IMAGES IN CONFLICT : VISUAL IMAGERY AND THE TROUBLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND (1968 - 1981)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the roles of visual imagery in relation to Northern Ireland's present troubles. It surveys fine art and popular imagery employed in Northern Ireland with relevant material from England and the Irish Republic.

The theoretical approach is established in Chapter 1. Three main defects in existing presentations and analyses of troubles imagery are outlined: the separation of such imagery into unrelated categories of fine arts, popular culture and mass media; their treatment as disembodied art-works, related only to art-world traditions, or as mere reflections of social, economic and political forces; and their location within immediate contexts, with no sense of their historical evolution. It is therefore proposed to treat the different troubles images as interrelated parts of visual languages, which are themselves in dialogue; to see such images and languages as factors interrelating with economic, social and political forces; and to locate them adequately within evolving traditions. This approach is related to similar recent work by art-historians, sociologists and anthropologists, and then tested in six paired chapters, handling chief types of troubles imagery.

The first two chapters discuss William III and Mother Ireland emblems. They analyse roles of identity figures, genesis and function of visual mythology, and interrelationships of fine art and popular imagery. The next pair examine Orange and Green imagery. They discuss function of rituals and symbolism, development and roles of visual styles and general problems and possibilities of analysing popular imagery. The third pair analyse fine art and political propaganda. They examine evolution and

roles of visual conventions and their relation to political, social and economic forces via art-world structures. A brief conclusion summarises problems and advantages of the approach adopted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Because this thesis has been compiled far from its sponsoring university, has crossed the boundaries of various academic disciplines, and has in latter years been combined with motherhood, its writer is particularly indebted to those who have given the support necessary for its completion.

Especial thanks are due to the staff of the Belfast Central Library, the British Newspaper Library at Colindale, the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, the National Library of Ireland, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and Queen's University Library, Belfast for their courteous and patient assistance. At the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Brian Ferran and Brian Ballard have cheerfully handled numerous queries, as have Mike Catto and Roy Johnston of the Belfast College of Art. In the National Museum of Ireland Oliver Snoddy has been a constant source of relevant and irrelevant information; at the Ulster Folk Museum Ronald Adams, Bill Crawford and Fionnuala Scullion have assisted particular lines of inquiry; and at the Ulster Museum my task has been greatly eased by Tom Wiley and Robert Heslip in Local History, and Ted Hickey, Erina George, Eileen Black and Mike Robinson in the Art Department. I am also grateful to Dr Mike Beames, Douglas Deane, the late Aiken McClelland, Cahill Tohill and Liam Thompson for allowing me access to their research material. My particular debts to them are recorded in the body of the text. Dr Mike Beames and Joseph Darracott also read various drafts of the thesis and made helpful suggestions. My debt to all these suppliers of information, ideas and criticism, and to all those who agreed to talk to me in the course of my research, is incalculable. I would also like to record my gratitude to the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University, Belfast,

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Finally my greatest debt is to my supervisor Gordon Fyfe, for maintaining a lifeline of encouragement from Keele to Northern Ireland, and to John, my husband, and Phoebe, my daughter for tolerating a long period of domestic chaos with remarkable forbearance.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Those with a quick eye for nuances of meaning will have noticed something slightly odd about the title of this thesis. The subject proposed for analysis in it is not visual imagery of the troubles in Northern Ireland, but visual imagery and the troubles in Northern Ireland. For it is precisely the two-way interrelationships implied by the conjunction "and", rather than the one-way derivation signalled by the preposition "of", that form the subject of this work.

Immediately that field of analysis is defined, a very basic question is raised, namely, how can one discuss the relationships between visual images and political developments in such a way as to increase understanding of both those images and those developments? This is more than an academic question, for not only has the Northern Ireland conflict been of crucial significance to the people of Britain and Ireland, but the visual images relating to it have been and continue to be powerful factors in both its enactment and its consideration.

Various answers to this question are implicit in existing presentations and discussions of the visual imagery related to the present troubles in Ulster.[1] It is my contention that those answers are in

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1. Historically Ulster is the nine-county Irish province including not only the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone now incorporated in the state of Northern Ireland, but also Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. However from the late nineteenth century onwards the name has tended to be appropriated by Northern Protestants of a Unionist persuasion to designate that area of Ireland which they wish to remain under British rule. Initially this was the nine counties, but it gradually became apparent in the early years of this century that it would only be feasible to retain the six counties eventually constituted as the state of Northern Ireland in 1921. Irish men and women of a republican persuasion generally avoid the use of the term Northern Ireland, which runs contrary to their aspiration to an Irish republic incorporating the six northern counties. In this thesis, for discussions of the period before 1921 "Ulster" and "the North of Ireland" will be taken to mean the old nine-county province, while for the period after that date "Ulster" and "Northern Ireland" will refer to the six counties retained under British rule.

certain respects seriously deficient. In this introduction I shall therefore offer a critique of these approaches, before outlining the kind of analysis I intend to employ, and my reasons for selecting it.

As this thesis will reveal, a vast amount of visual images relating to the Northern Ireland troubles have been produced during the past thirteen years. Moreover these images fall into a very wide range of categories. Press photographs, cartoons, advertisements, posters, Christmas cards, banners, badges, wallpaintings, craftwork, processional regalia, paintings, drawings and sculptures have all taken up themes related to the Ulster conflict. Yet the analyses of these images are few in number and highly selective in their approach.

These analyses have been offered in two main forms, publications and permanent or temporary displays in museums and art galleries. In both there has been a marked tendency to separate the images related to the Northern Ireland troubles into illustrations of history, works of art and media imagery, each category being treated in a different fashion. This division in treatment can best be illustrated by considering first three publications in which troubles imagery is reproduced, and then a number of the relevant museum and art gallery displays.

Since the beginning of the present troubles in Northern Ireland in 1968 English and Irish publishers have produced a number of illustrated books attempting to set the conflict in a historical perspective. Some of these have been designed to be used as school text-books; others have been aimed at the general public. In the latter category a recent example is Robert Kee's Ireland, A History,[1] produced to accompany his television

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1. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980. Unless otherwise stated all publications cited are issued in London.

series of the same title, first broadcast on BBC 2 and RTE between December 1980 and February 1981. In this book visual images related to the troubles are used as illustrations of history. This emphasis is conveyed by the way they are selected, the style in which they are reproduced, and the kind of written information which accompanies them.

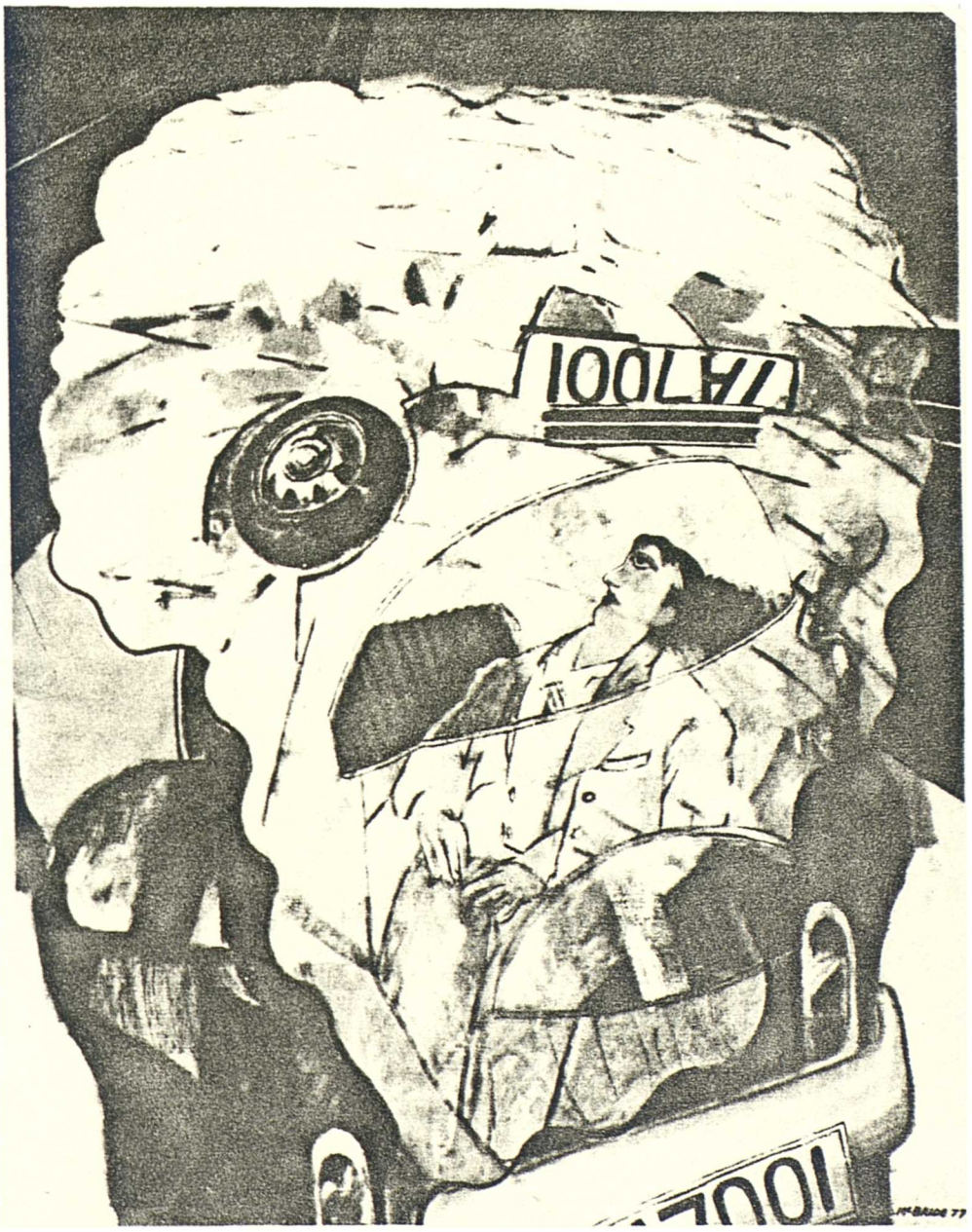
Take for example the two colour pictures of Orange processions reproduced opposite page 64 of Kee's book (ill 1). The juxtaposition of painting and photograph on this page places them on a level as sources of information, although the painting is accorded a small measure of superiority by virtue of its position at the top of the page, its size and the fact that it is not cropped, which the photograph obviously is. This interpretation of the two images is reinforced by the captions accompanying them. The reader is directed by these to see the pictures as interesting evidence of the Ulster Orangemen's continuing celebrations of William III's victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, (illustrated on the following page), and to a question about an item of regalia used in those celebrations. The painting is given slight precedence by the naming of the artist responsible for it; anyone interested in the name of the photographer who took the picture of contemporary Orangemen will have to search in the acknowledgements at the back of the book. The reader is not however encouraged to reconstruct Lavery's work as a painting. Neither its size, nor its medium are given, and its location can again only be traced through the acknowledgements. The presentation of these pictures as illustrations of historical information is further emphasised by their relationship to Chapter 3 of Kee's book, in which he explains the Orangemen's celebrations as an assertion of their resistance to and victory over the encircling Irish Catholics at the period of plantation, during the bitter political and religious conflicts

ABOVE: Celebrating an ancient victory. Orange parade, 12 July 1926 (painting by Sir John Lavery, who also designed the Irish Free State banknotes).

RIGHT: Contemporary Orange Day celebrations. But why in bowler hats?

1. Colour illustrations opposite p. 64 of Robert Kee, Ireland, A History, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981/ actual size.

81 DENIS McBRIDE
Northern Incident [*Peaceful*]
1977; oil on canvas; 137 x 101.6 cms; collection the artist



2. Black and white illustration on p.143 of Mike Catto, Art in Ulster: 2, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1977/ actual size.

73 ROWEL FRIERS
Miss Free Derry
13 November 1971; *Belfast Telegraph* cartoon

The example here (no 73), is typical of his style of draughtsmanship. His gallery of working urban or rural 'types' is generally a pithy form of human observation. Friers' political cartooning has a sense of fair play: it provokes a tut or a chuckle (in itself no bad thing) rather than giving the cruel flash of insight that one gets from commentators as diverse as Daumier, Scarfe or Heartfield. There have been some exceptions, notably the example illustrated, which is deservedly one of the most famous of the 'troubles' cartoons. Rowel Friers' art, however, is not specific to the troubles; for him this past decade probably represents yet another daft episode in the history of a fascinating but daft community.

Another Ulster artist who has specialised in cartooning with a political slant is Kenneth Mahood whose work appears regularly in *The Times* and *Punch*. Mahood was one of the young painters of promise in the mid 1950s but his subsequent move to London saw the spiky line of his paintings develop into an almost baroque graphic style which delights in curls and swirls. Although he has produced a fair number of scathing visual comments on the Irish situation, he has no great

3. Black and white illustration on p.129 of Mike Catto, Art in Ulster: 2, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1977/ actual size.

in the 1640s, in the Williamite campaign of 1689-90, and at the time of the fight against Home Rule in the early years of this century (hence, says Kee, the retention of the bowler hats worn during that era).

In the notably few art publications discussing visual images related to the present conflict in Northern Ireland a radically different approach is taken. The most coherent of these publications is Mike Catto's chapter titled "Notes from a Small War/Art and the Troubles", in his Art in Ulster: 2.[1] What Catto offers is a selection of images in which artists and a handful of cartoonists, photographers and graphic designers have reacted to or handled the troubles. These images are all accorded individual importance by their separate reproduction, but a hierarchy in their status is implied by the caption information supplied with them. In the case of fine art works, like Denis McBride's Northern Incident (Peaceful) (ill 2), the reader is given the artist's name and the title of the work, together with its date, medium, size and location. This information urges the insertion of the work into the artist's total output, and the reconstruction of its original appearance. The same kind of artwork information is provided for the Don't Fraternise poster (ill 182). Indeed by categorising it as the work of "Anonymous" rather than of a member of the political group which produced it,[2] it is removed from a political into an artistic context. For Rowel Friers' Miss Free Derry cartoon (ill 3), however, no medium or dimensions are given, the implication being that not being a work of art such information is not appropriate. Yet the lack of dimensions deprives the reader of a particularly important piece of evidence about the cartoon, for much of

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1. Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1977. For a more general discussion of the treatment of troubles imagery in such art publications see below, p. 671-675.
2. See below, p. 566.

its impact at the time it was issued in the Belfast Telegraph derived from the scale of its reproduction.[1] The implied scale of values in these captions is further endorsed in Catto's text in which a constant opposition is proposed between the independent view of the troubles presented by the fine artist who is seen as being above political divisions and "the futility of violence" and the mindless sectarian propaganda of makers of political imagery, from which category the maker of the Don't Fraternise poster escapes by virtue of his or her involvement in a form of poster-work popular amongst art-students and sanctioned by art-fashion in the late 1960s.

Mass-media photographs of the Northern Ireland troubles have been analysed in a number of publications, notably various issues of Camerawork, a photography magazine produced by a leftwing collective in London. Issue no 14 of the magazine, which appeared in August 1979, was entirely devoted to the subject of Reporting on Northern Ireland. The overall message about press-photographs of the Northern Ireland conflict conveyed by this publication is that the production of such photographs for the mass media is subject to strong political and technical pressures, to which certain committed leftwing photographers respond by seeking more independent ways of issuing their pictures so that their aesthetic and political content can be given unhindered expression. Except in the first three pages of the magazine, which carry an illustrated "Short History of Ireland" based on a slide show compiled by the Troops Out Movement, the photographs in the magazine are beautifully reproduced,

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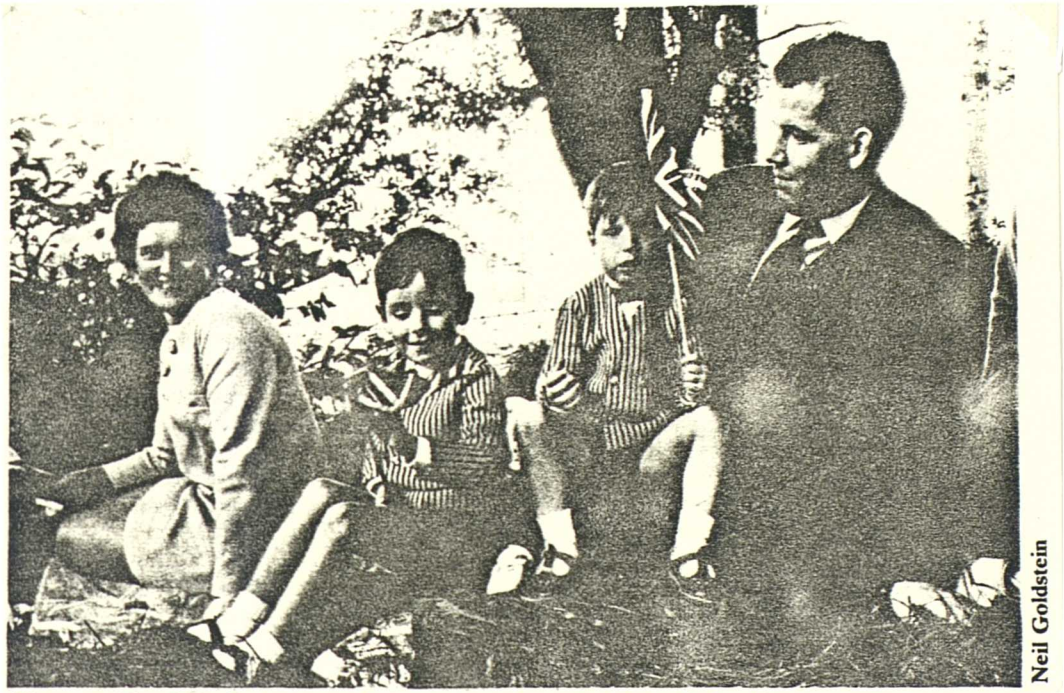
1. The cartoon is 6½" x 8½" (16·5 x 21·5 cms). It is reproduced on a newspaper page measuring 25" x 16" (63·5 x 40·5 cms).

generally on a very large scale; they are grouped in photo-essays and articles on particular political aspects of the Ulster conflict, such as "Catholic West Belfast", or "Camera on Patrol" (an article on the use of cameras by the British Army in Northern Ireland); they are captioned in such a way as to emphasise their political content; and they are credited with the name of the photographer responsible (ill 4). The same implied antithesis between the independent photographer observing developments in Ulster with political and aesthetic correctness, and the manipulation of photographic images by the mass media and the British Army, can be found in the articles in this issue, in which analyses of press distortion and army surveillance are counter-balanced by a series of interviews with a number of photographers who have worked in the province since 1968.

To sum up then: two different relationships between visual images and political conflict are generally proposed by the few published analyses of the visual material linked to the Northern Ireland troubles. On the one hand the history books, by concentrating on the content of visual images, imply that they are reflections or illustrations of political developments, and as such have an equivalent value, whether they be paintings, photographs, prints or wallpaintings. And on the other hand the art-books, and to a large extent the publications dealing with media-photographs, by concentrating on the authorship of images, emphasise their role as creations of finely-tuned aesthetic individuals, who are essentially independent of political constraints, and whose output is graded according to a hierarchy of artistic categories, and an estimation of value based largely on the degree of independent integrity involved.[1]

1. Clearly there is some overlap between these two approaches. Even in history books fine art works are often given the kind of precedence over other images to be found in the Kee illustration, and an aspiration to reflection of political realities is contained in the photographs reproduced in Camerawork.



Neil Goldstein

Happy and loyal: the Protestant middle classes are least affected by the troubles.

4. Black and white photograph reproduced on p.10 of Camerawork, no 14, "Reporting on Northern Ireland", Half Moon Photography Workshop, August 1979/actual size.

Neither approach exhibits much interest in the function of these images or situates them in their original context. Neither approach develops an analysis of the political messages coded in their style as opposed to their content. In fact neither approach is concerned with them as evidence in themselves. The relationship between image and conflict is collapsed by focussing too exclusively on image or conflict.[1]

Similar limited and divided approaches can be found in the museum and art gallery displays of visual imagery related to the Northern Ireland troubles. In the Ulster Museum in Belfast various kinds of visual images ranging from a painting of William III to a penal cross and transfer-printed volunteer jugs illustrate the province's political traditions in the Local History galleries, opened in 1978, and at the end of these galleries a wall-panel of photographs surveying various aspects of Ulster's past and present concludes with a small selection of carefully balanced, tasteful press pictures of the present conflict. Several floors above the few works of art referring to the troubles which the museum owns are displayed in the art galleries reserved to the Irish school or to international modern art.

Future displays of such material in permanent collections are likely to remain as limited and divided, whether in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, or Britain. Only one institution has made any organised attempt to collect visual imagery relating to Northern Ireland's present troubles. This is the Linen Hall Library, a subscription library in Belfast, which has put together an extensive collection of the posters, newsheets, and similar ephemera which have appeared in Northern Ireland over the past thirteen years. Discussions between public institutions

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1. There have been a few exceptions to these two main forms of approach to visual imagery relating to the Northern Ireland troubles. Thus Frank Webster's "Every Picture tells a lie", (Camerawork no 5, Feb 1977, p. 4) locates the photographs of Maire Drumm's funeral carried by the Fleet Street popular papers firmly within the context of the conventions governing their production. But this kind of approach has been exceedingly rare.

such as the Ulster Museum and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland about allocation of responsibility for activities such as collecting troubles photos or recording wallpaintings and street parades reached no firm conclusions. No clear programme of action in preserving the visual imagery of the troubles has been pursued by any of these public bodies. Such material as they own has generally been acquired through the individual initiative of a member of staff or a donor. The same is true of outside bodies such as the Imperial War Museum in London and the National Library and National Museum in Dublin. Moreover the private collections on which public institutions normally rely for later acquisitions of this kind of material have been constantly depleted throughout the past thirteen years by bombs, confiscation by the security forces, increased mobility and deliberate wastage. (Not only have Belfast's main newspapers repeatedly lost their photographic files as the result of bombs; they have also maintained a policy of destroying these files after a set number of years).[1]

Temporary exhibitions, normally regarded as a more flexible and experimental way of handling visual imagery than permanent museum and art gallery displays, have in fact generally offered the viewer the same kind of limited and divided presentation of troubles imagery. There have been a handful of one-man shows of personal aesthetic visions of the troubles by fine artists from Ulster, the Republic of Ireland and Britain. In May 1975 some of the political imagery produced by loyalist and republican groups, such as wallpaintings, posters and internee crafts were documented in a series of colour-photographs incorporated in an

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1. The News Letter normally destroys its photographic files once they are 10 years old, the Belfast Telegraph when they are 2 years old. The Irish News has not in this period employed staff photographers and therefore maintains no photo-files of its own.

exhibition surveying political attitudes in the province. This show, titled A shade of green, an orange edge, was prepared for the Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic by the English artist Conrad Atkinson, and after display in Belfast, toured a number of venues in England. And in February and March of 1980 a photographic exhibition based on Camerawork no 14 and characterised by much the same approach was shown as part of the Sense of Ireland festival at the Cockpit theatre and then at Action Space, both in London.

Only a handful of temporary displays have attempted to present visual images relating to the troubles in a fashion avoiding the division into object and subject, illustration and art. During the early years of the conflict fine art and popular images were shown alongside each other in a number of exhibitions associated with festivals organised by those advocating a republican solution to the Northern Ireland question, notably the People's Festivals in Armagh and Dublin, and the Connolly Week in Armagh. And occasionally younger members of the art community in Northern Ireland joined forces to promote similar displays without committing themselves to a specific political viewpoint. The first such venture took place in November 1972, when the Troubled Image Group promoted as part of the student fringe of the Queen's University Festival, artists' performances and an exhibition of children's paintings, both related to the Northern Ireland conflict. A similar, slightly more ambitious project was the Almost Free Art Show mounted at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland gallery in Belfast in the spring of 1978. This was organised by a group of people from Northern Ireland who had been funded by the Arts Council to visit the documenta exhibition at Kassel in West Germany the previous summer. It was an open-access exhibition in which submissions ranged from loyalist and republican internee craft products to performance

art, and from videos to oilpaintings by both amateur and professional artists, which formed a self-presentation and critique of culture in contemporary Ulster. And at the Richard Demarco gallery during the 1980 Edinburgh festival a small selection of photographic layouts titled Cross-Eyed analysed some of the relationships between visual imagery and the Northern Ireland troubles pursued in this thesis.[1]

Clearly the bulk of the permanent and temporary displays of visual imagery relating to the Northern Ireland conflict propose, like the publications, that such images are either reflections of political developments or creations of artistic individuals independent of political constraints, whose output is graded and separated according to a hierarchy of existing categories and a valuation system based largely on the degree of independent integrity involved.

It is possible to argue that at least the second assessment of the relationship between visual imagery and politics has some foundation in existential reality. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards the makers of visual imagery were increasingly divided into separate and graded categories, headed by the fine artist who was expected to stand somewhat aloof from society so as to be able to present it with the independent creations of his individual genius. The artist/craftsman working to a patron's commission in a range of images from murals and easel paintings to designs for jewellery, stage scenery or propaganda prints, was gradually replaced by the fine artist, committing his individual visions to a more limited range of paintings, drawings and sculpture, while other forms of imagery were produced by a growing army

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1. Here I must declare an interest. I was one of the group organising The Almost Free Art Show and I put together Cross-Eyed with some help from friends.

of specialist craftsmen, such as medallists, print-makers and stage-designers. This was part of a more general split between high and low culture during this period, which was deepened by the far greater rate of change in high culture, its increasing reservation to institutions such as universities and art-dealers to which the general populace had very little access,[1] and its absorption of the romantic conception of the artist as a heroic rebel against social conventions.

It is also true that the development of the mass-media during this period, and most particularly after 1900, did effect a further major division in categories of visual imagery. It is as well to remember that mass-production on a limited scale was already being used for objects such as coins, medals and wood-engravings.[2] But the changes in scale and speed of output which now took place were enormous. Contrast for example the implications of a newspaper photograph to those of an Orange or Hibernian banner. The former is produced in enormous numbers, available to all, largely uncontrollable by the individual, designed to be thrown away, demands a speedy response and may well refer to far distant events. The latter is a single image available to a select group, geared to their taste and chosen by at least one of their number, designed to be kept, demands repeated reflections and refers to local allegiances. It is clear that with the development of the mass-media a totally new kind of imagery did come into existence.

However the existential separation of visual imagery from politics and society, and its organisation into a hierarchy of categories, has been less clear-cut than is often assumed. In the first place categories of

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1. See Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, Temple Smith 1978, and Victor E. Neuburg, Popular Literature, A History and Guide, Penguin, 1977.
2. See William M.Ivins, Prints and visual communication, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass/London, 1969.

imagery have varied from time to time and from area to area. As will already be apparent from the discussions of analyses of photographs of the Northern Ireland troubles, there is currently an attempt to elevate photography to fine art status. This is nothing new. Aaron Scharf, whose Art and Photography[1] minutely chronicles the relations between painting and photography since the earliest development of the latter medium, makes the point that photographers have constantly striven to raise their trade to the level of an art in the eyes of the public. It is in the last ten years however that they appear to have come closest to achieving that aim.

"Several galleries now devote themselves entirely to showing photographs. Official bodies make urgent appeals for the retention in this country of important early works. Sotheby's auction prints by living photographers for three-figure amounts. Anticipating more rapid appreciation some collectors have foresaken paintings for photographs. In the academic world, photography - a working tool in many departments for over a century - now rates a department of its own, having become an acceptable subject for degree awards; and the Arts Council is also giving it official recognition."[2]

Illustration is another medium which can be found sometimes in one art category, sometimes in another. While in England there has been and still is a tendency to look down on illustrators, in France and America they have frequently been accepted as fine artists.

And in the second place, if one looks at the total function of visual images in everyday life, rather than at the particular question of

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1. Allen Lane, 1968.
2. Tom Hopkinson, "Artist or Reporters", The Sunday Times, 21 Sept 1975, p. 39.

their initial production, the existential basis for a view of them as separate from society and politics and isolated into different categories crumbles very rapidly. Consider for example the various and interrelated roles of visual imagery in the life of a man who lives in Derry, paints Orange banners and Catholic statues, has a photograph of the Queen and his own paintings of Irish landscapes on the sitting-room wall, and reproductions of Dutch oil paintings and medals of William III in his studio, makes a ritual effigy every year, attends a Church of Ireland cathedral, walks in Apprentice Boys processions, is photographed by the British Army and various Irish newspapers, has a house-painter's training, and reads the News Letter, the Londonderry Sentinel and the Orange Standard. For such a man visual images are very much part of his involvement in society and politics, and divisions between fine art and popular imagery are virtually meaningless.

If the existential basis for the commonly-held views of the relationship between visual imagery and political developments is debatable rather than fixed, why are those views so persistent? To a certain extent one must recognise that they are rooted in both overall and specific practical considerations. Analysis of a wide range of imagery, produced by image-makers who assume themselves to be in very separate categories, displayed and stored in museums and archives which reflect those separations at the point of production, and similarly discussed and analysed by different groups of commentators, requires considerable time, energy and money. Indeed for this thesis it became necessary to abandon a proposed chapter on press-images relating to the Northern Ireland conflict for these very reasons.

Moreover one can argue that the modes of presentation and analysis of visual images relating to the Northern Ireland conflict have also been

considerably affected by the more immediate practical circumstances surrounding their production, notably the intention with which they were made, and way in which they were constructed. This may become clearer if we look at some of the specific examples already cited.

The intention of Robert Kee's book, as of his television series, was to present to a wide public in England and Ireland,[1] an account of Irish history which would facilitate a solution to the present conflict in Northern Ireland.[2] Like the majority of such popular illustrated history books, it used visual images as a means of attracting readers, and thereby increasing sales, and as teaching aids, stimulating an interest in the written text. These images were selected not by the author but by a picture researcher. Most picture-researchers are underpaid, work to tight deadlines, under pressure to find cheap, easily obtainable images, and move speedily from one project to another - today the First World War, tomorrow Northern Ireland. Often these conditions of work result in their producing images which are only loosely appropriate to the text, and lack even the most basic information about their relationship with the historical point they supposedly illustrate.[3] Even educational publications use picture researchers for their illustrations,[4] and it is only very occasionally,

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1. The television series was available through the BBC in mainland Britain and Northern Ireland, and through simultaneous RTE transmission in the Republic of Ireland. The book was widely distributed in Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic.
2. The last sentences of Kee's book, which are also incorporated in the publisher' blurb inside the front dust-jacket, are "History is indeed a difficult prison to escape from and the history of Ireland is as difficult as any. It is not the business of a historian - even of a television historian - to propose how escape should be effected. Yet change is the business of history and the historian has a vested interest in seeing change come about. Having traced the foundations on which the prison of Irish history was built, he can only wait and hope to see British and Irish alike one day walk away."
3. Thus in the Kee book no indication is given that the scene of the Flight of the Earls reproduced on pp 38-9 is a recent oilpainting produced in the Republic of Ireland by the artist Thomas Ryan.
4. A case in point is the Schools Council publication on Northern Ireland titled The Irish Question, produced by Holmes McDougall in Edinburgh in 1977.

when a historian selects and analyses his own illustrations,[1] or a particularly talented picture researcher is involved in the writing and making of a history book,[2] that its illustrations are used and analysed as historical documents presenting their own particular kind of evidence. Clearly the tendency of historians to present visual images as illustrations or reflections of political developments is closely linked to current practices involved in making and selling history books.

Mike Catto's Art in Ulster: 2 is an example of a very different kind of publication, aimed at a specific, limited audience. It was written principally for the Northern Ireland market, and chiefly for use in teaching the province's new alternative syllabus Art GCE exams, introduced in 1975, for which study of Northern Ireland art history is required. In dealing with the visual imagery related to the Northern Ireland troubles Catto was therefore limited to a brief, straightforward, factual account of who did what within the limits established by the concept of "art history" as a school subject, his awareness of the need to be careful in handling political issues given the need to consider both his audience and his subjects (who might conceivably suffer attack for too close identification with a particular political standpoint), and the pressures involved in putting together such a book while simultaneously pursuing a busy career as a college lecturer and frequent broadcaster on local radio and television. These practical considerations appear to be strongly linked to Catto's emphasis on the role of the independent artist in his analysis of visual imagery relating to the troubles.

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1. As in the folder of facsimiles on Robert Emmet: the insurrection of July 1803, issued by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), in 1976, which incorporates a detailed analysis of images of Emmet.
2. As in Richard Broad et al, The Troubles, Thames/Macdonald Futura, 1980.

Somewhat similar considerations have affected the limited and divided displays of such material in the Ulster Museum. Museums are habitually cautious about putting on show imagery which relates in any way to contemporary political issues. Their administrators are very conscious of their practical responsibilities towards the safety of both the public entering their premises, and the objects on display in their showcases. Anything which might provoke the half-brick or the firebomb is therefore to be strenuously avoided. Such administrators are also sadly aware of the way in which any display which could be regarded as political will be regarded as such, and will normally be interpreted as favouring one "side" or another. This is a situation normally regarded as highly embarassing by an institution in receipt of public funds, particularly if, as in the case of the Ulster Museum, it is responsible to a governing body largely composed of local and central government representatives, and the political issues in question are close to home. These factors largely affect the limited, tentative nature of the museum's displays of visual imagery relating to the troubles.

However the categorisation and separation of those displays is linked to a somewhat different practical limitation, that imposed by the usual internal organisation of a museum into departments which acquire, document and display their own separate collections. Thus in the Ulster Museum visual images relating to the present troubles and to the traditions connected with them, are handled by either the Art Department or the Local History Department. Paintings, sculptures, drawings, quality prints, glass and china are the province of various specialists in the Art Department, while Local History handle popular prints, flags, banners, badges, coins, medals and photographs. There is collaboration in mounting displays - thus the Cobbe cup (ill 15) which forms part of the Art

Department's collections is currently in a case of Williamite objects in the Local History galleries - but the separation of categories and treatment of troubles imagery previously described is closely related to the departmental organisation of the museum. And that organisation in turn is linked to the way museum staff are trained, normally taking a degree in a relevant discipline and an additional Museums Diploma, primarily intended to certify a level of competence in current administrative practices in such fields as preparation of estimates, security and conservation.

For the practical factors affecting the ways in which the relationship between visual imagery and the troubles is handled in Robert Kee's book, Mike Catto's book and the Ulster Museum displays are all linked to the kind of formal and informal training in handling such material received by those involved. In the majority of cases they have a university degree and subsequent employment in either history (Kee,[1] and the staff of the Local History Department in the Ulster Museum,) or art history (Catto,[2] and the staff of the Art Department in the Ulster Museum). The teaching and practice of these two academic disciplines in Britain and Ireland predispose those trained in them to the two very different attitudes towards the relationship between visual imagery and political developments which I have

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1. Kee also has a background in pictorial journalism, including a spell with Picture Post, and television, in which training normally consists of instruction by one's colleagues into the selection and captioning of images in such a way as to catch the eye of the reader or viewer. (For a formalised presentation of current attitudes underlying photo-journalism see Harold Evans, Pictures on a Page, Heinemann, 1978. On the specific mode of photo-journalism employed in Picture Post see Tom Hopkinson (ed), Picture Post 1938-50, Penguin, 1970 and Stuart Hall, "The Social Eye of Picture Post", Working Papers in Cultural Studies no 2, Birmingham, 1972, pp 71-120). This background may have contributed to the strongly journalistic handling of visual imagery apparent not only in Kee's television series but also in his book.
2. Mike Catto's original degree was in History of Fine Art and Modern History, but his subsequent career has been entirely in the artworld occupations of arts - administration, art-criticism and teaching history of art to students in the Belfast College of Art.

just outlined. On the one hand British and Irish historians are not trained to analyse visual imagery as historical evidence, and rarely see their elders or their peers doing so. And on the other hand the majority of art-historians in Britain and Ireland have until very recently been trained to document, evaluate and categorise art-works in a manner associated with their status as collectable objects, and have often found employment in artworld jobs involved with collecting (museums and art-dealers), and its promotion (art-criticism and art-administration). This slant to their training and professional careers naturally orients them towards emphasis on visual images which are unique, set apart from political and social developments and preferably the creations of individual geniuses. For collecting by its very nature removes visual images from their social and political contexts into an association normally determined by the purely artistic concepts of the medium (oil paintings, drawings, prints, medallions, ceramics etc) or the artist, or the style (Gothic, Mannerist, Baroque etc), or the school (which may have a political element, as with the British or Irish schools, but equally may be related to a particular centre attracting artists from a number of countries, as with the Paris or New York schools).

In summary therefore it is my argument that when existing analyses and presentations of the visual imagery relating to the Northern Ireland troubles envisage those images as mere reflections of political developments, or as artistic creations graded into separate categories according to their degree of separation from those developments, they do so not so much as a reflection of undebatable existential realities, but because the training and working conditions of those producing them predisposes them to those kinds of interpretation.

Having established this, I will now outline the mode of analysis used in this thesis, and indicate why I believe it offers a better

understanding of the ways in which visual images and political developments are related. My approach to this relationship is grounded in a general theory about the role of visual images in society. It is my proposition:

that in order to understand that role it is necessary to abandon the traditional, hierarchical, evaluative separation of visual images into categories such as fine art, popular imagery and the mass media, except insofar as that evaluation and categorisation is part of those images' real, existential function;[1]

that any specific visual image is the product of a maker or group of makers whose work is conditioned, though not completely determined, by overlapping social, political, economic and religious factors, by virtue of their personal context, the technology involved in the production of their work, its location within institutional structures, and its use of existing visual conventions;

that such an image is not static, but is further developed each time it is used or re-produced, and that in the course of these processes it both acquires additional layers of meaning and has a real impact on social, political, economic and religious developments;

that this living, developing image is not isolated, but in the various stages of its production both derives meaning from and contributes meaning to the overall visual language available to its producers/users, and is appropriated by them to the specific visual language codes with which they shape their view of the world;

and that those visual language codes can be seen interacting in a kind of dialogue in which opposition and overlap are both important.

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1. This does not mean that I believe debates on the value of different kinds of visual imagery are useless. Indeed I see them as exceedingly important. But it is my conviction that discussions of what visual images actually do are too often side-tracked by consideration of what they should do. On this point see Janet Wolff, The Social Production of Art, Macmillan, 1981, p. 141. Having said this it is also important to stress that no analysis can ever be completely free from connotations of value.

It is important to emphasise that I did not commence this thesis with such a theoretical outline ready-made in my head. It is not a fixed model into which I have sought to fit reality, but rather a group of generalisations which have come to seem useful to me as a means of throwing light on the relationship between visual imagery and political developments, as the result of my own study of the visual imagery related to the present troubles in Northern Ireland, and my consideration of some of the theories developed by others when approaching this question. I will now briefly describe this theoretical evolution, as a means of expanding a little on the somewhat skeletal outline just given, and of indicating its location in relation to current debate in this field.

In the chapters that follow the reader will actually see the theoretical generalisations just offered emerging from my grappling with various aspects of the visual imagery employed in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years. However it is as well to summarise here, in a less fragmentary and intermittent fashion, the existential aspects of that imagery which led me to dissatisfaction with the conceptualisations of the relationship between visual imagery and political developments traditionally offered by historians and art historians.

It gradually became apparent to me that within the context of the Northern Ireland troubles, visual imagery, including the fine arts, was involved with political developments, not separate from them; that this involvement consisted of both absorption of politics into its production and an effect on politics, mainly through its function or usage, but occasionally through its production as well; that the divisions between supposedly separate categories of visual imagery were more apparent than real; that every time a visual image is used or re-produced it is given further layers of meaning by those involved; and that it was no

exaggeration to talk of the two religio-political communities in Northern Ireland using two different visual languages which were involved in a kind of dialogue, in which there was both overlap and opposition.

As these observations began to accumulate they raised in my mind the question of whether the relationship between visual imagery and political developments in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years was peculiar to a unique situation, or whether it could be employed, with appropriate reservations, to produce generalisations and modes of analysis of use in dealing with this relationship in other situations. I also began to see the need to relate together these fragmented observations in order to obtain a stronger conceptual grip on the nature of the imagery-politics relationship. It was for these reasons that I began to consider some existing approaches to this problem alternative to those offered by mainstream history and art history in Britain and Ireland.

Various promising avenues turned out to be complete dead ends. Most existing discussions by British and Irish art-historians of the relationship between art and political developments in past conflicts appear to be strongly confined to traditional interest in the commissioning and production of art,[1] heavily slanted by political loyalties,[2] and committed either to unsupported associations between political developments

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1. See for example Lilian Miller, Patrons & Patriotism: the encouragement of the fine arts in the United States, 1790-1860, University of Chicago Press, 1966; James A Leith, The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France 1775-1799, University of Toronto Press, 1965; John Willett, Expressionism, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970; James Joll, Intellectuals in Politics, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1960 and Jane Rye, Futurism, Studio Vista, 1972.
2. Few discussions of art under the Nazis are prepared to admit such observable historical facts as the way in which Nazi culture fed on Expressionism, the extent to which totalitarian styles in architecture pervaded virtually the whole of the western world in the inter-war period, and the improvements in German industrial design promoted by the Nazi regime. Similarly in Ireland there have been virtually no studies of the distinctive visual culture of the country's Ulster Protestant community.

and the nature of an artist's work,[1] or to so cautious an awareness of the complexities of the relationships between imagery and politics that attempts to assess it are virtually abandoned.[2]

Most discussions of popular imagery are similarly constrained by value-assumptions and modes of analysis inherited from existing disciplines. To this day analysts of popular culture tend to focus on "good" rural folk traditions, for much the same reasons as those who first worked in this field, namely because of desire to preserve the rapidly disappearing past, a reaction against the effects of industrialisation and modernisation, and a belief that in such traditions lie the ethos of the nation.[3] In Ireland this has resulted in a large body of writing extolling the national virtues of the traditionalism of the Irish peasant, and implicitly separating them from urban and English culture, and a smaller number of works[4] seeking in rural folk culture something older, wiser and separate from the country's political conflicts, whether past or present.

Clearly this concept of popular culture has been inimical to the incorporation with it of the mass media. Those who have pioneered the study of media imagery have done so from a position of horrified fascination. Their attitude seems to derive from that peculiarly English half-literary, half-artistic tradition of revulsion from the effects of industrialisation and mass-production which runs from Matthew Arnold and William Morris to

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1. See for example the fairly typical assertion by Jack Lindsay (in his Death of the Hero: French painting from David to Delacroix, Studio, 1960) that Jacques Louis David adopted the compositional ploy of placing all his figures in the same line, to express the new values of equality and democracy.
2. See Hugh Honour's treatment of the relationship between art and political developments during the French Revolution in his Neo-Classicism (Penguin, 1968), and the discussions of the relationship between Irish nationalism and art in Cyril Barrett's "Irish Nationalism & Art 1800-1921", in Studies, Dublin, vol 64 no 256, Winter 1975 pp 393-409 and Jeanne Sheehy's otherwise excellent The Rediscovery of Irish Art (Thames & Hudson, 1980).
3. Burke, op cit pp 7-16 and C.W.E. Bigsby (ed) Approaches to Popular Culture, Edward Arnold, 1976.
4. Notably the many publications of E. Estyn Evans.

F.R Leavis.[1] They attack the way the mass media have transformed our lives in passages like the following:

"it has long been plain that the executives of production and selling have been thinking in military terms, smashing public resistance with carefully planned barrages followed by shock troops of salesmen to mop up the pockets. It will take more than a change of vocabulary to eradicate this lethal aspect of know-how, for it is not easily separated from its origin or its uses. The public may smile at being the target for a barrage of corn flakes or light bulbs. But this industrial ammunition has the character of exploding in the brain cortex and making its impact on the emotional structure of all society."[2]

It is significant that Marshall McLuhan, the author of this passage, and a leading exponent of media studies in the 1960s, was a Professor of English.

This line has been adopted in the recent publications on the mass media and Northern Ireland such as Camerawork no 14. The message is sharpened by the particular political anxieties involved, ie Irish distrust of the English, and leftwing English distrust of capitalist control of the organs of opinion, but it is basically the same message: "Big Brother is watching and controlling you with his evil technology which is capable of perverting you without you realising it."

This is the view of outside critics of the mass-media. A second strand in the development of media-studies in recent years has been the provision of inside knowledge about the tricks of the trade. Harold Evans

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1. See A. Swingewood, The Myth of Mass Culture, Macmillan, 1977, pp 1-10.
2. Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 34.

for example, in his Pictures on a Page[1] appears to offer the viewer a fairly comprehensive guide to the way photographic images of events can be altered by photographers and picture editors, by virtue of such techniques as use of different lenses, selection, juxtaposition, cropping and downright faking. This is the kind of approach employed by Frank Webster in his analysis of the photo-coverage of Maire Drumm's funeral[2] although he considers a wider range of factors than Evans does. Yet by their focus on these kinds of alterations Evans and Webster implicitly distract the viewer from the effects on photographic images of the wider context in which they appear. They make no mention for example of the juxtaposition of news photographs with advertising material and of their consequent reduction to beautiful objects for consumption. Just as McLuhan and similar critics of the mass-media are limited by their position as outsiders to it, so Evans and Webster are limited by their role as insiders. The other kind of inside information which the viewer needs to consider alongside that made available by Evans and Webster is the specialised analyses of advertising researchers, published in journals such as Admap. Here there is constant discussion of such considerations as the location of images, the relative impact of descriptive or illustrative layout and the varying use made of publications by their readers. Yet this kind of research on visual imagery is rarely considered by academics or the general public. Even within media-studies therefore, there are divisions of approach which hamper the viewer's ability to decipher the images with which he or she is confronted. Indeed the existing studies which move outside the mainstream of art history to consider art and politics, popular

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1. Heinemann, 1978.
2. Webster, loc cit.

imagery and the mass media have little to offer anyone interested in the relationship between visual imagery and political developments, for they take with them many of the assumptions traditional to the kind of art history generally practised in Britain and Ireland.

Far more useful to anyone attempting to discover the nature of this relationship are the works of the German and Austrian art historians working in the first half of this century, notably Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl. In Panofsky's studies it is possible to find the kind of sensitive and complex analysis of the interplay between various cultural and social factors within a given area of time and space that has been so lacking in the work of most British art historians. He observes for example

"a connection between Gothic art and Scholasticism which is more concrete than a mere 'parallelism' and yet more general than those individual (and very important) 'influences', which are inevitably exerted on painters, sculptors, or architects by erudite advisers. In contrast to mere parallelism the connection which I have in mind is a genuine cause-and-effect relation; but in contrast to an individual influence, this cause-and-effect relation comes about by diffusion rather than by direct impact. It comes about by the spreading of what may be called, for want of a better term, a mental habit - reducing this overworked cliche to its precise Scholastic sense as a 'principle that regulates the act'... Such mental habits are at work in all and every civilization. All modern writing on history is permeated by the idea of evolution...and all of us, without a thorough knowledge of biochemistry or psychoanalysis, speak with the greatest of ease of vitamin deficiencies, allergies, mother fixations and inferiority complexes."[1]

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1. Erwin Panofsky, Gothic Architecture & Scholasticism, Thames & Hudson, 1957, pp. 20-21.

And this kind of general observation is rooted by Panofsky in observance of specific connections. He cites, for example, the existence in Villard de Honnecourt's Album of the groundplan of an "ideal" chevet which he and another architect, Pierre de Corbie, had devised, "disputing between themselves", in other words following the Scholastic manner of arguing out a question.[1] And he describes the world in which the High Gothic architects of France moved, the area round Paris where Scholasticism dominated education, where they were in frequent contact with its religious supporters, where they heard sermons and public debates using its style of argument, and where, in a new atmosphere of urban professionalism, they could join in such discussions as equals.[2]

Fritz Saxl's peculiar importance lies in his firm assertion, in passages like the following, that visual images have an independent life of their own, and can reveal areas of history in a way other evidence cannot.

"Alexander of Macedonia was represented as Helios, the sun-god. We find the emblems of sun and moon shown with the person of the ruler on German and English medieval seals. In the seventeenth century Louis XIV is again styled le roi soleil. Or think of the paraphernalia of majesty in Byzantium, the triple crown of the Popes, the ceremonial robes and objects used for the coronation of the Kings of England. Each of these objects has its history, and if it is studied in connexion with historical documents and liturgical texts, it reveals facts and ideas which could not be discovered otherwise."[3]

Panofsky and Saxl, along with other art historians of the German and Austrian school have subsequently been much criticised for their

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1. Ibid, p. 87.
2. Ibid, pp. 21-26.
3. Fritz Saxl, A Heritage of Images, Penguin, 1970, p. 13.

tendency to see art as a product determined by a Hegelian spirit-of-the-age, with no possibility of alternatives offered and little consideration given to the role of the artist's skill.[1] However the importance of their interest in the relationship between art and society has recently been recognised by a number of younger art historians,[2] who have attempted to rework their approach, generally by replacing their Hegelianism with a developed interpretation of the Marxist metaphor of base and superstructure.

An early fore-runner of these new studies was Arnold Hauser's The Social History of Art.[3] It is easy to be over-dismissive of this sprawling, over-ambitious work, but Hauser did begin to look at some of the questions hitherto normally ignored by art historians, such as the economic and social status of artists, who were the actual rather than the assumed patrons of art, and how much of society took an interest in art, and for what reasons.[4] However his tendency to see art as a reflection of broad social structures has quite rightly been rejected by later writers.

A further defect of Hauser's work, and one common to many Marxist studies of art,[5] is his failure to pursue his analysis into the artwork itself. Those who have attempted to elucidate the relationship between the social situation of the artist and the kind of work he or she produces, have done so with varying success. Max Raphael's attempts to tackle this subject collapsed amidst the kind of vague theory, and unsubstantiated arguments to be found in the following paragraph from his essay on Cezanne's Mont St-Victoire.

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1. Notably by Ernst Gombrich, in his In Search of Cultural History, Oxford, 1969, pp. 30-38 and his Art and Illusion, Phaidon, 1962, pp. 16-18, and John Tagg, in "Putting Art History on its Feet", Radical Philosophy, Winter 1975, pp. 3-10.
2. See especially T.J. Clark, "The conditions of artistic creation", Times Literary Supplement, 24 May 1974.
3. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2 vols, 1951.
4. Ibid, vol 1, p. 297 and pp. 307-317.
5. Such as John Willett's study of art in Liverpool (Art in a City, Methuen, 1967) which offers a fascinating survey of the history and recent development of art institutions in the city, but fails to attempt to establish any links between them and the nature of the art and visual imagery produced in Liverpool.

"Cezanne's palette was that of a peasant, but of a peasant who was at odds with the world. In his day the earth had yielded its primacy as a means of production to the machine. The fruits of production were no longer goods (ie substances) but commodities (ie factors of exchange). The typically peasant ideology of transcendence had become socially obsolete. In short, Cezanne the peasant lived under industrial capitalism, but at a time when agriculture was not yet industrialized. In consequence the act of painting, to the very extent that it was instinctively and unconsciously pursued, inevitably transformed - even against the artist's will and to his own surprise - an intended harmony into a disharmony, whose own inner contradictions, at least in their artistic quality, would have destroyed one another had Cezanne not deliberately staved off destruction by creating transitions and connections through analyzing nature and integrating the results of his analysis into a compositional whole."[1]

Far more substantial and suggestive studies of this question have recently been provided by T.J Clark and Michael Baxandall. Clark uses the process of production involved in the making of a major artwork like Courbet's The Burial at Ornans to show the artist's involvement with political and social developments and the way in which he both reveals and transforms them within the very structure of his work.[2] He seeks to discover how the "background" becomes foreground, not by making analogies between form and content but by discovering the network of real, complex relations between the two. This process he sees as an encounter with history, for the study of any one "factor" in artistic production leads to general problems.[3] In addition Clark constantly stresses the importance of

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1. Max Raphael, The Demands of Art, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968, pp 16-17.
2. T.J Clark, Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution, Thames & Hudson, 1973.
3. John Tagg, "Marxism & Art History", Marxism Today, June 1977, pp 188-9.

what is omitted, of what cannot be said. The cartoons by Daumier which were suppressed, the points at which the art critic falters and falls silent, are for him crucial indications of what current ideology will not allow. Here he is influenced by the French Marxist theorist, Pierre Macherey.[1] Like Macherey he believes that the work of art should, by distancing itself from society and by the process of work involved in its construction, heighten and point up these discrepancies.

