher Dysart's knowledge. Dysart had been tipped off, and Roddy stood to be ruined. Charlotte is the one who led Dysart to discover the money was missing, and the ruining of Lambert was all part of her plan. At the time, the plan was simply undertaken for spite, but she stood to marry Lambert after all, as Francie was knocked from her horse and killed while their conversation about the money was underway. If Charlotte had lent Lambert the money, or even simply stalled, she would have been in a position to marry him and save his reputation (and get the husband she wanted). Only one thing stood in her way, and that was that "Every now and then in the conduct of her affairs Miss Mullen permitted the gratification of her temper to take the place of the slower pleasure of secrecy" (384). Charlotte boasts of having told Dysart and purposefully ruining Lambert's reputation. She speaks with anger, spite, and great satisfaction, which hurts Lambert beyond his imaginings. Even though it is not made explicit in the text,

when the revelation that Lambert's second wife, Francie, has been killed arrives moments later, those words would make the marriage she had been lusting after the entire novel impossible.

Charlotte is not alone in this unhappiness, however. While she is the most brazen and egregious violator of cultural values, all the characters manage to destroy their own happiness by violating some of them in their own ways. Mostly, it is the violation of "contented poverty" (ie. ambition to rise or live above one's station) that causes disaster.

In the case of Roddy Lambert, his thirst to live beyond his means drives him to take on quite a bit of debt, which he must finance by taking loans from Charlotte. This puts him in a terrible position late in the novel. Once he marries the young, beautiful Francie, he wants to shower her with an extravagant honeymoon and to give her an opulent lifestyle. To fund this, he takes money from the estate he manages without the permission or knowledge of the owner. He intends to pay it back before it is missed, but instead the debts just continue to rise. Eventually, Charlotte tells Dysart he had better check his books, and the theft is discovered.

While it is true that Francie marries him as a last resort, and does not really love him, she has affection for him, is grateful to be married to a kind man she's known all her life, and is resigned to be a loyal wife. There were three men competing for Francie's hand, and Roddy Lambert was the one she chose. He could have been very happy, but his grasping above his station destroyed his chances.

Francie is perhaps the character portrayed the most sympathetically in the novel. While Charlotte was patterned after an actual cousin of the authors (Lewis xiii), they always had the softest spot in their hearts for Francie as her experiences being sent to live with relatives and meeting the likes of Charlotte most mirrored Somerville and Martin's own lives (xv). While a

great part of her suffering is brought on by loving and putting her hopes into a man of inconstant affection (Hawkins), in the end she is motivated by discontented poverty to marry Lambert.

Once she has her falling out with Charlotte, and is put out of her home, she goes to live with other relatives in a tenement-style shanty. There she is miserable, as she has just come from an extended period of living in relative material comfort and social opportunity. She has also managed, through outfitting her wardrobe during that period, to rack up a tidy debt for herself. Let down by the suitor of her highest hopes, stuck with a debt she despairs of paying, and trapped in an overcrowded house, Francie jumps at the chance to marry Roddy Lambert. Lambert was much older than herself, but he had always been kind to her, and she had fond memories of him going back to her childhood. It was to be an imperfect arrangement, but one in which she might have found a degree of contentment.

She cannot, however, because she did not investigate his actual suitability as a husband (he was just a way out of the circumstances she found undesirable), as he was already saddled with quite a bit of debt even then. Hawkins eventually comes to his senses, and attempts to convince her to run away with him, and had she not married Lambert so quickly, she would have been in a position to have married the man she actually loved. It is true that she had no way of knowing that he would come back for her, and it is also true that Hawkins' circumstances were not much better off than Lambert, but she might have endured the debt and poverty contentedly as she loved him, and he was passionate about her. Instead, the authors indicate her thought process:

> It is a truism of ancient standing that money brings no cure for heartache, but it is also true that if the money were not there the heartache would be harder to bear. Probably if Francie had returned from Lismoyle to a smart house in Merrion

> Square, with a carriage to drive in, and a rich relative ready to pay for new winter dresses, she would have been less miserable over Mr Hawkins' desertion than she was at Albatross Villa; she certainly would not have felt as unhappy as she did now. (Somerville & Ross 275)

It is at that moment that Lambert, lonely after the death of his wife, arrives on the porch to "rescue" her. From there, their courtship moves through engagement to marriage with alacrity.

Hawkins is another matter. He adds a further violation of cultural values to the typical one of ambition. He is in the army, so he is paid well, but he still manages to accrue massive debts which leave him little option but to engage to marry a wealthy woman. This is all done before the opening of the narrative, and he carries on in his life as if he is not engaged. For him, the wedding is looming out in the foggy future. His arrangement does not occupy his thoughts, and he openly courts Francie, winning her heart quite thoroughly. When Francie finds out that he is engaged, she begins to treat him rather coldly. It takes Hawkins some time to figure out why, and when she finally tells him, he professes his love for her and promises to break off the engagement -- something he had not been able to do because of the difficulty of his debts.

He does go to visit his fiancée, Miss Coppard, but instead of breaking off the engagement, he writes to Francie infrequently and with shorter and shorter messages. Eventually, a broken-hearted Francie gives him up, but never completely so in her heart. Hawkins makes some bad decisions in his interactions with Francie, but by grasping at a lifestyle above his station, similar to Lambert, he takes on ruinous debt that does not leave him free to marry the woman he loves. Thus, his ambitious living and debt have led to a destruction of his happiness.

Hawkins goes on, however, to reinitiate flirting with Francie when he returns to Lismoyle and she is already married. Initially, she is very cold toward him, her pain at his playing her for a fool still fresh. She still loves him, however, and he comes to understand that. In his persistence, he wears her down, and has her at the brink of leaving Roddy to run away with him when the news of Dysart's discovery causes her to renew her loyalty to her husband. Hawkins was willing -- eager, even -- to walk away from his engagement, his debts, and his duty to the army to abscond to New Zealand with another man's wife. He does not merely fantasize about this or suggest it to Francie once, but he really pushes her to accept his plan with all his persuasiveness. He almost succeeds in leading the young girl into adultery (although she would have been a willing participant, such a decision would have only come about in response to his pressure). He meets her on the day he had hoped to finally convince her, unaware of the news about her husband. Francie is on her way to Charlotte's to bring news that she has managed to convince Dysart not to destroy Roddy (Dysart had also been in love with Francie, and had even proposed to her before her husband) when Hawkins begins to make his case anew, and he gets verbally aggressive when she resists with newfound vigor. It is to get away from him that Francie rides her horse up the narrow path past the funeral procession (instead of making her horse to stand still, as etiquette dictated) (379). As she is trying to squeeze by, the horse is spooked, causing it to throw her to the ground on her head, killing her. Thus Hawkins' debt cost him the marriage he wanted, and his immoral entreaties resulted in the death of the woman he loved.

Francie's death might have spared her a lifetime of regret with Lambert or the commission of a mortal sin, but she did not die contentedly and peacefully as Sally Cavanagh or Rose Mulvany. The misery of all the main characters, including Francie, was the product of

their own conduct and choices, and the direct results of breaches in the Irish values of contented poverty and Christian morality (and, in the case of Charlotte Mullen, many more).

Like *The Real Charlotte's* preoccupation with marriage and romance, Michael Banim's *The Town of the Cascades* also focuses on a domestic issue: alcoholism. And also like *The Real Charlotte*, Banim's novel neither focuses on poverty nor shows much of it aside from the very end. Even then, its treatment is of a very different character than what is seen in most of the other novels, Irish or English. Early on, Banim does make a note regarding economic and social disparity when looking at the town graveyard. He spends a page talking about the elaborate vaults for the "genteel" population of the cemetery. Banim then notes that, "...these distinguishing marks were few in the high-up 'village of the dead,' as compared with the abodes of the unnoted population ; those who had dwelt in hovels while alive outnumbered all the others by far" (Banim 1: 23). He goes on to say that those graves were of low elevation and marked by odd stones and whatnot which would only be recognized as a grave by the relations who had placed it. They were "unnoted" in life and anonymous in death.

