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'Ireland beyond the nation-state: antecedents of transnational history in Irish historiography'

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Since the 1990s 'Transnational history' has moved to the top of research agendas in multiple countries and the approach appears ideally suited to further explore subjects such as nationalism, empire, famine and migration that historians have long recognized to be of central importance to Ireland's past and present. At the same time, despite these international aspects, few could dispute the resilience of the nation-state framework in modern Irish historiography. Ireland seems immune to the charms of transnational history and debates have been slow to arrive and get going. Enda Delaney's important article in *Irish Historical Studies* and a clutch of recent monographs indicate that transnational approaches are making some inroads into Irish historical scholarship.[1] But in comparison to North America or central Europe, transnational history has had a much smaller impact in Ireland. In Britain, where it was also relatively slow to take off, centres for transnational history now exist at University College London (2007) and at the University of St Andrews (2009). Similar developments are not evident in Ireland. The landmark *Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* edited by Akira Iriya and Pierre-Yves Saunier gives some indication of the Irish outlook.[2] It contains entries on a wide variety of subjects from 350 contributors working in 28 different countries, yet there is no entry by an Irish author or an author working in Ireland. This absence is all the more conspicuous when one considers that Ireland is at the centre of the North American/European academic networks that underpinned the volume.

Despite the apparent dearth of explicitly transnational perspectives in Irish history writing, particularly in revisionist debates of the 1990s, this essay argues that numerous antecedents of transnationalism exist in the historiography that provide a clear foundation for the development of history beyond-the-nation-state into new thematic

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[1] Enda Delaney, 'Our Island Story? Towards a Transnational History of Late Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 37, (2011), 599-621; Barry Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World,*
[2] Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

areas of modern Ireland. Transnational history, first and foremost, is defined as a perspective, rather than a new master narrative. It is a means for historians to challenge notions of national exceptionalism, to bring a new angle to issues typically discussed in national contexts through the study of 'people, ideas, products, processes and patterns that operate over, across, through, beyond, above, under or in-between polities and societies'.[3] Many examples of just such a perspective exist in the work of a number of Irish historians. In particular, this essay assesses the impact of 'Atlantic history' and the groundbreaking work of the early modern historian Nicholas Canny. Attention then turns to imperial and commonwealth history, and the seminal work of Nicholas Mansergh. Finally, the historiographies of the Irish diaspora and, briefly, the Irish labour movement are considered. Locating Ireland in the broader global picture has long been a facet of scholarship in these fields and they have established a platform with which to develop transnational perspectives into critically important areas of Irish history where the national and local battlefields of revisionism have so far predominated, such as the Irish Revolution, 1913-1923.

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The revisionist debates that dominated Irish historiography up to the early-2000s afforded little room for transnational perspectives. From the late 1930s the historians T. W. Moody and R. Dudley Edwards began to successfully consolidate historical studies in Irish universities and established a consistent scholarly output in Irish history. They formed part of a revisionist trend that sought to upturn state-peddled myths about Irish history and heroism by facing the facts and instituting a positivist approach to the discipline. The writer Sean O'Faolain typified this new attitude when he lamented that 'All our histories are nationalist, patriotic, political, sentimental. I had not a single book to turn to which is not either preoccupied with the national ego and a delusion of its self-sufficiency, or else a cursive record of political events'.[4] The agenda of these early revisionists, then, was in tune with transnationalist concerns to provide a corrective lens to 'methodological nationalism', to critically respond to how the development of nation-

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[3] Iriye and Saunier, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, p. xviii; C. Bayly et al, 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History', American Historical Review, 111, (2006), pp. 1440–1464.
[4] Sean O'Faolain, *The Irish*, (London: Pelican, 1947), p. 9.

states shaped the evolution of history as a discipline.[5] In revisionist writing, however, deflating the nationalist narrative did not mean discarding the national framework, rather it was reinforced. Revisionist historians, most of whom were trained in England, frequently at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, employed the narrow, nation-state approach that came hand in hand with the high-political history then predominant in England, in contrast to the *Annales* school in France and the agenda advanced by Mark Bloch and the early advocates of comparative history.[6]

Many years later, in 1989, the historian Brendan Bradshaw criticized the revisionist project for denigrating national identity in historical writing, but as Nancy Curtin observed, 'he need not fear that the nation is being written out of the new history of Ireland'.[7] From the 1970s to the 2000s both revisionists and their opponents, sometimes called post-revisionists, scuffled over adversarial interpretations of nationalism, war and the origins of the Irish state. The intensity of debate was crucially shaped by the violence in Northern Ireland and historians strove to rattle the different versions of history utilized to vindicate political positions. New studies coupled much archival digging with national and regional perspectives, eschewing wider frames of analyses. And these were often battles best fought in national or local contexts, which are better equipped to address certain questions. Beyond Ireland, revisionist controversies in some other countries were similarly debated in national terms.[8] Transnational approaches are not, as noted above, superior to national or local ones, but are designed to provide different perspectives better suited to explore some problems and not others.

