

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction: the return of the repressed island

International travelers who go to London via Dublin face a strange inconsistency. Changing planes in Dublin on a recent journey, I had my passport stamped and boarded a plane for London, where I arrived in the domestic terminal and walked off without scrutiny. On the way back, though, I found myself in the international terminal of Dublin Airport again, getting my passport stamped once more so that it seemed to reflect a geographical impossibility – had I entered Ireland, gone nowhere, and somehow re-entered again? Had I passed between two foreign countries (as the Irish authorities seemed to think) or had I done no such thing (as the British procedure seemed to indicate)? The situation, I argue, is emblematic of the relationship between Ireland and England, now as in the past: never fully united, never entirely separated, and above all, never agreeing on the details of either union or separation.

In 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty ended the Anglo-Irish War and set up a new political order to replace the one that had endured since the Act of Union in 1801, creating a southern Irish state that had the status of a dominion within the Commonwealth and leaving in place the new semi-autonomous entity of Northern Ireland. Contemporaries and historians have rhetorically described this moment as the end of the Irish Question in British politics: the end, in other words, of the open question of the political status of the Union of Ireland and Great Britain, and also of the capacity of Ireland to roil metropolitan politics. Even on a narrow political reading, the claim for 1921 being the end of the Irish Question is problematic: questions about the boundary between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, the constitution of the Irish Free State, and other political issues continued to arise during the interwar years (and beyond); the exact nature of the political relationship between the two islands was not settled in 1921 and is not in fact fully settled today. However, the statement that “the Irish Question was solved in 1921” tends irresistibly to expand, so that it suggests not only a political change but a kind of clean break in Anglo-Irish relations in 1921. England forgot Ireland and

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 Introduction

moved on; the Irish disappeared from English politics, English life, and English consciousness, with the disappearance passed along a chain of meanings from Parliament to the collective national awareness. Patrick O'Farrell, for example, quotes Charles Mowat: "Nothing in the history of the Irish question is so surprising as the suddenness and completeness of its end. It simply disappeared as a major factor in British politics." O'Farrell glosses this as a "fading of Ireland from the English scene," which is really something quite different and much more expansive.¹

This narrative of a popular forgetting of Ireland informs some of the key historiography on Anglo-Irish relations in this period.² D. G. Boyce has described the Anglo-Irish War as a "trauma" that the English people were more than willing to leave behind.³ The Treaty of 1921 placed the Irish Question "beyond the realm of domestic political controversy," leaving the few remaining issues in the hands of the political elite.⁴ Contemporaries, too, wrote about the welcome forgetfulness brought about by the Treaty. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, journalists and commentators on Anglo-Irish relations regularly asserted that the average English person did not care about Ireland and in fact was barely aware of its existence any longer, having been glad to see it go. In 1922, Captain George Swinton argued that the overwhelming sensation of the British towards Ireland was "bored indifference" flavored with a wish to sink Ireland "to the bottom of the Atlantic with a good many of those on it."⁵ Ten years later, Sir Charles Petrie reflected on the curiousness that while "for many years the English people spared neither blood nor treasure in their efforts to preserve the Union with Ireland intact, that no sooner had the Irish Free State come into being than they proceeded to forget about it altogether."⁶ The political conflicts with Éamon de Valera's government in the 1930s caused the Irish question to "raise its repulsive head" once more, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian*.⁷ Yet even in

¹ Patrick O'Farrell, *England and Ireland since 1800* (Oxford University Press, 1975), 42. See C. L. Mowat, "The Irish Question in British Politics (1916–1922)," in *The Irish Struggle 1916–1926*, ed. Desmond Williams (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 141.

² See Alan J. Ward, *The Irish Constitutional Tradition: Responsible Government and Modern Ireland, 1782–1992* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 129; Paul Canning, *British Policy towards Ireland 1921–1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), vii; Michael Hopkinson, "From Treaty to Civil War, 1921–2," in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. VII: *Ireland, 1921–84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

³ D. G. Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy 1918–22* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), 185–86.