Still, that merely notes the reality that many of the rural inhabitants of Ireland were poor and unremarked by history, even though they outnumbered their more "notable" neighbors. There's no allegation of injustice in the disparity, simply an observation on the simple country ways and the lot of most Irishmen. It is interesting that Banim, writing in 1863, does incorporate a direct mention of the evictions of the Famine-era and afterward when he digresses for a bit into burial practices of the countryside,

> At the present moment a very scanty sod is immediately underfoot ; the early occupiers must have been laid in "narrow houses" scooped out from the rock. Now, when a new dweller comes, there is not room for him ; an old inhabitant

> must be either entirely or partially displaced to give the incoming tenant accommodation. *"Ejectment" must be resorted to here, as with the living.* (1: 24) [emphasis mine]

Aside from that, Banim does not mention political issues much at all. When he does moralize, he seems to concern himself most with right living, especially as concerned alcohol. He gives the example of Tom O'Loughlin. This man came from "what is called 'a good family'" (1: 102-3) and had a modest inheritance. He lived a lavish and dissipating lifestyle, engaging in leisure, gambling, and drinking "without a single glance beyond the excitement of the hour, thus leading, as he himself recklessly expressed it in his favourite toast, 'a short life and a merry one!'" (1: 103). In consequence, "Tom O'Loughlin was avoided by every one, because he would fain beg or borrow of every one" (1: 103). Tom's example fits precisely into the Irish value system. While he had material comfort (Banim is careful to indicate that his inheritance was not large, but enough to allow him "moderate independence"), he burned through it by engaging in immoral living and an attempt to live out a sort of pretentiousness. As a result, he is not only reduced to a destitute poverty of his own making (he must rely on mismatched handouts of clothing, etc), but he is ushered outside of the life of the community, a terrible fate. It is important to note that he is not shunned because of his poverty, destitution, or appearance, but rather because he imposes on his neighbors for material goods, not due to his poverty, but due to his behavior-reinforced poverty.

His need for charity was brought about by a commitment to immoral living. "Even in his extreme poverty, the desire for indulgence had not left him, and he would ingratiate himself wherever his subserviency might lead to gratification" (1: 104). He was thus known as "the decayed gentleman" by the inhabitants of the town. While he was ostracised from the

community life, Banim is careful to note that "...to the credit of the inhabitants be it recorded, that the poor wretch was regarded rather as an object of commiseration than of censure" (1: 104). Unrepentant, he and his carousing compatriot, Ned Culkin, find themselves debilitated and sheltering at the workhouse by the end of the tale (2: 194).

There are several examples in the second volume where beggars who are impoverished due to different means are treated very well by the community. Most notably, the spiteful and vindictive Nora Spruhan was treated well by those giving her alms as well as those who would invite her in to put a roof over her head for the night. She sits by the cliff begging because she was so haunted by the consequences of her actions with Richard O'Meara. A shattered woman, she engages in such penance the rest of her life, an example of Catholic piety. Consequently, she is treated well by the rest of the town. There are repercussions for her actions, but she is taken care of and wished peace in the afterlife by those who knew her in her spiteful, feisty days (2: 195). Similarly, the three beggars at the very end of the tale are treated with kindness and compassion by all who pass by while engaged in their profession.

The central narrative is about the fall of one Richard O'Meara told through the eyes of his friend and foster-brother, Michael Hanrahan and Michael's wife, Mary. Even though Richard was a professional man (a lawyer), he is described by Michael as being likeable because he carried himself in accordance with the Irish values: "if you met him walking abroad there, you couldn't but take a liking to him. He didn't swagger and want to pass himself off as a grandee" (1: 105).

Not only that, but Richard behaved in accordance with those values as well: "There was a degree of Quixotism very rare in the profession often guiding our young solicitor in his practice. Whenever the great oppressed the humble, whenever the rich was against the poor,

Richard O'Meara was found to be at the weaker side" (1: 108). Richard did not exhibit professional ambition. He could have chased high profile cases and clients in order to increase his professional standing and thus his status. Instead, he earned the reputation of being "the poor man's attorney" (1: 109).

There does emerge what might be a possible exception to the wealth rule when Richard wins the case for Ellen, the woman he secretly loves. He wins her her dowry, which is considerable, before marrying her (1: 110). This is not actually the exception it at first appears for three reasons. First, O'Meara owns that, "...had [she] remained poor, my exertions in [her] cause been unsuccessful, I would have sought [her] love as the most precious thing on earth" (1: 113). In this way, the situation is remarkably similar to that of Harry and Rose in *Oliver Twist*. Second, they do not change their living standards after marriage. Ellen moves in with Richard and his foster-brother, Michael. And lastly, it seems that the primary purpose of the dowry is to be lamentably dissipated as Richard becomes a raging alcoholic over the course of the story.

There are not too many other opportunities for the Irish values to peek through in the narrative, but there are a few. One of them comes from a song at the end of the first volume, describing Ireland as "The land 'where there's hospitality, all reality, no formality there you'll ever see…" (1: 274).

The story of Richard O'Meara's destruction does not offer much in the way of views on poverty, as the only times poverty really figures into the novel are in cases of utter destitution brought on by immoral living. There's not too much to be said for "contented poverty" in *The Town of the Cascades*, but there's not much to be said for "discontented poverty," either. Some of Peck's predicted fatalism does appear in Volume 2, however. When Ellen thinks about the

loss of two of her three children, she does not blame Richard, as well she might, but rather insists "It had been -- the will of God!" (2: 118).

Michael and Mary provide examples of ideal behavior, from the perspective of the Irish values. When they decide to marry, they do so very poor. Mary saves up her wages for years, and Richard owed much money to Michael. There was the possibility of a windfall, since Richard's debts were being called in. Mary and Michael had plans to open a shop after they got married. But Richard ran off, and his wife and child was left sick and destitute by the confiscation and sale of their household goods. Michael and Mary cannot bear to see Ellen and the child sick, so they forego their portion of the debt (Mary says there was not enough to cover the debts anyway) and to spend their own savings on them. They spend all they have, down to the last thirty shillings, and they decide to get married and start their life together on that (2: 186-7).

A final characteristic of the Irish values has to do with the ending of the novel. The Half-Pay, who is partially responsible for the start of Richard's decline, repents when he learns of the results of his actions. He tries to stop Richard from falling, but he cannot do so. This causes them to have a falling-out, a fight, and a duel. The break between the two old compatriots is thought to be irreconcilable, but because he considers himself responsible for Richard's subsequent destruction (including Ellen's death), he takes their son under his wing and leaves the town. The reader discovers at the end that he took the boy into his home when he received a large inheritance (something of an English-sounding ending), but he uses that inheritance to help the young boy, the Half-Pay's own remaining relations, and even Michael and Mary Hanrahan. Beyond that, when it becomes known that Richard is not dead (instead, he ran away and was

reduced to suffering as a blind beggar), the material comfort is used to help even his own, old "enemy" (2: 282-4).

While Kickham's novels (especially *Knocknagow*) provide the most ready examples of ideal Irish behavior, the Irish cultural values and perspective on poverty, both very distinct from the English ones, are found throughout all the popular literature of the period, and those values and that perspective find their roots in the Irish experience of institutional poverty and the PTSD-inducing horrors of the Famine, just as Peck asserted.

But the sands were shifting beneath those values and perspectives. There was a traditionalist element which sought to preserve them, but this element was made up of a number of groups with deep internal divisions. Many wanted to see those values preserved, but they wanted it for different reasons and for different ends. Thus, the traditionalists would at times find themselves working against each other as they fought over the meaning of the cultural renaissance, whether or not the Irish language should be saved, and exactly what it meant to be Irish in the twentieth century.

Chapter 6

THE TRADITIONALISTS

The traditionalist viewpoint in Irish fiction, which so dominated the nineteenth century after the Famine, was not a monolithic structure. Even before it encountered the serious ideological opposition described in the next chapter, it found itself opposed from within. The imperative for the traditionalist viewpoint may well have been rooted in the destruction of the rural way of life, but not all traditionalists were concerned with the same aspects of the culture.

While many figures (such as Yeats) were both cultural revivalists as well as nationalists, one did not necessarily have to be an adherent to both groups in order to affirm the aims of one. The national-identity formation of the cultural revivalists was seized upon by the nationalists, however, and this is significant. Thus, the two separate things -- cultural revival and political nationalism -- were indeed bound together in several practical ways.

> That the issue facing turn-of-the-century Ireland was cultural-political rather than purely, and reductively, political informed the majority of the writers of the period but none more so than D. P. Moran whose essay 'The Battle of Two Civilizations', which first appeared in his journal The Leader, then in Lady Gregory's Ideals in Ireland in 1901, argued that 'mere political independence'" would not create a nation, for 'the development of nationality is the natural development of a distinct civilization'" and it was this fatal division - 'this primary contradiction" - between nationality and civilization which, asserted Moran, had plagued Irish political leaders throughout the nineteenth century. (Richards 122)

That the two should have been bound together sooner or later should have surprised no one. There were several elements to these movements. There were language revivalists, trying to save the Irish language; there were cultural revivalists, trying to glorify and popularize the vestiges of ancient Celtic lore and practices; and, there were nationalists of various stripes ranging, at various times, from those looking to repeal the Act of Union, to those looking for an expanded Home Rule, to those seeking complete independence. For all of these groups (and the various shades of philosophy and approach which existed within each), a sense of national identity was essential, and so the work of cultural and language organizations provided a foundation upon which each group sought to build its own vision of Ireland. This necessarily meant reaching for those aspects of the culture which were most alien to British culture in an effort to emphasize the distinctness of Ireland.