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[5] Simon MacDonald, 'Transnational History: A Review of Past and Present Scholarship', www.ucl.ac.uk/cth/objectives/transnational_history_simon_macdonald (last accessed 15 April 2013), p. 4. For a more recent take on Irish methodological nationalism, see John M. Regan, 'Southern Irish Nationalism As A Historical Problem', *The Historical Journal*, 50, (2007), pp. 197-223.

[6] Marc Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de synthèse historique*, 46 (1928), pp. 15-50. On revisionism see Kevin Whelan, 'The Revisionist Debate in Ireland', *Boundary*, 31 (2004), pp. 179-205; Ciaran Brady, '"Constructive and Instrumental": The Dilemma of Ireland's First "New Historians"', in idem (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938-1994* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), pp. 3-31; M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish Historical "Revisionism"': State of the Art or Ideological Project?' in *ibid*, pp. 306-26; D. George Boyce, 'Past and present: revisionism and the Northern Ireland troubles', in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 216-38.

[7] Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical scholarship in Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 26 (1989), pp. 329-351; Nancy Curtin, '"Varieties of Irishness:" Historical Revisionism, Irish Style', *Journal of British Studies*, 35, (1996), pp. 195-219, 219.

[8] To take just two examples, American exceptionalism or Australia's 'history wars'. See Mark Leff, 'Revisioning U.S. Political History', *American Historical Review* 100 (1995), pp. 829-53; Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars*, 2nd ed. (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press 2004).

Yet time and again the revisionist reflex was to turn the gaze inward, seldom outward. In 1978, when modestly contemplating the agenda of Irish history in 2018, R. D. Edwards asked 'must we not endeavour to see ourselves in the wider context?'[9] But in the following decades the national paradigm remained predominant in revisionist writing on the modern period, along with a conservative theoretical approach that left little room for methodologies making an impact elsewhere. In the 1980s and 1990s sociological approaches, postcolonialism, gender studies or comparative history were unwelcome intrusions into self-referential empirical debates. Revisionists and post-revisionists greatly advanced Irish historiography, but it is hard to disagree with Margaret MacCurtain and Mary Dowd's assessment that 'few of the contenders in the debate have recommended new methodologies or fresh ways of looking at Irish history'.[10] Forensic analyses of who shot who in Cork in 1920 or 1922 have ensnared much scholarly energy but ultimately rest on little more than volatile oral testimonies from handfuls of individuals.[11] Postcolonial and imperial history both entail wider frameworks of analysis, but revisionist contributions to the debate frequently revolved around the view that Ireland's position in the British empire was not comparable to the colonies, but neither was it the same as the home UK nations. True, establishing national idiosyncrasies and differences between cases is central to comparison within large-scale frameworks, but Ireland's apparent uniqueness was sometimes presented as a reason for not engaging in the exercise in the first place.[12]

Despite the nation-state focus of revisionist debates, a trailblazing example of transnational history emerged from the revisionist scene in 1963, written by the eminent Irish historian F. S. L. Lyons. *Internationalism in Europe* explored organisations, conferences, economic cooperation, labour movements, humanitarian societies and intellectual exchanges in Europe during the century from 1815-1914, when 'alongside the

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[9] R. D. Edwards, 'An agenda for Irish history, 1978-2018', in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*, p. 58.

[10] Margaret MacCurtain and Mary Dowd, 'An agenda for women's history in Ireland, 1500-1900', *Irish Historical Studies*, 28, 1992, pp. 1-37, 4.

[11] Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); B. P. Murphy and Niall Meehan, *Troubled History: 10th anniversary critique of Peter Hart's The IRA and Its Enemies* (Cork: Aubane Historical Society, 2008); more recently see John Regan, 'West Cork and the Writing of History', *Dublin Review of Book*, 28, (2013); John Borgonovo, 'Revolutionary Violence', *Irish Historical Studies*, (2012), pp. 325-331; Eve Morrison, 'Kilmichael Revisited: Tom Barry and the "False Surrender"', in David Fitzpatrick, *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2012), pp. 158-180.

[12] On these debates see Cleary, 'Amongst Empires', pp. 21-3, 35; Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1996); Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies and Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Europe of many frontiers there existed an international Europe where traditional divisions between countries had come to have less and less meaning'. Commissioned by the Council of Europe and written during Ireland's first attempts to gain EEC membership in 1961-3, the book was of its time. Lyons explicitly sought to throw light on 'the early stages of that process of European integration which is now so much in the foreground of events'.[13] Remarkably, the book completely ignored Ireland, apart from a pair of minor references. It was as if Irish history was not part of, or unaffected by, the processes Lyons described. The sense was of an Irish historian looking out at this European world, rather than feeling a part of it, and his work on Irish history remained national in focus.

