The Phoenix Resurgent:
An Outline of Irish Nationalism from the Volunteers to Sinn Fein

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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To many historians the most dynamic force in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been nationalism. Yet defining, delimiting and tracing nationalism in theory or in practice is a cumbersome task. Nationalism is easily compatible with other ideologies such as romanticism, liberalism and, strangely enough, even socialism. These ideologies have become so intertwined that they seem inseparable. Nationalism has so greatly affected the intellectual world that a poet or historian may be labelled "nationalist." Likewise, such fields as literature, language and history, have themselves been important tools for nationalists. This close interrelationship between nationalism, primarily a political ideology, and the cultural milieu has often been central in the success or failure of nationalist movements. It is of great importance to the historian. This is perfectly illustrated by the rise of the Irish nationalist organization Sinn Fein in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prior to Sinn Fein other nationalist movements in Ireland had been unable to develop a comprehensive program which combined cultural ideals with an effective political program. This fusion has been Sinn Fein's major contribution to Irish nationalism and certainly played an important role in the emergence of a distinct, modern Irish state. At the same time, it may also be a factor in the continued violence in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this paper is to trace the growth of Irish nationalism in order to explain Sinn Fein's peculiar place in Irish history.
Before beginning an analysis of Sinn Fein's specific position in the nationalist pantheon, it is necessary to set down a definition of nationalism. This definition is not meant to be precise. Certainly many additions or exceptions could be made. Nevertheless this definition will provide a point of reference for considering Irish nationalism in general. To begin with, nationalism is a definite political program. Simple attachment or loyalty to a region, group or already existing state may provide a foundation for nationalism, but it is not of itself nationalist. As a political system nationalism is based upon the "nation," whether it be defined by region, culture, class or race. This nation is the seminal unit in the constitutional theory. The "nation's" sovereignty rather than tradition, divine right, or natural law is supreme.

Advancing national freedom (or liberation), national unity, the furtherance of national interests or the inculcation of national loyalty are the prime objectives of political action—either because these have intrinsic [sic] value or because they are necessary to secure other desirable ends of human life.

Having an understanding of nationalism, the next step is to apply these ideas to Irish history specifically.

Nationalism existed in Ireland before the rise of Sinn Fein, but pinpointing its precise genesis is difficult. Some historians, particularly those interested in advancing a nationalist cause, have sought to portray Irish nationalism as a very ancient tradition originating at latest in the seventh century. Eoin MacNeill, a twentieth-century scholar
deeply involved in the nationalist movement, tried to present Ireland in the early Middle Ages as loosely unified under a high kingship or *ard ri*[^3]. But, most modern historians have seen medieval Ireland as being broken into dozens of small independent kingdoms and tribes lacking any unity or national consciousness whatsoever[^4]. Historian D. G. Boyce has noted that "it is an amusing paradox that a country which prided itself on its strong sense of nationalism, that sought statehood and emphasized unity should in its infant days have been totally devoid of all these characteristics."[^5]

Rather than earliest Ireland, many historians have placed the genesis of Irish nationalism in the twelfth century. This is the century of the first Norman invasion of Ireland. With the beginning of so-called "British Imperialism," the Irish were supposedly united in their opposition to the invaders. Certainly there can be little doubt that the "native" (a misleading term considering the fact that the Celts had migrated from somewhere in eastern Europe) Celtic population was in an almost constant state of rebellion against Norman and Briton. These rebellions are often cited as evidence of a national awareness. The Gaelic world was unwilling to submit to Anglicization. This theory ignores the fact that these rebellions were usually centered around a specific leader, clan, region or grievance. Furthermore, certain provinces and kingdoms, especially Ulster, remained remarkably independent until the seventeenth century. Boyce reiterates:
A genuine national monarchy did not emerge; but neither did the kings of Ireland unite to check and expel the invader. Instead each ruler fought for himself, now allied with, now against, the newcomers. . . . They were not the beginning of a process of Irish resistance to the British which lasted unbroken from 1171 to 1921.

Still, the hostility which is naturally felt towards invaders, the English Reformation's creation of a religious difference and the plantation of Ulster in the seventeenth century did help create a firm tradition of animosity toward England. This animosity may certainly be seen as a major factor in the development of Irish nationalism, or, as historian Tom Garvin describes it, a "primordial national consciousness," but it is not nationalism in the modern sense. It was not a specific separatist program. The Irish had a sense of community; however this sense of community was cultural, religious or regional rather than national. Nationalism of a true type does not develop until the eighteenth century.

During the eighteenth century the Irish parliament in Dublin, made up exclusively of Protestants due to the penal laws suppressing Catholicism and the Test Act disqualifying nonconformists, was controlled by the British privy council. This control began with the so-called "Poynings' Laws" passed by an Irish parliament in 1494. Under this act, the calling of an Irish parliament was prohibited until all legislature proposals had been submitted to and approved by the Crown privy council. This restriction was more acceptable to the parliament in Dublin than the Declaratory Act of 1719. Under this act the British parliament at Westminster, its authority expanding, assumed for itself the right to pass legislation
that was binding both in Great Britain and the separate Kingdom of Ireland.

Yet, by the middle of the eighteenth century the Irish parliament had become increasingly difficult to manage. There arose within the Dublin commons a group of men who were dissatisfied with the constitutional arrangement. The dual role of the English king, serving also as king of Ireland, was acceptable, but domination by Westminster began to chafe. The political atmosphere in Ireland had been affected by the notion, developed from John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers, that the government of a nation should be somewhat responsive to desires of its citizens, however limited that citizenship might be. The ideas of John Wilkes on parliamentary reform, along with complaints of the American colonists on the restriction of trade, were beginning to have a widespread effect. According to historian J. C. Beckett, "there was a gradual change in the character of Irish political life due largely to the growing influence of public opinion." This growing dissatisfaction set the stage for the emergence of a specific plan and party which sought to emphasize the rights of Ireland as a separate kingdom.