"(Courbet) ...devised, as Balzac had done, a structure which deliberately refused to unite the elements of rural society; he reproduced their disunity rather than merely representing it. What Macherey says of Balzac's plot-structure could be applied with very few modifications to Courbet's pictures of 1850: To carry out the project he had set himself Balzac could not content himself with writing his novel well, or harmoniously constructing it around a central theme: the kind of figuration he had chosen means that there is not in the front of the work a foreground behind which secondary planes are outlined in succession, but several foregrounds one after another with abrupt breaks between them."[2]

Baxandall adopts a somewhat similar approach in his study of fifteenth century Italian paintings[3] which analyses the impact on them of the artist's social role, the technical materials available to him and his involvement with the more general ways of seeing current in the society in which he lived. He shows how artists were obliged by their contracts to use particular colour schemes by virtue of the limitations imposed on their employment of costly gold leaf and blue pigment.[4] And he demonstrates

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1. Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
2. Clark, op cit, p. 120.
3. Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, Oxford University Press, 1972.
4. Ibid, p. 11 ff and p. 81 ff.

in some detail how daily visual skills and artistic skills were actually linked, while constantly setting such analyses in a wider context. For example he shows how important the gauging of volumes and quantities was in an age when containers were not manufactured in stock sizes; how an artist like Piero della Francesca was both mathematician and painter; and how his patrons, used as they were to assessing geometrical quantities, enjoyed his frequent demonstrations of this skill.[1] But he is careful to stress that the inter-connections were more complex and with wider implications than such direct relationships tend to imply. He is at pains to establish the pervasiveness of these mental habits within the society and culture of the time, and their involvement with apparently disconnected spheres of thought.

"Quattrocento education laid exceptional value on certain mathematical skills, on gauging and the Rule of Three. These people did not know more about mathematics than we do: most of them knew less than most of us. But they knew their specialized area absolutely, used it in important matters more often than we do, played games and told jokes with it, bought luxurious books about it and prided themselves on their prowess in it; it was a relatively much larger part of their formal intellectual equipment."[2]

Like Saxl, Baxandall stresses that this kind of approach to the relationships between artworks and society provides us with unique evidence not only about the artworks, but also about the society in which they were produced.

"A society develops its distinctive skills and habits, which have a visual aspect, since the visual sense is the main organ of experience, and

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1. Ibid, pp. 86-97.
2. Ibid, p. 101.

these visual skills and habits become part of the medium of the painter: correspondingly, a pictorial style gives access to the visual skills and habits and, through these, to the distinctive social experience. An old picture is the record of visual activity. One has to learn to read it, just as one has to learn to read a text from a different culture, even when one knows, in a limited sense, the language : both language and pictorial representation are conventional activities. And there are various destructive uses of pictures which must be avoided. One will not approach the paintings on the philistine level of the illustrated social history, on the look out for illustrations of 'a Renaissance merchant riding to market' and so on; nor, for that matter, through facile equations between 'burgess' or 'aristocratic' milieus on the one side and 'realist' or 'idealizing' styles on the other. But approached in the proper way - that is, for the sake of argument, in the way followed in this book - the pictures become documents as valid as any charter or parish roll. If we observe that Piero della Francesca tended to a gauged sort of painting, Fra Angelico to a preached sort of painting and Botticelli to a danced sort of painting, we are observing something not only about them but about their society."[1]

In summary then the German and Austrian art historians and their more recent successors offer a number of important modes of analysing the relationship between visual imagery and social, political, economic and religious developments. They demonstrate how artists' visions are linked to the society in which they live by their involvement with a variety of conceptual and visual conventions, their dependence on the technology then available, the overt or implicit limitations on what they can say in their

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1. Ibid, p. 152.

works, and the structure of the relationship between them and the consumers of their products. Moreover these writers make the important point that artworks are in themselves unique documentary evidence of aspects of society in which they are produced. However, for the student of the relationship between visual images and political developments there are a number of very noticeable deficiencies in their analyses. These retain a primary emphasis on fine art works, and are almost exclusively limited to consideration of the initial process of production. The broad spectrum of visual imagery, the living function of images both at the time of their initial production and during their subsequent usage, reproduction and transformation, and the relationship between the institutional organisation of artwork and the style of imagery produced in it, are areas which remain virtually untouched in these studies. It is necessary therefore to turn to research undertaken completely outside the field of art history.

For useful material relating to the last topic one can turn to some of the most recent studies of media imagery. While in Britain there is still a tendency in media studies to relate institutional factors solely to the content of the images conditioned by them, as in the various articles in Camerawork no 14, similar analyses in America, notably Barbara Rosenblum's comparative study of news, advertising, and fine arts photographs, relate the institutional organisation of media imagery to the style adopted in it.[1]

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1. Barbara Rosenblum, "Style as Social Process", American Sociological Review, New York, vol 43, June 1978, pp. 422-438, and Photographers at Work, A Sociology of Photographic Styles, Holmes & Meier, New York, 1978.

In seeking to establish the living function of visual images within social and political developments, much can be learnt from the work of anthropologists. In particular the kind of approach towards ritual symbols developed by Victor Turner,[1] appears to be very fruitful. Turner lays a heavy emphasis on the multi-valency of such symbols, stressing that their meaning may vary not only from context to context but also from time to time during the same performance, or rather different senses may become paramount at different times. If the importance of a single principle of social organisation is being stressed this can only be done by blocking the expression of other important principles. Frequently however the conflicting principles obtrude in some fashion into the ritual.[2]

Turner's theory is basically a development of Sapir's argument that symbols can be divided into referential symbols which are economical devices referring to known facts, and condensation symbols which deal with the emotions and the unconscious. Turner argues that ritual symbols are both at the same time, condensing thoughts and actions, unifying disparate meanings and combining ideological and sensory poles. These poles may also be described as structurally normative and grossly physical, social and organic, obligatory and desirable. It is the function of the symbol to effect an interchange between the two.

"Norms and values, on the one hand, become saturated with emotion, while the gross and basic emotions become ennobled through contact with social values. The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the 'love of virtue.'"[3]

Clearly theories such as these, which have been developed as the

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1. In The Forest of Symbols, Cornell University Press, New York, 1967.
2. Ibid, pp. 40-41.
3. Ibid, p. 30.

result of observation of African tribal rituals, can only be used with much caution in analysing the ritual use of visual imagery in Western society, and indeed E.P Thompson has launched a scathing attack on the misuse of anthropology in recent historical studies of religion and magic in seventeenth century Britain.[1] But when properly applied, as in M.R Beames' recent studies of the use of ritual imagery by agrarian protest movements in late eighteenth century Ireland,[2] the kind of anthropological approach employed by Turner can assist an understanding of the way visual images can be transformed by their living, ritual use, and in this process of transformation can be employed to effect an interchange between a number of meanings, derived from the political, cultural, social, economic and religious experience of their users.

Handled with care, mass media studies and anthropological analyses of ritual imagery can supplement art historical contributions to understanding of the relationship between visual imagery and social and political developments, by their demonstration of the way the style of images is conditioned by the institutional organisation of their production, and by showing how they acquire layers of meaning in the course of their use in living rituals. However these theories and perceptions do no more than illuminate further fragments of the relationship between visual imagery and society. Their authors go no further than the art historians in offering a general view of that relationship, in which in particular the visual languages perceived as so evident in the Northern Ireland context can find adequate theoretical location. For this it is necessary to turn

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1. E.P Thompson, "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context", Midland History, University of Birmingham, vol 1 no 3, spring 1972, pp 41-55.
2. To be published in Dr Beames' forthcoming book on peasant movements and their control in pre-famine Ireland.

to recent studies of the social function of symbols and language rather than particular forms of visual imagery. In these there have been a number of attempts to determine the underlying codes and "grammar" of myths, rituals, symbols and language, and to relate them to social structures. In particular the socio-linguist Basil Bernstein has developed the theories of Boas, Sapir and Whorf, who have argued that people speaking different languages live in different thought-worlds. Whorf believed that such languages are influenced by fashions of speaking which cut across typical grammatical classifications. In his opinion these fashions of speaking are unrelated to social structure. Bernstein has argued however that social structures generate distinct linguistic forms or codes which transmit culture and constrain behaviour. He has suggested that there are two main codes, restricted and elaborated.

In the restricted code the form of communication is predictable, for the social relationship is based upon a conscious shared identity with no need to make intent explicit. The language is simplified and narrow, and individual differentiation is expressed by extra-verbal signals. Speech is impersonal, concrete, condensed, neither analytical nor abstract. Its major function is to define and reinforce a form of social relationship by restricting verbal signalling of individual experience. The restricting nature of this code is reinforced by the 'noise' or distortion which it tends to introduce into communication. The elaborated code on the other hand is unpredictable, with a high level of syntactic organisation and lexical selection, as the intent of the other person cannot be taken for granted. The major function of the elaborated code is the delivery of relatively explicit meaning. This form of communication facilitates the transmission and elaboration of the individual's unique experience and allows modifications to be made to suit the listener. Whereas the

restricted mode reinforces a particularistic social structure by the use of universalistic models, the elaborated code uses particularistic models to reinforce a universalistic society. And whereas in the restricted code the concept of self tends to be refracted through the implications of the status arrangements, the elaborated code facilitates reflection on the concept of self.[1]

Bernstein tends to see these codes as the product of social structures, associating the restricted code with the working-class and the elaborated code with the middle-class. He believes the reasons for this association lie chiefly in the family-role system and modes of social control of the two classes. In his view the restricted code arises in a social system governed by mechanical solidarity in which the family is positional while the elaborated code is found in a social system governed by organic solidarity, emphasising the personal family and founded on the division of labour.[2]

A more complex theory about the relationship between different verbal and visual codes and forms of social structure than Bernstein's somewhat crude code-class model is offered by Mary Douglas in her development of his work (ill 5).[3] And indeed we shall see that Douglas's map of social-cultural structures bears a strong resemblance to the socio-cultural divisions which emerge in the body of this thesis as characteristic of Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years. However the theories of both Bernstein and Douglas tend to imply an over-simplified, determinist production of cultural codes by social structures, leaving little room for the impact of culture on society, the role of history and change and the

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1. Basil Bernstein, "A socio-linguistic approach to social learning", in Class, Codes & Control, vol I, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971, pp. 121-132. See also Claus Mueller, The Politics of Communication, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, p. 95.
2. Bernstein, op cit, p. 130 and Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols, Barrie & Rockliff, 1970, p. 42.
3. In Douglas, op cit.

Diagram 3 : General Cosmological Ideas

(i) cardinal virtues
(ii) cardinal sins
(iii) the idea of the self
(iv) art form

Speech
Socially restricted

A	C
(i) piety, honour (respect for roles)	(i) sincerity, authenticity
(ii) formal transgressions against social structure	(ii) sins against the self, hypocrisy, cruelty, acceptance of frustration
(iii) self, passive, undifferentiated element in a structured environment	(iii) internally differentiated agent, attempting to control unstructured environment
(iv) primitive: structural elaborations upon social categories, humans as cardboard allegorical figures	(iv) romantic: triumph of individual over structure (escape, brief happiness, etc.)

Family Control System →

Positional	*Personal*
(i) truth, duty	(i) personal success, doing good to humanity
(ii) cardinal sin is failure to respond to demands of social structure	(ii) generalised guilt, individual and collective
(iii) active agent, internally differentiated, responding to roles	(iii) subject alone
(iv) classical: triumph of structure over individual	(iv) professionalism: overriding concern with techniques and materials of creative process

↓

B	D

Speech elaborated

5. Diagram 3 on p.50 of Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols, Barrie & Rockcliff, 1970.

contribution of individual skill.

To some extent these defects can be remedied by fusing with the theories of Bernstein and Douglas the adaptation of the generative grammar theory made by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who conceptualises cultural codes as strategies, customs or 'pre-laws', based in turn on

"a small batch of schemes which enable agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations, without those schemes ever being constituted as principles."[1]

These schemes he characterises as fuzzy oppositions, such as left-right, which can be developed in much the same way as one makes play on words.[2]

But Bourdieu, like others employing the concept of generative grammar, leaves unanswered the tricky question of where those schemes or codes came from in the first place. It is this living intersection between culture and society on which Janet Wolff focuses most effectively in her recent book on The Social Production of Art.[3] By seeing the relationship between society and art as a continuous process of interaction, in which social and political structures are mediated into the artwork through the technology, social situation and art conventions conditioning the individual or group actions of the producer(s), and are then modified in turn in the course of the work's manufacture and its completion and continuing production by its consumers, Wolff satisfactorily avoids both the determinism and the transcendentalism between which attempts to analyse that relationship have continually vacillated. It is this kind of approach that I have attempted to maintain in the course of this thesis.

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1. Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 16.
2. Ibid, pp 118-123.
3. Macmillan, 1981.

There is however one marked difference between my analysis and Janet Wolff's which is apparent as soon as you look at the title of our two studies. For Wolff, along with the majority of sociologists approaching this area, confines herself to the old, limited category of "art", whereas I believe it is essential to take a wider and less value-structured view, by looking at "visual imagery." In this I have been much influenced by the pioneering work of Walter Benjamin[1] and John Berger,[2] whose perceptions about the interrelationship of different kinds of visual imagery and the two-way link between style and social structures I have attempted to locate in the kind of historical context which they of necessity ignored. Hence the structure of this thesis, which is as follows. In the next four chapters, titled William, Mother Ireland, Orange and Green, some of the most dominant traditions in popular imagery in Northern Ireland are analysed in such a way as to show their involvement with supposedly separate fine art works, and their roles in relation to political developments in the province, past and present. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss William III and Mother Ireland emblems. They focus on roles of identity figures, and the genesis and function of visual mythology. Chapters 4 and 5 examine Orange and Green imagery. They are chiefly concerned with functions of rituals and symbolism and the development and roles of visual styles. An overall theme of these four chapters is the way in which groups in Northern Ireland have constructed and continue to construct a cultural history for themselves, and the way in which modernisation has been bound up with this

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1. Notably in his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", published in Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, edited Hannah Arendt, Jonathan Cape, 1970, pp 221-227.
2. In his Ways of Seeing, BBC/Penguin, 1972.

development of traditions. The next two chapters, titled Politics and Artists, look at two supposedly discrete modes of vision, those produced by fine artists and by political organisations. They concentrate on the evolution and roles of visual conventions and their relation to political, social and economic forces via the institutional structures involved in the making of visual imagery. An overall theme of these two chapters is the way tradition is involved in the development of ostensibly modernised imagery. And finally the thesis closes with some brief conclusions.

It is important that these analyses be read with two concepts constantly in mind, namely what I have chosen to call functional weight, and the general and particular limitations of this writer in tackling the subjects under discussion. By functional weight I mean the way in which particular forms of visual imagery fit into the overall cultural, political, social and economic structure of a society and the resonance that they have within that structure. Now clearly this is a matter which can vary very much according to the kind of measurement one is using. For example, does an image have a greater functional weight within a society, if it hangs on the sitting-room wall of one of its political leaders, or if it is carried by thousands of protesters through the streets of its capital city? Nevertheless it seems possible to give some feeling for the relative impact of images if one has some idea of their location and diffusion within a society whose overall size and structures are approximately known. In the course of my discussion of various images in this thesis I have endeavoured to emulate Michael Baxandall in his description of the gauging mode of seeing in fifteenth century Italy, by giving some feeling for the strength and extent of their impact within Northern Ireland. I shall therefore confine myself here to giving some indication of the overall

scale and organisation of society in Northern Ireland.[1]

The nature of Northern Ireland as a society is of course a subject for heated debate, as a glance at any recent bibliography of studies relating to the province will reveal.[2] Most of the observations made here would however meet with general agreement. Present-day Ulster is a small place, with an area about the size of Yorkshire, and a population of approximately 1½ million, of whom roughly a half live in Greater Belfast, while the remainder are equally distributed between smaller urban settlements and isolated rural homes.[3] The province is also peripheral, both geographically in its isolation on the north-west fringe of Europe, and politically in its marginal relationship to the centres of political, economic and cultural power, in Britain, the Republic of Ireland and the EEC. Thus although small events and developments bulk large within its confines, whether they are to do with violence, politics or culture, there is a constant feeling that the major decisions are made elsewhere.

This small, peripheral society is marked by a virtually total segregation of its society into two religio-political communities, the native, Catholic Irish, comprising approximately one third of the province's population, and the descendants of the Protestant planters of the seventeenth century, comprising the remaining two thirds. In education, friendships, marriage, the workplace, housing, recreation, religious practice and political affiliation, these two communities lead virtually separate lives. Within both communities family ties and religious observance have an enormous importance.[4] The lack of foreign residents or visitors, and the tendency

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1. In doing so I am much influenced by Peter Laslett's enlightening outline of the scale and structural organisation of English society just prior to the industrial revolution in his The World we have lost (Methuen, 1968, pp 8-10).
2. See for example John Darby, Nicholas Dodge and A.C. Hepburn, Register of research into the Irish conflict 1981, New University of Ulster, Coleraine, 1981.
3. Paul A Compton, Northern Ireland: A Census Atlas, Gill and Macmillan, 1978, pp 10-18.
4. On the high level of religious observance in Ulster see Richard Rose, Governing without Consensus, Faber, 1971.

of Ulster's inhabitants to either emigrate completely or remain within a very small area of their native province, reinforce the small, peripheral, divided, traditional nature of their society.

Until the mid-1960s the major sources of employment in the province were service industries, the shipbuilding, textile and engineering industries centred on Belfast, and small-scale farming, most of it pastoral. Since then the latter two groups have declined dramatically, while the role of the service industries has increased, and multi-national manufacturers and retailers have moved in. The manufacturers, who were largely concentrated in the field of artificial fibres, have mostly moved out again, although the retailers have stayed, and have indeed continued to move into the province. Since the mid-1960s there has also been a marked increase in employment by central and local government, and in unemployment, always higher in the province than in the rest of Britain. At all times employment, particularly industrial employment, has remained higher in the Protestant than in the Catholic community, and in the east than in the west of the province.[1] As we shall see, the institutional organisation of all kinds of visual imagery in the province has remained weak until very recently, and has been characterised by a high degree of overlap in personnel.

Having given this brief outline of the size and structures of Northern Ireland society, it is necessary to turn to my own situation as an observer of the relationship between visual imagery and political developments within that society during the past thirteen years. This has been conditioned by general and specific factors. In the first place any

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1. Department of Finance, Northern Ireland, Social and Economic Trends in Northern Ireland, HMSO, Belfast, no 1, 1975 and no 2, 1976, and Liam O'Dowd, Bill Rolston and Mike Tomlinson, Northern Ireland, Between Civil Rights and Civil War, CSE Books, 1980, ch 2.

observer, as Bourdieu makes plain in his Outline of a Theory of Practice, is liable to make a totalisation from practices which is not possible to those involved in them:

"By cumulating information which is not and cannot always be mastered by any single informant - at any rate, never on the instant - the analyst wins the privilege of totalization thanks to the power to perpetuate that writing and all the various techniques for recording give him, and also to the abundant time he has for analysis. He thus secures the means of apprehending the logic of the system which a partial or discrete view would miss; but, by the same token, there is every likelihood that he will overlook the change in status to which he is subjecting practice and its products, and consequently that he will insist on trying to answer questions which are not and cannot be questions for practice, instead of asking himself whether the essential characteristic of practice is precisely the fact that it excludes such questions."[1]

Moreover if part of the observer's research-methods consist, as in this thesis, of questioning those involved in practices, further distortions are likely, because respondents will produce information in which there are omissions due to their very familiarity with the practices they are describing, because personal details will often be avoided as unsuited to this kind of discourse, and because a semi-theoretical approach will be adopted to meet the questioner's requirements, ignoring the "learned ignorance" with which many practices are carried through.[2]

In the second place an observer, as much as any producer, is conditioned though not totally determined by surrounding circumstances. It therefore seems appropriate to give details of those circumstances

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1. Bourdieu, op cit, p. 106.
2. Ibid, pp. 18-19.

most relevant to the construction of this thesis. My background on my father's side is that of an Anglo-Irish family associated with Ireland since the sixteenth century, and involved in both unionist and nationalist politics, though most frequently tending to a unionist opinion. I was however reared in England like my father and grandfather before me, and when I commenced this thesis I had as little knowledge of Irish history as anyone educated in the English school system, although I have visited friends and relatives in the Republic since early childhood. I was raised as a Roman Catholic and remain one, although it is fair to say that my belief and practice are closer to English than Irish Catholicism. From my upbringing I have also retained an ineradicable middle-class English accent, which has undoubtedly aroused suspicion and antagonism amongst some of those I have conversed with in the course of my research, although my status as a woman has generally reduced those feelings, and my known involvement in the local artworld has normally created some kind of sympathy to my work amongst the professional artists with whom I have talked.

My academic training consists of a first degree at Cambridge in history and history of art, followed by employment as a researcher on a proposed dictionary of British artists, and as an assistant keeper in the art department of the Imperial War Museum in London. There I first began to develop an interest in the wider field of visual imagery (the department's collections range from major paintings to button-badges) and specifically in the imagery related to the Northern Ireland conflict. I had first visited the province in the autumn of 1969 in order to see a friend, and had been taken by him round the back streets of Belfast to see vigilantes manning temporary peace-lines, but I had no real interest in events in Ulster until the early 1970s.

In November 1973 I left the Imperial War Museum to write this thesis, which commenced as a general survey of war art, but rapidly came to deal with its present subject. For two years I continued to live in London, while making research trips to the province, one of which, in the summer of 1975, was financed by the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University, Belfast. In the autumn of 1975 I moved to Northern Ireland, where for the first six months I lived near Carlisle Circus in Belfast, while working for the Simon Community. This was the period during which I saw most of the immediate effects of the violence in the province, although at no time during my residence here have I witnessed a shooting or been close to an exploding bomb. From early in 1976 I lived in the university area of Belfast, until I moved to my present home in a peaceful village in Co Down in the autumn of 1979. Since the spring of 1979 I have been married to an Ulsterman reared in the Protestant community, who has a deep loathing of all religion. Neither he nor I have during the past thirteen years been a member of any political organisation. It may also be relevant to point out that apart from the short-term grant from Queen's University mentioned above, this thesis has been funded out of my small private income, occasional earnings from part-time jobs ranging from charring to art-criticism, and financial support from my husband.

During the period in which I have lived in Northern Ireland I have been practically involved in the province's artworld in a number of ways. In the summer of 1977 I helped to organise the participation of twenty people from Northern Ireland in the Free International University workshops associated with Joseph Beuys at the documenta exhibition at Kassel in West Germany. On our return I continued to work with some of those people on the follow-up Almost Free Art Show presented at the Arts Council of

Northern Ireland gallery in Belfast in the spring of 1978, and on the establishment of Art & Research Exchange, an alternative arts centre with which I continued to be involved until the end of 1979. In the early months of 1978 I also organised for the Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic an exhibition of Irish trade union banners and regalia and wrote the accompanying monograph catalogue. In November 1978 I was one of those involved in the protest against the closure of the Art for Society exhibition by the trustees of the Ulster Museum. I have also written a number of articles on local visual imagery, published in journals and newspapers in England, Northern Ireland and the Republic.

As far as practical competence in the production of visual imagery is concerned, I can handle oilpaints, make a crude silkscreen poster, and use both a single-lens 35 mm camera and a 16mm cine-camera. In summary therefore it would be fair to say that this thesis should be read as the work of an academically marginal participant observer.

6. Mural of King William III/1979/first painted in 1939/Rockland St, Belfast/Photo: B. Loftus.

CHAPTER 2 : WILLIAM

A King for today

"King William III, Prince of Orange": he confronts you, this brightly-painted monarch, as your car crawls up the traffic-choked road when you leave the motorway from Dublin, and head for Belfast's city centre (ill 6). He fills the gable-end wall of one of the small, terraced, brick houses in Rockland Street, neat, colourful, heroic, with his drawn sword, on his prancing white horse. And he is only one of the many representations of this seventeenth century King that can be found in the imagery of Northern Ireland's Protestant community today.

It is true that many of the old wallpaintings of William III have declined to the level of a childish scribble,[1] or have faded to a mere ghost of their past selves,[2] no more apparently than a relic of folk traditions now gone, like the painting of William's image on a pub-sign[3] or a pike-stone[4] or the carving of it on a butter-mould.[5] But the young loyalists of post-1968 Ulster have continued to make wall-paintings like their forefathers, and King William is still their favourite subject. The Rockland Street corner boys will not deviate from the monarch first painted in their street some fifty years ago. He is their heritage they say, and they proudly though inaccurately claim that their mural of him is the oldest in Northern Ireland. (The Robert Jackson murals in Derry

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1. In Canton Street in East Belfast in the mid-1970s a crude King Billy was drawn at child-level amongst the usual gable-end graffiti and football posts.
2. e.g. in Silvergrove Street and Dromara Street, both in Belfast.
3. In Scotch Street, Armagh from about 1920 to the early 1960s.
4. Near Downpatrick. Defaced during the present troubles.
5. See Robert Harbinson (Bryans), Song of Erne, Faber, 1960, p. 129.

are in fact far older, probably dating back to 1916.)[1] The Tartan Gang who signed the spanky little mural they painted in Coleraine kept to the old imagery,[2] as did the sixteen-year old boy reputed to be responsible for a similar figure in Larne. Only on three occasions have I seen an exception to the prevalence of William III as a wall-painting subject. There is the Howard Street South loyalist prisoners' mural with its crossed flags (ill 7). In Rathcoole housing estate on the outskirts of Belfast the junior members of the UVF painted a batman figure accompanied by the slogan KAI which they cheerfully interpreted to me as "Kill All Irish". And in Carrickfergus an unknown graffiti artist scrawled a hasty depiction of an IRA gunman running away.

Wall-paintings are not the only evidence of King William's continuing supremacy in the hearts of Northern Ireland Protestants today. His image is still featured on a good half of the banners carried in the processions of the Orange Order, the semi-masonic society which numerous members of the Protestant community continue to join.[3] And an amazing variety of commercial representations of him continue to be available in the loyalist souvenir shops in Sandy Row or East Belfast or Ballymena. Prints, tea-cloths, mugs (some made in Rumania!) and crude plaster-of-paris figures produced by a firm in Coleraine, all display the King on his white horse.[4] William is part of loyalist domesticity - indeed Catholics poke fun at Protestants' use of cushions decorated with his image, mocking their willingness to sit on the likeness of their hero.[5] But young loyalists

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1. See below, ill 9 and pp. 56-7 and p.62.
2. Reproduced in Robert Kee, Ireland, A History, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981, between p. 64 and p. 65.
3. On the Orange Order, see below, Chapter 4.
4. Ken Nixon, "Psst! Want a King Billy", News Letter, Belfast, 3 June 1971, p. 4.
5. Frank Burton, The Politics of Legitimacy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 61.

7. Loyalist Prisoners Mural/1979/first painted ca 1976/ Howard Street South, Belfast/Photo: B. Loftus.

are unabashed and continue to flaunt representations of William on their chests, whether in the form of commercially printed t-shirts[1] or hand-knitted jerseys[2] or large and elaborate tattoos (ill 8).[3]

To see images of a remote, seventeenth century monarch still so firmly embedded in popular culture is startling, particularly when one considers the nature of the groups producing and using these representations. Urban wall-painters, commercial manufacturers and young loyalists might all have been expected to develop images more suited to their own situation during the past thirteen years or so. For the wall-painters local figures, particularly workers in the shipyards and engineering industries would seem to have been far more representative of what they were celebrating and championing than would a seventeenth century monarch; for the manufacturers a figure representing imperial, bureaucratic power, such as the traditional imperial image of royalty seated on the throne carrying the orb and sceptre, would have been far more suitable than that of the heroic King William; and for the contemporary loyalist, Ian Paisley or a Protestant paramilitary would appear far more relevant than a historic ruler.

This seeming disjuncture between the social and political reality of these Protestant groupings and the Williamite emblems employed by them, is most sharply apparent in the banners of the Orange Order. The Order's membership includes wall-painters, businessmen, industrial employees, politicians and paramilitaries from the Protestant community. Yet scarcely any of its banners represent the province's main industries,

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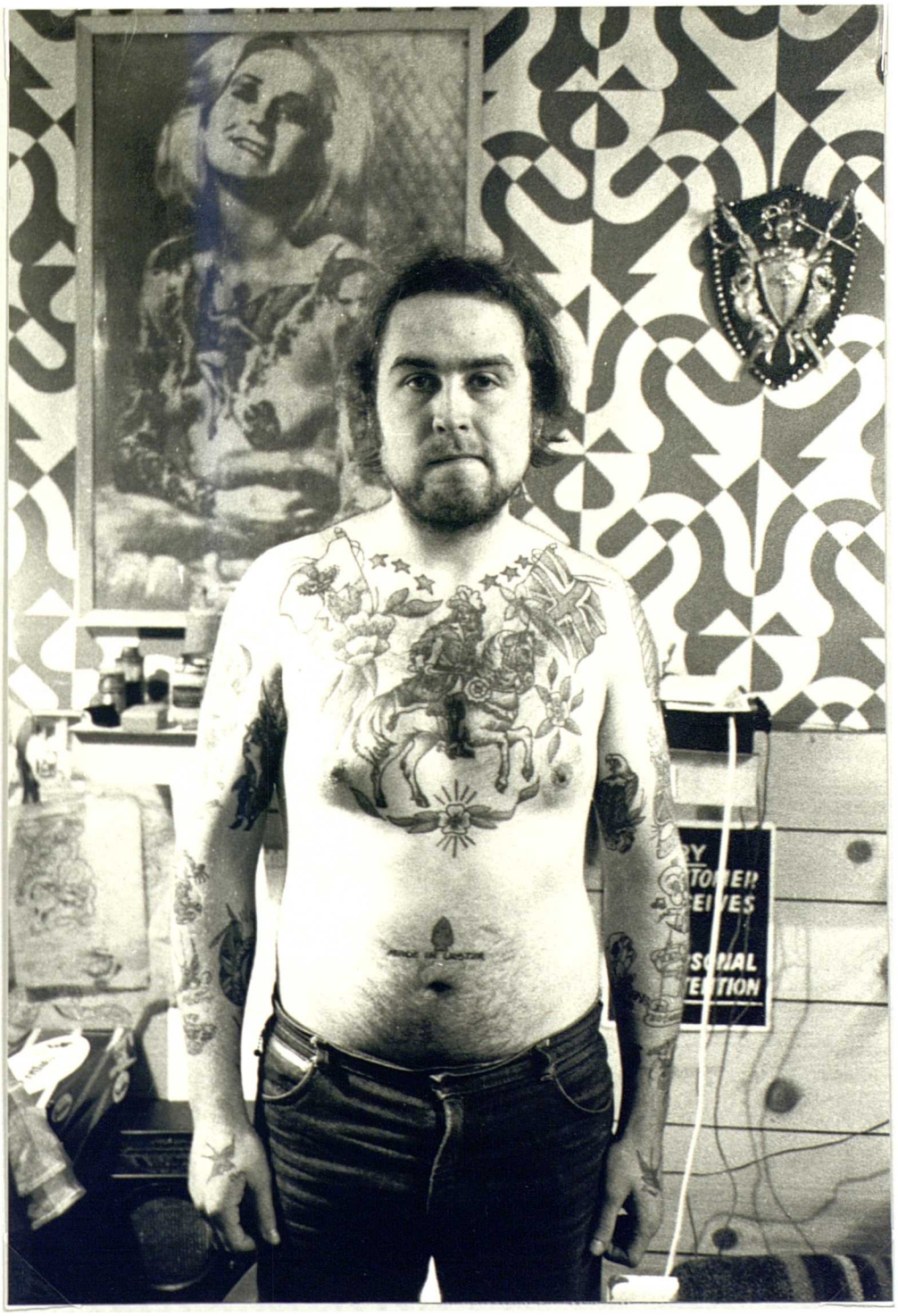
1. See the advertisements for t-shirts in the Loyalist News, Belfast, 14 June and 28 June 1975.
2. The Orange Cross, Belfast, no. 79, n.d., carried an advertisement requesting a knitting pattern for a William III jersey.
3. See also the tattoo reproduced in Ronald Scutt & Christopher Gotch, Skin Deep, Peter Davies, 1974, p. 104.



8. Man with William III tattoo/1980/Johnny Venus tattoo studio, Donegall Pass, Belfast/Photo: B. Loftus.

contemporary politicians or paramilitary leaders. Depictions of the cranes of Harland and Wolff, Belfast's Queen Elizabeth bridge, and a power station, are rare exceptions to the repetition of tradition. Even the banner of the Press lodge, which shows a newspaper page, has as the subject of the photo on it - King William III. The ban on banners showing living figures does rule out the depiction of such current leaders as Ian Paisley and the Rev Martyn Smyth, but it is nonetheless startling that the only representation of a man or woman of contemporary significance has been on the Ernie Elliott banner, carried for a short while by an Ulster Defence Association lodge in the mid-seventies.[1] Even in Long Kesh loyalist prisoners are as ready to depict the traditional bust of King William on their Twelfth of July banner as they are to show themselves drawn up in parade order.[2]

The continuing popularity of images of William III amongst such Protestant groupings during the present troubles raises two linked questions. How did such images come to be favoured by Northern Ireland Protestants in the first place? And why have they continued to be so important to them?

Recently a number of historians have attempted to answer these questions by discussing the importance of William III's actions for Ulster

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1. Ernie Elliott was a Lt-Col in the UDA who was found murdered in a Protestant area of Belfast on 7 December 1972. It is widely believed that he was killed by rival UDA members who disapproved of his leftwing views. A plaque commemorating him still hangs in the West Belfast headquarters of the UDA on the Shankill Road.
2. The William III Long Kesh banner is reproduced on the front cover of the UVF newsheet, The Orange Cross, no. 33, n.d (in the Linen Hall Library). The Ulster Museum has a UDA flag made for the Twelfth of July celebrations in Long Kesh in 1974. It shows the UDA prisoners of Cage 9 drawn up before their huts and carrying Ulster, Vanguard and Scottish flags. It is reproduced in G.A. Hayes McCoy, A History of Irish Flags from earliest times, Academy Press, Dublin, 1979, p. 233.

Protestants. Two main lines of argument employed by them are summarised in the next section of this chapter, titled Historical Explanations. It is my contention however, that by relegating the depictions of William III to the status of illustrations of historical events, these historians have neglected their roles as images.

In the following section on Wall-paintings I shall therefore discuss the functions of one particular kind of Williamite imagery employed in Northern Ireland during the present troubles, namely the gable-end paintings, of which the Rockland Street mural (ill 6) is a typical example. The few commentators on these paintings have generally characterised them as either "folk art" or "sectarian graffiti", thereby consigning them to a timeless, spaceless limbo, in which they have no connection with historical development, other forms of art, or the complex daily existence of their makers and users. My intention is to recover the meanings of these wall-paintings by returning them to their artistic, social and political contexts.

In the first place I will give a history of the practice of gable-end painting in Northern Ireland, a practice which appears to be unparalleled in the rest of Western Europe. From this it will emerge that, far from being a form of folk art such paintings are a relatively recent, urban development, in large part made possible by the widespread marketing of commercial house paint. In the second place I will assess the functions of King William gable-end paintings. From an examination of the intentions of their painters, the locations in which they are situated, and the rituals and ceremonies of which they form part, it will become apparent that these murals should be characterized as works of celebration and commemoration, rather than of sectarian challenge. And thirdly I shall give some indication of the visual sources to which the

Northern Ireland wall-painters have turned for their depictions of King William.

From this it will become obvious both that these painters bring to their works their own personal interpretation, and that their images ultimately derive from mainstream European art traditions. In the section titled The history of an image I shall therefore analyse in some detail how various images of William III were transmitted to Northern Ireland and how they were then developed and changed within the Irish context. In particular I shall attempt to explain why certain representations of William as a heroic, historical leader came to largely supercede earlier, important depictions of him in the guise of a classical emperor. My explanation will point to the linked importance of what has been practically and artistically available to the makers of images of William III in Northern Ireland, and what they have chosen to appropriate from this available material.

In order to understand the impact of certain representations of William on these local image-makers it is necessary to know a little of the wider context in which those representations appeared and the living rituals and ceremonies with which they were involved. I will therefore devote two sections to these subjects. In the first, titled The visual contexts, I will make a brief assessment of the contexts in which images of King William have appeared, in an attempt to show how they may have been challenged or reinforced by their visual setting. In the second, titled Living images, I will show how at every stage in its development Williamite imagery has acquired layers of meaning through its appropriation to a variety of rituals and ceremonies.

Finally, having established how the image of William III became so important in Northern Ireland, I will return to consideration of why it

has remained so during the present troubles, in the section titled The legitimate hero. My argument will be that the continuing popularity of representations of William III in Ulster cannot simply be attributed to vague concepts like folk tradition or inertia, or to the historical importance of the King to Northern Ireland Protestants, important though that is. Again I will turn to the images themselves. It is my contention that it is by looking at the element in the depictions of William which is most vehemently adhered to by Northern Ireland Protestants, namely the white horse, and by considering the political contexts in which apparently anomalous use of William III images has been made, that one can discover *why those images have remained so* important to the Ulstermen of today.

Historical Explanations

In the second part of the television series, Ireland: A History,[1] the painter of the Rockland Street mural (ill 6) was shown, talking about the significance it had for him. He made three statements about William III, the substance of which was as follows.

"He was King of England.

He was the head of the Protestant church. And I'm an Orangeman so he must mean a lot to me.

He saved the Protestant people from being persecuted and murdered by the Church of Rome, Papists as they're called here."

Robert Kee, who devised and narrated the series, devoted much of this programme to explaining the fear of the Catholic, native Irish which

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1. Broadcast on BBC 2 and Radio Telefis Eireann on 9 December 1980, at 9.30 p.m.

exists amongst Ulster's Protestant settlers. This he saw as largely the result of the bitter religious and political conflicts of the seventeenth century in which the Protestant planters suffered greatly at the hands of the Catholic population (and vice-versa). And this to Kee explained the Protestants' devotion to the memory of William III, as their deliverer from Catholic domination by his victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

Kee's analysis was an attempt to convey to both English and Irish viewers[1] how a particular interpretation of seventeenth century Irish history shapes the attitudes of Ulster Protestants today. Other Irish historians have tried to go back to the actual events of that century to discover what were the attitudes to them of contemporary Protestants and Catholics. A particularly close study of reactions to William III's Irish campaign has been made by J.G. Simms.[2] He concludes that William's victory at the Boyne was by no means the decisive event that it is now seen as by Ulster Protestants. This was recognised in eighteenth century Williamite celebrations which laid equal emphasis on commemoration of the far more important Battle of Aughrim (23 July 1691) and subordinated both to remembrance of William's birthday and landing in England (4 - 5 November). Moreover, according to Simms, neither in actuality nor in contemporary appraisal was William's ultimate victory over James II the defeat of the Church of Rome in Ireland. The situation in his view was far more complex. The Irish campaign was a mere sideshow, part of a larger European conflict in which the papacy was actually supporting William III against French ambitions, although the extent of that support

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1. The series was shown throughout Britain, including Northern Ireland, and in the Republic of Ireland.
2. J.G. Simms, "Remembering 1690", Studies, Dublin, Autumn 1974, pp. 231-242.

is debatable. In Ireland both Catholic and Protestant attitudes to William were therefore confused. Catholics were embarrassed at William's apparent use of papal aid to remove the Catholic James II from the English (and Irish) throne. Many of them however had no great love for James and recognised in the anti-sectarian terms of the Williamite settlement (largely agreed to by the new monarch to please his Catholic allies), a reasonably fair deal for themselves. Some Protestants on the other hand, both then and subsequently came to the reluctant conclusion that a Pope who seemed to have supported William must actually have some good in him.[1]

Simms goes on to try to establish why William and his victory at the Boyne should have come to mean so much to Ulster Protestants. Unlike Kee he sees the reasons as lying not so much in the earlier religio-political conflicts of the seventeenth century but in the direct impact made on Ulstermen by William during his progress through the province and in action at the Boyne.

William took two weeks to travel through Ulster. It was his first excursion on Irish soil, and his only visit to the province. By all accounts, it was one of the rare occasions when his normal unsmiling reserve gave way to a warmth and good spirits which, after initial uncertainties, kindled in the northern populace a wild rejoicing which, according to an official report of the time, blazed out in "bonfires so thick that the country seemed aflame."[2] This progress culminated in the Battle of the Boyne. It was the only significant Irish battle in which both William and James took part, "a combat of kings" in which

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1. Simms, op cit, pp. 231-3.
2. Official gazette quoted ibid, p. 238.

"The reckless gallantry of William made a splendid contrast to the indecision and craven flight of James."[1]

In this gallantry Ulstermen could feel they had personally participated for it was the Enniskillen troops which William had chosen to rally in the difficult crossing of the river which formed the turning point of the battle.

Kee and Simms offer two different historical explanations for the subject matter of the Rockland Street wall-painting (ill 6), but they leave other questions unanswered. Why is King William represented in a wall-painting? There is after all no apparent parallel to this practice anywhere in western Europe. Why is this particular image of William III represented? And what is the significance of both this practice and this image?

Wall-paintings

Commentators on the William III wall-paintings have generally taken one of two attitudes towards them. On the one hand there have been those who have seen them as a form of sectarian graffiti, a view encouraged by the onset of the present troubles. Thus in 1972 the Belfast lecturer, journalist and critic Sean Breslin wrote of the Rockland Street mural

"What we have here ... is a splendid example of a traditional form that has been handed on from generation to generation. To appreciate the mural fully alcohol is desirable, although hatred, prejudice and the right type of music also serve to induce the proper aesthetic response."[2]

This was the voice of a spokesman from the Catholic community. But

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1. Ibid, p. 234.
2. Sean Breslin, "By their walls you shall know them", Aquarius, Benburb Co. Tyrone, no. 5, 1972, p. 66.

certain Protestant groupings have taken the same attitude. Even before the troubles, fine artists and their supporters in the Protestant community were clearly embarrassed by the image of William. There is not a single serious painting of him by them, and if they turned their hand to a banner or a wall-painting depicting him, it was claimed that they were at that time either very youthful, or very impoverished, or both.[1] And during the early years of the present conflict wholesalers of loyalist emblems became somewhat shamefaced about their William III images. In 1971 one shopkeeper complained

"Until recently you could go round to their showrooms and see all the King Billy stuff laid out. But nowadays there is not a single ornament or anything like that on view. You'll have to ask to see it and even then they make you feel you are asking for something illegal."[2]

(It should be remembered however that it was during this period that the Northern Ireland government brought in the Incitement to Hatred Act and showed itself willing to implement it.)

The other common approach to the wall-paintings of William III has been to view them as relatively harmless folk art. The art historian John Hewitt described the murals as such;[3] the Arts Council of Northern Ireland initiated an abortive scheme in the mid 1970s to sponsor photographic records of wall-paintings and arches for its Traditional Arts Committee; and Bobby Jackson's murals in Derry (ill 9) have been

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1. An employee of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland told me that William Scott, the distinguished Ulster emigre artist, would be very embarrassed if it became known that he had painted an Orange banner in Enniskillen in his youth, and John Luke appeared to have a similar sense of embarrassment about his youthful work on gable-end murals (see John Hewitt, John Luke 1906-1975, Arts Councils of Ireland, Belfast and Dublin, 1978, p. 4 and p. 66).
2. Ken Nixon, loc cit.
3. John Hewitt, "Painting and Sculpture in Ulster", in Sam Hanna Bell et al, The Arts in Ulster, George Harrap, 1951, p. 93.

9. Bobby Jackson/Mural of William III landing at Carrickfergus/1979/first painted ca 1916 in Clarence Place, Derry/Photo: B. Loftus.

preserved as a local monument although the street in which they stood has been demolished for redevelopment.

This fashion for viewing Williamite images as folk art and little else has really been a middle-class attempt to remove from these images the embarrassing power they continue to have in actuality. Indeed both of the accepted views of King William wall-paintings distance them from the commentator himself and from any real context, whether political, social or artistic. As a result the paintings become disembodied or are allocated over-simplified functions. By examining them more closely and returning them to their contexts it is possible to see that their real significance is more complex.

In the first place these murals are a comparatively recent and urban tradition. The earliest is claimed to have been painted by the shipyard-worker John McClean in Belfast's Beersbridge Road in 1908,[1] and all subsequent examples are to be found in the cities and larger towns of Northern Ireland. There are some who argue nevertheless that the custom is rooted in rural memories. Charles Brett, for example, in his history of the buildings of Belfast, has claimed that the annual repainting of the city's small terraced brick houses is a continuation of the country tradition of whitewashing cottages and farmbuildings each summer.[2] As this practice is particularly marked in Protestant areas of the city it has been tempting to see the William III wall-paintings as in some respects an extension of it. What seems to have been more crucial however is the commercial development of house-paints at the turn of the century. Although some of the mural-painters used paint stolen from

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1. "The First King William Painter", Ireland's Saturday Night, Belfast, 5 July 1958, p. 4. The painting no longer survives.
2. C.E.B. Brett, Buildings of Belfast 1700-1914, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969, p. x.

Belfast's shipyards because it was of superior quality (and free), the easier availability of ready-made decorating materials must have given impetus to both the painting-up of urban houses and the execution of King Billy murals. Significantly nineteenth century photographs of Belfast do not show houses picked out in this fashion. Significantly too similar house-decoration in industrial Wales and lowland Scotland seems also to date from the beginning of this century.

Clearly William III wall-paintings are not simply unchanging folk art. Are they however sectarian images?

This is a difficult question to answer. It can I think be approached in three ways, by looking at the intentions of the men who paint the murals, by analysing the significance of their location and by studying the rituals and ceremonies of which they form part. (Catholic attitudes to King William images will be analysed at a later stage in the following chapter.)

On the whole Protestant wall-painters appear to have been anything but bigots. The Rockland Street lads think nothing of entering Catholic areas of Belfast and are appreciative not only of the nearby Roden Street community mural but also of the aesthetic qualities, as opposed to the political message, of the recent H-Block wall-paintings (ill 19). Bobby Jackson in Derry paints Hibernian drums as happily as Orange ones and repairs many a Catholic statue. He welcomed Catholic neighbours to the boisterous celebrations attending the annual redecoration of his street. James Hume and his brothers, like many other East Belfast Protestants, would tour Catholic churches at Christmas, looking at their cribs. George Wilgaus helped paint the interior of the Catholic church in the Clonard area of Belfast. (Aesthetic pleasure was mingled with financial considerations. Catholics tended to pay better, he claimed.) Yet it is unwise to paint too rosy a picture. The information about the Rockland

Street group, Jackson, Hume and Wilgaus was almost entirely supplied by themselves, either to this writer or to journalists working on Irish newspapers, in other words to people to whom evidence of non-sectarian attitudes would be assumed to be welcome. And it should be recorded that one member of a Belfast wall-painting family has been jailed for life for a murder committed with sectarian intent.[1]

The evidence of location however would make it appear that loyalist wall-paintings were intended to serve as a focus for the celebrations of the Protestant community, rather than as a deliberate taunt to Catholic neighbours. All the examples known to me, whether past or present, seem to have been located within Protestant areas rather than at the interface with Catholic territory. (The Rockland Street King Billy can now be clearly seen waving his sword towards the Catholic Falls but that is only because of recent demolition work.) Most of these murals have been painted either as part of the annual summer-season celebrations of Williamite history, or as memorials to the victims of Belfast's perennial sectarian conflicts. Sometimes the memorial paintings were personal, like the George VI and Queen Elizabeth mural painted off Marne Street in about 1938 in commemoration of the artist's younger brother, killed by a sniper in an outbreak of political violence. Sometimes they were communal, like the King William painting carried out in 1965, which was sponsored by the Protestant Boys of Fleet Street band, as a memorial to a group of Protestants killed during a bout of political gunplay in 1935. Often they were ceremonially unveiled by local dignitaries.[2]

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1. Maurice Wilgaus, a close relative of the wall-painter George Wilgaus, was given a life sentence in June 1975 for murdering a man he thought to be a Catholic, but was in fact a Protestant ("Killer of two gets life - twice", Belfast Telegraph, 4 June 1975, p. 4.)
2. Christopher South, "Ulster Wall Game", Sunday Times Colour Magazine, 23 March 1969, pp. 60-61. The Belfast Telegraph, Monday 10 July 1933 has a photo of a recently unveiled mural commemorating the officers and NCOs of the Ulster Division.

The paintings carried out for the Orange celebrations have been surrounded by convivial rituals. They are part of a whole frenzy of decoration including bunting, arches and flags, and are generally subscribed for on a bob-a-nob basis. Their completion is often marked by a bonfire and street party, normally on "eleventh Night", ie the eve of the massive Twelfth of July Orange processions celebrating the Battle of the Boyne.[1] Always boisterous, these celebrations sometimes get wildly out of hand. The large area of plasterwork missing from the right-hand side of the Rockland Street mural (ill 6) is a result of an over-enthusiastic bonfire in 1974, and Bobby Jackson remembers blowing in all the windows in his street with an effigy packed too full of fireworks, during one of his Eleventh Night parties.

It is admittedly difficult to determine whether all local inhabitants have shared enthusiasm for William III wall-paintings and the ceremonies associated with them. Asking people what they feel about the murals does not always produce very reliable information. When I tried to find out from two women in Howard Street South who had painted the loyalist prisoners mural there (ill 7) they said that it could not have been done by anyone local, that they strongly disapproved of it themselves and that their only concern was peace. There was indeed a peace group in the area at that time, but my hunch is that they were offering the kind of replies appropriate for any stranger with an English accent who might be assumed to be working either for the army or the press. It is, after all, a rather large mural to paint without anyone in the area noticing or

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1. For a description of "Eleventh Night" celebrations see below, p. 359.

protesting.[1]

Graffiti may perhaps be a surer indication of youthful feeling. It is noticeable that William III wall-paintings, including the one in Rockland Street, are not immune to graffiti of a Protestant nature.

If the role of William III wall-paintings in ceremonies of commemoration and celebration can easily be missed by the uninvolved observer, equally the variation in their style and their relationships to wider art traditions can be obscure to those who have only a passing acquaintance with recent examples of the genre. It is important to stress that the earliest King William wall-paintings were part of a widespread practice which included a considerable range of other subject-matter. Memories and old photographs record elaborate scenes of historical events dear to the loyalist heart. The ship named "Mountjoy" was shown breaking the boom maintained by the Jacobites against the Protestant defenders of Derry in 1688; Lord Roberts appeared flanked by two Boer War soldiers; the Ulster Division went over the top at the Battle of the Somme in action-packed detail; the Angel of Mons hovered over the battlefield; the "Titanic", built in Belfast's shipyards, went down with all the appeal of a disaster movie; King George V and Queen Mary were depicted at their coronation, their gilt chairs behind them receding in sharp perspective;

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1. Similarly caution rather than disapproval may have motivated the wife, who, finding her husband had acquired a chest tattoo of King William while drunk, sent him off to have the monarch's image covered with flowers. Tattoos have proved to be dangerous distinguishing marks since the onset of the present troubles. Gusty Spence, leader of the illegal Protestant paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force, was identified by his tattoos when he was captured by the British army in 1972 and plastic surgeons in Northern Ireland have removed dnagerously political tattoos on a number of occasions in recent years. See Richard Deutsch and Vivien Magowan, Northern Ireland 1968-73, A Chronology of Events, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, vol 2, 1972-3. p. 236 entry for 4 Nov 1972 and Alf McCreary, Survivors, Century Books, Belfast, 1976, p. 216.

the visit of the Prince of Wales to Northern Ireland was commemorated by a mural showing him playing the great Lambeg drum, favourite instrument of Orangemen; and Victory was celebrated in 1945 with a rising sun and fly-past of aeroplanes.[1] King William himself, although always neatly depicted and always shown in the same heroic pose, was subject to enormous personal variation.

Admittedly the sources used by the painters were often limited. A newspaper photo shows the Dowie brothers discussing a "print" of King William (which looks more like a bannerette) before repainting the Rockland Street mural in 1968;[2] James Hume, an East Belfast painter working between 1918 and 1920 is known to have relied initially on a postcard for his designs; and one of the Johnston postcards (ill 10) was used as the basis for the Jackson mural in Derry of William III's landing at Carrickfergus, first painted in 1916 and the only exception to the standard heroic image (ill 9).

Yet the Jackson murals are superb, vigorous and personal in their execution. The face that such a fine work could derive from so meagre a source indicates the crucial role of individual skill and imagination in the production of these gable-end paintings and belies the customary belief in the unvarying nature of 'folk art'. However well-established the basic format the element of personal interpretation has always been important. There have been King Billys as elegant as an eighteenth-century portrait[3] or as boisterously vulgar as a piece of pop-art.[4] And

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1. I am grateful to Mr Douglas Deane, formerly of the Ulster Museum, for showing me some of the photographs he took of these early Belfast murals in the late 1950s.
2. News Letter, Belfast, 12 July 1968, p. 2.
3. eg the now much faded mural on the outskirts of Ballymena.
4. eg the mural off Montague Street in Portadown, now destroyed. I am grateful to Mr Weatherup, curator of Armagh County Museum, for giving me a slide of this mural.