⁴ D. G. Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868–1996* 2nd edn. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 9; see also 75–6.

⁵ George Swinton, "Ireland," *Nineteenth Century and After* 92 (Oct. 1922), 651.

⁶ Sir Charles Petrie, "The Irish Free State To-day," *Nineteenth Century and After* 111 (Feb. 1932), 161. See "Journalists in Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, April 2, 1932, 10.

⁷ "Peace with Ireland," *Manchester Guardian*, July 5, 1932, 8.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

3

1938 Shane Leslie described Ireland as “a rather forgotten island beyond the Isle of Man, from which proceed depressions in the weather, horses and jockeys and sweepstake tickets.”⁸

What memory “contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers,” Raphael Samuel has argued.⁹ Why, though, did the English contrive to forget Ireland in this fashion? In his reading of *Wuthering Heights* in the context of the Famine, Terry Eagleton suggests that Ireland functioned as nineteenth-century Britain’s unconscious.¹⁰ This metaphor also provides a useful way to think about the relationship between England and Ireland after 1921. The repeated statements made by contemporaries about forgetting Ireland are a kind of repression: of the trauma of the Anglo-Irish War, but also of the deeply complicated relationship between England and its Celtic other. Ireland in interwar English culture has the quality of the uncanny: the thing that is familiar and yet unexpected because it has been repressed, according to Freud’s contemporary essay.¹¹ Irishness remained embedded in the very fabric of English life, and yet that fact had to be repeatedly forgotten in order to navigate the realities of the post-1921 world.

It is demonstrably not the case that Ireland, Irish people, and Irish things disappeared from interwar England. There were networks of Irish clubs and organizations dedicated to causes from ending partition to returning Sir Roger Casement’s bones to Ireland. Irish people kept moving to England: loyalists and Protestants in the 1920s, an increasing number of economic migrants in the 1930s. English people traveled to Ireland, read about Ireland, and argued about the Irish in their midst. Catholic schools were built with Irish support; gardens were tended by former Anglo-Irish demesne-holders; bombs were detonated by militants; shamrocks were bought and sold and admired on St. Patrick’s Day. Taken together, such diverse phenomena suggest broader conclusions: first, that English society absorbed the potentially dislocating threat posed by the Irish war and by continued Irish presence by making some aspects of Ireland foreign and domesticating others; and second, that this process is emblematic of the ways in which interwar England successfully managed social fissures. The Irish in England were kept out of party politics and militant movements to the greatest extent possible; high politics, meanwhile, preferred

⁸ Shane Leslie, *The Film of Memory* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1938), 368.

⁹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Vol. 1: *Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994), x.

¹⁰ Terry Eagleton, “Heathcliff and the Great Hunger,” in *The Eagleton Reader*, ed. Stephen Regan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 383–5.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” trans. Alix Strachey, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

4 Introduction

to deal with Ireland only as a semi-foreign place, a somewhat troublesome new dominion. The Irish Question was removed from the volatile realm of politics and reassigned to the rich interwar landscape of domestic and associational life, where Irishness could be safely reinterpreted as an enthusiasm, a heritage, or a leisure activity, rather than a public identity for which men and women would be prepared to die. In other words, the aspects of Irishness that could not be made foreign were instead civilized: made to behave, and made to fit into a civil society rather than continuing to loom as a political or even militant threat.