With the coming of the American Revolution this so-called "patriot party" led by Henry Grattan and Henry Flood, members of the Dublin parliament, found an opportunity to regain their legislative independence. Using the pretext of American and French raids along the coast, the patriots raised a militia to replace those British troops that had been sent to the colonies. This militia became known as the Volunteers. In
1782 a group of delegates from Volunteer units met in Dungannon and adopted a series of resolutions to be sent to Dublin. These resolutions were meant to encourage the "patriots" in their struggle with Westminster and Lord North's cabinet. That same year, relying upon what was essentially a veiled threat of rebellion from the Volunteers, the Dublin parliament was able to force Lord North's embattled cabinet in London to repeal the Declaratory Act and accept the independence of the Irish parliament. In addition, in 1783 Flood was able to pass a Renunciation Act. This resolution left no doubt that the Kingdom of Ireland, though sharing a common crown with Britain, was

"to be bound only by the laws enacted by his majesty and the parliament of that kingdom [Ireland] in all cases whatever, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity which may be instituted in that kingdom, decided in his majesty's courts therein [within Ireland] finally and without appeal from thence."

More importantly for the future, the act went on to assert that this right "shall be and is hereby declared to be established and ascertained for ever and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable." Although the attempt to limit all future parliaments is quixotic, this act would return to haunt Britain in the nineteenth century.

Grattan, on the occasion of winning this so-called "constitution of 1782," wrote: "Ireland is now a nation." Some, including Arthur Griffith, as we shall see later, accepted Grattan's declaration. Yet, this statement should have been qualified. Aristocratic, Protestant Ireland was
now a nation. Although a movement for reconciliation had developed (Grattan had gone so far as to assert that "the Irish Protestant could never be free till the Irish Catholic ceased to be a slave"), and the disabilities of Catholics had been reduced, no political rights were granted to them. In addition, among the rising merchant classes there was a strong desire for constitutional reform, the widening of the electorate, that faced stiff opposition in the newly independent parliament. The Volunteers were neither revolutionary, nor separatist-nationalist in the modern sense of the word. The movement was directed at specific grievances within the constitutional system. They did not wish to separate themselves from the Crown, or establish a republic, but simply sought to correct what they felt was tyranny from Westminster. Yet the Volunteers became an important symbol for nationalists, especially those who espoused some form of constitutional agitation.

The next important stage in the development of Irish nationalism was profoundly affected by another revolution, the French Revolution. Beginning around 1790 a large number of radical clubs, similar to those already existing in England, were founded in and around Dublin. At first these clubs were open societies dedicated to specific political objectives: "parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation and the reduction or elimination of English influence in the government of their country." Of these societies, the Society of United Irishmen became the most important. A year after the fall of the
Bastille, these clubs, along with many "respectable" citizens, welcomed the revolution. Beyond viewing it as a cross-channel edition of the Glorious Revolution, the radicals were pleased with the apparent democratic turn the new order was taking. This success must have increased their own impatience with Westminster's procrastination on parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. Even after the darker side of the revolution became evident, a small core of radicals was unwilling to recognize its shortcomings. The loss of this model, this symbol, was unacceptable.

To add to this growing discontent, the advent of war between Britain and France forced the government at Westminster to suppress dissent. Naturally enough, the United Irishmen's continuing enthusiasm for the revolution made it a prime target for suppression. The same draconian measures that were adopted in England were also applied to Ireland. In the spring of 1794 the United Irishmen were forced underground and became an oath-bound secret society dedicated to revolution with help from the French. With the enthusiasm of the United Irishmen and the repression of the government, a series of disturbances occurred, and in May 1798 two major insurrections occurred, one in Ulster, the other in Wexford.

These rebellions in 1798 were significant not only because they were, at least in Wexford, partially successful at the outset, but also because of the image, the symbol they provided later nationalists. One important image was that of a truly united effort with Protestants, Dissenters
(Protestants outside the official church), and Catholics working side by side. However, the society of United Irishmen was, as late as 1794, still overwhelmingly Protestant and Presbyterian. Efforts had been made to obtain the support of Catholics, especially through the Catholic Committee, a body representing mostly the merchant class and involved in agitation for Catholic emancipation. The United Irishmen's constitution of 1797 went so far as to state "that no reform is practicable, efficacious, or just, which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion." However, there seem to have been some reservations on both sides. John Keogh, the head of the Catholic Committee, while pleased with the program of parliamentary reform espoused by the United Irishmen and thankful for their support of emancipation, felt that Catholics should "at the same time keep clear of deciding about reform or other political questions." In addition, in 1798 the higher Catholic clergy were disturbed by French hostility to the pope, and along with important members of the Catholic community, including Keogh, published an address calling upon Irish Catholics to defend "our constitution, the social order and the Christian religion." Finally, it has been pointed out that the yeomanry and militia which suppressed the insurrection of 1798 were made up mostly of Roman Catholics.

On the other side, many Protestants and Presbyterians in Ulster, especially in rural areas such as Armagh, were becoming increasingly involved in sectarian strife. The Orange
Order was founded in 1795 as a result of agricultural competition. Historian J. C. Beckett writes: "... there had been a beginning of political reaction among Ulster Presbyterians. ... Thus as early as the 1790's we can trace in Ulster Protestantism, the first stages of a political transformation."¹⁹ One writer goes so far as to claim that Orangeism had recruits even among the United Irishmen.²⁰ Another writer considering the religious question within the United Irishmen summed it up: "Not only did it fail to stop the sectarian strife and recruit the warring factions into a united front against the government but it also failed to effect a genuine union between Catholics and Dissenters within the movement."²¹

Beyond a united front, the United Irishmen, to some nationalists and historians, mark the beginnings of republicanism in Ireland. There can be no doubt that once the repression of dissent began the United Irishmen, at least a small inner group, began to turn toward revolutionary republicanism.²² Yet, whether or not the membership as a whole accepted this new policy is questionable. Historian J. L. McCracken points out that the society began to recruit in discontented rural areas rather than among their former base, politically conscious Catholics and middle-class radicals.²³ In addition, the uprising in Wexford, by far the most extensive, appears to have been motivated more by atrocities committed by militia units in the area than by republican zeal.²⁴ The constitution of the United Irishmen as late as
1797 was still centered around parliamentary reform. The document does not mention the creation of a republic, the abolition of the monarchy, or the institution of a new legislative body or constitution.\textsuperscript{25}

The definition of nationalism mentioned earlier requires that a nationalist constitutional system be centered upon the sovereignty of the nation rather than tradition, divine right or the rights of men. The United Irishmen certainly were concerned about English influence in Ireland, much like the Volunteers, but they based their constitution on reform which would bring about the "equal distribution of the rights of man throughout all sects and denominations of Irishmen."\textsuperscript{26} Yet, as often happens, the image of the society rather than its reality became important.