10. Irwin/Postcard of William III landing at Carrick-fergus/1981/first issued ca 1900/photo-gravure/ published by William Johnston, Belfast.

individual murals have been changed with practically every repainting even if the same man or group of men was responsible. The Rockland Street image was first painted in the late 1930s by a man called Johnston from nearby Roden Street. From 1945 to 1979 it was maintained by a group of men in Rockland Street who retouched it every time the paintwork suffered as a result of the traditional bonfire lit in front of it on the night of eleventh July. I have photographs of the mural taken in the 1960s, 1975 and 1979. At each stage there are differences both in content and in style. Repetition almost inevitably involves change but some of these differences were deliberate. The caption to the News Letter piece on the Rockland Street mural in 1968 claimed that it was being entirely remodelled for the first time in thirty-nine years, and a few streets away another wall-painter, William Warlow, claimed that each time he painted a King Billy gable-end he made it slightly different.[1]

Indeed it needs to be emphasised that many of these murals were painted purely for the artist's own pleasure, often with sublime disregard for personal comfort or public proprieties. James Hume for example would get up at 5 am to put in a couple of hours on a mural before starting work in the shipyard. He would seize on a suitable wall regardless of who owned it, even using the side of a local police station, painting away whenever the coast was clear.

These wall-painters have been politically independent men, often with considerable artistic skills. Their murals, as we have seen, form part of community rituals, but they have not simply been crude repetitions of a sectarian formula or the subject of committee decisions by local loyalists. The artists might occasionally be Orangemen themselves but

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1. Conversation 27 July 1976.

they have been prepared to challenge Orange tradition if it dissatisfied them. Bobby Jackson for example claims that he only changed the colour of William's horse from unfashionable black to the probably inaccurate though traditional white because of a deathbed request from his mother. Jackson is the kind of man who has been able to dictate his own terms, commanding respect with his trained skill, his wide ingenuity and his ability to draw on the resources of learning. He can turn his hand equally well to the marbled and wood-grained walls of his own house, the elaborate lining out of ceremonial cars, the painting of banners, the decoration of drums and the building of the great effigy of Lundy burnt at the commemoration of the siege of Derry. For his wall-paintings he took great pains to get the details historically accurate, consulting the antiquarian collection of local history books in the strong room of Derry's Protestant cathedral to which, as verger, he had the key. George Wilgaus, who painted many of the murals in the Shankill area of Belfast between the wars, was the same kind of man. He trained as a sign-writer but turned his hand to both wall-paintings and banners. Clearly he was a good hand at depicting horses, for one of his advertisements for Gallaher Tobacco was a war-horse jumping over a stile. (This was the period when such advertisements were still painted direct onto walls.) His uncle was an academician and he himself had exhibited locally, mingling with professional painters like William Conor, from whom he often sought advice.

In recent years these skilled men do appear to have been lacking. The decline in the number of William III wall-paintings and their replacement by purely heraldic imagery, like the flags and coats of arms used in the loyalist prisoners' mural painted in Howard Street South in the mid-seventies (ill 7), does not seem to be due solely to the impact

of the troubles. One of the men who carried out the Howard Street mural is the gentleman with the splendid King Billy tattoo (ill 8). He told me that he had wanted to paint a traditional William III like the old mural in nearby Silvergrove Street which he greatly admired, but had simply lacked the skill. (I find it hard to understand though why he should not have drawn upon the expertise of his tattooist, whose shop is just across the road from the Howard Street South mural.) However the street corner boys in Rockland Street who intend to maintain their fathers' mural are not lacking in painterly expertise or appreciation. They have no specialist art-training or craftsmen's skill, but their knowledge and appreciation of wall-paintings in Northern Ireland is considerable, and one of their number has carried out murals in a Belfast pub which derive from record-sleeves but are strongly structured and well-executed.

The history of an image

It should by now be clear that King William wall-paintings are not simply folk art or sectarian graffiti but part of a complex, urban practice. They are made for local communities and for personal pleasure by men who are by no means as separate from the fine art world as some commentators would like to believe. And indeed the images they use can ultimately be traced back to the mainstream traditions of European fine art. It is the art history of the King William murals that I wish to examine in this section, because various choices made in the course of it have crucially affected both the style and the meaning of the image of William III that can be seen painted on gable-end walls in Northern Ireland today.

The first important Irish depiction of William III was very

different from the figure represented in present-day images of the king. In 1700, only ten years after the Battle of the Boyne, and while William was still alive, the Dublin Corporation resolved to raise a monument to him. This was completed in 1701 and erected in College Green, in front of Trinity College. It showed William on horseback and wearing classical rather than contemporary costume (ill 11).

The practice of honouring rulers by equestrian statues dates back to Roman times.[1] It was revived in Italy during the Renaissance and reached England during the seventeenth century. By showing leaders in Roman costume sculptors at this time imbued them with the timeless nobility of the classical period; by depicting these leaders on horseback they emphasised their role as conquerors rather than as rulers. The choice of this style of memorial by the inhabitants of Dublin was also linked to the local political and cultural ambience at this time. The city was at the height of its power as the Irish capital, and neo-classical elegance, rationality and timelessness smoothed over some of the seventeenth century obsession with conflict, religion and mortality. Grinling Gibbons, who carried out this statue, was however better known for his decorative wood-carving than his sculpture and his portrayal of William III seems to have fallen somewhat short of the models to which it aspired. This photograph was taken not long before the monument was finally dismantled in 1929 following a republican bomb attack.[2] As we

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1. A particularly influential Roman equestrian statue was the monument to Marcus Aurelius, illustrated in Frances Yates, Astraea, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, Plate 1. Gibbons was clearly aware of this figure when he made the William III statue.
2. The private parts of William's horse were used to patch Dublin water pipes during the second World War. Other parts of the statue have recently reappeared in the Dublin Corporation Yard and are now in Dublin Civic Museum. See Nigel Brown, "King Billy turns up in bits", The Irish Times, 27 Nov 1981 p. 13; Frank Kilfeather, "Dublin patches it up with Billy", The Irish Times, 10 Feb 1982, p. 1 and photo in The Irish Times, 27 Nov 1981 p. 13.

11. Grinling Gibbons/Statue of William III/1701/ dismantled 1929/lead on stone pedestal/College Green, Dublin/Photo: Robert French for W.M. Lawrence/Copyright: National Library of Ireland.

shall see, the statue had already suffered many attacks by that date. Possibly as a result of these, possibly due to Gibbons' inadequacies as a sculptor, it lacks presence.[1] The front half of the horse is anatomically curious and William looks like a stiff dummy dropped onto his mount from above.

Yet this statue was to dominate the cult of King William throughout the eighteenth century and was never entirely to be forgotten. It has had a particularly strong influence on the imagery of the Orange Order, the Williamite Protestant society which was founded in Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century and to which the painter of the Rockland Street mural belonged. It has consistently been used as the Order's official emblem, featured on the title-pages of its rule-books from the nineteenth century to the present day (ill 12), on many of the certificates issued by the society before the mid-nineteenth century, and on the vast majority of the seals used on these certificates whether they are wax or smoke. It also appeared on a number of more popular items associated with the Order in its early days. The splendid pre-1800 Newtown Mountkennedy banner from County Wicklow and various pieces of china clearly intended for Orange use, and believed to have been manufactured

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1. Gibbons is also believed to have been responsible for the earlier and equally unsatisfactory statue of James II standing in classical armour, now outside the National Gallery in London (Rupert Gunnis, Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851, Odhams, 1953, p. 169).

1967

Constitution, Laws and Ordinances

of the

Loyal Orange Institution of Ireland

Approved by Grand Lodge, 14th June, 1967

Operative from 1st September, 1967

ALL PREVIOUS ISSUES CANCELLED HEREBY

T. H. JORDAN, LTD., BELFAST

12. Title page of Orange Order rule book/1967/letter-press/actual size/Ulster Folk Museum.

around 1800, all bear this classical figure.[1]

From the end of the eighteenth century however the classical Dublin statue image of William was increasingly challenged by representations of him in contemporary costume and adopting a more combative, heroic stance, waving a sword rather than a baton. The earliest examples of this kind of imagery can be found in the coins, medals, paintings and prints issued in celebration of William's victories in Ireland, first by artists from his native Holland and then by the Irish themselves.

At the time of William's Irish campaigns the Dutch were strongly established as Europe's leading visual propagandists. One medium which they used to particular effect was the commemorative and symbolic medal, and the examples of these which celebrate William III's victories in Ireland made a considerable impact on later images of the monarch produced in that country. A number of these medals show the King in the same guise of the timeless Roman emperor as the Dublin statue, although generally it is only his bust which is depicted. Many of them however

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1. The earliest Orange rule-book I have seen is dated 1814 and was printed in Dublin; the latest is dated 1967 and printed in Belfast. Both carry a representation of the Dublin statue on the title page. They are in the Ulster Folk Museum. The Folk Museum also has a good collection of Orange certificates while Armagh County Museum has several interesting local examples, both printed and hand-drawn. On early warrants and seals see R.M. Sibbett, Orangeism in Ireland, Henderson, Belfast, 1914-15, vol 1 p. 233 and vol 2, p. 19. The Newtown Mountkennedy banner is in the Ulster Folk Museum. It is illustrated in Richard Broad et al, The Troubles, Thames/Futura, 1981, p. 56. Armagh County Museum has a Boyne Orange Society banner made for a pre-Orange Order society (ie pre-1 5), which bears a classical bust of William. There are several Orange punch-jugs extant which bear the classical figure of William III. A good example is the Royal Independent Orange Society Jug in the Ulster Museum which was made in Liverpool round about 1800. There is also a tea or coffee set which shows the statue surrounded by a Greek key border. Pieces of it are widely distributed and can be seen in the Ulster Museum, Armagh County Museum, and Dublin Civic Museum. Such examples as I have examined appear to carry no recognizable maker's mark, although on stylistic grounds one might hazard a date of ca 1800.

represent William as a historic, heroic leader, mounted on horseback, dressed in contemporary costume, leading his troops into battle (ill 13).[1] Although it appears almost impossible to establish whether any of these items were actually produced in Ireland - the only one which certainly was, is the medallion bearing the classical bust of William executed by James Roettier and presented by William III to the City of Dublin in 1698[2] - they certainly reached the country in great quantities and the nature of their imagery would not have been totally unfamiliar to its inhabitants. There is an ironic footnote to these medallic representations of William III which serves as a kind of cautionary tale, a warning - pace Simms - against identifying too closely a particular kind of image with a specific historic subject. Roettier, who was a brilliant Dutch medallist, is generally believed to have been the designer of James II's so-called gun money, issued in 1690, in which the King's equestrian pose, sword in hand, hitherto unknown in Irish currency, was clearly a forerunner of the Williamite imagery.[3]

William also appeared as a heroic equestrian figure in the paintings of his Irish campaign made by the Dutch artists Dirk (or Theodor) Maas and Jan Wyck. Maas is known to have been present at the Battle of the Boyne as painter to King William. A sketch that he made there formed the basis for his paintings of the battle. It seems likely

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1. See also such examples in the National Museum, Dublin as NM 66-1908 and those described in Edward Hawkins, Medallic Illustrations of Great Britain and Ireland to the Death of George II, ed Augustus W. Frank andHerbert A Grueber, British Museum, 1885 vol I pp. 715-716 and Phelps Warren, "Glass relating to William III", Journal of Glass Studies, Corning Museum of Glass, New York, vol 15, 1973, plate 4.

2. Hawkins, op cit, vol 2 frontispiece & p.197; and Rev Henry Richard Dawson, "A Memoir of the Medals & Medallists associated with Ireland", Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, vol 19, 1843, p. 6. The Roettier medal depicts a bust of William.

3. Ibid. p. 5; Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, Quarterly Notes, Belfast, no 5, March 1907, plate II; and Dr A.E.J. Went, Irish Coins and Medals, Eason, Dublin, 1978, ill 36.

13. Jan Luder/Dutch medal commemorating the Battle of the Boyne/1690/silver/diameter 2.25 ins (5.8 cms)/ British Museum/Photo: BM.

that Wyck was present at the Siege of Derry.[1] There are numerous records of supposed Maas and Wyck portraits of William III in Irish collections, including the Ulster Museum.[2]

There are also firm traditions in Ireland that the many supposed Kneller portraits of William III and his consort Mary to be found in the country's big houses, were gifts from the monarch in gratitude for services rendered during his Irish campaign, much like the signed photographs now dispensed by the Royal Family in Britain. These portraits are generally busts or half-lengths. They show William full-face in contemporary ceremonial dress.[3]

In a sense the production and reproduction of this kind of image of William III was almost as mechanical as the making of photographs, for it was the Netherlandish Kneller who really introduced the English to the factory manufacture of portraits.

"Kneller, who was adopted by the English, painted nothing but portraits. He used to say 'I paint the living that I may be enabled to live.' His practice was to paint the heads and hands of his pictures only; the draperies, ornaments and backgrounds, were painted by English, Dutch and Flemish artists. It was Sir Godfrey who established in England this practice of manufacturing portraits, which has since been brought to great perfection in our country. A modern author remarks that 'in England they get up portraits as they manufacture pins; each passes through several hands - one making the head, another the point. They will soon require as great a variety of artists to produce a whole-length portrait as are required of

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1. Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, The Painters of Ireland, c. 1660-1920, Barrie and Jenkins, 1979, p. 38.
2. The lists kept by the National Portrait Gallery are particularly informative.
3. Typical examples can be seen in the hall of the Lenox-Conynghams' former home of Springhill in Co Tyrone, now a National Trust property.

tradesmen to equip a petit maitre."[1]

As John Hewitt has remarked, the likenesses of General Schomberg and Bishop Walker, two other heroes of the Williamite campaign in Ireland, appear to have been manufactured in the same way for they are usually represented in the same armour and pose as those of King William.[2] There appears to be no confirmation for his supposition that these canvases were supplied or imported unfinished and the faces filled in locally but this does not mean that local artists were backward in supplying memorials of William III to patrons in Ireland. True, the splendid tapestries of The Defence and the Relief of Londonderry and The Battle of the Boyne set up in the newly built Irish Houses of Parliament in 1733 were designed by another Dutch artist, Johan van der Hagen,[3] but it was Dublin painters who happily churned out portraits of William during the early eighteenth century,[4] and it was Dublin engravers who from the 1740s ensured a truly widespread knowledge of the extant paintings of King William.[5] The considerable output of Irish Williamite prints at this time, mostly after the Kneller and Wyck portraits, may be attributed partly to the belated flowering of print-engraving in Dublin,[6]

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1. John Pye, Patronage of British Art, 1845, facsimile reprint by the Cornmarket Press, 1970, p. 36, footnote 27. Pye was quoting from "the letter of the Abbe Le Blanc to the Abbe du Bos," written about 1738. Pye's work is splendidly opinionated but his opinions were very much those of the time.

2. John Hewitt, "Painting and Sculpture in Ulster", p. 75.

3. W.G. Strickland, A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Maunsel, Dublin, 2 vols. 1913, entry on Johan van der Hagen. The parliament building, now the Central Bank of Ireland, is in Dame Street in Dublin. The tapestries may still be seen there.

4. W.G. Strickland, op.cit, entries on Thomas Carlton, Thomas Hardy, Michael Mitchell and Thomas Pooley.

5. Ibid, entries on John Brooks, Michael Ford, Andrew Miller and Richard Purcell; and Freeman O'Donoghue, Catalogue of the Engraved British Portraits preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, vol 4, 1914, p.479ff, William III, nos 50, 65, 69 and 85.

6. See Bruce Arnold, A Concise History of Irish Art, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969, p. 72.

and partly to the widespread urge to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of William's Irish victories. We know for example that John Brooks' 1744 engraving after a Kneller portrait was specifically commissioned by John Sproule of Athlone at a time when there was a project afoot to erect a statue to King William in his native town.[1]

By the mid-eighteenth century therefore, both Dutch and Irish artists had created numerous representations of William III as a contemporary hero, challenging the classical image of the Dublin statue. However undoubtedly the most influential "heroic" image of William III was the painting of the Battle of the Boyne by the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West, which was first exhibited at the newly-established Royal Academy in London in 1780. There is no record of the painting ever having been in Ireland but engravings after it very soon reached the country. In 1781 West himself, in collaboration with John Hall, published a print of the picture, copies of which can be found in Irish collections;[2] in 1798 a booklet of Constitutional Songs carried a reproduction of the West image on its title-page;[3] by the 1820s a lithograph version can be found in a songbook produced for the Apprentice Boys, a branch of the Orange Order;[4] and during the same period the painting was being reproduced on an elegant silk handkerchief which has been proudly framed and displayed in the house of at least one leading Planter family in Ulster (ill 14).[5]

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1. W.G. Strickland, op cit, entry on Brooks.
2. There is one in the Ulster Museum's Local History collection.
3. There is a copy of this booklet in the National Library in Dublin. No place of publication is given but another Constitutional Songs was published in Cork in 1799-1800 by A. Edwards.
4. The Protestant True Blue, Loyal Songs, Toasts, And Sentiments, J. Charles, Dublin, ca 1820. There is a copy in the Ulster Folk Museum.
5. The house I am referring to is Springhill (see above, p. 70 note 3 . The handkerchief was acquired at an auction in the early 1950s by Captain William Lenox-Conyngham. There is a further example in Armagh County Museum.

14. Benjamin West/Silk handkerchief engraved with the Battle of the Boyne/ca 1820/approximately 31½ x 31½ ins (80 x 80 cms)/Armagh County Museum/Photo: Bill Kirk.

Engravings on glass also served to disseminate the image of William III in Ireland. The use of engraved glasses for the drinking of Williamite toasts dates back to the early eighteenth century; the custom was certainly well-established in 1713 when the Bishop of Cork, also Provost of the pro-Anne and anti-William Trinity College, roundly condemned it in his pamphlet Of drinking in remembrance of the dead.[1] Although glass was being made in Dublin from about 1690[2] the earliest such glasses were for the most part imported from England and Holland.[3] By the second quarter of the eighteenth century however an increasing number were engraved in the Irish capital, mostly by English or German craftsmen.[4] From this time until the end of the century the images of King William which they carried were almost entirely based on medals and coins. Thus the toasting glass which was probably made for the Roe family of Ballyconnell House, in the former Ulster county of Cavan,[5] and Archbishop Cobbe's great loving cup, (ill 15),[6] both probably engraved around the middle of the century, possibly by the Dublin man, Joseph Martin,[7] carry respectively the classical bust and the contemporary military leader mounted on horseback, both clearly based on Dutch medals.

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1. Edward Rogers, Revolution of 1688 and History of the Orange Association of England and Ireland, W. and G. Baird, Belfast, 1881, p.15 and Simms, op cit, p.235.
2. Irish Glass, ROSC exhibition catalogue, Dublin, 1971, p.5.
3. Wilfred A. Seaby, Irish Williamite Glass, Ulster Museum, Belfast, 1965, p. 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, p.3 and plate II b.
6. Ibid, pp.2-3 and Phelps Warren, op cit, p.119.
7. Seaby, op cit, p.4.

15. Joseph Martin?/Archbishop Cobbe Loving Cup/ca 1745/ engraved glass/12½ ins (31.8 cms) high/Ulster Museum/ postcard: UM.

There was by now an increasing tendency to relate the heroic image of William to that of contemporary leaders. Many of the pieces of glass made in the 1740s commemorate not only the fiftieth anniversary of the Boyne but also contemporary victories over the Jacobites. Thus the toast inscribed on the Cobbe cup includes "The Pretender" as well as "The Pope, and all Enemies of Protestant Religion" in the candidates for "Perpetual Disappointment." It is hardly surprising therefore that King William occasionally takes on the features of current defeaters of the Jacobite cause. For example, on a decanter dating from the late eighteenth century and now housed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art he closely resembles the Duke of Cumberland.[1] The models used here were probably contemporary examples celebrating the Duke's victory at Culloden,[2] and at the end of the century a number of glasses appear in which the classical bust of William takes on the Hanoverian features of George III as shown on his coinage.[3] The equestrian figure was changing too, becoming less and less regal, and more and more like a contemporary soldier or country gentleman, a metamorphosis which is completed in the Napoleonic military commander, incongruously wreathed with classical laurel, on the magnum made for the Loyal Dungannon Orange Society, and in the dumpy little Regency squire who trots across the rummer which originally belonged to the strongly Orange Waring family. Both are Northern pieces, dating from the first thirty years of the nineteenth century and may possibly have been made in Belfast where Benjamin Edwards was engraving glass from the 1770s.[4]

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1. Ibid, pp. 4-5, plate IIIa.
2. Ibid, plate VI, e-h.
3. Ibid, p. 8 and plates VIII d-g and VI i-l.
4. Ibid, pp. 12-13 and plate VII d and e.

It was not only on engraved glasses that William was identfied with contemporary leaders. A Belfast broadsheet, printed by Joseph Smyth some time between 1824 and 1854, also showed the monarch on horseback as a Napoleonic commander (ill 16)[1] and there is an interesting group of transfer-printed mugs and punch-jugs widely distributed north and south of the Border, which represent William as a landlord figure.[2] These mugs and jugs were clearly intended for use by Orange lodges for the Armagh jug is inscribed "Wm Plunket/Orange Lodge/No 1294/Armagh 1822." In addition to the figure of William all the pieces carry a chart of Orange Order emblems (which is slightly variable) and some of them have floral decorations and a scene of two men wearing top hats and sashes, holding up a crown beneath an inscription which says "Let Brotherly Love Continue." All of these designs are transfer-printed in black and then hand-coloured. None of the pieces bear a maker's mark. It is tempting to see them and the tea or coffee sets bearing the image of the Dublin statue as of Irish manufacture, but although transfer-printing is known to have reached the country, the few verifiable examples date from the mid-eighteenth century.[3]

By the mid-nineteenth century therefore, the classical, timeless, imperial Dublin statue image of William III perpetuated in official Orange Order imagery was being challenged by his representation as a heroic, contemporary, combative leader, not only in fine art productions acquired solely by the aristocracy, but also in the popular imagery made available by the earliest forms of mass-production. Indeed this new image must have had considerable appeal

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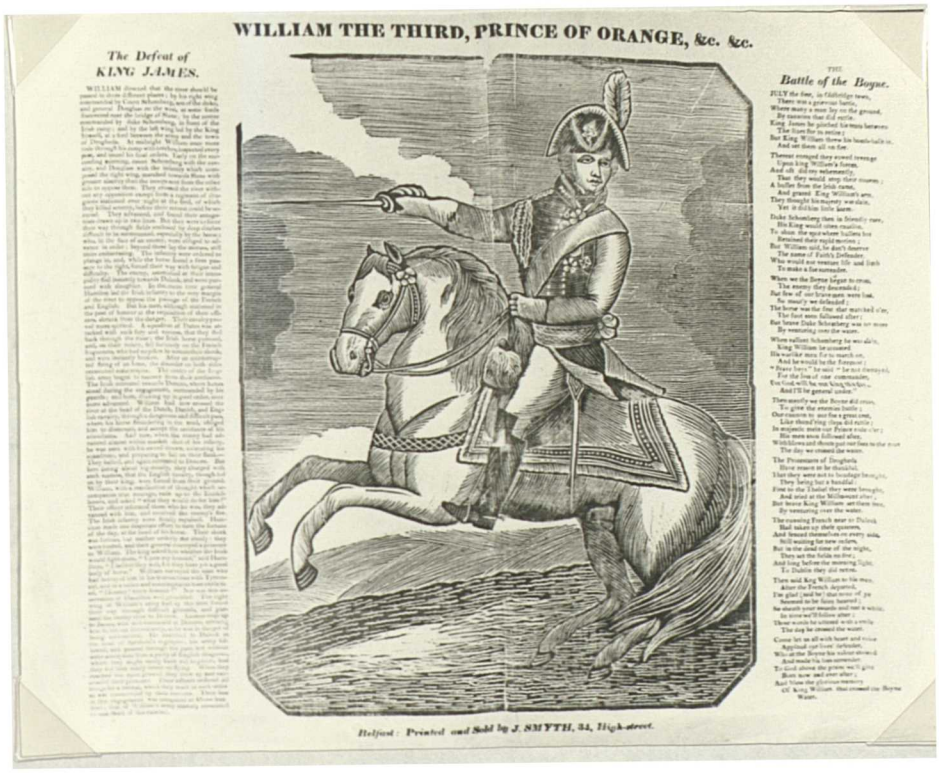
1. In the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.
2. There are jugs in the Ulster Museum and Armagh County Museum and a mug in the National Museum in Dublin.
3. See Irish Delftware, ROSC exhibition catalogue, Dublin, 1971, pp. 125-6.



16. William III broadsheet/between 1824 and 1854/ wood-engraving/16½ x 20 3/4 ins (42 x 52.8 cms)/ printed Belfast/Photo: Sean Watters

for members of the Orange Order itself. The engraved glasses and transfer-printed mugs and jugs were clearly designed for their use and from this time the heroic William dominated both their non-official publications[1] and the banners which were increasingly used in their processions.

We know that banners of William III were carried by the Orange Order from their first parades in 1796, when the hostile Northern Star said that:

> "Their colours, which were new and costly, bore on one side, King William on horseback and (will it be believed?) on the reverse King George the Third!!!" 2

As we have seen the only such banners which survived from this period show William in classical guise, but it is difficult to tell from contemporary descriptions whether this was the general case. What we do know is that the Dutch monarch remained the favourite subject for Orange banners throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. A traveller passing through Tandragee during Orange Order celebrations in 1812 said of the banners and colours that they were:

> "more remarkable for loyalty than taste or variety, for King William on horseback, as grim as a Saracen on a signpost, was painted or wrought on all of them." 3

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1. See the collection of Orange publications in the Ulster Folk Museum.
2. Northern Star, Belfast, Monday 11 July to Friday 15 July, 1796. This description of the subject matter of the banners is confirmed by other contemporary accounts. In 1797, participants in the Lisburn procession carried "the figure of the best of kings, miserably depicted on divers banners ... rather like a great fool" (contemporary account, quoted by Hereward Senior in Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1795-1836, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, p. 41) while in Belfast the banners "displayed representations of King William the 3rd on horseback, the Crown and the Harp, or the Crown alone, with appropriate mottoes as well as symbols and mottoes appropriate to Enniskillen, Londonderry, the Boyne and Aughrim (Belfast News Letter, Belfast 14 July 1797).
3. John Gamble, A View of Society and Manners in the North of Ireland, in the Summer and Autumn of 1812, C. Cradock & W. Joy, 1813, p. 35.

And in the summer of 1845 The Nation, which reported loyalist demonstrations with a detailed, if jaundiced eye, remarked of the Orange processions that the equestrian figure of William III appeared on all the banners carried.[1]

Such parades were in fact generally banned from the 1830s to the early 1870s, apart from a brief spell of freedom between 1845 and 1850. The first serious challenges to this ban were made by a number of Orangemen in 1867 and 1868, prominent amongst whom was William Johnston of Ballykilbeg. There is a splendid applique banner of William III in his heroic guise, said to have been made in Crossgar in 1867.[2] As Crossgar is quite close to Ballykilbeg it is tempting to see in this image an association with Johnston's fighting stance on the right of Orangemen to process. Certainly Johnston seems to have encouraged this kind of image of William for it appears on a number of Orange certificates printed in the 1860s at the office of his newspaper, The Downshire Protestant.

It was however the industrialists of Belfast, Liverpool and Glasgow, that close trading triangle based on the cheap water transport of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who finally confirmed the Orangeman's allegiance to the heroic King William. It was Belfast firms who now produced the bulk of the banners and drums paraded in Orange processions.[3] It was Glasgow and Liverpool industrialists who mass-produced the cheap illustrated books, the song-

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1. The Nation, Dublin, 16 August 1845, p. 725 and 23 August 1845, p. 742.

2. Recorded in a slide made by the late Aiken McClelland.

3. The chief Belfast banner-painting and drum-making firms of Bridgett's and Hewitt's were both well-established by the close of the nineteenth century.

sheets,[1] the gaudily-coloured prints,[2] and the shoddily-decorated china[3] which must have flooded Loyalist homes at this time. And it was a Belfast printer, William Johnston, who commissioned the painting which, by its dissemination through postcards and prints, still available today, codified and formalised the authorized icon of the heroic King William. Other loyalist imagery was promoted at this time whether in prints, ornaments or banners, but it was the heroic figure of William that was to remain dominant.

The brief art-history of images of William III given in this section makes it plain that the heroic, historic figure so familiar in present-day Ulster is a formula arrived at by a series of choices. A variety of other images of the monarch have been available to Northern Ireland Protestants, and have been used by them, but it is this one that they have chosen to appropriate most fully to themselves. In this process of appropriation one must recognise the impact of general changes in taste in Britain and Ireland as a whole. In particular the elevated status of history painting from the late eighteenth century until the late nineteenth century must be remembered when considering the impact on Irish Protestants of

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1. Most of the books and song-sheets appear to have been published by two Glasgow firms, Cameron, Ferguson & Co. and the Globe Publishing Co. Examples of their productions sold by the Belfast firm of Nicholson in the early twentieth century can be found in the Edward John McKean collection of ballad and song-sheets in Queen's University Library, Belfast.

2. Such as the late nineteenth century coloured lithograph, adorned with tinsel, published by Lowe & Robinson, Liverpool, at Springhill House, Co. Tyrone. See also Harbinson, op cit, p. 236.

3. See the set of china in Armagh County Museum which was made by David Lockhart & Co, a Glasgow firm operating between 1865 and 1898 (information kindly supplied by Michael Archer of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

the Benjamin West painting of the Battle of the Boyne. General developments in techniques of reproduction must also be borne in mind. It is clear that the West image was easily appropriated in Ireland because of its dissemination there by means of the cheap printing techniques developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But local factors have also been crucial. Even before the appearance of the West image Northern Ireland Protestants were turning from the classical to the heroic, historic image of William and identifying him with subsequent Protestant heroes, whether national figures like the Duke of Cumberland or local leaders in the shape of Ulster Protestant landlords and squires. This process was clearly accelerated by the foundation of the Orange Order, which happened to take place at approximately the time when the West image became widely available. And it indicates one way in which the heroic, historic figure of William was repeatedly revitalised and renewed as an important emblem of Protestant attitudes in Ulster.

Therefore, when we look at an image like the Rockland Street painting, (ill 6) we are seeing a view of William III determined not only by the ideas and skill of its painter, or by its social role, but also by an art-history in which a series of choices have been made, in situations affected by developments in the mainstream of fine art, the technology of reproduction and local political circumstances.

The visual contexts

However, a fuller awareness of the meanings attached to this historic, heroic image of William III can only be attained if we know something of the visual contexts in which earlier depictions

of him were appropriated by Irish Protestants. For much of the effect of those earlier images must have depended on the surroundings in which they were seen.

It is difficult for us to recapture the impact that early images of William III must have had. Looking at the location of the Dublin statue as it is today, cluttered with memorials, choked with traffic, thronged with tourists, and dominated by office blocks, one has to make a real effort of the imagination to envisage it as *it was at the beginning of the eighteenth century. At* that time of small, human-scale buildings, horse transport and virtually no public statues the figure of William on its high pedestal must have had considerable presence, for all its sculptural inadequacies.

Similarly the Williamite medals, engravings and paintings must be set in the context of what we know of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century loyalist landlords homes in which they were preserved. Sparsely-furnished by our standards, these houses would have had little else in the way of decoration - some family portraits probably, most likely some military momentoes, a few pieces of silver, pewter, china or glass, maybe some fine carpets or embroidery.[1] (It should be remembered too that the Protestant churches attended by the inhabitants of these houses were characteristically bare of imagery).

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while these landlord homes became more lavishly furnished and decorated,

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1. Brian de Breffny, in The Irish World, Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp. 123-4, emphasises the importance of not underestimating the state of the decorative arts in the Dublin area in the seventeenth century but suggests that the situation outside the capital was far bleaker.

early industrial processes brought a much greater range of imagery, particularly in the form of broadsheets and transfer-printed pottery, into the homes of people lower down the social scale. Tradesmen, prosperous tenant farmers, weavers, are all the kind of people who owned these items and they could choose what they wanted from a wide range of imagery. The imported transfer-printed china might show a parade of volunteers, masonic emblems, the Death of Wolfe; local broadsheets offered religious scenes, genre subjects such as sailors at work on their ships, political imagery and ribald depictions of such everyday events as a visit to the dentist. So the image of William III had plenty of competition in this kind of material. But once selected it probably had considerable impact in the home to which it was conveyed. From what little we know, it seems that the houses of people in those social classes were, like those of their superiors before them, relatively lacking in decoration. Transfer-printed pottery was handed on from generation to generation as a family heirloom, and broadsheets are known to have been carefully pasted up on a cottage wall or a weaver's loom.[1]

Later in the nineteenth century this situation changed with the increased mass-production of cheap ephemera. While William's image was becoming more widely and easily available, its claim to loyalist allegiance was less unique, as it was surrounded by images of Boer War leaders, Sir Edward Carson, the Royal Family and so on. Yet at the same time Williamite street rhetoric was reaching its height. The banners carried in Orange processions attained their largest size - ten feet by nine feet - and the wallpaintings, arches

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1. Victor E. Neuburg, Popular Literature, A History and Guide, Penguin, 1977, p. 105. See also, below, p.

and other street decorations transformed normally drab little brick-built streets into a riot of colour and imagery. This must have been as noticeable in the drab days of unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s as it is in the present bleakness brought on Belfast by the troubles and redevelopment. And to this day the Williamite murals dominate those little streets, sometimes challenged by advertising hoardings - at the time of writing the Rockland Street mural faces a large, though boring cigarette advertisement - but always removed from the glittering shopfronts of the city centre.

Besides the impact of single images of William in city streets or individual homes one must recognise the important role of collections of Williamite imagery, a role undoubtedly reinforced by the slow and faltering development of official museums and art galleries in Northern Ireland.[1] For a long time the country houses belonging to Ulster's Protestant landowners served as little museums, like Springhill with its Kneller portrait and its Benjamin West handkerchief, or the Blacker home with its Kneller and William III's horse furniture. In due time many of these little hoards were passed on to Orange Halls. William III's horse furniture was recently donated to the museum of the Grand Orange Lodge in Belfast. Previously, at the end of the nineteenth century it had served as a model for the statue of the monarch produced by the English sculptor Harry Hems as the crowning feature of the Clifden Street Orange Hall, also in Belfast.[2] The collection housed in that building includes a Faber print after one of the Wyck paintings of William III, two small oval Kneller

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1. See below, pp. 759 ff.

2. Brett, op cit, p. 46.

type portraits of William and Mary, an unidentified half-length of the King in armour, a copy of the Benjamin West painting of the Battle of the Boyne and a print after it. Many of these items must have started life in the homes of local landlords.[1] Either from these sources or from contacts in institutions like Belfast Museum and Art Gallery[2] local depicters of William III have built up their own little gallery of historic images of him. Pinned up on the wall in the Belfast banner-painting firm of Bridgett's for example, there is a print of William at the Boyne, a photo of an early Williamite medal, and another of a Kneller portrait of the monarch.

Study of the visual contexts of earlier images of William III reveals that their impact on Northern Ireland Protestants has generally, though not always, been reinforced by lack of competing imagery and by their endorsement in semi-official collections of emblems generally passed on by the Protestant landowning class to their lowlier brethren in the Orange Order. Yet again we see the heroic, historic image of William being maintained and revivified by identification with later Protestant leaders in Northern Ireland. This process is also very apparent in the various rituals and ceremonies which have involved this image.

Living images

For like the wallpaintings in recent years, earlier representations of William III were not the static, passive images one finds in too many books on art history. They had a role, almost a life of their own.

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1. Some donations were made by landlords to individual Orangemen. Robert Harbinson (Bryans) records a woman showing him an engraved glass given to her father when he left the stewardship at Colamber Manor and treasured by him because it had been used after several famous Protestant battles (op cit, p. 123).

2. See below, p. 699.

From its inauguration on 1(12) July 1701 the Dublin statue (ill 11) served as a focus for Williamite displays very similar to those now used in connection with the wallpaintings. The day was kept as a public holiday. The Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Councillors, Dublin militia and Lords Justices processed to the statue which they circled three times. The city musicians played, a eulogy on King William was delivered, a volley was fired and the proceedings concluded with feasting, drinking, fireworks, bell-ringing, illuminations and bonfires.[1] Similar ceremonies were repeated throughout the eighteenth century on the anniversaries of the Battle of the Boyne (12 July) and William's birthday (4 November).

Not all supported these demonstrations of loyalty however. Very soon after its inauguration the statue was subjected to the first of a series of attacks which underlined its living role as a focus for political feelings. In 1710 two students from Trinity College (which was adjacent to the statue and tended to give its allegiance to the Stuart and Anglican Queen Anne, rather than to William) removed the baton from the King's hand and plastered his face with mud. They were caught and severely punished, but the baton was again removed in 1714 and, despite the establishment of a guard to protect his majesty, the statue continued to suffer humiliating attacks; a favourite ploy was to mount a straw dummy behind the King.[2]

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1. Sibbett, op cit, vol 1, p. 150; Simms, op cit, pp. 234-5; and J.T. Gilbert, A History of the City of Dublin, McGlashan & Gill, Dublin, 1859, vol 3, pp. 40-41.

2. Simms, op cit, p. 235; Sibbett, op cit, vol 1, p. 152 and Gilbert, op cit, vol 3, pp. 42-45. There is an English parallel to these attacks on William's statue. In 1688 Newcastle's equestrian statue to James II, erected three years previously, was torn down by the mob and thrown into the Tyne (Gunnis, op cit, p. 233).

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Williamite cult began to assume a military air when it was taken up by the Volunteer movement. It had always shown a tendency to flourish in army circles - one of the most important orange organisations which preceded the Orange Order was the Society of the Orange and the Blew, established in the Fourth Regiment of Foot in 1727[1] - but it was this new, enthusiastic and highly popular movement which brought back before the delighted public gaze all the glamour of military-style celebrations round the Dublin statue, with drums, flags, volleys of gunfire and brilliantly coloured uniforms (ill 230). Orange ribbons and cockades were universally worn and some of the companies marched as reincarnations of King William's troops at the Boyne: in 1779 the Liberty Volunteers:

> "appeared in blue uniforms, edged with orange, and set off with blue waistcoats, while oak boughs adorned their hats, reviving the Boyne dress." 2

These demonstrations were emphatically anti-sectarian and aimed at obtaining political and economic rights for Ireland. William III was being honoured not as the defeater of the Jacobites but as the monarch who had granted the bill of rights and the placards placed round his statue carried such mottos as "Relief to Ireland", "A Free Trade or Else!!", "The Glorious Revolution" and "The Volunteers of Ireland, having overturned the cadaverous simple Repeal, must now effectuate an equal Representation of the people."[3] But under the influence of the French revolution the Volunteer movement

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1. Sibbett, op cit, vol II, p. 136ff and Rogers, op cit, p. 21. On other pre-Orange Order organisations see Sibbett, op cit, vol I, p. 152ff.
2. Sibbett, op cit, vol I, p. 186.
3. Simms, op cit, p. 239.

became increasingly republican. Although the parades continued, by 1792 green not orange cockades were being worn and there was a general refusal to process round the statue on William's birthday. Loyalists who feared a rebellion in 1792 rumoured that the signal for it would be the pulling down of the statue with ropes.[1] The brief period of ecumenical celebration was over and the Williamite cult was to pass increasingly into Protestant, anti-republican and northern hands.

Following the establishment of the Orange Order in 1795 its Dublin branches revived the celebrations at William's statue. The corporation paid for the painting and dressing of the monument at these occasions, the decorations being supplied by William Mackenzie, a bookseller, who was known as 'man milliner to King William.' These celebrations reverted to imagery which perpetuated the religious and political bitterness of the seventeenth century.

> "On the 12th of July and the 4th of November the statue was coloured white and decorated with a scarlet cloak and orange sash, while a bunch of green ribbons and shamrocks was symbolically placed beneath the horse's uplifted foot. Garlands of orange lilies and streamers of orange ribbons bedecked the horse and the railings were painted blue." 2

Trampling the emblems of one's enemy is very much a seventeenth century image of imperial power. Closely akin to kicking the pope, it had previously been used in connection with William III in Kneller's portrait of him at Hampton Court which shows him as a peace-maker trampling the emblems of war, and, even more significantly, in a print by William Faithorne of Oliver Cromwell, which was altered to represent William.[3] There is a lack of evidence as

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1. Gilbert, op cit, vol 3, p. 51.
2. Sibbett, op cit, vol 1, p. 152.
3. There is an example of this print in the Sutherland Collection in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

to whether either of these works became known in Ireland, but trampling emblems has persisted as a feature of the Williamite cult, and indeed of imperialist and anti-imperialist imagery connected with the Irish conflict, until the present day.

Given the symbolic use made of William III's statue by the Dublin Orangemen it is not surprising that the figure was the target of sectarian attack during the United Irish rebellion in 1798. The sword was wrested from the King and the irrepressible Watty Cox, later the author of cartoons violently attacking the government's behaviour at this time, attempted to file off the King's head.[1]

Following the Act of Union in 1800 the demonstrations seem to have lost their appeal for a while, although in 1805 the tarring of the statue elicited a re-enactment of the traditional rites in all their detail.[2] This was a period however of growing Protestant unease about the possibility of Catholic emancipation, and when in 1822 an attempt was made to perpetuate the temporary ban on Orange celebrations at William's statue imposed during George IV's visit to Dublin 1821, the outraged Protestants of the city demonstrated the intensity of their fear of Catholic domination by the violence of their reaction, which included flinging bottles at the pro-emancipation Duke of Wellington in a riot in a Dublin theatre. A leading cartoonist in the city caught the mood of the moment when he represented the ghost of William's statue as a protagonist in the

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1. Simms, op cit, p. 242 and Gilbert, op cit, vol 3, pp. 51-2.

2. Sibbett, op cit, vol 2, p. 107; Gilbert, op cit, pp. 52-3; and Causidicus and His Compeers Exposed or the True Question not whether the usual celebrations about the Statue of King William ought to be continued but whether Protestant Liberality is to be the effect or Catholic Dictation, J. Jones, Dublin, 1822, p. 6.

Orangemen's opposition to concessions to the Catholics (ill 17). Turning for leadership to such an insubstantial figure was, as in 1793, a measure of Protestant panic; according to one of their pamphleteers the Cathllics:

> "will not rest with driving Protestants from the Statute of KING WILLIAM and abolishing all recollection of his GLORIOUS MEMORY; but unqualified Emancipation will be soon after not asked but wrested from us." 1

This pamphlet was written as propaganda and should be read as such, bearing in mind that whipping up fear of an under-privileged section of the population is a classic propaganda tactic in justifying opposition to their claims for improved rights, making it appear that such opposition is nothing more than valid self-protection. It is however a tactic which can only be employed in a situation where some real fear exists and the emphasis of this pamphlet upon past rather than present leaders is a measure of the underlying hopelessness felt by its compiler. Something of the same bitter fears can be found in Enniskillen in 1829 where, according to a correspondent of the pro-Catholic Freeman's Journal, the local Orangemen commemorated the Twelfth by compelling the Catholics to take off their hats before a statue of King William, breaking the windows of Catholic houses, and so on.[2]

For the 1820s and 1830s were difficult years for both the Orange Order and the Protestant population of Ireland in general. Following the introduction of the Unlawful Oaths Act in 1823, the Order was dissolved and replaced by the Orange Institution. Although it was reconstituted in 1828 its strength as a secret organisation had been greatly undermined by publication of its investigation by a Select

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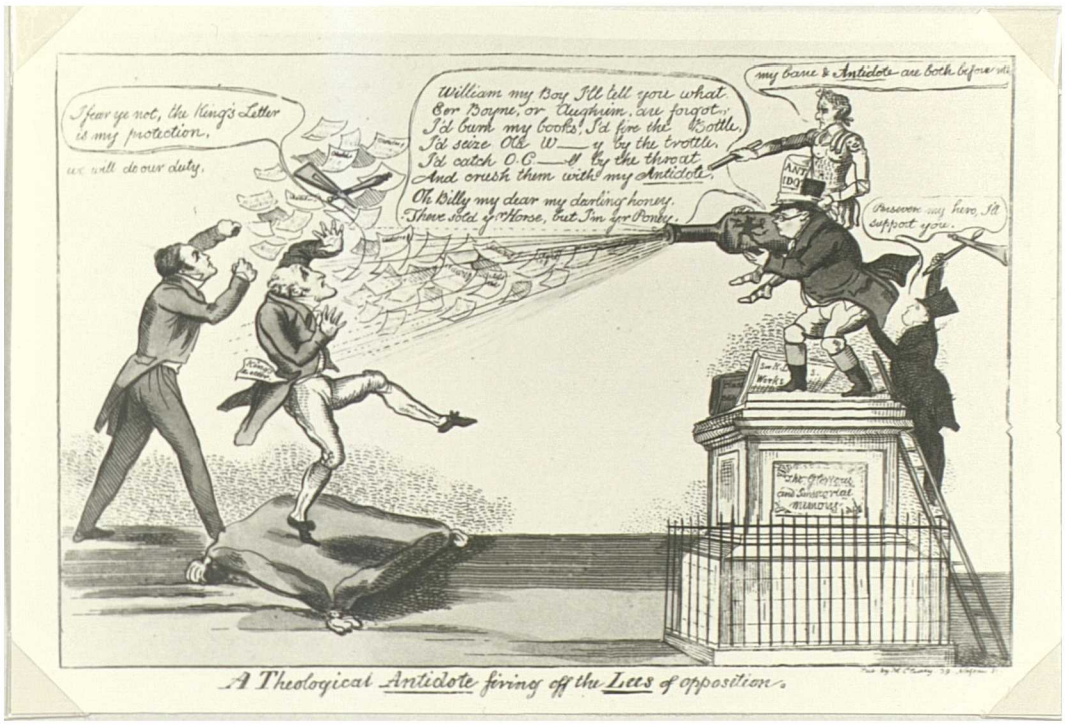
1. Causidicus, p. 15.

2. Georges-Denis Zimmermann, Songs of Irish Rebellion, Allen Figgis, Dublin, 1967, p. 195.



A Theological Antidote firing off the Lees of opposition.

17. J. Gleadah(?)/cartoon/1823/coloured engraving/$7^{3}/4$ x $12^{1}/4$ ins (19.8 x 31.1 cms)/issued by the Dublin publisher McCleary/British Museum, Department of Prints & Drawings/Photo: BM.

Committee of the House of Lords in 1825. O'Connell's mass agitation finally secured Catholic emancipation in 1829 and in 1832 parliamentary reform marked another step in the shift from fractional interests and mobs to parliamentary parties and organised crowds. Orange processions were banned again in the same year and although they still went on, the lodges were finally dissolved in 1836, following yet another parliamentary investigation. In April of the same year the Dublin statue was blown up. The damage was not in fact very great, and the figure was repaired by July, an event commemorated by the enterprising Isaac Parkes, who issued a medal representing it and formed from part of the fragments detached in the blast. However a satirical Catholic song on the event ended with the warning lines:

> "But Billy, my boy, on the Twelfth of July
> I hope you will not try to dress as before
> For if that you do, perhaps you may rue
> And a visit ensue from some crony once more."[1]

And indeed, although the Orange Order continued to meet clandestinely under other names, apart from a brief spell between 1845 and 1850 it was not to process openly and with impunity again until the late 1860s.

The contemporary, heroic and largely Northern image of William III carried by the Order when processions were resumed again, had, like the Dublin statue, a living history. This can best be conveyed by looking at Colonel Blacker's account of the Orangemen's demonstration at Lurgan on 12th July 1797:

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1. Zimmermann, op cit, p. 221.

> "Some time before this my old grand-uncle, Colonel Carey, had made me a present of an original painting of King William III by Nellor and also of the horse furniture used by that prince at the Battle of the Boyne. My father had a magnificent black horse, a racing hunter, one of the most beautiful examples of horse flesh I have seen, and on him the furniture was arranged. He was attended by twelve of the finest-looking men in the County, all six feet high, and uniformly dressed. Two of them led the horse while the others kept off the traffic, which was no easy matter, when there was a multitude, particularly of old people, both men and women, who strove to kiss or touch the relics as they passed along. Several hundred well-mounted horsemen followed ... Then came the districts in order with all manner of music." 1

What we see in this account is a ritual icon in the making, and some of the elements involved in it. There are in the first place the existing Williamite images - one of those many Kneller portraits and the King's saddle furniture, an example of the numerous personal relics strewn behind him by the monarch during his Irish campaign.[2] And then there are the contemporary elements, the horse, the processors, Colonel Blacker himself, and the spectators. How do they all fit together? The key really is the horse.

This procession was taking place in the area on the borders of counties Armagh and Tyrone where the Orange Order had come into being some two years previously. The society is now believed to have been largely Episcopalian in character but with a significant Presbyterian element. Its membership included both the Protestant small farmers/ weavers and a sprinkling of local landlords. Its growth seems to have been precipitated by Protestant anxiety on two counts. The first was the Catholic assertion of the right to bear arms as Volunteers, never

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1. Blacker MS autobiography, Armagh County Museum, quoted in W.H. Wolsey, Orangeism in Portadown District, Portadown Times, 1935, p. 5.

2. Simms, op cit, p. 238; "Williamite souvenirs in Museum display", The Irish Times, Dublin, 19 July 1977, p. 7; and Catriona MacLeod, "Some Hitherto Unrecorded Momentoes of William III (1650-1702) Prince of Orange and King of England, from Lismullen, Navan, Co Meath", Studies, Dublin, vol 65, no 258, Summer 1976, pp. 128-143.

previously allowed, the second the rapid economic progress of their Catholic neighbours as the result of the expansion of the linen trade.[1] However the events which led to the formation of the society seem to have been a series of local faction fights, and the locations of these fights were generally at fairs, markets, cock-fights and horse-races at which men from the area congregated. It is evident from contemporary accounts that the rivalry involved in the racing or selling of a horse could easily lead to, or be used as a substitute for, more violent conflict between local factions.[2] The horse carrying King William's saddlery was therefore an eminently suitable emblem of status for a sectarian grouping which, to a certain extent, had its roots in this form of conflict.

Moreover the horse may also have had a semi-magical aura for participants in and viewers of the Lurgan procession. Horses appear to have been honoured in Ireland from very early times. E. Estyn Evans remarks that:

> "Such fragments of harness as have been recovered from early Celtic sites in Ireland suggest that the horse was held in high regard and was perhaps reserved for pageants, combats and ceremonies," 3

and stresses the continuing association of horse-races with early sites - such as the Giant's Ring near Belfast - and the fairs so often located on or near them.

But it was only landlords who, in late eighteenth century Armagh and Tyrone, owned horses:

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1. A.T.Q. Stewart, The Narrow Ground, Faber, 1977, p. 128 ff and Peter Gibbon, The Origins of Ulster Unionism, Manchester University Press, 1975, pp. 36-39.
2. J. Byrne, 'An impartial account of the late disturbances in the County of Armagh', 1797, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T 1722, pp. 8-10.
3. E. Estyn Evans, Irish Folk Ways, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, pp. 166-7.

> "Not even the most accomplished proletarian rider actually owned a horse. Like the battle weapons of later Orangemen, these were brazenly appropriated by riders and supporters on their way to the contest." 1

Therefore William Blacker, by heading the Lurgan procession with his father's black hunter carrying William III's saddlery, helped to fuse in the Orangemen's minds the image of the historic monarch with that of the contemporary landlord leader, and of the near-magical, combat-signifying horse.

The Orange procession at Lurgan has been analysed in some detail because it is one of the clearest (and earliest) examples of the ritual practices in which the various elements of the heroic image of William III were fused. It is not however an isolated instance. The Sham Fight at Scarva in Co Armagh, which dates back to at least 1835 and still forms a highpoint of the Orange Order's summer celebrations, (ill 18)[2] is a remarkably similar example of this process of fusion.

The Sham Fight is a mock-battle between the forces of King William and King James in which the latter is always beaten. Layers of meaning appear to be embedded in it. The earliest is probably that of simple commemoration of a historical event, for fights re-enacting the Battle of the Boyne are known to have been held all over Ireland from at least the end of the seventeenth century.[3] From the end of the eighteenth century onwards these fights seem to have been appropriated to contemporary military affairs, both official

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1. Gibbon, op cit, p. 37.
2. For a description see below, pp. 360-361
3. The earliest recorded sham fight is at Bandon, Co Cork, in 1691. See R.M. Sibbett, op cit, vol 1, p. 154. Were Irish sham fights perhaps imported popular version of the mock-battles so frequently staged for Elizabeth I? See David M. Bergeron, English Civil Pageantry, 1558-1642, Edward Arnold, 1971, p. 25 and p. 46.