> The advent of the Gaelic League in 1893 with its revitalization of the indigenous language and culture had brought to the fore the fact that 'a distinct nation is a distinct civilization',' and in response to his own question 'What is Irish nationality?', Moran articulated that which was central to the polemic of the period: that the Irish had conceived 'a mean and cringing opinion of themselves'," the country was suffering from 'the lack of an Irish heart',' and the Irishman foundered in insecurity and ignorance, imitating the fashions of an England he claimed to despise, being all the time 'not aware that he ever had a civilization'.' The objective, then, of Moran and others, was to convert that past tense into present and so generate an independent Ireland in the future; one whose viability and, indeed, validity, would be according to the degree that it repossessed the civilization of its past. (Richards 122)

After all, if Ireland were to be Anglicized to the degree of Cornwall or Strathclyde, what justification could there be for independence or even political autonomy? Since the English had been in Ireland for so very long (seven centuries by the time of the creation of the Irish Free State), this necessitated reaching back very far indeed.

Just as will be shown with the progressives, modernists, and socialists, the traditionalists were made up of several different groups with completely different goals that just happened to be pulling the literature in the same ideological direction. That direction, more or less, is one of isolation from outside influences.

Some of the traditionalists, like Carleton, advocated a minimal level of isolation. He discourages emigration, and he does make the city (a place with unrestricted access to foreign ideas -- a form of what O'Leary calls "cosmopolitanism" throughout *The Prose Literature Of The Gaelic Revival*) an undesirable place for his rural characters to be.

Kickham shows a greater level. His Knocknagow is situated in a place so idealized that it reflects reality only slightly. His method of endorsing isolation is to maintain a rural life at all costs. Those who emigrate meet a bad fate if they are not retrieved to Ireland quickly enough. Bessy returns straight away when Mat finds her, several of the men come home missing arms or legs and Rose meets a pitiful end (albeit with small consolation due to her repentance). Kickham's rural haven is insulated from reality.

But the traditionalists also included the language revivalists and cultural revivalists who did not write novels. The cultural revivalists attempted to reach back to a time when native Irish culture was unencumbered with foreign overlords. That meant isolation from the modern world. For some, like Yeats, even Christianity was too much of a "modern," "foreign" influence. The cultural revivalists attempted to create an "authentic" Irish culture based in a romanticized

"golden age" set between the Roman withdrawal from Britain and the coming of Strongbow. As Kiberd noted, this form of literature and thought suffered from a near-fatal nativism. He writes, "A literature which tries to explain and justify a culture may all too easily lapse into apologetics, into defensive demonstrations that such a thing as a native culture exists" (*Irish Classics* 269). In short, the cultural revivalists were striving to demonstrate that a distinct Irish culture worthy of independent status (culturally, if not also politically) still existed in the wake of the Famine which devastated the rural and Irish-speaking population.

But it is perhaps the language enthusiasts who had the most deliberate and purposeful isolation. They were trying to keep out a foreign language which had actually become the primary spoken language of the country. Part of this was an attempt to control the cultural dialogue. Pádraic Ó Conaire spoke of wanting to erect an ideological/linguistic wall through which "no idea" could get through "from the outside" (O'Leary 19).

> While Ó Conaire saw his wall as a temporary defensework behind which Gaelic culture could regroup in preparation for resuming an active role in contemporary European civilization, other language revivalists envisioned it as a permanent feature of the Irish intellectual landscape, one designated to keep the country safely quarantined from what they regarded as the pernicious moral atmosphere of the new century. (19)

The goal was, at least in part, to have the dialogue of the national literature conducted in the Irish language to limit undesirable foreign (and presumably, even domestic) ideas from entering the arena. O'Leary notes several times throughout his first chapter that a disproportionate number of writers in the language were priests, and many of those who weren't were very conservative in their moral thinking. He states that one of the goals was to place

> ...such an emphasis on the role of the Irish language and its traditions as a defense against the debilitating effects of decadent foreign literatures and worldviews was central to the nativist position and shared by many other less ideologically rigid revivalists. Indeed, it is probably fair to say that most Gaels supported both bishops and county councillors when they denounced immoral publications, and welcomed the Catholic Truth Society and new Catholic periodicals… (33)

The fact that there was a division even within the language revivalist traditionalist ranks, namely that some of the leaders like Pearse were not Catholic and desired linguistic isolation for different reasons, further complicates the matter. "Pearse agreed in an early editorial blast at the pseudosophistication of foes of the Revival: 'We fear that in Ireland, "cosmopolitanism"...is only another word for Anglicization" (56). Perhaps it was all the competing subdivisions which would be the undoing of the traditionalist view in the face of a more united alliance of ideologies.

Anglo-Irish works were outright shunned by the Gaelic Revivalists. Pearse actively opposed the development of an Irish literature in the English language. He argued that Yeats' theater should be "strangled at its birth" (281).

> Pearse could admit that it had never occurred to him to read Kickham, and could ask: "How comes it that we who have heard persistently the call of Gaelic Ireland, of Puritan England, of enthusiastic france, of metaphysical Germany, have never even for a moment heard the call of Anglo-Ireland?" (329)

And he was by no means alone. Fr. Dinneen, another of the language revival leaders, felt that "With a foreign language come foreign modes of thought, foreign ideals in art and literature, foreign customs, foreign manners, the spread of all that is debasing in foreign literature….No

genuine native school of literature, or of art, can ever be created from foreign or Anglo-Irish models" (283). Widespread among the revivalists was the belief that any Anglo-Irish literature was simply a form of British literature (285). This was not simply a lament for a lost opportunity of creating a national corpus of literature. The appeal of Anglo-Irish literature itself was "dangerous" (287). People would be induced to read a literature that reflected themselves without having to learn Irish. If they could get such a diet in English, the Irish language would surely be left to finally wither and die.

But these revivalists had another difficulty: there was not enough to make up a literature. Few people were writing in the language by that point, few fluent speakers were capable or inclined to read longer works, and half of the Irish-language classics had been written so long before that they required updating in order to be intelligible to a modern audience, such as it was (228-31).

Indeed, a lack of material was a serious problem. While there were many activists who wanted to see Irish literature and drama capture the center ground of a new Irish literary movement, with few exceptions, they were not producing the works.

> Writing in *Irish Freedom* four years later, Ua hÉigeartaigh challenged Gaels to examine their own consciences before attacking the Abbey for its failure to produce plays in Irish: "Has anybody ever submitted a play in Irish to them? Has the Gaelic League ever asked them to do a play in Irish, or helped them to organise an Irish side to their company? And above all, what encouragement have they had in their uphill upbuilding of drama in Ireland from the Gaelic League, and what support from Gaelic Leaguers?" (320)

And even if they produced the works, who could fluently read them who was also possessed of great acting ability? There was a problem with quantity, but even when quantity could be supplied, there was a problem with quality. What was true for drama was also the case for prose.

> If Gaelic actors were, however, to miraculously master their craft as fully as had the Fays, Sara Allgood, or Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, where would they find the plays to showcase their skills? As has been noted, there were only a handful of Gaelic plays at this time, and the vast majority of those were either brief knockabout farces, woodenly orthodox propaganda pieces, or unwieldy, pseudo-Shakespearean melodramas. There was also, however, a precedent for the translation of Anglo-Irish plays into Irish, a precedent several influential revivalists saw offering the best immediate source of relatively sophisticated plays… (322)

So both sides began producing translations and versions of older works. Not only were there Anglo-Irish adaptations and translations of ancient Irish texts (harkening back to the pre-Norman "golden age"), but there were modern Irish translations of ancient Irish texts and non-Irish texts as well. The Irish Texts Society, for instance, published a version of *The Aeneid* in Irish. Not even *Knocknagow* escaped translation (an effort to take the most popular Irish novel and capitalize on it for the Irish language market). The Oireachtas began offering a prize in 1900 for modernized Irish-language versions of Old and Middle Irish tales (232-3). Despite the prediction that Irish drama would "drive English drama from the stage in a few more years," such a supplanting was never to be (298).