“Men were bored with the Irish question,” wrote A. J. P. Taylor, and so, it has often seemed, were many historians of twentieth-century England.¹² Boyce suggests that “British history makes more sense if Ireland is left out,” since the country “seemed more legitimate, more homogeneous after Ireland.”¹³ In an essay on the “four nations history,” Hugh Kearney has argued that the truly insular Anglocentric historical tradition dates from the interwar years, linking the rise of that tradition directly to the apparent end of the Irish problem.¹⁴ Such an approach has the effect of relieving historians from constructing narratives of English or British history that take the Irish dimension into account. For example, Pat Thane writes: “The relative stability of British domestic history makes it one of the deviant cases of twentieth-century European history. This has to be qualified with reference to the important exception of events in Ireland; however, these have left the culture of the remainder of the British Isles extraordinarily untouched.”¹⁵ This book contends something quite different: that it is necessary to reintegrate Ireland into English history in a way that reflects the varied links between the two countries and the central place often occupied by Irish politics and Irish people. An example of this sort of integration, as applied to the nineteenth century, can be found in the work of Eugenio Biagini, who places Irish Home Rule at the center of a popular rethinking of liberty and citizenship.¹⁶ In the case of the interwar period, I argue that British stability did not exist in spite of Ireland, or outside the Irish frame of reference, but rather that it was

¹² A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1965), 161.

¹³ Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics*, 13, 15.

¹⁴ Hugh Kearney, “Four Nations History in Perspective,” in *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, ed. Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11–12.

¹⁵ Pat Thane, “Family Life and ‘Normality’ in Postwar British Culture,” in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*, ed. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193–210, 193.

¹⁶ Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876–1906* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4. See also Daniel M. Jackson, *Popular Opposition to Irish Home Rule in Edwardian Britain* (Liverpool University Press, 2009).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

constructed in part out of reaction to the potential impact of the Irish Question.

The boundaries between the public and the private, and the political and the non-political, are crucial here. The Irish story is part of the transformations that shaped interwar England: a valorization of the domestic and the private, and the rise of a version of shared Englishness that was simultaneously nostalgic in flavor and modern in its democratic dispersal through new forms of leisure and taste. According to the Anglo-Irish writer Lionel Fleming, the English enjoyed “the stability of people to whom history has been kind.”¹⁷ On one level this stability is an objective fact: England escaped the intense political turmoil that marked much of interwar continental Europe thanks to compromises hammered out between government, industry, and organized labor, a less severe economic crisis, and innovations in technology and lifestyles, such as the garden suburb, which improved daily life and buffered against the appeal of extremist groups.¹⁸ Stability was also a cultural project, and one that was linked to notions of national identity. The power of Stanley Baldwin’s Englishness was not that it really was homogeneous, but rather that it effectively parceled out heterogeneity in ways that seemed enriching rather than dangerous. Ross McKibbin has brilliantly explicated how this strategy worked in regard to class by excluding trade unionists from the true national public.¹⁹ McKibbin also argues that Conservative hegemony was bolstered by interwar cultural patterns that neutralized class conflict by allowing it to play out in a private, leisure-oriented setting rather than in the political sphere.²⁰ Alison Light has defined the interwar period

¹⁷ Lionel Fleming, *Head or Harp* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965), 114.

¹⁸ John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics, 1929–1939*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 290–1; Andrew Thorpe, *Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 94; Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System since 1911* (London: André Deutsch, 1979); Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the Decade after World War I* (Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁹ Ross McKibbin, “Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the ‘Public’ in Inter-War Britain” in *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). See also Sonya Rose, “‘Good’ vs. ‘Militant’ Citizens: Masculinity, Class Protest, and the ‘Civil’ Public in Britain between 1867 and 1939,” in *Civil Society and Gender Justice: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* ed. Karen Hagemann, Sonya Michel, and Gunilla Budde (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 190–207; David Jarvis, “British Conservatism and Class Politics in the 1920s,” *English Historical Review* 111:440 (1996): 59–84; Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, “Introduction,” in *The Conservatives and British Society, 1800–1990*, ed. Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), 4.