18. Sham Fight between William III and James II/13 July 1975/first performed ca 1835/Scarva Co Down/ Photo: B. Loftus.

and unofficial. During the volunteer period some sham fights appear to have been used by the newly formed regiments as military manoeuvres.[1] And during the early nineteenth century they seem to have had a close connection with local faction fights, particularly those of a sectarian nature. The Scarva fight is first recorded as taking place in 1835,[2] but may well have originated at an earlier date, for there is a tradition that it commemorates such an affray at Lisnagade in 1783, between the Protestant Peep of Day Boys, forerunners of the Orange institution, and the Roman Catholic Hearts of Steel.[3] Certainly in its earliest years it took place across the Newry canal, which was used to represent the Boyne water but which also marked the county boundary between Armagh and Down. Quite possibly the same boundary marked out the territories of rival faction-fighters. And the shooting of King James's green flag which forms part of the present ceremony is said to date back to an 1872 faction fight at Scarva when Catholics unwisely attempted to hold a Lady-Day demonstration there and had their green flag torn to shreds.[4] Historic fights and contemporary events were being fused in the same way as at the Lurgan march.

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1. Padraig Ó Snodaigh, "Notes on the Volunteers, Militia, Yeomanry and Orangemen of County Monaghan", Clogher Record, Silver Jubilee issue, 1977, p. 154.

2. T.G.F. Paterson, "The Sham Fight", in Harvest Home, Armagh County Museum/Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, 1975, pp. 165-7.

3. Billy Kennedy, "Scarva's Sham Fight", News Letter, Belfast, 1976, p. 4.

4. Rev M.W. Dewar, The Scarva Story, Portadown News, 1956. This linking of sham and real fights was also apparent in the Rathfriland and Castlewellan area in 1849. On 10 or 11 July of that year a placard was put up in Castlewellan, advertising a sham fight to take place on the race-course at Rathfriland on 13 July. Clearly linked to it was the challenge to the local Orangemen to route their Twelfth of July parade over Dolly's Brae, issued by the Catholic Defenders in the area on 10 July. In this the Defenders firmly asserted "you will not find us King James or his men." (Papers relating to an investigation into the Occurence at Dolly's Brae, 12 July 1849, Parliamentary Papers, 1850 (1143), p. 21 and p. 44.)

As at Lurgan too, the manner of enactment of the Scarva sham fight seems to indicate the involvement of other traditions which for earlier participants would have provided a symbolic chain between the individual actors representing the local community, the historic fight at the Boyne, and the continual natural conflict between the forces of life and death. The first link in this symbolic chain is indicated by the role played by the horses used in the fight. For although the men who play William and James repeat their roles year after year the horses are always different.

> "We usually gather about an hour before the Fight in the courtyard at the back of Scarvagh House. The horses, which we have never ridden before, are saddled up, and about a dozen or so young men handpicked to play the part of the troops..." 1

I do not think it is fanciful to see in this a relic of those earlier days in which young men "borrowed" their superiors' horses for their sports and contests, thereby making themselves, as at Scarva, kings for the day.

The second link is indicated by the close resemblance of the Scarva fight to the mumming plays known in Northern Ireland. As Michael Beames has stressed in his analysis of Whiteboys symbolism, these mumming plays:

> "were associated with the rites of passage that accompanied communal life as well as with the critical junctures in the lifespan of individuals such as weddings and wakes. To some extent they were about luck-bringing. Beyond that they provided metaphors for the life-cycle: birth, death and rebirth; the survival and continuity of the community." 2

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1. Participant interviewed for the News Letter, Belfast, 13 July 1977. See also "This loser always gets a crowd", Belfast Telegraph, 14 July 1977, p. 4.

2. This quotation is taken from a draft of Dr Beames' forthcoming book on peasant movements and their control in pre-Famine Ireland. I am grateful to him for letting me see sections of his manuscript and for allowing me to make this quotation from it.

It seems possible therefore that the Scarva sham fight, by fusing a number of symbolic traditions like the Lurgan Orange procession of 1797, helped to appropriate the historic, heroic figure of William III to the role of an immediate local hero, repeatedly fighting to protect his community from both the specific threats of Catholicism and Irish nationalism, and the more general evils of natural death and disaster.

Wearing King William's clothes has not been confined to the Scarva fight. At frequent intervals politicians and lesser mortals have worn his guise. Given the flair for propaganda of the politicians leading Ulster's fight against Home Rule at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and in particular their skilful use of local symbolism, it is not surprising to find them producing a postcard in which Lord Carson is represented as William III.[1] And given the fashion for dressing up during that same period it is not unexpected to find the programme of a Grand Bazaar and Sale of Work at the Ulster Hall in 1888[2] promising that among those represented in costumes would be the Prince of Orange. Nor is it really surprising, given their extravagant nature, that the Twelfth of July Orange processions at Holywood and Ballynahinch have been, and still are, regularly

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1. In the Ulster Museum.

2. In the Ulster Folk Museum.

graced by local men dressed up as William and riding on a white horse.[1]

Less easy to understand is how, as late as the 1949 Stormont elections, Colonel Hall-Thompson, the Unionist Minister for Education, thought it worth his while to ride round his constituency on a white horse;[2] how in the same year the last appeal of the Unionist prime minister Lord Brookeborough to the electorate could be:

> "I ask you to cross the Boyne ... with me as your leader and to fight for the same cause as King William fought for in days gone by," 3

and how the more recent Unionist leader, William Craig, could appear at a rally at the Belfast City Hall accompanied by a placard constructed from a William III tea-towel.[4] One cannot after all imagine equivalent figures in mainland Britain, or indeed the Irish Republic, appropriating a historical figure to themselves in this fashion. This returns us once again to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, namely:

How did images of William III come to be so important to Northern Ireland Protestants?

and

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1. Photos of the Holywood King William can be found in the News Letter, Belfast, 13 July 1975, p. 1 and 14 July 1975, p. 4. The hoped-for effect has not always been achieved by these horsemen. In a Co Antrim town in the 1940s the horse selected for King William belonged to a local bakery and insisted on making the halts usual on its Saturday delivery run. (See W.D. Morrow, "The doors King Billy's horse wouldn't pass", Belfast Telegraph, 10 July 1976, p. 6.)
2. Particularly in view of the fact that Hall-Thompson was one of the few Unionist politicians who did not belong to the Orange Order. (See E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, Nationalism and Socialism in twentieth century Ireland, Liverpool University Press, 1977, p. 118 note 2). Hall-Thompson's action is recorded in Michael Farrell, Northern Ireland: The Orange State, Pluto Press, 1976, p. 187.
3. Farrell, loc cit.
4. Photograph in Civil Rights, Belfast, 15 April 1972, p. 3.

Why have they continued to be so important to them in recent years, and in particular to groupings amongst them for whom other symbolic figures would appear far more appropriate?

Answers to the first question are by now apparent. The image of William III became significant to Northern Ireland Protestants not simply because it illustrates a historical event which they have regarded as a seal on their political status, or as a heroic high-point of their past, although that part of its significance is important. Its relevance for that community has also depended on its history as an image, made available and culturally important in the mainstream of European fine art, disseminated in Ireland by the means of developments in the technology of reproduction, endorsed with the status of a semi-official art tradition in an area of Ireland where a more general, publicly-acknowledged art history was slow to develop, and appropriated by successive generations of Ulster Protestants to their local symbolic needs, through a series of living rituals, of which the urban wall-painting like the Rockland Street mural (ill 6) must be regarded as the latest example.

However the second question still remains to be answered. I propose to deal with it by two linked approaches, an analysis of the meaning of the element in that image which is most fiercely adhered to by Northern Ireland Protestants today, namely the monarch's white horse, and an examination of the political situation of those apparently anomalous users of the William III image already mentioned.

The legitimate hero

One could attribute the continuing importance of the image of William III for Northern Ireland Protestants in recent years to the

inertia of tradition, or to the persistence in the province of real, continuing links between modernised, urban politics and the country landlord symbolism so significantly appropriated to the monarch's figure in previous generations. Certainly the continuing dominance of William III on Orange banners is attributed by the present head of the Belfast firm of Bridgett's to the traditionalism of Orange lodges, who often ask him simply to repeat the subject-matter of the previous banners. And certainly even such urban and urbane political leaders of Ulster Unionism in recent years as Brian Faulkner have retained very close links with the Irish countryman's obsession with the semi-mythical, status-carrying, sport-associated horse. Faulkner was a shirt-collar manufacturer like his father before him. But for both father and son horses had an enormous importance.

> "James Faulkner, country born, grew up with a great love for horses. In his early days he was too poor to have a mount of his own, but as a young boy in Belfast he was a willing part-time groom on the local polo grounds, earning his rides by brushing down the horses of the Ulster gentry. Early in his marriage one of his first luxuries was the purchase of a horse. Since then the Faulkner family have always owned a small stable." 1

His son indeed was an ardent horseman, with a great fondness for hunting; his early death was in a hunting accident. During his lifetime politics often took second place to horses. His chief contacts with Southern politicians was in the President's box at the Dublin horse show and on one occasion his nationalist opponents at Stormont agreed not to put any parliamentary questions to him on the day he was due, as Master of the Iveagh Hunt, to parade the hounds at the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society's annual

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1. David Bleakley, Faulkner, Mowbrays, Oxford, 1974, pp. 15-16.

show in Belfast.[1]

However it has become apparent from the previous historical analysis of William III imagery that traditions do not simply endure because of inertia, or the persistence of some of the social realities from which they have derived their meaning. In order to survive they require constant revitalisation by appropriation to contemporary realities. To discover how William's image has been reinforced in this way in recent years it is necessary to return once again to its actual nature as an image.

For an outside observer, one of the most striking aspects of recent representations of William III in Northern Ireland is their fervent insistence on the whiteness of William's horse. As recently as 1950, Loyalist Belfast councillors vetoed the purchase for the then Belfast Museum and Art Gallery (now Ulster Museum) of a painting of William by Jan Wyck, on the sole grounds that the horse was brown.[2] And all the popular images of William made in Ulster in recent years, whether wallpaintings, banners, drums, tea-towels, pottery, stamps or posters, show his horse as white. Yet there is no certain historical tradition about the colour of his mount at the Boyne - his leading biographer points out that he took six war-horses with him to Ireland, and rode several on the day of the battle, when he spent sixteen hours in the saddle.[3] Indeed early representations of the conflict often show William riding a bay.

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1. Brian Faulkner, Memoirs of a Statesman (ed. John Houston), Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978, p. 21 and p. 33.

2. There is a long and hilariously funny account of the meeting in Belfast's Catholic newspaper The Irish News, 2 March 1950.

3. Letter from Dr Nesca Robb, quoted in "Unsolved mystery of King William's horse", News Letter, Belfast, 27 December 1962, p.4.

Some have sought to link this white horse obsession with memories of the many folk traditions relating to horses in Ireland and elsewhere. John Hewitt for example believes that planters coming to Northern Ireland from England may have brought with them recollections of the white horses carved on chalk hillsides like the Uffington White Horse in Berkshire, which is thought to date from about 100BC. Although there appears to be no proof for or against this theory, there is strong evidence that the Irish did venerate horses, particularly white horses. Indeed a legend strongly rooted in Irish folklore and included in the bogus Prophecies of Columcille was that Ulster would finally be conquered by a foreign knight on a white horse.[1] There is also a tradition, illustrated by an illumination in a thirteenth century manuscript,[2] of a white mare forming part of the ceremony of conferring kingship in Tyrconnel. And, in a more recent memory, a white mare would preside at certain Irish fairs and featured in Halloween ceremonies in County Cork.[3]

There seems no way of linking these white horse traditions with Williamite imagery however. It is more instructive to look at

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1. Morris Fraser, Children in Conflict, Penguin, 1974, p. 195 note 15. Fraser records that "in the reign of Henry II, one John de Courcy, identified with this hero to the extent of believing he was the man named. Having built a castle at Carrickfergus, (still a landmark), he set out on a white horse to prove his claim, failing disastrously, and went on the Crusades instead."

2. Reproduced in de Breffny, op cit, p. 77.

3. Evans, op cit, p. 257 and pp. 276-7, and William Hackett, "Folklore No 1 : Porcine Legends", Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, vol 2, part 2, 1853, pp. 308-9. On the persistent belief of British children in the luckiness of white horses, see Iona and Peter Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, Paladin, St Alban's, 1977, pp. 226-8. Dr Beames has pointed out to me that white horse symbolism seems to spread across a number of folk cultures and that Zapata, the Mexican peasant leader, for instance, was generally pictured on a white horse.

the history of that imagery to see when the insistence on the white horse began. This is difficult to establish but it appears that the eighteenth century painters of the Dublin statue habitually coloured the horse white. Various reasons for this have been put forward. Dr Nesca Robb thinks it is probable William rode a white horse as the recognised biblical symbol of victory at his entry into Dublin on 6 July 1690.[1] There may also have been a certain aversion to representing William on a brown mount following his death in 1701, which was caused by a fall from a sorrel or chestnut horse. More significantly, white horse emblems were much used in Ireland as an expression of loyalty to the House of Hanover in its role as the protector of the Protestant accession.[2] These emblems included china figures which were displayed in the fanlights of eighteenth century houses[3] and the white horse designs which were frequently used on the flags of the largely Protestant Yeomanry, formed in the 1790s.[4] This would tie in with the fusion of loyalty to William and George III already noted in Orange banners and engraved glasses.

The white horse tradition was probably crystallized by Benjamin West's painting. (West, who was court painter to George III, may himself have chosen a white steed as a compliment to his

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1. See Apocalypse, chapter 6, verses 1-2 and chapter 19, verses 11-17. Certainly the imagery of Apocalypse was much in vogue at this time. See below, p.

2. A heraldic device on the arms of Hanover, the white horse was added to the British royal coat-of-arms with the succession of George I in 1714.

3. Simms, op cit, p. 237. A house in the Protestant Woodvale district of Belfast still displays two white china figures of horses in the window over the door.

4. G.A. Hayes-McCoy, op cit, pp. 103-108. Some Northern Yeomanry flags are preserved in the Ulster Museum.

employer, and as a result of that employment he would almost certainly have known Kneller's painting of William on a white horse, which is and was then at Hampton Court). William's horse clearly became white in a symbolic attempt to assimilate Irish Protestants to the legitimacy of the Hanoverian monarchy, at a time when their own legitimacy as planters and rulers of Ireland was still very much in question.

The continuing emphasis on the image of William III by Northern Ireland Protestants in recent years appears to be rooted in a similar need for legitimisation, caused by further challenges to their political status. This emerges both from explanations of the whiteness of William's horse provided by their own spokesmen, and from the political contexts in which images of William have continued to be used.

In about 1975 the Reverend Martyn Smyth, Imperial Grand Master of the Orange Order, and a leading member of the Unionist party, provided a lengthy commentary on what he believed to be the significance of the image of William III for Ulster Protestants today. I will quote it at length because it reveals very clearly why the image of William still retains its power.

> "The Conqueror. In Revelation 6:2 and 19:11 we read of another white horse and a rider going 'forth conquering and to conquer'. This is the Christ, the Word of God. Just as William served under God on that fateful July day and won a tremendous victory so should we today.
>
> The Conquered's Conquest. No matter what the enemy may be like 'we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us' (Romans 8:37). It is our wonderful privilege to live the victory life in Christ. Some people think they could not keep the Christian life, but herein lies the fallacy. We do not so much keep as we are kept by the power of God. We are not only saved as a past event, but we are being saved as a present experience and we shall be saved in God's eternity.

> This demands a constant tryst with Christ. Just as William had his chaplains regularly preach to the army and lead them in prayer so must we diligently search the Scriptures. We must constantly read our battle instructions and regularly in prayer get our daily orders. It is only as we abide in him that the life of victory will be evident in us.
>
> This banner speaks to us of our priceless heritage. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. May we watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. He is able to save and keep. It is our responsibility to let him do so by a daily surrender to him." 1

At one level this is a deeply sincere spiritual meditation. But at another level it shows how the image of William III is still being revitalised for Northern Ireland Protestants by appropriation to contemporary symbolic needs. As in the past the historic, heroic king is being made into a symbolic link between the real-life situation of contemporary Protestants in Ulster, and the eternal struggle between life and death. This was made particularly clear by the caption added to the standard heroic image of William when it was reproduced on the back cover of Sydenham Defence Association, a newsheet issued by the Protestant paramilitary Ulster Defence Association, on 8 July 1972. It said:

> "Remember Our Glorious Past. For the Country which has no Past - has no Future."

This caption is clearly a variation on the traditional salutation of William as of "Glorious, Pious and Immortal Memory", known from the Orange toasts of the early eighteenth century to the recent pages of the Reverend Ian Paisley's Protestant Telegraph.[2] It also reveals the link between the continuing massive uncertainty

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1. W. Martyn Smyth, The Message of the Banners, Evangelical Protestant Society, Belfast, n.d., ca 1975, p. 16.

2. See for example the Twelfth of July issue in 1975. This style of toast appears on Williamite glasses believed to date from the first quarter of the eighteenth century and was clearly prevalent by 1713 when the Bishop of Cork specifically condemned "the action of drinking to a mere man in that very manner which ought never to be applied but to the person of Christ." See Warren, op cit, p. 111ff and above, pp. 73-4.

of Northern Ireland Protestants about both their past and future, and their persistent emphasis on the image of William III as a symbol of eternal legitimacy.

This link is additionally confirmed if we consider the political situations in which devotion to the image of William III has been most notably reiterated. When Colonel Hall-Thompson and Lord Brookeborough rallied William to their cause in 1949 they were speaking soon after De Valera's proclamation of Ireland's status as a republic, which implicitly denied the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state, and when William Craig headed his demonstration accompanied by a placard of William III in 1972, Britain had just replaced the Protestant government with its own direct rule. In these situations it is not so surprising that Northern Ireland Protestants had recourse to a William III figure which had been so repeatedly appropriated as a symbol of the eternal legitimacy of their cause.

Indeed it should by now be clear that the image of the heroic, historic figure of William III on his white horse has continued to be important for Protestant Ulstermen during the past thirteen years because it has provided them with a well-established and very adequate form of compensatory myth which has helped them to handle the challenges thrown up by the present troubles. Threatened with absorption by republicanism and Romanism they have turned to the clear distinction and setting apart implied in the white horse; under military attack and limited in retaliation by their political need to remain within the law they can turn to the figure of the unrestrained conqueror; abandoned by their leadership, they have been able, as in the past, to reinvent a relationship with it

in the figure of William on his lordly steed; their legitimacy questioned in every area of their operations they can turn to the very personification of the Constitution they uphold, seated on a mount which is always correctly painted white; and uncertain about their origins, their present role and their future, they can turn to a hero figure who established them in their land, and foreshadows the rider on the white horse who will lead them into the kingdom which is to come. The Northern Ireland Protestants' images of William III have their own functions, history and interpretations which are sufficient to reveal them as factors within the historic process rather than as mere illustrations of it or art objects separate from it.

19. H-block protest mural/1981/Rockmore St, Belfast/
Photo: B. Loftus.

CHAPTER 3 : MOTHER IRELAND

Women and suffering

In the summer of 1981 a whole series of wallpaintings began to appear in the republican areas of Belfast and Derry. Of these the one which attracted the greatest attention was undoubtedly the mural in Rockmore Street (ill 19), in which the H-block hunger-striker lies clutching his rosary beads, while the Virgin Mary appears to him in a vision.

Clearly this is a very different kind of political symbol from the William III wallpainting discussed in the previous chapter. It deals with the present situation in Northern Ireland, not a past event; it includes a female figure as well as a male; it has an overt religious content; and its emphasis is on noble suffering rather than heroic conquest.

This image cannot be regarded as a definitive emblem of present republican ideals in Northern Ireland. Several local residents who share the youth and strong republican beliefs of its designer have questioned his inclusion in it of the Virgin figure. They have felt it to be over-religious and inappropriate, given the supposed lack of support for the hunger-strikers by the Catholic clergy, although likely to appeal to older members of the local community. In general the murals painted by republicans during this summer and at various other times in the past thirteen years have employed a very broad range of symbolism, including figures of militant women,[1] freedom-fighter images,[2] the heroes and symbols of the 1916 Rising,[3] IRA

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1. For example the mural painting on the Falls Road opposite Beechmount for International Women's Day in 1982 by Sinn Fein Youth.
2. These were featured in a large number of the Belfast H-block murals in the summer of 1981, notably in the "Captain Rock" painting in Rockdale Street.
3. For example the James Connolly mural painted in the Ardoyne in the early years of the present troubles, and the Connolly and Pearse murals painted in the Beechmount area in spring 1982.

men in paramilitary uniform (ill 38) and the guns they have used.[1] And in the wider context of political imagery used by the Northern Ireland Catholics during the present troubles, male, secular, heroic, historic personifications have appeared alongside female, religious, suffering, contemporary figures.

Indeed there is even a curious ambivalence towards that quintessentially Protestant hero, William III, amongst some sections of the Catholic community in Ulster. King William wallpaintings have certainly suffered attacks from Catholics who tend to regard them as symbols of territorial dominance.[2] Bobby Jackson's Derry paintings were scrawled with IRA slogans after the demolition of the surrounding houses, (ill 9) and the murals in Silvergrove Street and Dromara Street, both in South Belfast, had pots of paint flung at them after increasing numbers of Catholics had moved into the area.[3]

Comments and cartoons in republic newsheets have also been antagonistic towards King Billy images. A letter to the pro-Republican Andersonstown News in 1974 said of a British soldier with King Billy tattooed on his arm:

> "How can any Catholic of Andersonstown expect non-sectarian policies from thelike of this soldier and how can the hierarchy of the British Army allow this soldier to portray King Billy in this way?"

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1. For example the M60 rifle painted underneath the flyover running down into the Bogside in Derry.
2. A Catholic community activist recently told me that he felt areas in which William could be seen on the walls were not safe for him. (Conversation 10 Sept 1981).
3. The Silvergrove Street mural was never very well maintained. First painted in 1938, it was not renewed again until 1960 ("King William Murals dying out but Orange Arches increasing in Belfast", News Letter, Belfast, 9 July 1963, p. 7). Not all defacement of Protestant murals has been by Catholics. It is claimed that the loyalist mural in Howard Street South (ill 7) was attacked by British soldiers, and that their action was subsequently admitted by the Army who supplied the paint for its replacement (News Letter, Belfast 11 June 1977, p. 1).

And the Provisionals' Republican News in June of the same year carried a cartoon of a King Billy wallpainting where the King bears a gun on his arm and the slogan is "Rem 1974".[1]

Yet on the banners of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Catholic equivalent of the Orange Order, nationalist heroes like Patrick Sarsfield, who led the Irish Jacobite forces against William, are represented in the same heroic pose as the King. Indeed, by a kind of double irony both are occasionally shown in the action-packed style of those late nineteenth century English paintings which depict cavalry commanders charging into battle in every corner of the Empire (ills 20 & 21). This may be because the Orange and Hibernian banners are often painted by the same men. It should also be noted that the same Glasgow firms who at the turn of the century provided Ulster loyalists with cheap songbooks bearing the heroic image of William, also provided their republican counterparts with publications of their songs, illustrated with the figure of Sarsfield - and both men were shown in that jingoistic, imperialist pose. Neither loyalist nor republican could entirely escape the central imperial images disseminated by big businesses at this period.

Nevertheless, in the wallpaintings, internee products and newsheet cartoons produced within Northern Ireland's Catholic community during the present troubles, feminine personifications representative of Ireland, often fused with the religious figure

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1. Andersonstown News, Belfast, 24 August 1974, p. 13, and Republican News, Belfast, 22 June 1974, p. 3.

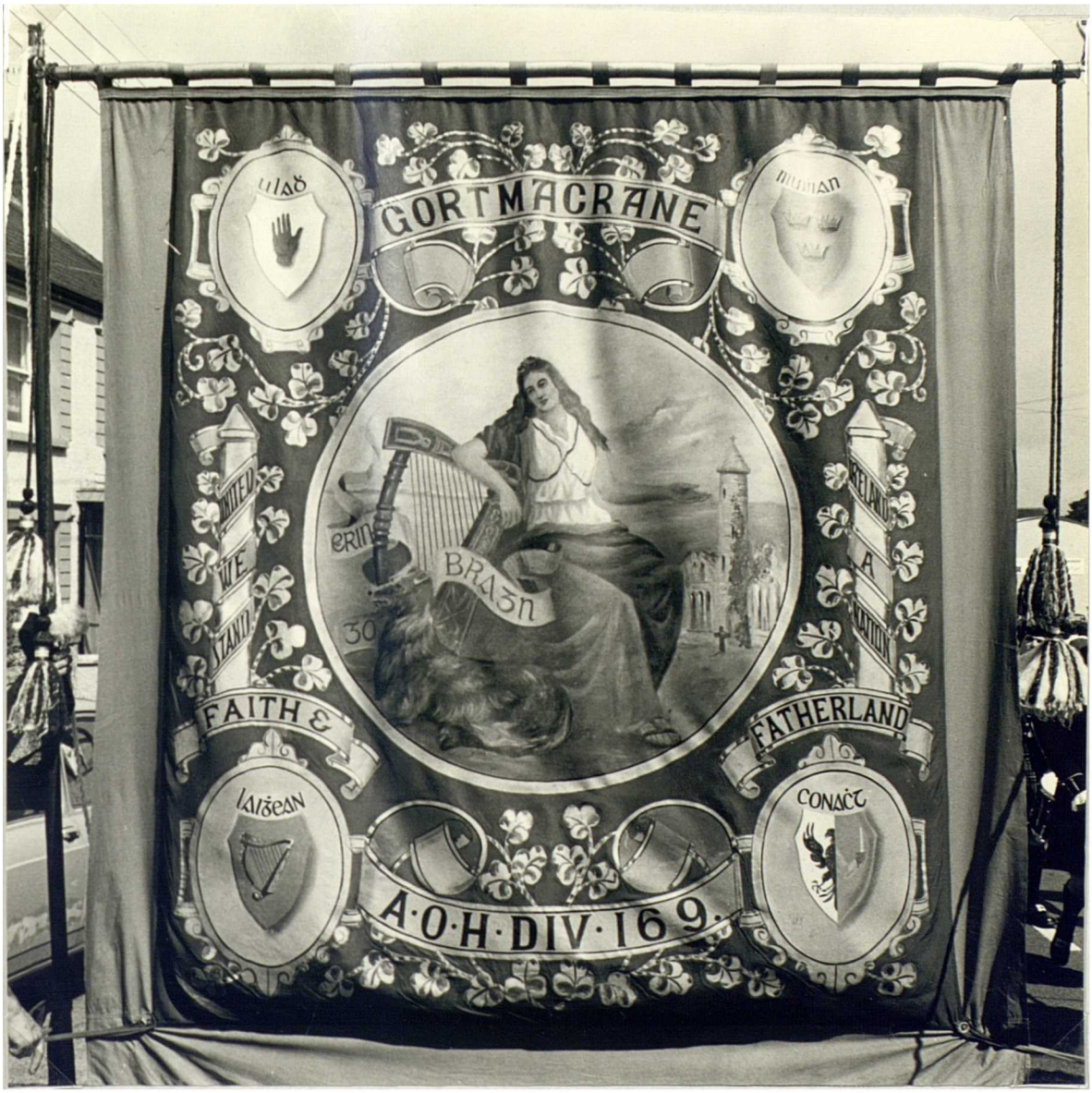
20. Ancient Order of Hibernians/Patrick Sarsfield banner/ 15 August 1975/oil paints on silk/approximately 96 x 72 ins (244 x 183 cms/Maghera, Co Londonderry/Photo: B. Loftus.

21. Orange Order/William III banner/1975/oil paints on silk /approximately 96 x 72 ins (244 x 183 cms)/Photo: Conrad Atkinson.

of the Virgin Mary, and frequently depicted as suffering, have been dominant. Typical examples are one of the many Maid of Erin banners carried by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (ill 22); an internee handkerchief painted in 1971, adorned with a shawled spinner-woman personifying Ireland (ill 23); the cartoon in the pro-Republican Andersonstown News in 1972 which showed Hibernia as a prostrate, weeping Celtic maiden, burdened with chains, as much at the mercy of Jack Lynch in the Republic as of the British (ill 24); the drawing reproduced in the Provisional Sinn Fein's Republican News in 1974 which depicted the six counties of Northern Ireland as a woman leaning sorrowfully on her harp (ill 25); and the glass painting made in Long Kesh which represents a sub-Mucha Celtic goddess incongruously titled Mother (ill 165).

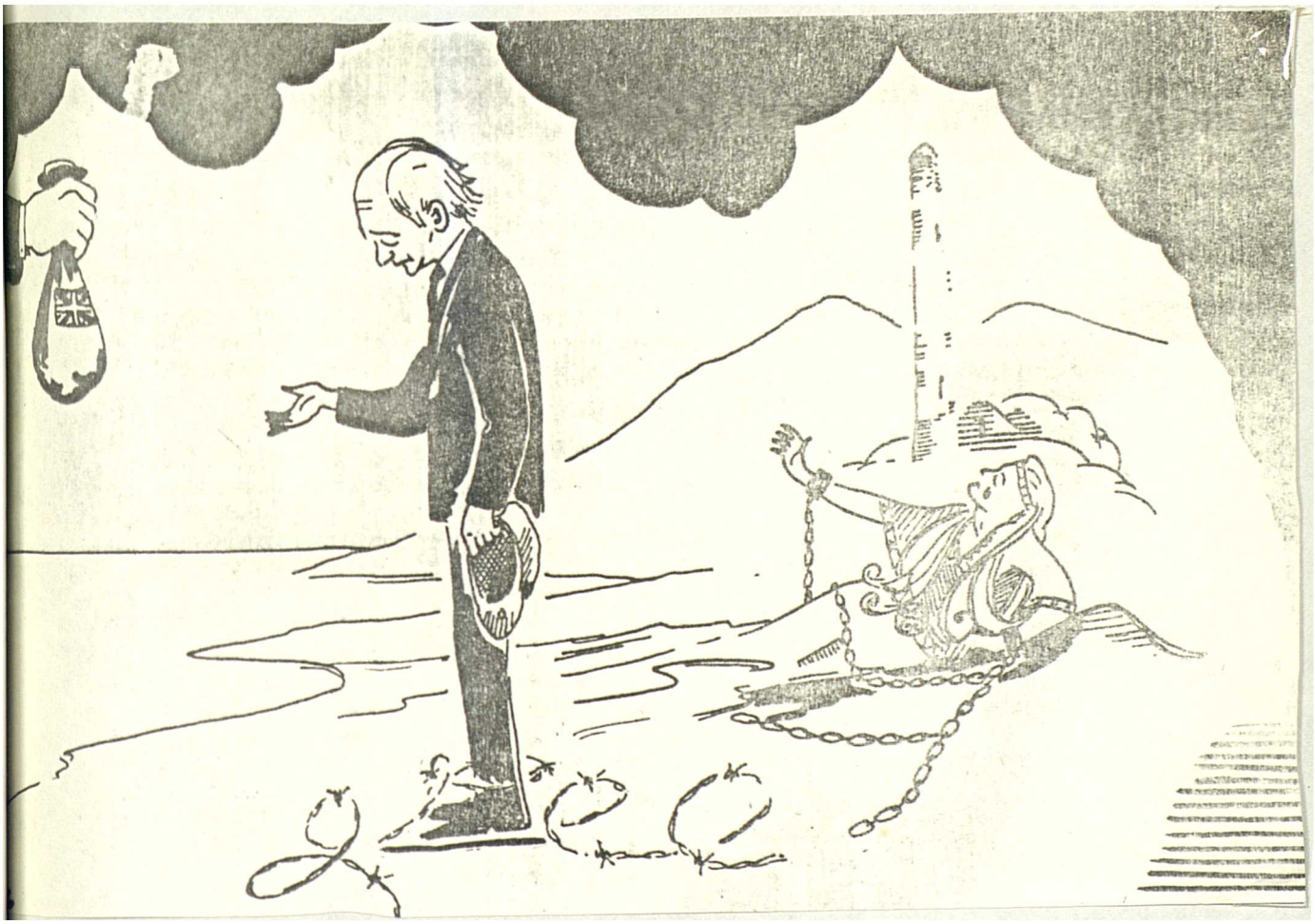
The actions of republican women during the present troubles have also been represented as conforming to this submissive sorrowing model. Newsheet photos and posters sometimes show them in an active role, generally displaying guns. And very occasionally, if they have achieved the status of a Maire Drumm or a Bernadette Devlin, they are depicted addressing press conferences or being accorded a martyr's funeral. But most frequently they are shown in support of their menfolk, mourning their deaths in attitudes recalling the mother of Christ (ill 26) or protesting at their prison conditions, carrying posters and wearing H-block blanets (ill 27).

The pervasiveness of this kind of image can perhaps best be conveyed by consideration of a single issue of Republican News, that



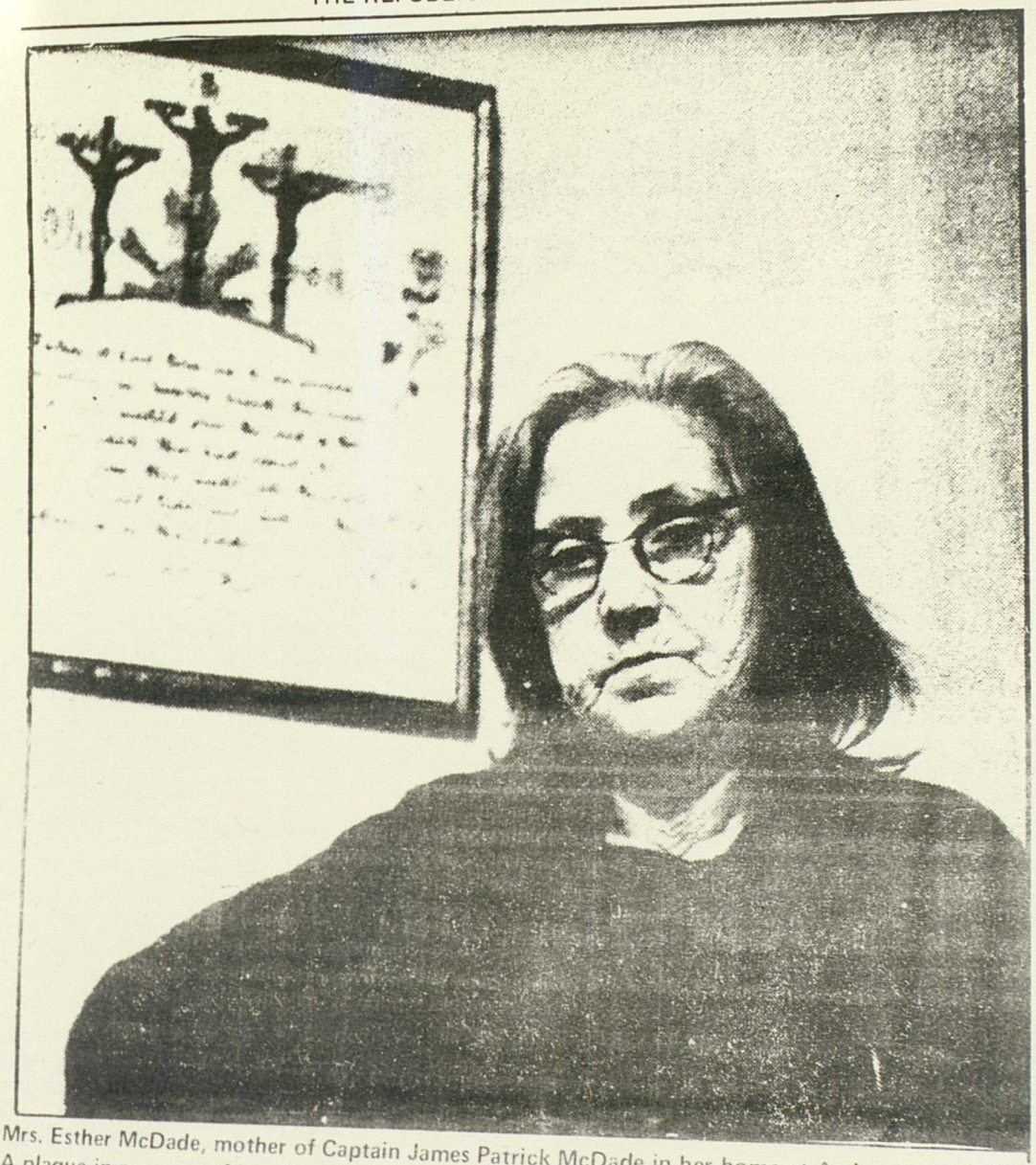
22. Ancient Order of Hibernians/Maid of Erin banner/15 August 1981/oil paints on silk/approximately 96 x 72 ins (244 x 183 cms)/Photo: Bill Kirk.

23. Republican internee handkerchief/made in Long Kesh in 1971/Linen Hall Library, Belfast/Photo: Sean Watters.



24. Oisin/cartoon/Andersonstown News, Belfast, 6-13 Dec 1972, p.3/actual size.

25. Republican cartoon/Republican News, Belfast, 12 Oct 1974, p.3/actual size.



Mrs. Esther McDade, mother of Captain James Patrick McDade in her home at Ardoyne, Belfast. A plaque in memory of her other son, Gerard, who was also an officer in Oglaigh Na h-Eireann, can be seen on the wall. Captain Gerard McDade was shot dead by English Troops in Belfast three years ago.

Mrs. McDade, a mother of five, said of her two sons: "I am proud of both of them. They were doing what they believed in, and died for their country.

As she prepared to attend the funeral, Mrs. McDade said: "I think James deserves a hero's burial. After all, he gave his life for his country."

26. Photo in Republican News, Belfast, 30 Nov 1974, p. 3/actual size/Photo: Chris Coppock

27. Republican women protesting at the removal of political status for prisoners at the Maze/1 Dec 1976/ Castle St, Belfast/Photo: Pacemaker Press, Belfast.

for 22 Feb 1975. On the front page there is a large photograph of a woman with two small children, surrounded by wedding anniversary cards and Long Kesh artifacts. It is captioned:

> "This valient Irishwoman visits a jail or concentration camp almost every day, every week to visit a member of her family. Several of them are political hostages. Mary Shannon we salute you!"

The rest of the issue is almost entirely given over to coverage of the funeral of Mrs Chrissie Price, and tributes to her. Her own involvement in republican activities, her marriage to another republican and her support of her daughters Dolours and Marion, gaoled for their part in IRA bombings in England, are all described but it is her suffering which is particularly stressed, most notably in "A Tribute".

> "Many emblems have been made the emblem of Ireland over the years - many of them have been truly symbolic of the situation in Ireland pertaining at that time.
>
> One emblem, grossly overlooked, but always there, is the coffin. More than any other object, it reflects the true symbol of Ireland - more than any other object, it portrays the suffering, the death and the humiliation of our nation. The true story of Ireland's fight for freedom is the coffin.
>
> In the death of Mrs Chrissie Price, wife of Albert Price and mother of Dolours and Marion Price, we witness yet another brave daughter of Erin gone to the just reward she so rightly earned.
>
> Chrissie Price has over the years, so like Mother Erin, suffered the anguish of separation, of illness, of humiliation and has somehow managed to withstand all that came her way, except the last mortal blow.
>
> '... But Lord, I have my Joy, my sons were faithful and they fought.'"

Undoubtedly suffering and supportive roles have remained very important for many of the women of Northern Ireland's Catholic community. Tied to homes in streets where rioting is a daily

occurrence, and raids by the British Army all too frequent; raising children in areas where truancy, crime and involvement in paramilitary organisations are well-established youthful activities, and street checks by the security forces a regular event; maintaining families when their husbands and sons have been interned and imprisoned - this has indeed been the daily pattern of life for many Catholic women in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years.

But many of them have also been prominent in other, more active roles during the present troubles. It is frequently they who have started demonstrations and riots (women for example have been responsible for the bin lid banging which has initiated the annual demonstration against internment). They maintained the rent and rates strike initiated in August 1971 as a more long-term protest *against internment. And they have been prominent in political* activity, whether as spokeswomen for republican organisations like Maire Drumm and Bernadette Devlin, as leaders of various peace movements, like Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, or as organisers of pressure groups to win improvements in living conditions in areas like Turf Lodge and Divis Flats.[1] The kind of confidence this has engendered is reflected in a militant statement by Maire Og Drumm (daughter of Maire Drumm) to a Belfast Provisional Sinn Fein rally in 1979.

> "I will conclude by assuring the leadership of the Republican Movement that in the days to come when the war to eject the British reaches a successful conclusion, women will not be found wanting. Indeed if you show any signs of weakening we will take over." 2

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1. Margaret Ward and Marie-Therese McGivern, "Images of Women in Northern Ireland", The Crane Bag, Dublin, vol 4 no 1, 1980, pp. 67-70.
2. Reported in An Phoblacht/Republican News, Dublin, 18 Aug 1979, and quoted in Ward and McGivern, op cit, p. 71.

Two questions are therefore posed by the popular female imagery employed by members of Northern Ireland's Catholic community during the present troubles. In the first place why are these images used at all? And in the second place why has their emphasis generally been on a suffering, passive, often religious figure, when women from this community have frequently been active agents in the events of the past thirteen years?

Additional questions are raised by the numerous recent artistic depictions of Mother Ireland and the female figures associated with her, and the small but interesting group of female representations to be found on the banners of the Protestant Orangemen.

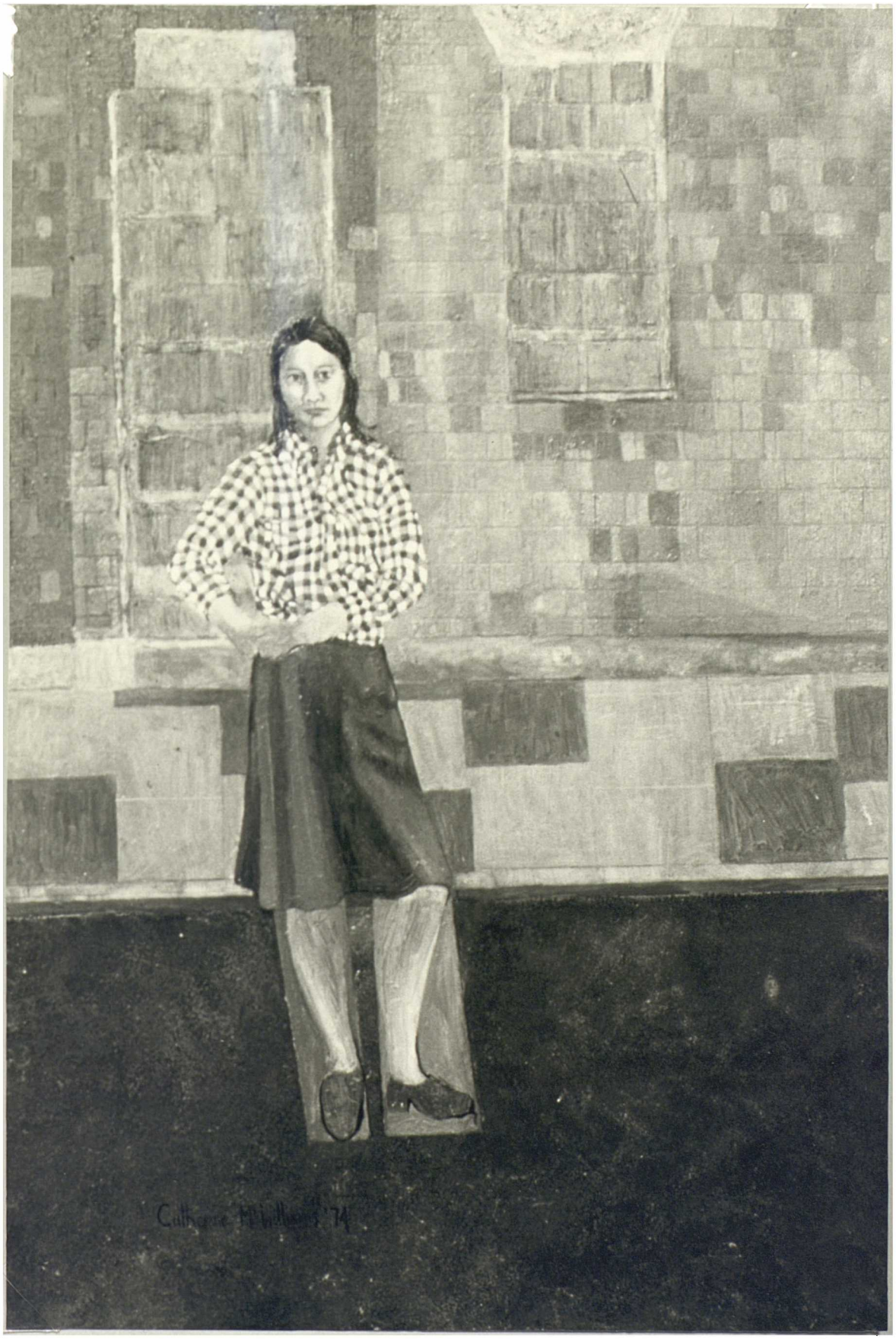
In contrast to the virtually complete lack of fine art images of William III during the past thirteen years, there are a considerable number of recent works by Irish artists dealing with the specific theme of Mother Ireland, and the more general roles played by women in the present conflict in Ulster. Most, though not all of these, are by artists from the Catholic community. Many of them are young painters who have spent at least part of the last thirteen years living and working in Catholic West Belfast, and the women of that area are strongly featured in their work. In Patricia McComish's drawings they appear as suffering, brooding figures swathed in obsessive webs of heavy black lines. In Catherine Mcwilliams' paintings they are very simply depicted, standing in doorways or looking out of windows, both involved in the troubles and observers of it (ill 28). In Brendan Ellis's works they are lively combatants, suffering but fighting back. Joking factory girls hurry home from work, a wife or girlfriend leans forward in her chair to watch the news on television, a pinched, down-at-heel housewife scuttles along the street with her carrier-bag past the

the corrugated-iron barricades (ill 29), a girl shocked by some violent incident crouches in an armchair, wrapped in a dressing-gown, brassy tarts parade in the pub. In Martin Forker's drawings the women of this area are subject to intolerable conditions which drives some of them to suicide (ill 30).

However these artists have not simply recorded what they have seen around them. They have also related the daily lives of women during the troubles to the Mother Ireland theme. Martin Forker has tried to paint a monumental Mother Ireland figure as an emblem of all the suffering he has witnessed, while Dave Scott and Brendan Ellis's younger brother Fergal have both explored the contemporary relevance of the well-established Irish republican concept of the mother with her children at her feet, carrying guns for her men and mourning their death in the struggle for a united Ireland (ill 31).

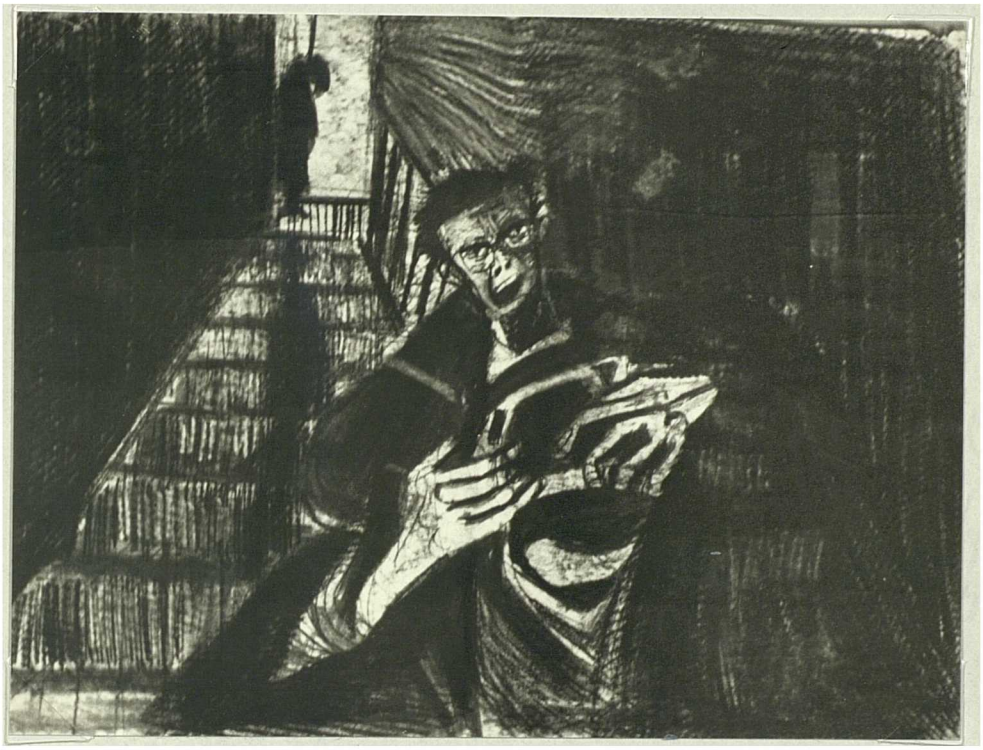
More complex analysis of the role of the Mother Ireland concept during the present troubles in Northern Ireland can be found in paintings by Brian Ferran and Micheal Farrell. Both are from the Catholic community in Ireland, but both have been distanced from the impact of violence by age, social status and the locations in which they live. Ferran has explored the contemporary relevance of the roles allotted to women in Ireland's Celtic myths, and their semi-real, semi-symbolic involvement in the Irish republican rising of 1798 (ill 32). Farrell has made a number of variations on Boucher's depictions of Miss O'Murphy, the Irish-born mistress of Louis XV (ill 33) which are meditations on the continuing ambiguous appeal of the Mother Ireland figure.

Consideration of the actual and symbolic roles of women in the present troubles in Northern Ireland has not been confined to



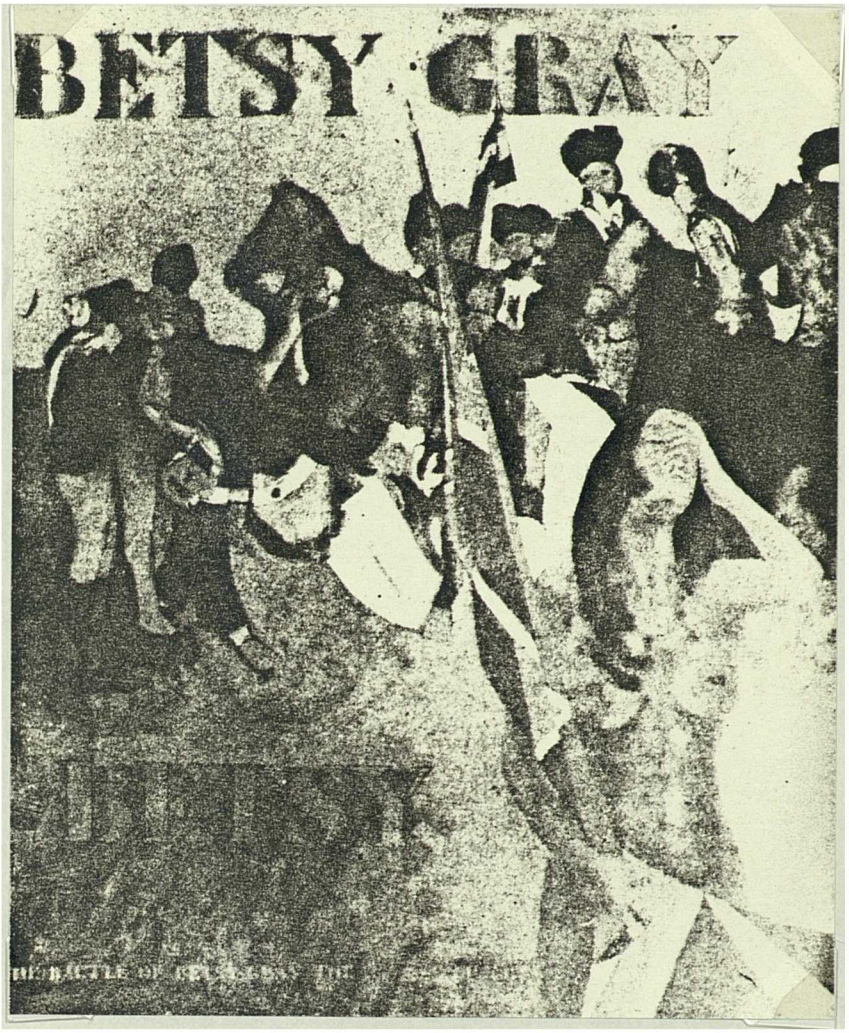
28. Catherine McWilliams/Margaret Foster/1972/oil on board/24 x 18 ins (61 x 46 cms).