O'Leary describes the coming together of the cultural and language revivalists as an "uneasy alliance." The language revivalists could use some of what the cultural revivalists were very effectively producing (both texts and institutions, such as the Abbey Theatre), and the cultural revivalists could use the language revivalists work with ancient and classical texts. The (primarily Catholic) religious conservatives could use them both. As will be shown in the next chapter, the alliance between the socialists, modernists, and progressives involved much less intranecine conflict and mistrust.

But the language revivalists themselves would demonstrate perhaps the greatest ideological differences within any particular movement. While several other groups made at times, uneasy bedfellows, it was the language revivalists alone who could be found in both the traditionalist and modernist movements. Each subset had mutually exclusive methods for achieving the same goal: saving the Irish language. The issue was that they disagreed not only over how best to accomplish the preservation and revival of Irish as a spoken and literary language, but even what sort of Irish language should be the aim of any efforts.

> Indeed one Dublin Gael complained tongue-in-cheek that through his reading he had acquired a truly impressive and entirely useless familiarity with the practices and accoutrements of farm life…As early as 1898 one "Fear na Cathrach" (The city man) had jolted readers of *Fáinne an Lae* with a stark pronouncement that called into question the central tenet of Gaelic League ideology, the indissoluble link between the language and the historic Irish nation: "If Irish is only suited for the country, it's not a national language at all, but only a poor dialect that's not worth discussion or debate. It will be dead before the question is settled." (401-2)

And so there is evidence that the post-Famine population influx to urban centers was causing language revivalists (in many ways the core of the traditionalist trend) to admit the reality of the situation. A significant portion of the country's population now lived in cities, people were leaving the country for the cities in increasing numbers (both foreign and domestic cities), and cities offered the opportunity for vibrant intellectual and artistic life. The language revival modernists recognized that the twentieth century would be a century of cities, not a rural century. In order to revive Irish, the language would have to be relevant to life actually lived by those producing the literature (most were writing in cities) as well as the majority of the audience.

> Of course, the most influential voice calling for a truly modern Gaelic literature was that of Patrick Pearse, who proclaimed in 1906: "This is the twentieth century; and no literature can take root in the twentieth century which is not of the twentieth century. We want no Gothic revival." (404)

But that does not mean that those who saw the language as an opportunity to morally or culturally insulate the Irish people accepted the notion. The fight over how best to save the Irish language and what the societal role of that language should be was vicious.

> In the very same issue of *Fáinne an Lae* in which "Fear na Cathrach" concluded his eloquent call for Irish speakers to reclaim the cities and thus establish the language on a truly national basis, the paper's editor wrote, in a different context: "Dublin is the great English language city and an enemy of Irish….And it is the place from which the countryside has most been Anglicized." (408)

The editor of a major publication of the language revival movement regarded the largest and most economically vibrant population centers to be the enemies of the language and culture. He is essentially arguing that the "national" language is, by definition, the language of a minority

of the nation. Rather than considering the cities part of the nation, many traditionalists (even those who were not specifically language revivalists) looked at them as something from which the "real" Irishmen needed to be protected. The threat of the cities was dual in nature. The first threat was the cultural and economic domination of the urban way of life. That way of life was incompatible with the traditional Irish values such as hospitality and sense of community. Without that sense of community, the people became anonymous and could find no respite from the hard knocks of life.

> And in the absence of a concerned and supportive community, such urban poverty was infinitely more painful and degrading than the rural variety: "If a traveler approaches a house in the city, he is met with inhospitality on the threshold. If he stands in a sheltered corner to let the stormy weather pass him by, a policeman rousts him out. The hardship doesn't allow him to be quiet and at rest, and the law and the inhospitality of the rich people don't allow him to be at rest or content." (415-6)

Life in the country was full of hardships, sorrows and poverty, but the sense of community bond meant that one was cared about by one's neighbors. A degree of support was as close as the nearest neighbor. This was not the case in the cities. If one was ground down by life, there was nowhere outside one's own family where one could find support. This meant that life would eventually become endlessly tiresome and depressing. Having no respite meant that the beleaguered only became more so as a dreary existence rolled interminably onward.

The second threat the cities posed was their allure. The Irish needed to be protected from themselves. Despite all the ills city life had to offer, people were flocking there from the countryside by the thousands:

> The heroine of ["Gach Duine agus a Cheobhrán Féin air"] finds Dublin little better [than London]: "The young girl hated the city; the day they would spend on Grafton Street would seem longer to her than a week at the foot of Sliabh Ruadh." And most revivalists would have agreed that their own capital was in no way a satisfactory home for rural people, especially native speakers. Indeed, for many Gaels Dublin was the most insidious of all cities, but for its alluring proximity and for its plausible brut fraudulent claim to be Irish. (413-4)

Again, we see the allegation that the largest Irish city was not Irish at all. It does seem rather contradictory to attempt to keep the country people ignorant of the ways of the world while expecting them to pass up the cosmopolitan allure of urban life (not to mention its economic opportunities). The revivalists who sought to establish the only authentic "Irishness" as rural were seeking to control the conversation completely. They wouldn't have to compete with Anglo or European values in the free market of ideas if they could but scare the rural people away from ever encountering them. Unfortunately for them, since the English language was already so dominant, there was no way to turn off the spigot.

Thus, the country life was connected with a sort of Eden. Irish country life was life as God intended. As William Cowper wrote in "The Sofa" (1785), "God made the country, and man made the town." This sentiment is echoed down to the modern age:

> The rather abstract dichotomy outlined by Thompson found more vivid expression in the writings of many revivalists: "Behind me I was leaving anglicisation with all its hideousness and soulless materialism, its big smoking chimnies [sic] and prisonlike factories (called commercial property) where thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen in their struggle for a sordid existence

> forget they have a soul. Before me lay the Gaedhealtacht where the spiritual passionate Gael with his simple beautiful customs, speaking his own language and singing his own sweet songs, lived as God intended that he should." (O'Leary 409)

One can easily see images of Gaskell's Manchester and Dickens' Coketown in the ugly description of city grime. While the above excerpt emphasizes the prison-like qualities of the factories (one of the main reasons impoverished country peasants went to the cities in the first place), others sought to emphasize sickness, decay, and death.

> Séamus Ó Dubhghaill, author of "Cainnt na Cathrach / City Chats," was even more lurid in his picture of the dangers of urban corruption: "Some day England's power will be broken. Where there is growth there will be decline and there will be withering and there will be decay. This sickness has already come over England, where the cities seem to show an advanced decay and a withered state. They are much like cancers on a person's body or worms in a sheep's groin. the poison of the cities will spew out into the country. Some of it has already spewed out. If we want to protect ourselves from the poison, our only protective shields are the grace of God and the Irish language." This link between God, Gaelic, and country life was, of course, a central article of the nativist creed. (409)

Always present was the insistence on the link between God and country life. For the vast majority of the country peasants, that meant the Catholic Church, and so the Church became yet another way to exercise social control. The power of the priest is evident in many of the Irish novels heretofore examined (qv. *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* in particular), and the influence of the Church will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

Their solution to the urban allure was to popularize the image of the country peasant who travels to the city to find misery, longing to return to the rural life but unable to do so. This was successful to a degree in that many Irish regarded city life with suspicion and fear.

> Yet despite this success and despite his own personal familiarity with urban life in Cardiff, Belfast, and London, [novelist] "Conán [Maol]" saw the city through suspicious eyes. Like Ó Conaire he frequently emphasizes urban poverty, most notably in a scene in which a group of desperate men pressing forward in search of work as dockers inadvertently shove several of their number off a pier. He also makes clear that many of London's poor are Irish country people who regret their mistake in coming and would go home if they could. (435)

But the modernists fired back with an argument that is relevant in the Irish language revival community today. While it is generally recognized that Irish is most "at home" in a rural setting, that lifestyle is diminishing. It is economically hard to compete with the opportunities available in city life. Today, this argument takes on even greater relevance as corporate agribusiness puts many farmers and fishermen out of business or forces them to conduct their livelihood English. The question that the modernist revivalists ask is simple: Shall we concede the majority of the population and economy of the country to English, preserving the rural West as a linguistic museum, or are we to try to make headway in taking back the hearts, minds, and tongues of the cities?

Thus, the language revival movement found in its midst a large group of adherents who were intent on carrying the language into the new century:

> Throughout much of the [first quarter of the twentieth century] the League formed the nucleus of a popular movement that sponsored Irish language classes and

> cultural events, encouraged Irish industries, pressed for bilingual education for native-speaking children in the National School system, and campaigned for a compulsory Irish-language requirement for matriculation in the National University of Ireland. In short, the Gaelic League was in the van of Irish cultural nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century in that it sought to maintain and develop native culture (McMahon 2).