²⁰ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 527–8. See D. L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 332.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 Introduction

through its development of a “conservative modernity” that reassigned the meanings attached to binaries such as public and private, urban and rural, inward and outward, so that “the virtues of the private sphere of middle-class life take on a new public and national significance.”²¹ The interwar decades saw a reordering of the public and the private; contentious issues of difference were contained by being relocated to the home and civil society in a move made possible by a new valorization of those spheres. Interwar stability was not an illusion, but neither was it a simple stroke of good luck: instead, it was a complicated construction that both depended upon and perpetuated the identification of difference with the personal, a process exemplified by the evolution of Irishness in interwar society.²²

R. F. Foster’s phrase “marginal men and Micks on the make” refers to a capacious category including immigrant communities, expatriate writers such as W. B. Yeats and George Bernard Shaw, and the “disaffected British people” attracted to Ireland.²³ Such people crossed the Irish Sea in both directions as soldiers, investigators, immigrants, and tourists. Their journeys reveal the central tensions of the interwar Anglo-Irish relationship, and their experiences are at the heart of this book. I follow three strands of experience in particular: first, the perceptions, prejudices, and politics of English people engaging with Ireland or the Irish; second, the political and cultural activities of the working-class, mostly Catholic and nationalist Irish communities in England; and third, the declining world of the Anglo-Irish, especially those who chose to settle in England after their hybrid lifestyles were curtailed by political division. The connection between England and Ireland remained objectively important in the interwar decades: as a source of political, military, and economic instability; as a source of migrants; and as a source of cultural products of all sorts, to name only the most prominent examples. Equally, however, the Irish are crucial to the history of interwar England for their ability to serve as a microcosm, or a series of microcosms, enacting the dramas of the era on a small and vivid scale. In other words, the Irish are important both as reality and as metaphor, a dual position they have often occupied in English history. Moreover,

²¹ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), 8, 10. See Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 143.

²² See Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918–1931* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7–8.

²³ R. F. Foster, “Marginal Men and Micks on the Make: The Uses of Irish Exile, c. 1840–1922,” in *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 282.

the case of the Irish in interwar England existed at the intersection of two larger historical frameworks: the political realignments, nationalism, and “unmixing” of peoples of post-World War I Europe and the impending dissolution of the British Empire. The centrality of Irish people, literature, heritage, and so on to English culture suggests that Irishness was vital to Englishness in a positive as well as a negative sense: not only a foil, but also a constitutive element.²⁴ National identity, like personal identity, grows out of a complicated set of social relations unable to be fully captured by the dichotomy of self and other.²⁵ It is the contention of this book that Irishness was a crucial component of interwar Englishness. Its salience varied widely and its meaning was often deeply personal and idiosyncratic, but it remained, after 1921, a bright green thread woven into the lives of people of many backgrounds and perspectives. Its presence was not merely decorative but indicative of important mechanisms of social accommodation in the face of ethnic diversity and the beginning of decolonization.

The question of names and labels is tricky in a work that aims to question categories of identity and to emphasize the blurry borders between nations. Ireland refers to the literal place, but also the vast mental category comprising all things Irish, however varied and even contradictory; the more precise Irish Free State captures something narrower.²⁶ When contemporaries referred to “the Irish” in England, they often meant only the working-class, Catholic Irish, a cultural construction sometimes repeated in historiography.²⁷ The Irish people in interwar England were far more diverse than that stereotype, and this book considers experiences ranging from Protestant loyalism to socialist republicanism.

A related question is the extent to which even the working-class Catholic Irish formed a distinct community in England.²⁸ In the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants had filled industrial and agricultural jobs in an urbanizing and industrializing Britain; the “shock wave of pauper migrants” fleeing the mid-century Famine were obvious but not typical.²⁹ Marked

²⁴ Mandler, *The English National Character*, 53.

²⁵ Billie Melman, “Claiming the Nation’s Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 26:3/4 (1991): 575–95, 575; Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 132.

²⁶ Mary E. Daly, “The Irish Free State/Éire/Republic of Ireland/Ireland: ‘A Country by Any Other Name?’” *Journal of British Studies* 46:1 (2007): 72–90.

²⁷ John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800–1939* (Liverpool University Press, 2007), xii; Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750–1939* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 5. See Brian Walker, “The Lost Tribes of Ireland: Diversity, Identity and Loss among the Irish Diaspora,” *Irish Studies Review* 15:3 (2007): 267–82, 267.

²⁸ See Walker, “The Lost Tribes of Ireland,” 275–6.

²⁹ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, 54.