Lyons' study of Europe without Ireland appeared shortly before J. C. Beckett's seminal study *The Making of Modern Ireland.* The heading 'Ireland Isolated' appears early in the narrative and the sense of a place close to Britain but cut off from the rest of the world lingers throughout the book. At the same time, his 'Three Kingdoms' approach, which interlinked the histories of Ireland, England and Scotland, was still broader in focus than most contemporary works. This was a decade when Irish historiography was, in the words of the early modern historian Nicholas Canny, 'narrow, linear, and focused either on the English state or on the proto-state of Ireland'.[14] The research and teaching cultivated in Irish history departments in the 1960s and 1970s, Canny argued, 'remained insular because primacy was given to a narrowly defined Irish history that maintained links with an equally narrow version of English history'. Yet there were exceptions and a handful of early modern historians - David Beers Quinn, Hugh Kearney and Canny – sought to steer Irish history off the narrow path, resisting 'Irish chauvinism' by situating their subjects in wider contexts and manoeuvring an Atlantic turn in Irish history.[15]

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[13] F. S. L. Lyons, *Internationalism in Europe, 1815-1914* (Leiden: A W Sythoff, 1963), pp. 5, 11.

[14] Nicholas Canny, 'Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America', *The Journal of American History*, 86, 3, The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special issue (1999), pp. 1093–1114, here 1095; idem, 'Atlantic History and Global History', in Renate Pieper and Peer Schmidt (eds.), *Latin America and the Atlantic World: essays in honor of Horst Pietschmann*, (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005), pp. 25-34.

[15] Nicholas Canny, 'Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World' *The Historical Journal*, 46, 3 (2003), pp. 723-747, here 723, 726; Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: a history of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Beer Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584–1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted Walter Raleigh in 1584*, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955).

During the 1980s and 1990s early modern Irish history was increasingly studied within the wider field of the 'Atlantic world' and Canny's work contributed to the systematic development of this field both internationally and in Ireland, notably the studies *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World 1560-1800* (1987), *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (2001) and his role as editor in the opening volume the *Oxford History of the British Empire* (1998).[16] His writing demonstrated a desire to challenge the inward looking nature of Irish historical studies by analysing developments in Ireland within comparative Atlantic contexts of migration, settlement and imperialism. This new framework allowed historians to revisit well-known sources with new questions and a key achievement of the Atlantic approach lay in how it revealed the workings of colonisation processes in Ireland, the Caribbean and the Americas that would not have been recognizable from a national or regional perspective.

Atlantic history primarily entailed the study of people, people who were 'born in, and moved into, out of, between, and beyond' different geographic areas. Constructing the history of 'people and their movements would also bring all historians of places, whether of Britain and Ireland or of the Atlantic basin, to accept that their subject is inextricably linked with developments on continental Europe and further afield'.[17] Mobility and networks, then, were central aspects of Atlantic history and recreating population movements revealed new understandings of patterns of settlement, but also that the actors involved were 'keenly conscious that this was an endeavor that they were sharing with other Europeans'.[18] This approach certainly held transnational aspects and Canny contributed to the landmark 1999 special 'transnational' issue of the *Journal of American History*, edited by David Thelen.

Given the innovative and extensive contributions that Atlantic history has made to Irish history, it is tempting to ask if 'transnational' simply provides a new label. Yet there are a number of differences. First, the most evident difference is that the Atlantic world, like the British empire, is a geographically specific entity, a self-contained sphere of interest and therefore is not free of the problems associated with national history. Neither is the Atlantic world always as broad as the term infers. Atlantic history, as

[16] Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); (ed.), *The Origins of Empire, British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. I, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 Vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); (ed.), *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World 1560-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[17] Canny, 'Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World', p. 741.

[18] Canny, 'Writing Atlantic History', p. 1107.

Canny acknowledged, was a form of writing imperial history and often entailed 'reconfiguring the history of colonial British America'. A European, north Atlantic world frequently took centre stage, relegating African and South American histories to the margins.[19] In contrast, transnational approaches hold the potential to extend in multiple directions and overcome the spatial limitations of the Atlantic or imperial worlds.