Indeed, late in the novel Ó Cearnaigh confronts nativist ideology head-on when a priest friend urges him to return home to the Gaeltacht: "The new literature of Ireland will come from the country. The towns we have are decayed, spoiled. Neither the spirit of Christ nor the spirit of Cú Chulainn is in them…" (O'Leary 440). Unlike virtually all of the urban exiles we have previously encountered, Caoimhghín has the means to follow this advice. Moreover, as an orthodox Gael he accepts the fundamental truth of the priest's condemnation of urban life and wants to go home. The vocation he has come to realize through the course of the novel, however, calls him to stay in Dublin, striving to awaken his fellow citizens from what James Joyce at precisely this time but from an entirely different perspective called their paralysis… (440)

The traditionalists argued that the cities were not exactly lost, but that they were never truly Irish to begin with. Indeed, most of Ireland's cities were founded by either the Vikings or the English. Thus, the Irish language was a pastoral language, and suitable only to express those values and ideas.

> The Liverpool-born Dubliner Piaras Béaslaí, whose own pioneering efforts in several fields we have already encountered, provided a blunt and selfless summary of the central issue: "The writer of Irish literature should be able to draw

> on the life around him for his material. To put it as simply as possible: --Literature should grow out of life. *An Irish literature must grow out of an Irish-speaking life.* It cannot grow out of the English-speaking, English-thinking life of Dublin." (418)

This question of authenticity was not to be take up lightly. The modernist authors in the revival movement tried relentlessly, but took decades to hit their stride. They were determined to bring the language into the modern age, dragging it, kicking and screaming, if necessary. That, they saw, was the only way for the language to remain relevant. While the traditionalists felt that the language needed to be "pure" in order to be worth saving, the modernists believed it needed to be relevant in the new century of cities and factories, of machines and cosmopolitan ideas.

> Ó Conaire was a true pioneer in his willingness to deal seriously with authentic urban themes in Irish… Nonetheless, however firm his commitment to bringing Irish into the twentieth century, and however great his own debt to the intellectual freedom and ferment of urban life, he invariably saw the city through the eyes of an outsider, remaining in many ways as suspicious as any Gaeltacht nativist of "the false civilization of the age..." (430)

While the anti-urban value became pretty standard in Irish literature (as has already be shown), it was not enough to supercede the allure of the cities, and so migration continued. The traditionalists' "war on modernity" escalated in pitch. Even if a youth did not die in urban misery, he would be utterly corrupted by his time there.

> Forced to adapt to his new [city] life, Labhras [from Ó Grianna's 1920 novel *Mo Dhá Róisín*] changes in many ways. For example, he becomes quite a dapper

> dresser, begins to speak what his father contemptuously dismisses as "Dublin Irish"...and looks down his nose at the poverty and even the customs of his native place. It is, therefore, little surprise that the people of that place feel he has been corrupted by the capital. (451)

The change described is one similar to what was undergone by Miss Evans in *Sally Cavanagh*. By putting on airs and looking down on one's "real" people, the city-dweller is tragically lost to loved ones, even if he returns alive. But, for those who sought a "better" life for themselves of their children, even the traditionalists (being largely artists and academics), had to admit that it was not all bad: "In one way, however, Ó Grianna clearly feels Labhras has changed for the better, as his experience with the intellectual tumult of urban life permits him a political sophistication far beyond that possible to the Gaeltacht dweller who never left home" (451-2).

So it was that many of the writers themselves discovered they were caught between two worlds and navigating it more or less successfully. After all, they were publishing and making a living. They were engaging with the language while (many of them) living in cities themselves. But even the modernists did find that the language did not lend itself to urban ideas as easily as they would have liked would have been possible.

> In Seán Ua Ceallaigh's amusing 1917 story "An Ceithearnach is a Chéile" (The Kerne and his wife), a boorish countryman and his spouse arrive dirty and with no luggage at the most fashionable hotel in Dublin, take the most expensive room after an elevator ride that terrifies the wife, order an enormous meal after asking for a Gaelic menu in place of the French one they can't read, and in general behave in a n outlandish manner, scandalizing the quality...but always paying

> without question and tipping lavishly before departing into legendary status on an ass cart. Most Gaelic writers on urban themes must have shared the couple's sense of being somewhat at sea in exotic surroundings, but few had their unflappable self-possession… In this sense both these authors and their colleagues intimidated into silence on urban themes were the first victims of what the contemporary Gaelic novelist Diarmaid Ó Súilleabháin has called "the schizophrenic state of the Gaelic novelist"...a condition brought on by trying to write in Irish of a life lived in English. (444)

At its heart, city life *was* English life while Irish life found its most organic expression in the countryside. That's not to say that the entire countryside was Irish-speaking. No, most of it was English-speaking, but life-lived-through-Irish existed only in pockets of the urban landscape, often supported by language-revival organizations. Only in rural villages was it truly the language of the majority of inhabitants, used daily without struggle...when it was found in a village at all, that is. The specially demarcated (after independence) *Gaeltacht*, the name given to Irish speaking areas, translates to "the Irish area," while the *Galltacht*, the term that would apply to most of the area and population of Ireland, translates to "the foreign area." That alone speaks volumes in either language.

Chapter 7

THE GREAT SHIFT IN IRISH LITERARY VALUES

The traditionalist view was a reactionary and a protectionist one. For them, it was not enough to have gotten a square economic deal from the British. As has been shown, such treatment was not the case, but even if it had been, at what cost would it have come? For this reason, charges of being anti-modern could be (and were) leveled against the traditionalists. The traditionalist view is given by Douglas Hyde in positive tones:

> Hyde hypothesized a situation in which an able English administration of Ireland produced 'a land of wealth and factories' which was achieved at the cost of the unremitting extermination of 'every spark of national feeling'. 'How many Irishmen are there who would purchase material prosperity at such a price?' asked Hyde, and in his response that while nine out of ten Englishmen would gladly accept such an exchange of identity for wealth, nine out of ten Irishmen would indignantly refuse, he delineated that definition of the Irish essence which runs throughout the writing of the period: its anti-material bias...also provided a clear line of contact with the pastoral concept of Ireland developed in the cultural nationalism of Thomas Davis and The Nation. De-Anglicization, while having a political implication, is more broadly considered as a far reaching cultural (and also economic) programme in which the nation will realize itself only through a return to its own cultural heritage. The ramifications of such a nascent policy were indeed far reaching, for a future Irish state organized according to such principles would not only be exclusivist but inherently conservative. (Richards 126)

It is important to note that this implied two things. First, securing fair treatment from a British colonial system was no longer good enough to serve as a goal. Second, even a future, independent Irish government would not be allowed to sacrifice many of the traditionalist values in an effort to run a successful, modern state. By the time that state actually came into existence (even in a subsequent form as a full republic), other ideologies were pulling away from the traditionalist views, with neither one able to secure complete dominance over the other. Consequently, independent Ireland would be inhibited by having some of its governing principles seemingly at cross purposes to other of its governing principles.

Kickham, like the other "traditionalist" novelists, does have an anti-modern message. This was also partially the reason for the emphasis on the rural over the urban. Cities were full of new ideas, new technology, and new people (as opposed to the small, tight-knit rural communities of the agrarian novels).

> When Kickham renews the project of the Irish national novel...he chooses as the central hero of *Knocknagow* another example of a nonbourgeois male, the laborer Mat the Thrasher. But before the "rollickingest, rovingest blade in all Tipperary" can become a family man, Mat has a definite task to perform. He must win his sweetheart Bessy back from the temptations and dangers of modern life beyond the little village. For this national romance to succeed, the lovers (especially the woman) must recommit themselves to their native place. (Nolan 107)

The modern world (in this case, America, which Kickham did view positively and as Ireland's best hope of salvation, as opposed to an Irish city) held temptations to immorality, destruction of tradition, and lack of connection to community. Not only that, but his overly-rosy picture might actually be considered a strength in this regard as "the idealizing haze through

which Kickham views his Tipperary peasants is typical of the mindset of Irish nationalism" (111). Kickham really is the quintessential Irish novelist of the period.