29. Brendan Ellis/Mother Ireland, right hand panel of Good Samaritan triptych/1977/oil on canvas/ 36 x 24 ins (91.5 x 61 cms)/Collection: the artist/Photo: Maire Concannon



30. Martin Forker/No Place for Heroes/ca 1976/
charcoal on paper/24 x 30 ins (61 x 76.2 cms)/
Collection: the artist/Photo: B. Loftus

31. Dave Scott/Belfast shawlie/1971-2/oil on canvas/ approx 60 x 30 ins (152.5 x 76.2 cms)/Photo: Dave Scott.



32. Brian Ferran/Betsy Gray/ ca 1978.

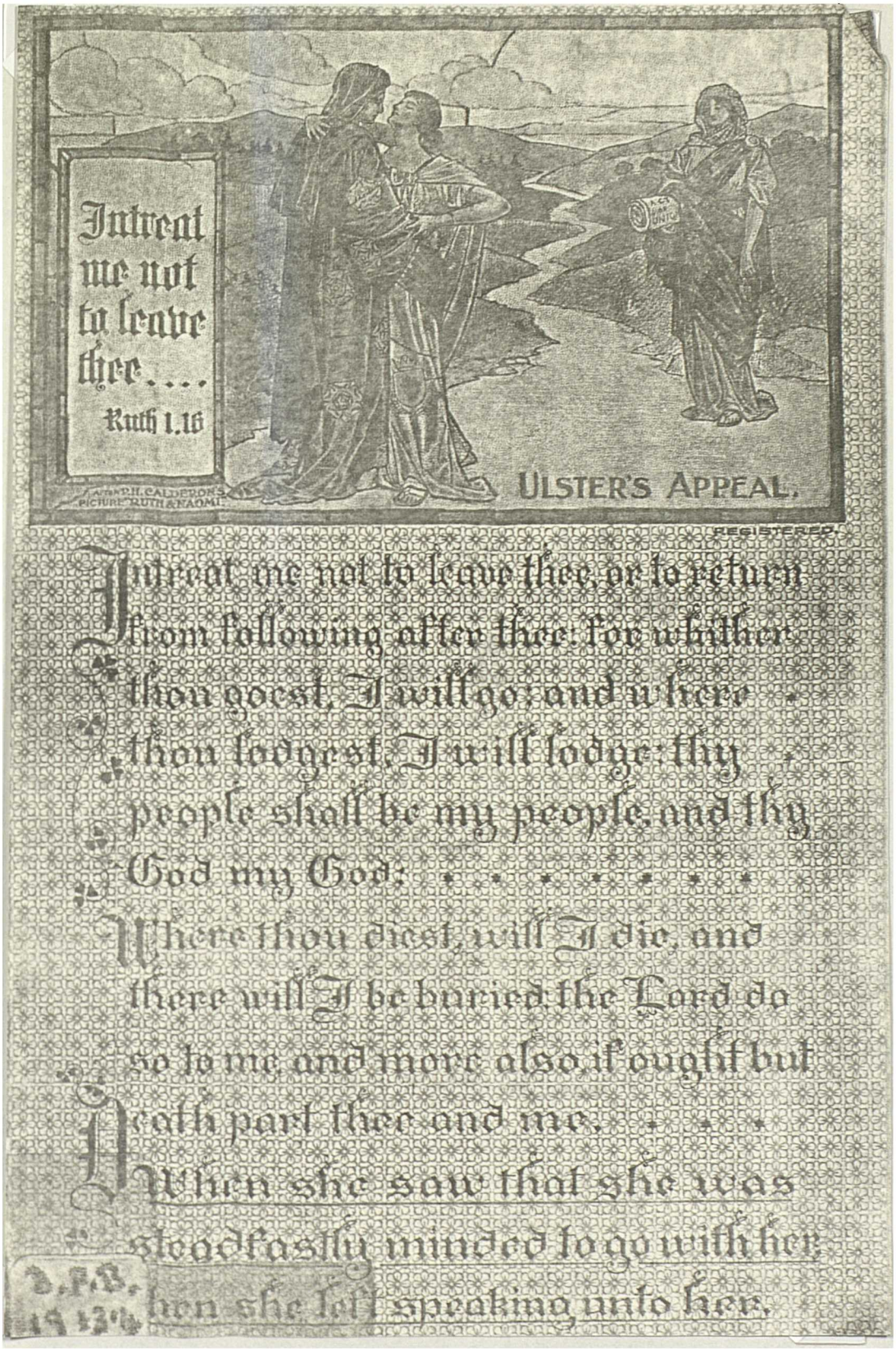
33. Micheal Farrell/The Very First Real Irish Political Picture/1977/Acrylic on canvas/68½ x 73 ins (174 x 185.5 cms/Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin/ Photo: Green Studios, Dublin.

artists drawn from Ireland's Catholic community. F.E. McWilliam, a sculptor long established in the London art-world, but originally from an Ulster Protestant background, has also explored these themes in his two Women of Belfast series (ill 34). Yet while the female figures of Queen Victoria (ill 70), Protestant women martyrs, Britannia, Ulster (ill 35) and Faith (ill 36) are strongly featured on the banners of the Protestant Orangemen, such personifications have been almost totally absent from all other popular images produced within Northern Ireland's Protestant community during the present troubles.

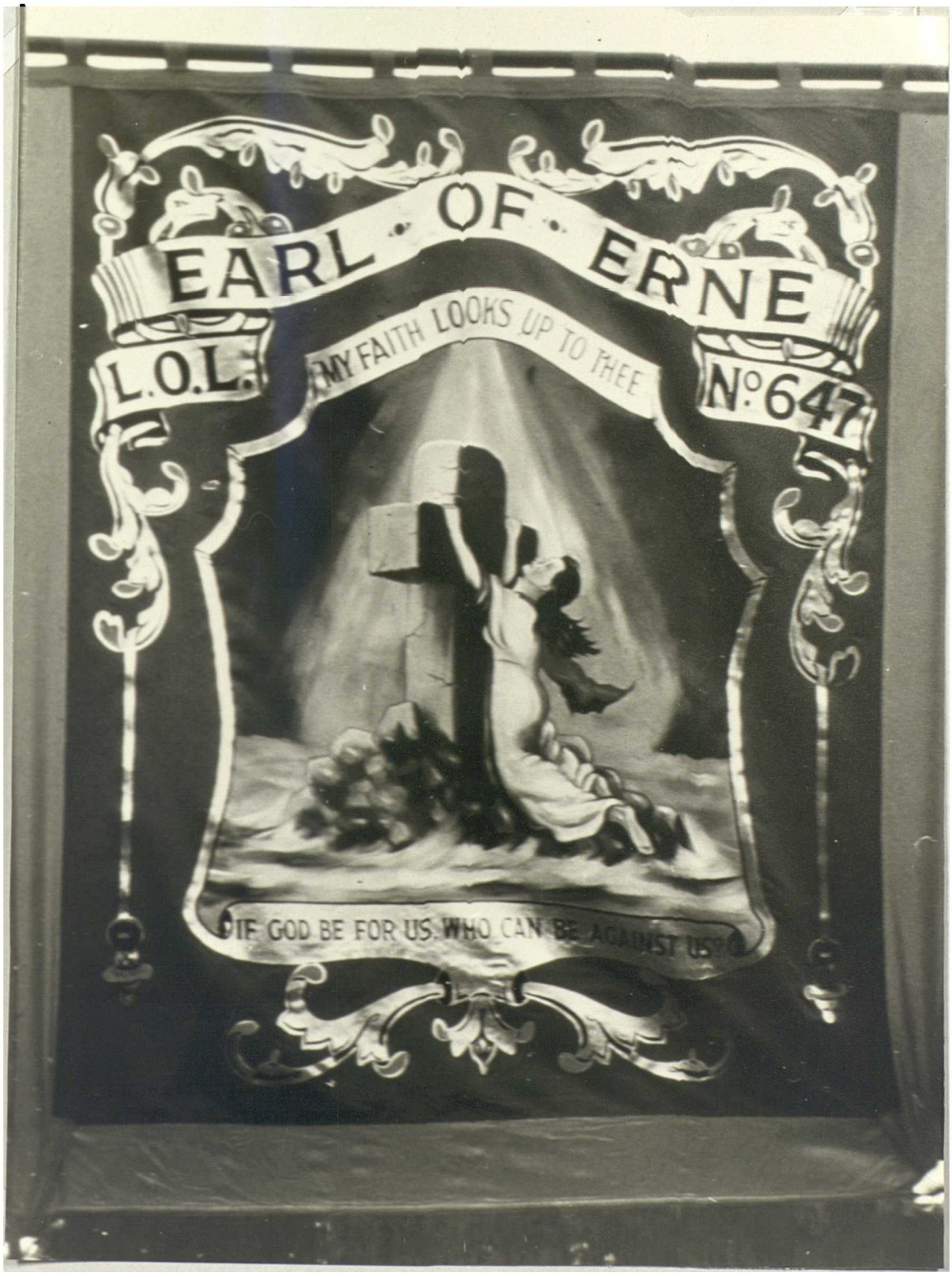
The handling of images of Mother Ireland and associated female figures by fine artists and by Ulster Protestants in the past thirteen years raises a number of questions, in addition to those already posed by the popular female imagery employed by members of Northern Ireland's Catholic community. Why are these figures more attractive to artists than William III? How have the artistic depictions of them been related to the more popular Mother Ireland images used during the present conflict? What relationship have these artistic depictions had to that conflict itself? And why have these female figures appealed to artists and Orangemen from Northern Ireland's Protestant community but to no other Ulster Protestants during the past thirteen years?

My attempts to answer these questions will be structured as follows. In the next section of this chapter, titled The religious tradition, I will consider such traditions of wall-painting as exist in Northern Ireland's Catholic community. From this it will become apparent that for Ulster Catholics wallpaintings are a relatively recent innovation, and lack the kind of traditional community role attached to the King William murals. Much of their imagery

34. F.E. McWilliam/Women of Belfast, 1972/7/bronze/13 3/4 x 11 x 9½ ins (35 x 28 x 24.2 cms)/Ulster Museum/ Photo: UM.



35. Ulster Unionist Council/Ulster's Appeal/1913/ coloured photo-gravure/actual size/printed by McGowan & Ingram, Belfast/Linen Hall Library, Belfast



36. "My Faith looks up to thee"/Orange Order banner/ca 1974/oil paints on silk/approximately 96 x 72 ins (244 x 183 cms)/Photo: Bill Kirk.

derives instead from the religious practices of the Catholic community and from very long and complex symbolic traditions. In the case of the Mother Ireland figure these practices and traditions have been closely related to the actual roles played by women in the course of Irish history.

In order to give an adequate impression of the way in which the layers of symbolism and reality in the female personifications of Ireland have been laid down, I have chosen to deal with their history in a series of sections. The first of these, titled Celtic Goddesses and the Virgin Mary, discusses the characteristics of the women incorporated in Irish Celtic mythology, the extent to which those characteristics were appropriated to the female saints of Christian Ireland, and the use of the Virgin Mary as a political emblem by Irish Catholics in the seventeenth century. The second historical section, titled Hibernia and Liberty, analyses the classical female personifications introduced to Ireland by its English colonisers. The seventeenth century genesis of Hibernia is explored and the significance of her employment in two main poses, standing proudly and lying weeping, is discussed. Her association with Liberty by the Irish patriots and republicans of the late eighteenth century is then described, and the section concludes with a discussion of the extent to which these images were employed by the Catholic Irish peasantry as distinct from their largely Protestant leadership. In the section titled Submissive females the tendency in the nineteenth century to reduce the Mother Ireland figure to a simpering handmaiden is outlined, and shown to be common to virtually all depictions of her, whether English or Irish, fine art or popular. The reasons for this change are sought in political, religious, cultural and social developments both in Ireland and in Western Europe

as a whole. The final section of this history of Mother Ireland imagery is titled Cathleen ni Houlihan and the Easter Rising. This attempts to establish why the imagery and roles of Irish women was so assertive in the period preceding the rebellion of 1916, which led to the establishment of the Irish state, but tended to be eroded at the time of that rebellion and subsequently, being replaced by representations of suffering, male-supporting females or the simpering, submissive colleens of the nineteenth century.

These historical sections will make plain some of the reasons why Mother Ireland imagery in general, and the suffering types of Mother Ireland imagery in particular, have such an appeal for the Northern Ireland Catholics of today. But the weight of historical tradition is not sufficient to explain the adherence to such representations in the face of the very different actions carried out by a significant number of women in the province during the present troubles.

In the section titled Man-made images, I will turn therefore to some of the social, political and cultural circumstances which hinder the development of adequate images of those women's actions. The chief of these circumstances will be seen to be the lack of control by Northern Ireland women of the images made of themselves, despite the open availability to them of various kinds of visual training; the general uninvolvement of middle-class women in the province in political activity; the strength of traditional family roles for Northern Ireland's working-class women; the continuing tendency of Irish republicans, male and female, to subordinate the feminist struggle to the pursuit of political revolution; and the intensification of religious devotion to the Virgin Mary's

suffering and sacrifice encouraged by the real-life afflictions of many of the province's Catholics during the present troubles, particularly as a result of internment.

Having established some possible reasons why the popular images of suffering Mother Ireland have remained so popular for Northern Ireland Catholics during the present troubles, I will turn, in the section titled The Role of the Artists, to consideration of the factors governing their continuing appeal for Irish artists, both past and present. Their attraction will be seen to lie not so much in their political aptness but in the ambivalent nature of Mother Ireland figures as images, which leaves them open to the play of the artist's imagination, and in the endorsement of such images as valid subjects by the artistic conventions which have prevailed in Western Europe during the past two centuries. Nevertheless it will be demonstrated that many of these fine art images are made with political intent, and that despite attempts by the majority of art-critics to confine discussion of their meaning to the field of aesthetics, they have performed certain political roles during the present troubles.

This discussion of the use of female symbols by members of Northern Ireland's Catholic community will be followed, in the section titled Protestant females, by consideration of Ulster Protestants' attitudes to such symbols, and of their own use of female personifications during the past thirteen years. By looking in detail at the history of the female representations which appear on Orange banners, and the reasons proferred by Protestants for rejection of Catholic female symbolism, it should become apparent that both the past appropriation and the present rejection of such figures are largely rooted in their ambiguity. This ambiguity is too painful to contemplate for many Ulster Protestants, at a time when their

political and religious certainties have been severely shaken. While William III is the kind of static, rigid personification with which the Protestants reinvent the sharply-dichotomised political and religious state of affairs which they see as essential to their survival, Mother Ireland and her attendant female figures not only carry unhappy associations of Catholicism and Irish nationalism, but also, as images, have an unnerving tendency to slip across such carefully defined boundaries.

In the Conclusions to this chapter I will summarise its main findings about the roles of Mother Ireland imagery during the present troubles in Northern Ireland and the techniques required to evaluate them.

The religious tradition

The majority of political wallpaintings made by Northern Ireland Catholics, including the Rockmore Street mural (ill 19), were produced in one short period, during the summer of 1981.[1] They were part of a widespread campaign in support of the republican hunger-strikers in the H-blocks at Long Kesh and appear to have been initially spontaneous, although once the fashion for them spread, Provisional Sinn Fein organised supplies of paint and gradually came to orchestrate them. By the spring of 1982 the timing and subject-matter of republican murals in the Falls Road appeared to be largely a matter for members of Sinn Fein.[2]

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1. My discussion of the H-block murals is based on a series of conversations in February, March and April of 1982 with wallpainters and their relatives; on information supplied by Peter McGuinness, who photographed the Belfast murals in 1981; and on an unpublished article on the murals in Belfast and Derry, completed by Cahill Tohill early in 1982.

2. When I talked to the youths painting the International Women's Day mural in the Falls Road in March 1982 they told me that they had been told to do the mural and supplied with the paint for it.

For the painters of these murals the roles to be played by them in the hunger-strike campaign were considered to be various. They were intended to rally any wavering supporters of the strikers in the locality; they were to a certain extent a challenge to the security forces; and they were deliberately aimed at attracting the attention of the international media. One member of the group who painted the Rockmore Street mural (ill 19) told me that they sent their own photos of it to newspapers in the Irish Republic such as Magill and Sunday Tribune, and that although these pictures met with no response, reporters and photographers from other papers, such as The Sunday Times and Der Spiegel took a considerable interest in the murals and gave them coverage.[1]

The H-block murals also had other unintended social roles. Many of the local inhabitants who welcomed them did so, not so much out of political identification with their themes, as out of pride and delight in having any paintings to brighten up the area in which they lived. Indeed much of the motivation for the painters themselves derived from a sense of personal achievement and a strong neighbourhood pride as much as from commitment to a political cause. The paintings wiped out the traditional Catholic feeling of being second-class citizens, and the execution of them was in itself a kind of community celebration. Large groups of youths and children carried out the work, with much comment and

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1. A photograph of the Rockmore Street mural heads Simon Winchester's article "Ten years on : has age taught us wisdom?" in The Sunday Times, 9 Aug 1981, p. 9.

crack[1] from the people in the street and passers-by.[2]

The murals also came to serve as memorials to the dead hunger-strikers. In 1982 the group in the Rockmore Street area were repainted between Easter and the anniversary of the death of Bobby Sands, a decision made by Provisional Sinn Fein and apparently governed equally by weather conditions, the acquisition of sufficient paint, the possible presence of international media-men, and the desire to associate the paintings with two major commemorations of men who died for Ireland.

A similar purpose of commemoration lies behind the only pre-1968 Catholic wallpainting in Northern Ireland known to me. This was the Robert Emmet mural painted in the Ardoyne area of Belfast in 1953, at the time of the 150th anniversary celebrations of Emmet's abortive rebellion against the English in 1803 (ill 37). This mural, which has recently been destroyed as the result of redevelopment, was clearly intended for that single occasion, for when I first saw it in the early 1970s it was already in an advanced state of decay and had obviously never been repainted. Northern Ireland Catholics clearly had no tradition of wallpainting comparable to that existing in the Protestant community.

Indeed the earliest Catholic wallpaintings produced during the present troubles were little more than upgraded graffiti. The earliest and best-known was the Derry gable-end marking the

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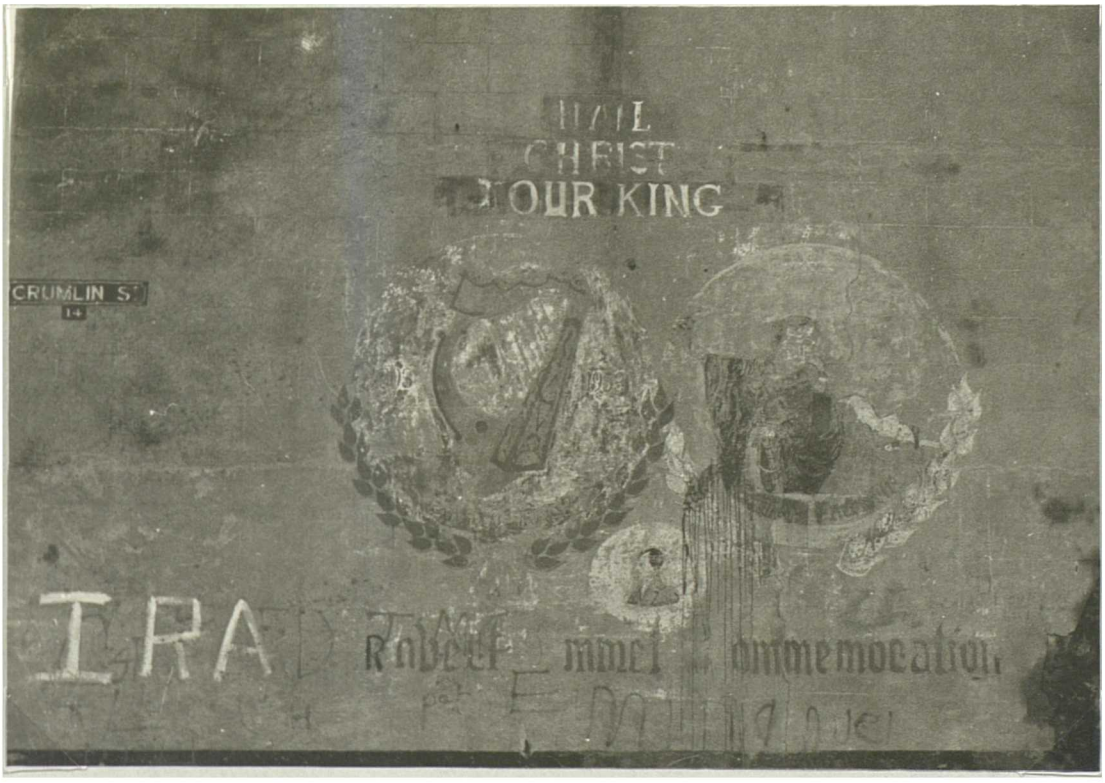
1. A virtually untranslatable but highly expressive Northern Ireland term for lively conversation.

2. There were critics as well. The Narrow Water mural in Rockville Street had to be painted on the half-day of the chemist whose wall it is on, because he was not at all happy about the idea (probably because of fear of army retaliation to a painting celebrating the killing by the IRA of eighteen British soldiers). And there was one man who visited the wallpainters in this area virtually every day in order to point out to them details he thought they should change.



37. Robert Emmet commemoration mural/1979/first painted 1953/Crumlin St, Belfast (now demolished)/Photo: B. Loftus.

38. Republican mural/1979/Bogside, Derry/Photo:B. Loftus.

entrance to the Bogside, bearing the slogan "You are now entering Free Derry", first painted on 5 October 1968. Its symbolic value was enormous. Martin McGuinness, then the officer commanding the Provisional IRA's Derry Brigade, recalled in the early 1970s:

> "I was in the Merchant Navy when all this started. Before 1969 I had only read about it and seen the photographs; things like people attempting a peaceful march and the British Army stopping them.
>
> When I came back I saw the 'Free Derry' wall. I knew that it had become clear to all of us that it was time to act." 1

The wall continues to be lovingly preserved. From approximately 1973[2] the Bogside area was also decorated with a number of figurative wallpaintings. These mostly consist of republican flags and Easter lilies but also include a member of the Provisional IRA (ill 38), an M60 rifle, and cartoons of members of the security forces. The majority of these are crude scrawls. During the same period kerb-stones, telephone kiosks and letter boxes in republican areas of Derry were picked out in green, white and orange. This was a tit-for-tat reaction to the loyalist red, white and blue kerbstone decoration, a practice well-established before 1969.[3] It was also a challenge to the legitimacy of the state. The practice continues today in certain strongly republican areas of Belfast.

The wallpaintings produced by members of Northern Ireland's Catholic community during the present troubles resemble those painted by the Protestants in their commemorative role, their relative lack

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1. Quoted in P. Michael O'Sullivan, Patriot Graves, Follett, Chicago, 1972, p. 143.

2. The earliest record that I have seen of republican wallpaintings in Derry, apart from the Free Derry wall, is a photo of a mural in the Brandywell estate, reproduced in Civil Rights, Belfast 31 March 1973 p.6. It depicts the tricolour and starry plough flags crossed below the slogan "Ireland".

3. See below, pp.304-305.

of sectarian intent, and their appropriation as a focus of local community pride. But unlike the Protestant murals they are not part of a well-established practice. Both the manner of the;r execution and their imagery have been borrowed from other traditions.

The way in which Catholic murals have been carried out derives not from a reiterated practice, based on the skills of the house-painter, as is the case in the Protestant community, but from the world of the fine arts. The designer of the Rockmore Street mural had taken an Art GCE while in Long Kesh; in the street next door the mural was designed by a skilled amateur artist married to a painter trained at the Belfast College of Art; and one of the team who worked on the murals in the area described the Narrow Water mural as their "masterpiece", on account of the amount of free handling and experimentation contained in it. Whereas Protestant wallpaintings generally aspire to skill and craft, Catholic murals aspire to art.

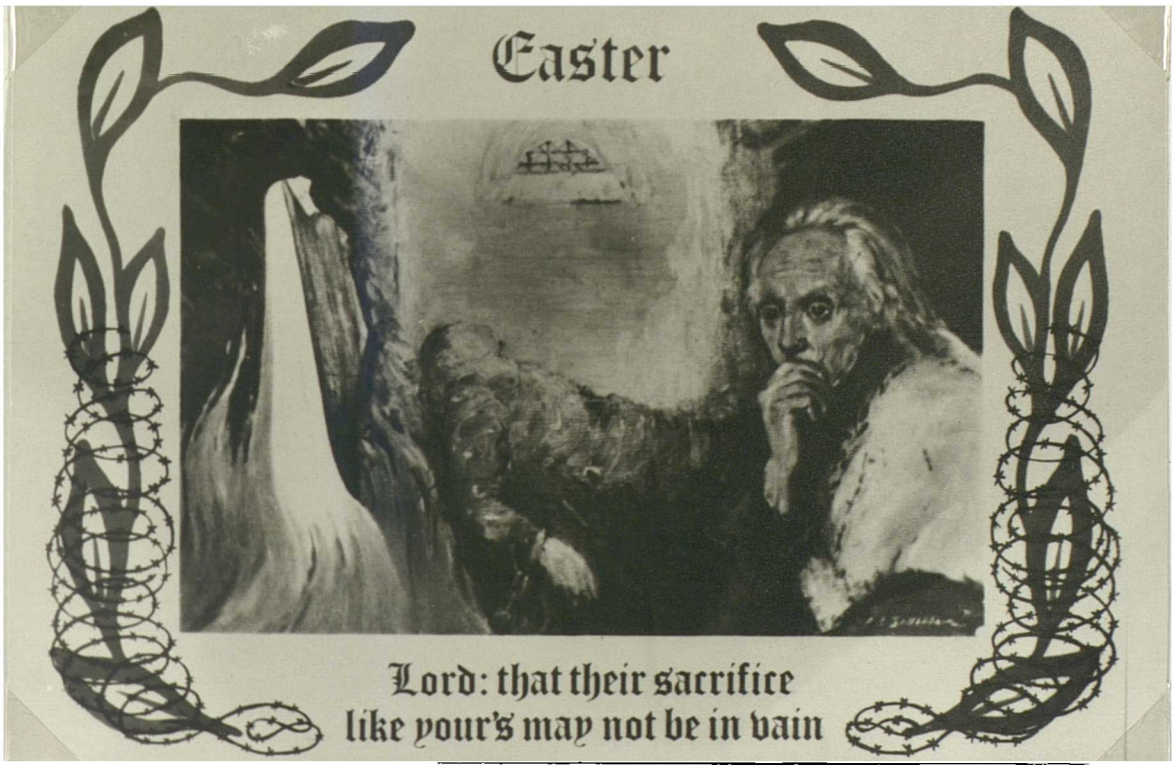
It is also because of their lack of an established tradition that the imagery of Catholic wallpaintings has been derived either from various pieces of recent visual propaganda issued by organisations like Provisional Sinn Fein or the Troops Out movement, or, as in the case of the Rockmore Street mural (ill 19), from the imagery of the Catholic religion.

There are immediate reasons why religious symbolism should have been used in this way. The man who designed the Rockmore Street mural had previously been interned in Long Kesh, and like many republican internees, had become devoted to his religion at that time. Those who helped him to paint the mural by no means shared this intense devotion, but they all knew that Bobby Sands, the first H-block hunger-striker to die, had lain on his death-bed

with his rosary in his hand.

But there are also more long-standing reasons for the use of religious imagery in the wallpaintings of Northern Ireland's Catholic community. There is a very long tradition in that community of political imagery whose symbolism is derived from religious art. Indeed the Rockmore Street mural (ill 19) may have been influenced by just such a fused image, a republican Easter card issued early in the 1970s (ill 39) in which a dying hero of the 1916 rising is watched over by two women, one young, one old, who may equally represent the Virgin mourning her son who died at Easter, or Mother Ireland mourning her Easter dead.

Equally there is a very longstanding tradition by which the imagery of the Catholic church in Northern Ireland, both public and private, has acquired political connotations. Above the wallpaintings in Derry's Bogside (ill 40) there stands a grotto, typical of many shrines all over Ireland. In it the plaster statue of the Virgin stands enthralled in prayer, her rosary over her arm. Before her kneels another female figure, Bernadette, the young French girl who , it is claimed, saw Mary in a vision at Lourdes in 1858. Both the figures are virginal. The Mother of God is seen without her child, worshipping the Deity above; Bernadette is shown in the garb of the religious order which she later joined, her gaze fixed on the vision before her. The viewer is invited to join in their adoration, by a rail at which it is possible to kneel and pray. Despite the urban surroundings, the immediate location of the scene is rural. A rocky grotto is set into a grassy bank below trees and shrubs. It reproduces in miniature the grotto of Lourdes. It is as well a reminder of the outdoor, private worship so typical of Irish Catholicism since the religious and political conflicts of the seventeenth



39. Republican Easter card/ca 1972/5 7/8 x 8½ ins (15 x 21.4 cms)/National Museum of Ireland/ Photo: NMI

40. Grotto of the Virgin and St Bernadette/1979/Bogside, Derry/Photo: B. Loftus.

century. As such it also emblemises for its viewer the persecuted, underground political status of many Irish Catholics since the time of the Reformation.

In order to understand more clearly how these political and religious female images fused, and the implications of the manner of their fusion for the political symbolism of Northern Ireland Catholics during the present troubles, it is necessary to look at their history.

Celtic Goddesses and the Virgin Mary

The fused Mother Ireland-Virgin figure was by no means Ireland's first female national image. In Irish Celtic mythology goddesses played a dominant part, closely associated with their roles as divine mothers and personifications of the land. In many cases they were associated with particular locations. Anu, the goddess of prosperity, was especially identified with the fertile province of Munster, where twin hills in Co Kerry still bear the name of the Paps of Anu, while Áine had her seat at Cnoc Áine in Co Limerick, Aoibheall at Craig Liath in Clare and Clíodna at Carraig Clíodna in Cork. But the concept of a woman who represented all Ireland was also known, both in the shape of the divine triad, Ériu, Fódla, and Banbha, who reigned over Ireland at the coming of the Gauls, and of the woman embodying the sovereignty of Ireland who attended the god Lugh.[1]

Indeed it was these goddess figures who conferred sovereignty on the kings of Ireland by mating with them, symbolizing by their

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1. Proinsias MacCana, Celtic Mythology, Hamlyn, 1970, pp. 85-6 and Lady Gregory, Gods and Fighting Men, Colin Smyth, Gerrards Cross 1970, pp. 69-70. On the world-wide myths relating to Mother Earth see Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, Collins/Fontana, 1974, p. 156ff.

union the marriage of a king with his land. A persistent part of this belief was the idea that the goddess could become utterly transformed by her marriage:

> "Just as the land lies barren and desolate in the absence of its destined ruler and is quickly restored to life by his coming, so the goddess who personifies the Kingdom often appears ugly, unkempt and destitute until united with her rightful lord, when suddenly she is changed into a woman of shining beauty." 1

Some of the Celtic heroines were more than mere consorts or symbols of territorial legitimacy. Thus the husbands of Medbh, legendary queen of Connacht, were never more than sleeping partners. Medhb indeed is a striking example of that combination of sexual capacity and warlike ferocity which can be found in so many Irish Celtic goddesses and queens. In the saga of the Tain Bó Cuailnge she leads her armies against the men of Ulster and is said to have claimed that "never was she without one man in the shadow of the other." While the combination of ferocity and sexuality in one figure or in the trios of goddesses such as Morrigan, Macha and Badhb, can be explained by their primary concern with the prosperity of the land, in terms both of fertility and security, its constant reappearance as a theme in Irish Celtic mythology is very striking.

It is possible that something of male fear of the devouring mother/male aspect of Irish Celtic goddesses is embodied in the grotesque sheela-na-gig carvings which have been found on Irish churches and castles. However both the date and the meaning of

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1. MacCana, op cit, p. 120.

these images are hotly disputed[1] and they do not appear to have exercised much influence on the moulding of the visual images of Mother Ireland.

More crucial in the long run was Irish Christianity's absorption of Celtic mythology. In this process the half-real, half-mythical St Brigid took over the pagan Brigid's spheres of healing, fire and water, becoming the patron saint of hearth, home and sacred wells. Despite her own virginal status she became strongly identified with the land of Ireland and with fertility, like the Celtic goddesses before her. Her feast-day on the first day of February coincides with Imbolg, the pagan festival of spring and renewal, and many of the rituals and traditions connected with her are linked to this event or to her supposed employment as a dairymaid and cowherd during her youth. Like the Celtic goddesses too Brigid was an immensely powerful and energetic woman. She established numerous convents for Irish nuns and even appointed a bishop.[2]

Even after the plantation of Ireland by English and Scots settlers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries memories of the pagan goddesses still remained. Irish bards of the sixteenth

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1. See Jørgen Andersen, The Witch on the Wall, George Allen & Unwin, 1977; Helen Hickey, Images of Stone, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1976, pp. 43-4 and pp. 57-8 and the lengthy correspondence in The Irish Times, Sept-Oct 1977.

2. John Sharkey, Celtic mysteries : the ancient religion, Thames & Hudson, 1975 ill 48; MacCana, op cit, pp. 34-5; Margaret MacCurtain, "Towards an Appraisal of the Religious Image of Women", in The Crane Bag, Dublin, vol 4, no 1, 1980, pp. 26-7; E. Estyn Evans, Irish Folk Ways, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, pp. 267-270; and P.V. O'Sullivan, "St Brigid's legacy of symbols", The Irish Times, 3 Feb 1981, p. 10. Both MacCana and O'Sullivan make it clear that the cult of Brigid/St Brigid is widespread outside Ireland, being known throughout the British Isles as well as in Brittany and Italy.

century apostrophised their country with the words bean (woman) or céile (spouse) linked with the names of ancient kings, along with mythological designations such as Banba or Fódla. Contemporary warlike women kept up earlier traditions. Gráinne Mhaol or Gráinne Ní Mhaille - in English Grace O'Malley - was a sixteenth century chieftain of the Owles or Umhall, the district round Clew Bay, Co Mayo. Described in 1576 as "famous for her stoutness of courage and person and for sundry exploits done by her by sea" and in 1593 as "the nurse of all rebellions in the province for the last forty years", she was celebrated in popular song, from the eighteenth century onwards as another personification of Ireland, Granuaile.[1] Celtic traditions both pagan and Christian had firmly established in the consciousness of the native Irish the association between the land in which they lived and worked and female figures who often mysteriously combined strength, age and cruelty with beauty, youth and sexual appeal.

It is the Virgin however who features in the first true female nationalist emblems known to us in Ireland. These are two flags believed to have been carried by the Catholic Confederacy against the Protestant settlers in 1641. The first of these, a Confederate unit flag, is known to us only through a description preserved among the papers of Fr Luke Wadding, an Irish Franciscan patriot living in Rome. This refers to a blue flag with an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary carrying the Infant Jesus and crushing a serpent's head with her foot. The motto is given as solvit vincula Deus (God hath broken our chains).[2]

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1. Georges-Denis Zimmermann, Songs of Irish Rebellion, Allen Figgis, Dublin, 1967, p. 55.

2. G.A. Hayes-McCoy, A History of Irish Flags, Academy Press, Dublin, 1979, p. 51. A pictorial reconstruction of the flag is given opposite, p. 48 of this book.

The other flag is believed to be a Confederacy cavalry guidon or pennant (ill 41). It was found in Kilkenny in 1846 and shows, painted on a ground of blue silk, the Virgin bearing the infant Jesus, within the surround of a Rosary. It seems that after the impact of the Reformation in the sixteenth century and of the Protestant plantation in the seventeenth, Ireland's native, Catholic population turned increasingly to the cult of the Virgin Mary, who previous to this appears to have taken second place to Celtic female saints and goddesses.[1] Veneration of the Virgin is known to have been particularly strong in seventeenth century Kilkenny, and in Ireland as a whole the cult of the rosary became particularly important during this period. It was authorised by the papacy to meet the needs of people who were largely debarred from more sophisticated liturgical practices by the wholesale confiscation of churches and, subsequently, by the anti-Catholic penal laws of the early eighteenth century. Then and now, in the Confederacy flag or Bogside grotto, the Irish Catholics have clung to the Virgin as a religio-political symbol of their dissent from Protestant rule and their adherence to their own traditions, practised amongst the fields and rocks, or in the privacy of their own homes.

Hibernia and Liberty

It was however the English who introduced to Ireland the female figure which was most decisively to shape the evolving visual image of Mother Ireland. Hibernia was the Roman name for Ireland, known since at least the time of Caesar.[2] Largely as a result of the

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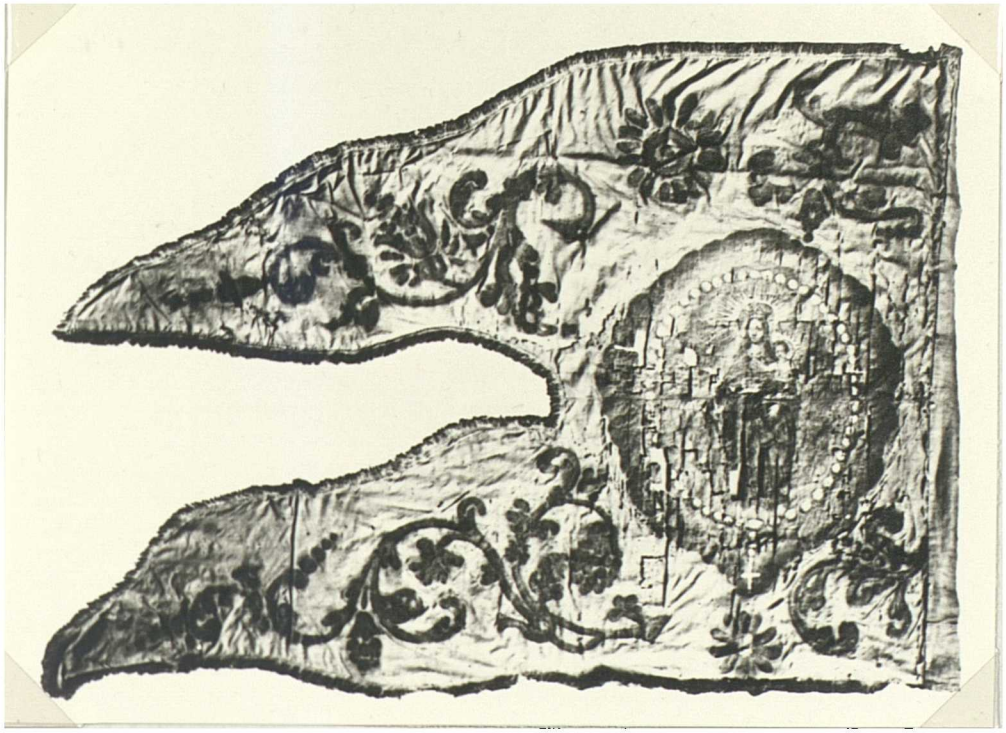
1. MacCurtain, op cit, p. 28.
2. Dr M.W. Heslinga, The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide, Van Gorcum, Assen, 1971, p. 30, note 6.



41. Catholic confederacy banner/1642-1652/painted silk/ 43 x 61 ins (109.2 x 155 cms)/Dominican Priory, Tallaght Co Dublin/Photo: National Museum of Ireland.

revival of classical imagery during the Renaissance such national designations gradually became commonplace. Britannia, who had first been given visual form on Roman coins, started to make public appearances again in the early seventeenth century. In 1605 she figured in Anthony Munday's entertainment for the Lord Mayor of London and in 1609 she was featured in the frontispiece to William Camden's Britannia.[1] By the mid-seventeenth century she was widely featured on English and Dutch medals, many of them designed by Roettier, and in 1672, she made her first appearance on English coinage, also designed by Roettier.[2] By this time Hibernia was also being fleshed out. In, for example, the frontispiece to the second edition of Sir James Ware's Antiquities of Ireland published in London in 1658, she stands in a peaceful, well-stocked woodland, with spear and wolfhounds, like the huntress-goddess Diana (ill 42). It was not unusual at this time to equate newly-discovered or colonized countries with the untarnished natural world of the prehistoric golden age dreamed of by the authors of ancient Greece and Rome. Such classical formulae played an important part for example in the development of European images of America.[3] These visions may indeed have owed something to reality. Contemporary English writers paid constant tribute to the nymph-like comeliness of Irish women and to the fertility and abundance of their

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1. David M. Bergeron, English Civil Pageantry 1558-1642, Edward Arnold, 1971, p. 173 & M. Dorothy George, English Political Caricature to 1792, Oxford, 1959, vol 1, p. 9 and pp. 144-5.

2. Herbert M. Atherton, Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth : A Study of the Ideographic Representation of Politics, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, pp. 89-91. On Roettier see above, p. 69.

3. Hugh Honour, The European Vision of America (exhibition catalogue), Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, 1975, pp. 2-5.

42. Hibernia/Frontispiece to James Ware, De Hibernia & Antiquitatibus ejus, 2nd ed, 1658/copper-engraving/ actual size.

country.[1] However the interests of propaganda also shaped many of these images. Indeed Ware's book may have been intended, like other contemporary descriptions of Ireland, as a lure to prospective settlers, to whom the country's famous hunting dogs and horses were particularly appealing. Personal feeling may have had its influence too. Ware's own nostalgia for the land from which he was in temporary exile[2] and the idyllic delicate view of nature usually to be found in the works of Wenceslaus Hollar, the artist responsible for the image, may each have played a part in its creation.

Yet only a few years previously, the numerous broadsheets and leaflets attacking Irish Catholics published by the English during the Civil War had included several depictions of Ireland as a woman weeping over her fate.[3] In the 1690s the theme was resumed again in a Williamite medal which showed the Dutch monarch as the welcome rescuer of the unfortunate country. Issued to commemorate William's presence in Belfast, it depicted:

> "... a figure of Ireland kneeling in a supplicating posture and demanding assistance, while over the whole were the words: Nisi tu quis Temperet Ignes? which, being translated, means, who but you can extinguish these fires?" 4

These English and Dutch depictions of weeping and melancholy Hibernia were clearly propaganda images, turning Ireland's very real

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1. David Beers Quinn, The Elizabethans and the Irish, Cornell University Press, New York, 1966, pp. 58-61 and pp. 79-80, and James Carty, Ireland from the Flight of the Earls to Grattan's Parliament, 1607-1782, C.J. Fallon, Dublin, 1949, p. 3 and p. 19.
2. His genuine interest in the country appears to be reflected in his activity as a collector of Irish manuscripts. See Evans, op cit, p. 5.
3. Syons Calamitye or Englands Miserye, 13 May 1643, and A prospect of bleeding Ireland's miseries, 16 April 1647, both in the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, see F.G. Stephens et al, Catalogue of prints and drawings in the British Museum, Division I, Political and Personal Satires, vols I-II, 1870-1954, no 677 and additional 373; and Brian de Breffny (ed), The Irish World, Thames & Hudson, 1978, p. 172.
4. R.M. Sibbett, Orangeism in Ireland, Henderson, Belfast, 1914, vol 1, p. 94.

woes at this time to political ends. Political comment is insufficient to bring out their full resonance however. They must also be seen as emblems of an age in which melancholy was an obsession, expressed visually in endless depictions of real or symbolic figures with the head resting on the hand in the pose considered appropriate to that sad mood, both in classical art and in later representations of the penitent Magdalen.[1]

The English images of Hibernia, both standing and prostrate, were soon turned to use by Irish propagandists. By the 1720s it was Anglo-Irish patriots who were depicting their country as the victim of her English rulers. In 1724 Miles Lockyer in Dublin issued a cartoon attacking Woods halfpence, in which the figure of Ireland lies weeping, her harp neglected,[2] while in 1749 Pingo's medal shows her thrown upon the ground, threatened by a murderer, whose dagger is averted by Justice, while at her feet lies a cap of liberty and a spear. On the reverse is unstrung harp.[3] And in 1770s and 1780s prostrate Hibernia is shown with a new rescuer from English subjugation - the Irish volunteer.[4]

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1. F. Saxl and R. Wittkower, British Art and the Mediterranean, Oxford University Press, 1948, section 43, no. 1. For Irish portraits of the late seventeenth century adopting this pose see Peter Harbinson, Homan Potterton and Jeanne Sheehy, Irish Art and Architecture, Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp. 125-6.

2. British Museum Prints and Drawings, George no 1749, reproduced in Michael Wynn-Jones, The Cartoon History of Britain, Tom Stacey, 1971, p. 21. In 1722 William Wood, on obtaining a patent to coin copper money for Ireland, began to mint lightweight halfpennies which were vehemently rejected by the Irish and eventually withdrawn. (Dr. A.E.J. Went, Irish Coins and Medals, Eason, Dublin, 1978).

3. Rev Henry Richard Dawson, "A Memoir of the Medals and Medallists associated with Ireland", Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, vol 19, 1843, p. 8.

4. See The Rescue. A Volunteer delivering Hibernia from the claws of the Lion, probably after 27 May 1782, British Museum Prints 2 Drawings, George 6002, and the flag of the Loyal Ballyshannon Volunteers, Donegal, ca 1779, preserved in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin and described in Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 92. There were also numerous representations of prostrate Britannia during this period. See Atherton, op cit, pp. 95-6.

Indeed by this time many Irish representations of Hibernia were showing her restored to dignity and adorned with the emblems of Liberty. The Cap of Liberty appears to have been an image current in Europe from the early seventeenth century. In 1604 the figures on the Temple Bar during James I's entry into London included Liberty trampling on yoked and fettered servitude, while bearing in her hand the hat symbolic of freedom;[1] and in 1641 the Cap of Liberty appeared in Henri Estienne's L'Art de faire les Devises where its meaning is traced back to the fact that the Egyptian hieroglyphic for an enfranchised slave was a hat.[2] Its earliest Irish appearance seems to have been in the medals of the Williamite period, particularly a series commemorating the King's triumphal entry into Dublin (ill 43).[3] When, some fifty years later, Irish medalmakers began to celebrate the achievements of the Protestant patriots who struggled to achieve a greater measure of Irish independence from England, often in the name of the Williamite constitution, they reverted to this imagery, showing their Hibernia surrounded by the symbols of liberty. One of the Williamite medals seems to have had a particularly direct influence on their designs. Dating from after 1702 and possibly the badge of an Orange club, it shows the King presenting the Cap of Liberty to a kneeling Hibernia. The same gesture is repeated in the 1755 medal which commemorates the protest of 124 Irish MPs against the need for royal consent for the disbursement of their treasury surplus on the Irish national debt. This time however it is the Speaker of the Irish House of

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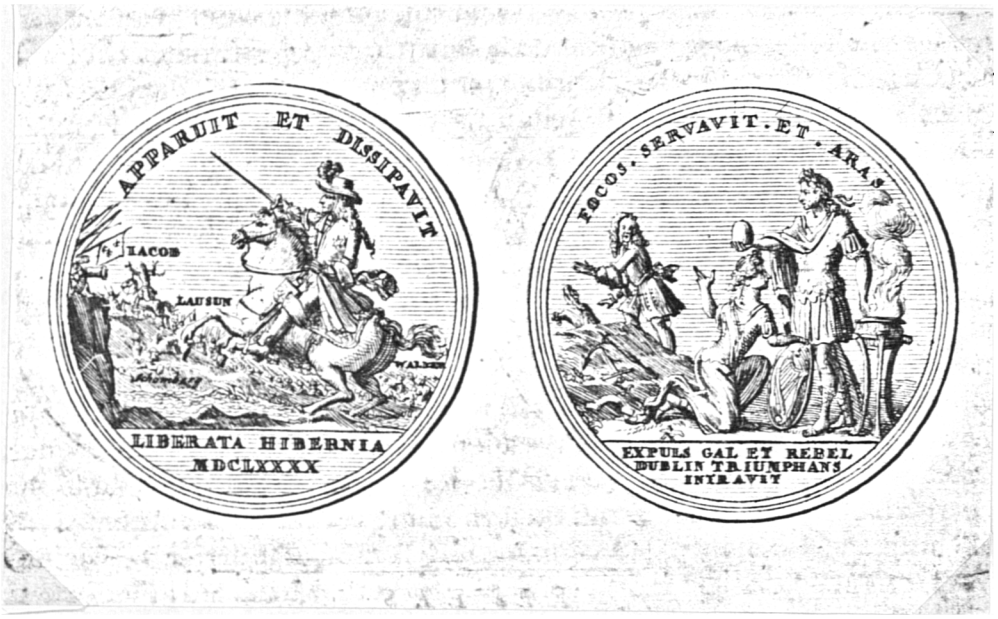
1. Bergeron, op cit, p. 85.
2. Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books, Chatto & Windus, 1948, p.24.
3. Edward Hawkins, Medallic Illustrations of Great Britain and Ireland to the Death of George II, ed Augustus W. Frank and Herbert A. Grueber, British Museum, vol 2, 1885, nos 140-145.



43. Dutch medal celebrating the liberation of Ireland/ 1690/illustrated in N. Chevalier, Histoire de Guillaume IIIme ... par Medailles, Inscriptions, Arcs de Triomphe & autres monuments publics, Amsterdam, 1692, p.142.

Commons who places the Cap of Liberty on Hibernia's head.[1] This was soon followed by the assertive imagery of the Louth election medal of 1755, the Westmeath election medal of 1768 and the medal of the Free and Independent Citizens of Kilkenny in 1770, all of which show Liberty/Hibernia standing with her cap and spear.[2]

Such imagery was not confined to medals. In 1768 a printed invitation to a social event at the time of the Co Louth elections depicts the figure of Hibernia, a spinning wheel, and an Irish harp surmounted by the crown and Cap of Liberty, all accompanied by the slogan "The Freedom, Independence and Protestant Interest of Louth Secured by the Octennial Bill, February 16th, 1768."[3] Even English manufacturers fell in with the change of mood. Transfer-printed plaques made in Birmingham round about 1760 showed Britannia encouraging a figure emblematic of the Irish linen industry and Paris awarding his prize apple to Hibernia.[4] The new feeling of Irish self-assurance was clearly linked with social change. A cartoon of this period shows a farmer's daughter returning to her family from Dublin and startling them with her fashionable airs.[5] She is a figure far removed from the distressed and distressing Irish women of the previous century.

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1. Dawson, op cit, p. 10.

2. Ibid, pp. 10-12 and National Museum 23-1934. The Louth election medal is reproduced in Went, op cit, ill no 101. Association of Britannia with Liberty was also frequent during this period. See Atherton, op cit, pp. 94-5.

3. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast (hereafter PRONI) D/4632/A. I am grateful to Graeme Kirkham for drawing my attention to this item.

4. These were shown at Morley College, London, in a Ceramic Circle exhibition, Nov-Dec 1974.

5. Stephens, et al, op cit, no 3751.

Liberty imagery in Ireland as in England[1] appeared well before either the American or the French Revolution, and owes much of its impetus to a return to the constitution of William III. Nevertheless the American Revolution of 1775 did serve to strengthen both the determination of Irish patriots and their inclination towards the emblems of liberty.[2] The revolutionaries, many of whom came from an Ulster Protestant background, saw themselves as fighting for, amongst other things, the liberties established by the Williamite rebellion of 1688 and sought to re-establish the classical democracy of the Greek and Roman republics.[3] Such concepts were naturally sympathetic to Ireland's Protestant patriots. The Revolution also gave those patriots the opportunity to develop their military strength, for the withdrawal of regular troops from Ireland to deal with the crisis left a need for Volunteer forces. These were rapidly recruited and towards the end of the century Liberty emblems featured increasingly in the items associated with them (notably badges, medals and flags), alongside the Orange symbols of their more loyalist brothers.[4] In Northern Ireland a particular type of Hibernia/Liberty figure seems to have been popular in the area on the borders of Counties Armagh and Tyrone, despite the strong Orange influence which prevailed there. The banners of the Waringstown and Caledon volunteers (ill 133) and the badge of the Loughbrickland volunteers all showed the female figure seated,

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1. In England such imagery is noticeable from the time of the 1745 rebellion. Used then as an assertion of the anti-Jacobite settlement it was, in the 1760s, developed by Wilkes and his followers to champion the rights of the citizen under that settlement.

2. See below, p. 403ff.

3. See Honour, op cit, p. 10 and The New Golden Land, Allen Lane, 1976, pp. 141-5.

4. Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 111.

leaning on her harp, holding a palm branch in one hand and a spear or pike crowned with the Cap of Liberty in the other.[1] This figure is very closely related to the coinage image of Hibernia. It was first used by James II in the currency struck after he fled to France and became thereafterwards the standard for Irish coins.[2] Hibernia's association with the Cap of Liberty on these emblems indicates however that she is no loyalist lady. This is underlined by the additional symbols supplied to her. In the case of the Loughbrickland and Caledon images she is seated on a bundle of fasces, or rods bound round an axe. This was the Roman symbol of authority. On both banners the reverse shows the harp surmounted by a Gaelic, not a British crown.

