

Transnational nationalism and collective identity among the American Irish

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This fine study fits into a long-established tradition of transatlantic scholarship. It is also the latest in a line of books discussing Irish nationalism in the US. While Lune looks at the Irish American experience in some detail his focus is different. The book stresses the continuities in Irish nationalism from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth and focuses on the transnational dimensions, both differences and similarities as well as the multi-site interactions that marked out the Irish diaspora as a discrete site of political interactions. *Transnational Nationalism* stresses narration, performance and negotiation and it is very good at bringing these things together and explaining their importance in creating identities, upholding shared values, or revealing to us where such connections existed. The book also evinces a strong understanding of the idea that mobility and transnational collective expression are important for those with a commonality of interests. In this sense, transnational identities are shared and shareable in ways which relate to the wider issue of the globalization of goods, people and ideas. I am certainly of the view that transnational communication is a key to understanding how the identities of home may be shared in diasporas.

While *Transnational Nationalism* revisits well-known events and themes, it also brings together the consistencies of nationalism over time. The book is clear in describing Irish events and activities and assessing them through the prism of Irish American activism. It is the continuity of ideas, not the consistency of a singular nation, which emerges here. The nation changes beyond imagination in these decades – except that it remained a colonial state of the United Kingdom. And so continuities can be gleaned. Lune asks why generation after generation chose to fight against British rule, even when the odds were so stacked against them. Why did heroes in the Irish nationalist pantheon from Wolf Tone to Patrick Pearse chose the condemned paths they did?

Beginning with the period of the 1798 and ending with the 1916 Rising, Lune illustrates well that “national identity at home is a very different thing from national identity abroad” (54). He focuses on each phase of dramatic resistance to British rule, hence there is not much here between 1867 and 1916. There is a very interesting discussion of early Hibernian organizations, which like Scots, English and German equivalents, were set up in the eighteenth century to help immigrants settling into the colonies and early Republic, and, with sociable conviviality, to raise a glass to the old country. Only with O’Connell’s movement for Catholic emancipation, did such meetings become more political and

nationalist; although O'Connell's hostility to slavery made O'Connellism a difficult badge of honour in many parts of the US. Moreover, the rise of an alternative, physical force nationalism in the form of Young Ireland and its anti-O'Connellite Confederacy also receives consideration here. This study is good on the period of extreme nativism, from the 1840s to the 1860s, in which Catholics and the Irish were regularly lambasted by what are humorously labelled "unfriendly" societies, as well activists under the banner of Know-Nothing politics.

At the same time, Great Famine and the failed Young Ireland rebellion generated a wave of nationalism in the United States unmatched at home. For there were limits to what a colonized people could do. The great Irish humanitarian, agitator and MP, Michael Davitt, did time in prison for Fenianism. For many reasons, Davitt disliked his fellow ex-prisoner, the exiled Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. Davitt was disdainful of men like Rossa who sat in safe exile in America whilst encouraging Irishmen to take risks at home that might get them killed, not least the letting off of bombs. Indeed, Niall Whelehan in *The Dynamiters* (2012), goes as far as to argue that Irish American dynamite campaigners were something other than Fenians altogether. While the radical Irish in America were fomenting further futile risings after 1867, the Irish at home were in a phase of O'Connellite reformism, this time in support of Charles Stewart Parnell, a man whose milking of the diaspora for money to fund Irish politics at home set a tradition that would last till beyond WWI.

Lune recognizes the severe limitations sectarianism imposed on full nationalist expression, yet he also overlooking the Protestants and Orang Order members who are on the other side of the national struggle. It is true that Lune's story is not their story, yet they are wrapped up in it. Lune does, however, importantly find space for Ribbon traditions between their precursors, the Defenders, and their inheritors, the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Ribbonmen were protecting Irish Catholic neighbourhoods from nativist assault in the 1850s in a way that echoes Michael Lynch's study of the Northern IRA. Here Lynch portrays the Hibernians, not the IRA, as the true defenders of the people against Unionist police and paramilitaries in the turbulent early years of the Northern Irish State. The echoes are remarkably clear.

Viewing nationalism in the long nineteenth century as a consistent cultural manifestation, despite the many and varied political experiences of the same period, Lune is able to add new value and originality to our consideration of well-known episodes in Irish nationalist history. Some of the best parts of this book concern events and ideas which stress the differences between the Irish and their diaspora. Lune even concludes with his own hunt for a popular New York Irish punk band called Black 47. In early 1990s New York, they were well known, but the record shops of Dublin had not heard of them. The diaspora, now and then, past and present, revealed convergence and divergence whilst also creating many shared symbols, customs and actions. Lune's book is an excellent and original guide to these issues.