William Carleton would present a close second for that title. He had a deep connection to the people he was attempting to represent. He presents not quite the idealized picture Kickham does (especially regarding the Catholic Church), but it is perhaps his slightly more realistic picture that prevents him from snatching the title from Kickham in the mind of the nineteenth century Irish audience. Still, he is a man who clearly wrote what he knew, and this was part of his appeal:

> ...he was himself a countryman and could write about the peasantry from within. And he would write about them with utter accuracy, so that the young people in the cottages, when taking up his books, would confirm their truth. For Carleton could see all around him...that...the peasantry would soon be construing the narratives that purported to construe them. (*Irish Classics* 266)

Despite writing about his own lived experiences, Carleton had a deep philosophical break with the Catholic Church early on, and that provided a deep division between him and the vast majority of his countrymen (and the peasants about which he wrote). Kiberd argues that this may have actually been a strength of his when he notes that, "To write about his people at all, Carleton had to remove himself from them" (*Irish Classics* 267). Kiberd argues that his removal from his countrymen gave Carleton valuable perspective. He was *from* them in his origins and upbringing, he lived *among* them as he observed and wrote throughout his life, but he was no longer *of* them in the sense that Kickham was, and this allowed him to assess the culture and sociopolitical situation somewhat more objectively. In short, he was able to be objective without being entirely dispassionate. By imposing a kind of ideological or philosophical exile on

himself, he was able to offer more effective resistance to the injustices of the colonial system without relying on the kind of violence resorted to by the Ribbonmen and other such groups, which he hated. Kiberd states that, "Writing is one alternative to violence, but in order to write one may have to go into exile. Success at such work and then seem like a form of betrayal, removing the writer further still from the very people whose lives he wishes to report" (*Irish Classics* 267). In this, he recognizes that Carleton's finding of fault with the system and his suggestions for the amelioration of legislative and economic injustice was harder to dismiss for a unionist or an Englishman than would have been Kickham's, but by eschewing Kickham's solutions in the form of the Church, America, and notions of inherent strength in Irish society, he made himself somewhat less popular among his own countrymen.

One aspect of Carleton's appeal, despite his anti-Catholic attitudes and reticence to romanticize to the degree Kickham had, was his superiority as a writer. While some, like O'Leary, noted aspects of Kickham's writing which were lackluster, Carleton was much more successful at his art. Kiberd notes that,

> Part of Carleton's achievement as a writer would be his rendition of a social panorama, a cross-section of peasant types, and above all his gift for capturing and individual moving through a vast crowd. With a population of perhaps seven million, Ireland was very crowded in those years. Soon it would not be crowded at all...and then his stories would have the poignancy of pictures of laughing, happy persons taken on the eve of some terrible holocaust which destroyed them utterly. (*Irish Classics* 266-7)

Carleton's characters were more three-dimensional than Kickham's, and so served to better preserve the essences of those friends, neighbors, and kin who were lost to his readers during the

horrors of the Famine and the decades of emigration which followed. Kickham was popular because he allowed Irishmen to see themselves as they wished they were; Carleton was popular because he allowed his readers to reconnect with those whom they lost.

If Carleton was treading two separate paths when it came to the predominantly Catholic Irish culture, he was also treading two divergent paths ideologically. He recognized the faults in the system which led to and exacerbated the effects of the Famine were not solely the provenance of an unjust land system and ill-conceived laws. True, they bore the primary responsibility for it all, but Carleton recognized that some aspects of Irish society were, at best, less than helpful; at worst, contributing factors.

Because of this, Carleton recognized that the culture would also have to change if Ireland was to have a future. Whereas Kickham advocated a return to and enshrinement of traditional Irish core values, Carleton wanted to see some of them change. This resulted in Carleton having many more specific political suggestions in his texts than did Kickham. That said, Carleton, at times, seems to be unable to fully commit to some of his more progressive suggestions, if not philosophically, at least in writing.

> But Carlton believed in progress, or at least he thought he did. That is the point of all those fussy scientific disclaimers and footnotes, which distance him from the folk beliefs of his people. All the same, there is something strange about such gestures, and that strain may be rooted in his uncertainty about the value of 'progress' itself. (*Irish Classics* 273)

Carleton's dilemma, as was most evident with the Irish-language authors of the previous chapter, was not merely for him alone, but was shared by a number of his contemporaries.

So the Irish novels of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries may have been agrarian and traditionalist in nature, but this was not to remain the case. Ireland was changing socially and economically (in no small part to the demographic effects of the Famine), and so the values that underpinned the old society would change as well. Writers like Kickham, Carleton, and Michael Banim would all play a part in forging and fostering a sense of national identity and an "ideal" Irishman. They would also tender their solutions to the difficulties that faced the nation during the period.

> There also appears to be an attempt to appeal to Irish landowners to side with their tenants against the Government. For Kickham, it should be Irishmen united against Englishmen rather than landowner against tenant. The only chance of finally settling the Land Question is with full Irish Independence. (Davis 174)

This, as will be shown, was precisely the opposite view of the socialist viewpoint which was rapidly gaining appeal and popularity as the country industrialized and urbanized. For the socialists, the Irish/English rivalry was a distraction from the "real" struggle between the working class and the capitalists. For the tenant to join with his landlord in opposing the English, only to live in an independent Ireland where he was still a tenant serving a landlord would have been a pointless failure. Irish independence was necessary, in their view, not because Irish capitalists would have been better masters (remember Kickham and Carleton's criticism of Irish middlemen) but because a new Irish state was the greatest opportunity to overthrow the capitalist order as it existed under British rule and replace it with something wholly different.

In "The Poetry Of Poverty," Henry Carpenter, writing during the period under study, affirms that there had been an British literary tradition of realism in depictions of poverty

juxtaposed to an Irish literary tradition of idealism going back at least to the eighteenth century. He notes "a tender glow, as of the dying day; a pensive, lingering light of sentiment, which tones down the sharp outlines of distress and pain till they grow beautiful in the hues that invest them" (243). The fact that this idealism predates the Famine does not negate Peck's theory that a multigenerational response to trauma accounts for silence on many aspects of poverty in the Irish literature. Her theory is sound in that the novel horrors of the Famine were suppressed, but it is also true that the Irish were coping with centuries of poverty and oppression leading up to that event. "[Multigenerational trauma] involves learning to experience an intense...helplessness...through viewing another's experience of trauma...and learning to react/act in similar fashion… The terms historical or cultural trauma have also been used to accent the depth and breadth of certain traumatic experiences shared by many" (Coll 95). While not as singularly traumatic as the Famine, the sense of hopelessness and helplessness it engendered laid the foundations for Kickham's "contented poverty." Indeed, that aspect of the Irish values was firmly in place long before the Famine, as Carpenter recognized. Coll, et al. affirm that the Irish experienced this trauma not only through the specific event of the Famine, but through "centuries of English oppression and colonialism...which included: Physical coercion; Sexual exploitation; Economic exploitation; Political exclusion, and Control of ideology and culture" (96). Attributable to this was a "deep psychological legacy of trauma" including dependency, ambivalence toward the colonizer, and suppression of anger and rage (96), along with many other results.

These long-standing coping mechanisms set the stage for psychological attempts to deal with the even greater traumas of the Famine. Thus, in the wake of the Famine, attitudes like "contented poverty" and "ambivalence toward the colonizer" continued with even greater fervor,

while the specific Famine-related traumas were either completely silenced in the literature (eg. the squalor of the sod-dwellings) or they were approached with great care and tact (eg. the role of the landlord in the misery). It would be a mistake to consider these things in a vacuum. There were many things functioning as variables within Irish society, just as there were in the Irish perspective when read against the English ones.

The fact that this period, quite possibly in response to the Famine, saw a birth of nationalist ambition (and, consequently, the coalescing of a national identity) meant that a great shift was underway. This shift would eventually result in political independence for Ireland from the United Kingdom, but it also would leave the Irish values exemplified in *Knocknagow* to fade into obscurity.

Peck certainly traced a number of responses to the trauma of the Famine into the latter-half of the twentieth century, but that doesn't mean that the situation remained static until then. No, part of the difference in the two perspectives certainly had to do with the English one developing out of a prosperous, dominant culture with a strong emphasis on class hierarchy and the Irish one developing out of an impoverished, colonized culture with little class distinction between the native individuals (the upper classes in Ireland tended to be British or Irish Protestants who self-identified as British). Thus, the Irish found themselves with a centuries-long colonial legacy of poverty and trauma which the English did not.

But there were other major factors at the time, especially industrialism. Ireland remained a primarily agrarian and rural economy for generations after industrialism had swept over Britain and much of the European continent. That is not to say that Ireland did not have cities with a large proportion of the population, nor is it meant to suggest that there were no factories. Ireland had both, but the urbanization and industrialization processes were much stronger and farther

developed in England. This was due in no small part to the matrix of economic laws and regulations affecting Ireland as a colony. As England was industrializing in the 18th and early 19th Centuries, the majority of the Irish population found itself legislated into poverty and denied opportunities for education, property, and civic participation. That is not an environment conducive to producing a labor workforce or adequately rewarding the capital risks required to set up and maintain manufacturing enterprises on large scale.