The United Irishmen, looking forward to later developments, and Sinn Fein, did not attempt, like other nationalists in Europe, to base Ireland's claim to independence from Britain on its peculiar cultural tradition, literature and language.\textsuperscript{27} They rarely referred to ancient or medieval Ireland, but were inclined against retrospection. "Mankind have been too retrospective, canonized antiquity and undervalued themselves."\textsuperscript{28}

An important event in the shaping of Irish nationalism occurred two years after the insurrections of 1798. In 1800 William Pitt, the British prime minister, decided that the existing Irish constitutional arrangement must somehow be altered if England were to prevent Ireland from being in a state of constant rebellion or conspiracy with Britain's
foes. To prevent this, Pitt resurrected a plan calling for a legislative union of the two kingdoms similar to that which had been worked out with Scotland in 1777. The idea of a legislative union had been looked upon with favor by many of the Protestants in Ireland at this time. These men were willing to surrender the "constitution of 1782" for reasons of security. In 1793 Catholics had been granted parliamentary franchise along the same lines as Protestants, that is upon the basis of a forty-shilling freehold of property. They feared that this concession would lead to a "popish democracy." The union would give the Protestants security in the fact that by sitting at Westminster any Catholic influence or pressure could be countered by an alliance with their Protestant brethren of England, Scotland and Wales. The Act of Union was passed in 1800 and on January 1, 1801, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland came into existence.

To later Irish nationalists the Act of Union would become a prime example of English misrule in Ireland. First, many would point to the manner in which the act was passed. Without question there was corruption; bribes and threats were made; peerages, pensions and patronage were promised in order for the government to come up with a sufficient number of votes. But whether this corruption exceeded what was an acceptable, indeed expected, level for the period is another question. Beyond this, other nationalists concluded that the act was illegal, saying that it violated
the Renunciation Act of 1783, which had never been repealed. Moreover, the parliament in Dublin had no right to end its own existence.

When Pitt planned the union of the two kingdoms, he had envisioned a bill for Catholic Emancipation, the removal of the two remaining disabilities facing Catholics: the prohibition from holding seats in parliament and the denial of important government positions. But George III and conservatives in Britain and Ireland were vehemently opposed to the Emancipation Bill and it was defeated. This was to become the next great crusade in Irish history, the cause which many Irish historians have looked upon as the beginning of widespread political awareness and agitation among the majority of Ireland's Catholic population. The Earl of Cornwallis, in command of the British forces in Ireland, remarked on the eve of the passage of the Act of Union: "The mass of the people of Ireland do not care one farthing about the union." This was indeed true. The parliament in Dublin, still dominated by aristocratic Protestants, was certainly no more concerned with the desires of the majority of Irishmen, particularly middle- and lower-class Catholics, than London would be. The interests of the majority of Irishmen were in reducing rents, abolishing the tithes collected by the established Church from Catholics, Dissenters and Protestants alike, disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in its place.
Immediately after the Act of Union Irish politics went through a period of relative inactivity. There were attempts by sympathetic Protestant leaders to bring about Catholic Emancipation by working at Westminster, but the government there was too concerned with the Napoleonic Wars, foreign policy, and party politics to consider Irish problems seriously. The question of Catholic Emancipation, like parliamentary reform in Britain, was not forcefully pressed until after Waterloo. The newest effort was centered around one man: Daniel O'Connell. A Catholic lawyer, one of the first admitted to the bar, he organized in 1823 the Catholic Association to forward Catholic interests, most importantly emancipation. After a slow start, O'Connell was able to build a massive extraparliamentary pressure group in Ireland. The government was understandably disturbed by the size of the organization, which with the aid of the Catholic Church was collecting over £2,000 a week at its height, the subscription being only one pence a month. Even more alarming to some was O'Connell's supposedly aggressive language. One English historian described O'Connell as "personally ambitious, unscrupulous and a powerful demagogue." There is no doubt that O'Connell was an exuberant, perhaps overly enthusiastic, speaker but he was never an advocate of open rebellion.

The government in Westminster was under a state of siege during this period. The 1819 Peterloo massacre of peaceful reform demonstrators by the local militia near Manchester had increased the amount of agitation for
parliamentary reform and created an explosive atmosphere in Great Britain. Naturally, the appearance of another extra-parliamentary pressure group disturbed the government. Yet, the government tended to overreact and labelled any reform organization as part of a Jacobite plot. The simple fact that the Catholic Church supported O'Connell where it had vehemently condemned the United Irishmen demonstrated the essentially peaceful nature of the organization. O'Connell himself had demonstrated his own opposition to revolution by serving with the Dublin militia in the repression of a rebellion there in 1803. He never insisted upon the dissolution of the monarchy and often made it a special point to demonstrate his loyalty to the Crown.

Finally, in 1829, the Emancipation Act was secured. But many later nationalists would condemn O'Connell on two counts. First, in his negotiations with the government O'Connell had compromised on the matter of the property requirement for the franchise. The property requirement soared from 40s to £10. Secondly, more radical nationalists, those advocating physical force, would condemn O'Connell for not going further, for not attempting a complete separation rather than further integration into Westminster. Instead of working in Ireland, where he had his success in the first place, O'Connell had led Irishmen to Westminster, where they were badly outnumbered.