By now though, the desire for liberty was becoming almost respectable in certain Irish circles. Even the Cunningham prize medal designed by W.S. Mossop for the Royal Irish Academy in about 1783-4 showed Hibernia with harp, Irish crown, spear surmounted by Cap of Liberty and a ruined round tower, although the latter was probably intended more as an emblem of Irish antiquities than as the nationalist symbol it was later to become.

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1. The Waringstown banner was in Waringstown parish church. For descriptions of liberty imagery on volunteer banners see Hayes-McCoy, op.cit., pp.93-9. The Loughbrickland badge is in the Ulster Museum. It is reproduced in Andrew Morrow, "The Rev Samuel Barber, a.m. and the Rathfriland Volunteers", Ulster Journal of Archaeology, 2nd series, vol 15, 1909, p. 153.

2. There are examples of James II's coinage in the National Museum, Dublin. His Hibernia figure holds a palm branch in one hand and a cross in the other, a pose derived from Charles II's coinage of 1672 in which the now familiar seated Britannia first made her appearance, in imitation of the Roman coins of Hadrian II and Antoninus Pius issued in the second century AD (Saxl & Wittkower, op.cit, section 11). In Irish coinage subsequent to that issued by James II, Hibernia is invariably shown with one hand raising a palm branch and the other resting on her harp.

During the 1790s the Hibernia/Liberty figure passed into truly popular imagery, and following the formation of the revolutionary United Irishmen in 1791, became increasingly combative and alive. In the County Antrim election which took place in 1790 the two candidates who were in favour of parliamentary reform were elected, amid scenes of great enthusiasm. In the subsequent jubilant procession the two members were preceded by "a figure of Hibernia, holding in one hand a wreath and in the other the Cap of Liberty elevated on a pole."[1] In Belfast on 14 July 1792 an elaborate procession of volunteers and citizens celebrated the French Revolution. They carried a great standard elevated on a triumphal car and supported by two volunteers. This showed a figure of Hibernia bound hand and foot in shackles, with a Volunteer presenting to her a figure of Liberty, with the motto "For a People to be FREE, it is sufficient that they WILL IT!!"[2]

Participants in these processions could also consider more permanent representations of Hibernia/Liberty. If they were well-to-do, or members of Volunteer or United Irishman groups, they could see depictions of Liberty and her triumphs on the transfer-printed jugs from the Liverpool and Wedgwood factories then being imported into Ireland.[3] And even if they were poorer and unassociated with the kind of groups in which these jugs were used on convivial occasions, they could purchase for 1s 1d the collection of United Irish poems called Paddy's Resource, printed in 1795, probably in Belfast. The

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1. Charles Dickson, Revolt in the North, Antrim and Down in 1798, Clonmore and Reynolds, Dublin/Burns Oates and Washbourne, London, 1960, p. 83.
2. Belfast Politics, H. Joy, Belfast, 1794, p. 54. The banner was painted by James Atkins, father to the well-known Belfast artist of the same name. On the other side it showed the release of the prisoners from the Bastille.
3. There are several in the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

frontispiece to this is a wood-engraving which shows Hibernia/ Liberty standing under the Tree of Liberty, holding a maiden harp and a pike or spear topped with the Liberty cap, while broken chains lie at her feet (ill 44). The slogan above is "Tun'd to Freedom" and that below "Irishmen unite - Tear off your chains and let Millions Be Free". This publication seems to have been immensely influential : it went into numerous editions and remained popular until the 1840s; it was widely sold by pedlars in Northern Ireland; the "Tun'd to Freedom" slogan of the frontispiece reappears on one of the Volunteer jugs just mentioned; and the frontispiece was reproduced in a delightful early nineteenth century broadsheet, by the accomplished Belfast engraver John Barr.[1]

Another engraving by Barr underlines the widespread use of liberty imagery in Belfast during this period. It shows local citizens pointing upwards to an inn-sign on which the figure of Liberty is prominently displayed.[2] Government forces were increasingly aware that such emblems represented United Irish readiness to seize freedom for their country by an open rebellion, supported by the French revolutionaries. In 1793, during a period of particularly strong government anxieties about a possible rebellion, there were riots in which members of regiments stationed in Belfast pulled down similar inn-signs representing Dumourier, Franklin and Mirabeau.[3]

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1. On Paddy's Resource see Zimmermann, op cit, pp. 37-9 and F.J. Bigger, "James Porter (1753-1798) with some notes on 'Billy's Bluff' and 'Paddy's Resource'", Irish Book Lover, London,/Dublin vol 13, nos 7 and 8, Feb-March 1922, pp. 126-8. The Barr broadsheet is in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast. On Barr see below, p. 238 note 1.
2. This broadsheet is in the library of Queen's University, Belfast.
3. Belfast Politics, pp. 122-130 and Dickson, op cit, p. 95.

44. Hibernia as a Liberty figure/Frontispiece to Paddy's Resource, Belfast(?), 1795/copper engraving/actual size.

As the fervour of the United Irishmen grew, the wives and relatives of their leaders began to dress themselves up in nationalist colours or as deliberate personifications of Hibernia or Liberty. A yeoman named Poyntz Stewart recalled that Margaret Monro, sister of Henry Monro, the United Irish leader at the battle of Ballynahinch:

> "... always dressed in the first of Dublin fashion in her girlhood days and green and orange ribbons nearly always graced her head-dress." 1

And in Dublin Lady Lucy Fitzgerald, sister of another United Irish leader, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, had herself painted by the fashionable artist Hugh Douglas Hamilton:

> "... dressed in a gown stripedwith green, with a green ribbon on her head, and in gold letters on it the words, 'Erin go brah'". 2

Image and reality were becoming increasingly identified, and the Hibernia/Liberty figure was clearly very close to the heart of the Irish rebels of this time. Indeed Robert Emmet, who headed the abortive rebellion of 1803, designed his own seal of Erin playing the maiden harp, accompanied by liberty emblems, and doodled a striking Hibernia/Liberty figure, (ill 45).[3]

Even lowly camp-followers allied themselves with history in the same fashion. On the battlefield at Ballynahinch in 1798 were found:

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1. Dickson, op cit, p. 251.

2. Letter from Mrs. Maria H- of Dublin to Mrs. Helen Clarke, London, 31 May 1798, facsimile no 83 in PRONI, The 98 Rebellion, HMSO, Belfast, 1976.

3. See Hayes-McCoy, op cit, pp. 120-121 where the seal is reproduced.

45. Doodles by Robert Emmet, ca 1803/illustrated opposite p.54 of L. O'Broin, Emmet, Dublin, 1954.

> "the bodies of two beautiful women fantastically dressed up in green silk who had carried the rebel standards. They had been known as the Goddess of Liberty and the Goddess of Reason, and were apparently the town prostitutes." 1

The extent to which Hibernia/Liberty imagery affected the rural Irish of this period is however debatable. Their verbal traditions certainly provided a semi-underground link with the female figures of Ireland's Celtic past. Eighteenth century Irish Jacobite poets wrote allegorical songs, often of an aisling or dream nature, saluting the female personification of Ireland, frequently using a contemporary girls' name. While some have seen in this a cult of "secret names" for the mother country, others believe that the choice was quite fortuitous. According to them the poet wrote patriotic words to the air of a popular love song, retaining the name of the girl in the original, perhaps because it provided an indication of the tune to which the new words were to be sung; only then did the name become allegorical for Ireland.

The political symbolism of the Celtic goddesses seems also to have been appropriated by at least one Catholic rural protest group in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The Whiteboys, who flourished in counties Kilkenny and Tipperary in the 1760s, appear to have sought legitimation of their intimidation of figures like rent and tithe collectors, by symbolically associating themselves with a number of mythical females, notably Queen Sieve or Sieve Oultagh. They swore a secret oath to be true to Sieve and her

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1. Thomas Pakenham, The Year of Liberty, Panther, 1972, p. 264. Such dressing-up also occurred in England at this time. At an election procession in Nottingham in 1802, an allegedly nude woman represented the Goddess of Reason (E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Penguin, 1968, p. 493).

2. Zimmermann, op cit, p. 55 and pp. 88-91.

children.

> "'By Sieve', they said, 'we meant a distressed harmless old woman, blind of one eye, who still lives at the foot of a mountain in the neighbourhood. By her children, all those that would join us for the aforesaid purposes." 1

They also described themselves as "Queen Sieve and her fairies." Their threats were often signed Sieve Oultagh. And it is said that one of their common rallying-cries was "Long Live King George III and Queen Sieve."

In all this there seems to be a strong element of recourse to the Celtic concept of the female figure emblematic of the land, who validates the King's rule by her acceptance of him, and whose natural laws the Whiteboys represented themselves as administrating.[2] The Whiteboys appear also to have legitimised their activities by appropriating to themselves female imagery associated with Irish mumming rituals. Female disguise was persistently employed by the Whiteboys themselves, and by similar groups until at least the mid-nineteenth century. Dr Michael Beames has argued convincingly, that by adopting such disguise from mumming ceremonies associated with ritual turning-points of natural and human existence like May Eve and Hallowe'en, these rural agrarian protestors impressed on their victims (and indeed on themselves) their natural right to act as they did.[3]

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1. M. Wall, "The Whiteboys", in T. Desmond Williams (ed), Secret Societies in Ireland, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973, p. 15.

2. See Patrick J. Corish, The Catholic Community in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Helicon, Dublin 1981, pp. 124-127, and A.T.Q. Stewart, The Narrow Ground, Faber, 1977, p. 117.

3. This argument is contained in Dr Beames' forthcoming book on peasant movements and their control in pre-Famine Ireland. See above, p. 94 for the possible appropriation of mumming traditions to Williamite sham fights.

However recourse to the female imagery of Celtic and mumming traditions does not appear to have been a feature of Catholic peasant life in the north of Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Instead we find there, in the 1790s, a tantalising glimpse of a female figure who may be either the Liberty symbol used by Irish republicans of this period, or the Virgin figure previously used as a semi-religious, semi-political emblem by Irish Catholics.

In 1795 the standard of the Catholic Defenders was captured at the Battle of the Diamond by an Orangeman who was later master of no 76 Lodge in Tandragee. It was preserved by his widow who showed it to the Orange historian Edward Rogers many years later:

> "On a white ground, with a green shamrock border, is painted the Virgin Mary, presiding as a goddess, with a bunch of beads in her hand, and underneath the following inscription:- 'Deliver us from these heretic dogs and we will be free.'" 1

On balance I think this probably was a Virgin banner. Certainly in 1791 the Defenders defeated by Williamites in an affray at Lisnagade, are said to have carried the white flag of Jacobite tradition, a bundle of rosary beads and an invocation to the Virgin Mary.[2] Yet there is an element of ambiguity about this figure - it could just have been a Hibernia/Liberty image based on the Paddy's Resource frontispiece or something similar. The word goddess could be read equally as the taunt of a Protestant or as the instinctive

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1. Edward Rogers, Revolution of 1688 and History of the Orange Association of England and Ireland, W.E.G. Baird, Belfast, 1881, p.17. See also Sibbett, op cit, vol I, p. 225. This flag may well indeed have been previously carried at Lisnagade. In an old Orange song, commemorating that affray, first committed to print in 1816, there is a verse, which runs as follows:

   We had not march'd a mile or when the white flag we espied,
   With a branch of podereens on which they much relied,
   And this inscription underneath - Hail Mary! unto thee
   Deliver us from these Orange dogs, and then we will be free.

   Podereens is a corruption of the Irish word "paidrin" meaning rosary (Zimmermann, op cit, p. 306).

2. Zimmermann, op cit, p. 43.

term selected when dealing with a classical image, and rosary beads and chains are easily confused, particularly by an Orangeman on the lookout for Mariolatry. In essence what we seem to have here are two possible lines of descent stemming from those early seventeenth century figures of Liberty trampling the fetters of bondage.[1] On the one hand, the message of those early images may have been adopted in general Catholic imagery of the Virgin as the breaker of man's bondage in sin through her part in the Incarnation, and transmitted thence to the Defenders banner either directly, which seems most likely, or just possibly, through the memory of the Catholic Confederacy banner (ill 41). Or on the other hand, the message of those early Liberty figures may have been passed on to the Defenders virtually unchanged, through the medium of such United Irishman images as the frontispiece to Paddy's Resource (ill 44). The known facts do not allow us to make any firm conclusions, and a strong sense of the different meanings given to female images during the late eighteenth century by Protestants and Catholics, republicans and peasant agitators, has also to be retained. Nevertheless, whether the Defenders' image was a Liberty figure on the Virgin, the message was essentially the same - deliverance from bondage.

Submissive females

Female figures which fused concepts of Ireland and liberty continued to feature in Irish political imagery in the nineteenth century. The revolutionary aspirations of the previous generation were not forgotten. Ballad-singers passed on such songs of the 1790s as the Sean van Vocht (The Poor Old Woman), perpetuating a

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1. See above, p. 132.

personification of Ireland derived from the Celtic tradition, and they maintained in their repertoire the aisling poems of the eighteenth century Jacobites, albeit in anglicized and often degenerate versions.[1] The visual imagery of their song-books and ballad-sheets also kept republican traditions alive. An 1803 Dublin reprint of Paddy's Resource was supplied with a new frontispiece showing a glowing cap of liberty, while, as we have seen, the old frontispiece was given a new lease of life in John Barr's charming broadsheet, which probably dates from the 1820s.[2]

Liberty imagery was also perpetuated in a significant proportion of the many medals connected with Daniel O'Connell, the leader of Irish constitutional agitation from the late 1820s to the early 1840s. Perhaps the most striking of these was the design produced by W. Wyon for the Loyal National Repeal Association in about 1840. This associated an open statement of the desire to revive the 1782 campaign for an independent Irish parliament with the liberty imagery of that period. Also interesting were John Jones' medal commemorating the obtaining of Catholic emancipation in 1829, in which he simply added a spear and a cap of liberty to Mossop's design for the Centenary of the House of Hanover, and William Woodhouse's medal of 1841 rejecting foreign manufacture, in which the figure of Hibernia was modelled after O'Connell's daughter, Mrs Fitzsimon of

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1. See above, p. 139 and Zimmermann, op cit, pp. 54-6 and pp. 176-180.

2. Another broadsheet of about the same date, printed by Joseph Smyth of Belfast, showed a female personification of America carrying on a sword a cap of liberty decorated with a shamrock. (Linen Hall Library).

Glencullen.[1] In all these medals Hibernia is upright and defiant. Indeed on the membership medal of the Order of Liberators, designed by Isaac Parkes and first issued in 1829, she firmly clasps a sword in her hand and is titled "Ireland as she ought to be."

Upright, defiant Hibernia also appeared on banners associated with O'Connell's campaigns, although the effect was not always as intended. An unsympathetic reporter on the nationalist leader's visit to Belfast in 1841, describes as follows some of the decorations at a dinner given in honour of the notable visitor:

> "Behind the chair were two female figures crowning O'Connell with what seemed to be and most probably had been intended for, a wreath of laurel, while on each side were banners exhibiting national devices, one of which was a figure of Erin, with a harp encircled with shamrocks, but so coarse was the workmanship, that if the truth must be told, poor Erin had more of the bloated exterior of a shebeen housekeeper than of the angelic idealism naturally associated with the personification of the 'Emerald Isle.' Another emblematic representation of the same subject was placed in front of the orchestra, with a wolf-dog reposed at the lady's feet..." 2

More effective representations seem to have appeared on the trade banners used in O'Connellite demonstrations, such as those carried in the procession in Dublin in 1843.[3]

It is possible that images of a standing defiant Hibernia were encouraged by the increased display of representations of the

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1. Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, Irish Portraits 1660-1860, catalogue of exhibition shown at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, National Portrait Gallery, London and Ulster Museum, Belfast, 1969-1970, Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, 1969, pp. 98-9, and William Fraser, "Irish medallists and their work", Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Dublin, vol 17, 1886, pp.612-613. The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin have a good collection of medals associated with O'Connell.
2. William McComb, The Repealer Repulsed, Belfast, 1841, p. 30.
3. See the description quoted in Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 131.

Virgin following the granting of Catholic emancipation in 1829. She was featured in all her glory on the temperance medals of the 1830s and 1840s,[1] honoured by Lady Day processions in Belfast in the 1860s and 1870s,[2] and lovingly depicted on school medals such as the one produced for Clongowes in 1863.[3]

The most assertive Hibernia image of this century was produced, as one might expect, by the Fenians, who struggled unavailingly to bring about another Irish rebellion in 1867. On their 10 dollar bond issued in 1867, Hibernia, accompanied by her harp and wolfhound, points to the struggle which is to come, while a Fenian volunteer kneels to pick up the sword which lies at her feet.[4]

However in the last quarter of the century, in the imagery of the Land League and Home Rule movement, there seems to have been a shift from a defiant, upright Hibernia to a far more submissive figure. In the Cullen Land League banner from Co Tipperary, Ireland is elegantly seated, leaning on her harp,[5] and on the Irish National League banner from Kilmaley in Co Clare, she is being raised from her knees by the Home Rule leader Parnell (ill 46). Contemporary accounts of nationalist demonstrations during this period seem to bear out this change in imagery.

G.A. Hayes-McCoy, in his book on Irish flags and banners, points out that a century earlier it was the Volunteer who knelt to

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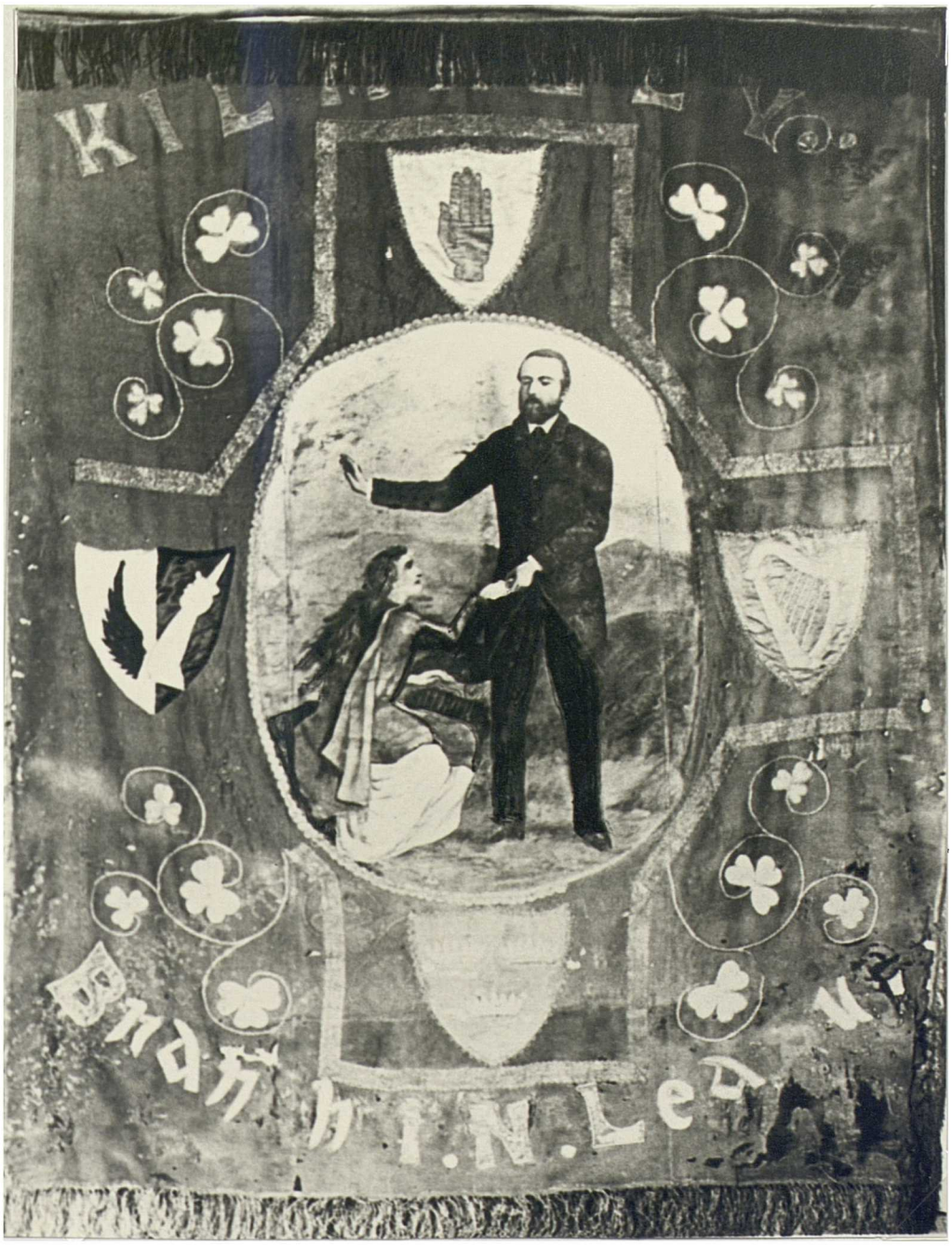
1. See the examples in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.
2. Sybil Baker, "Orange and Green, Belfast 1832-1912", in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, The Victorian City, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, vol 2, pp. 797-781.
3. Frazer, op cit, p. 204.
4. Reproduced in Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 151.
5. Reproduced and discussed ibid, pp. 175-177. The banner is in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.



46. W. O'Grady/Banner of the Kilmaley, Co Clare, branch of the Irish National League/1885/oil paints and applique on silk/84 x 60 ins (213.5 x 152.5 cms)/National Museum of Ireland/Photo: NMI.

Hibernia. He concludes that the change in roles was due to nationality's loss of mystique in the intervening period.[1] The situation is more complex however. As we have seen, Hibernia's pose here was by no means the only one adopted by her in the late nineteenth century. And its occurrence in this banner is attributable to a large number of factors.

If we want to understand the meaning of Hibernia's pose in the Kilmaley banner, it is necessary first of all to consider the immediate context of its production. Of its painter, W. O'Grady, we know little, except that he was a Dublin decorative artist who painted several trade union banners in the 1870s.[2] About the Irish National League we know considerably more. It was formed in 1882 to replace the Land League, and represented a change in aim for the followers of Charles Stewart Parnell. Their main target now was home rule for Ireland rather than land reform, and the new group was geared more to constituency organisation than to attacks on landlords. Its membership was increasingly middle-class.

Immediately prior to the formation of this body Parnell had suffered a short period of imprisonment. During this time the women of the Ladies Land League, led by his sister, Anna, had been particularly active in anti-landlord campaigns. Female participation in the land war was nothing new. Throughout the nineteenth century hordes of howling women had attended the men who attempted to serve notices of eviction. But their involvement in the Ladies Land League marked a new stage in self-organisation, for it made possible

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1. Op cit, p. 176.

2. Belinda Loftus, Marching Workers, (exhibition catalogue), Arts Councils of Ireland and Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Belfast 1978, p. 62.

the all-important comprehensive boycott of shops linked to landed interests. There was also a noticeable increase in violence against landlords at this time, which may have been partly due to the Ladies Land League. Whatever the truth of the matter, the organisation attracted much male opposition, notably from clerics and from Parnell himself.[1] Neither he nor his associates welcomed militant women to the nationalist cause. Their attitude to the fervently nationalist Maud Gonne is very revealing. According to police records, Parnell deliberately avoided Dublin when he knew Miss Gonne to be there, and in London, when she tried to appear on a platform with him, he told her that "there were already too many ladies upon public platforms and that the fewer the better."[2] The police believed the Irish Party regarded Maud Gonne as a fanatic, and thought she might be useful for electioneering but little more. Davitt, the Land War Leader was also cool towards her. According to her own account he believed her to be a spy, though reading between the lines, one suspects he thought her condoning of the recent Land War outrages an indication of a dangerously fervent

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1. F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine, Collins/Fontana, 1974, pp. 174-5 and 178-9; Joseph Lee, The Modernisation of Irish Society, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1973, pp. 93-4; and T.W. Moody, "Anna Parnell and the Land League", Hermathena, Hodges Figgis, Dublin/Academic Press, London, no 117, 1974, pp. 5-17.

2. Information in Dublin Castle State Papers, CBS 1833/S,22 Aug 1980, quoted in Gregory Allen, "Maud Gonne and Home Rule", Irish Times, 18 Jan 1978, p. 8. See also, Conrad A. Balliett, "The Lives - and lies - of Maud Gonne", Éire-Ireland, Irish-American Cultural Institute, Minnesota, vol 14 no 3, Fall 1979, p. 25, and Maud Gonne, A Servant of the Queen, Victor Gollancz, 1938, pp. 86-7. Constance Markievicz was also treated with initial suspicion by Arthur Griffith in 1908 (Jacqueline van Voris, Constance de Markievicz, University of Massachusetts, 1967, p. 59.)

character.[1]

Something of this male sense of horror at militant female nationalism may underlie Hibernia's submissive relationship to Parnell in this banner. It should be remembered though that this was not the first time the relationship between Ireland and a political leader was visualised in this way. In Daniel O'Connell's home, Derrynane in Co Kerry, there hangs a hilarious, anonymous painting of the great leader as a Herculean figure bursting the chains of Irish bondage, watched admiringly by a grateful, kneeling Erin, a kind of Irish Tarzan and Jane. The figure who liberates Ireland from slavery is now male not female. The country looks to him to act on her behalf, rather than bursting asunder her chains herself or calling to her people to rid themselves of their shackles. This is the age of the leader and the mass.

However political imagery is not purely a reflection of political activity. The meek and submissive imagery of this painting, and of the Cullen and Kilmaley banners, needs to be seen in the more general context of Hibernia imagery in the nineteenth century. Victorian sentiment, commercial interest, religious development and social change, all helped to foster a cliched image of a seated Hibernia, leaning on her harp and in many cases lamenting. This image was accepted by Irish and English alike, from the lowliest tourist seeking a souvenir, to the most distinguished artist in search of a symbol of his native land.

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1. Elizabeth Coxhead, Daughters of Erin, Secker & Warburg, 1965, p. 25.

The impact of Victorian sentiment on Irish female imagery can be seen very early in the nineteenth century. Indeed it seems more than likely that horror at the brutal events of the 1798 rebellion accelerated the shift from eighteenth century rumbustiousness to Victorian gentility. Certainly the female imagery associated with the Act of Union between England and Ireland in 1800 is an epitome of polite loyalty. Medals in particular took up the loyal theme. In 1801 there were a number which celebrated union with England with representations of Hibernia, Britannia and shamrock wreaths. In 1814 there was one designed by W.S. Mossop, which commemorated the centenary of the House of Hanover, with a representation of a seated Hibernia, with harp, lion and cornucopia, holding a portrait of George III and an olive branch, while behind her the sun rises over the sea. And in 1821 a number of medals marked the visit of George IV to Ireland, including a design by W. Hamy Direx showing Hibernia with harp and wolfhound.[1]

Meanwhile in Dublin and London, fashionable ladies dressed themselves in:

> "... flowing white muslin gown, green silk cummerbund, hair tumultuously abandoned - and gazed out of their bedroom windows while fingering a harp."[2]

They were modelling themselves on Princess Glorvina, heroine of the novel The Wild Irish Girl, published in 1806 by Sidney Owenson (Lady Morgan), a charming drawing-room propagandist for the romance of Gaelic Ireland. In the same drawing-rooms were also being sung Thomas Moore's sad and sentimental nationalist songs,

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1. See the medals of this period in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin and Dawson, op cit, p. 19.

2. Brian Cleeve, "The Wild Irish Girl", Hibernia, Dublin, 16 May 1975, p. 21.

several of which celebrated the female personification of Ireland.[1] A similar romantic, sentimental view of Irish womanhood was being presented to England's lower classes in the popular songs of the day, which were often performed by Irish artists and which were sometimes recorded in visual form by contemporary cartoons.[2] The growing number of English tourists visiting Ireland were also offered endless commercial products which featured this kind of sentimentalized Hibernia. One of the best known porcelain figures made by the high-quality Belleek pottery in Co Fermanagh for its considerable tourist and export trade, was variously titled Erin Uncovering her pot or Erin Awakening from her Slumbers. It dates from sometime in the late 1860s, and was designed by William Boynton Kirk, son of the Dublin sculptor Thomas Kirk. In it Erin, for all her harp and Celtic High Cross, is a typically delicate Victorian young lady. Similar sentimentalized Hibernias also adorned cheaper items geared to the tourist trade, such as bog oak jewellery.[3]

Simultaneously English manufacturers and designers were conveying this image to Irish customers. A mid-nineteenth century catalogue of seals manufactured by J. Bray in London and sold by J. Henderson in Belfast, includes the following entry:

> "108. Old Woman, Cat and Spinning Wheel. 'Irish Manufacture for ever' (two sizes)" 4

The irony of the motto is inescapable. And indeed I suspect

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1. Zimmermann, op cit, p. 77.
2. Stephen et al, op cit, nos 10954, 11201, 11522.
3. There is an example of the Belleek piece in the Ulster Museum Belfast, which also has a fine collection of bog oak jewellery. See Jeanne Sheehy, The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past, Thames & Hudson, 1980, ill 71.
4. The catalogue is attached to the September 1847 number of the Belfast People's Magazine in the Linen Hall Library and presumably was issued somewhere around that date.

that what we see here is a popularized, anglicized version of those eighteenth century images associating the personification of Ireland with the emblems of her rapidly developing linen industry, a version from which, in turn, the figure of Ireland as a spinner, depicted on internee handkerchiefs during the present troubles (ill 23), almost certainly derives.

Tourist-style images of Irish colleens were also presented in Irish novels of this period, for many of these were illustrated by Englishmen with little or no direct knowledge of their neighbouring island. Such is the frontispiece by "Phiz" to William Carleton's Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry, which crucially belies the often wry and harshly realistic nature of the author's writings (ill 47). It seems all the more remarkable in that it was actually published in Dublin not London.

Yet Irishmen themselves produced the same kind of sentimentalized Hibernias for their own delectation. A formula Maid of Erin developed, leaning on her harp, and accompanied by round tower, wolfhound, sunburst, and sometimes high cross. This figure was endlessly repeated in popular artifacts. In her liveliest manifestations, such as Pat McAuliffe's famous plaster-carving in Listowel[1] or some of the Northern banners of nationalist organisations like the Ancient Order of Hibernians (ill 22), her billowing bosoms and raven hair proclaim her to be a true Irishwoman, far removed from Kirk's simpering female, but she is almost always too stolid to elicit more than a faint glow of patriotic fervour.

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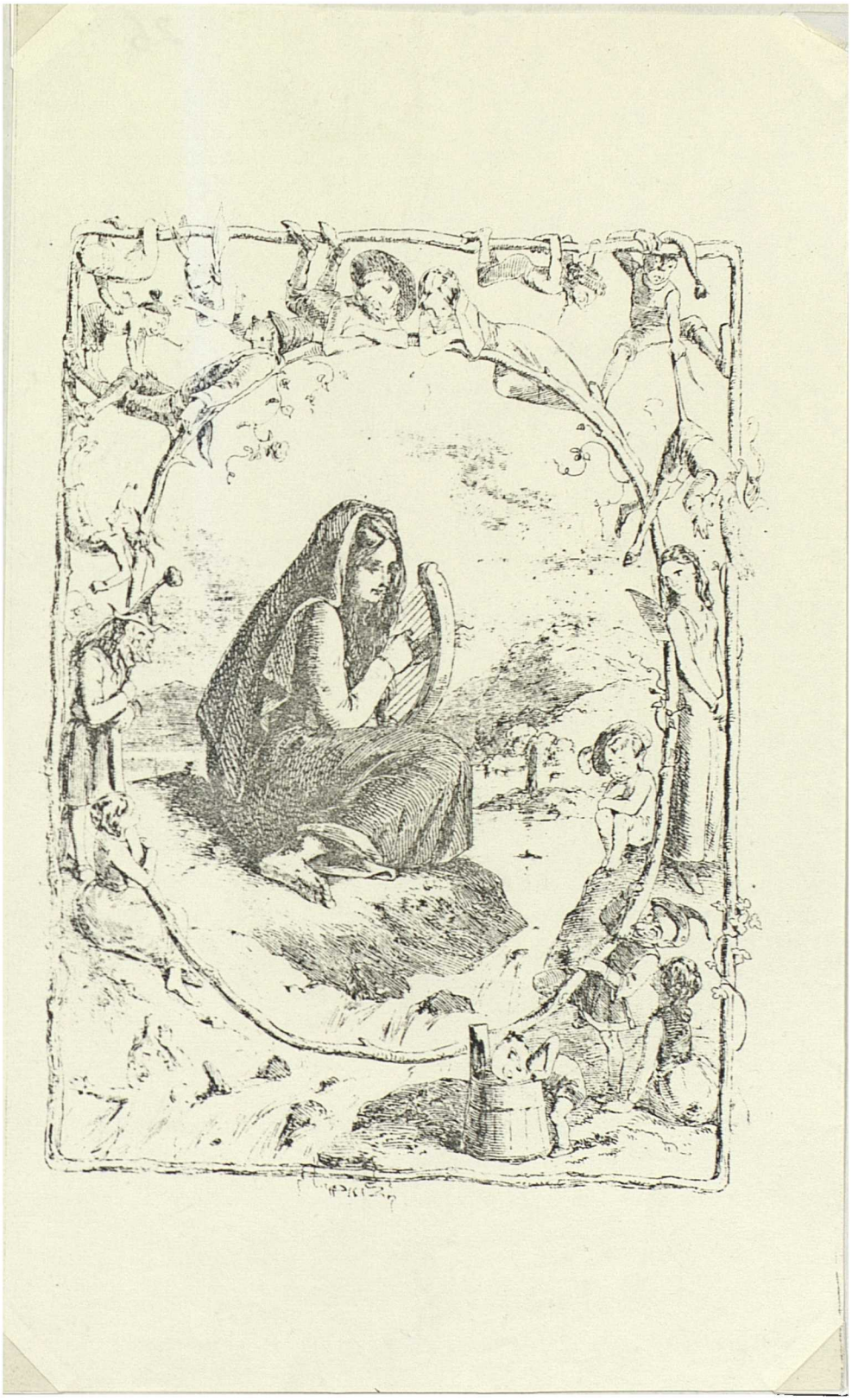
1. Sheehy, op cit, colour plate 1.



47. "Phiz" (Hablot Knight Browne / Frontispiece to William Carleton, Tales & Stories of the Irish Peasantry, James Duffy, Dublin, 1846/steel-engraving/actual size.

The leading artists of the period hardly strayed from this formula. Indeed they did much to reinforce its popularity. The Cork-born artist Daniel Maclise achieved a considerable reputation as a history-painter in the mid-nineteenth century. His first major work on the Hibernia theme was The Origin of the Harp, believed to have been painted in about 1842. This image, which shows the figure of a woman emerging from the sea and being turned into a harp, was based on one of Thomas Moore's melodies, in which he imagines the maiden of the Irish harp rising from the waves, to bide tryst with a youth whom she loved but who 'left her weep' - 'Heav'n look'd with pity on true love so warm, and changed to this soft harp the sea maiden's form.'[1] Moore claimed that when he visited the United Irish leader Edward Hudson in Kilmainham gaol he found that his friend had 'made a large drawing with charcoal on the wall of his prison, representing that fanciful origin of the Irish harp which, some years after, I adopted as the subject of one of the Melodies."[2] As Hayes-McCoy points out, the maiden or figurative harp had in fact been current in Irish usage since at least the seventeenth century, and its derivation was far less glamorous than this moving story would indicate.[3] But, for Maclise, who had become a friend of Moore and who is also believed to have been a member of the London extension of the Young Ireland movement,[4] the harp was increasingly a person symbol of Ireland's

1. Thomas Moore, 'Tis believed that this harp', in Moore's Irish melodies, Longmans, n.d. (1845), p. 60.

2. Thomas Moore, The life and death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Longmans, 1831, vol 1, p. 302, quoted in Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 47.

3. Op cit, p. 46. On the development of the harp as a nationalist symbol for Ireland, see below, p. 445ff.

4. Sheehy, op cit, p. 45. On Maclise's earlier antagonism to both Thomas Moore and Irish nationalism, see John Turpin, "Daniel Maclise, Disraeli and Fraser's Magazine", Eire-Ireland, Minnesota, vol 15 no 1, Spring 1980, pp. 46-63.

sufferings. He repeated the Origin of the Harp image a few years later in his illustrations to the 1845 edition of Moore's Melodies (ill 48) and included in those illustrations several other designs on the harp theme. Both Maclise's painting and his Moore illustrations are in a gloomy, almost icily romantic style which owes much to the work of contemporary German artists. But the illustrations are, like their German models, very skilfully integrated with the text, and Moore's book was enormously popular in England and Ireland. It is not surprising therefore to find them becoming a natural model for other Irish illustrators of the late nineteenth century.[1]

Maclise himself repeated the symbolic representation of Ireland's sufferings by unstrung harps and submissive, lamenting women in his major painting of The Marriage of Strongbow and Eva, (ill 49) first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1854. The degree of nationalist feeling involved in this work is debatable. While in his earlier years Maclise demonstrated a strong interest in Irish antiquities and customs, and is believed to have had links with the Young Ireland movement, like many of his contemporaries he later reacted with morbid disquiet to the revolutionary activities of the Fenians. And certainly the painting has to be seen in context, as one of a number of designs by Maclise for the proposed Westminster Palace frescoes, in which he chose to emphasise not the achievements of the English people but the subjugation of Britain's native inhabitants by successive waves of invaders.[2] Yet it is clear both from this painting and the artist's later works that his interest in Irish

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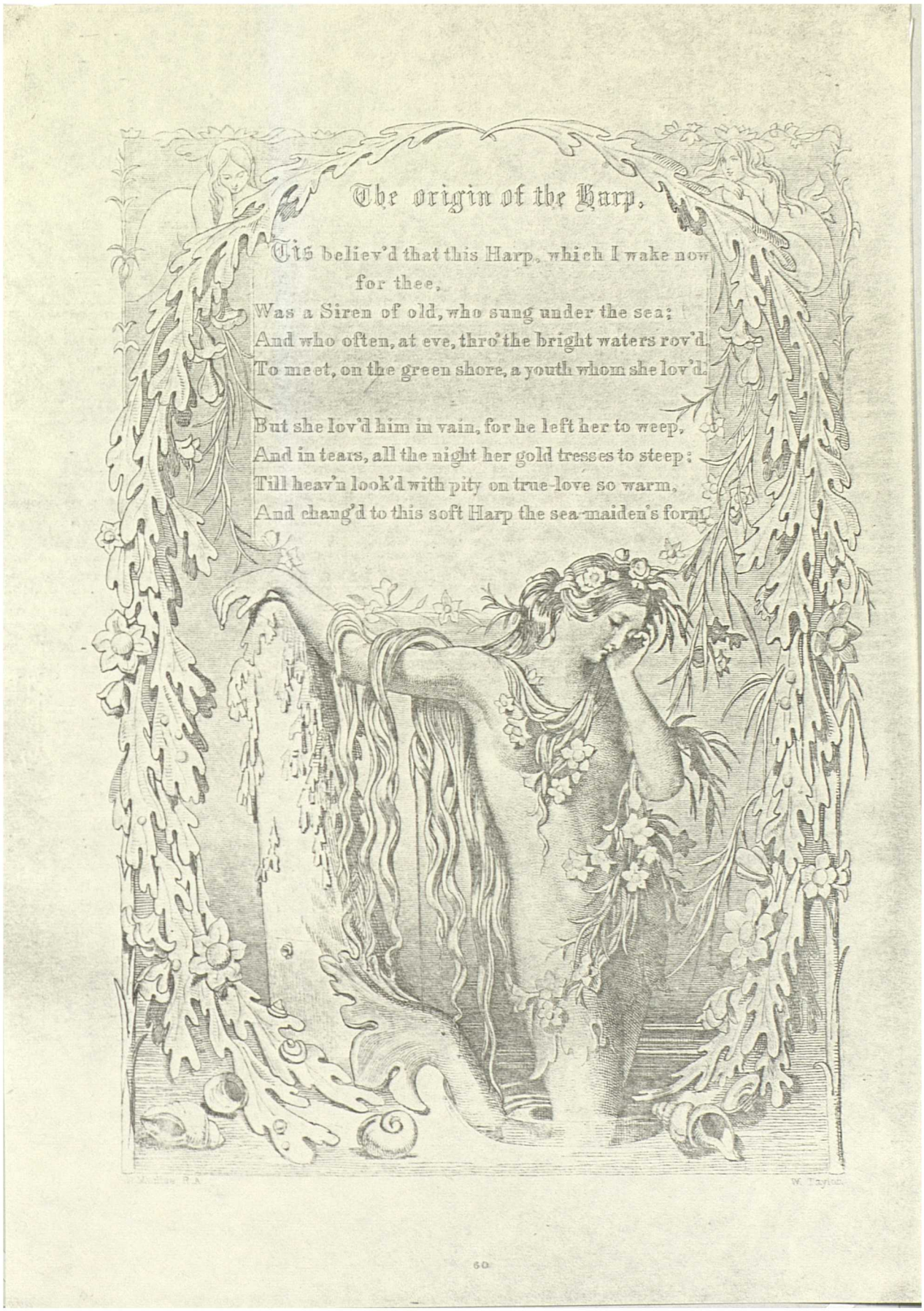
1. See the work of the Belfast artist, Elish Lamont.

2. Sheehy, op cit, p. 42.



48. Daniel Maclise/Illustration on p.50 of Thomas Moore, Irish Melodies, Longmans, n.d. (1845)/steel-engraving/ actual size.

49. Daniel Maclise/The Marriage of Strongbow and Eva/ ca 1854/oil on canvas/121½ x 198 3/4 ins (309 x 505 cms)/National Gallery of Ireland/Photo: NGI.

culture and all it stood for, remained to the end.[1]

It is a picture of flawed grandeur, largely because of Maclise's attempt to use two incompatible styles; as in a Cecil B. de Mille film epic, the painstaking attention to accuracy of detail detracts from the grandeur of the overall design. As an illustration of the amazingly complex influences on an Irish artist's depiction of his native history in the mid-nineteenth century, it is however a fascinating picture. In a sense all Maclise's life seems to be concentrated in it. From his father's soldiering background is probably derived his obsession with military defeat, developed no doubt by the gloom and morbidity of his later years; to his Presbyterian background he may have owed his deeply serious attitude to history; from his contacts with Irish Catholics such as his fellow native of Cork, the sculptor John Hogan, he may have acquired the knowledge of religious imagery which enabled him to give added poignancy to the defeat of the Irish. (The dead are buried with the gestured of Christ's entombment, the mourners lamenting with the bowed heads of the 'pleurants' surrounding medieval tombs or the upflung arms of the women grieving over Christ's body in early renaissance paintings, the damsels follow Eva into bondage with the palms and wreaths of virgin martyrs, the figure of Strongbow relentlessly tramples the Cross).[2] From his early studies of Celtic ornament reinforced by his knowledge of the German illustrators and fresco-painters and of the new theatrical

1. Ibid, p. 49, where Jeanne Sheehy points out that Maclise's last oil was based on one of the Irish subjects suggested many years earlier by Thomas Davis, leader of the Young Ireland movement.
2. John Turpin, "The Irish Background of Daniel Maclise, 1806-1870", Capuchin Annual, Dublin, 1970, p. 177; Richard Ormond, "Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) - a major figurative painter", The Connoisseur, March 1972, p. 167 and John Turpin, "The lure of the Celtic past in the art of Daniel Maclise", Ireland of the Welcomes, Dublin, May-June 1972, p. 36.

emphasis on accuracy of custume Maclise may have drawn this insistence on the minute details of banners and armour;[1] from his love of the theatre too he may have developed the fondness for striking gesture, the talent for using compositional grouping and the contrasts of dark and light, male and female, to emphasise the opposition of conqueror and conquered;[2] from his knowledge of the literary theories of Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton and Carlisle (the last of whom was himself influenced by German idealist thought) may have grown the whole concept of symbolising great historical changes by the actions of great heroes at key historical moments; and, as one might expect, the personal key-note is there too: as in other paintings in this series the bard is witness to the passing of a civilization. Here though he is eloquently mute, and his harp is stringless.

Maclise's painting does not seem to have come to Ireland until 1879, when it was purchased at Christies by Sir Richard Wallace, who presented it to the National Gallery of Ireland. It seems never to have been exhibited elsewhere in the country; nor does it appear to have been engraved.[3] It is unlikely therefore to have had a vast influence on popular concepts of Hibernia; the Moore illustrations must have been far more widely known. The painting is indicative however of the extent to which Ireland's artistic elite of this time shared the popular image of sorrowful Hibernia and her harp.

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1. Turpin, "The Irish background", p. 178 and p. 192.
2. Richard Ormond and John Turpin (compilers), Daniel Maclise, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1972, p. 100 and p. 106.
3. Information from the National Gallery of Ireland.

The same is true of John Hogan's memorial to Bishop Doyle (ill 50). The praise lavished on the statue by both George Petrie in the Irish Penny Journal of 19 December 1840 and by the Young Irelanders in The Nation of 30 October 1847 may have recommended it to a large number of their readers, but they would have had to travel to Carlow Cathedral to see it, for it appears never to have been placed on show elsewhere. The statue, which was completed in 1839, shows Doyle with one hand laid encouragingly on the shoulder of the kneeling, sorrowful Erin while the other is raised to heaven in intercession for her. The pose, which closely resembles that of Parnell and Erin in the Kilmaley banner, has definite religious overtones. It is that of Christ with Mary Magdalen at his feet, both as a sinner and as the faithful but uncomprehending follower in the garden of the Resurrection. This was not the only occasion on which the strongly Catholic Hogan merged nationalist and religious feeling. Another of his Erin sculptures, which shows the Ireland-figure with the Celtic hero Brian Boru, is a Madonna and Child composition.[1]

The Mother Ireland figures portrayed by Hogan and Maclise may also be early examples of female figures which symbolise not only public meanings but the artist's most private reflections on his personal relationships and the nature of his muse. For Hogan repeatedly used his wife as the model for Erin, and Maclise's harp-playing figures appear to be the embodiment of his own activities as observer, recorder and mourner of the past.

The interweaving of religious and nationalist imagery in the Bishop Doyle statue is probably chiefly attributable to the nature

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1. This group, which is in the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork, is reproduced in Cyril Barrett, "Irish Nationalism and Art, 1800-1921", Studies, Dublin, vol 64, no 256, Winter 1975, p. 400.

50. John Hogan/Monument to James Doyle, Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin/1837-1839/marble/Carlow Cathedral.

of the monument, the character of its subject - Doyle devoted much of his life to combating the poverty and ignorance besetting Ireland at the time - and to Hogan's own well-documented Catholic fervour. But did this mingling of religious and nationalist feeling underlie the many other representations of suppliant females produced in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century? And was it in turn related to changes in the social situation of Irish women during this period? Or were these images no more than a reflection of general Victorian trends, common to fine art and popular imagery in Britain as well as Ireland?[1]

Certainly the prevalence of female religious supplicants in Irish popular imagery of this time is very striking. Both the Doyle statue and the Kilmaley banner are very close in spirit to the numerous nineteenth century chapbook illustrations, both Catholic and Protestant, which represent female figures kneeling devoutly in penitence and prayer (ill 51). The image also constantly reappears in the popular works of Irish artists of the period. It can be seen for example in Maclise's illustrations to Mrs S.C. Hall's influential Sketches of Irish Character[2] and in the engraving of The Blind Girl at the Holy Well by Sir Frederick Burton, another artist much praised by the Young Ireland movement.

Such attitudes of religious supplication may well have come

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1. In England Victorian sentiment found expression in numerous paintings of Mary, Queen of Scots, in which she was shown as an afflicted, sensitive, passive female. See Roy Strong, And when did you last see your father?, Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp. 133-5 and p. 154.

2. Published by M.A. Nattali in 1844. A typical example of a devout lady by Maclise in this can be seen opposite p. 351.

51. Frontispiece to The New Week's Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper, T. Mairs & Co for Simms & McIntyre, Belfast, 1819/wood-engraving/ actual size/Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

more easily to the minds of Irish image-makers at this time because of the very real changes occurring in the religious and social situation of Irishwomen. These were chiefly caused by the combined impact of the Great Famine of the 1840s, and the massive reorganisation of the Catholic Church in Ireland in the period which followed. The famine led to late marriages, smaller families, massive youth emigration, and loss of trust in the old ritual celebrations of the annual cycle of death and regeneration. For Irishwomen these changes in themselves must have entailed increased mourning and a decline in emphasis on their symbolic roles as sources of fertility and life-giving reassurance. And these psychological and symbolic changes were undoubtedly further emphasised by the increasing domination of the Catholic laity by their clergy during this period, and by that clergy's massive stress on popular devotions involving many rituals of repentence, often centred on the figure of a Virgin who had to a certain extent been distanced from her human, productive role, by the proclamation of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception in 1854.[1]

It is moreover clear that by the time that the Kilmaley banner was produced, some of the Catholic clergy in Ireland were encouraging members of their church to make the association between the pure and suffering Mother of God and the equally pure and suffering figure of Mother Ireland. Speaking in 1872 the Irish Dominican preacher Fr Tom Burke said:

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1. On the interlinked social and religious changes in Ireland during this period see Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland 1850-75", The American Historical Review, Washington vol 77, no 3, June 1972, pp. 625-652 and David W. Miller, "Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine", Journal of Social History, New Brunswick, vol 9, no 1, Autumn 1975, pp. 81-98.

> "Ireland a province! No; rather be the child of a nation, rather be the son of a nation, even though upon my mother's brows I see a crown of thorns and on her hands the time-worn chains of slavery. Yet upon that Mother's face I see the light of faith, of purity, and of God; and far dearer to me is my mother Ireland, a nation in her sorrow today, than if I beheld her rich, and commonplace, and vulgar, and impure, and forgetful of herself and of God." 1

Indeed I believe it may be possible to take this argument a stage further, by postulating that the continuing appeal of the submissive Hibernia/female imagery in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century for both the makers and users of it was due, not solely to political distrust of assertive women, or to Victorian sentiment, but also to the fact that these images handled in religious (i.e. safe) imagery the emotional stresses created by the peculiar economic and social nature of Ireland during this period. For the many mothers and widows to whom the marriage of their son would mean the loss of their land, their power and their loved one, the figure of the Virgin cradling her dead son on her knees must have had a strange appeal; and for the many single women who could not find independence outside the family home, the submissive, sublimated relationship of Magdalen to Christ may well have been an effective symbol of their own relationship to their real-life fathers, to the priests whom they saw as their fathers-in-God, and to the politicians to whom they looked for the salvation of their distressed land.[2]

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1. Quoted in Patrick O'Farrell, England and Ireland since 1800, Oxford, 1975, p. 151.

2. See Lee, op cit, p. 5, and ibid, in "Women and the Church since the Famine", in Margaret MacCurtain and Donncha Ó Corráin (eds) Women in Irish society : the historical dimension, Arlen House, Dublin 1978, pp. 37-45.

Cathleen ni Houlihan and the Easter Rising

From the closing years of the nineteenth century the cliched image of sorrowing Hibernia was increasingly challenged, notably by Irish women themselves. For women of every class were actively involved in the social, cultural and political changes which took place in Ireland during this period.

By no means all the women left single because of the post-Famine tendency to preserve family landholdings by few and late marriages, stayed meekly at home. A small but significant proportion of them emigrated, or sought what employment they could in Irish towns and cities, particularly in the industrialised North (Londonderry indeed became almost entirely a city of female labour). From the end of the nineteenth century some of these single, working women, denied a part in political activity by the existing Irish nationalist organisations, turned to self-organisation in feminist and nationalist societies.[1] Their most striking leaders, figures like Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz, were drawn from the privileged world of the Anglo-Irish landlord class. For women from this background this was a period of previously unknown opportunity. Accumulated wealth and easy travel throughout Europe made it possible for these high-spirited ladies to pursue both cultural and political obsessions, and in public. No longer were they confined to private good works amongst the poor, private identification with Ireland's historic past, or private dabbling in art and photography and the theatre. They sought now to deliver their views to the world at large, involving themselves in labour and nationalist organisations,

1. According to Margaret Ward the republican Cumann na mBan or Council of Irish Women, formed in 1914, consisted almost entirely of single and/or working women (Paper on the Cumann na mBan given at the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University Belfast, 1 Nov 1977.)

publishing their folklore researches and their photographs, training as professional artists, and acting out their symbolic roles in public theatres and city streets.[1] The female symbols of Ireland which featured so prominently in their artistic and dramatic productions were strongly militant and extraordinarily influential.