8 Introduction

out by their overall poverty and their Catholicism, they attracted hostility and elicited anxiety.³⁰ Their interest in politics, especially nationalism but also working-class movements such as trade unionism, as well as their enthusiasm for typical diversions including drink and games, was in tension with the politically quietist and temperance-oriented church that claimed their allegiance.³¹ The result, according to some scholars, was that the Irish in Britain assimilated rapidly. John Hutchinson and Alan O'Day put it starkly when they write of the impressive "rate at which Irish Catholics have disappeared into British society."³² O'Day argues further that integration and assimilation prevented the Irish from being "politicized, at least in a specific and continuous ethnic sense."³³ He links this with stability, arguing that assimilation was perhaps "one of those blessings which enable Britain to avoid the excesses of ethnic strife which marred the first half of the twentieth century for much of Continental European society."³⁴ Other scholars have challenged this narrative. Sean Glynn argued in 1981 that it was not adequate to describe areas of dense Irish settlement, and he characterized the Irish population as maintaining "a low profile."³⁵ Steven Fielding, too, argues that they continued to be marked out by religion and ethnicity.³⁶ Mary Hickman, one of the sharpest critics of the assimilation narrative, concludes that a "low profile is not evidence of assimilation but of a specific response by Irish people to the various anti-Irish and anti-Catholic discourses and practices, which have been encountered and negotiated within the context of specific communal

³⁰ Sheridan Gilley and Roger Swift, "Introduction," in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, ed. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 5, 9.

³¹ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, 80; Alan O'Day, "The Political Representation of the Irish in Great Britain, 1850–1940," in *Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940*, Vol. IV: *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation*, ed. Geoffrey Alderman, John Leslie, and Klaus Erich Pollmann (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1993), 31–72.

³² John Hutchinson and Alan O'Day, "The Gaelic Revival in London, 1900–22: Limits of Ethnic Identity," in *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension*, ed. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 261. See David Fitzpatrick, "A Curious Middle Place: The Irish in Britain, 1871–1921," in *The Irish in Britain 1815–1939*, ed. Sheridan Gilley and Roger Swift (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989), 44; John Herson, "Migration, 'Community' or Integration? Irish Families in Victorian Stafford," *The Irish in Victorian Britain*, ed. Swift and Gilley, 181–2.

³³ Alan O'Day, "The Political Organization of the Irish in Britain, 1867–90," in *The Irish in Britain 1815–1939*, ed. Gilley and Swift, 207.

³⁴ O'Day, "The Political Representation of the Irish in Great Britain," 79.

³⁵ Sean Glynn, "Irish Immigration to Britain, 1916–1951: Patterns and Policy," *Irish Economic and Social History* 8 (1981): 50–69, 53, 68.

³⁶ Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880–1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), 3–5.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

9

institutions.”³⁷ She warns against simple teleologies and urges scholars to recognize a diversity of forms of community and consciousness.³⁸

This book finds considerable evidence that the Irish Catholic minority in interwar England was a distinctive subculture, following Samuel’s conclusion that they are “one of the more substantial – and one of the more beleaguered – of those minority cultures of which (it could be argued) the ‘majority’ culture of modern Britain is composed.”³⁹ The political and militant mobilization of the Irish minority in 1916–21 can be seen as another, and perhaps final, wave of activism, of which the most striking antecedent is the Fenian movement.⁴⁰ In the 1860s, too, Irish men and women in England joined organizations and demonstrations in support of militant nationalism, doing so in ways that both linked them to, and distinguished them from, their counterparts in Ireland.⁴¹ The failure of Fenianism led to decades in which Irish culture in England was maintained through religious and social ties, imbued with nostalgia for Ireland and a sentimental nationalism.⁴² The activists of 1916–21 paid homage to their Fenian forbears and in some respects their experiences tracked a similar cycle of politicization followed by a turn to culture and leisure. The distinction lies partly in finality – Irish republicanism would not be revived on a meaningful scale in England for the rest of the twentieth century. Instead, the interwar period saw the absorption of the first postcolonial minority into English culture. By placing the Irish Catholic story in the context of other kinds of engagement with Irishness, I argue for a larger process of incorporation that nonetheless maintained the distinctiveness of the place of the Irish, and of Irishness generally, in English society.