Second, the flexible spatial scale offered by transnational history allows for the greater integration of modern Ireland into the European context. Atlantic history has neglected Ireland's relationships and connections with European colonial powers, other than Britain, as well as other countries and regions of Europe. The primary focus has been on the relationship with Britain and North America and this tendency is compounded in the modern period by the sheer intensity of Irish migration to the United States and Canada, drawing scholarly attention away from Europe. One recent volume has argued that 'Ireland did not develop its national characteristics in isolation from the rest of Europe', but an understanding of this position in Europe was lost due to the national focus of much history writing in the twentieth century.[20] The North American orientation of Atlantic history did not address this neglect of the European context of modern Irish history. More extensive investigations of the history of links, interactions and influences between Ireland and continental Europe are necessary, not least given the nature of Ireland's present position in Europe. In the post-war period, many accounts of Irish relations with the European Union are dour affairs, reminiscent of old high-political histories that were based on reports, accords and the correspondence between elite figures.[21]

Transnational history holds the potential to reconfigure Ireland's relationships with Europe beyond institutional connections, opening up possibilities for tracing linkages and parallels between Ireland and places neglected in national and Atlantic history, such as central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries. F. S. L. Lyons' 1963 book was a lost opportunity, but new transnational histories are reintegrating Ireland into the European picture in areas such as educational, migratory and religious networks.[22]

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[19] Canny, 'Atlantic history; what and why?', *European Review*, 9, (2001), pp. 399-411, 407; William O'Reilly, 'Genealogies of Atlantic history', *Atlantic Studies*, 1, (2004), pp. 66-84, here 76-7.

[20] Brian Heffernan (ed.), *Life on the Fringe: Ireland and Europe 1800-1922*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p. 3.

[21] A clear exceptions is the landmark study by Alan Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[22] Ciaran O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility and the Irish Catholic Elite, 1850-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2013); Bryan Fanning and Ronaldo Munck (eds.), *Globalization, Migration and Social Transformation: Ireland in Europe and the*

The latter provides an ideal site for transnational perspectives and further research is clearly necessary on the movements and behaviour of Irish individuals and groups in the religious circuitry of Europe. Moreover, Catholicism is not an indigenous church in Ireland, but an institution ruled by a foreign power, the Vatican, and a transnational approach is vital to understanding this cross-border relationship.

Third, Atlantic history has thrived most of all in early modern period, when population movements, commercial networks and systems of political patronage, in the words of Bernard Bailyn, 'brought disparate worlds increasingly together into a single Atlantic entity'.[23] The eighteenth century in particular has received much attention from Atlantic historians who view it as an era when Europe and America were closely connected, but in the nineteenth century Atlantic history seems to come to a halt. J. G. A. Pocock, for example, saw the revolutions of the late-eighteenth century as a disruption to the trans-Atlantic colonial linkages that developed in the early modern period, leaving a less integrated world behind them in the 1800s.[24] Nicholas Canny observed that the 'Atlantic world of trade and employment…remained reasonably self-contained until the late eighteenth century'.[25] National borders and identities became more palpable from the late-eighteenth century onwards, but the increased speed and lower cost of transporting people and goods, along with transformations in communication, also opened up new connections and fragmented the Atlantic world. Atlantic approaches fade as we move into the modern era, and modern Irish history has not benefitted from this wider frame of analysis as earlier centuries have.[26] Whereas transnational approaches are more appropriate to explore these new connections in an increasingly globalised age, instead, modern Irish history was viewed very much through the national lens. Perhaps the nineteenth century has been 'nationalised' to a greater extant than earlier centuries as part of the nation-building process. Yet the question still

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World (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2011); Colin Graham and Leon Litvack (eds.), *Ireland and Europe in the nineteenth century*, (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006).

[23] Bernard Bailyn, 'The Idea of Atlantic History', *Itinerario*, xx, 1, (1996), pp. 19-44, here 33.

[24] Ibid, p. 39; J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47, 4, (1975), pp. 601-621.

[25] Canny, 'Atlantic history; what and why?', p. 409.

[26] Exceptions include David Gleeson (ed.), *The Irish in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010); Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and History: the Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

remains why haven't modern Irish historians employed broader perspectives when modern historians and literary critics frequently and advantageously have done so?[27]

Beyond the political and ideological battlefields of revisionism, they often have. Several important works in modern Irish history represent precursors of the transnational approach. Nearly seventy-five years ago Nicholas Mansergh's *Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* took an unusually transnational approach at a time when the output of the Irish historical discipline was not abundant and what existed generally followed a nation-centric or Ireland/England approach. Professor of Commonwealth history at Cambridge University, throughout his distinguished career the Tipperary-born Mansergh consistently sought to adopt broad perspectives and make comparisons in order to better understand developments in Irish history. *Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* was his third monograph, published when he was just thirty years old, and it preceded a prolific scholarly output that included the landmark studies *The Commonwealth Experience* (2 Vols, 1969) and *The Prelude to Partition: Concepts and Aims in Ireland and India* (1978).[28] Mansergh's analytical lens allowed for Ireland to form an instructive case study that deepened the general field of inquiry on nationalism, partition and the development of the Commonwealth, but also refracted back to insightfully contribute to the historiography of Ireland itself.

Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution approached Irish nationalism in the century or so before the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty by placing it in a wider European context and assessing the observations and analysis of international travellers, intellectuals, radicals and statesmen on Irish affairs. The book was widely read, evident in its revision and expansion in 1965 and republication three times under the title *The Irish Question 1840-1921*. In order to 'widen the view', Mansergh explored the writings of an illustrious list of

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[27] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 155-165, 251-262; Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and imagination. Patterns in the historical and literary representation of Ireland in the nineteenth century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); idem, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

[28] Nicholas Mansergh, *Ireland in the age of reform and revolution: a commentary on Anglo-Irish relations and on political forces in Ireland, 1840-1921*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1940); *The Commonwealth and the nations: studies in British Commonwealth Relations*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948); *The coming of the First World War: a study in the European balance, 1878-1914*, (London: Longmans, 1949); *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931–1939,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); *The Commonwealth Experience*, 2 Vols. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); (ed.) *Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power, 1942–47*, 12 Vols. (London: HMSO, 1970-1983); *The Prelude to Partition: Concepts and Aims in Ireland and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); *The Unresolved Question: The Anglo-Irish Settlement and its Undoing, 1912–72* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

travellers and intellectuals whose perspectives merited inclusion because they looked on Ireland's past and present as,

> 'a part and an outcome of European history and, in so doing, they not only shed some new light upon them, but asked questions of lasting and fundamental significance. They, at least, did not think that the signposts pointed all one way'.[29]

Along with the exploration of these 'external judgments', Mansergh drew European parallels throughout the book to test ideas of Irish exceptionalism. He found similarities between the suppression of the United Irishmen's 1798 rebellion and contemporary violence in the Vendeé. He drew attention to the crushing of political revolts in nineteenth-century Europe with violence that exceeded the ferocity of contemporary repression in Ireland. Cultural nationalism and the Gaelic League stimulated a 'consciousness of nationality in precisely the same way as the revival of Magyar earlier, and of the Czech, Polish and Croat later in the century, stimulated the ambitions of the nationalities within the Habsburg empire'.[30] In the twentieth century he observed how the 1913 Lockout in Dublin 'found a counterpart in the great Chicago strike and in the French railway and industrial strikes of 1909 and 1911'.[31] Drawing parallels, he maintained, helped 'to place a period in the wider historical setting, so essential to its understanding'.[32] Mansergh's 'gaze girdled the globe', in the words of Joe Lee, who reflected that *Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* was 'a rare example of a historical study that not merely preaches, but practices, the comparative approach'.[33] Lee also followed this example and his writings on Irish history are peppered with comparisons and a desire to situate Irish history in wider contexts, most notably in his groundbreaking study of twentieth century Ireland.[34]

Mansergh's work anticipated some of the approaches that we now call transnational, as well as postcolonial and empire studies. He never treated Ireland as a 'place apart', Joe Cleary has argued, and was 'alert to the consequences of historical trauma and to the politics of cultural memory in ways unusual to British Commonwealth

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[29] Nicolas Mansergh, *The Irish question 1840-1921: a commentary on Anglo-Irish relations and on social and political forces in Ireland in the age of reform and revolution,* 3rd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 13.

[30] Mansergh, *The Irish question 1840-1921,* pp. 269.

[31] Ibid, p. 265.

[32] Ibid, p. 85.

[33] J. J. Lee, 'Foreword', in Nicolas Mansergh and Diana Mansergh (ed.), *Nationalism and Independence: selected Irish Papers* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), pp. xiv-xvi.

[34] J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

historiography of the time'.[35] Acknowledging Mansergh's important contribution, Cleary has advanced an empire studies approach to modern Ireland that incorporates not only Irish responses to the British empire, 'but also the wider European imperial system and to the American neo-imperialism that emerged in its wake'.[36] Yet the transnational approach, rather than empire studies, appears more suited here. Rather than incorporating Irish America into the picture on the basis of the modern United States being a neo-empire, taking a transnational approach presents a more flexible framework that overlaps with empire studies and can incorporate an analysis of different attitudes and worldviews among Irish people at home and abroad, but is not limited to the imperial question. Following the work of Bayly, Mcgee and Thompson, Barry Crosbie's study of Ireland's 'multidirectional involvement' in empire employs 'more enabling cross-cultural or transnational approaches' that move beyond 'coloniser-colonised' models.[37]

Perspectives beyond-the-nation-state are also found in explorations of Irish labour and radicalism, whether the transnational lives of activists, the circulation of revolutionary ideas or the participation of Irish people in working class movements abroad.[38] At the same time, while transnational and global approaches to labour studies have come to the fore in multiple countries over the past two decades Emmet O'Connor has pointed out that, 'in Ireland, the debate on these topics has hardly begun'.[39] Given the internationalism, if not universalism, of central issues in labour studies there is extensive scope for new work that takes a broader approach. Elsewhere, the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's classic *Nations and Nationalism* emerged from ideas presented at the Wiles lectures in Belfast and placed Irish nationalism in a wider comparative context. Marxist historians of Irish nationalism have also contextualised their subjects in

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[35] Joe Cleary, '*Amongst* Empires: A Short History of Ireland and Empire Studies in International Context', *Éire-Ireland*, 42, (2007), pp. 11-57, 35-6.