With the existence of a group within parliament who represented the concerns of the majority of Irishmen, an
important dichotomy in Irish politics had developed. A choice had to be made between constitutional agitation, working within the confines of the Westminster parliament, and agitation which was clearly unconstitutional, involving conspiracy and rebellion, or agitation which might be labelled "semiconstitutional." The word "semiconstitutional" refers to those movements which were overtly constitutional, but accompanied by extraparliamentary pressure groups that are meant to intimidate the government with the possibility of insurrection and thereby force reform. This dichotomy became the major issue in Irish politics until 1921 at least, and, perhaps, considering the present situation in Northern Ireland, to the present.

Looking at the Catholic Association with respect to our definition of nationalism, once again, the group falls short. O'Connell made no attempt, to this point, to repeal the Act of Union. He was not a separatist. Furthermore, he did not imagine an elimination of the dual monarchy. Finally, and most importantly, he did not envision a new constitution based upon the sovereignty of an Irish "nation."

As so often happens, this reform was not sufficient to placate the Irish or O'Connell himself. During the years between 1829 and 1841 O'Connell had to satisfy himself with reform, partly because middle-class Catholics were more interested in reform than repeal, and also because the government in Westminster was cooperative. But in 1841 a conservative government came to power and any kind of reform
seemed unlikely. As a result, O'Connell turned to repeal of the Union. By repeal, O'Connell meant a restoration of a separate and independent Irish parliament, as had existed between 1782 and 1800. In his agitation O'Connell used the same mass appeal that had worked so well during the emancipation campaign. He organized "monster" meetings which literally hundreds of thousands of people would attend. In order to keep order at such meetings the crowd was often organized in what appeared to be a military fashion. Naturally enough, the government was once again concerned about the possibility of open revolution. Furthermore, O'Connell's language before these meetings was often inflammatory. Yet, when the government did call O'Connell's apparent bluff by prescribing a "monster" meeting scheduled at Clontarf, the ancient site of a Celtic victory over Danish invaders, O'Connell backed down and called off the meeting.

Once again, O'Connell's retreat at Clontarf had produced a historical controversy for many. This controversy split later nationalists upon the ever-widening divide between those who believed in constitutional methods and those who would not be limited to constitutional means. To the constitutionalists O'Connell's disavowal of violence was an asset. Historian Malcolm Brown insisted that O'Connell's insistence upon "moral force" or "nonviolence" was "his foremost lasting contribution to the political arts."

Others insist that O'Connell's decision set back Irish independence by years, pointing to the decline of the repeal
movement and its subsequent destruction, along with much of Irish society, by the advent of the famine in 1845.

Yet, before O'Connell's decline and the famine occurred, another important Irish political movement came into being. This movement, while in its own time relatively unsuccessful, had a monumental effect upon the development of Irish nationalism and particularly Sinn Fein. In 1842 a young Protestant barrister, Thomas Davis, joined O'Connell's Repeal Association in Dublin. In 1842 he also founded a newspaper called the Nation, with the assistance of John Blake Dillon and Charles Gavan Duffy. In their newspaper these men, led by Davis, advocated a type of nationalism that hitherto was completely foreign to Ireland. Instead of basing their ideas upon the rights of man, as the United Irishmen had, or Catholic rights, as O'Connell had, Davis and his followers tried to emphasize a historical view of Irish nationality. Davis hoped that Ireland's romantic, heroic past might be linked to modern Ireland and help restore a sense of self-respect and self-confidence.42 The Nation was filled with ballads, poems and tales recounting the great Irish heroes. Therefore Brown sees Davis as taking an almost methodical approach to the problem of nationality. "The national schools were silenced on Limerick and Dungannon; let this be remedied forthwith. Irish men were ignorant of their history; let a popular library of Irish heroes and episodes be published instantly.43"

The divide between O'Connell's program and the policies of Davis continued to widen. Davis's followers, or Young
Ireland as they became known, advocated the preservation of the Irish language, which, though still widely used before the famine, was in decline.\textsuperscript{44} In contrast, O'Connell, himself the product of an Irish-speaking background, did not consider its preservation a necessity. O'Connell said of the tongue, "I am sufficiently utilitarian not to regret its passing."\textsuperscript{45}

The differences between O'Connell and Young Ireland have often been viewed as the result of their different attitudes toward continental thought. As Brown has pointed out, O'Connell made a definite effort to keep his followers separated, especially in the minds of the British cabinet, from French republicanism and English Chartism.\textsuperscript{46} Davis was less hostile toward continental thought. Davis himself was deeply influenced by the French historians Augustin Thierry and Jules Michelet. In his essays Davis praised men such as the Comte de Mirabeau and Georges Danton.\textsuperscript{47} In an early essay entitled "Udalism and Feudalism" he compared the economies of Denmark and Ireland in order to present the ideal which Ireland might have attained were it not for the wretched Union with Great Britain.\textsuperscript{48} In addition Davis was one of the first Irishmen to advocate protectionism rather than free trade. He suggested that Ireland should be "willing to pay a little dearer to her own manufacturer than to foreigners," and pointed to the protectionism of the German states as an example.\textsuperscript{49} Yet, as Davis soon found out, Irishmen's imaginations were not inflamed by his theories of economic policy and Norway. As a result Davis sought to
excite the people by exploring their common Irish cultural inheritance. Many of these same characteristics will later be seen in Arthur Griffith's thoughts.

While Davis was influenced by European thought he still turned to Irish history for his symbols. At the same time continental nationalists were concerned with the question of Irish nationality. Whereas Davis might compare economies, Czech and other Slav leaders compared the Irish struggle with their own independence movements. In Prague, O'Connell was cited as an example for Czechs and a "Repeal Club" was founded there. Yet, it is interesting to note that many continental nationalist thinkers concluded that Ireland should remain in the United Kingdom. For example, Count Cavour, the Italian nationalist, thought that "at all costs" the Union should be maintained, "first in the interest of Ireland herself, then in that of England, and finally in the interest of material and intellectual civilization." Cavour believed that Ireland would make more material gains within the Union than outside it. Guiseppe Mazzini, probably one of the most intense nationalists in European history, came to a similar conclusion. In 1847, when he founded a People's International League for the restoration of subject nationalities, Mazzini omitted Ireland. When members of the moribund Repeal Association complained, Mazzini answered that the Irish needed better government and not a new nation. The Irish "did not plead for distinct principle of life or system of legislation, derived from native peculiarities, and contrasting radically
with English wants and wishes." Mazzini did not believe Irish nationalism would survive.