The urban population increased in the post-Famine period as Irishmen who had been put off their land but were unable to emigrate gravitated toward the cities. Combined with adjustments to economic policies as well as the technological demands of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, this population shift led to a traumatic increase in both urbanization and industrialization after the Famine.

> The historical narrative...is strangely scrambled: the modern period in Ireland flows from an origin which is also an end, an abyss into which one quarter of the population disappears… Because of the Famine, Irish society undergoes a surreal speed-up of its entry upon modernity... (Eagleton 14)

But at the same time, the post-Famine period saw a resurgence of nationalism and cultural renaissance. While some moved from the outrage of the Famine directly to nationalism, the country as a whole took a more circuitous route. After the Famine, there were several efforts to address "the land question" and the government policies that exacerbated the disaster. As some goals proved difficult, land reform would lead into calls for Home Rule (re-instituting an Irish Parliament within the framework of the UK), and when that faltered, outright independence.

While that was underway, a cultural nationalism or renaissance began. What started as an attempt to document the vanishing language, history, traditions, and oral literature of rural

Ireland quickly turned into movements like the Gaelic League, designed to preserve and revive them. That, in turn, led to the fashioning of a new national narrative. For centuries, the history of Ireland had been written by the English. Now, a class of (mostly Protestant, aristocratic) Irishmen were trying to bring an affirmative perspective to Irish history and the nation's cultural contributions to Europe and the world. That attitude, as it became ever more Hiberno-centric, added fuel to those pushing for independence.

Throughout Europe at the same time, many emerging nations were trying to establish cohesive national identities in the same way that Ireland was. Because the cities tended to have a cosmopolitan mix of cultural or ethnic groups, almost all of those driving the movements looked to the rural countrysides for the ideal or "pure" version of the culture. Ireland did the same.

> Much has been written of the romantic roots of the various nineteenth-century European nationalisms and their exaltation of the indigenous, racially and culturally pure peasantry of any particular countryside over the jaded and compromised cosmopolitans of supranational urban society. Ireland was no exception… (O'Leary 408)

This was carried to the extent that not only were there strenuous attempts to revive the Gaelic language, but the dialect considered the "prestige dialect" shifted from the southern, Munster dialect (in which most of the Irish language's literary tradition was written) to the very rural Connemara dialect. Instead of Ulster, the setting of Ireland's national epics, or Kerry, the seat of the literary dialect, the Irish of the rural Aran Islands was chosen as the basis for the academic standard dialect when it was developed in the 1950s. This meant that Kickham's idealized peasants (and similar characters) provided the touchstone for "true Irishness." In all respects, representations of Cathleen Ní Houlihan, the personification of Ireland in literature and

drama, would always be depicted having more qualities in common with Peig Sayers than Speranza or Lady Gregory.

As the new Hiberno-centric cultural narrative began to take shape beyond Irish academic and literary circles and into the social and political life of the masses, the nationalists turned from pushing for reforms and autonomy to agitating for independence. In both the autonomy (ie "Home Rule") and the independence stages of the movement, the Kickham-esque focus on the rural peasant as the purest expression of Irishness served well to reinforce the argument that the Irish were different from the British, and should therefore be in charge of their own political affairs and national destiny. Thus, the romantic peasant archetype was embraced by those trying to craft a national identity. Stories and plays were set in the countryside, the purity of peasant life was emphasized, and ancient Celtic themes and figures became popular subjects for poetry and painting.

The greater the perceived cultural differences between the Irish and the British, the easier it became to argue against colony status. So English-speaking city life was minimized. After the Famine, the Irish language was in ever greater decline than it had been before, since the Irish-speaking areas were some of the hardest hit (*Inventing Ireland* 21). Language is a powerful piece of cultural identity, and the vast majority of Irishmen (even then) spoke only the language of the colonizers and not their "own" native language. The romantic peasant allowed an ideal to be depicted in which the other markers of culture and social life were alien to the British ways seen in the cities.

At the same time, however, Ireland was industrializing and urbanizing. With migrations of displaced tenant farmers to the cities and an increase in opportunities for industrial labor came many of the same ideas and philosophies which had long been popular among the urban,

industrial working classes of Britain and the rest of Europe. These viewpoints were considered progressive and modern, and they were very attractive to the impoverished working classes. This form of socialist thinking brought with it new perspectives on poverty and the relationships between the classes.

The working class began to envisage an antagonistic relationship with the upper class that overshadowed what was seen between the tenant farmers and landlord class. Socialist values up in the literature before independence (eg. "September 1913") and only deepened afterward with the deeply socialist themes of Sean O'Casey and the like. by the 1930s, O'Casey could achieve popularity by eschewing entirely the rural life of the country farmer or the brave rebel and instead become "a working-class realist who focused his Dublin plays not on the deeds of warriors but on the pangs of the poor… O'Casey's deepest indictment of the rebels was that he allowed them to appear so seldom on his stage, as if to suggest the irrelevance of their lofty ideals to the actual needs of the urban poor" (*Inventing Ireland* 218). By the time of independence (*Shadow of a Gunman* was produced in 1923), the socialists were already displeased with the new state which had only managed to make its way into existence thanks to Connolly's alliance between the socialists and the more traditionalist elements of the nationalist cause.

The socialist perspective affected Irish politics even before that. Integral to the Easter Rising in 1916 was James Connolly's socialist organization, the Irish Citizen Army, and his influence on some of the wording of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic is evident (ie - addressing "Irishmen and Irishwomen," "We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland," "guarantees equal...opportunities to all its citizens," "oblivious to the differences fostered by an alien government" and a call for universal suffrage) (*Proclamation*).

Support for those and similar ideas was widespread among those who did set up the first (and subsequent) independent Irish governments. But, at that moment, James Connolly was perhaps the leading voice of the socialist movement in Ireland and his Irish Workers And General Transport Union (and its military arm, the Irish Citizen Army) the most influential organization. Indeed, his printing press was used to print the Proclamation ("Seachtar na Cásca - James Connolly"). Note how unlike Kickham and Carleton was Connolly's outlook:

> But who are the Irish people? Is it the dividend-hunting capitalist with the phraseology of patriotism on his lips and the spoil wrung from sweated Irish toilers in his pockets; is it the scheming lawyer – most immoral of all classes; is it the slum landlord who denounces rackrenting in the country and practices it in the towns; is it any one of these sections who to-day dominate Irish politics? Or is it not rather the Irish working class – the only secure foundation on which a free nation can be reared – the Irish working class which has borne the brunt of every political struggle, and gained by none, and which is to-day the only class in Ireland which has no interest to serve in perpetuating either the political or social forms of oppression – the British connection or the capitalist system? The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country. The act of social emancipation requires the conversion of the land and instruments of production from private property into the public or common property of the entire nation. (Connolly 23)

There is none of Kickham's "contented poverty" there. There's none of Banim's respect for the professions. The tone is utterly devoid of Carleton's tact when dealing with landlords. His words are full of grand ambition (self-emancipation, conversion of private property to

common property, etc) and accusation. True to his Marxist ideology, Connolly sees the current "nationalist" paradigm as part of the problem. While some argue that Connolly was fostering a new dimension to the ancient-minded national identity of the romantics when he "presented socialism as a return to the Celtic system whereby a chief held land in the common name of all the people" (*Inventing Ireland* 207), such a viewpoint could itself become problematic if taken too deeply. British nationalism lead to the imperialism that was crushing Ireland, but in his estimation, Irish nationalism would merely lead to a different state beholden to the same capitalist powers that have been creating poverty. Connolly is looking to establish an ideal of "Irishness," but it is not the romantic, complacent peasant of Kickham he favors. No, Connolly's ideal "Irishman" is an Irish worker. He sees the heartbeat of the nation not in its language, countryside, or religion. No, it is the muscles of Irish labor that makes the nation in his estimation. In fact, by the time of the Easter Rising, he saw Ireland's strike for freedom most valuable as an example to the oppressed and colonized people in the rest of the world ("Seachtar na Cásca - James Connolly").

Connolly may serve very well as a spokesman for socialism in Ireland during this period due to his position and influence, but his ideology and similar ideas had been gaining traction for some time. His ideas were so popular that it was necessary to bring in his Irish Citizen Army to the plans for the Easter Rising due to the likelihood that his organization could stage a unilateral rising of its own before the Irish Volunteers were ready, bringing down the wrath of the British Empire onto all nationalist organizations in the country, destroying the possibility of a more successful rebellion ("Seachtar na Cásca - Tom Clarke").