The turning point in the development of this imagery was undoubtedly the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. Whereas in 1891 the female personage attending the Irish National League procession witnessed by a French visitor to Waterford, was clearly a variation on the sorrowing Hibernia, for she was "a very pretty girl, dressed entirely in green, leaning on a harp and personifying Erin",[2] seven years later the women who processed in the '98 commemorations in Belfast and Dublin were flamboyantly militant. The disordered and violent Belfast parade was headed by a young woman on horseback, well dressed in green and carrying a green banner,[3] while at the more dignified Dublin proceedings, a girl in green and gold personified the legendary '98 heroine, Betsy Gray.[4] Banners repeated the heroic imagery. On the Michael Dwyer banner carried by the Leeson Street nationalists in the Belfast parade, Hibernia stands proudly clasping a flag inscribed "Liberty".[5]

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1. Apart from the direct involvement of women in the nationalist struggle one should mention Lady Gregory's publication of Celtic myths, Rose Shaw's sympathetic photographs of Irish peasant women, the involvement of the Yeats sisters and Evelyn Gleeson in the revival of Irish craftwork and Sarah Purser's part in the development of Irish stained glass.
2. Anne Marie de Bovet, quoted in Diarmuid O'Muirithe, A Seat Behind the Coachman, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1972, p. 196.
3. Weekly Freeman, Dublin, 11 June 1898, Paul Henry, Further Reminiscences, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1973, pp. 59-61 and "The 98 Demonstration", Irish News, Belfast, 7 June 1898, p. 6.
4. Sean van Vocht, Belfast, vol 3, 1898, p. 161.
5. The banner is in the Ulster Museum, Belfast. It is illustrated in Hayes-McCoy, op cit, p. 176. The other side of it is reproduced below (ill 127).

Similar militant female figures were to appear repeatedly on Irish streets in the years that followed. In the early 1900s tableaux of such scenes as Dark Rosaleen, or Deirdre and the Children of Uisneach, were presented by the Gaelic League in Belfast and Dublin (where they were for a number of years successfully infiltrated into the St Patrick's Day parade).[1] Some of the imagery adhered to old models however, and not all the viewers appreciated what they saw. Maurice d'Art, then an apprentice boiler-maker in the Dublin dockyard, recalled that as a member of the Fianna, the republican youth movement, he was delegated to saw away at Erin's chains in one of the tableaux. Returning to work the next day he was pelted with wet sacks.[2] It must be remembered as well, that not all such dressing-up at this time had an overtly nationalist theme. Successive English viceroys and their wives in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century found no incongruity in joining the fashion for donning Celtic costume, or putting on tableaux from Celtic plays by Standish O'Grady and W.B. Yeats. (For the latter they even borrowed some of the Celtic gold ornaments in the National Museum).[3]

Nevertheless it is clear that the strong female figures emblematic of Ireland and the struggle for Irish nationalism, which were featured in the tableaux and illustrated magazines of this period, made a very deep impact on the imagination of some of the nationally-minded young. Sidney Gifford for example, expected the committee of the Inghinidhe na h'Eireann (or Daughters of Ireland) to look "like

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1. Bulmer Hobson, Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow, Anvil Books, Tralee, 1968, p. 3 and pp. 14-15, and C.P. Curran, Under the Receding Wave, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1970, pp. 29-30. A photograph of such a Dublin pageant crossing O'Connell bridge in about 1909, put on by either the Gaelic League or St Enda's school, is in the National Library, Dublin (Ireland Historical Photos 1897-1915).
2. Loftus, op cit, pp. 24-25.
3. Sheehy, op cit, pp. 103-105.

the heroines of '98 which I had often seen in the supplements to the Freeman's Journal", (ill 52) instead of finding them "plainly dressed in costumes of Donegal tweed in shades of dingy browns or greys."[1]

The contrast between image and reality at this time must not be forgotten. Much of the work done by nationalist women and their organisations during this period was unflamboyant and unheroic. The Inghinidhe na h'Eireann themselves were founded in 1900 by Maud Gonne, to work and fight for the complete independence of Ireland. But many of the activities they undertook in furtherance of this aim were prosaic enough. The society conducted classes for children, contributed to the Irish theatre movement, ran a patriotic monthly magazine, Bean na h'Eireann, and carried on a lively anti-enlistment campaign, in which members tried to involve Irish girls who were walking out with British soldiers. The Inghinidhe na h' Eireann also worked hard to provide a hot midday meal for poor children in Dublin schools.[2]

Once the humdrum reality of the work undertaken by many nationalist women at this time is established, the role of the heroic female images constantly reiterated in their paintings, their illustrations, their banners and their acting becomes easier to understand. These figures were used as a deliberate means of stirring a generation of young men to rebellion; but they were also it seems, a private form of communication between nationalist women, a means of encouraging themselves in their various battles. This private role of political imagery is too often forgotten. It is very

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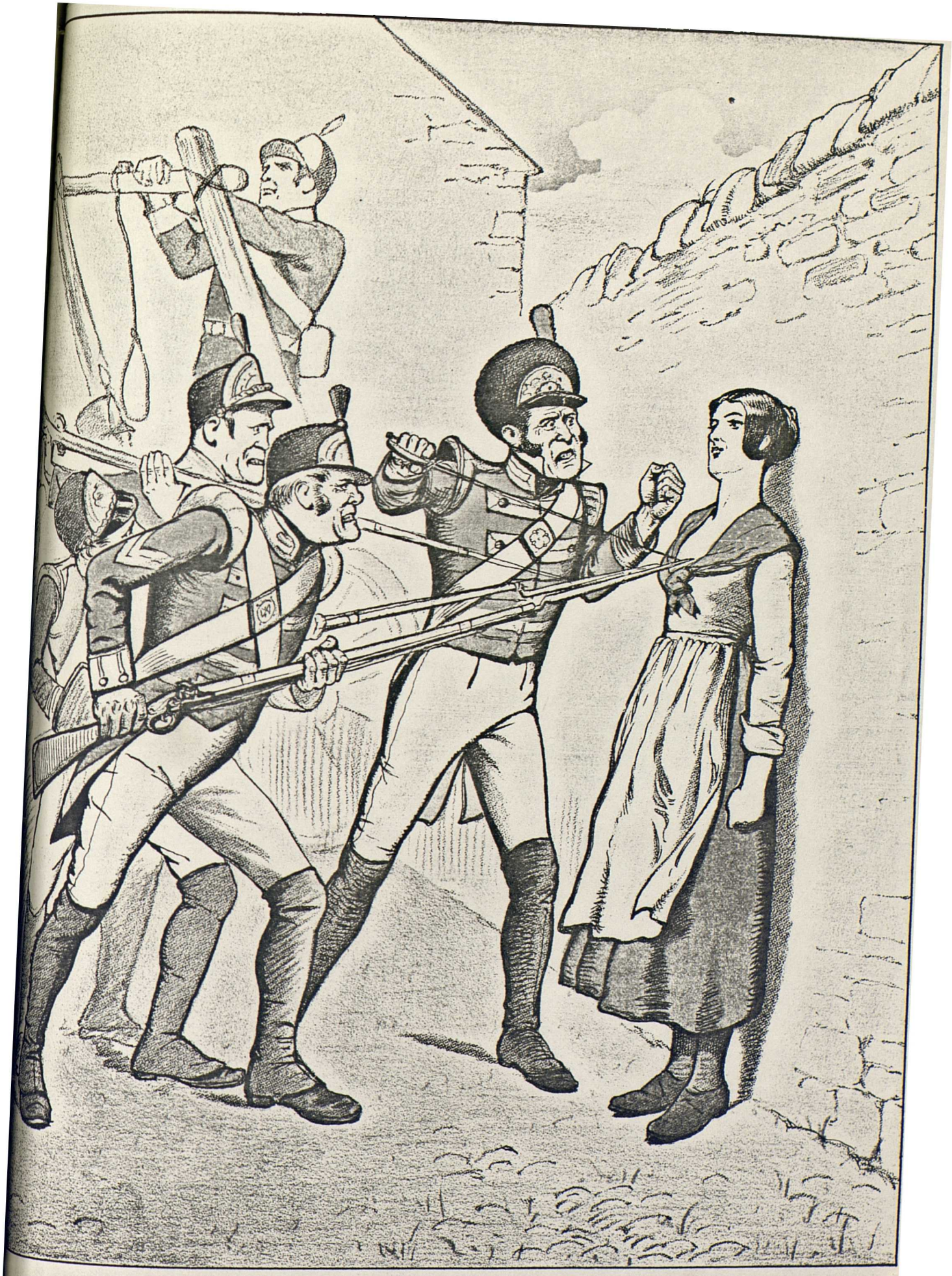
1. Sidney Czira/John Brennan, The Years Flew By, Gifford & Craven, Dublin, 1974, pp. 48-9.

2. Ibid, pp. 48-53.



HEROINES OF IRISH HISTORY.—V.

THE TORTURE OF ANNE DEVLIN.

. 52. The Torture of Anne Devlin/Supplement to The Irish Fireside, Dublin, 5 Aug 1885/coloured lithograph/ actual size/Ulster Museum.

close to the role of religious imagery, and indeed nationalist women of this period often talked of the female symbolism they held dear to them as thought it was religious, using terms like "gospel" and "sacrament". (In part no doubt this was due to the feeling shared by Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz that commitment to the Irish people necessarily involved commitment to their Catholic faith.)[1]

The supportive role of Irish female imagery comes out very clearly in some of the activities of the Inghinidhe na h'Eireann. They chose St Brigid as their patron saint; they took as pseudonyms the names of such Celtic warrior queens as Maeve, Macha and Emer, and they wrote their own plays and tableaux vivants, featuring these forceful women. Ireland Fettered and Ireland Free was a great favourite, and Maud Gonne performed in The Last Feast of the Fianna, written by the Northern nationalist Alice Milligan.

> "The raised curtain showed her, seated in an ancient carved chair, with an illuminated parchment book on her knee. She had a splendid robe of brocaded white poplin with wide sleeves, and two little pages in medieval dress of black velvet held tall wax candles on either side of her... The quality of her beauty dulled the candle-flames." 2

Maud Gonne was well aware of her beauty and of its potential for inspiring revolutionary fervour in the Irish. In 1902 she finally persuaded the adoring W.B. Yeats to write the play in which she could exercise her talents to the full in the service of Irish nationalism. It was titled Cathleen-ni-Houlihan and she played the

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1. Nancy Cardozo, Maud Gonne, Victor Gollancz, 1979, p. 228 and Van Voris, op cit, p. 203.

2. Ella Young, Flowering Dusk, Longmans, New York, 1945, pp. 57-8, quoted Cardozo, op cit, p. 193.

title-role in it. Set in 1898 it showed the eponymous heroine appearing in the guise of an old woman, to summon to the rebellion a young man who is about to be married. She insists on the need to sacrifice all for Ireland, and that those who die in this cause "shall be remembered for ever." At the end, like the figures of Celtic myths, she is transformed into her true likeness, "a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen."

By the following year Maud Gonne had married Captain John McBride, and Yeats found himself opposed to her, by virtue of his support for Synge's anti-romantic portrayal of Irish womanhood in his play In the Shadow of the Glen.[1] But in later years Yeats was to ask himself:

> "Did that play of mine send out
> Certain men the English shot?"

He had good reason to be a prey to such self-questioning. Maud Gonne herself, in the preface to her memoirs, describes Cathleen ni Houlihan singling her out as one of the stones that would support her as she moved across the treacherous bogs of time.[2] Constance Markievicz, sentenced to death for her part in the 1916 Rising, recalled in prison that for her, Cathleen-ni-Houlihan had been "a sort of a gospel."[3] The young Beatrice Glenavy, deeply impressed both by the play and some of Jack Yeats' early patriotic works, painted an allegorical picture of Cathleen ni Houlihan. This showed her seated and hooded,

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1. Lyons, op cit, pp. 241-6.

2. Gonne, op cit, p. 7 and pp. 176-7.

3. Quoted in Conor Cruise O'Brien, States of Ireland, Hutchinson, 1972, p. 70.

> "... with a child on her knee, presumably Young Ireland, stretching out his arm to the future, and behind her a ghostly crowd of martyrs, patriots, saints and scholars. Maud Gonne bought this picture and presented it to Saint Enda's College, the school for boys which Patrick Pearse had started. Some time later I met one of the boys from the school and he told me that this picture had inspired him 'to die for ireland'! I was shocked at the thought that my banal and sentimental picture might, like Helen's face, launch ships and burn towers!" 1

Other young men were equally stirred.

"The effect of Cathleen-ni-Houlihan on me" said Stephen Gwynn, "was that I went home asking myself if such plays should be produced unless one was prepared for people to go out to shoot and be shot. Miss Gonne's impersonation had stirred the audience as I have never seen another audience stirred."

Gwynn was a Protestant nationalist, a supporter of the non-violent Irish Party. More militant nationalists experienced ecstasy from Cathleen-ni-Houlihan. For the republican revolutionary P.S. O'Hegarty it was a 'sort of sacrament'.[2]

It is difficult for us now to understand how Maud Gonne's performance could have had this impact. Surviving photographs of the first night, (ill 53) are scarcely impressive and to the modern eye Maud Gonne herself, as captured in photographs and paintings,[3] is no great beauty. Yet all who knew her agree that photographs in particular did her scant justice, and those who saw her in Cathleen-ni-Houlihan were dazzled. The young Maire nic Shiubhlaigh, who was

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1. Beatrice, Lady Glenavy, 'Today we will only Gossip', Constable, 1964, p. 91. See also p. 27. The painting has since disappeared.

2. Quotations in O'Brien, loc cit.

3. See the illustrations in Cardozo, op cit.

53. Scene from the first performance of W.B. Yeats, Cathleen ni Houlihan/Tatler, 16 April 1902/Photo: Mander & Mitchenson Theatre Collection.

to play the part herself in later productions, said of Maud Gonne's interpretation of it:

> "Watching her, one could readily understand the reputation she enjoyed as the most beautiful woman in Ireland, the inspiration of the whole revolutionary movement. She was the most exquisitely-fashioned creature I have ever seen. Her beauty was startling..." 1

Moreover one must remember the context surrounding both Maud Gonne and the play. Her style of beauty was very much that of the Edwardian period, and in that period it was the fashion throughout Europe for women to sweep men off their feet with a mere glance, and for men to commit themselves with heroic gestures to wars, which, being fought mainly in far-distant lands, could be viewed as trials of courage rather than dirty scraps, and for plays to be acted in a histrionic style which today would seem totally false.

In the years that followed nationalist Irishwomen continued to produce heroic female imagery symbolic of the role of Ireland and Irish women. Maud Gonne herself, who was a keen amateur artist, painted a picture of St Brigid which she sent to John Quinn, the American supporter of Irish culture.[2] Constance Markievicz (who had trained as an artist at the Slade School in London and Julian's Academy in Paris), designed two heroic female figures for republican publications. One was the masthead for Bean na h'Eireann, the magazine put out by the Inghinidhe na h'Eireann. It showed a noble female peasant figure, although she was accompanied by the now rather outmoded round tower and sunrise.[3] The other,

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1. Ibid, p. 219.
2. Ibid, pp. 268-9. The picture is still in the Quinn collection.
3. Coxhead, op cit, p. 60 and Anne Marreco, The Rebel Countess, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967, p. 111.

for the cover of the first Fianna handbook in 1914, was a representation of Ireland standing arrayed in the garb of a Celtic goddess.[1] In 1909 Markievicz, always a great lover of dressing-up and amateur theatricals, performed the role of Norah, the nationalist heroine of her husband's play The Memory of the Dead, set like Cathleen-ni-Houlihan in 1798. Although it had nothing like the impact of the earlier play, and Markievicz by all accounts was a poor actress, it did attract considerable attention.[2] On the streets of Dublin too she performed, marching with the Citizen Army in a borrowed jacket, dark green breeches, her best feathered hat and anything from her beloved revolver to a complete array of small arms (ill 54). Her audience was inspired by her. A Citizen Army man recalled later:

> "She was lovely in uniform. I can remember seeing her marching at the head of the Citizen Army with Connolly and Mallin at a parade on Sunday afternoon. My God, she was it!" 3

In Northern Ireland the rather touristy Hibernia which served as the frontispiece for Alice Milligan and Ethna Carberry's Sean van Vocht, launched in 1896, was joined by the more assertive imagery of objects like the banner used in the 1904 feis at Waterfoot in the Glens of Antrim. It is believed to have been designed by one of the women organisers and shows a proudly standing Hibernia rigged out in Celtic costume.[4]

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1. Van Voris, op cit, p. 144. The Fianna were largely organised by Constance Markievicz.
2. Marreco, op cit, pp. 129-130.
3. Quoted in Van Voris, op cit, p. 167. Van Voris also quotes the delightful description by Nora Connolly O'Brien, the daughter of the 1916 leader James Connolly, of how she and Constance Markievicz decided "what to wear to a rebellion" (ibid, p. 170).
4. It is now in the Irish Shop in Ballycastle.

54. B. Keogh/Constance de Markievicz/ca 1916/National Library of Ireland.

However, the female symbols of Ireland used by male Irish nationalists of this period are somewhat different. Male artists saw the women of Ireland as waiting or weeping for their men. In the North John Campbell, a superb draughtsman in the Celtic Revival manner, showed the women of 1798 waiting for their men to return from war, (ill 55) while in the South, Jack Yeats, brother to the poet - author of Cathleen-ni-Houlihan, revived the theme of Ireland mourning her dead in Bachelor's Walk, in Memory. Where three were killed and thirty-two injured when British soldiers fired, probably as the result of misunderstood orders, on jeering, stoning crowds after the Irish Volunteers' successful gun-running to Howth, a flower-girl drops two red roses into an open gate-way. Sbe stands at the intersection between light and dark, life and death, casting the little, blood-coloured blooms into the sad mauve shadows, with an elegaic gesture. The sunlit, yellow roadway, tilted sharply upwards behind her, the horse and cart clattering along it, and the barefoot boy staring out of the picture at something else, all serve to pull the eye away from the central incident, to remind the viewer of the continuing occurrences of city street life surrounding it.[1]

The roses in this picture may be a personal reference to the white roses thrown on the grave of Yeats' uncle in 1910 by two high-degree masons,[2] or to Roisin Dubh, the little dark rose, a name

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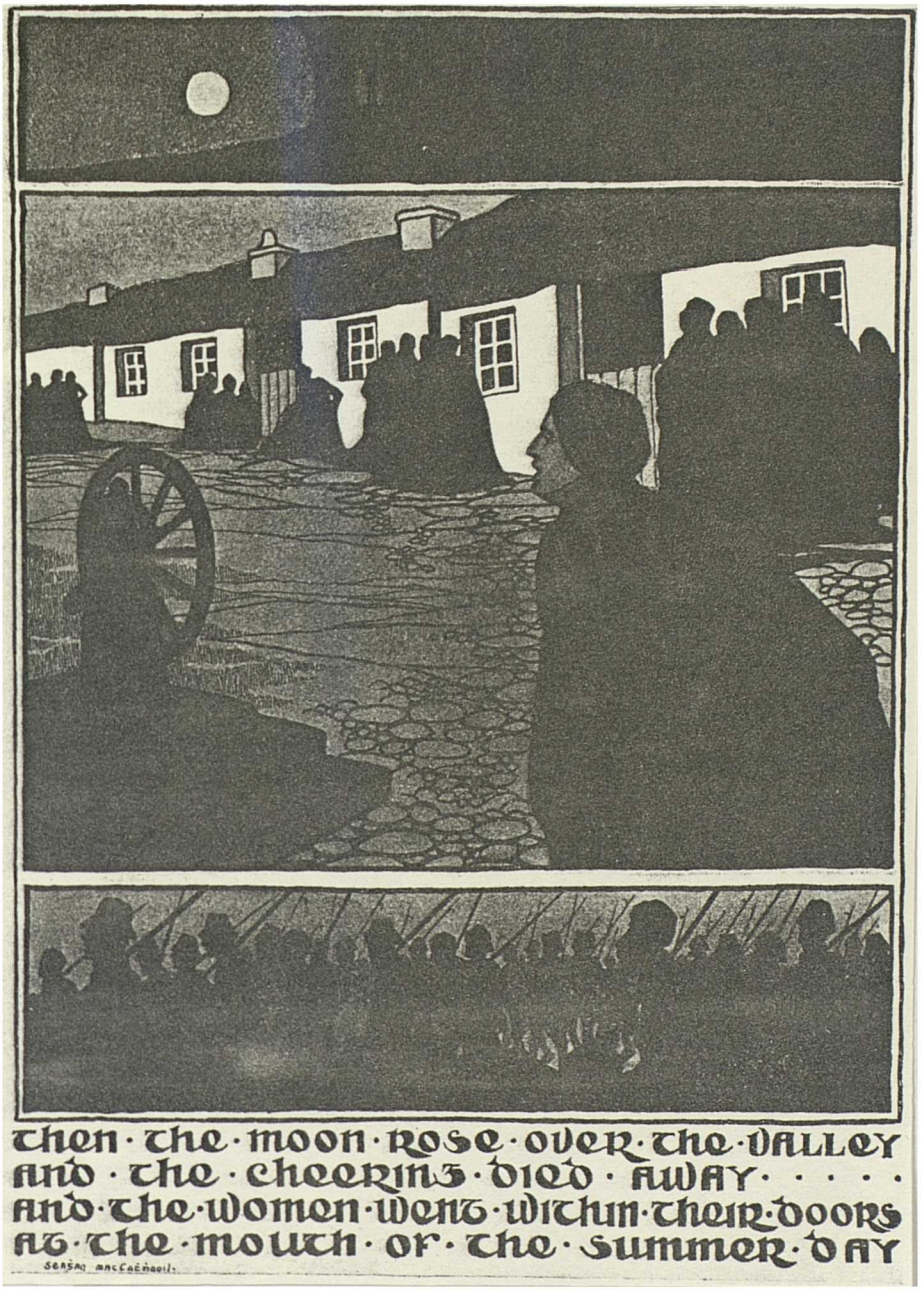
1. On Yeats' use of colour and composition in this painting see Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Jack B. Yeats, Painter and Poet" European University Papers, Herbert Lang, Berne/Peter Lang, Frankfurt, Series 18, vol 3, p. 34. For more general comments see Cuimhneachán 1916 (catalogue of the exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising), National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin 1966, pp. 30-31 and Jack B. Yeats 1871-1957 (catalogue of the centenary exhibition shown in Dublin, Belfast and New York, 1971-2), National Gallery of Ireland, 1971, p. 66 and p. 150.
2. Hilary Pyle, Jack B. Yeats : a biography, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 110.



55. John Campbell/The Women at their Doors/Ulad Belfast vol 1 no 4 Sept 1905/actual size.

first applied to Ireland by the aisling poets of the seventeenth century,[1] and now frequently employed by nationalist writers, who emphasised its sacrificial overtones. Women were amongst these writers. In July 1909 Constance Markievicz wrote in Bean na h'Eireann of seeing a crimson rose which brought her:

> "... straight back to the reality of July '98 ... the petals of Roisin Dubh lay as red and strange then on the green hill-sides of Wexford - scattered a crimson shedding over the land from little Arklow to the shores of Lough Foyle, from the sea bounds of the Atlantic to the dusty streets of Dublin - everywhere in Ireland had the soil been consecrated by the blood of the noblest and the best." 2

But it was men, particularly such nationalist leaders as Joseph Plunkett and Patrick Pearse, who delighted most in this sacrificial theme. Pearse's lines in which he envisaged the reaction of his mother to the possible death of her two sons in the forthcoming insurrection are well-known:

> "I do not grudge them; Lord I do not grudge
> My two strong sons that I have seen go out
> To break themselves and die, they and a few,
> In bloody protest for a glorious thing."

As he wrote them did he have in the back of his mind the Mater Dolorosa carved by his brother William for the neighbouring Catholic church in Westland Row?

Other nationalist leaders at this time expressed their devotion to the image of the woman who sends her sons to war. The trade-unionist James Larkin appealed for recruits for the revolutionary Irish Citizen Army in the following words:

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1. Zimmermann, op cit, pp. 84-86.

2. Quoted Marreco, op cit, pp. 111-112.

> "You may have to seal your faith, love and loyalty in your blood. To enlist for Caitlin-ni-Houlihan may mean a dark and narrow cell for your body but think of the great joy it will bring your soul." 1

It is as well to remember however that the Irish were not the the only ones to take up the theme of the sacrificial wife/mother in these years. The massive numbers of First World War recruiting posters issued by the British not only depicted Irish colleens posing the embarassing question "For the Glory of Ireland - Will you go or must I?", but also urged their own men on in the same terms - "Women of Britain say - GO"[2] admonishes one such poster, which shows wives and sweethearts waving farewell as their men march to war, to fight no doubt for little Belgium, so frequently visualised as a damsel in distress. It is a theme which goes back to the chivalrous concepts of early twelfth century Provencal poets,[3] but it was particularly prevalent at this time.

When the Irish rising finally took place, at Easter 1916, the role of women in it was, for all their activity in the previous years, largely symbolic. From their headquarters in the Dublin GPO the rebel leaders issued a Proclamation of the Irish Republic. It had been drawn up and printed on the spot and appears to have been largely the work of Patrick Pearse. Its opening sentence envisages Ireland as Cathleen ni Houlihan, calling to her children to fight for her.

> "Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom."

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1. Quoted in F.X. Martin, Leaders and Men of the Irish Rising, Methuen, 1967, p. 192.
2. Both these posters are in the Imperial War Museum, London.
3. Anthony Cronin, "Luv and War", Irish Times, 3 February 1978, p. 8.

However, the visual images which soon commemorated the Rising emphasised the more religious female symbolism which predominated in the thinking of its male leaders. An undated poster titled The Birth of the Irish Republic - 1916 (ill 56) shows Ireland in the pose of the resurrected or transfigured Christ, rising above the battling rebels of 1916. The fact that the rising took place on Easter Monday and the emphasis of its leaders on their Christ-like sacrifice, must have brought this theme readily to mind and the imagery to flesh it out was readily available for Catholic Irishmen, whether in the illustrations to well thumbed devotional booklets produced for them since the early nineteenth century (ill 57), or, more locally, statutes like John Hogan's Transfiguration (ill 58) which stood in Patrick Pearse's local church in Westland Row until at least the 1920s.

What were the women themselves doing meanwhile? A very few took part in the fighting. Constance Markievicz, dressed up now for a real performance, shot away with the best of them (ill 54). Others, like the members of the Cumann na mBan (Council of Irishwomen), formed in 1914, acted as supporters to the men, carrying despatches, providing food and tending wounds.[1] Others again continued to play out emblematic roles. Grace Gifford, who married the rebel leader Joseph Plunkett on the eve of his execution, acted not only personally but symbolically, for she was well-known in her own country, and in England, as the girl whom Sir William Orpen had painted as Young Ireland.[2]

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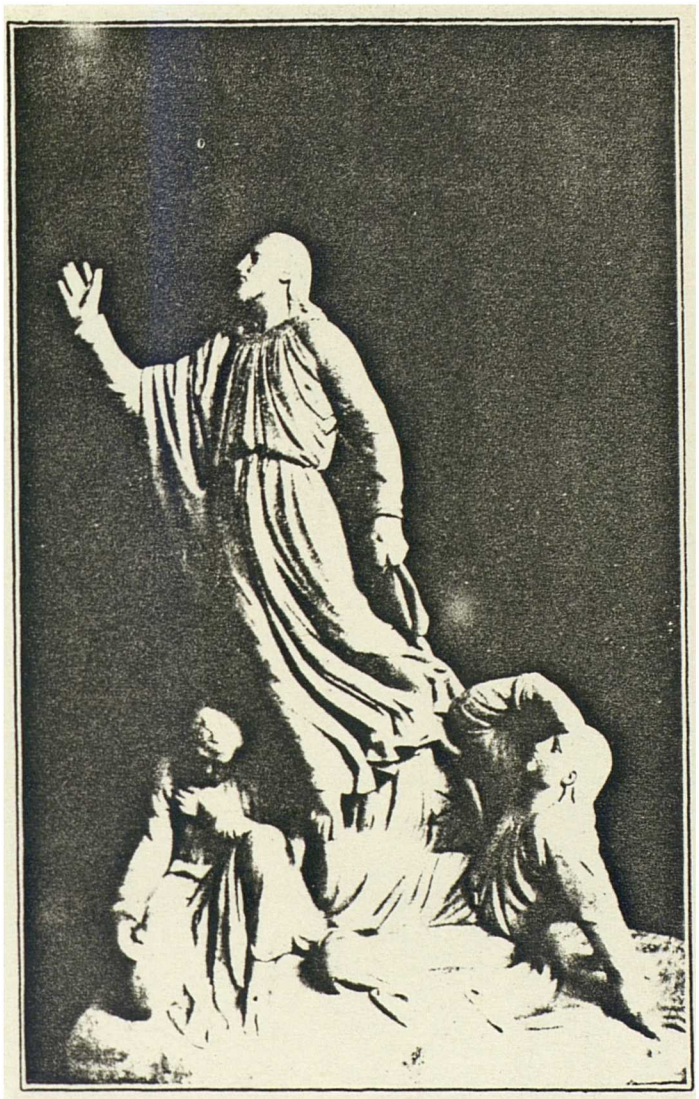
1. Lil Conlon, Cumann na mBan and The Women of Ireland 1913-1925, Kilkenny People, Kilkenny, 1969, p. 20ff.

2. See Daily Sketch, 9 May 1916 and Sunday Chronicle, 5 August 1934. The portrait is now in the Tate Gallery. It is illustrated in P.G. Kennedy & Sidney Dark, Sir William Orpen, Seeley Service, 1932.

56. Republican poster/ca 1916/colour lithograph $18^{1}/4$ x $11^{3}/8$ ins (46.3 x 29 cms)/The Art Depot Dublin/ Imperial War Museum/Photo: IWM.

57. The Resurrection/ill on p.97 of The Path to Paradise, Being the Catholic's Companion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, J. Smyth, Belfast, 1841/wood-engraving/ actual size/Linen Hall Library.



THE TRANSFIGURATION.

58. John Hogan/The Transfiguration/1848/Marble/
33 ins (83.8 cms) high/Father Ford, Glanmire

But even the small parts played by women in 1916 and the years immediately before and after, met with rejection. Their departure from the traditional feminine occupations of wife and mother was strongly attacked. Grace Gifford's mother, in an interview given to the Belfast Telegraph in 1916 rejected her daughter as "too independent";[1] Constance Markievicz was continually criticised for her lack of maternal feeling, in leaving her daughter to be brought up by her grandmother, while she herself concentrated on fighting for the Irish people; the members of Cumann na mBan, although allowed military arms and training for a brief period after 1915, continued to find themselves in supportive roles, generally raising funds or collecting information.

Part of the reason for this was the attitude of these nationalist Irishwomen to the strong feminist movements of the period. Many of the leading figures and the rank and file members of Cumann na mBan had previously been suffragists. Indeed this experience was probably crucial to their formation as a self-organised and structured group. Constance Markievicz for example, was frequently involved in suffragette activities, largely as a result of her closeness to her sister Eva Gore-Booth, and Eva's friend Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington, both tireless activists in the feminist movement. It is abundantly evident from her prison letters to Eva, that the solidarity between nationalist Irishwomen of this period, forged in their feminist, labour and revolutionary activities prior to 1916, and then greatly reinforced by their terms of imprisonment together, did much to encourage them in continued support of the fight for Irish freedom.

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1. Ward, op cit.

Nevertheless Markievicz and many other nationalist Irishwomen of the time believed that Irish liberation must be achieved first, and that it would bring the liberation of Irish women in its train.[1]

The relegation of nationalist Irishwomen to male-supporting roles after 1916 must also be seen in the general cultural and political context of the time. It must be remembered that the post-1916 era was not a sympathetic environment for nationalist heroines. The splits in the nationalist movement must have made the envisaging of a single, simple female symbol of Ireland as difficult as it acceptance, and the horrors of the 1914-18 war, known by the Irish as well as the English, made straightforward heroism look very out of date.

Some nationalist Irishwomen stuck to assertive female images of Ireland. Sadhb Trinseach's poster in the 1916 room in Dublin's National Museum makes a firm contrast for example between a standing Eire and a seated West Britain.[2] Others however seem to have been confused by the situation around them. Grace Gifford's artistic output envisaged the female Ireland figure in a whole series of widely differing roles. In her political cartoons Ireland appeared at different times as a woman in chains and as the radiant Cathleen-ni-Houlihan, while on the walls of Kilmainham Gaol in 1923 she painted a Madonna and Child.[3]

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1. Margaret Ward, op cit; Van Voris, op cit, pp. 42-3 and p. 63; Marreco, op cit, p. 110, p. 147 and p. 173; and Mac-Curtain and Ó'Corráin, op cit, pp. 46-57.

2. EW 1215. The poster was published by the Gaelic League in approximately 1920. Supporters of continued links between Ireland and England have been habitually described as "West Britons" by Irish nationalists of this century.

3. R.M. Fox, Rebel Irishwomen, Talbot Press, Dublin and Cork, 1935, pp. 75-83; Irish Art 1900-50, (exhibition catalogue), Cork, 1975, p. 28 and Irish Press, 14 December 1955. Some of Grace Gifford's political cartoons were published in Mrs Joseph Plunkett, To Hold as 'Twere, Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, n.d.

Probably the most significant actions of nationalist Irishwomen during this period were their tireless and effective campaigning for Sinn Fein in the elections which followed the First World War, and their united stand against the Treaty Settlement, due at least in part to its denial of the vote to women under thirty. But their best remembered gestures were their protests about the treatment of nationalist prisoners by both British and Irish governments. The problem was a very real one. According to official estimates, eleven to twelve thousand military prisoners were held by the Free State during the year of the Civil War. Unofficial figures, which included civilians, were much higher.[1] However the effect of these protests was to return republican Irishwomen to an alliance with the imagery of suffering Ireland and the bereaved Mother of God. Maud Gonne attired herself in widow's weeds after 1916, not, she told W.B. Yeats, because of her own loss of a husband, but because of Ireland's loss of the men of 1916.[2] And as they kept vigil outside prison gates the groups of women would recite the rosary, or hang an image of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour beside them (ill 59).[3]

Meanwhile the Treaty was agreed and the personification of Ireland chosen to feature on the banknotes issued by the new state was no 1916 republican heroine, but that Irish-American society beauty, Hazel Lavery, the wife of the designer, shown as a sentimental touristy colleen, leaning on her harp in the traditional sorrowing pose (ill 60).

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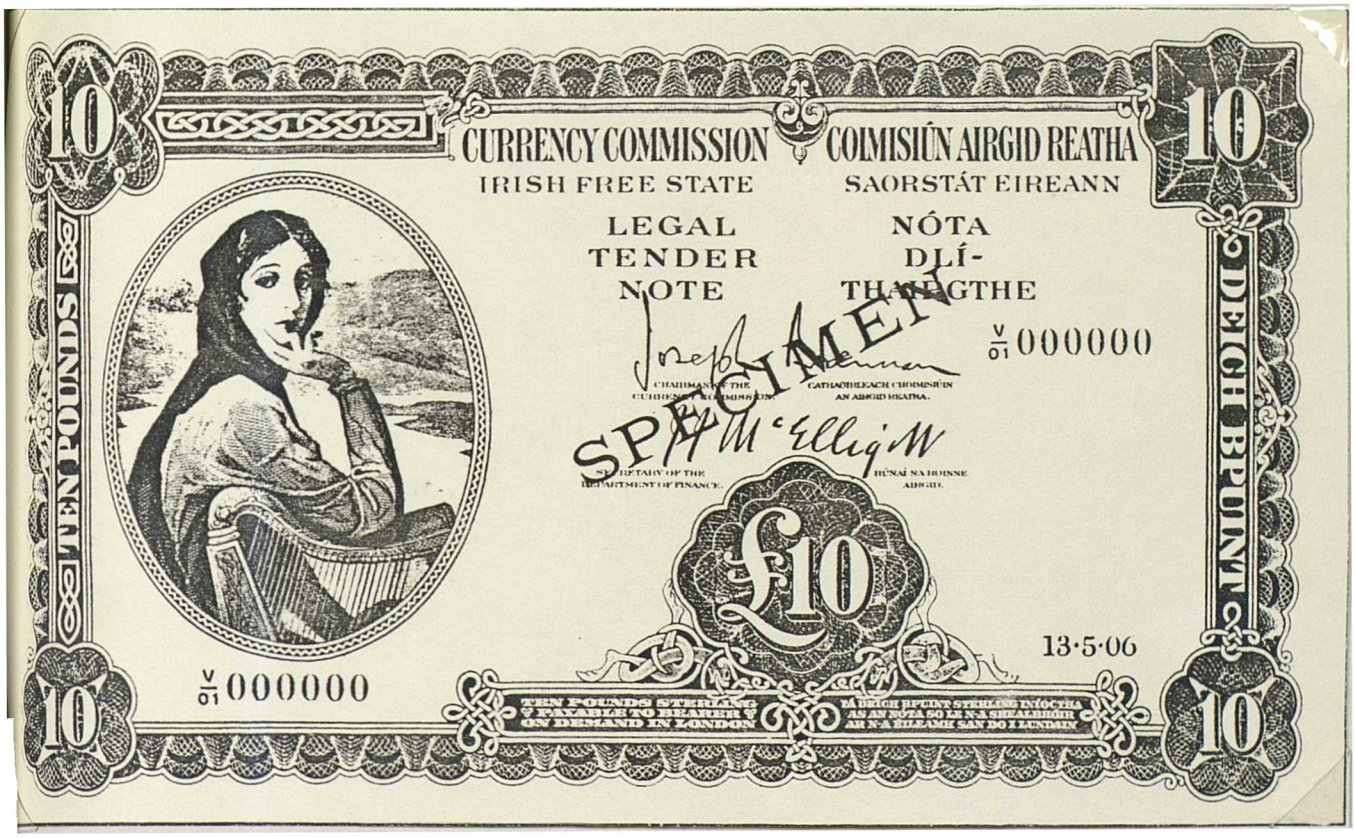
1. Lyons, op cit, p. 311.

2. Cardozo, op cit, p. 311.

3. Other photos of such demonstrations can be found in J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army : a history of the IRA, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1974, plate 19 and Richard Broad et al, The Troubles, Thames/Futura, 1981, p. 182.

59. Joe Cashman/Barry O'Delaney, Maud Gonne McBride and Mary MacSwiney outside Mountjoy Prison during the hunger strike by Sinn Fein prisoners in 1921/plate XX of J. Bowyer Bell, The Secret Army: a history of the IRA, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974



60. Specimen of Irish Free State £10 note issued in 1928/ill in Derek Young, Guide to the Currency of Ireland, Legal Tender Notes, 1928-1978, Stagecast, Dublin, 1972, p. 18

John Lavery's wife had indeed dabbled in Irish politics. Her motivations were personal ambition and a Celtic revival dream of Ireland, based on the works of James Stephens, Synge and AE, which her husband characterised as "unreal as a mirage in the desert."[1] She had urged on Lavery to paint the portraits of both republican and unionist leaders, thinking his studio would provide a neutral meeting-place for them. Subsequently, she attempted to play a hand in the Treaty negotiations, both by providing a number of social occasions at which the participants could meet informally, and by personal pleading with the most reluctant Irish leaders. According to Sir John:

> "By many it was believed that had it not been for Hazel there would have been no Treaty - certainly not at the time it was signed. She had given up Erskine Childers as impossible to move, but she had overcome Arthur Griffith's last objections. Michael Collins stood firm to the last minute. He seemed to have lost his temper. Even I, whose head was never really out of a paint-pot, could see that he who loses his temper in argument is lost, and told him so, but I failed to convince him. Eventually, after hours of persuasion, Hazel prevailed. She took him to Downing Street in her car that last evening and he gave in." 2

Lavery claims that Kevin O'Higgins planned to recognise Hazel's role by appointing her to be the English Vicereine in Ireland, and that when his death ended the scheme an alternative thanks-giving was provided by President Cosgrave in the shape of a commission to Sir John to paint his wife's portrait for reproduction on the new Irish bank-notes:

> "which, as President Cosgrave in his charming way said, 'Every Irishman, not to mention the foreigner who visits Ireland, will carry next to his heart.'" 3

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1. John Lavery, The Life of a Painter, Cassell, 1940, p. 221.
2. Ibid, p. 214.
3. Ibid, p. 222.

The reality seems to be a little less romantic however. The painting of Hazel Lavery is indeed in the possession of the Central Bank of Ireland and is dated 1923.[1] But the selection of her image appears to have been extremely haphazard and to reflect Ireland's continuing dependence on English expertise. Although the advisory committee appointed by the Irish Free State in 1928 to select the designs for the new banknotes was entirely composed of eminent representatives from Irish art institutions, they decided that an Irish colleen should symbolise the new state, and it was the English printers of the notes, Waterlow and Sons, who came up with the actual design. It had previously been engraved by one of their staff as a bookplate for Sir John Lavery. A fine head of Erin by John Hogan was also used on the banknotes - but as a watermark.[2]

In the Irish Free State the role of both female nationalists and of female nationalist imagery continued to decline. While some, like Denis Johnston, used the heroic images of Mother Ireland to criticise the new state for its pursuit of economic rather than nationalist aims, others, like Sean O'Casey, made bitter attacks on Cathleen-ni-Houlihan, both in his play, The Plough and the Stars, and in his historical works on 1916 in which Constance Markievicz in particular is written off as a hysterical poseuse.[3] Meanwhile the Cumann na mBan were gradually fading away, and the few female politicians who emerged were all fired by their loyalty to the principles of the male relatives they replaced. (This is

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1. It is reproduced in de Breffny, op cit, p. 241.
2. Derek Young, Guide to the Currency of Ireland, Legal Tender Notes 1928-72, Stagecast, Dublin, 1972, pp. 7-10.
3. Vivien Mercier, The Irish Comic Tradition, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 203-4 and William Irwin Thompson, The Imagination of an Insurrection, Harper & Row, New York, 1967, p. 204.

in strong contrast to the situation in Britain in recent years where increasingly the few women entering politics have done so in their own right).[1] The very machinery of the new Irish state reinforced a concept of women as wives and mothers rather than as workers and political activists. Article 41.2 of the 1937 constitution stated:

> "2.1 In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
>
> 2.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home." 2

This stress on motherhood was reinforced by such measures as the long-standing ban on contraceptives, and the legal bar to employment of married women in the Irish Civil Service, only removed in 1973. Simultaneously Irish schools taught children to see the female personification of Ireland as a victim of man rather than as a self-sufficient militant. In John McGahern's The Leavetaking, the hero rages at the headmaster of his school:

> "It's written down in black and white in the official Notes for Teachers on history that the cultivation of patriotism is more important than truth. So when we teach history Britain is always the big black heart, Ireland is the poor daughter struggling while being raped, when most of us know it's a lot more complicated than that. And yet we teach it." 3

Meanwhile in the North nationalist women politicians were unknown, and the Cumann na mBan virtually disappeared, apart from organising

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1. Margaret MacCurtain, "Women, The Vote and Revolution" and Maurice Manning, "Women in Irish National and Local Politics," in MacCurtain and Ó'Corráin, op cit, pp. 92-101.

2. Quoted in Mary Robinson, "Women and the New Irish State" in ibid, p. 60.

3. John McGahern, The Leavetaking, Faber, 1974, p. 186.

collections during the Outdoor Relief protests of 1931-2.[1] There were also occasional protests by women at ill-treatment of republican prisoners, like the St Patrick's Day demonstration outside Crumlin Road gaol led by Maire Drumm in 1958.[2] Nationalist female imagery lingered on. Hibernia continued to appear on the banners of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Ancient Order of Foresters (ill 22). (Strangely, although the Foresters have placed more emphasis on constitutionality than the Hibernians, their figure of Hibernia tends to be more assertive, assuming a standing rather than a sitting position). But as in the South, it was religious images which proved the most resilient. To this day the figure of the Virgin is omnipresent in the lives of Northern Ireland's Catholics. Not only does she appear in shrines like the Bogside grotto, or in churches and graveyards. She is also represented on AOH banners,[3] adorns every Catholic school, is painted by the children there and is enshrined in their homes, her image honoured with lights and flowers, or, more informally, nestling amongst the family photos on top of the television. She is imitated as well. Small girls are clad in the white dress and veil of the virginal Bride of Christ to receive their first Holy Communion, or to be confirmed, or to walk in procession on religious feast days.

From the historical analysis of Mother Ireland imagery presented in this and previous sections it should by now be clear that the female symbolism used in relation to the present troubles in Northern Ireland draws on and is conditioned by successive layers of meaning developed in relation to cultural, political, social and

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1. Ward, op cit.
2. Conversation with Maire Drumm on 29 January 1974.
3. E.g. Mayogall AOH no 265 and Magherafelt AOH no 282.

religious forces by a series of individual decision made by both the native Irish and their English colonisers. The most persistent meaning attached to this imagery is clearly that of the interrelated sufferings of the Virgin, Mother Ireland and individual Irishwomen. But to see the many contemporary representations employing this meaning as merely products of a past history is to ignore their relationship with the cultural, political, social and religious forces of today. It is that relationship and those forces that I wish to consider in the section that follows, in an attempt to answer the question why the suffering Mother Ireland figure has remained so prevalent during the present troubles in Northern Ireland, in the face of the energetic actions of many of the women involved in the conflict.

Man-made images

One major reason for the discrepancy between the actions of women in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years, and the way in which they have been represented is their lack of control over the images made of them. It is no longer the case, as in 1916, that republican women are the willing accomplices in the distortion of their visible image. Their dissatisfaction about the propaganda takeover of their activities by republican men has been frequently voiced.[1] But unlike in 1916 their involvement in the production of visual propaganda appears to have been minimal. I know of only one woman who has been briefly active in this field.

The same has been true of non-republican women's organisations such as the Peace Women. Their imagery has been created almost

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1. Ward & McGivern, op cit, p 71, and Nell McCafferty, "The Rise and Fall of the Peace People", Magill, Dublin, vol 3, no 11, August 1980, pp. 26-7.

entirely by male journalists whether in their own organisation or in the world's press. The considerable range of their rank and file activities has been lost in the welter of film-star publicity pictures of their two female leaders (ill 61) and the trickle of Catholic Mother-of-God images presented to the movement by artistic well-wishers in the shape of Christmas card designs, or such paintings as the one in Peace House all too accurately described by Nell McCafferty:

> "It showed a long line of poor and wrteched people struggling up a hill, their hands outstretched to Mairead Corrigan, who stood on top, smiling joyously, a light around her head. To the left, behind her, moving out of the painting, Anne Maguire, a sad faced woman with spectacles, pushed a baby in a pram, as two children clung to her coat." 1

(Mairead Corrigan herself is exceedingly embarassed by this picture as are others in the Peace movement, but it remains true that the photographs of the movement's grass-roots activists carried in its own newsheet Peace by Peace from 1977 to the present day have almost always included the glamorous, endorsing figures of Mairead or Betty Williams).

This lack of women image-makers does not appear to be caused by insufficient opportunities for visual training. Girls in the province are actually more likely to study art at school than boys,[2] and their prospects of further art training and practice appear to be good. Women have been well-represented at the Belfast College of Art, and in Ireland as a whole they feature fairly prominently in the ranks of professional artists.[3] Moreover visual training has not proved a necessary qualification for those creating

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1. Ibid, p. 20. This painting is by a woman. It commemorates the Ballymena peace rally in 1976.

2. See tables 21 and 22 in Northern Ireland Department of Education, Northern Ireland Education Statistics 18, HMSO, Belfast, January 1975.

3. Dorothy Walker, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman", The Crane Bag, Dublin, vol 4, no 1, 1980, pp. 106-111.

61. Peace People poster/ca 1976/black and white photo-lithograph/23 x 16 ins (58.5 x 40.7 cms)/Linen Hall Library, Belfast/Photo: Pete McGuinness.

political imagery in Northern Ireland. The vast majority of male visual propagandists in the North, with the exception of those working for the advertising agencies employed by government departments and political parties, have had no art-training at all beyond secondary school level.

If training has been irrelevant to the manufacture of political imagery in the present troubles in Northern Ireland, to what other factors can we attribute women's lack of control over representations of themselves during this period? The intervention of women image makers in the creation of contemporary Irish symbolism might be expected to come from two groups, middle-class and upper-class women with comparative freedom from economic and domestic limitations, and working-class women strongly involved in street-level political struggles. The first group has been conspicuous by its absence, apart from a few young academics involved in organising feminist publications such as Women's Action, the newssheet run by the Socialist Women's Group since 1976, Saor Bhean, issued by Women against Imperialism since 1978[1] and the Women in Northern Ireland bulletin, put together by women in the North in 1978.[2] The visual images in these are nearly all derivative, being lifted either from feminist publications produced in England or America, or from newspapers and republican newsheets in Ireland.

Should one see this comparative lack of involvement of middle-class and upper-class women in the creation of the North's female symbolism as simply due to their existence in an age of lost innocence, in which simple heroics and romantic gestures are no longer

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1. Some issues of these newsheets are in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.
2. Workers Research Unit, Belfast, Bulletin, no 5.

possible? Surely not, for in most of the Western world the late 1960s were a period of material affluence, easy travel and high idealism very similar to the Edwardian period. In the sixties women were, and indeed have continued to be, prominent in revolutionary movements of every kind in both Europe and America. In seeking the reasons for the general lack of involvement of upper and middle-class women in the current political and social struggles in Northern Ireland it may be more relevant to consider the location of the conflict. There has always been less of an upper-class Anglo-Irish element in the North. Moreover the province's predominantly working-class ethos has been noticeably reinforced by the almost aggressive egalitarianism of its non-conformist Protestant religions. A combination of this working-class ethos, of massive economic problems and of the province's small scale have helped to prevent the loosening of family ties which has been such a crucial element in the development of a young, independent, free-thinking middle-class in the Republic, as in other countries in Western Europe. And the troubles themselves have reinforced those ties, causing women to cling to the support of both family and religion, with a consequent emphasis on supportive and submissive roles for themselves.

This is even more the case with working-class women in Northern Ireland. With a few notable exceptions the majority of such women actively involved in the province's political and paramilitary organisations have been young and unmarried. In most cases the length of such active involvement has been brief for it has ceased with relatively early marriage and lengthy childbearing. It is still unusual for men in Ulster to help with the home or the children, even if they themselves are unemployed.[1] Few married women

1. Ward and McGivern, op cit, pp. 66-7.

therefore are able to pursue activities outside the home. I know of only one who turned her hand to designing republican imagery before the lack of financial support from the organisation concerned and the pressures of motherhood forced her to abandon such work.

There has also been a complex interplay between the actual nature of the political situation in the North and the female symbolism related to it. For republicans the liberation of women continues to be considered a lesser priority than the liberation of Ireland. While a number of women have supported the attempts by British rulers to bring Northern Ireland's legislation on such matters as abortion and divorce into line with the more liberal laws of the mainland, for others such collaboration with the English has appeared repugnant.[1] The feminist groups formed north and south of the border in the past decade have also suffered endless divisions over the old question as to whether the fight for nationalism or for feminism should take precedence.[2] Meanwhile in the Protestant community the lack of any kind of protest tradition appears to have hampered the development of feminist self-organisation.[3] But above all, the political deadlock which has existed since the mid-seventies has encouraged the republican movement in Northern Ireland to increasingly stress the traditional politics of endurance, and the achievement of Irish liberation by a Christ-like suffering in which women willingly play their sorrowing mother role.

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1. Women in Ireland, p. 1 and pp. 22-4.
2. Ibid, pp. 37-40.
3. Ward & McGivern, op cit, p. 71.

All these factors must be borne in mind when one looks at the characteristic female symbolism employed during the present troubles. But the very potency of that symbolism in creating the conditions for its own survival has also to be remembered. A friend involved in running a refuge for battered wives told me that, at a Belfast meeting of English and Irish volunteers working for the International Voluntary Service in 1977, she was told by a young man from Ballycastle that Irish women did not need liberating, because they were already such powerful Mother Ireland figures, ruling their families and dominating their children who never escaped from them.[1]

The Role of the Artists

In part the continuing strength of this Mother Ireland image must be attributed to its persistent representation by Irish artists, the majority of whom are, like the popular image-makers, male. But why does this theme have such a strong appeal for them, in contrast to the image of William III, which is scarcely ever featured in artistic depictions relating to the present troubles in Northern Ireland?

Some of the answers to this question have already been provided in the brief survey of recent artists' images of Mother Ireland and her associated figures given at the beginning of this chapter. From this it is already apparent that many of these representations have been based on direct observation of the realities of women's roles in Catholic west Belfast. When Dave Scott painted a shawled

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1. See also Frank Burton, The Politics of Legitimacy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 15 on the continuing power of mothers in Belfast's Catholic ghettos, and their identification with Mother Ireland.

woman carrying a Thompson gun from one hiding-place to the next (ill 31), he was not making a romantic illustration of a republican myth, but reporting something he actually saw in the early days of the present troubles. And when Martin Forker decided to paint a picture of Mother Ireland and her child, which he intended to be "a monumental image of suffering",[1] he did so because of what he had seen of the real sufferings of women in Turf Lodge, sufferings which drove one of his neighbours there to commit suicide.[2] Although a number of republicans have commented sourly to me on the tendency of Catholic artists to climb the professional ladder, join the middle-classes, move out of working-class areas, and withdraw support from the struggles of working-class and republican Catholics, it is clear that, particularly in their early years, artists from this community have stayed closer to the political and social concerns of its working-class than have their Protestant counterparts.