In some ways Mazzini's predictions about the future seemed warranted. By 1846 both O'Connell and Davis were dead. In addition, in 1845 the famine had descended upon Ireland, bringing practically all nationalist agitation to a standstill. In 1848 the ragged remains of Young Ireland, frustrated by the sad decline of nationalism, led a pathetic rebellion. This was the last great call for separation for almost twenty years. In addition, the famine had a serious effect upon the cultural tradition on which Young Ireland had begun to base its program. A good example would be the decline of the Gaelic language in Ireland. Gaelic was primarily the language of the peasantry, the very class of Irishmen that was most devastated by starvation and emigration. This attrition, combined with the development of a primary educational system in English and the usefulness of English as the language of trade, indeed survival in a time of dearth, led to the complete dominance of English over Gaelic. A language which had perhaps as many as a million and a half speakers in Davis's time had been reduced to an anomaly heard only in pockets in the west and south. This decline may have been disconcerting to many nationalists, but the only serious efforts to preserve the tongue were conducted by scholars.

After the famine, Irish nationalism was in a state of disarray. Some agitation continued at Westminster, but for
the most part the Irish members of parliament had been inte-
grated into the British party system, dividing themselves 
between Liberals and Tories. Efforts to unite the Irish rep­re­sentative into a solid front on the issue of land 
reform had proved unsuccessful, partly because of church 
opposition, as all nationalist organizations became synon­
ymous in its mind with the Italian nationalists who were 
causing the papacy difficulty. The development of a separate 
Irish party was still in the future.

While attempts were being made on the constitutional 
front, a new revolutionary group was in the making. Two 
former followers of Young Ireland, James Stephens and John 
0'Mahony, having spent time in exile in France and the United 
States respectively, founded in 1858 an oath-bound secret 
society dedicated to the establishment of an Irish republic.
In Ireland this group became known as the Irish Republican 
Brotherhood (IRB), which some writers call the Irish Revo­
lutionary Brotherhood, while an auxiliary organization in 
the United States was known as the Fenian Brotherhood. As 
time went on the term Fenian was applied to both groups. The 
Fenians attempted to develop a secret army and with American 
help hoped to foment a general rebellion in Ireland. Other 
than the establishment of a republic the Fenians had no 
organized program of social reform. In many ways they 
looked upon the ending of British rule as a panacea for 
Ireland's ills. Yet once again the revolutionary approach 
failed. The church condemned the IRB, the British authorities
infiltrated the organization and rounded up the leaders. In addition, the people were mostly unconvinced by its program. But the minor insurrection of 1867 which the IRB led became established in the revolutionary pantheon.

Despite its early failures, the IRB was able to survive. In 1873 it adopted a new constitution which, while still convinced that only force of arms would bring about the mythical republic, commanded members in time of peace to confine themselves "to the cultivation of union and brotherly love among Irishmen, the propagation of republican principles and the spreading of knowledge of Irish national rights." In doing this the Fenians became involved in organizations that were openly dedicated to constitutional politics. Through this technique the IRB was able to survive and exert a major influence upon the development of Irish nationalism.

This influence can be seen plainly in the development of a separate Irish party under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. During the early 1870's Isaac Butt, a Protestant lawyer, had attempted to organize an Irish party, but his Home Government association was neither tightly controlled nor independent of Liberals and Conservatives. After Butt's failure became evident, a new attitude began to develop among the Irish members. They began to adopt a policy of total independence from both British parties. They voted with the party that was willing to act upon their program. If this party did not act they would immediately support the other party.
two parties was small, the Irish vote could bring down a government. The Irish hoped that the British would become concerned about parliamentary instability and enact this program.

Historian F. S. L. Lyons sees the members moving toward an "ill-defined alliance between Fenians and parliamentary traditions." Parnell, a Protestant landlord educated in England, emerged as the leader of this new style.56

In Ireland the IRB seemed totally opposed to an alliance with the parliamentarians on the ground that they were not working for a completely independent Ireland. In America, however, there were more pragmatic men. In 1878 Parnell, after convincing an American representative that he favored complete independence, met with important Irish-American nationalists in New York. The result was a program known as the "New Departure." This program sought a middle ground between the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists. The objectives were the self-government of Ireland, although just what form this government might take was purposely left vague, and a vigorous program of land reform.57 Parnell was able to forge such an alliance because of his constant ambiguity. He would not commit himself to revolution, but wished to form as broad a front as he could in his struggle for Home Rule.

Home Rule was the name given the program whereby a local Irish legislature would be restored while certain powers, such as foreign policy, would be retained by
Westminster. During the 1880's Farnell was able to bring Home Rule to the forefront of British politics for two reasons. First, he was able to organize a tightly disciplined parliamentary party that was independent of the Liberals and Conservatives. Second, the Liberals and Conservatives were so equal in strength that Farnell and his party became the deciding votes. On important issues they could decide the survival or defeat of a government. Farnell used this edge to push Home Rule before Parliament. Yet in late 1889 Parnell's world exploded. He was involved in an ugly divorce case that split the party. Farnell died in 1891.

The fall of Farnell was to prove a turning point in Irish history. Farnell, in his last struggles against the reactions of the church and the anti-Parnellite faction that had developed, returned to more violent rhetoric. This convinced many revolutionaries that Farnell had finally lost his illusions about constitutionalism and he was enshrined in the temple of revolutionaries with Wolfe Tone and the Fenians. Yet, more importantly, Farnell became a martyr figure, the betrayed leader whom the small minds of Ireland had slain. He became not only a powerful political symbol, but also a major cultural symbol. W. B. Yeats, the Irish poet, wrote numerous poems eulogizing the great leader. James Joyce, the novelist, in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, portrayed the emotional trauma and division that Parnell's death created in Irish society.
At the door Dante turned round violently and shouted down the room, her cheeks flushed and quivering with rage:

---Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend!