Ireland at this time, like the rest of the Western world, was awash with competing, and sometimes contradictory, philosophical movements. Its nationalist movement, along with its

romanticizing of the rural peasant, was unique to itself (not generally, as many other small nations were undergoing a similar idealizing of the rural, but each had its own character), but there were many others. Just as Connolly's socialism had foreign roots and transnational connections, modernism also brought with it values antithetical to Kickhams' romanticized peasantry.

Modernism affected literature, art, architecture, and social values. There was faith placed in technology and science. There was a sense that human ingenuity and accomplishment could conquer most anything. There was a sense of a bright future for civilization to which the world was inexorably drawing. The price, however, was to leave behind the old customs and ways of thinking that prevented humanity from moving in that direction.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a synthesis of modernism and socialism resulted in a popular new ideology that influenced literature, politics, and the societies in which it was found: progressivism. Progressive ideology added political and social components to the modernist outlook. It indicated that not only could humanity innovate its way into a bright future through technology and art, but that the enlightened members of a society would need to bring social, political, and economic innovation to bear as well. Inherent in progressive philosophy is a belief that those things can be a civilizing force, and that institutions, practices, and beliefs which bar the way of civilizational progress must be dismantled for the good of humanity. These ideas tended to find expression in largely socialist and populist terms.

And so it was with Ireland. After the First World War, Europe was swept up in a sense of progressive optimism. Many felt that Western civilization had hit its nadir and that the war was an indication of just how broken the old system was. A League of Nations would prevent another European war, the least democratic of the monarchies were gone, economic reforms and

stronger unions would erase poverty, and the list went on. Thus, on the eve of finally winning her independence, Ireland was undergoing the formation of another national identity. Western Europe's youngest nation sought to demonstrate that it could epitomize the modern standard of "civilization."

Because of the urbanization and industrialization the population of Ireland had been undergoing at an accelerated rate, the socialist and progressive ideals were very attractive and popular in public opinion (as they were with other European nations undergoing the same kind of rapid industrialization/urbanization in that period, like Germany and Russia). Thus, Ireland's sense of national identity was undergoing a shift from two different ideological camps both pulling in the same direction for slightly different reasons. The combined power of their votes and support meant that the new Ireland would take shape largely (but not entirely) under their influence. In the end, both sides would seek to eschew the old national image of the rural, Gaelic-speaking peasant, living in a small, cooperative community, and content with his lot.

Instead, the socialists tendered as the new, "authentic" Irishmen a working class family, struggling in the slums of north Dublin. The socialists distrusted any state not entirely committed to stamping out economic inequality by force. In their estimation, nationalism was little more than a way to keep the working classes of various nations divided against each other. In this way, it could be argued that a working class Irishman had more in common with a working class Englishman or German than with a wealthy Irish capitalist. For them, the problem with British colonial rule was less the British and more the British (and Irish) capitalists. They saw a new state as an opportunity to establish a system to address the economic injustices of the previous system by creating new institutions and policies without the baggage of the previous ones. To the degree that national or cultural traditions created obstacles to that, they were simply

tools serving the privileged classes in leeching off the working classes. After independence, a socialist outlook would also offer the benefit of providing an explanation for why Ireland was still impoverished and economically stagnant: it was not the fault of the British but of the capitalists.

For the progressives, the new, "authentic" Irishmen were the cosmopolitan, forward-looking academics and intellectuals who would use the new state as an opportunity to finally establish a new kind of society with institutions that bolstered a "modern," egalitarian mode of living. The ills of nature were to be tamed by human inventiveness and technology, and the ills of human nature by the wise hand of an enlightened government. This view was therefore just as reactionary as those of the traditionalists:

> Many students of Modernist literature, including Edmund Wilson, R.P. Blackmur, Lionel Trilling, and Monroe K. Spears, have drawn attention to its anti-rational or Dionysiac element, its emphasis on myth, subjectivity, personal authenticity. To some extent this emphasis is antipathetic to a civilization that is democratic, egalitarian, rationalist, and industrialized. Hence, it might seem that if Modernism is not reactionary because it emphasizes Culture ("memory," "the tradition"), it is so because it emphasizes Nature. (Sultan 449)

For progressives, nationalism itself could be seen as petty or the bringer of the worst humanity had to offer. As Declan Kiberd put it, "Modernity needed to preen itself just a little by marking itself off from the recent as well as the ancient past: for without them, it was not modernity at all. But those elements carried over from that past could themselves be made the basis of a national claim" (*Irish Classics* 278). The argument over centuries of colonial

oppression or even the blame for the Famine a generation before, were themselves "traditionalist" or "un-modern" ways of looking at it.

In the progressive vision, the problem with the previous system is not that the British were foreign colonizers, but that they subscribed to a philosophy of national identity which made much of the differences between them and the Irish they governed. If only the British hadn't been so wrapped up in the superiority of their traditions, if only they hadn't used differences in religious creed to foster political mistrust against the Irish, then the Irish would have had a much easier time as part of the UK, and might not have been so callously treated by its government or have needed to violently extract themselves from it. For them also, the ideal Irishman was not the rural, Gaelic-speaking peasant, content in his life of poverty. The twentieth century would belong to forward-thinkers, social experimenters, and those who could renounce old traditions and practices that served to limit the limitless human potential to make a better world. Ireland, so long having been in a dependent situation, so often viewed as "West Britain" by the rest of the Continent, would need to prove that she was as worthy of self-governing independence as any other modern nation. Many felt that the new state could do that by turning its back on Kickham's poor, quaint peasants. That ideal Irishman belonged to another age, an impoverished age, a dependent age.

None of this is meant to imply that the progressives and socialists were the only influences on the new state or the formation of a national identity. There were still many traditionalists in Ireland, and they, too, would exert profound influence. The traditionalists still endorsed aspects of rural society as the "true" Ireland. Their influences could be seen in the role afforded the Catholic Church in law and government institutions and policies. In addition, the new state would undertake the preservation and revitalization of the Irish language, which up to

that time had been a "grassroots" effort, by monitoring and incentivizing the language's healthy transmission in the specially designated "gaeltacht" and mandating the teaching of it in all government schools. While the reach of the traditionalists was long indeed, theirs would be a philosophy on the wane over the course of the twentieth century.

The Irish value system, which was in several ways antithetical to the English value system, was formed during centuries of oppression and poverty. Those values enhanced both physical survival as well as psychological health during extended periods of poverty, shortage, and tragedy. Those individuals and communities who embraced those values found themselves best equipped to survive the cataclysm of the Famine, but the event would leave deep scars.

In the wake of the Famine, the Irish people's commitment to those values grew stronger. In some cases, this was perhaps due to the assiduity with which those who survived had grown accustomed to following them. In other cases, people clung to them because they had formerly provided the only stability they had known during the traumatic events of the Famine. There were several movements for cultural renaissance or political independence which also picked up on them in an attempt to form a cohesive national identity distinct from British culture. For these reasons, the values are strongly evident in the literature of the period.

Also evident in the literature of the period is a near-silence (or "occlusion") on the Famine horrors. Some of this was due to multigenerational community PTSD, and some was due to the pre-existing Irish value system. Scholars like Peck would argue that even that value system bore evidence of existing PTSD as a result of long periods of deprivation and oppression. Regardless, it is clear that both the existing values and the psychological effects of the Famine worked in concert to obstruct frank treatment of the Famine and related issues.

What of the distinctive Irish values that were not the result of psychological trauma were the result of Ireland's economy and population settlement being agrarian and oriented toward the rural. This allowed for different views on class and material wealth to be endorsed in the Irish prose literature than what were found in the British prose literature of the same period. In the end, though, the Famine changed the Irish economy and population patterns. As Ireland started to look more like Britain by industrializing its economy and reorienting toward the urban, rather than the rural, life, the attitudes with which class and wealth were regarded began to look more like British attitudes as well.

The process would be slow and complicated for Ireland, as there were still many factors which were not present in Britain (the continuation of a more or less repressive colonial regime, the long-term effects of the Famine, a very strong emigration trend, etc), so the result would not be identical to that which was found in Britain, but it would come remarkably close.

In the end, the combined result of urbanization, industrialization, and the removal of an Imperial England as the primary boogey-man was a decline in affinity for the rural, Kickham-esque model of the ideal Irish culture and citizen. Those three factors, already at work in the early twentieth century, would, a fairly short time after Irish independence in the early 1920s, result in an Irish society which looked much more like Liverpool or Manchester than Knocknagow or the otherwise nameless Town of the Cascades, and the values and philosophy found in the literature would reflect that.

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