English society, and not British society: although at times this book engages with British institutions or the notion of Britishness as distinct from Englishness, it is at heart a story about the relationship between England and Ireland (and, to a lesser extent, Wales) and recognizes that

³⁷ Mary J. Hickman, “Alternative Historiographies of the Irish in Britain: a Critique of the Segregation/Assimilation Model,” in *The Irish in Victorian Britain*, ed. Swift and Gilley, 253.

³⁸ Hickman, “Alternative Historiographies of the Irish in Britain,” 239–41. See also Mary J. Hickman and Bronwen Walter, “Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain,” *Feminist Review* 50 (1995): 5–19, 10.

³⁹ Raphael Samuel, “The Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Poor,” in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, ed. Swift and Gilley, 290. See Cecil Day-Lewis, *The Buried Day* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 96.

⁴⁰ MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, 139–40.

⁴¹ R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society 1848–82* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1998), 81, 127.

⁴² David Fitzpatrick, “The Irish in Britain, 1871–1921,” in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. VI: *Ireland under the Union 1870–1921*, ed. W. E. Vaughan (Oxford University Press, 1989), 675.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-05268-0 - Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England

Mo Moulton

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 Introduction

the Scottish trajectory is somewhat different. Scotland's interwar decades were grimmer than England's, on average; the slump struck Scotland with more uniform harshness than in England, where the relative prosperity of the south helped to lighten the blow. The Scottish population declined for the first time since modern records were kept as a result of difficult living conditions, industrial decline, and persistent poverty.⁴³ Richard Finlay has argued that the story of interwar British stability is not fully applicable to Scotland, which was at much greater risk of social dislocation and class strife; indeed, he concludes that the "British political system acted as an effective buffer against the growth of political extremism."⁴⁴ Home Rule in Ireland had a different resonance, politically, for Scotland, which had itself joined the United Kingdom under its own earlier Act of Union (1707). Ewen Cameron argues that the Treaty actually strengthened the Unionist Party in Scotland, while also raising more pointed questions for Scottish nationalists about their own Home Rule platform.⁴⁵ The history of Irish immigration to Scotland is also distinctive. Scotland and Northern Ireland are physically far closer, across the North Channel, than England is to Ireland, and population transfers have been occurring in both directions for centuries.⁴⁶ As in England, there was particularly large-scale Irish immigration in the nineteenth century, particularly around the Famine.⁴⁷ Debates over assimilation, integration, and difference parallel those made about the Irish minority in England, with some scholars finding the Irish to be essentially a religious minority and others insisting on the persistence of ethnic difference.⁴⁸ However, Irish immigration to Scotland lost steam in the early twentieth century.⁴⁹ In some respects the sectarianism of Ulster society

⁴³ Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880*, The New Edinburgh History of Scotland 10 (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 125–35.

⁴⁴ Richard J. Finlay, "The Interwar Crisis: The Failure of Extremism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, ed. T. M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (Oxford University Press, 2012), 583.

⁴⁵ Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, 165, 168. See also Alvin Jackson, *The Two Unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the Survival of the United Kingdom, 1707–2007* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 248–9.

⁴⁶ See Patrick Fitzgerald, "The Seventeenth-Century Irish Connection," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, ed. Devine and Wormald, 285.

⁴⁷ Ben Braber, "Immigrants," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, ed. Devine and Wormald, 492–6.

⁴⁸ See Tom Gallagher, "The Catholic Irish in Scotland: In Search of Identity," in *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Tom Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1991), 24; Braber, "Immigrants," 498–500; Graham Walker, "The Religious Factor," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History*, ed. Devine and Wormald, 587.

⁴⁹ Brenda Collins, "The Origins of Irish Immigration to Scotland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society*, ed. Devine, 15.