The door slammed behind her.

Mr. Casey, freeing his arms from his holders, suddenly bowed his head on his hands with a sob of pain.

---Poor Parnell! he cried loudly. My dead king! He sobbed loudly and bitterly.

Stephen, raising his terrorstricken face, saw that his father's eyes were full of tears.

The other important effect of Parnell's fall was the creation of a political vacuum in which cultural nationalism and Sinn Fein began to develop.

The complete disintegration of the Irish party at Westminster led many Irishmen to pause and reconsider the tactics and strategies that had resulted in failure. Much of this discussion occurred in small literary societies that began to appear both in Ireland and England. Since independence appeared to be as far in the future as ever, "there could be no excuse for postponing all other activities--cultural, literary, artistic--until the day of freedom dawned." This activity not only helped to bring about the Irish literary revival, but also a new theory about the causes of Irish nationalism's failure to this point. For many this failure was the result of the contamination and weakening of Irish culture and society by its exposure to English culture. As a result, many nationalists decided to devote their energies to the strengthening of Irish culture.

Yet, one problem in such an approach was the fact that a distinct Irish culture may no longer have existed. In
reality the cultural nationalism that began to develop in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century was an attempt to recreate an heroic Gaelic culture that no longer existed, if indeed it ever had. Historian F. S. L. Lyons asserted that the diversity of culture, whether actual or invented, that the nationalists attempted to emphasize was a primary factor in the development of the Irish state in the south and the partitioning of the northeast corner. Whereas culture usually acts "as a unifying force in a fragmented society and as a barrier against anarchy," in Ireland "the diversity of cultures has been a force which has worked against the evolution of a homogeneous society and in doing so has been an agent of anarchy rather than unity." 63

In their efforts to develop an Irish culture the cultural nationalists realized that it was necessary somehow to show the steady influx of British ideas and attitudes into Ireland. Given the close economic ties between the two islands, this was difficult, but one way of slowing the tide was to portray English culture as somehow harmful and degenerative. One of the earliest examples of this strategy was directed, surprisingly enough, at athletics. In November 1834 the Gaelic Athletic Association was founded for the preservation of Irish games, such as hurling and Gaelic football. One of the early patrons of the Association, Thomas W. Croke, Archbishop of Cashel, attempted to dissuade Irish boys from playing English sports by suggesting that these sports were less than virile. 61 Later this strategy was applied to society in general, and on
25 November 1892, Douglas Hyde, a southern Protestant and scholar, presented an address to the Irish National Literary Society entitled "On the Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland." England was fast being identified as the source of all evil. Maud Gonne, a fiery nationalist, summed this idea up in a sort of catechism. "What is the origin of Evil?" The answer: 'England.'

This tendency is visibly evident in many of the political cartoons from the period. In a cartoon from Arthur Griffith's newspaper Sinn Fein (see Figure 1), a kind of religious imagery is bestowed upon the cultural program. "The National Apostle" of Ireland was of course St. Patrick, and the myth of his casting the serpents out of Ireland is well known. Yet, in the cartoon the serpents driven before the apostle are symbols for the two evils, emigration and Anglicization, that cultural nationalists felt were threatening the Hibernian paradise. In addition, by evoking the image of St. Patrick, the cartoon seems to suggest that if British influence was cast out of Ireland, Ireland would become a holy, virtuous land. Historian William Irwin Thompson wrote of this strategy: "The first and most durable characteristic of the ideological movement had appeared: the Irishman's dismissal of evil from his consciousness of Ireland."

Probably the most important of the societies that developed out of this cultural revival was the Gaelic League. The League was founded by Hyde in 1893 as a way of implementing his plans for de-Anglicization. The objectives of the Gaelic League
were the restoration of the Irish tongue to use in everyday life and instillation of a sense of pride in their Gaelic heritage among the masses. Ostensibly, the Gaelic League was supposed to be an apolitical organization and there were many Anglo-Irish Protestants in the organization, particularly in the first ten or twenty years. Still, its efforts to strengthen Gaelic culture seemed somehow to encourage nationalism among its members. It is interesting to note that a study has shown that about half of the government ministers and senior civil servants in the first fifty years of independence had been members of the Gaelic League in their youth. Furthermore, despite the protests of some leaders, the league was closely identified with nationalism. A cartoon, once again from Griffith's Sinn Féin (see Figure 2), graphically demonstrates this point. The cultural nationalists in the Gaelic League were the torch-bearers of Irish nationalism. The cultural nationalists' aversion to English culture at times became a vulgar racial and religious animosity similar to that which Englishmen had been guilty of for decades. Using Hyde as an example, many cultural nationalists attempted to avoid outright prejudice. Ideally, cultural nationalism was a program for all Irishmen regardless of descent or creed. Yet Hyde's attitude toward Ulster Protestants and Dissenters reveals the underlying feelings. Hyde remarked about the assimilative powers of Irish culture. In the past Dane, Norman and Saxon had been transformed into virtuous Gaels. Yet Hyde referred to Ulster as a place "where
FIG. 2
the Gaelic race was expelled and the land planted with aliens, whom our dear mother Erin, assimilative as she is, has hitherto found it difficult to absorb."68 Hyde does not suggest whether or not these "aliens" would have a place in the independent, Gaelic Ireland that he and the other cultural nationalists envisioned. This attitude only confirmed the fears and biases of northern Protestants, and helped to lead to the eventual partition of Ireland.