[36] Ibid, p. 11.

[37] Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks*, p. 8.

[38] Frank Roney, *Irish Rebel and California Labour Leader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931); Eric Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League & Irish America', *Marxist Perspectives,* 2 (1978), pp. 6-55; Sean Wilentz, 'Industrializing America and the Irish: Towards the New Departure,' *Labor History*, 20 (1979), pp. 582-585; Seán Daly, *Ireland and the First International* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1984); Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); John W. Boyle, *The Irish Labor Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989); Emmet O'Connor, *Syndicalism in Ireland, 1917-23* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1988); idem, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia and the Communist Internationals*, 1919-43 (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004).

[39] Emmet O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-2000*, new ed. (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), p. xii. See Marcel van Der Linden, *Transnational Labour History. Explorations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

broader theoretical debates, albeit their focus remained centred very much on the nation-state.[40]

The field of Migration Studies has provided an important site for the general development of transnational history, whose proponents agree that it is primarily concerned, like Atlantic history, with people and their movements.[41] Migration does not, by default, require a transnational perspective, but migrants are well suited to David Thelen's oft-repeated description of transnationalism as the study of people who move 'above, below, through, and around, as well as within, the nation-state'.[42] Scholars of migration such as Donna Gabaccia, Nina Glick Schiller, Thomas Faist, to name but a few, have produced important interventions in transnationalism debates. Rather than viewing migration as a closed process between two nation-states, they stress how 'border-crossing migrants create integrated social spaces that follow a logic other than that of nation-states'.[43] These transnational social spaces are shaped by overlapping, informal personal networks, as well as more formally organised ties to associational culture, religion and politics.[44] While acknowledging structural factors in the sender and receiver countries that influenced migration, this perspective shifts the emphasis toward migrants' individual agency and how their choices were shaped by the constant exchange of knowledge within transnational personal networks. Diaspora and transnationalism are not interchangeable terms, but Thomas Faist maintains, 'diasporic phenomenon can be conceived as a subset of transnational social formations that have broader scope'.[45] Both terms help us make sense of the world created by migration.

Some of the clearest antecedents of transnationalism in modern Irish historiography are found in studies of the Irish diaspora that go beyond standard

[40] Erich Strauss, *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* (London: Methuen, 1951).

[41] Patricia Seed in Bayly et al, 'AHR Conversation', p. 1443; Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 14, (2005), pp. 421-439.

[42] David Thelen, 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History' *Journal of American History*, 86, (1999), pp. 965–75, 967.

[43] Dirk Hoerder, 'Losing National Identity or Gaining Transcultural Competence Changing Approaches in Migration History', in Haupt and Kocka, *Comparative and Transnational History*, pp. 247-271, 257. See N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton, (eds.), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992); Donna Gabaccia, 'Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History,' *The Journal of American History*, 86, (1999), pp. 1115-1134; David Thelen, 'Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History," *Journal of American History*, 79, (1992), pp. 432-453.

[44] Enda Delnaey, 'Transnationalism, Networks and Emigration from Post-War Ireland', in Delaney and MacRaild, *Irish Migration*, 276-296.

[45] Thomas Faist, 'Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partners', in Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (eds.), *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 9-34, 33.

accounts of how well, or badly, the Irish did abroad, paradigms of assimilation in the receiver country, or views of the diaspora as capital for economic and political goals in Ireland. This is not the occasion for an exhaustive list, suffice to point out that a number of works have adopted a more nuanced approach to the dynamic relations between homeland and hostland.[46] The work of Kerby Miller stands out, particularly his seminal study *Emigrants and Exiles*, moving as it does with equal expertise between Ireland and the United States and doing sophisticated transnational history before many others were beginning to debate it.[47] David Fitzpatrick and Patrick Farrell have advanced our understandings of how migrants understood the worlds they inhabited between Ireland, Britain and Australia.[48]

Given Ireland's massive and geographically widespread diaspora, there is abundant scope to expand the transnational approach and reveal new insights. Diaspora is a key theme in Ireland's transnational historical development because of how, beyond emigration, it is woven into the history of nationalism, religion, gender relations, ethnic identity, labour and the economy. Yet, as Enda Delaney has pointed out, the Irish people who emigrated are frequently considered as a separate field of inquiry to Irish history. Instead, he calls for an 'integrated history that accords the Irish overseas and the Irish at home equal weighting', and 'explores in a rudimentary way how the connections with this diaspora shaped both the history of the homeland and that of receiving societies'.[49] This transnational approach enables the analysis of a wide range of questions regarding social, political, cultural and economic behaviour across Ireland and centres of Irish settlement, and holds the potential to radically rethink not just the Irish diaspora, but also central aspects of modern Irish historiography.