This is clearly due to a lack of political inhibition as well as to direct personal observation of the realities of daily life in areas like west Belfast. For even artists from the Catholic community who lead a middle-class existence, well away from the troubled areas of the province, like Brian Ferran or Michael Farrell, do not have the kind of embarassment about using the Mother Ireland image that is felt by artists from the Protestant community in relation to the figure of William III. They may handle Mother Ireland in a way that is highly critical of her traditional

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1. Conversation 11 April 1981.

2. Curiously though he used as the visual basis for his Mother Ireland painting not figures from Turf Lodge, but a photo of an itinerant woman and child in Edna O'Brien's Mother Ireland (Penguin, 1979, p. 17).

meanings, but she is available to them, part of a heritage they feel free to exploit. Much of their ease in handling this theme shouldno doubt be attributed to the generally shared political view in the Catholic community that a united Ireland in the long term is desirable, though the means to achieve it may be debatable. Mother Ireland remains a generally agreed symbol for a desired reality, whereas many middle-class Protestants are clearly confused as to what William III symbolises today and whether they support it. The Catholic religion's continuing fondness for images of the Virgin Mary should also be remembered. Even for the fairly numerous middle-class members of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland who reject the religious practices of their youth, these images make it easier to handle figures like Mother Ireland than it is for the image and Mary-suspecting Protestants.

But there are other factors as well which have led recent Irish artists to turn to the Mother Ireland figure. These are essentially related to its nature as a female image, rather than as a political symbol.

In the first place it is a subject which has enabled artists to deal with personal feelings related not only to the Northern Ireland conflict but also to the society they live in and their role within it. Thus when Fergal Ellis painted a heroic republican woman, child in one hand, gun in the other, contemplating the graves of her martyred men, the image had also a private meaning for him, symbolising the marital strife which he felt to be widespread in Ireland. And Catherine Mcwilliams' paintings of women and girls standing in doorways and looking out of windows (ill 28), both involved in the troubles and observers of it, mirror not only what she has seen around her but also her personal feelings about her own

role as a woman in the society of today. She sees the women living in West Belfast as constantly at the point of decision between action and contemplation:

> "the people who have to pick up the pieces left by the violence at the end of the day, keeping their families together." 1

It is this balancing-point that is also depicted in the drawings and etchings she made in the same period, in which a self-portrait figure moves through half-defined openings, hovering between the assertion desired by herself and the retreat demanded by social conventions, tangled in the complex forces of internal and external roles.[2]

In turn these personal considerations, for which Mother Ireland imagery has provided a suitable focus, have been related to topics of general concern during the past thirteen years. Marital breakdown and the role of women have been much aired subjects of debate during this period, as have also the linked themes of sex and violence which have featured so noticeably in many artists' representations of women in relation to the Northern Ireland troubles.[3]

But above all, artistic conventions prevalent in the Western world since the early nineteenth century encourage artists to see a female figure like Mother Ireland as a potent, multivalent, ambiguous image which can be used to explore layers of meaning. This is particularly apparent in the works of Brian Ferran and Micheal Farrell.

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1. "Ulster's Troubles through Eyes of Women", Belfast Telegraph 21 Oct 1977, p. 13.
2. Catherine McWilliams' interest in this whole theme may also have been influenced by the work of her husband, Joe, who was similarly absorbed during the mid-1970s in the role of doorways in Belfast's violence. See below, p. 800.
3. Notably in works by Dave Scott and Pete McGuinness.

Ferran's paintings of the late 1970s were based on the belief that women are:

> "in many ways the political manipulators under the surface of the whole thing while at the same time being able to stand removed and say 'well I told you so'". 1

In these pictures he has made his own versions of sections of Thomas Robinson's contemporary painting of the Battle of Ballynahinch in 1798 (ill 231), watched by a figure who may be his own wife, or the wife of Thomas Robinson, or the semi-mythical figure of the '98 rebel heroine, Betsy Gray, or his own consciousness, and is sometimes a passive observer, sometimes lamenting, sometimes carrying a machine gun (ill 32).

Similarly Micheal Farrell's Madonna Irlanda (ill 33) is both beautiful and a whore. With her halo above her head she is apparently innocent in her nudity and yet she entices her followers to violence. In several versions a tricolour radiates round her seductive buttocks, in others a revolver points at her kneecap. She is both a victim and an instigator of violence. Often the works are subtitled "boucherie à la mode irlandaise", a pun on the name Boucher which also means butcher, and the sprawling figure of Miss Murphy is marked and labelled in some of them "fourquarters, gigot, knee-cap" etc like an illustration of butcher's cuts in a cookery book. She is a sexual turn-on and yet a castrater. Vitruvius' figure of man as the measure of all things is often set into the picture, his equilibirum unbalanced as he clutches his genitals in agony. And she is shown as a living reproach to the inadequacies of the voyeur artist who frequently appears leaning into the picture, like one of Beardsley's epicene attendants, fixedly observing her naked charms while the

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1. Conversation 21 July 1975.

cigarette he puffs is both a symbol of indifference and aimed at her like a substitute penis.

What emerges from these paintings is that Mothter Ireland's appeal for Farrell and Ferran derives not only from her political significance, but also from her fusing in their minds with other roles appropriated to the female figure by the existing artistic conventions of the Western world. She is not only the country in which they live or from which they have departed, but, as for Maclise and Hogan in the past, the wife,[1] the muse, and the quintessential focus of ambivalence and ambiguity.

It is here, I believe, that we find the chief reason for the continuing appeal of the Mother Ireland figure for Irish artists today. Her traditional and continuing importance as a political symbol, her immediate reality in the lives of Northern Ireland women during the past thirteen years, her continuing validation by the Catholic religion, her association with topics of general concern throughout the western world, all add to her attractions. But for these artists her strongest appeal is that she is a woman and therefore endorsed by artistic tradition as the suitable personification of ambiguous realities. She is an occasion for the private, imaginative play of the mind, licensed by accepted convention.

Indeed the key importance of artistic convention in making Mother Ireland attractive also helps to explain why William III has been virtually ignored by Irish artists of both communities, and why at least one artist from the Protestant community has been drawn to make works about the real and symbolic roles of women in the Northern Ireland conflict, thereby approaching a theme generally considered to be peculiar to the Catholic community.

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1. Farrell's studies for his Mother Ireland series include drawings of his wife.

In many ways King William would seem to be an attractive subject for the Irish artist dealing with the Ulster conflict. He clearly retains some political relevance; his heroic, combative figure could be related to the day to day realities of street-fighting in the past thirteen years; he has some link to great artistic themes of the past (one can easily imagine a Battle of the Boyne painted in the style of Uccello):- but he is a public, static, male figure of a kind which, since the early nineteenth century, has become decreasingly acceptable as the focus for the artists's imagination.

Indeed when F.E. McWilliam, an emigre sculptor from Northern Ireland's Protestant community, turned to the subject of the troubles in his native province it was female images that he used in his two Women of Belfast series, not the figure of William (ill 34). And like the other artists handling the Mother Ireland theme he appears to have done so not simply because of the real and symbolic roles of women in the Northern Ireland conflict, but because of their validation by artistic tradition as ambiguous emblems of suffering and aggression.

McWilliam's first series of sculptures were of women caught in bomb blast and he intended them to represent "the woman as victim of man's stupidity."[1] Yet these little figures appear to suffer no major injury, but rather loss of dignity and oppression by forces beyond their control, their skirts blown up, their shoes flying, their stockings ravelled, caught off balance, crushed by the corrugated iron which surrounds them, trying to struggle to

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1. Artist's statement, in the exhibition catalogue, Women of Belfast, New Bronzes by F.E. McWilliam, Dawson Gallery, Dublin, 4-20 Oct 1973.

their feet. Indeed they are not altogether victims. Often they are fighting back, sometimes their flailing arms and legs are positively aggressive.[1]

The ambivalence of women's roles in Northern Ireland, implicitly expressed in these figures, was further developed by McWilliam in his second series of figures related to the troubles, the banner carriers. In part these were a reaction to newspaper photos of protesters, in part a reference to his memories of the Twelfth banners. Many of the pieces are jokey. "All Ban" says one banner. In others women carrying peace placards fight with each other, or struggle with banners which threaten to engulf them.

The ambiguity of these figures is very precisely derived from European art tradition, for they recall earlier women whose movements symbolise both good and evil. They reel and cavort like medieval figures in the danceof death. Their clothes billow out expressively like those of baroque saints who bring messages of hope or despair. They display apparently conflicting profiles like Picasso's cut-out sculptures. McWilliam, like his counterparts in Northern Ireland's Catholic community, has been drawn to handle the troubles with female imagery which has a rich tradition of ambiguous meaning.

However to say that recent Irish artists have been frequently drawn to the Mother Ireland theme because it fits existing artistic conventions is not to deny a political role to their depictions of this subject. Some of these depictions have indeed been made with deliberate political intent. When one of Farrell's Madonna Irlanda

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1. Each figure in the series is illustrated in F.E. McWilliam Sculpture 1972-3, Women of Belfast, catalogue of exhibition at the Waddington Galleries, London, 31 Oct-24 Nov 1973.

works was shown in a London exhibition which formed part of the Sense of Ireland festival in February and March 1980[1] it had on the canvas a statement that it would not be finished until the two Irelands are one. And in an admittedly somewhat hectic and over-dramatised interview early in 1981, Farrell claimed that these paintings so effectively attacked the political hypocrisy of the Republic's attitudes to Irish nationalism, that although one of them was bought by the state it was never shown.[2]

The claim was in fact untrue. (At the time of the interview the painting, which is owned by the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin, was on display.) And Farrell's belief that the critics who praised his earlier, more decorative work:

> "turned on me once I began to make the kind of statement they didn't want to hear," 3

is something of an exaggeration. While it is the opinion of influential Irish art critic Dorothy Walker that in these works the political statement often gets in the way of the actual painting, the equally influential Cyril Barrett sees them as marking an important, though not ncessarily successful stage in Farrell's art in which he is probing and questioning his personal position.

> "This may at times be embarassing to the outside observer, but it is the stuff of which some of the greatest (as well as some of the worst) art is made. Where it is successful, we are all beneficiaries, since we are inescapably human, and can benefit from the experiences of others objectively expressed." 5

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1. The International Connection, Round House Gallery, London, Feb-March 1980.

2. Liz Ravaud, "Self-Portrait of the Artist as Sensitive Man", Sunday Tribune, Dublin, 8 Feb 1981, p. 20.

3. Ibid.

4. Cyril Barrett, Micheal Farrell (exhibition catalogue), Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 1979, p. 15.

And a third commentator on this series praises the fragmentary, incomplete nature of them and of works on Northern Ireland by Rita Donagh and Adrian Hall as being "more truly contemporary" and raising more questions in the mind than the international blandness behind which many Irish artists tend to hide their opinions.[1]

Yet in a way the very terms used by this reviewer and by Cyril Barrett, with their emphasis on personal expression and the aesthetic qualities of fragmented art, deflect attention from that very political impact which Farrell so desires to make. In the eyes of the art world and the media these works are at best an important stage in Farrell's aesthetic development, at worst the naughty gesture of a provocative enfant terrible. Such attitudes derive from a concentration on the formal qualities of paintings at the expense of their other content, and on a location of them in limited artistic contexts (the artist's output, artistic movements, the exhibition). When they are set in a wider cultural field it becomes possible to see that they may have a political impact. The nature of that impact will depend on a number of factors.

In the first place the general status of these artists must be borne in mind. Both Farrell and F.E. McWilliam are in the forefront of those artists who are claimed as Irish. They have an international reputation, their works sell well and they have frequent exhibitions in Ireland, which are generally given considerable publicity.[2] Anyone interested in Irish art is likely to be aware of their works on the women of Ireland theme.

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1. Frances Spalding, "A Sense of Ireland", Art about Ireland, Dublin, April-May, 1980, p. 20.
2. Micheal Farrell's Mother Ireland works were shown at the Dawson Gallery, Dublin, in August 1977; at the Tom Caldwell Gallery, Belfast, in April-May 1978; and at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, in April-May 1979.

In the case of F.E. McWilliam the more specific impact of those works can be given in more detail. His first troubles series was shown in Dublin, London and Belfast in 1973, the second in London and Belfast in 1976-7. All the showings were obviously successful, although the response varied at the different venues. In London the subject-matter proved something of a drawback. Visitors to the first show frequently commented that the works were "too uncomfortable to live with" and press coverage was less than usual. In Dublin there were more sales than in London and the reviews were favourable. The subject matter appeared to be neither a barrier nor a bonus. In Belfast the shows were very well-received, probably on account of the subject-matter.[1] Out of the first series at least nine of the eighteen pieces were bought by private collectors and several went into public collections, including the Ulster Museum.[2] Local purchases of the second series were also good. Media-coverage of both exhibitions was considerable and a retrospective of F.E. McWilliam's work mounted by the Arts Council of Ireland was shown at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin and the Crawford Municipal Gallery in Cork in the spring and summer of 1981.[3] Yet Northern Ireland artists are almost unanimous in their dislike of these works, criticising them as superficial and over-emotional. (In this criticism there may well be more than a trace of resentment at the success of an emigré artist and a feeling that he was cashing in on the troubles.)

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1. Information from the artist, January 1974.
2. Information from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
3. Accompanied by a monograph on F.E. McWilliam by Judy Marle and T.P. Flanagan, published in Belfast in 1981 by the Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

In assessing the wider and more political impact of such works it is important to ask who owns them. Various works by Catherine McWilliams, Martin Forker and Brendan Ellis are now to be found in the collections of a prominent journalist in the Republic, a leading Fianna Fail politician and British soldiers who have served in Northern Ireland; while pieces by the Ellis brothers have been given to friends and relations living in Catholic West Belfast. The continuing, subtle effect of these works on the perceptions of their owners have to be remembered as well as their more publicised appearance in the art gallery or on the newspaper page.

Protestant females

In using female imagery to handle the Northern Ireland conflict F.E. McWilliam is something of an exception amongst artists drawn from the province's Protestant community; and it should be stressed that he is an emigré artist who has lived and worked in London for practically all of his career. Within Northern Ireland a number of artists from the Protestant community have shown a marked interest in female imagery - Colin Middleton is a notable example - but none of them appear to have handled it in relation to the present troubles, although Donald Owen Craig's Pietà drawings and sculptures and Emma Brown's funereal women may have been influenced by the pervasiveness of suffering and death in the province over the past thirteen years.

The lack of female figures in Protestant popular imagery during the present conflict is even more striking. The only significant loyalist representations of women during the present troubles seem to have been angry images of Britannia beating up her loyal

Ulster subjects, used on posters and in paramilitary newsheets at the time of the introduction of Direct Rule from Westminster in March 1972.[1]

Indeed it has been fairly frequently asserted that Northern Ireland's Protestant community has no tradition of female imagery. Margaret Ward and Marie-Thérèse McGivern for example emphatically state:

> "Protestantism, particularly the Calvinistic brand so pervasive in the north, is a patriarchal religion where the image of woman is invisible." 2

However this view ignores the considerable evidence for the fascination exerted on certain Northern Ireland Protestants in the past by both Catholic and republican female images, and the existence of a number of prominent female figures on the banners of the Protestant Orangemen.

Not all Protestants have been antipathetic to those linked Catholic symbols, the Virgin and Mother Ireland. John Luke is probably not the only artist from the Protestant community to have painted the Madonna and Child for Catholic churches.[3] And the writer Robert Harbinson describes his youthful reactions to a medal given him by the sister of a friend when she became a nun:

> "Clinging about the Madonna and Child, like clouds to the mountain, was a strong appeal, a symbol of feelings I cherished for my own mother. Somehow the air of protection and concern of a Madonna towards the Child was terribly like Big Ina's struggles, and her unfailing efforts to keep us out of trouble, or orphanages, and the grave. And although our preachers

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1. Irish Independent, Dublin, 28 March 1972, p. 7 and News Letter, Belfast, 30 March 1972, p. 7.

2. Op cit, p. 68.

3. John Hewitt, John Luke 1906-1975 (exhibition catalogue), Arts Councils of Ireland, Belfast, 1978, pp. 62-7 and p. 80.

> thumbed great Bibles and shouted hysterically that Mary's 'easy' ladder to heaven in fact led to hell and the burning lake, I could not think of her as anything other than very human and warm. Her soft face, always lighted by a rapturous expression, the gentle pose, even the soft, enfolding clothes seemed preferable to our Protestant heroes. Fine though Billy King on his charger might be, or however handsome the periwhigs and lace portrayed on the Orange banners, the savage element in them was but cold comfort. But Mary, so near to our kind of life, I could well imagine bending over the tinker's fire, warming a sup of milk for 'wee Jaysus'". 1

It is an open question whether the personification of Erin has been capable of inspiring similar emotions in the Protestant heart. Harbinson describes Charlie, an old Protestant bargee who had a plaster model:

> "... of a woman standing with a greyhound, pained grotesquely green and gold. Charlie hugged this ... when beer fanned the dying flame in him." 2

It seems clear that neither Charlie, nor, more significantly, Harbinson, understood the political meaning of this figure, but the emotions inspired by it are indisputable.

Not only have Northern Ireland Protestants demonstrated a certain affection for Catholic and republican female imagery; they have also employed a considerable number of female images of their own. Interspersed with the endless depictions of King Billy on the Orange banners carried at the Twelfth of July processions there are quite a number of other designs showing Protestant female martyrs drowned in the River Bann or the Solway Firth, Faith clinging to her Cross (ill 36), Queen Victoria handing the bible to a negro prince (ill 70), Britannia in all her glory, and Ulster appealing to Britain not to leave her (ill 35).

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1. Robert Harbinson (Bryans), No Surrender, Faber, 1960, p. 183. John Wilson Foster asserts that testimonies to the appeal for Protestants of such Catholic imagery are quite common in Ulster fiction (Forces and themes in Ulster Fiction, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin 1974, pp. 133-4).
2. Robert Harbinson (Bryans), Up Spake the Cabin Boy, Faber, 1961, p. 61.

The image of the martyred women is clearly based on memories of the bitter seventeenth century politico-religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and the figures of Britannia and Queen Victoria were absorbed into the panoply of Orangeism at the time of Ulster Protestant identification with the British Empire in the late nineteenth century.[1] The history of the images of Faith and Ulster are more complex however, and demonstrate very clearly the links and similarities between the symbolic female figures of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Indeed it seems that Faith is a distant derivative of the Catholic image of Mary Magdalen clutching the foot of the crucifix, an image which apparently first came to Britain from Italy in the fourteenth century.[2] How and when this figure was transformed into the Protestant symbol following the Reformation is not clear. Certainly by the early nineteenth century, Faith with her cross and the rock of certainty promised by Christ to Peter was appearing on items like Irish masonic certificates.[3] During the second half of the century these images seem to have fused and Faith came to clutch her cross and the rock on which it stands in the academic painting by M.M. Hughes which is the basis of today's Orange banners[4] and of the tattoos which form a private

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1. See below, p. 299.

2. Saxl and Wittkower, op cit, section 33.

3. John Robinson, Irish Masonic Certificates, Leicester, 1903.

4. Information from the banner-painter W. Mellon of Bridgett's, Belfast, who owns a print of the painting. I have been unable to trace any further information about it.

version of them.[1]

What is interesting is that nineteenth century Irish Catholic versions of both the original Magdalen image and of the My Faith version were also produced. A booklet containing The Office for the Dead, printed in Belfast in 1831 for the Catholic Truth Society, and formerly in the possession of the Belfast Roman Catholic Library, has as its frontispiece a wood-engraving of the Crucifixion with Magdalen clutching the foot of the cross; (ill 62) and a banner designed by the fiercely nationalist John F. O'Hea for the rope-makers and twine-spinners, and carried in the O'Connell Centenary Parade in Dublin in 1875, had on it Faith clutching her cross.[2]

To fully understand the My Faith image it needs to be set in the general context of Protestant symbolism in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century. During this period the illustrations to the cheap, devotional chapbooks or booklets printed in Belfast frequently depicted the figure of a kneeling, praying woman who might be either mourning the dead or repenting her sins.[3] This figure had been known on Irish tomb-stones since at

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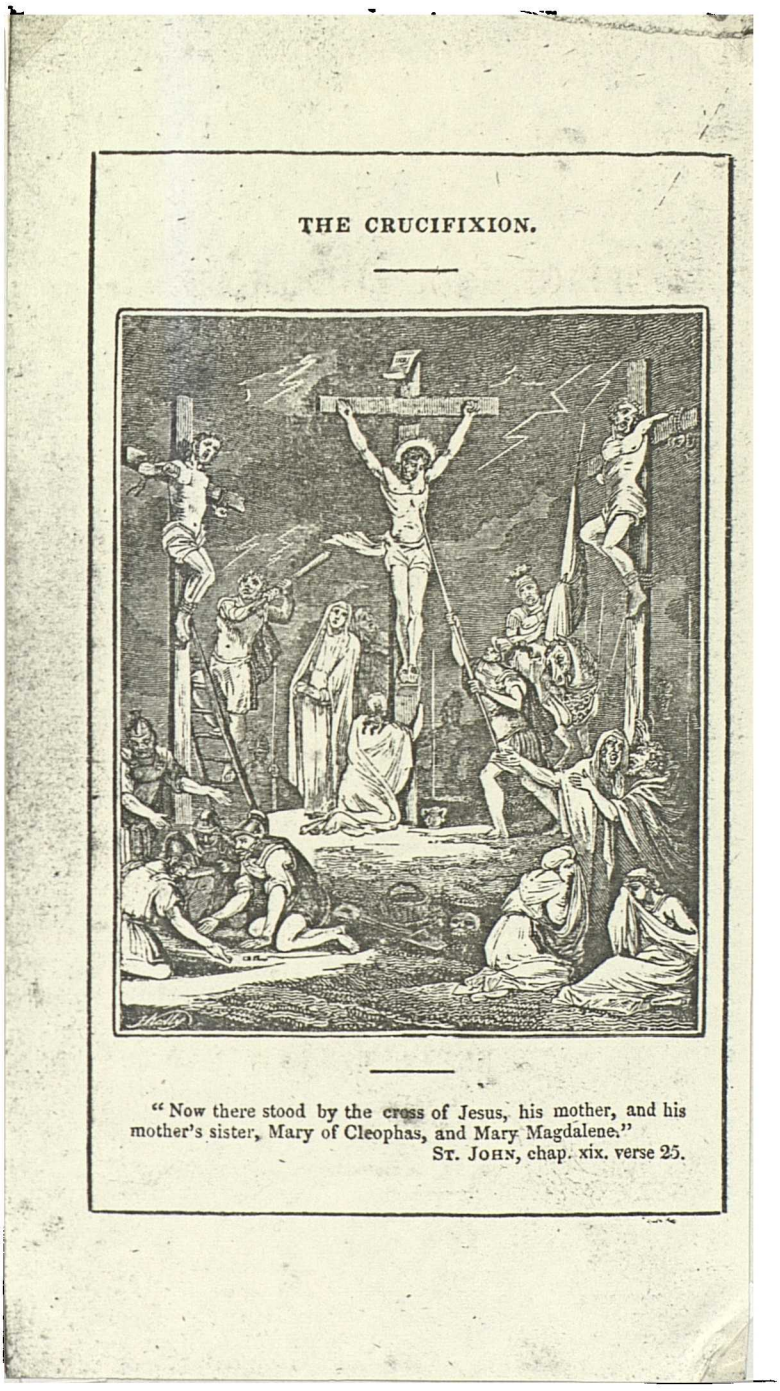
1. Johnny Venus, the Belfast tattooist, has a large My Faith design. A similar tattoo, titled The Seaman's Grave, is reproduced in Hans Ebensten, Pierced Hearts and True Love, Derek Verschoyle, 1953, p. 40; another late nineteenth century use of the image in England is on the plate issued to commemorate the victims of the 1875 Oaks Colliery disaster (in Clive Jenkins' collection).

2. O'Connell Centenary Record, Joseph Dollard, Dublin, p. 160.

3. See the frontispieces to The New Week's Preparation for a Worthy Receiving of the Lord's Supper, Simms & McIntyre, Belfast, 1819 (of which there are two versions, one engraved by the Dublin artist, Brocas) and to Rev Edwin Davies, The Hope of the Bereaved, William McComb, Belfast, 1854. Both these are in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast. On the staggering amounts of Protestant tracts distributed in Ireland in the early nineteenth century see Gearoid O'Tuathaigh, Ireland before the Famine, 1798-1848, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1972, pp. 58-9.



62. Frontispiece in The Office for the Dead, Catholic Book Society, Belfast, Jan 1831/ wood-engraving/actual size/ Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

least the sixteenth century[1] and seems to have become particularly popular in the secularized and sentimental Protestant monumental carvings of the early nineteenth century.[2] Its popularity was now so great that it also appeared in cheap prints[3] and even influenced secular illustrations. James Thomson's literary lady on the title-page of Bernard Short's Rude Rhymes[4] peruses her book of poems in very much the same kneeling, rapt pose as her religious counterparts. So pervasive indeed was the influence of this religious symbolism that a truly secular female image, such as the lass at her loom on the title-page of The History of Mary Watson and Jenny Mortimer (ill 63) is extremely rare. Even this image illustrated a moral tale about two Sunday School girls, published by the Belfast Religious Tract Society, and the weaving girl in the illustration is shown eagerly perusing a presumably religious book as she weaves.

Indeed nearly all these devout ladies are pondering a book which lies open in front of them. This may indicate an ultimate visual source for these illustrations in traditional Catholic images of the Annunciation where the Virgin is often shown in a similar pose, but until some chain of descent can be discovered this, like the dependence of the My Faith image on Catholic depictions of

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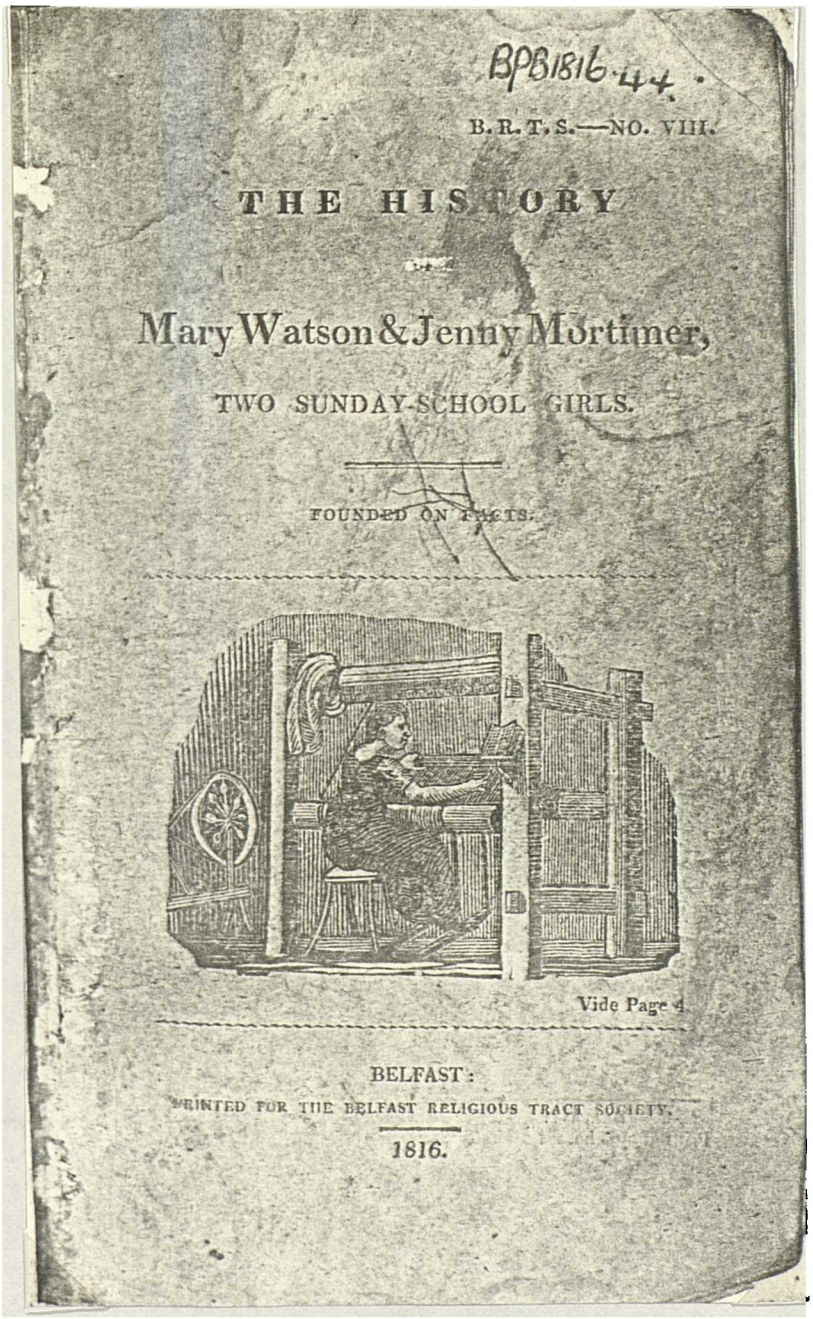
1. See the Maria Jones tombstone of 1585 in the church porch at Ardglass, Co Down, which has a praying figure below a crucifixion scene (R.S.J. Clarke, Graveyard Inscriptions, vol 8, Co Down, Barony of Lecale, Ulster-Scot Historical Society, Belfast, 1972, p. 6).
2. See the tombstones at Comber and Saul in Co Down (Clarke, vol 5, Co Down: Baronies of Upper and Lower Castlereagh, 1970, p. 27 and vol 7, Co Down: Baronies of Dufferin & Lecale, 1972, p. 79 and p. 93.
3. Robert Harbinson (Bryans), No Surrender, Faber, 1960, p. 60.
4. F.D. Finlay, Belfast, 1824. In the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.



63. Title-page/Belfast chap-book/wood-engraving/actual size/Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

Mary Magdalen, remains no more than a hypothesis.[1]

What this contemplation of the book does fairly accurately reflect, is the religious and social context surrounding these images. This was a period when literacy was rapidly increasing. Even prior to the establishment of national schools in 1830 children were being taught to read, very often from chapbooks like these, in Protestant Sunday schools or the Catholic hedge-schools.[2] From this time onward Irish literacy remained remarkably high.[3] And whereas in mainland Britain literacy probably hastened the noticeable secularization of the working-classes which attended their industrialisation and urbanisation, in Ireland it appears to have assisted a change in religious practice rather than a removal from it. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, in both urban and rural areas, the appeal made by Ireland's Protestant organisations was increasingly emotional, evangelical and conversionist rather than rational, orthodox and prophetic. For the laity, attentive listening to the clergymen or minister's sermon, disputation about theological niceties and anxiety about ecclesiastical organisation were replaced by adherence to the Bible as the only guide to salvation and emphasis on the personal experience of conversion.

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1. Contemporary Catholic images of penitent females centred on the rite of Confession. See J.P. Haverty's painting of The First Confession, n.d., which shows a young girl confessing her sins to a priest, and is in the National Gallery of Ireland. It is worth pointing out that nineteenth century publishers of Protestant devotional texts did occasionally turn to very overt Catholic images of penitential females for their illustrations. An edition of John Bunyan's Works edited by George Offer, and published by Blackie in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1855, has on p. 685 of the first volume an engraving after a Murillo painting titled The Acceptable Sacrifice or the Excellency of a Broken Heart. It shows Magdalen praying in front of rocks on which are propped a cross, a skull, a jar and a bible.
2. P.J. Dowling, The Hedge-Schools of Ireland, Mercier, Cork, 1968, p. 62ff.
3. Lee, op cit, p. 13.

> "In order to meet people's real needs for the alleviation of stress, prophetic orthodoxy requires a capacity to believe in the possibility of supernatural intervention in the external world. By the early nineteenth century modernization had proceeded far enough to eliminate that capacity in most Presbyterians. Conversionist evangelicalism which confined the 'magic' to the internal world of the individual's psyche, moved into the gap." 1

Literacy was a vital part in this modernizing process. Not only did the laity increasingly turn to their own Bibles and devotional booklets. They also began to challenge the increasing social distance between the clergy and themselves, by stressing the adequacy of common speech.[2]

It is possible that the continuing popularity of these female devotional images in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century may also be related to economic and social developments in much the same way as their submissive Catholic counterparts. Peter Gibbon has pointed out that the great Ulster Revival of 1859 found a particularly susceptible audience for its enthusiasm amongst the many young women in rural and urban areas whose hopes of marriage were frustrated by social, economic and demographic developments following the famine years of the mid-century.[3] Whereas for their British counterparts, many of whom flocked to the cities to escape family constraints as much as to seek their fortunes, shame at the single state or at non-legalised unions was reduced by the anonymity of distance, the majority of these women had no such freedom. Even if they left their family home to migrate to Belfast, in an area of small size and low population the

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1. David W. Miller, Presbyterianism and 'Modernization' in Ulster, Past and Present, vol 80, 1978, p. 85.
2. Peter Gibbon, The Origins of Ulster Unionism, Manchester University Press, 1975, p. 57.
3. Ibid, pp. 59-62 and J.J. Lee, "Women and the Church since the Famine", in MacCurtain and Ó'Corráin, op cit, pp. 37-45.

possibilities of greater freedom were limited. For many of them and for their rural sisters the My Faith image may have been an expression of sublimated sexual desire, of that kind of conversion experience in which the down-pouring of grace was experienced as "religious matrimony with Christ."[1]

At the end of the nineteenth century a second female figure with curious symbolic links with Catholic imagery began to appear on Orange banners. This was Ulster. At first she was depicted by the Unionists as assertively independent, as in the 1892 Unionist Convention medal.[2] But in the early twentieth century, when Home Rule for Ireland was beginning to appear inevitable, there were a whole series of designs for postcards and booklets which depicted her as a defenceless woman, notably in the scene titled Ulster's Appeal, which still appears on a number of Orange banners (ill 35).

The selection of this image to symbolise Ulster's plight may have been influenced by the numerous existing depictions of helpless Hibernia. The 1914-18 use of dejected females as representations of the plight of small nations like Belgium may also have made this scene popular with loyalist Ulstermen, who tended to make unfavourable comparisons between English support for the Belgians and rejection of their own cause. (It was clearly a male choice for in no way did it accord with the militant feminism displayed by the women most active in Ulster Unionism during this period).[3] However the immediate visual source for this scene, which is indeed acknowledged on it, is

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1. Gibbon, op cit, p. 61.

2. Went, op cit, ill 103.

3. See A.T.Q. Stewart, The Ulster Crisis, Faber, 1967, pp. 86-7 and pp. 221-2.

P.H. Calderon's painting of Ruth and Naomi. This painting has been in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool since it was purchased from the artist at the Liverpool Autumn Exhibition in 1886. Although it was never exhibited in Ireland, it was endlessly reproduced on postcards and calendars and in the kind of religious, commercial and art publications which must have been familiar to many an Ulster Protestant, whether he or she perused A Hundred of the World's Masterpieces,[1] Bibby's Quarterly,[2] or Stories from the Old Testament.[3] And finally McCaw, Stevenson and Orr, the Belfast printers of this booklet, paid a fee in January 1911 for its reproduction on a calendar.[4]

The picture illustrates the section of the Bible story of Ruth where, in a passionate declaration beginning "Intreat me not to leave thee...", she refuses to abandon her mother-in-law Naomi, who has lost both her husband and her sons. Here the Ruth figure is Ulster while Naomi is England and the onlooker is Scotland. It is perhaps significant that Ulstermen at this time chose to represent their country as a daughter-in-law rather than a daughter of their motherland, England.

Like so many visual images used in Irish politics however, this scene has pictorial and emotional resonances far beyond its immediate context. The pose of the two embracing women is that traditionally employed for the visitation of Elizabeth by the Virgin Mary. It has been known for centuries in popular printed imagery. It was used

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1. Reproduction fee paid by Eyre and Spottiswoode in 1899.
2. Reproduction fee paid in April 1901.
3. Reproduction fee paid by G.G. Harrap in 1907.
4. I am grateful to Mary Bennett, Keeper of British Art at the Walker Art Gallery for supplying this information about the Calderon painting.

for example to illustrate the concept of Humanity in the Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius, first printed the English translation of Charles Hoole in 1659 and widely distributed thereafter (ill 64). As with the praying and repentant women the links in the chain of transmission are missing but the similarity seems too close to be lightly dismissed.[1]

What is quite well documented is the popular attachment of Ulster people both Protestant and Catholic to the story of Ruth and Naomi. A female linen worker who commenced employment in 1933 recalled a ritual performed by women workers in both mill and factory.

> "We done what you call 'turn the key in the Bible' ... they got what you call a widow's key - at that time they had a big long key. It was more like for openin' a bank than it was for a door... you had to steal it. And somebody brought in a Bible, and it (the key) was tied in till the chapter of Ruth. And this was tied up with anything. You see, it was so supersti - the Irish are supersititious anyway.
>
> And whoever was doin' the turnin' ... I always done it, you see. One tip of the key was on this middle finger here, and the girl that was gettin' it done - the other was on her middle finger. And you said:
>
> 'Ruth says, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from followin' after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people will be my people, and thy god, my god."'
>
> Well, then, you said, 'If "A" be the first of my true lover's name, turn, key, in the Holy Bible, turn.' You went up the whole alphabet, sayin' that, until it came that you knew that was her initial, and she was so engrossed that she didn't see you movin' your finger, and that woulda turned right around, and her mouth woulda been right open. 'Oh, that's his name.'"[2]

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1. Ronald Adams, Librarian of the Ulster Folk Museum, and an authority on early Ulster printing, confirms that these were no Belfast-printed versions of Orbis Pictus, but believes that the English editions were highly likely to have been used by more enterprising teachers in the North of Ireland in the eighteenth century.
2. Quoted in Betty Messenger, Picking up the Linen Threads, University of Texas Press, Austin & London, 1978, p. 188.

Humanity. CXVII. *Humanitas.*

Men *are made*
for one another's good;
therefore let them be kind.
Be thou ſweet and lovely
in thy Countenance, 1.
gentle and civil
in thy Behaviour *and* Manners, 2.
affable and true-ſpoken
with thy Mouth, 3.
affectionate and candid
in thy Heart, 4.
So love,
and ſo ſhalt thou be loved;
and there will be
a mutual Friendſhip, 5.
as that of Turtle-doves, 6.
hearty, gentle,
and wiſhing well on both parts.
Froward Men are
hateful, teſty, unpleaſant,

Homines facti ſunt
ad mutua *commoda*;
ergò ſint *humani.*
Sis ſuavis & amabilis
Vultu, 1.
comis & urbanus
Geſtu ac *Moribus*, 2.
affabilis & verax
Ore, 3.
candens & *candidus*
Corde, 4.
Sic ama,
ſic amaberis;
& fiat
mutua *Amicitia*, 5.
ceu *Turturum*, 6.
concors, manſueta,
& benevola utrinque.
Moroſi homines ſunt
odioſi, torvi, illepidi,

64. Humanity/ill on p.147 of John Amos Comenius's Visible World, translated into English by Charles Hoole, S. Leacroft, 1777/wood-engraving/actual size/Queen's University Library, Belfast.

There is no way of directly linking this ritual with Ulster's Appeal but the story brings to life the kind of active role this bible-image had amongst Ulster workers, a role which must have rendered its political usage particularly appealing to them.

Given the evident interest of past Northern Ireland Protestants in Catholic and republican female figures, and their own development of images similar to and linked to them, why have they so rigidly eschewed such feminine symbolism during the present troubles? Is it because of the kind of increased fear of absorption by the Republic of Ireland to be found in a comment by the Reverend Ian Paisley at the time of the meetings between Terence O'Neill, Prime Minster of Northern Ireland, and Sean Lemass, Prime Minister of the Republic O'Neill had described the Republic as an attractive girl living next door to whom one should talk over the hedge, to which Paisley countered with the observation that O'Neill was a married man and that Northern Protestants saw the Republic as the harbourer of the murderers of policemen.[1]

Or is it because Protestants have felt increasingly rejected by their motherland, Britain? Or should this apparent avoidance of female imagery be related to a continuing unease about Catholic attitudes towards the Virgin Mary? Certainly this kind of unease has been very forcefully voiced in recent years by the Reverend Martyn Smyth, in a sermon delivered to various groups of Orangemen, which is worth quoting at some length.

> "1. We can have Christ or Mary
>
> This may seem a strange way of putting it but it strikes at the very heart of the Gospel. It was the core of the Reformation conflict. And it is the basic choice before us today.

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1. Ireland: A History, Part 12, broadcast on BBC 2 and RTE on 17 Feb 1981.

It really stands for the way of salvation we take - God's way or Man's.

We might digress for a moment to comment on the cult of Mary in the Roman system. Although the Reformers clearly saw the issues involved, Roman protagonists and others have obscured them. The Reformers were accused of distortion when they charged Rome with giving a place of infallibility to the Papacy and placing an unbiblical emphasis on Mary. History has proved they did not distort the facts but rather pinpointed the fallacies in that system. In 1870 the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility was clearly enunciated as Dogma. And in the cult of Mary there has been a steady procession of error - the immaculate conception, perpetual virginity, the bodily assumption into heaven, the enthronement as joint Queen of Heaven and the approaching declaration that she is co-redemptrix with Jesus Christ.

However it is not merely the errors of Roman Catholicism which are enshrined in the question, Christ or Mary? Put that way it speaks of the place of human co-operatio n in Salvation. An old divine put it well when he said 'The natural man is a born Catholic!' By which he meant that it is most natural for us to wish to contribute to our own salvation.

The very symbolism of the Madonna and Child reflects not only the imbalance but the totality of the error. Instead of Jesus only-crucified Saviour, 'the way, the truth and the life', - we have all of human effort typified in Mary and dominating the scene. The Mother is able; the child is dependent. The truth, however, is other.

Certainly she is blessed amongst women. Truly God owned her as His handmaid. Indeed the holy child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. All this is true.

But He alone offered up Himself once and for all to bear away our sins. We spurn His grace and denigrate His ability when we add anything to the finality of His Cross - the finished work for our redemption." 1

What I would like to stress about this sermon is the very strong either/or emphasis, for it is my belief that Protestants are both fascinated by and fear female images, because of their border-crossing ambiguity.

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1. W. Martyn Smyth, Stand Fast, Orange Publications, Belfast, 1974, pp. 14-15. It was this sermon which Rev Smyth preached in Newtownbreda on 17 Dec 1967 at an Apprentice Boys of Derry Service to mark the Shutting of the Gates and at the Diamond on 24 September 1972 to mark the anniversary of the "Battle" there.

It may well seem that I have over-stressed the contrast between the ambiguous Mother Ireland and the rigid King William. Certainly it is true that under the heading of Mother Ireland I have considered a very wide range of female images, and that William is limited by his position as a single historic figure, rather than a generic symbol. But if one looks at the whole range of male figures which feature in Northern Ireland political imagery, both Protestant and Catholic, it is impossible not to be struck by their rigidity of definition in contrast to the ambivalence of their female counterparts. A Protestant leader is forever a figure of monumental rectitude, and a republican monument to the dying Cuchulain is always a reminder of heroic self-sacrifice for Ireland, but Mother Ireland and her entourage are two-faced, both beautiful and horrific, subservient and manipulative. Moreover the tendency to view these female figures in this way appears so obsessive that it cannot be seen simply as a throw-back to the Celtic love of ambiguity, or as a reaction to the real role of women in the troubles.

These figures are both fascinating and fearful, not only because of their political and religious symbolism, but because as women they are in our culture dangerous, dirty, boundary figures, quite apart from the roles they play.[1] Amongst Northern Ireland Protestants the fascination with this imagery emerged in the past in banner-images of Faith (ill 36), and Ulster (ill 35), which have a strongly feminine, sexual, "dirty" feeling about them, despite their religious references. But more recently members of the Protestant community have shown their increased fear of the breaking of their boundaries in avoidance of such female figures and of the invading dirt associated with them.

This is revealed in Protestant attitudes to the supposed

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1. See Edmund Leach, Culture and Communication, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp 34-5, 61-2, 72-5 and 82.

dirtiness of Catholics. References to this are far more numerous than any reality would warrant. In particular there is the tendency, in moments of exasperation, to refer to Catholics as "dirt" or "scum". There seem to be layers of fear involved here - the fear of falling back into a state from which one's own people has lifted itself with some difficulty, a fear of being absorbed by the earth-rooted natives, a fear of the women who maintain those homes which are not in that revealing local phrase "Protestant-looking", and a fear of that Catholic religious attitude which, based on the concept of original sin, tolerates "dirt" in a way unthinkable to the black and white mentality of Ulster Protestants. To me these attitudes are most effectively summed up by the story of the female prisoners on the dirty protest in Armagh gaol, whose holy pictures of the Virgin framed in shit would seem perfectly natural to most Catholics but appear dreadful to the Loyalist members of the prison visitors committee.[1]

Conclusions

It is now possible to suggest some of the reasons for the continuing importance of Mother Ireland and her associated figures for both Catholics and Protestants during the present troubles, in the face of challenges from the real actions of women during this period and the rival attractions of William III.

For Catholics these figures are part of a long and strong tradition, closely interwoven with political, religious and social elements of their community's history. They have also remained

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1. Tim Pat Coogan, On the Blanket, Ward River Press, Dublin, 1980, p. 118.

linked to such realities of Catholic life in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years as the sufferings of the women living in the most troubled areas of the province, the political desire for the eventual achievement of a United Ireland and the continuing devotion to the Virgin Mary. Women have found it difficult to counter these images with figures more representative of their real situation, largely because of the continuing strength of traditional sex roles in the province and the republican subordination of the feminist struggle to the fight for political freedom. Moreover the legitimacy of these images has been endorsed by their continuing use in the works of Irish artists during the past thirteen years, which would appear to have both an immediate, short-term effect on perceptions of the troubles, and a more subtle long-term influence on the views of those who own them. Much of the appeal of these figures for artists has been seen to derive from their status as females, culturally endorsed as suitably ambiguous subjects for the play of the artistic imagination. And it is this ambiguity of female figures in our culture that appears to be the reason for both the interest and fear engendered by such images in the Protestant community during the present troubles. The roles played by Mother Ireland and her associated figures can only be understood if these personifications are examined as images, as well as factors relating to political, religious and social developments.

Indeed, taken together, the analyses of the developing images of William III and Mother Ireland make plain some of the approaches necessary to elucidate the political role of visual images, and some of the problems involved. It is clearly too simple-minded to do no more than relate such images directly to political and/or artistic developments. The overtones they carry, what one might call their

endorsing qualities, have also to be studied in order to understand both their genesis and their effect. In Northern Ireland these overtones are overwhelmingly religious. King William is identified with the victor on the white horse in the Apocalypse, Mother Ireland with the Mother of God. Listening and watching for these overtones is not simple however. Inadequate evidence can make it difficult to tell whether an apparent confusion between, for example, the Virgin with her rosary beads and the figure of Liberty with her broken chains, is due to fusion of imagery by its maker, or to misunderstandings by observers. And likely hypotheses must remain as such if missing links cannot be traced. With the apparent lack of adequate material and descriptive evidence for the style of Orange banners between 1796 and 1867, we cannot be sure when their depiction of William III changed from the classical image of the Dublin statue to the heroic figure known from paintings, prints and engraved glasses. And it has not yet been possible to clearly define the links proposed as existing between late nineteenth century political images of submissive women (such as My Faith and the Kilmaley banner), the imagery of religious revivalism, the social conditions of Irishwomen during the period, and the more generalised, commercial, Victorian taste for simpering females.

Many of these problems arise from the attempt made in this thesis to locate the visual imagery of Northern Ireland's politics, both past and present, in a total cultural context, and to give it some kind of functional weight.[1] Clearly this begs a number of questions. The defining of a cultural field in itself involves a

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1. See above, Chapter I.

selection, conditioned by personal feeling, the availability of material, the limitations of memory, and the need to achieve coherence. And functional weight varies according to usage and viewpoint. Some allowance for that variation can be made by studying the attitudes of different groups to particular images. A more crucial drawback is that the totalisation provided by this approach is rarely available to the viewer on the ground. Nevertheless I believe the attempt is worth making. If one subtracts from the discussion of King William wallpaintings the information about the visual traditions inhabited by their makers, or if one removes from the analysis of the Entreat me Not image, the evidence concerning the widespread reproduction of Calderon's painting in the kind of literature familiar to Ulster Protestants of the period, one is left, I think, with images dwindling to the isolated, disembodied state to which they are so often reduced in the works of historians of art and politics.

Moreover the attempt to achieve this kind of overall view leads to awareness of certain significant patterns in the development of the Mother Ireland and William III images. In studying their progress through time it becomes evident that although they have both constantly shifted to and fro between the spheres of fine art and popular imagery, the general tendency has been for the Williamite images to move from fine to popular art, whereas the Mother Ireland figures have shifted in the opposite direction. In seeking a reason for this, the importance of the gate-keeping role of artistic convention emerges. For the exploration of complex feeling increasingly expected of the artist as his role shifted from the public to the private sphere the traditionally more ambiguous female figure has appeared more sympathetic than the male. It has

also been more available as a model, in the shape of the (generally male) artist's wife or mistress, and more acceptable as a subject to the (generally male) purchaser.

The historical analysis of the William III and Mother Ireland images also throws into prominence certain general European cultural trends which have affected them. In these trends religious, political, industrial and commercial developments have all played a part. Both types of image were affected by the visual propaganda of the English and the Dutch in the seventeenth century in which religious and political themes were fused and which featured a strong, classical, imperial element. Both were involved in the increased public representation of the ordinary people which took place in the second half of the eighteenth century, fostered equally by the growth of dressing-up and by the gradual popularisation of permanent political symbols in such early industrial products as engravings and transfer-printed pottery. Both were weakened and diffused by the increased sentimentality, politeness and religiosity of the nineteenth century, together with the massive development of the use of illustrations in cheap books, magazines and broadsheets. Both were revived in a coarser, more lavish, and more opportunist fashion as a result of the advent of true mass-production, the renewed passion for dressing-up, the increasing jingoism and the fight-for-the-women mood of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

Looking across the field of King William and Mother Ireland imagery within Northern Ireland, it becomes evident that various kinds of dialogue have been taking place between these symbols throughout their history. There has been the simple kind of tit-for-tat retort in which one figure opposes the other by repeating

the same basic message. Thus the Ancient Order of Hibernians repeat in their banners of Patrick Sarsfield and Owen Roe O'Neale the same figures of the heroic leader on horseback as can be found in the Orange Order banners of William III. And there has also been the diametric opposition of symbols in which, for example, the neatness, "cleanliness" and conqueroring role of William has been reinforced by the ambiguous, "dirty", suffering nature of Mother Ireland and vice versa. Patterns very similar to those found in Mary Douglas's social maps seem to emerge but they are dynamic and interrelated rather than static.[1]

In looking for ways to locate the King William and Mother Ireland images in the total cultural context certain points of intersection between the visual artifact and its social and political roles emerge as the most productive focuses for analysis. The commissioning or initiation of such artifacts has for long been the subject of study for those interested in the social history of art. The public, ritual use of visual images has received less attention, although a number of political and social historians are increasingly turning their attention to it. The private, ritual use of images in the home or on the person appears to have received no attention at all. All three need to be studied in order to understand the interrelationship between visual images and political ideology.

Finally it is apparent from the discussion of the William III and Mother Ireland imagery that it is important not to explain them away by making them the products of other social, religious or political factors, or by simply envisaging them as one link in a

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1. Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols, Barrie & Rockliff, 1970. For a discussion of the relevance to this thesis of Douglas's social maps see Chapters 1 and 8.

circular chain of such factors. If one adheres to the concept of functional weighting, despite its limitations, it is clear that at certain times visual images dominate religious, political and social processes, taking on a kind of life of their own. It is important to bear in mind that our view of the role of Williamite imagery in the 1797 Orange procession in Lurgan or of Mother Ireland symbolism in 1916 is conditioned by the abundant and lively evidence we have about those events. Nevertheless the real and living impact made by the images is undeniable. The support lent to the power of Ulster landlords by the figure of William III cannot be totally attributed to its political exploitation by those landlords or their followers, and Mother Ireland, in the form of Cathleen-ni-Houlihan, really did send men out to die in 1916.