Cultural nationalism was molded into a definite political program by Griffith and Sinn Fein. Griffith was a Dublin journalist who had become involved in a number of literary societies at the turn of the century. In March 1903 Griffith had suggested that the numerous societies that had grown up around Dublin form a federation and consolidate their efforts. In September 1903 Cumann na Gaedheal was founded.69 The organization sought to leave "the utmost liberty of action" to those clubs whose general objective was the "securing of a sovereign independent Ireland by cultural, economic or military means."70 Yet Cumann na Gaedheal soon became a separate organization. Still, within the organization there was a group of men from the secret society, the IRB. There has been a controversy over whether or not Cumann na Gaedheal was simply a front for the IRB and whether Griffith himself was a member of the society. Some authors, such as Davis, argue that Griffith was not a member of the IRB and was indeed attempting to prevent the society from becoming a mere tool of the IRB. Davis points to the difference in policy that had developed within the society.71
Griffith, in the beginning, based his political strategy on the so-called constitution of 1782. He held that the Renunciation Act of 1783 passed by the Dublin parliament had never been repealed and, as a result, the Act of Union was invalid. He suggested that the Irish members of Parliament currently sitting at Westminster return to Dublin and meet as a separate, independent parliament. Yet Griffith did not suggest that Ireland should deny its allegiance to the monarchy. This brought him into conflict with the policy of the IRB. It would settle for nothing less than the establishment of an Irish Republic. In addition, Davis points out that Griffith's policy smacked of open political activity. Following the disastrous alliance with Farnell open political activity was shunned by the IRB as a betrayal of the republican tradition which advocated the use of force alone as a means of gaining independence. Davis has suggested that this fact precluded any IRB takeover of the society.

Historian Leon O'Broin insists that the society was a front for the IRB. He points out that Griffith was involved in the Transvaal Club, which supported the Boers in their war with Britain. This society was known to have connections with the IRB. In addition, Griffith was known to have been present at at least one IRB meeting. Furthermore, O'Broin points out that the suspected head of the IRB was an active member of Cumann na Gaedheal. One wonders whether or not the head of the IRB would be involved in a society that was hostile to the IRB program.
A more satisfactory answer to this question might be found after considering the struggle that was taking place in the IRB at this time. The IRB, after the disastrous rising of 1867, had pledged itself to an armed struggle, but that armed struggle was not to take place until the general population seemed likely to support a rising. Until then the IRB was to remain a secret society and avoid all public activity. At the turn of the century this strategy was beginning to irritate a new generation of IRB men who felt the IRB should combine open political agitation with conspiracy until an armed struggle could take place. These men might look upon Griffith's ideas as an opportunity to put the new strategy into practice.

During this time Griffith began to develop his so-called "Hungarian policy" which led to the evolution of Sinn Fein as a political organization. Griffith, having already considered the idea of a dual monarchy for Ireland, became interested in the Hungarian nationalist movement in the Austrian Empire and how it had resulted in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Griffith saw many parallels between the Irish and Magyar struggles. He recognized that where the Magyar patriot Louis Kossuth had failed to establish a Hungarian state by force, the parliamentarian Francis Déak through a policy of abstention had been able to bring about a separate assembly for Hungarians. In 1905 Griffith published a series of articles entitled "The Resurrection of Hungary" in which he outlined the similarities between Irish and Magyar history.
and suggested that Déak's approach might work for Ireland as well.

In addition to his political program Griffith envisioned a specific economic policy. Like his predecessor Davis, Griffith looked abroad for parallels to the Irish economy. Yet, whereas Davis looked to Denmark, a largely agricultural nation, Griffith chose industrial Germany. Basing his plan on the ideas of the German economist Friedrich List in *The Nationalist System of Political Economy*, Griffith advocated a policy of protectionism in order to strengthen Irish manufacturing. Griffith felt that "the fallacies of Adam Smith and his tribe" had severely damaged Ireland's economy, forcing it to remain almost solely agricultural. He believed that Ireland could develop and must develop its own industries. "A nation cannot promote and further its civilization, its prosperity, and its social progress equally as well by exchanging agricultural for manufacture goods as by establishing a manufacturing power of its own." Griffith, in looking at Germany, felt that the German states had made the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial society through the German Zollverein.

Since his policies all advocated some sort of self-reliance, whether it be political, cultural or economic, Griffith was searching for a name for the program which would evoke these ideals. According to poet and historian Padraic Colum, Griffith found such a title in a poem by Hyde recounting the dismal failures of Irishmen who had sought to free Ireland with outside
help. Hyde's verse suggested the self-reliance of Griffith's policies. "It is for every fool to have knowledge that there is no watchcry worth any heed but one--Sinn Fein amhain--Ourselves alone!" These two words, Sinn Fein, meaning "we ourselves," became the title for Griffith's program and later for the political party that developed from it. 77

It should be remembered that during this time Griffith's Cumann na Gaedheal was not a political party but simply a propaganda organ. Even when the name was changed to Sinn Fein in November 1915 it remained a society rather than a political party. Part of the difficulty was a lack of unity. The split between Griffith's ideas of a dual monarchy and the IRB's mystical republic had widened. During this period a division had developed, and in Belfast, Bulmer Hobson, a young aspiring IRB organizer, had founded a separate group of societies which became known as the Dungannon Clubs. 78 Griffith insisted upon the Sinn Fein policy's semiconstitutional program for mostly practical reasons. As for himself he was separatist, but he also recognized that the "Irish people are not separatists." 79 He hoped to attract Home Rulers, or constitutionalists, with his program. 80 Griffith was not anxious to create or lead a new political party. Historian Don McCartney summed it up thus:

Despite appeals by friends that he should become the Irish Deak and lead a new political party, Griffith was reluctant to commit himself to such a course, and hoped that the parliamentary party would adopt the Sinn Fein policy.
In 1907 the two factions were finally able to reach an agreement on a somewhat ambiguous objective, "the re-establishment of the independence of Ireland." Cumann na Gaedheal and the Dungannon Clubs came together to form the Sinn Fein League. At first Sinn Fein seemed to attract a number of members. Yet in 1910 a reorganized and reunified Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond was able to bring a Home Rule Bill to a vote in Westminster. It appeared that parliamentary methods might finally succeed. Sinn Fein was injured because it refused to accept or support Home Rule. Griffith objected to the proposed right of the British Parliament to amend laws enacted in Dublin, lack of tariff autonomy, inability of Ireland to collect its own taxes, right of Britain to tax Ireland without Irish consent, and existence of a joint exchequer with Britain.