Scholars of the Irish diaspora have largely expressed enthusiasm for transnational history, with an important caveat. There are dangers of essentializing an Irish subject of analysis that leads, Timothy Meagher contends, to 'conceptions of an irreducible and unchanging Irishness (or Italianness, or Polishness) scattered in lumps throughout

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[46] For a comprehensive account of transnational approaches to the Irish diaspora see Delaney, 'Our Island Story', pp. 599-605.

[47] Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); idem, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin: Field Day, 2008).

[48] David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to the Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); and extensive chapters by both authors in the *New History of Ireland v* and *vi*.

[49] Delaney, 'Our Island Story', 602-3.

countries around the globe'.[50] With these concerns in mind, Kevin Kenny has advocated a 'dual approach'. He distinguishes between transnational and comparative history, but argues that in combination they provide the most suitable approach to the Irish diaspora. In this framework, transnational, like diaspora, is a perspective that examines 'movement and interaction between migrants in places of overseas settlement (whether North America, Great Britain, or Australia), and between those communities and the home country (in this case, Ireland)'. To safeguard against the tendency 'to flatten out diversity', however, Kenny recommends comparisons of the similarities and differences between the experiences of 'Irish migrants and their communities in the very different places where they settled'. This dual approach provides a 'powerful and flexible framework for the task at hand'.[51] Malcolm Campbell's exploration of similarities and differences, but also exchanges, between Irish communities in Australia and western United States provides an example of the potential of such an approach.[52]

The identification of parallels, it is argued here, is also integral to transnational history. Drawing parallels, not only with other areas of Irish settlement, but with non-Irish phenomena enriches the wider context of analysis and eases the risks of reifying an ethnically transnational Irish world. Some scholars of migration have already adopted comparative approaches between both Irish and non-Irish migrant communities.[53] What is advocated here is not so much symmetrically comparative history, but identifying parallels between cases in similar historical circumstances that are not necessarily in communication with each other, making small-scale comparisons that open up the Irish world to dynamic exogenous circulations.

For example, exploring the transnational flows of syndicalist ideas in Ireland creates possibilities to draw parallels between the 1913 lockout and revolutionary labour

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[50] Delaney also emphasizes the need to pay attention to local 'specificity and context', Delaney, 'Our Island Story', 104; Timothy J. Meagher, 'From the World to the Village and the Beginning to the End and After: research Opportunities in Irish American History', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, (2009), 118-135, 122.

[51] Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study,' *Journal of American History*, 90, (2003), 134-162, 150, 160-1. On migratory networks see Enda Delaney and Donald MacRaild (eds.), *Irish migration, networks and ethnic identities since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[52] Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New World: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815–1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008).

[53] Donald Akenson, *Ireland, Sweden, and the great European migration, 1815–1914* (Liverpool: McGill Queens University Press, 2011); Irial Glynn, 'International trends and national differences in asylum policymaking: Australia, Italy and Ireland compared, 1989-2008', PhD thesis, (EUI, Florence, 2009); Christiane Harzig (ed.), *Peasant Maids, City Women. From the European Countryside to Urban America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); M. F. Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

in other countries; studies of Irish nationalist networks could draw parallels with concurrent revolutionary movements that follow similar trajectories in their ideas or actions; a study of ideas of agrarian improvement in nineteenth century Europe can draw parallels between how those ideas are received in different locations; investigations of the Great Famine might compare experiences in Europe that were generated by similar international factors. There are abundant possibilities to explore how the circulations and flows that traversed Irish communities at home and abroad shaped thinking and actions elsewhere. Reconfiguring our approach to Ireland in this way provides a clear path forward for doing transnational Irish history.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Transnational perspectives enable us to reconstruct a more complex picture of modern Irish history by placing developments in wider contexts, by identifying reciprocal influences between Ireland and other locations, by revealing the impact of flows and circulations in Ireland, by integrating Irish history with that of its massive diaspora, and by drawing instructive parallels between disparate cases. Such an approach, which has evident precedents in the historiography, is necessary in areas where more insular perspectives have predominated, particularly, as we enter the so-called 'decade of centenaries', the crucial years of the Irish Revolution, 1912-1923. Historians have acknowledged the importance of external factors in Ireland during this period, yet accounts of the revolution have typically adopted national or local frameworks. Emerging historiography has begun to situate the Irish revolution in wider British, Atlantic, European and imperial contexts that contribute to reconfiguring our understanding of the period. The Irish revolution lends itself to transnational analysis in a threefold manner. First, by investigating how the movement and experiences of people outside of Ireland before and during the years 1912-1923 shaped actions when they returned; second, by tracing parallels or connections between the Irish and other cases of paramilitary violence in post-war Europe; and third, by considering how the conditions of globalisation and news of far off events influenced the thinking of government and resistance.

Individual mobility and connections with the Irish diaspora were an important factor in shaping revolutionary mentalities. Many key personalities of the period spent significant periods of time abroad and Tom Garvin's classic study *Nationalist*

Revolutionaries has pointed out that 'well over 40 per cent, possibly over 50 per cent, had lived outside Ireland for considerable periods, usually in Britain or the United States.[54] Beyond migratory circuits, the conditions of globalisation in the early twentieth century shaped the development of the Irish revolution, through the hopes and fears generated in Ireland by the news of far off events, even when no concrete connections existed. The 1917 Russian Revolution, for example, created palpable anxieties about threats to the political and social order. Bolshevism quickly became 'synonymous with the elusive threats and underhand enemies that menaced European post-war societies'.[55] What happened in Ireland held its own peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, but the chronology of developments suggests parallels with other national and regional conflicts in post-war Europe, such as Finland, Poland or the Baltic countries, during a period of 'revolution, imperial collapse and ethnic conflict', when things seemed to be up for grabs, when opportunities seemed poised to be taken by new movements.[56]

One key challenge when writing on the Irish revolution, it seems, is how to combine transnational contexts with the intricate, local detail that continues to be illuminated by the county study. There are legitimate concerns that local complexity may get lost in more wide-ranging vistas, but transnational history does not aim to erase the nation or the locality. It is possible to safeguard against the burial of the peculiarities of county experiences beneath broader hypotheses. Utilizing a transnational lens provides a tangential perspective that, depending on the questions asked, can zoom in and out from large-scale questions to small-scale analyses of human agency. The local study or the biography can reveal how transnational processes play out at the micro-scale. To turn the tables, studies that are primarily local or national in scope also need to confront how experiences outside of Ireland shaped the actions and thoughts of the individuals in their story, and how news of events in distant lands like Russia or America impacted on local situations.[57] It is argued in this essay that exploring the manifold aspects of modern Irish history necessitates some transnational frame of reference that balances larger contexts with the rich detail excavated by the county study. Alternating the scale of analysis -

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[54] Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 2005 edn.), p. 54.
[55] Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, 'Bolshevism as Fantasy: Fear of Revolution and Counter-Revolutionary Violence, 1917-1923', in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 40-51.
[56] Gerwarth and Horne, *War in Peace*, p. 7.
[57] For a discussion of the interplay between the transnational and the local see Ian Tyrrell, 'Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States history: theory and practice', *Journal of Global History*, 4, (2009), pp. 453-474; Bernhard Struck, Kate Ferris and Jacques Revel, 'Introduction: Space and Scale in Transnational History', *International History Review*, 33, (2011), pp. 573-584.

between local, regional, national, transnational, global - creates possibilities to achieve such a balance while working closely with primary sources.

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Transnational history is a field of history that looks at how developments within the history of one country has been shaped by developments outside of this country, e.g. how British history has been shaped by developments from France, Germany or the US. One important feature of transnational history is to move on from taking the nation state as the "natural" frame for historical analysis and instead look at the past without the framing of the nation state. This redirection of historical studies can Entangled History (EH) is a historical perspective and a concept in historiography. Taking a trans-cultural perspective as the main point of departure EH centers on the interconnectedness of societies. The basic assumption is that neither nations, nor empires, nor civilizations can be the exclusive and exhaustive units and categories of historiography. Â Early steps for a conceptual framework that stressed transfers beyond borders can be traced back to the 1980s and were articulated in a European context of increased political integration. Michele Espagne showed the intercultural transfers between France and Germany, emphasizing the forms of transition in the constitutional process of nations (1988). Â Entangled Histories in the Americas. The Two Nations Theory holds that the Northern Ireland Protestants are a distinct Irish nation.According to S.J. Connolly s Oxford Companion to Irish History (pg.585) this idea first appeared in the book Ulster As It Is (1896) by the Unionistâ€¦Â [The Irish border as a cultural divide : a contribution to the study of regionalism in the British Isles. (2nd. Edition) M. W. Heslinga ; Assen [Netherlands] , Van Gorcum, 1979.] This view was also put forward by the Irish Communist Organisation in 1969, in response to the crisis in the North. Â Ireland â€" This article is about the island. For the sovereign state of the same name, see Republic of Ireland. For the constituent country of the United Kingdom, see Northern Ireland. For other uses, see Ireland (disambiguation). Coordinates â€¦ Wikipedia.