In addition, the more radical separatists were drawn from Sinn Fein by the new Irish Volunteer movement. In Ulster, Protestants and Dissenters opposed to the Home Rule Bill had organized themselves into a military force known as the Ulster Volunteer Force. Nationalists in the south were inspired by their example and in 1913 the Irish Volunteers were founded. At first the Irish Volunteers were dominated by more radical members of the IRB. Then Redmond became concerned about the growing size of the organization and attempted to assert his control over the organization. He was successful. The organization became dominated by Home Rulers and changed its name to the National Volunteers. A small rump of separatists
remained as the Irish Volunteers. Both these groups drew support that Sinn Fein otherwise might have been able to gain.

Then with the outbreak of the First World War Sinn Fein's fortunes began to change. Following the passage of a Home Rule Bill in 1914 Redmond and his followers had been willing to delay the actual implementation of the bill until the war had come to a conclusion. Most Irishmen were willing to accept this delay and a great many Irishmen served with the British Army. But a small group of revolutionaries led by Patrick Pearse and the socialist James Connolly planned and led a revolt in Dublin during Easter week 1916. Sinn Fein members had not been involved in the planning of the insurrection. Yet, like most people in Ireland, they were shocked by the summary execution of the leaders of the revolt, without a civil trial, before a firing squad. The Easter Rising was the beginning of a turn towards separatist politics during this period, and Sinn Fein, taking advantage of the situation, began to grow rapidly. 86

The Easter Rising and the later Anglo-Irish guerrilla war have raised questions in many scholars' minds about Sinn Fein's and Griffith's advocacy of peaceful, though separatist, means. Some historians have suggested that Griffith and Sinn Fein had adopted a policy of nonviolence or "moral force" for expediency. Davis points out that Griffith, when speaking about Hungarian history, had preferred the revolutionary Louis Kossuth over the abstentionist Déak, but felt that Déak's policies were more practical. In addition, McCartney points
out that Griffith felt that at times all nationalist movements must become for a short time violent. "In retrospect, the 1916 rising could be viewed as one of those occasional excursions of strategic points into the use of force to which Griffith had given his blessing in his interpretation of Irish history."37

In 1917, with the country in near rebellion, Sinn Fein finally became an official political party with the only surviving leader of the Rising, Eamon de Valera, as its president and Griffith as its vice-president. In the first general parliamentary election after the war, in December 1918, Sinn Fein, running on an abstentionist platform, won all but two seats outside of Ulster. In January 1919 these Sinn Fein members met in Dublin as the First Dail, the provisional government, de facto and de jure, of the Irish state. Finally, after two years of guerrilla warfare with the British they forced Great Britain to recognize this fact. Sinn Fein had finally succeeded in securing a separate Irish state.

Yet, even in triumph over Britain, Sinn Fein was not entirely successful. Griffith was never able to incorporate the separatists completely into an alliance. These men were unwilling to accept the treaty which the Dail had approved with Britain because it did not create their mythical republic. Ireland, under the terms of the agreement, was now a member of the British Commonwealth and all members of the Irish government were required to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. The alliance that Griffith had envisioned and forged between the radical separatists and more moderate
nationalists was destroyed on this point. As a result the Irish Civil War followed, with the rump of radicals retaining the name Sinn Fein for their organization. The descendants of this rump are the present-day Provisional Irish Republican Army and its political wing, Provisional Sinn Fein. They are a major cause of the violence that plagues Ireland to this day.

In looking back on the development of Irish nationalism since the late eighteenth century it becomes apparent that Sinn Fein was able to combine or renovate many of the tactics used by other nationalist movements. The constitutionalism of the Volunteers, the populism of O'Connell, the cultural nationalism of Davis and Hyde, and the cunning and flexibility of Parnell were all combined by Griffith into Sinn Fein. Irish nationalism had reached its ultimately successful manifestation. F. S. O'Hegarty, a contemporary of Griffith with amazing insight, had realized this in 1919 when he wrote: "Up to the Sinn Fein movement Irish patriotic movements have all been specialized rather than comprehensive."

Sinn Fein had risen from the ashes of earlier nationalist movements much like the mythical phoenix.
NOTES

1 Richard Jay, "Nationalism" [taken from chapter of an unpublished book given to me by author].

2 Ibid., p. 136.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 33.


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid., p. 214.

13 Ibid.


15 Curtis, pp. 238-239.

16 McDowell, p. 332.

17 Ibid., p. 611.


21 Williams, p. 67.
22 Ibid., p. 62.
23 Ibid., p. 63.
24 Beckett, p. 263.
26 Ibid., p. 239.
27 McDowell, p. 369.
28 Ibid., p. 371.
30 Beckett, p. 278.
31 Ibid., p. 273.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 235.
34 Webb, p. 191.
36 Webb, p. 191.
38 Ibid., p. 45.
39 Webb, p. 192.
41 Brown, p. 45.
42 Joyce, p. 232.
43 Brown, p. 58.
46 Brown, p. 45.
47 Ibid., p. 47.
46 Ibid., p. 47.
47 Ibid., p. 49.
50 Ibid., p. 54.
52 Ibid., p. 89.
53 Ibid., p. 96.
54 Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, p. 224.
56 Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, p. 156.
57 Ibid., pp. 163-164.
59 Joyce, p. 233.
60 Lyons, Culture and Anarchy, p. 2.
61 Lyons, Ireland since the Famine, p. 224.
62 Ibid., p. 223.
65 Thompson, p. 39.
66 Garvin, p. 102.
68 Curtis, p. 313.
70 Ibid., p. 17.
71 Ibid., p. 18.
72 O'Broin, p. 113.
73 Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 315.
74 Ibid., p. 251.
75 Curtis, p. 314.
76 Ibid.
78 Davis, p. 27.
79 Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 256.
80 Davis, p. 59.
82 Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p. 256.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., p. 257.
85 Davis, p. 54.
86 Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, pp. 382-393.
87 McCartney, p. 15.
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ADDENDA:
