

Constructing Irishness:
Nationalism,
Archaeology
and the
Historic Built Environment
in an
Independent State

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Nottingham Trent University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2014

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Abstract

The accepted underlying principle held for the destruction of certain elements of architectural heritage in Ireland has been nationalism. The explicit manifestation of this was the destruction of Dublin's Georgian architecture in the 1960s and 70s. Such architecture has been naturally associated with British imperialism: formal architecture represented the British Protestant upper classes, a division of society to which the native Catholic Irish did not apparently ascribe, or from which they were excluded. Assessments of value made by reactive amenity bodies such as the *Irish Georgian Society* did little to dispel the notion that formal architecture did not accord with Irishness, as such appraisals were being made by the elite.

Additionally, independent Ireland was keen to emphasise a native Irish identity, based in the west, and reinforced by icons of tradition including thatched vernacular houses and rural living. Such identity was underpinned by the archaeological record: the pre-dominant cultural-historical theoretical approach and the invasion hypothesis reinforced distinctions between the various cultures entering the country by both the physical movements of people and the diffusion of culture. However, such assessments of value become untenable in the face of economic development, as demonstrated by the Hill of Tara and the M3 motorway debate.

This research provides a nuanced appraisal of Ireland's selection and neglect of certain aspects of its material culture by evaluating the fluid nature of 'heritage'. This is achieved through a methodology which utilises archival material from the National Archives and Office of Public Works, assesses archaeological excavations and historic buildings through fieldwork and examines the politicisation of architectural destruction in the literature.

The research concludes that assessments of heritage value need to be taken beyond simple selectivity based on the tenets of nationalism, and expedient factors need to be given more credibility when assessing how and why Irish material culture is protected. It also concludes that the material culture which embodies Irishness is most at risk.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research concerns the Republic of Ireland and its material culture, and the influence that nationalism has had on the selection and neglect of certain elements of that culture, principally upstanding archaeological remains and historic buildings. Tilley et al. recognise the diversity of the composition of material culture and cite the origins of 'material culture studies' as having 'historically... a primary disciplinary 'home' and point of origin within the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology' (2006, p. 1). Venn proposes that 'every system of classification works on the basis of rules of inclusion and exclusion ... they operate on and constitute differences, they establish boundaries, and ground judgement and action' (2006, p. 44). The island of Ireland has historically been (and remains in the north) a contested space. Therefore, archaeological and historic remnants are charged with appropriation or rejection. Hewison is alert to the dangers of classification, and believes 'the question then is not whether or not we should preserve the past, but what kind of past we have chosen to preserve, and what that has done to our present' (1987, p. 47).

The persistence of 'Irishness', rooted in a distant past, has resulted in less regard for the historic built environment. This research makes an original contribution to knowledge by demonstrating that archaeology and vernacular architecture remain key in defining 'native' Irish culture and heritage, and by doing so, other forms of material culture associated with the country's former British colonisers are supposedly neglected in the present. Such fluctuations in value are bound with both cultural and collective memory, the nature of which is explored in this research through the selection and neglect of certain aspects of the historic built environment. Analogies have been created between acts of intentional destruction of material culture associated with the period of colonialism and the demolition of domestic Georgian buildings in the second half of the 20th century. This research untangles these correlations and considers more mundane and less political motives for architectural destruction.

1.1 Research background

In 1994, the then Minister of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, and current President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, evoked the significance of Irish archaeology and its contribution to identity:

For many people, it is the artefact or monument itself that symbolises the identity of a people. The images such as those printed on the front cover of every school child's homework copy as a daily reminder of the physical manifestation of our heritage are part of what we are — the Ardagh Chalice, the Tara Brooch, the Monasterboice High Cross and the Borrisnoe Collar.

Having grown up in Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, I recall using these copybooks. In moments of procrastination and distraction the jewels of the Tara Brooch would be filled with colour, and the stone walls of the Early Christian church and round tower of Glendalough imbued with texture from my pencil. It seemed that archaeology was everywhere: school trips to Newgrange passage tomb, Sunday drives to Knocknarea, County Sligo, the 'tomb' of Queen Maeve. My siblings and I would pull stones from the mound covering the grave of the mythological queen, using them to spell out our names on the hillside. I never questioned my identity, my 'Celtic' roots, or indeed the damage we were inflicting upon a Neolithic passage grave.

In 1991, my brother left school and enrolled on a government training scheme. His first placement was on an archaeological dig at Ardfert Cathedral, County Kerry. The Cathedral reflects many architectural periods, with the earliest parts of the building dating from the 12th century executed in a distinct Hiberno-Romanesque¹ style, and later Gothic and Victorian accretions. I cajoled him into securing a voluntary placement for me, even though I was only 14. I happily spent that summer cleaning excavated human skeletons with an *Oral B* toothbrush, taking great pleasure in using my implement to clear earth away from their wide grins. However, after several weeks I became disillusioned: most of the people on the placement had no training in archaeological excavation, and supervision by professionals was limited. My discomfort intensified when a trainee arrived one morning sporting a new earring formed from a human distal phalanx (bone from a fingertip) which he

¹ See Françoise Henry (1970) *Irish Art in the Romanesque Period (1020-1170 A.D.)*.

had excavated the previous day. It was only later, during my undergraduate studies that I learned of the huge debates around respect for human remains, particularly amongst indigenous groups, and burned with shame when taught to never ever clean the teeth of excavated skulls as traces of food lodged there could provide significant information about prehistoric diets. I also became acutely aware that the undergraduate programme I had chosen, 'Heritage Studies' had mainly attracted nationalists. This came to the fore when the only Protestant in the class gave a presentation on alternative attitudes and readings of Oliver Cromwell (a historic figure despised by Irish nationalists): the student was summarily cast into a social wilderness.

During summer holidays, I went home to County Kerry, and each year I observed the continuing work at Ardfert Cathedral. I slowly realised I was attracted to historic buildings and not subsurface remains, and so watched the conservation of the site with interest. However, one summer, I noticed the beautiful 19th century Victorian stone buttress, which had been supporting a Hiberno-Romanesque wall, had been removed. Subsequent enquiries revealed that the wall had been stabilised, therefore the buttress was deemed redundant. I was perplexed: surely the buttress was part of the history of the site?

After completing my degree, I looked for post-graduate programmes in architectural conservation. Irish universities were filled with Masters Degrees in archaeology, but there was only one Masters in Urban Design and Conservation in University College Dublin. Not being interested in the design element, I looked further afield, and found an MSc in Historic Conservation run by Oxford Brookes University, UK. This afforded me an external view of Ireland, and I recognised that the impetus for 'conservation' was overridden by archaeology and 'heritage'. For my dissertation, I decided to investigate the conjectural restorations at Newgrange and Knowth Neolithic passage tombs, County Meath, to try and make sense of the influence of Irish nationalism. That particular research was stirred by the shock I felt on discovering (only a few years earlier) that the façade of Newgrange was decidedly modern and principally composed of concrete, and Knowth's rounded and monumental appearance was achieved with quite a lot of polystyrene. After graduation, I became a conservation professional, based in the UK, as this country provided more employment opportunities in the sector. However, a residual interest in

Irish archaeology and the historic environment remained and I longed to fill a gap in knowledge: why were we indoctrinated with nationalism during our formative years? Why is Irish archaeology so sexy, and conservation disparaged? Why is there so much popular literature on historic stone buildings, and not brick? Therefore, as an experienced conservation professional, I chose to investigate this further, hence this research project.

1.2 Nationalism and Irish identity

In 2013 the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, was presented with a *Certificate of Irish Heritage* owing to his Irish ancestry. Obama joined other notable and popular Americans of Irish descent, including the Hollywood actor Tom Cruise, with his acceptance of this *Official Certificate from the Irish Government* which 'provides official recognition that you are of Irish descent. Anyone with an Irish ancestor, born outside of Ireland is eligible' (Government of Ireland, 2013). The certificates come with several finishes including the 'West of Ireland', 'Celtic Knot' and 'Emigrant ship'.

The certificates can be appreciated as a blatant attempt to commodify state sanctioned 'Irishness', and the images and finishes applied to the certificates demonstrate how on a popular level the Irish perceive themselves: the rural west of Ireland scene is complete with a thatched cottage, donkey and unindustrialised landscape. The Celtic Knot motif on the second design appeals to an insular early medieval form of art, associated with a period of the archaeological past seen as intrinsically Irish as it pre-dates major 'invasions'. The 'Emigrant ship' draws on the Famine narrative, an event which resulted in mass starvation and emigration from Ireland in the mid to late 19th century. Collectively, the design of the certificates draws on representations of nationalistic Irish identity.

'Irishness' is a nebulous term, with no specific definition. Byrne, Kirwan and O'Sullivan consider 'Irishness' as being composed of 'cultural narratives' which work on 'idealised national stereotypes and the image of the nation that political realities have created' (2009, p. 4). 'Irishness' draws on facets of nationalism, and these 'cultural narratives' were developed in the 19th century, decades before independence from Britain in 1922. It remains a constantly evolving condition, such that Foster recognises it as 'a scale or spectrum rather than a simple national, or residential, qualification' (1988, p. 596). The

position of material culture on this scale fluctuates, just as heritage values are fluid and not fixed. This led Comerford to caution that 'Irishness is not an essence to be identified in various emanations, but a category whose ever-changing contents need to be accounted for' (2003, p. 2). This accords closely with Smith's 'definitions of the "nation" ... that emphasize purely "subjective" factors, such as attitudes, perceptions and sentiments.' (2001, p. 11) This research examines how 'Irishness' is mediated through particular aspects of material culture².

The subjectivity of heritage values can be identified in Hobsbawm's (1992) 'invention of tradition' whereby a set of practices, rituals and symbols are brought together to influence values and behaviour and which once replicated infer a connection with the past. He focuses upon invention to demonstrate that the history of a state 'is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so' (in Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p. 13). Therefore, Irish identity has commonly been defined as Gaelic and Catholic 'characterised by a long struggle for freedom against England of which we should feel proud' (Fennell, 1993, p. 54).

However, Irish identity is not as simple as identifying oneself as 'Celtic' or Gaelic: it is a 19th century construct, which Hobsbawm accepted as 'occurr[ing] before the creation of a nation state' (1992, p. 12). It relied on the premise that Irish culture had not been destroyed, but rather was 'atrophied by the climate of foreign oppression' (Smith, 1986, p. 196). The island of Ireland has experienced successive influxes of people over the past 9000 years: the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, the Neolithic tomb builders, 'Celts', Vikings, Normans and English. The Norman Invasion in 1169 CE³ is popularly regarded as the definitive break, irrevocably changing the trajectory of the country and its population. In the 19th century, Irish nationalists endeavoured to craft narratives depicting a 'Golden Age' of Irish civilisation and nationhood which flourished independently long before the Norman

² Crooke (2001) addresses how other material culture (artefacts and museums) was used in relation to nationalism. Bourke (2001) considers Irish museums in an international context.

³ CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before Common Era) are used in this research. BC and AD are used only when adopted specifically in the literature referenced in the research.

invasion, and was thus maintained in Western enclaves thereafter. This accords with Dietler's observation, where 'places and objects can be made into powerfully evocative symbols that serve to authenticate constructed traditions ... archaeology provides that anchor by tying sites to ancient events and people.' (1994, p. 597) Therefore, one of the principal theoretical approaches to this research is nationalism, and consequently how Irish 'national' identity has been constructed through the archaeological and historic built environment.

1.2.1 Irish Nationalism

Irish nationalism, both before and after independence, demonstrates Hobsbawm's theory of invented traditions and bears out Laurence's view that the past may be presented in different ways to serve different needs in the present (2008). Hobsbawm 'does not regard the "nation" as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period.' (1990, p. 10). Cultural nationalists promoted the revival of Gaelic as the national language to give cohesion to the aspiring nation before an independent state was practical. Political nationalists, upon the establishment of the Irish Free State, sought to legitimise their nationhood at the time of traumatic change by striving to locate 'Irishness' in the prehistoric past and early Christian era, connected to their present by the restoration of iconic ancient monuments, which spoke of a sophisticated indigenous culture owing nothing to the former colonial power. Anderson (2006) recognises the agencies involved in the creation of such narratives with his aptly titled *Imagined Communities*. In recognition of this, Guha-Thakurta contends that 'pasts become meaningful and usable only when they are activated by the contemporary desires of individuals and communities, and, most powerfully, by the will of nations' (2004, p. xvii), and Hindess compounds this by stating 'If the nation is an imagined community, then nationalism is a project which aims to adapt the social and political order to the requirements of some preferred national imaginary through a process, often contested, of nation building' (2005, p. 234).

The Gaelic Revival was fashioned in the 19th century. This was intended to foster an interest in the Irish 'Gaelic' language and traditions, and went hand in hand with the struggle for an Irish nation, distinct from that of Britain. This

movement was very clearly part of Irish nationalism. This research explores how Irish identity is constructed through facets of 'national identity' and the expression of an Irish 'ethnic community'. However, O'Brien (1995) describes the former as 'cultural nationalism', where Gaelic games, the Irish language and Irish literary revival contributed to national identity in the mid to late 19th century.

1.2.2 Irish Language

By the end of the 19th century cultural nationalists - the literary cognoscenti - in Ireland shared a common goal 'to establish that the peoples of Ireland had a rich and ancient culture which justified their sense of nationhood' (Laurence, 2008, p. 160). To this end, the purpose of the Gaelic League (founded in 1893) was to revive the Irish language, the use of which had declined substantially following mass rural emigration at the time of the Famine (1845-51) coupled with the colonial policy of teaching in English only, since 1831 (Laurence, 2008 p. 186). *The Ideals of the Gaelic League*, a pamphlet of 1898 states 'A distinctive language is the surest and most powerful bond of a distinctive nationality.' (O'Hickey, 1898, in Laurence, 2008, p. 180) Douglas Hyde, a founder member of the Gaelic League, believed that Ireland could regain her independent cultured past but 'she must cease to imitate, and must take up the thread of her own past, and develop from within upon native lines', (cited in Laurence, 2008, p. 161) emphasising by his metaphor the continuous thread drawing the 'native' past into the present. The ideal of reviving Gaelic was symbolic for Irish nationalists especially as the colonial power was seen as largely to blame for its decline, and whilst its reintroduction may have been confined largely to academic circles (Laurence, 2008, p. 180), the idea of a unique language giving access to ancient Irish culture would have appealed to the wider nationalist constituency, 'build[ing] on people's awareness of a nation', creating a 'national self-consciousness' and 'giving a set of attitudes and a programme of action.' (Kellas, 1991, p. 3) This concurs with Smith's definition of 'nationalism', whereby it is 'an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation".' (2001, p. 9), and where "'objective" factors, such as language, religion and customs, territory and institutions' are emphasised (2001, p. 11).

1.2.3 Irish Catholic Identity

Smith reflected on the location of Irish identity where 'in the 19th century, various Anglo-Irish and Irish-Catholic revivalists looked back to the surviving remnants of the Gaeltacht in the west to champion the essentially popular, Catholic and Gaelic civilisation of an Irish Ireland as a special community of the faithful with its distinctive sacred myths and symbols' (1986, p. 65)⁴. It was widely accepted that Irish cultural identity was located in the west, as propagated by nationalism (O'Sullivan, 2008), however, the impact that this approach has had on material culture which does not accord with Irishness has not been comprehensively challenged, and this research aims to address this gap in knowledge.

Hall concludes that:

The Act of Settlement (1701) secured a Protestant ascendancy, drawing the critical symbolic boundary between the Celtic/Catholic and the Anglo-Saxon/Protestant definitions of the nation. Between 1801 (the date of the Act of Union which brokered Ireland into the Union) and Partition in 1922, the national story proved incapable of incorporating 'Irishness' into 'Britishness' or of integrating Irish Catholic migrants into an imagined Englishness. Their culture and presence remains marginalised today. (2005, p. 27)

Therefore, the reaffirmation of Irish Catholic identity was an important tenet of Irish nationalism, to the extent that after the Irish achieved independence in the 20th century, Irish Catholic and ethnic identities led to the 'racialization of religion'. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 229) Smith cites the 'Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland' amongst those 'ethnic minorities retain[ing] strong religious bonds and emblems' (1991, p. 7). The expression of identity in Northern Ireland is principally achieved through religious differences: the power of which consumes the vestiges of any assumed ethnicity and identity through historic settlement there. Whilst the Republic of Ireland certainly accords itself

⁴ Irish nationalism, particularly the political component is addressed sympathetically by Kee (2000), whilst nationalistic narratives include that by Somerset Fry (1988). Moody and Martin (1967) attempted to provide a balanced view of Irish history, and the first edition of their work was published to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. The popularity of their work has seen many reprints, the most recent edition dates to 2011, and includes the demise of the Catholic Church, corruption and the fall of the Celtic Tiger. Alternatively, Foster (1988) provides one of the most definitive revisionist approaches to Irish history.

a Catholic identity, nationalism utilises many platforms on which it can express and articulate a separate 'cultural' identity and this will be explored in this research in relation to archaeology and the historic built environment. Smith argues that 'for the greater part of human history the twin circles of religious and ethnic identity have been very close, if not identical' (ibid). Therefore, in acceptance of this facet of Irish identity, this research explores how identity and Irishness are created through material culture. However, whilst Irish Catholicism is an important attribute of Irish identity, it does not form the core direction of this research and is ancillary to it: the exploration of such religious identity is currently in flux due to the loss of power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and would therefore be more appropriately investigated as a standalone study.

1.2.4 Ethnicity

The renewal, or perhaps more accurately 'creation', of a discrete identity was underpinned with the concept that the 'native' Irish were of a different 'ethnicity' to the British. This was strengthened by religious differences: Catholicism was associated with the 'native' Irish, while Protestantism was linked to the ruling upper classes. Kellas also noted that 'since "nation" can be defined in "ethnic", "social" or "official" senses, so nationalism can take these forms also' (1991, p. 3). This research therefore explores the treatment and interpretation of the archaeological and historic built environment at governmental level (the 'official' sense of identity) and local level (the 'social' sense).

But, in relation to Kellas' 'ethnic' nationalism, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin consider the benefits of 'ethnicity' where it is 'usually deployed as an expression of a positive self-perception that offers certain advantages to its members' (2007, p. 75). However, Smith recognises the subjectivity involved in the definition of 'ethnic communities' whereby confusion of the term 'is the product of the widespread influence of racist ideologies and discourses, with their purportedly 'scientific' notions of racial struggle, social organisms and eugenics. (1991, p. 21-22) Ethnicity, like nationalism, can therefore be deemed a social construct - Dietler calls on anthropologists to be more critical of ethnic identity: 'Given that ethnicity and nationalism are such powerful forces in modern Europe, it is crucial for anthropologists to understand the historical processes through which identities are constructed and transformed

by competing groups and the ways in which the distant past is marshalled as a symbolic resource to establish authenticity and continuity.’ (1994, p. 585) Ethnicity can be used to legitimate a suitable historic past using a positivist approach which, upon acute examination, is distorted. This is explored in this research in relation to the use of DNA analysis to stress Irish ‘ethnic’ identity.

Smith contrasts ‘national identity’ with ‘ethnic communities’, compiling six modes of identification for the latter: ‘a collective proper name; a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories; one or more differentiating elements of common culture; an association with a specific ‘homeland’; and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population’ (1991, p. 21). Therefore, the following can be noted of Ireland: the ‘collective proper name’ was enunciated through the nomenclature of ‘Irish Free State’ and later ‘Republic of Ireland’, both of which asserted the political identity of the country. The ‘myth of common ancestry’ will be explored extensively in Chapter Two, whereby Ireland’s ‘nationalism’ will be argued to have more recently evolved into that of an ‘ethnic community’. The ‘shared historical memories’ are again addressed in the succeeding chapters, as are the ‘one or more differentiating elements of common culture’, especially in relation to archaeology and the vernacular tradition in Chapters Two and Three. The ‘association with a specific “homeland”’ comes to the fore with the Irish diaspora, as will be acknowledged in Chapters Three and Five. Smith’s ‘sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population’ will be addressed in relation to the increasing methods which are being used to identify an Irish ‘ethnic’ identity, as seen in Chapter Two and Irish cultural memory, as considered in Chapter Three in relation to vernacular architecture.

1.2.5 Material Culture

‘History’ is acknowledged by Hobsbawm as ‘the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamental ideologies’ (1997, p. 5). Selection and neglect are cognisant of value systems, and an analysis of heritage is therefore suitable for disseminating fluctuations in Irish identity systems through material culture. Macdonald shows that

Heritage is deployed to show that the collective identity in question – perhaps that of a nation or a region – has not just been formed in the very recent past but somewhere further back, preferably ‘in the mists of time’ or deepest antiquity. Age – the ‘age’ of ‘heritage’ –

commonly confers legitimacy. Heritage presents identity – which literally means sameness – as persisting over time. (2006, p. 10)

This research appraises heritage values as pertaining to archaeology, traditional and polite⁵ architecture. It challenges the concept of Irish identity as being rooted in the archaeological record, as underpinned through nationalism. McCarthy considers that 'heritage can only be understood within the context of the present – heritage value only has significance in the here and now, and therefore, reflects our present society as well as our desires for the future' (2005, p. 123). Therefore, attitudes to what is considered authentic Irish architecture, in contrast to that associated with the British, must be considered in their 19th and 20th century contexts, demonstrating the fluid nature of Irish value systems.

This research explores 'myths' which constitute the main framework of defining 'Irishness' through the archaeological and historic built environment in opposition to the country's former coloniser, the English, and later, British. Assmann defines 'myth' as 'foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins' (2011, p. 38). Such 'foundational histories' can be found, invented or 'rediscovered' through a process of nationalism, and this research uses 'iconic' sites, monuments and buildings to demonstrate such inventions, including Newgrange and Knowth Neolithic Passage Tombs, the Hill of Tara, and Dublin's Custom House, General Post Office and domestic Georgian legacy.

Marwick recalls that 'as the idea of a "nation" developed in both the new nation-states that were being formed and the old nation-states whose imaginations were being refurbished, the 19th century produced – in history books, museums, paintings, literature and statuary – a national past that could be seen as 'golden' and could help give new meaning to the present' (2001, p. 176). The 'golden' Irish past was the resource used in the 19th century during the 'Celtic' or 'Gaelic' revival (Sheehy, 1980), the success of which 'simply enhanced the nationalist mythology of a broken linear

⁵ 'Polite' or 'formal' architecture is broadly defined as being conceived by architects and employing stylistic devices which were influenced by prevailing fashions. Calloway (2012) provides a comprehensive encyclopaedia of architectural styles.

development and its summons to communal regeneration' (Smith, 1986, p. 195).

Lowenthal charts the symbols used to elevate this past during the Gaelic Revival:

The Book of Kells, the newly found Tara Brooch, and Celtic crosses became sources of inspiration for art and architecture; furniture and ornaments carved out of ancient bog oak exhumed from peat served as emblems of Irish history similarly disinterred; shamrocks, harps, wolfhounds, and round towers proliferated on tea services, glassware, jewellery, bookcovers, workboxes, banners, and tombstones. (1985, p. 333)

Moore contends that 'Irish heritage was deeply associated with antiquity and a pre-modern world and promoted in ways that portrayed a certain sense of Irishness, one that was predominantly rural, male and Catholic' (2007, p. 99). Therefore, the questionable application of the term 'Celtic' to the archaeological record bridges the gap between Ireland's prehistoric, pagan, material culture and the Christian 'Celtic' period of the second half of the first millennium CE. The construction of symbols and imagery used to depict Irishness from the 19th century is assessed by Moran who notes they 'draw upon a mythic understanding of the Irish past, serving to recapitulate and codify that past' (1999, p. 174). Given the importance of archaeology in Irish nationalism, the development of that discipline will be explored shortly.

1.2.6 Memory

The partition of the island of Ireland in 1922 resulted in six counties in the north being retained under British rule, leading to the 'Troubles'. This is the on-going conflict between Irish nationalists, Loyalists (i.e. 'loyal' to the Crown) and their associated paramilitary groups. The divisions between the two are defined by religion: the Irish nationalists are Catholic, while the Loyalists are Protestant. Religious identity is peripheral and not central to this research, but the tensions which arise in relation to the historic environment are cited and examined as appropriate. Kearney attempts to move beyond nationalism, and thus beyond the continuous strife between north and south Ireland, where he 'imagines a postnational space in which overlapping local, national, and regional identities are given expression through multiple sites of political

sovereignty inside and outside the Isles.’ (2007, p. 61) Therefore, Kearney envisages breaking away from established cultural and civic boundaries.

In this research, such ideals manifest themselves in the parallels that can be drawn from the historic built environment of both Ireland and Britain. Far from being a divisive factor, as will be demonstrated in Chapters Three, Four and Five, shared discourse on the conservation of the historic built environment has great potential to create closer cultural ties between Ireland and Britain.

Marquardt, charting and evaluating the reconstruction of The Abbey of Cluny, France, proposes that ‘the inherent changes necessary to the move from heritage to patrimony also re-imagine a site according to contemporary standards and thus change its collective memory, mak[ing] it into a new monument that only remembers the past, but no longer houses it. (2008, p.5) This is explored in the context of this research whereby that which may otherwise have been deemed ‘dissonant heritage’, and thus an unwelcome ‘patrimony’, has been re-imagined as the rejection and consequent reappraisal of a colonial past in the context of Georgian Dublin.

This research addresses ‘cultural memory’ in respect of which Marquardt considers Aleida and Jan Assmann’s approach. They propose that ‘once original witnesses are gone, memorialization continues to occur in mediated ways.’ (2008, p. 256) This memorialization is explored in several ways: the individual ‘memory’ as passed through generations through the claims of personal involvement in nation forming events such as the 1916 Easter Rising and 1966 destruction of Nelson’s Pillar. This is explored further in Chapter Four with the ‘physical’ manifestation of these events, where the ‘tangible’ evidence of political and personal involvement in architectural destruction is evaluated.

Assmann defines ‘cultural memory’ as ‘the handing down of meaning’ (2011, p. 6) and this will be explored in Chapter Two through the reconstruction of Newgrange and Knowth, where Irish identity is made ‘explicit’. Assmann also recalls that ‘despite the fact that it is always the individual who “has” memory, it is created collectively ... while the group itself does not “have” a memory, it determines the memory of its members.’ (2011, p. 22). Connerton asks: ‘Given that different groups have different memories which are particular to them, how are these collective memories passed on within the same social

group from one generation to the next?’ (1989, p. 38) This research suggests that the ‘memory’ of Irish nationalism is being passed on in the late 20th and early 21st centuries through individual, yet collectively approved, alterations to vernacular buildings, namely the removal of render to expose the stone substrate, and this will be discussed in Chapter Three.

O’Keeffe summarises the manner in which historians can use ‘collective memory’ where they:

Reconstruct pasts by sculpting idealised collective ... or, better still, collected ... memories out of such raw “historical” material. “Historical memory” can be regarded, therefore, as that of which we are reminded, as distinct from that which we remember (2007, p. 5).

Collective memory is considered in this research through the association of the 1916 Easter Rising with the General Post Office, and the consequent damage to that building, and the later destruction of Nelson’s Pillar, in which many claimed active but unproven participation. It also manifests itself through the manner in which the destruction of Dublin’s historic built environment is retrospectively attributed to Irish nationalism, and the equivocal redundancy of vernacular cottages as memorials to the Famine.

Smith cites ‘common, mass public culture’ as a ‘fundamental feature of national identity’ (1991, p. 14) and this is best expressed in Ireland through all of the above, in addition to the Gaelic Revival, and the reliance on the prehistoric past and public archaeology, as will be demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three.

1.3 Archaeology

The discipline of archaeology evolved from antiquarianism in the late 19th century (Greene, 1995). Antiquarianism was ‘an intellectual tradition of enquiry’ that had surfaced in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries (Darvill, 2002). Greene observes that this discipline grew through ‘an increase in national consciousness, which produced rational attempts to examine continuity’ (1995, p. 19). The more conspicuous landscape monuments often attracted the attention and interest of these antiquarians. The first notable excavations began in the 18th century, at prominent sites such as Pompeii. Archaeology then developed through the establishment of other scientific

disciplines, namely: geology, and the concept of stratification: what lies beneath is older than what lies above. Such ideologies heralded the development of methodologies such as systematic excavation, progressed by antiquarians including General Pitt Rivers (Renfrew and Bahn, 2000).

Archaeology can be defined as 'the study of past human societies and their environment through the systematic recovery and analysis of material culture or physical remains' (Darvill, 2002, p. 21). While considering what dimension archaeology adds to material culture, Trigger found that 'archaeology's greatest asset was the heightened and immediate sense of connection with the past that material objects can provide' (1996, p. 249). Despite archaeology's development from scientific exploits, it cannot be considered a positivist discipline. Renfrew and Bahn propose that 'archaeology is partly the discovery of the treasures of the past, partly the meticulous work of the scientific analyst, partly the exercise of the creative imagination' (2000, p. 11). The human agency involved in interpreting artefacts, sites and monuments is recognised as being influenced by other factors, principally politics. Smith acknowledges that 'since the 1980s there has been a growing acknowledgement that what we do as archaeologists is 'political', and has significance beyond the accumulation of abstract knowledge about the past' (2004, p. 1). Renfrew and Bahn note such misappropriations of archaeology, where 'the past is manipulated for political ends and 'ethnic cleansing' is accompanied by the deliberate destruction of the cultural heritage' in areas of contestation and conflict (2000, p. 11).

If archaeology is not regarded as a positivist discipline, the influence of other factors needs to be evaluated. The use of the past in constructing narratives that affirm the 'nation' in both the past and present is widely recognised and charted. Kohl and Fawcett draw together several international illustrations in order to argue that 'there is an almost unavoidable or natural relationship between archaeology and nationalism and that this relationship is not necessarily corrupt or intrinsically suspect' (1995, p. 3). Therefore, this research recognises that the influence that Irish nationalism has had on archaeology is not necessarily an unusual phenomenon. However, the impact that this has had upon the interpretation and interventions into material culture is a neglected area of enquiry.

1.3.1 Archaeology and 'academic neutrality'

The World Archaeological Congress (WAC) was established in 1986. Its origins lay in the prohibition of South African archaeologists from the *Union Internationale des Sciences Prehistoriques et Proto-Historiques* conference in Southampton, UK, due to the regime of apartheid in South Africa. McEwan concluded that the 'furore' within archaeological circles on the exclusion of South Africa 'implied that archaeologists actually preferred to think of themselves as non-political' (2003, p. 1). Politics and archaeology take a much more subtle form than the expulsion of archaeologists from an international conference⁶. Shanks claims 'no archaeologist since the 1990s remains unaware of the connection their work may have with political interests, though many may wish to deny it and maintain ideas of academic neutrality' (2004, p. 491)⁷. This is best expressed in Ireland with the continuation of a 'cultural-historical' approach to the study of material remains, despite the development of more sophisticated archaeological theories since the 1960s. Commenting on the state of Irish archaeology in the second half of the 20th century, Waddell states:

The principal methodological or theoretical approaches have been empirical (the practical collection and analysis of data) and cultural-historical. The cultural-historical approach was concerned with the identification of discrete archaeological entities which might correlate with distinct population groups or specific peoples in time or in space...changes in the archaeological record were considered to be the result of isolated factors such as invasion or migration or the diffusion of technological innovation. (1998, p. 5)

Cooney concurs with Waddell's assessment, but notes that this theoretical approach continues: 'the development of Irish archaeology cannot be seen in any way in terms of a progression from culture-history to processualism to post-processualism' (1995, p. 264). As will be demonstrated, the use of invasion theory supports Irish nationalism.

⁶ Peckham (2003) examines the relationship between heritage and politics, utilising case studies from Europe, while Littler and Naidoo (2005) provide international insights. The concept of 'politics' is considered by Mackenzie (2009) and McLean (1996).

⁷ Díaz-Andreu et al. (2005); Díaz-Andreu and Champion (1996); Trigger (1984); Trigger (1996) and Ucko (1995) all address the relationship between nationalism and archaeology with in-depth case studies.

1.3.2 Archaeological theory

Whilst considering archaeological theory and practice in modern Irish archaeology, Cooney contends that:

the implicit assumption has been that the information is primary, speaking for itself, that the acquisition of more information is the primary goal of archaeology and that the limitations in the data prevent reconstruction of many aspects of life in the past...In this empirical tradition the influence of processual archaeology has been primarily in the area of data analysis and the various strands of post-processual archaeology have been largely lumped together with processual archaeology as "New", or else have been largely ignored. (1995, p. 263)

Johnson (1999) considers the 'mapping'⁸ or visualisation of prehistoric colonisation before the advent of the 1960-70s 'New Archaeology'. He notes that generally 'accounts of prehistory before the New Archaeology tended to consist of two elements. The first was a chronological sequence of cultures, a sort of timetable with culture groups listed instead of trains. The second was a map full of arrows to indicate the migration and diffusion of ideas that marked change between cultures' (1999, p. 18). Johnson argues that this 'descriptive synthesis' resulted in a portrayal of 'phases and areas of cultural change: this culture followed that culture, this innovation spread or diffused at that rate', and cites Lewis Binford's 1964 assessment of such an approach as 'an aquatic view of culture' (1999, p. 19), and this can be readily appreciated from the above account of Irish archaeology. Françoise Henry (1970) tried to disseminate Irish styles in, for example, Hiberno-Romanesque art and architecture, looking at the exchange of ideas and cultural influences to and from the Continent.

Prehistoric chronological sequencing maintains purchase in Irish archaeology, and as Cooney notes, theory in Irish archaeology has not embraced 'New Archaeology' (also known as 'Processual Archaeology') and consequent theoretical developments. New Archaeology itself did not introduce a fundamentally new theoretical approach, but was 'a movement or mood of dissatisfaction rather than a specific set of beliefs' (Johnson, 1999, p. 21),

⁸ For studies relating to the literal 'mapping' of Ireland in the 19th century, see Andrews (2002) and Doherty (2004).

which Clarke described in a seminal work as the 'loss of innocence' (1973). This new thinking was developed in America in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the main aim of making archaeology 'more scientific, with explicit theory and rigorous methodologies', essentially attempting to adopt a positivist approach (Darvill, 2002, p. 288). Darvill considers 'the overall aim was to move away from simply describing archaeological evidence towards trying to provide robust explanations for the patterns in it' (2002, p. 341). The new approach was not to be the final development in theoretical archaeology. In 1985 Hodder coined the term 'Post-processual' archaeology. Hodder was highly critical of New Archaeology, but post-processual archaeology itself did not actually introduce fundamentally new approaches. Instead, as Darvill notes, post-processual archaeology was 'a reaction against positivist approaches and their explicit use of models taken from the natural sciences (2002, p. 336).

1.3.3 Uses and abuses of Irish archaeology

The lack of concern for theory in Irish archaeology does not mean it is non-existent. The cultural-historical approach has long been acknowledged as being endemic in Irish archaeology, and this research demonstrates that it remains a dominant methodology in the analysis of archaeological data. The 'culture-history' approach supported overt political, and more specifically, nationalist, aims of positioning the Irish apart from former colonisers: the Normans from 1169 CE, and later the English, through the Plantations. Ireland was initially populated approximately 7000 BCE, and the debates on the origins of these first inhabitants will be discussed in Chapter Two.

The island was subject to various influxes of people, whose nomenclature is contested today. Harbison, Potterton and Sheehy (1978) provide general dating periods in Irish prehistory and the medieval period: Mesolithic period (c. 7000-3700 BCE); Neolithic period (c. 3700-2000 BCE); Bronze Age (c. 2000-500 BCE); Iron Age (c. 500 BCE-CE 432); Early Christian Period (423-1170 CE); Norman and Later Medieval Gaelic Ireland (1170-1600). The Bronze Age is widely regarded as Ireland's golden age (Ryan, 1994), while the Iron Age is heralded as the period when the 'Celts' arrived in Ireland (Harbison, 1994).

Collis problematizes the usage of 'Celts' and 'Celtic' by charting the movements of people in and out of Ireland since the arrival of the first populations and places the adoption of the term in the 18th century whereby

'the Irish, Welsh and Scots suddenly found they were all Celtic. This fortunately came at an opportune moment, as all over Europe, people were discovering the 'nation-state', and with it their national history' (1996, p. 169). Dietler notes 'The term *Celt* was never applied by classical authors to the inhabitants of Britain or Ireland' and he acknowledges that 'sometimes Celtic identity has been constructed as a means of classifying "others" and ascribing characteristics to them that serve as a means of self-defining contrast, as in the case of English prejudices concerning the Irish and Scots.' (1994, p. 586) Therefore, the terminology represents historic nationalist significance, rather than archaeological perpetuity and the consequences of this will be considered in Chapter Two.

The specific date of 432 CE heralds the arrival of Saint Patrick in Ireland, and the consequent spread of Christianity, and 1170 marks the year after the Norman invasion, before which Green and Troup claim 'the better part of the wild, wooded, boggy, and hilly country of the north and west had never so much as seen an English soldier or administrator' (1999, p. 27). The 17th century Plantation period is widely recognised as a 'true' period of British colonisation, during which 'the initial subjugation, subsequent colonisation and final integration of Ireland into the expanding English state' took place (Aalen, Whelan and Stout, 1997, p. 67). Foster dismisses superficial readings of the Plantations, and instead considers differences between the English Colonisation of Ireland and policies of 'Anglicization', whereby:

'Anglicization' presupposed a slow process: part of the destabilizing of Gaelic society and practices by introducing English modes of law, tenure and social relations. 'Colonization' indicated a more drastic approach, amounting at least in theory to tearing Gaelicism out by the roots...A Protestant population was desired in order that the government need no longer be dependent upon cajoling the Catholic political classes. (1988, p. 59)

Waddell provides a critical account of the emergence of the discipline of archaeology in Ireland and the study of the origins of the earliest settlers: 'Celtic myths continued to have an ever wider currency, especially the idea that there was archaeological corroboration for a migration of Celtic people to Ireland directly from Continental Europe and un-contaminated by any British influence' (2005, p. 1). The dominance of this definition of the 'true' Irish

holds purchase, and Chapter Two assesses the progression of such ideologies into positivist disciplines, where genetic profiling is being increasingly used to define 'Irishness'.

The re-establishment of a 'Gaelic' Irish identity, culturally diverse from the British, supported the political separation of Ireland from Britain during the period of Irish nationalism dating from the 19th century. Camille, for example, demonstrates how 'The Tara Brooch', a silver-gilt 8th century annular brooch, was 'copied and transformed in an effort to create a national style at a time when Ireland was seeking nationhood.' (1992, p. 17) This tactic became commonplace in Europe in the early 20th century, and in the 1930s was bolstered by Nazi claims of superiority, as 'proven' through the archaeological record (Arnold and Hassmann, 1995). Conversely, archaeology has been used to support the continued British presence in Northern Ireland, most notably through the work of geographer E. Estyn Evans (Davies and Evans, 1962). Evans's work on Neolithic Court Tombs was construed as legitimising the Scottish Planters' presence in Ulster (later used in part as a justification of Partition) through commonalities between this tomb typology in Scotland and Ulster. This helped to legitimise the continued presence of the British in Northern Ireland, through archaeological discourse, after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 and the congruent Partition of the country.

The use of the term 'ethnic' in relation to the 'Irish' remains a significant factor in asserting Irish identity and political boundaries, and this has been supported through the persistence of the cultural-historical approach to archaeology. This can be traced in the literature through the emphasis on the movement of peoples by authors such as Herity and Eogan. In 1977 they wrote of the Irish Neolithic 'Passage Grave Builders' and the 'vigorous moves' of people from the coasts. The terminology indicating movement is characteristic of that used by Irish archaeologists in the 20th century, supporting the 'invasion hypotheses'. This is predictable given the nature of prehistoric settlement in Ireland from 7000 BCE. The surviving archaeological record, particularly that pertaining to upstanding remains, provides tangible evidence of eras or periods of movement, but Waddell is critical of the portrayal of this in the literature, whereby:

An almost incessant stream of immigrants appears to have tramped ashore from the Mesolithic period to the Iron Age ... over a dozen

significant prehistoric movements are claimed by a variety of writers. (1978, p. 121)

Throughout the 20th century (and into the 21st) Irish archaeology continues under the aegis of data acquisition and subsequent categorisation into long-held cultural classifications. The accumulation of raw data is not problematic in its own right, but archaeological excavation is, by its very nature, the most destructive means by which to acquire data (Greene, 1995). Of immediate concern is the impact nationalism has on the archaeological record, both subsurface and upstanding. The strength of feeling generated by nationalism for an 'ancient' past, as noted earlier by Trigger, can be deemed to have resulted in neglect in the considered analysis of raw data, over-excavation and the lack of regard for archaeology which does not conform to nationalistic aspirations for an ancient Irish past, for example the medieval Carrickmines Castle (O'Keeffe, 2005). However, such arguments become untenable in the face of state sanctioned destruction, as seen around the landscape setting of the Hill of Tara, one of Ireland's most iconic sites, and the rationale behind this will be examined in Chapter Two.

The principal archaeological sites pertaining to the Neolithic period in this research are the Hill of Tara and the Brú na Bóinne passage tombs of Newgrange and Knowth. These sites have undergone some form of conjectural reconstruction after archaeological excavation, and much of the literature treats this as anastylosis⁹: the reassembling of scattered archaeological fragments. There is little critique of the reconstructions of Newgrange and Knowth: Jones (2007) and Vance (2009) exhort the sophistication of the mounds' construction and the aesthetics of the petroglyphic (incised rock art) found at both tombs. The current appearance of the tombs is not critiqued. Stout and Stout (2008) do express doubt as to the interpretation of deposition at the sites, but there has been no comprehensive assessment of the reconstructions and their historical context. The chief excavators Michael J. O'Kelly and George Eogan have published detailed reports on their investigations¹⁰, but both are non-reflective and academically defensive of their interventions. The 'Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne'

⁹ The Greek word for 'restoration'. Jokilehto (1999, pp. 89-96) provides further analysis of the restoration of classical monuments in Greece.

¹⁰ See O'Kelly (1982) and Eogan (1986)

(Brú na Bóinne) was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1993, in spite of the interventions. Ireland's only other World Heritage Site is 'Sceilg Mhichíl', a monastic site located on a remote island off the coast of County Kerry in the south-west of Ireland. It has not been subjected to any significant excavation, but satisfactorily underpins Irish nationalism by being Early Christian in date, located in the west, and on an island. The selection of only these pre-Norman sites as representing Irish heritage on an international stage reinforces Ireland's nationalism, and the lack of critique led this researcher to assess the reconstruction of Newgrange and Knowth as the topic of a Master's dissertation (Usher, 2004).

The influence that politics has on Irish archaeology remains implicit. Whilst considering national identity and archaeology in Ireland, Cooney feels that 'because of the character of modern Irish archaeology, which can be categorised as predominantly pragmatic and non-theoretical, issues such as nationalism and political dimensions of archaeological practice are not in general seen as particularly relevant by archaeologists' (1996, p. 146). As contemporary theories have not been embraced, an empirical approach continues in Ireland. This was facilitated during the economic boom, from the 1990s to 2007, by reactive development-led excavations. The accumulation of archaeological evidence and publication of excavation reports appeared to be paramount, and the publication of these reports continues with the *Excavations Bulletin*, the most recent report covering the year 2010 (Bennett, 2013). Kristiansen accepts that archaeology and politics are not isolated from each other, and asked 'how we can cope with the situation in a responsible way' (1989, p. 24). This is an important question, but given the fluctuation of values in heritage and nationalism, 'coping' will only reflect the present.

The above reveals the significant amount of research and attention given to Irish archaeology, and this study demonstrates that this is to the detriment of the historic built environment: 'coping' must open the remit for other disciplines to be explored, namely the conservation of historic buildings. However, historic buildings sit within a period of colonisation, therefore, in the present, the importance of Irish 'postcolonialism' needs further consideration.

1.4 Postcolonialism

Lloyd notes that superficial analysis of colonisation can result in 'either bad abstraction or a positive catalog of singularities' (2000, p. 379). It can equally be argued that in a post-colonial environment such limitations also exist when symbolising the new independent nation. Ireland's claims of being a postcolonial nation are inherently bound with nationalism, and ultimately, identity. Lloyd recognises that there is no set definition of 'postcolonialism': 'There are no identical colonial situations; so that in place of comparative, we should in fact employ the term "differential", marking the ways in which quite specific cultural forms emerge in relation to a universalizing process' (2000, p. 378).

The terms 'post-colonialism' and 'postcolonialism' are problematic. Various definitions exist, with the inclusion and exclusion of the hyphen increasing the problems of application. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin state that the term 'post-colonialism': 'deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies ... 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period' (2007, p. 168). This research mainly concerns the treatment of upstanding archaeological remains and historic buildings from the early 20th century to the present, therefore, the term 'postcolonial', without the hyphen has been adopted in this study. However, it can be argued that Partition between Northern Ireland and the Republic retains the agency of chronology, thereby making the inclusion of the hyphen more relevant in discourses between north and south. Slemon notes one of the ways in which the term post-colonialism is used: 'a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings' (1994, p. 16). Therefore it comes into existence after the political nation has been established. This differs from nationalism, whereby it exists prior to, and after, the establishment of the nation state.

'Post-colonialism' separates the coloniser from the colonised, thereby creating fundamental differences between the two. Young, considering Ireland as Britain's¹¹ oldest colony, problematises Ireland's place within definitions of post-colonialism:

Although among many postcolonialists Ireland tends to be regarded (as always) as a somewhat marginal case, in many ways its role has

¹¹ It should be noted that there was no 'Britain' before 1707: the 1707 Acts of Union made 'Britain' a political reality.

been central. This works at both a theoretical and historical level. Technically, at times Ireland may not have been colony at all: but the forms of revolutionary and cultural activism developed by the Irish against the entrenched self-interest of its rule by the British aristocracy and bourgeoisie meant that it remained the standard bearer for all anti-colonial movements in the late 19th and 20th centuries. (2001, p. 302)

Kiberd is pragmatic about the relationship between Ireland and England: 'If England had never existed, the Irish would have been rather lonely. Each nation badly needed the other, for the purpose of defining itself' (1996, p. 2). Howard feels that 'nation-states have wielded heritage to create themselves and to distinguish themselves from foreigners. Such manipulation of identity is immensely successful. England, for example, and later, Britain, especially in the 18th century, invented itself as a Protestant nation opposed to Catholics on the continent and in Ireland' (2003, p. 167). Therefore, notions of 'Irishness' are bound with postcolonialism, and therefore 'postcolonialism' can be seen as a facet of 'Irishness' whereby Irish identity has been constructed in opposition to the British.

1.4.1 *Ireland and Postcolonialism*

Postcolonial theory does not sit comfortably in Ireland. Several authors have proposed that Ireland lies on the periphery of postcolonialism: Rynne disputes the usage of this term in relation to Ireland. He notes that Ireland was complicit in the British Empire's other colonial exploits, and that the Irish were ingrained in Britain's 19th century industrial development and argues that these were 'the result of a collaboration of social equals, and not the product of colonial discourse' (2008). Carroll and King position the Irish within the expansion of the British Empire in the Caribbean, 'where they would at times rise up in rebellion with African slaves, still others became settlers and slaveholders there and in North America' (2003, p. 4). Ignatiev traces the assimilation of the Irish into 18th and 19th century American society, where 'the white skin made the Irish eligible for membership in the white race [but] it did not guarantee their admission; they had to earn it' (1995, p. 79). He goes on to note the Irish achieved this by oppressing the African-Americans in order to prove their superiority. In addition, the Irish are white, Christian, and

the country is physically located adjacent to Britain. Therefore, assertions of an 'ethnic' Irish people are problematic.

Van Dommelen notes 'postcolonial studies can at the very least be characterized, if not defined, as a specifically Western analytical perspective about representing colonial situations and structures' (2006, p. 104). Flannery, considering at length theoretical approaches to Irish postcolonialism, externalises the term whereby:

The very idea of a bona fide postcolonial society, whatever that means, residing within the borders of a modernist continent is abhorrent and/or nonsensical to many revisionist critics. Yet, despite this, postcolonial theory has been, and remains, one of the dominant modes of literary and cultural criticism within the broader discourse of Irish studies. (2009, p. 16)

With a comparable revisionist approach, Cleary, referring to the post-Soviet republics, also disputes the concept of Irish postcolonialism, arguing that 'the Irish historical experience...is much more usefully compared to other Western European societies, especially to other small peripheral societies dominated by more powerful neighbours, than it is to colonized societies in more distant quarters of the globe' (2003, p. 22). Said warns that if it is successfully argued that Ireland was not a colony 'what is at stake is nothing less than the whole question of Irish identity, the present course of Irish culture and politics, and above all, the interpretation of Ireland, its people, and the course of history' (2001, p. 177).

Irish postcolonial studies have been closely bound with the country's literary movement. Flannery assesses the influence of the 'Field Day Theatre Company' which was established in Derry in 1980 with the staging of Brian Friel's *Translations*, and went on to produce a body of literature, the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, which he describes as the emergence of 'a formidable body of critical work on Irish literary and colonial history' (2009, p. 21). The negotiation between literary theory and postcolonialism is addressed by Williams and Chrisman (1993), and in the Irish context Kiberd (1996) provides a comprehensive assessment of Irish literature and postcolonialism, recognising the anomaly that successful Irish literature is not penned in the native Gaelic language, but rather in English. One can identify the parallel

anomaly of the existence of British styles of architecture in postcolonial Ireland. The reconciliation of the language of architecture will therefore be addressed in Chapters Four and Five.

The common usage of the Irish language declined in the 19th century through what Kiberd describes as 'but one of a number of modernising experiments conducted in the colonial laboratory that was Ireland in the mid-19th century' (1996, p. 614). However, while Irish became the national language, after the establishment of the Irish Free State (as underpinned by the Gaelic Revival), English remains an official language. Llamas and Watt deliberate the significance of language as an identity signifier where 'modern linguistics has moved slowly but steadily toward embracing the identity function as central to language' (2010, p. 12). In Ireland, assessments of the value of Gaelic as a point of identity come to the fore in places of contestation with Adamson (1991) and O'Reilly (1999) focusing on language and Northern Ireland. Kumar (2003) recognises the role played by language in asserting the cultural nation, and this has been considered in the Irish context by Crowley (2008) and at an European level by Carli, et al. (2003). Therefore, language forms a significant part of Irish nationalism, but it does not constitute a major area of study within this research. Instead it can be argued that Ireland's marginal relationship with postcolonial theory has resulted in the exacerbation of politicised and iconoclastic gestures to the historic built environment, and so language is peripheral to this research. What is perhaps more telling is the manner in which the traditional architecture of the Irish natives is defined, the 'natives' being the people espoused by nationalism in opposition to the former colonisers.

1.5 Vernacular Architecture

In order to extrapolate what could be included in the Irish vernacular building tradition existing definitions need to be assessed. There is no fundamental definition of the term 'vernacular architecture': the classification of this building typology is influenced by many factors, including the geographical context and those proffering the definition. Classification ultimately results in limitation, and it will be argued in this context that definitions of Irish vernacular architecture are far too narrow and simplistic, with the 'essential nature' of such buildings distilled to the detriment of those which do not conform to the widely accepted basic parameters.

Brunskill, writing in a British context, states 'domestic vernacular architecture comprises the buildings designed for living as normally understood: eating, sitting, sleeping, storage,' in addition to ancillary buildings (2000, p. 22). He recognises that this is not just the preserve of the countryside as it also includes the domestic vernacular of towns where 'the one being related mainly to farming and the other mainly to commerce, and both governed until quite recently by the separate lines of development followed by town and country' (ibid). Brunskill furthers his definition with the inclusion of 'industrial vernacular': 'buildings which housed industrial activities related to the countryside ... and those manufacturing activities which were related to domestic rather than commercial scale', but he identifies the break in the tradition of the latter through the Industrial Revolution¹² (ibid).

Brunskill's definition is broadly inclusive of a wide range of buildings, but he identifies the traditional appropriation of the term by 'the students of folklife' who:

have shown, for instance, how often architectural details and building practices have perpetuated customs whose origins were thought lost, and whose technical basis had long been transformed. Vernacular architecture has been seen as one of the ways in which regional and national character survived the various political amalgamations which make up the present nation. (2000, p. 19)

The latter implies an 'unbroken line': the endurance of 'native' traditions beneath a wave of political upheaval, and this will be considered in Chapter Two in the context of archaeology and ethnicity. Notions of the simplicity of the people, their buildings and the methods of construction, are implicit in such definitions. Oliver considers the early 20th century opinion of the renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright: 'Folk building growing in response to actual needs, fitted into environment by people who knew no better than to fit

¹² 'Industrialisation' does not accord with Irishness: it is at variance with rurality and the 'west'. There has traditionally been a deficiency in literature relating to Ireland's industrial heritage, and Rynne asks: 'Did Ireland miss out on the Industrial Revolution as everyone is taught at school and college? Not if the remains of our industrial past are anything to go by: distilleries, breweries, textile mills, canals and railways, to name a few' (2006, p. 1). Rynne's recognises the motives behind such neglect, namely nationalism, and his *Industrial Ireland 1750-1930* (2006) moves to address this. Cox and Donald (2013) and Bielenberg (2009) are not necessarily cognisant of the reasons for neglect, but in any case further the research output in this area.

them with native feeling'. Oliver contends that Lloyd felt 'intuition rather than intelligence guided the builders' (2003, p. 9). To build with 'native feeling' conjures a primordial collective responding instinctively to environmental factors, thereby ensuring the comfort and security provided by shelter. This sustains the unbroken line whereby primitivism feeds into tradition, which in turn assures an ethnic link between those in the present and those of prehistory.

Chapman compounds this position with his review of literature relating to the 'home': 'traditional or vernacular housing forms do tell us a lot about deep cultural meanings ... just as Modernist housing design informs us about the ways the imposition of 'expert' know-how on the way people should live could go so dramatically wrong in public housing projects' (2001, p. 139). The latter refers to failed 1960s and 1970s social housing projects which were demolished not significantly long after inception. One could argue that Chapman is essentially contrasting cultural intuition with the paternalistic outsider.

Oliver coined his own definition of vernacular architecture as 'comprising the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources they are customarily owner- or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them' (1997). Oliver later adds 'they may be adapted or developed over time as needs and circumstances change' (2003, p. 14). However, Peter Guillery, launching a symposium on *British Architecture and the Vernacular* in London, 2008, felt the word 'vernacular' 'is meaningless in a democratic way. All architecture can be seen as vernacular.' Irish vernacular architecture is so constrained by internal and external definitions that a broad sweep of buildings is neglected both physically and academically.

1.5.1 Irish vernacular architecture

Oliver's 2003 publication, *Dwellings*, is described on the sleeve as 'about the types and forms of vernacular houses around the world ... an essential record of domestic buildings by indigenous groups that still exist and thrive in the world today, as well as others that are sadly under threat or disappearing.'

Oliver describes how 'in the verdant green, undulating but rough landscapes of Ireland the houses lie low beneath their thatched roofs' and considers how each room was used, where furniture and ornaments are placed, and even how spaces are appropriated: 'The kitchen and its furnishings are the woman's domain, scrubbed, swept and polished as evidence of her caring' (2003, p. 159). He is mindful that many of these houses have been demolished in the latter half of the 20th century as 'traditional buildings were rejected for new designs that reflected the growing economy' (2003, p. 160). Overall, his appraisal of Irish vernacular is anthropological in approach, discussing the inhabitants' behaviour as though considering an endangered ethnic group. His definition is flavoured with 'nostalgia', a condition of which Boym is cautious:

Algia – longing – is what we share, yet *nostos* – the return home – is what divides us. It is the promise to rebuild the ideal home that lies at the core of many powerful ideologies of today, tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding. The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one. (2002, p. xv-xvi)

The imagined 'home', or in the case of this research, 'past', is imagined through material culture (archaeology and vernacular architecture) and nationalism. Oliver's narrow definition sites the 'native' Irish in simple abodes with unpretentious value systems. He has been swayed by Irish nationalistic modes of representation.

What is also striking about Oliver's approach is the persistent use of the present tense, as if Irish vernacular buildings remain the principal mode of residence. In terms of the expansion of numbers of occupiers, he records 'there are the two- or three-roomed houses of the Serbs and the Irish, with outshuts or lofts adapted where necessary' (2003, p. 167). The aim of Oliver's publication is not a nostalgic overview. He is a well reputed academic, having established a programme of study on international vernacular architecture in Oxford Brookes University. However, his definition of Irish vernacular is romantic, and illustrated by thatched buildings and a basic sketch of the interior of such a house. It can be presumed that in the absence of a suitably twee Irish interior, the depiction has had to be hand crafted with a drawing.

Aalen et al. defined vernacular architecture in the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* as styles which have 'evolved as adaptations to the local environment and economy, with distinctive forms transmitted as part of a communal tradition...in contradistinction to buildings in formal styles which follow national or international fashions and are typically architect-designed and more substantial' (1997, p. 146). Such a definition accords with what Brunskill earlier described as that used by 'students of folklore'. Aalen's definition infuses the vernacular with a native and primordial consensus: it separates the natives from the English/British upper classes. It doesn't just try to define what Irish vernacular is – it also points out what it isn't. If one were to broadly define what Georgian or Victorian buildings are, the latter part of Aalen's definition would suffice. The implication of this is that architect designed buildings are defined as separate to those constructed with native intuition, and this is significant in that it promotes Irish identity as rural, and rejects urban areas and their associated formal architectural heritage as not according with a true Irish identity.

Mullane, significantly omitting reference to the urban environment, uses the following definition of such structures:

Rural vernacular or traditional architecture is the construction of small plain buildings in the countryside (particularly before 1925) where the dominant influence is siting, materials, form and design in the local folk tradition. Such vernacular will have been typical of a common type in any given locality and will lack the individualistic and educated design features that characterised international fashions in formal architecture during the same period. (2000, p. 74)

Therefore, vernacular architecture can be defined as 'rural' and not urban, and this accords with Irishness as defined through nationalism. Such a definition omits the abodes of the middle classes, many of which were vernacular in construction and located, not necessarily in cities, but in large towns.

In 1990 Pfeiffer and Shaffrey published *Irish Cottages* which aimed to 'convey some of their intriguing variety' (1990, p. 15). The buildings chosen represent a broad range of styles and materials, and have roofs composed of slate, corrugated iron and, inevitably, thatch. The walling materials include dressed

stone, lime render, stucco and brick. This compendium recognises Irish cottages as encompassing a wide palette of materials, and is similar in scope to that of Brunskill. Pfeiffer and Shaffrey propose two 'distinct traditions' of Irish cottages: linear and classical. The linear is reminiscent of a nationalistic definition, with the unbroken chain description where it 'derives from ancient origins [and] is the true vernacular style', while the classical 'which goes back only to the 18th and 19th centuries, has its origins in the formal principles of classical architecture' (1990, p. 17).

Editorially, however, the publication immediately aligns itself with the widely accepted stereotype: the cover image is that of a small thatched cottage, complete with lime washed walls, nestled in a rural setting. The foreword is penned by Alice Taylor who recalls the Irish cottage as 'a monument to a noble people who lived in those mud cabins' (1990, p. 10). Taylor reiterates the narrative of the destitute Irish who 'died of starvation by the roadsides of Ireland during the famine of 1847...boarded the coffin ships and sailed for America and Australia, many dying in transit. Of those who made it to a new land, many never returned' (ibid). Boym's 'nostalgia' can be recognised here: Taylor is essentially identifying the Irish vernacular cottage as an 'unintentional monument' to the Famine, what Riegl defined in 1903 as 'reveal[ing] the passage of a considerable period of time'. This further accentuates their significance in Irish nationalism and categorises the role of such buildings as a symbol of oppression. This is in opposition to 'intentional memorials' such as Rowan Gillespie's 1997 work, 'The Famine Memorial', located in front of Ireland's *International Financial Services Centre*, on Custom House Quay, Dublin (Image 1).



Image 1: 'The Famine Memorial', Custom House Quay, Dublin (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Whilst Pfeiffer and Shaffrey attempted to convey a wide representation of the Irish vernacular, the aforementioned editorial trimmings symbolise the romantic nationalistic approach to modest Irish houses. The rear cover contains a photograph of an elderly man leaning through a half door, painted blue. The door is framed by white washed walls and a thatched roof. The man, wearing a cap, is petting his sheepdog, and both are looking directly at the lens. The man's expression is genial. The scene provides an index to the content of the publication and draws on a nativist image of simplicity. Earlier, Oliver also provided an index to the inhabitants by describing the woman's place in her Irish home.

Kennedy contends that the word 'cottage' in relation to Irish domestic buildings was 'a pejorative word, especially in the west of Ireland' in the early 20th century because 'everyone wanted to live in a "house."' The term "cottage" referred to a dwelling that was rented from someone else, whether a landlord or farmer in the past, or a local authority more recently. It meant that a "coltlier" had no land of his own. The owner of a house was a "landowner",

hence the superior status of the "house" (1993, p. 173). However, this term arises with frequency in the literature relating to traditional Irish building, and in marketing holiday homes: one could argue that Kennedy is politicizing the nomenclature associated with such buildings.

Pfeiffer and Shaffrey's 'linear' tradition is generally split further into two categories: direct entry and lobby entry. This classification is based on a regional split in materials. Evans (1973) broadly classified buildings found on the north, west and south-west seaboard as 'byre-dwellings', with stone rubble walls, lime wash, end chimneys, bed outshots (in the north-west) and roped thatch. He noted the remainder of the buildings to the east and south-east have mud walls, central chimneys, jamb walls, and hipped roofs with scallop thatch.

The form of direct entry or byre-dwellings is dictated by the materials used in construction. The geology of the region is dominated mainly by limestone. Walls were constructed with random rubble and this material meant that a gable end could be erected. The gables could incorporate a chimney at one or both ends, and this elevation, devoid of openings would face the prevailing winds. Raised gable ends provided a junction into which thatch could be fixed. Thatch was also held down with ropes passed over the roof and weighed down with stones. The stone of the walls was bedded in a lime mortar, the exterior and interior finished with a lime wash. The latter added a protective coating to the walls, but also served to formalise the appearance of the walls: stucco on more formal dwellings was often lined out to give the appearance of ashlar masonry, thereby elevating the status of the building. Lime wash on a vernacular building did the same: it conveyed aspiration.

Lobby entry houses are found in low-lying areas of Ireland, particularly in the east of the country. Walls are most often of mud construction, but sometimes combined with stone, where this was used for the plinth of walls. Stone was scarce in the east and therefore mud was the dominant walling material in this region. Mud wall construction meant that walls could not be erected very high, therefore, in the absence of gables, the roof was hipped or half-hipped at the ends. Again, thatch was the widespread roofing material. Lobby entry houses are also characterised by a central hearth, as there were no gables against which to construct a chimney breast. The 'intuitiveness' of the builders and

occupiers is a concept that arises with frequency in the literature. Gailey felt that 'vernacular architecture stems from a 'little tradition' within which ideas have been transmitted mainly informally and orally, where the possibilities for individual innovation have been closely circumscribed by the attitudes of the community at large, transmitted over generations ... Vernacular architecture does not belong with the fine arts as architecture does; rather its practice has close affinities with disciplines like ethnology and archaeology.' (1984, p. 7) The emerging ethnographic approach to the Irish will be explored in Chapter Two with the rise of genetic profiling. Here, the associations between vernacular construction and ethnology are clear.

Danaher's classification of 'vernacular dwelling types in Ireland' is reliant on plan form (1993). He proposed six building types including the 'one roomed cabin of the landless Agricultural labourer'; the central hearth house; two typologies dependant on the location of a 'bed outshot'¹³; the lobby entry house and a combined byre-dwelling whereby cattle were housed in the lower end. Higginbotham developed this classification further through his unpublished 1987 survey of thatched buildings in County Wicklow in the south east of Ireland. The quirk of the Irish 'bed outshot' is often drawn upon when classifying Irish vernacular (see previous sketch by Oliver, 2003), and the main characteristics, portrayed visually, are the thatched roofs and diminutive size of these dwellings. In fact, the subtitle of Danaher's (1993) work is in Irish: *Foirgneamh na ndaoine*, which translates as 'Buildings of the People'. Therefore, he is insinuating that the 'people', the Irish, are represented by the vernacular.

These are singularities which pander to the nationalistic and postcolonial condition of Ireland: finger posts to the current cultural make-up of the country. Equally, thatch is used to convey authenticity in an Irish building tradition both internally and externally. This can be considered a 'bad abstraction' in order to convey Irish nationalism. Definitions of Irish vernacular buildings are constrained to a point whereby other buildings equally deserving of such classification are omitted. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin reflect on authenticity in the postcolonial:

¹³ The 'bed outshot' was a small addition, located near the hearth which was just for sleeping in.

The demand for a rejection of the influence of the colonial period in programmes of decolonization has invoked the idea that certain forms and practices are 'inauthentic', some decolonizing states arguing for a recuperation of authentic pre-colonial traditions and customs. The problem with such claims to cultural authenticity is that they often become entangled in an essentialist cultural position in which fixed practices become iconized as authentically indigenous and others are excluded as hybridized or contaminated. (2007, p. 17)

Evans (1977) believed that 'native' Irish dwellings could be found in the north and west, physically placing them away from English influence, and this was cited earlier. However, there exists a hybridity between vernacular and polite architecture. Craig's *Classic Irish Houses of the Middle Size* (1976) attempted to bridge a gap between modest formal houses and vernacular buildings. Its stated aim was to deal 'with those 17th, 18th and early 19th century houses of the middle size – neither the seats of the mighty, nor the simple vernacular buildings of the rural tradition ... Stylistically and culturally these houses are extraordinarily interesting ... bridging the gap between indigenous building and imported English and other European influences – and incorporating features of both' (sleeve). However, as demonstrated earlier, they remain excluded from definitions of Irish vernacular.

'Native' Irish domestic identity is found in 'vernacular' or traditional buildings. This contrasts with the identity of the colonisers who were associated with formal architecture, and this will be discussed further below. The traditional Irish house has been largely romanticised. In 1937 Ake Campbell regarded such buildings as:

Lacking nearly every architectural consciousness and at the same time every kind of imported building material, the Irish peasant house never stands out in bold relief against its background but melts into it even as a tree or rock. (cited in Evans, 1942, p. 57)

The romantic notion that Campbell presents can be read paternalistically: the house, like the occupier, is huddled protectively from view. However, whilst the thatched roof blends into the landscape, the lime washed exterior asserts itself with a vivid white hue. Therefore, Irish vernacular architecture cannot be read as subservient in form and appearance.

The materials used to construct vernacular buildings were sourced locally, and in the west of Ireland, stone was and is the most common walling material; the east and south east had a tradition of building with mud, while thatch was historically a dominant roofing material (see Pfeifer and Shaffrey, 1990, and Rothery, 1997). Thatch is seen as a symboliser of 'Irishness' in its own right: the Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government recently produced an advice series which included distinct publications, firstly on 'Thatch' (Government of Ireland, 2007) and later 'Roofs' (Government of Ireland, 2010): the separation of these in government literature creates a distinctive place for thatch, despite thatch essentially being a 'roof'. Therefore, research responses have tended to focus on this particular material to the detriment of others including slates. This can also be seen in relation to stone, where several publications highlight its properties (see McAfee, 1998). Such a reliance on stone in asserting native identity can also be seen in other structures such as walls: McAfee (1997) considers the history and conservation of stone boundary walls, principally those composed with random rubble. There is a notable change in the definition of field boundaries as one moves from east to west, across the River Shannon: hedgerows give way to stone walls, epitomising the transition from the east with its associations with the British, to the more 'native' west. In Britain, the lack of meaning of such materials can be construed with publications such as that by Williamson (2002) who addressed both hedges and walls.

The definition of what constitutes vernacular architecture is quite narrow. Brick is not widely regarded as a traditional Irish building material, and studies of brick pertain to formal architecture, such as that found on historic Georgian buildings (see Lynch, Roundtree and Shaffrey Associates 2009; Roundtree, 1999 and 2007). McAfee addresses the use of appropriate lime mortars in association with stone and brick; however, he places brick in the urban context of Dublin (2009). This research considers the rationale behind the rejection of brick as a traditional Irish building material, and this is seen in Chapters Three and Chapter Five. Therefore, the treatment of 'polite' architecture and its conservation needs to be addressed.

1.6 Conservation¹⁴

MacRory recalls that the concept of 'architectural conservation' arose 'out of the Romantic movement and revived sense of nationalism prevalent throughout Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.' (1994, p. iii) 'Romanticism' originated in the late 18th century and can be defined as 'a reaction against the order and restraint of classicism and neoclassicism, and a rejection of the rationalism which characterized the Enlightenment.' (Oxford English Dictionary) Stubbs notes that during the late 18th century:

Nostalgic interests in the historic past took on a new turn against a backdrop of rapid social change and the onset of industrialization. This sentiment is well represented in Europe's 19th century age of historicism, when what were perceived to be national styles were sought out and celebrated in new architecture. (2009, p. 57)

The impact of Romanticism in Ireland is best expressed through literature where, in the 19th century, Ireland (in line with British counties such as Somerset) began to function as an alternative to urban life, as perceived from Britain. Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* provides a glimpse of how Ireland was imagined – a remote place (especially the West of Ireland), steeped in its own traditions and maintaining a vibrant culture, complete with the status of victimhood. Mr and Mrs Hall's *Hand-books for Ireland*, penned in the 1840s, provide an account of Ireland's scenery and antiquities. They adopted Romantic sensibility, judging and assessing how the landscape revealed itself, and drew heavily on the picturesque. The 'picturesque' was an aesthetic ideal, often expressed through naturalistic settings, using 'real or re-created ruins as focal points' (Stubbs, 2009, p. 57).

Jokilehto recognises the role of France in the development of conservation principles where: 'The French Revolution [1789-99] became a key moment in the development of conservation policies. It brought together various lines of thought from previous decades, establishing some fundamental concepts. These included the idea of monuments of history, science and art as cultural heritage of the nation and useful for education, and that therefore it is a national responsibility to care for them.' (1999, p. 69) The roots of this lay in

¹⁴ Stubbs (2009) provides a comprehensive account of the development of conservation internationally, while Jokilehto (1999), Denslagen (1994) consider the origins of the movement in Europe. Delafons (1997), Cowell (2008), and more recently, Thurley (2013) assess the evolution of conservation and heritage in Britain from the 18th century to the present.

the architectural destruction wrought by the Revolution. Stubbs notes that 'Religious buildings and those associated with royalty and the nobility were often specifically targeted during the revolution ... The revolutionaries' harsh treatment of the architectural symbols of church and state did not go uncriticised and soon transformed directly and indirectly into conservation measures.' (2009, p. 211). In 1791 the *Comité d'Instruction Publique* was formed, and offered some protection to the historic built environment. In 1830 King Louis-Philippe ascended to the throne, and soon after created the position of *inspecteur general des monuments historiques de la France* 'who was charged with compiling a new list of significant historic buildings that deserved government consideration and monitoring restoration work.' (Stubbs, 2009, p. 213)

In Germany, the drive for architectural conservation in the early 19th century stemmed from 'romanticism and the yearning for German nationhood' where

What is now Germany was a patchwork of kingdoms, principalities, electorates, and ecclesiastical states ... Countless historic buildings were damaged by the occupying French and coalition armies. The defeat gave Germans a yearning for a unified country ... architectural efforts focused largely on completing cathedrals, the re-Gothicization of churches, and the stylistic restoration of historic buildings that were associated with German pride. (Stubbs, 2009, p. 226)

Stubbs acknowledges that, despite Germany's fractured states, 'a common language, history, and cultural traditions ... emphasised the Romantic movement' (ibid), and this approach was recognised earlier with the 19th century Irish Gaelic Revival. Gothic architecture was seen as the most evocative expression of German cultural identity, and much attention was given in the 19th century to the restoration of medieval castles and cathedrals.

Romanticism and interest in ruins was also prevalent in Britain, and Thurley recalls that in the late 18th and early 19th century 'The Continental Grand Tour stimulated the idea of cultural tourism at home, while a rising appreciation of landscape and the picturesque encouraged people to see medieval ruins as beautiful and evocative.' (2013, p. 6) In 1877 the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* was established as a reaction against the removal of layers of historic fabric in churches, an ill-advised process which aims to expose the

earliest medieval components (Denslagen, 1994). Therefore, the Romanticism expressed in Germany was also mirrored in British conservation efforts.

1.6.1 *Ireland and Conservation*

The conservation movement in Ireland did not develop from an individual philosophy or exemplary case study. MacRory states: 'It evolved slowly, resulting from the efforts of a few persistent individuals and in some cases from historical circumstance' (1994, p. iii). 19th century Irish conservation efforts did not develop in isolation, but were influenced by governance from Britain, and antiquarian approaches and methodologies had a significant impact on the field.

The initial documentation of archaeological monuments in Ireland, which commenced in 1824, came about through the establishment of the British Board of Ordnance, and its intention to map Ireland for taxation purposes. This was completed in 1846, and O'Connell notes 'the number of field monuments recorded on the actual six-inch sheets was most impressive and, though it did not do anything directly to forward conservation, did at least indicate what was there.' (1974, p. 79) In 1831 the Board of Works for Ireland (now the Office of Public Works) was established. It was considered 'the body to which was entrusted the delicate task of conserving some of the country's foremost ecclesiastical antiquities' (O'Connell, 1974, p. 81). Ecclesiastical buildings no longer used as places of worship were to be conserved by this body, and termed 'National Monuments'. The Irish Church Act 1869 further elucidated the position of such buildings, which was set in place 'To Disestablish The Protestant Church Of Ireland' (Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin, 2000). Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin note that until the introduction of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 'there was no provision for the care of archaeological monuments in the state' (2000, p. 527). Conservation work involved consolidation and securing of monuments, and was left to individual owners and organisations.

O'Connell (1974) catalogues the various projects which were undertaken in the mid-19th century, including the repair of Nun's Church at Clonmacnoise, County Offaly, with the replacement of weathered carved voussoirs with unadorned stone. The formal move towards older buildings came about when fourteen monuments were vested into the care of the Board of Works in 1874.

The next year Sir Thomas Deane was employed as the first Inspector of Ancient and National Monuments, with the Rock of Cashel, County Tipperary ecclesiastical site as his first major project. O'Connell (1974) refers to the conservation provisions laid out for this work by the Board, cited under their 1875-76 Annual Report, with regard to the Rock of Cashel:

Their operations are to be strictly confined to what is necessary for the preservation of the several monuments – securing loose stones, preventing infiltration of water by cement covering to walls, etc., where practicable, and clearing away rubbish, where, by doing so, portions of the buildings now hidden may, with advantage, be brought to view – but carefully to avoid any attempt at restoration, or doing anything which might mar the ancient and picturesque character of the ruins.

MacRory (1994) refers to this as a policy of 'minimum intervention'. An emphasis on presentation is also apparent: the clearing away of detritus to achieve visual appreciation. The avoidance of restoration can be argued to stem from Irish nationalism, whereby there was a desire to present a 'golden' past, free from Norman/English/British hybridity. The movement to gain independence from Britain, and the 'Home Rule' question in the 19th century, were supported by the assertions that native Irish had an ancient history, a culture differentiated from foreign influences such as the Normans. But, the treatment of historic buildings was also influenced by the Romantic Movement prevalent in 19th century Europe, as discussed earlier. George Petrie (1790-1866) was instrumental in stimulating interest in ruins, especially round towers. He was particularly keen to emphasise the native Irish contribution to the archaeological record: 19th century British antiquarians had previously considered round towers to have functioned as 'temples for holy fire', 'astronomical gnomons' or 'phallic temples' ... Petrie suggested that the towers were of Christian and ecclesiastical origin, were erected between the fifth and thirteenth centuries, were used as belfries and a place of security, and may have been used as watch-towers.' (Crooke, 2000, p. 83) Petrie's interest in ruins, and his attempts to attribute them to the native Irish, furthered Irish nationalism: 'as part of their defence against such [British] imputations of barbarity, Irish antiquarians ... invented a glorious pre-colonial past which contrasted with their present perceived positions as colonial subjects.' (O'Halloran, 1989, p. 85)

Many of the fourteen monuments vested into the Board's care were Hiberno-Romanesque in style or associated with the Early Christian era: periods long held to have occurred prior to the Norman invasion. Renfrew states, with regard to the Irish Neolithic passage tombs: 'Former generations held that Newgrange and those other prehistoric monuments of the Boyne valley, Knowth and Dowth, were the work of colonist-builders', but goes on to note the view of 19th century antiquarian George Petrie: 'Allow the ancient Irish the honour of erecting a work of such vast labour and grandeur' (in O'Kelly, 1982, p. 8).

These sentiments, and the aforementioned philosophy of the Board of Works, were not incorporated into the Rock of Cashel works, and Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin (2000) note the employment of restoration over conservation at this site and others. MacRory notes: 'The question of reclaiming history, of which buildings – especially ecclesiastical buildings were a part, was on both the Catholic and Protestant political agenda' (1994, p. 56). The Rock of Cashel is a prominent Romanesque ecclesiastical site, the restoration of which was influenced by such a Christian/Catholic agenda.

During this period the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* was established in Britain (1877), while the conservation of Irish monuments was edging towards over-restoration. One prime example is the work undertaken at the Iron Age stone forts on the Aran Islands, situated in Galway Bay. The isolated nature of these monuments resulted in over-restoration veering toward reconstruction, due to a lack of supervision by Deane (O'Connell, 1974). Stone ramparts were built against the walls and the tops levelled. O'Connell notes the fate of the stone fort on Inishmurry Island, where 'the wall is said to have been made even in height by raising it in some places and lowering it in others to make a nice neat job, while recesses were created in the wall-face to provide for cross-slabs, thus introducing without comment features which had not been there previously' (1974, p. 83). Such interventions were not documented, and site surveys were not undertaken prior to work, thus making study of the extent of work undertaken difficult (Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin, 2000). MacRory states that English approaches, such as that of William Morris, 'did not seem to have attracted many Irish followers.' (1994, p. 65)

1.6.2 The Legislation

The Ancient Monuments Protection (Ireland) Act, 1892 was introduced by the Westminster Parliament, and 'provided the basis for protection of ancient monuments in Ireland' (Pickard, 1998, p. 3). This Act moved protection away from ecclesiastical buildings, to include 'tumuli, cairns, stone circles, earthworks and ancient medieval buildings' and defined a monument as 'including the site, the means to access thereto and land required for fencing it, covering it in, or otherwise preserving it from injury' (O'Connell, 1974, p. 84). The owners could appoint the Board of Works as guardians to such monuments. Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin dwell on the failings of this Act, pointing out: 'it only protected a scheduled monument against damage by anyone other than the owner. This completely ignored the fact that the owner was the most likely person to destroy the site' (2000, p. 527). This loophole can be seen with regard to the destruction undertaken at the Neolithic tomb of Dowth, where the owners used the material from the mound for house and road building (O'Kelly, 1982).

In 1904 the *Madrid Conference of Architects* differentiated between 'dead monuments (those belonging to a past civilisation or serving obsolete purposes) and living monuments (those which continue to serve the purposes for which they were originally intended)' (in MacRory, 1994, p.81). MacRory notes that restoration was deemed permissible for living monuments, while preservation was agreed appropriate for dead monuments, an approach which she believes was generally applied in Ireland in the early 20th century.

1.6.2.1 National Monuments Act, 1930

The main legal protection afforded to the archaeological resource in Ireland after the establishment of the Free State was the National Monuments Act, 1930 (Amended: 1954, 1987, 1994, 2004). The 1930 Act remains the primary statute governing the care of monuments in the Irish Republic (Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin, 2000). The Act defines the word 'Monument' as including:

'Any artificial or partly artificial building, structure, or erection whether above or below the surface of the ground...and any cave, stone, or other natural product...which has been artificially carved, sculpted or worked upon or which have been purposely put or arranged in position and any prehistoric or ancient tomb, grave or burial deposit'.

The term 'National Monument' is identified in the Act as: 'A monument or the remains of a monument, the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic, or archaeological interest'.

Harold Leask was appointed Inspector of National Monuments in 1923. O'Connell (1974) refers to Leask as heralding a 'new era'. Leask set out to catalogue medieval buildings, including castles and churches. This was a shift from the previous focus on prehistoric and early Christian places of worship. Percy le Clerc continued this work in the 1950s. Significant restorations continued to be undertaken, for example at Bunratty Castle (County Clare) in the 1950s. Thus, restoration was, and is, an overriding practice and philosophy, which has dominated the Irish conservation movement since the 19th century.

1.6.3 Conservation today

The need to conserve the historic built environment is considered by Stubbs, who defines 'architectural conservation' as 'actions and interests that address the repair, restoration, maintenance, and display of historic buildings and sites as well as their associated accoutrements, such as furnishings and fittings' (2009: p. 21), but overall 'the conservation of architecture is all about managing change' (p. 7). The conservation policy governing Irish National Monuments today is realistically only determined under the word 'maintain' in the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1987. While referring to the maintenance of such features, the manner in which they should be upheld is not expounded. The main conservation principles of the Department of the Environment and Heritage are noted by MacRory, who states these standards show 'a lack of coherent conservation policy within the Office of Public Works' (1994, p. 127). She also contends that philosophy can only be determined on a 'site-by-site' basis. The main principles for Irish conservation are set out by the 'Conservation Guidelines Series' by the Department of the Environment and Heritage (Pearson, 1996). These include: the retention or restoration of historical significance, a conservation process based on research, minimum physical intervention and maintenance of visual setting (Pearson, 1996, p. 4).

The issue of 'conjecture' is dealt with briefly, with the advice to employ authenticity, with conjecture as a resort which can be employed 'when

educated conclusions can be implemented in order to ensure the viability of the whole project' (Pearson, 1996, p. 5). This research exposes the lack of regulation in this approach in the case of the excavation and conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange (1963-75) and Knowth passage tombs (1962-98).

Pickard observed that Ireland had 'limited discretionary powers' with regard to its conservation policy, and recommends 'the establishment of integrated conservation policies' (1998, p. 19). But as noted earlier, definitions of the historic built environment are influenced by nationalistic value systems; therefore, the overall regulation of this situation would expose lapses in value.

Ireland does not have a history of setting standards in conservation, such as for example in the UK with the 19th century founding of the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings*. The state is relatively young, having only been established in the early 20th century. Government legislation, in relation to conservation, has tended to favour older sites. The National Monuments Acts were enacted soon after the 1922 independence from Britain. It was not until 1963 that the first Planning Act was enacted, introducing the concept of 'listing' buildings. At this time conservation was not set out as a consequence of listing, rather it was redundant. A building could be listed, but there were no provisions for the owner to maintain a building, or funds to encourage such maintenance. The Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1999 attempted to address this by enacting the *Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (1985) into Irish legislation. However, the Celtic Tiger development agenda of Ireland maintained more power than the corresponding conservation movement, and this will be explored in Chapters Two and Three.

Clark defined 'conservation' as 'passing on to future generations what we value. It is not just about stopping decay' (1999, p. 7). In Britain, architectural conservation has maintained popular appeal. The literature relating to this can be found collectively addressing periods of architectural styles, or subdivided into periods: Calloway (2012) addresses both British and American period architectural styles from the 1700s, as do Jackson and Day (2002). These are further broken down in Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, Arts and Crafts and Art Deco styles, to name the main protagonists. The first three periods derive

their names from the ruling British monarch of the time. Parissien (1999) assesses the history and aesthetics of Georgian architecture, while Osband (2001) and Wedd (2002) treat Victorian architecture. More recently, Stamp (2010) bemoans the destruction of the same style in the 20th century. The passage of time between the present and the early 20th century has dictated the emergence of literature which appreciates this period, including Cranfield (2001) and Yorke (2011). Much earlier periods of architectural history typically gain more attention due to the very fact that they are older and rarer. This resulted in more recent periods of architectural history being neglected academically, and now a plethora of publications seek to appreciate the architectural heritage of the late 19th century and 20th century: English Heritage is currently pursuing the 'listing' or protection of 20th century architecture as it is perceived to be presently least understood and most at threat¹⁵ (HELM, 2012).

In the present, British conservation is challenged by a lack of craft skills and the consequent 'conservation deficit' (see Burman, Pickard and Taylor (1995) and Allison et al. (1996)). This is the converse of the philosophy behind conservation in, for example, Japan, where the ease of dismantling wooden structures for maintenance and repair has created an environment whereby the buildings are venerated as objects, and the intangible heritage - the craft skills required for conservation - is seen as inherent to this: 'It is characteristic of Japanese conservation policy to have regard to both physical and intangible properties...the policy implies that their preservation is not conceivable without keeping up the skills required for continuous maintenance and repair' (Jokilehto, 1999, p. 280-1).

Value systems for formal historic buildings in Ireland have been skewed by the destruction of the 'Big House', or the 'Country House' as they are generally known in Britain today: the large abodes of the landlord classes. These represented the Protestant ruling classes and Bevan notes that 'during the fight for independence in the years leading up to 1921 and in the civil war that followed many of the country houses of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy were burnt out by the IRA [Irish Republican Army]' (2006, p. 67). He also concedes that 'The attacks were aimed at a ruling class and its collective self-identity as

¹⁵ Cowell (2008), Thurley (2013) also address heritage and 'threat'.

expressed architecturally in their grand estates ... for many years they were hated 'monuments of landlordism and oppression' (p. 68). This represents a popular attribution to the decline of the 'Big House'. In the period immediately before and after the War of independence (1919-21) many houses were indeed burned and destroyed by the IRA. However, authors such as Dooley are revising the rationale behind the destruction and considering other factors: 'From the early 1920s, the combination of economic decline, the dramatic change in the socio-political climate during the revolutionary period, and indeed, the desire to cling on to an extravagant way of living forced or influenced many of the big house owners to dispose of their assets on an even larger scale' (2001, p. 140). Current research by his *Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates* at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, is addressing this gap in research, and the Centre's comparisons with the decline of the 'country house' in Britain are contextualising the decline of comparable houses in Ireland. Dooley is also attempting to revise Irish attitudes to the 'Big House' by extolling other attributes: 'Their preservation need not be seen as a celebration of the landlord system that facilitated their construction but rather a celebration of the great artistic achievements of the architects who designed them and the everyday works of craftsmanship of those who embellished them' (2003, p. 4). Therefore, the destruction and conservation of the 'Big House' is not addressed in this research due to other ongoing investigations.

Recent publications by Stamp (2007 and 2010) illustrate the extent of loss of Georgian and Victorian architecture in Britain during the same period. Stamp emphasizes this loss in his 2010 work *Lost Victorian Britain* with the subtitle: *How the 20th Century destroyed the 19th Century's Architectural Masterpieces*. Clearly the destruction of Georgian and Victorian buildings was not just the preserve of the nationalistic Irish. However, there remains a gap in the literature with regard to research into causes other than that of nationalism for architectural destruction in Ireland, particularly Dublin. The redevelopment of parts of Dublin, and the subsequent loss of historic buildings, has been politicised. This is apparent from the contentious quotes which are used repeatedly in the literature when addressing this destruction. One could argue that the collective memory of this antithesis to Georgian buildings from the late 1950s onwards emphasises 'otherness' in order to strengthen the notion of 'Irishness'.

Whelan (2002, 2003) considers the 'reinvention' of Dublin after the establishment of the Free State, and assesses how colonial landmarks were addressed in the 20th century. She reflects on not just the removal of intentional monuments but also the removal of more intangible icons to the British Empire, for example, the renaming of streets. Conroy (2003), on behalf of Dublin City Council, studied the monuments on O'Connell Street (one of Dublin's main thoroughfares). The timing of such studies was most likely influenced by the installation of the Millennium Spire, a structure which excited much controversy owing to its height (now the tallest structure in Dublin), and occupying the space once taken by Nelson's Pillar. Nelson's Pillar was deemed a problem before its destruction in 1966. O'Regan (1998) traces its origins, bombing, and the consequence debates on what should replace the monument. The destruction and forced removal of such intentional monuments tends to be followed quite reverently with proposals of replacement, with many meanings being read into such substitutions.

The literature charting the destruction of 'unintentional' monuments tends to treat Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings as 'intentional' monuments, ignoring the trends in architectural fashions which influenced their changing appearances. This could be ascribed to the terminology under which such architecture falls: 'Georgian' is a direct reference to the Hanoverian kings who occupied the British throne while such neo-classical architecture was being designed and constructed, just as Victorian and Edwardian also refers to monarchs. Such reactions accord with Hewison (1987) and Wright (2009) whereby once heritage becomes endangered it becomes 'hot', as Billig (1995) might agree. Other studies, particularly those concerned with preservation, have attempted to temper the nomenclature, stressing these buildings were of 'Irish' Georgian design, including Ypma (1998) and O'Byrne (2008).

1.7 Methodology

This research provides a nuanced reading of the relationships between nationalism and material culture in the Republic of Ireland. The review of the literature, above, establishes how archaeology and the historic built environment are selected and neglected through nationalism.

The Republic of Ireland constitutes the principal case study. Yin (2003) outlines the main parameters to consider with case studies, including

constructing validity (both internally and externally) and reliability. The operational measures of this research centre around two aspects: firstly, archaeological theory, which acts as a reference point by which to test empirical evidence against, in this instance, the interpretation of archaeological sites which are considered, perhaps unquestionably 'principal', in Irish prehistory. Secondly, this accepted pre-eminence of such prehistoric sites is tested against that which is a supposedly neglected part of Irish material culture: polite architecture associated with colonisation. The polarities of selection and neglect of material culture will demonstrate how nationalism is used to legitimise certain stances. This will essentially identify patterns of 'Irishness', and the changing fortunes of Ireland from the 19th to 21st century demonstrate how heritage value systems fluctuate. However, Ireland will not be considered in isolation, and external validity will be achieved through selective comparison with Britain in relation to post-World War II development control. The use of this case study, and the parameters which it encompasses, will demonstrate to future researchers how this can be replicated in future works pertaining to other postcolonial frameworks.

Veal (2006) states that the aim of 'studying single examples' is 'to seek to understand the phenomenon' (2006, p. 108). This research examines sites which reflect particular canons of selection and neglect in Irish nationalism, including prehistoric sites, vernacular and Georgian architecture. These are also dictated by spatiality, with the west of the country deemed to accord more with Irishness. Therefore, in the west of the country, sites chosen for study reflect these parameters, and these include The Céide Fields Neolithic complex, Deserted Village and Irish Folklife Collection, all located in County Mayo. Contrastingly, pre-Norman sites in the east of the country were visited and examined in order to assess how they have been treated and presented as facets of 'Irishness'. These included the Hill of Tara and the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage site, all in County Meath. The 'neglect' of Georgian architecture in Ireland's capital city, Dublin, is examined as a foil to 'Irishness'. Veal acknowledges that case studies can be used to 'test a single existing theory', and in the context of this research the widely accepted theoretical approach engendered by nationalism will be 'test alternative/competing theories' (2006, p. 110): the celebration of pre-invasion archaeology and the 'destruction' of Dublin will be challenged. This in turn will test the parameters of nationalism,

what Veal describes as 'pattern matching – relating the features of the case to what might be expected from some existing theory' (2006, p. 113).

This research adopts qualitative methods, which draw on my training and vocational experience as an architectural conservation professional. Veal recognises that qualitative methods are valid 'when the focus of the research is on meanings and attitudes' (2006, p. 99). Conservation is largely a tangible and visual field which requires observation. Whilst the secondary sources used in this research qualify selection and neglect, fieldwork is essential in challenging these perceptions in order to draw new conclusions. These conclusions are best demonstrated in this research by the examination of vernacular buildings in County Mayo and County Kerry, and 1960s Georgian replacements in Dublin. Numerous fieldwork photographs have been placed within the text in order to validate findings and conclusions.

Observation has also been adopted as a method for assessing events, including the protests at the Hill of Tara, most notably during the *World Archaeological Congress* in 2008. Veal notes that 'observation is capable of presenting a situation which is not apparent to the individuals involved ... Observation is therefore an appropriate technique to use when knowledge of the presence of the researcher is likely to lead to unacceptable modification of subjects' behaviour' (2006, p. 98). This technique was important when visiting Brú na Bóinne and taking guided tours of Dublin, whereby the narratives of tour guides were important in assessing the presentation of sites to visitors. This approach was also important with my participation in genetic profiling.

Several conferences were attended in Dublin as part of this research, during which I presented myself as an interested conservation professional and not a researcher, in order not to 'modify' the behaviour of other attendees. This included the *Institute of Historic Building Conservation* conference (2008) and *Irish Historic Towns Atlas* conference (2008). The official and unofficial proceedings of these conferences opened up new research leads.

Rationale for the neglect of Georgian Dublin was found extensively in secondary sources. Therefore, primary research was important in untangling the politicised layers which have been added to material culture. Whilst discourse analysis informed findings and conclusions, it should be noted that it

was not a principal methodological approach¹⁶. Archival research was undertaken in the National Archives, Royal Irish Academy and Office of Public Works (all in Dublin). The documents, journals and reports viewed there have been essential in revealing gaps and misappropriations in secondary sources. This was particularly important when examining highly charged and contentious conservation and architectural destruction, in particular, the rebuilding of the Custom House in the 1920s.

Content and visual analysis was also an integral methodological approach, and Veal accepts that 'the technique is attracting increasing attention' (2006, p.99). Therefore, the portrayal of 'Irishness' was assessed in media coverage and productions, postcards, websites and blogs. These all inform public perceptions of nationalism. Assessments of primary sources were supported by analysis of parliamentary debates in relation to protective legislation, including the National Monuments Acts and Planning and Development Acts. Media sources and journals have been accessed from the 1920s to the present in order to demonstrate how such protective measures were being portrayed to the public (for example, through the *Irish Times* newspaper), and how they were being presented to those involved in the building trade (for instance, through the *Irish Builder and Engineer*).

1.7.1 Structure

The extent to which Irish archaeology has been influenced by nationalism is explored in Chapter Two: in the context of Irish prehistory, the recognition of significant archaeological sites as being the work of the 'native' population was closely bound to nationalism. This chapter assesses the continued emphasis on Irish ethnic identity being rooted in the distant past, and more notably in the west of the country. Neolithic and medieval archaeological sites in the east of the country are also examined here, most notably Brú na Bóinne, the Hill of Tara and Carrickmines Castle.

The location of Irish identity with the building materials of stone and thatch is examined in Chapter Three, where it is argued that this limits the inclusion of other building typologies which could otherwise be validly intimated as 'Irish'. In addition, vernacular buildings are closely bound with 'dissonant' heritage

¹⁶ Brown and Yule (1983) and Bauer and Gaskell (2000) provide more comprehensive approaches to discourse analysis.

and the Famine narrative, and the impact of this on present day development control is considered.

Chapters Four and Five examine the denigration and destruction of architecture associated with the British in Ireland, namely intentional monuments and edifices associated with British imperialism, and more mundane, but equally loaded domestic expressions of architectural style associated with the period. These are contrasted with iconic buildings and structures, namely, the General Post Office, Custom House and Dublin's green post boxes. It concludes that the polarisation between building forms and materials has negatively charged attitudes to polite architecture. This is a consequence of the continued use of cultural historic approaches to material culture, namely archaeology and vernacular architecture. However, vestiges of the past which embody notions of Irishness are deemed to be most at risk in the present.

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to identify how an Occidental country such as Ireland attempts to define the cultural nation, utilising the archaeological resource in order to express its differences with the Normans/English/British. Identification as an Irish 'native' is reinforced by the presence of what is held to be authentic, original, and tangible material culture. Certain archaeological sites, such as the Hill of Tara, have long been recognised as evoking Irish nationalism, but this chapter will identify other sites which have been subject to invasive and irreversible alterations in order to underpin their 'Irishness', ultimately resulting in the loss of their authenticity through the removal of their built fabric. This chapter considers how 'sites of memory'¹⁷ are created in the Irish context, underpinning nationalism.

The discipline of 'archaeology' incorporates two basic components: material archaeological remains (sites, monuments, artefacts), and the actual discipline itself which investigates and attempts to record and interpret this resource (excavation, survey, dating). It is widely accepted that 'archaeology' endeavours to retrieve knowledge of the past through investigation and interpretation. Although the raw data of archaeology by definition contains no interpretive pre-determination, the human process of 'reading' the data can make it vulnerable to an alignment of the resource in order to meet political and cultural agendas (Bintliff, 2004). This can result in biased interpretations, and the influence of nationalism on the subject was explored in Chapter One.

Thomas F. Heffernan claims that 'in Ireland in the 1960s there was not a great deal of interest in medieval archaeology as compared to prehistoric sites'

¹⁷ Pierre Nora's influential *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-92) considered how the French past was and is constructed through 'sites of memory'. He proposed: 'Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieu de mémoire*, real environments of memory'. (1989, p. 7)

(1988, p. 7). This statement embodies notions of selection and neglect implicit in the archaeological record through nationalism. However, this chapter will assess if this was actually the predominant approach in Irish archaeology and if there is legitimacy of such beliefs.

Shanks recognises archaeology as both a 'source' and 'resource' where 'the archaeologist is primarily recovering and dealing with the past as a source; further interpretation may use the source as a resource ... places and things from the past are resources for invention' (1992, p. 117). This chapter will explore how an Irish 'native' identity has become 'invented' and entwined with the rural west of the country through antiquarian anthropological pursuits, and subsequently assesses how recent scientific ethnographic developments are exploiting this western bias. The consequences of this spatialisation of identity will come to the fore in Chapters Four and Five with the contestation of the historic built fabric of Ireland's capital city, Dublin.

Venn's 'system of classification' creating 'rules of inclusion and exclusion' was noted in Chapter One (2006, p. 44). Selectivity will be explored in this chapter, exposing the loss of authenticity in the archaeological resource through invasive excavation and conjectural reconstruction, and Newgrange and Knowth will be assessed as examples. This chapter will demonstrate how the pre-eminence of the Hill of Tara has narrowed popular perceptions of what constitutes Irish material culture, which, in turn, has been further polarised by the M3 motorway controversy.

2.2 Origins

Rúaidhrí de Valera¹⁸ (1916-1978) was Professor of Celtic Archaeology at University College Dublin (UCD) from 1957 to 1978. His particular research interest was in Neolithic megalithic tombs, and he proposed that the earliest Irish Court cairns were to be found on the west coast (1960). The nomenclature of his position perseveres in UCD with the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore & Linguistics, and this can be explained by the origins of the university as a Catholic/Irish institution. McDonald (1985) emphasizes its peripheral setting in Belfield as being re-located as far as possible from the traditionally Protestant/British university of Trinity College Dublin based in the

¹⁸ He was the son of Éamon de Valera, who was instrumental in the 1916 Easter Rising and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922.

city centre. UCD also holds a large selection of oral histories and information on folk traditions gathered during the 20th century. Whilst its archive is comprehensive there is little available examination of the material, for example, linguistic analysis. This accords with the ethos of primary data collection apparent in Irish archaeology, as discussed in Chapter One.

Professor de Valera's geographical positioning of the earliest monuments to be erected in Ireland is important. The assertion of a 'pure' Irish bloodline, untainted by 'others', is fundamental to an Irish ethnic community. The basic tenet of the argument is the route by which the first Mesolithic settlers entered Ireland approximately 9000 years ago. This tends to emphasize a point of entry on the west coast, thereby discounting any close genetic link with what is now Britain and emphatically separating the original 'natives' from the later colonisers. His argument is being strengthened today through the selective interpretation of DNA, as will be seen below.

The origin of these first settlers is also considered, by some, to be from the Basque region of Spain. An Irish association with the Basque people strengthens a self-perception of a struggling minority culture. The original settlers may indeed have come from Spain, and Oppenheimer (2006) considers this at length. However, it is the omission or lack of acceptance or interest in the potential eastern point of entry that is of significance. These contentions are not spurious: there is a definite link between Irish affirmations of an uncontaminated ethnic identity and the consequent denigration of the later (Norman/English/British) colonizers. Any potential genetic or cultural link between the British and the 'native' Irish is not necessarily dismissed outright by the Irish, but instead is not fathomed.

O'Sullivan states 'Ireland's western islands, situated out on its long Atlantic shore, have long been seen as icons of a true Irishness – the dwelling places of a Gaelic people; pure, clean-living and timeless' (2008, p. 175). He further notes:

Antiquarians...created, firstly, a sense of the remoteness, cultural distance and uniqueness of these islands. They also created a myth of the antiquity of these islands and the direct link between 19th century populations and the peoples of the remote past. This created a sense of a pure Gaelic Irish ethnicity and identity which

could be tapped into by both cultural and political nationalists.

(2008, p. 177)

Therefore, such constructs are an acknowledged part of Irish identity, and these perceptions need to be assessed in the present day interpretation of Irish archaeology, with particular regard for material culture which does not sit within accepted parameters of 'Irishness'.

These antiquarian approaches were complemented by the research endeavours of late 19th century anthropologists. Academics from Trinity College Dublin travelled to the west of Ireland, paying particular attention to the islands, measured the skulls of the 'natives', both living and dead. Walsh asks: 'How did one explain the presence of a primitive (white) race living in the back yard of the United Kingdom? The answer had to lie in the origin of the species, in this case the Irish peasant in remote communities all along the west coast' (2012). Thus, island living, the 'West' and so-called 'pre-invasion' archaeology all provide the basic tenets of what constitutes Irish 'ethnic' identity in nationalism. Such self-perception can be construed through the appraisal of implicit messages at certain archaeological sites. Billig (1995) explored that concept of 'nationalism' as 'banal': hardly noticeable to observers. But he also stressed that 'banal does not imply benign' (1995, p. 6). As will be seen, late 20th century visitor attractions continue to embed this message in their narratives, reinforcing Irish nationalism.

2.2.1 Harvard Archaeological Mission

The Harvard Archaeological Mission to Ireland was a five-year excavation programme, which commenced in 1932. It was directed by Professor Ernest Albert Hooton and Lloyd Warner of the Department of Anthropology in Harvard University. The grant funding came from several sources, both in America and the newly formed Irish Free State, namely the Rockefeller Foundation, Harvard University and the Irish government. Hugh O'Neill Hencken stated the object of the Mission was to 'study as far as could be done by excavations the successive cultures of Ireland from the first inhabitants down to the Anglo-Norman invasion in the twelfth century' (1941, p. 1). O'Sullivan considered its stated aim was 'to combine physical anthropological and archaeological investigations to explore the 'origins and development of the races and culture of the Irish' (2003, p. 10). The rationale behind the choice of Ireland as a case study is expounded by Carew, who cites the following from the original aims

and objectives of the survey: 'It was suggested that Celtic Ireland was still racially and culturally intact and was therefore worthy of a full anthropological survey' (2012, p. 38). Carew contextualises the interest of the archaeologists, where they were 'attempting to rescue the image of the Celt from the popular 19th- and early 20th -century caricatures depicting him as barbarous and as a 'white negro' and to rehabilitate him for successful 20th century Irish-Americans', and she further notes many of whom 'donated generously' to the Mission (ibid). Carew identifies the archaeologists as prominent members of the American Eugenics Society, with the aim of 'eugenics' being the 'hereditary improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding' (ibid). Therefore, the ethnic and racial connotations of the Mission were compounded by this association and influence.

Professor Hallan L. Movius worked alongside O'Neill Hencken, and together they sampled sixteen archaeological sites which they believed represented 'every phase of culture' (O'Neill Hencken, 1941). These sites were located throughout the island and were chosen as representing the Irish archaeological record prior to the arrival of the Normans in 1169 CE. The findings of the expedition were disseminated through Royal Irish Academy proceedings and the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Another branch of the Mission investigated social and physical anthropology in County Clare, located on the west coast of the country, as they believed descendants of the ancient Irish could be found there (Arensberg and Kimball, 2001). Therefore, it was believed that the original Irish race had populated the entire island, hence the sampling of pre-Norman sites across the country; but their descendants had been pushed to the isolated west. The fact that the west remained rural and relatively unindustrialised, reliant on an agricultural economy, served to reinforce this premise.

It is widely recognised that the Mission was influenced by nationalism (Waddell, 2005). The selected sites were of pre-Anglo-Norman origin (i.e. pre-1169 CE), which O'Sullivan recognises as the 'Celtic origins' agenda of the Mission. The contemporaneous categorisation of artefacts in the National Museum in Dublin also reflected this belief, of which McEwan recognises its 'general purpose was to illustrate the evolution of human civilization in Ireland from the earliest periods to the time at which native development was cut short by the Anglo-Norman conquest' (2003, p. 111). This approach accords

with Assmann's 'Grand Narrative': 'a master story that underlies and informs innumerable concrete tellings and retellings of the past' (1998, p.3). Ireland's 'Grand Narrative' is played out through notions of racial purity underpinned by the archaeological record. Collis considers the boundaries and classifications created by the demarcation of Celtic, Saxon and Norman peoples, and the appropriation of these terms by the Irish, Welsh, Scottish and English in both the past and present, whereby: 'the tendency to resort to exclusive definitions of group identity lies in the all-too-easy transformation of identity into caricature.' (1996, p. 172) Therefore, it can be argued that the Mission also accommodated a simplification of identity.

O'Sullivan goes on to assess how the findings were received in the national press: the nationalist *Irish Independent* reported in 1932 that the excavated Ballinderry Crannog 'could be taken as representing life at the time in Christian Gaelic Ireland a couple of centuries before the English Invasion', to which O'Sullivan compounds 'before Irish civilisation had been ruined' (2003, p.23). The emphasis on 'pre-invasion' archaeology can also be attributed to the legacy of the 19th century Celtic Revival of which the pre-Norman period was regarded as 'the last period when Ireland could be said to have been truly herself, untinged by influences from England or the Continent' (Sheehy, 1977, p. 200). O'Sullivan (ibid) contrasts the previous news report with that of the pro-British *Irish Times*. In the same year they described other finds at the Ballinderry Crannog, including Elizabethan and James II coins. O'Neill Hencken does not mention such archaeological finds in his 1941 summary of the expedition which demonstrates the neglect of material culture which does not accord with Irishness.

O'Sullivan recognises the long-term impact of the expedition: he contends the methodology and selection of 'representative' sites, and large number of artefacts uncovered which provided a tangible experience of the distant past 'maintained Irish archaeology on a cultural historical research agenda for many years' (ibid), and this is also accepted by Cooney (1995). O'Sullivan (2003), Carew (2012) and Waddell (2005) all acknowledge that the Mission significantly influenced the development of cultural-historical approaches in Irish archaeology, and consolidated 'a Celtic and Christian identity for Ireland during the thirties' (Carew, 2012, p. 39). It was supported by the director of the National Museum of Ireland, Adolf Mahr. Mahr was widely acknowledged

as a Nazi (Mullins, 2007), and therefore the purity of race agenda of the Mission accorded with his views. Indeed, Carew cites Hooton's view that 'an archaic Aryan language' was to be found in Ireland (2012, p. 38), and Wiwjorra (1996) expands on the agency of the 'Aryan Race' in the development of Nazi Germany. French art historian, Françoise Henry, furthered such nationalistic approaches to archaeology in the 1930s. Waddell considers how she reinforced Irish nationalism in 1936 when she 'argued that the artistic skill displayed in the enamel-work on [hanging] bowls was Celtic in origin and Irish in execution', as opposed to other potential Romano-British origins (2005, p. 212).

These 1930s exploits pervaded Irish archaeology long after the Mission left and strengthened the 19th century theme of Irishness defined by Celts and Christianity. Commenting on the state of Irish archaeology in the second half of the 20th century, Waddell states:

The principal methodological or theoretical approaches have been empirical (the practical collection and analysis of data) and cultural-historical. The cultural-historical approach was concerned with the identification of discrete archaeological entities which might correlate with distinct population groups or specific peoples in time or in space...changes in the archaeological record were considered to be the result of isolated factors such as invasion or migration or the diffusion of technological innovation. (1998, p. 5).

Cooney concurs with Waddell's assessment, but notes that this theoretical approach continues: 'the development of Irish archaeology cannot be seen in any way in terms of a progression from culture-history to processualism to post-processualism' (1995, p. 264), and this is demonstrated in relation to the dismissal of Roman cultural influence in Ireland.

2.2.2 The Roman rejection

Quirke outlined the polarity at play in Ireland before the establishment of the Free State: 'binarisms were at constant interplay and flux' between the 'New English', Old English' and 'Gaelic-Irish' (2008). She summarised the dualism between England and Ireland during colonisation, as defined internally by all three groups:

| England | Ireland |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Ideal | Reality |
| Kingdom | Colony |
| Protestant | Catholic |
| Civilised | Barbaric |
| Self (Age of Enlightenment) | Other |
| Male | Female |
| Map | Landscape |
| Global | Local |

Table 1: 'Binarisms' (Quirke, 2008)

'England'¹⁹ is a politically loaded term which is widely used in Ireland: this facilitates the lack of recognition of the six counties of Northern Ireland as remaining part of 'Britain'. If the columns were headed 'Britain' and 'Ireland' the dualism between Britain's civic nationalism and Ireland's so-called ethnic communities would be more pronounced. The 'barbaric' nature of the Irish, in contrast to the 'civilised' English is reflected in the archaeological record. This is discernible in historic assessments of early medieval manuscripts where 'crass' opinions 'virtually made all rough manuscripts Irish and all fine ones English' (see Wailes and Zoll, 1995, p. 30). The Romans were seen as a civilising force when they arrived in Britain (Brabbs, 2001). However, the presence of the Romans in Ireland has been somewhat denied as such a 'civilising' factor would not accord with the construction of an Irish native identity. Limited Roman finds were acknowledged by archaeologists in the 20th century, mainly coins and burials. In the 19th century Roman coins were found at Newgrange Neolithic passage tomb and Jones considered 'it is possible that the Newgrange offerings were made by visitors from Roman Britain' (2007, p. 249). However, Jones also contends that 'it is also quite possible, however, that the offerings were made by Irish returning home from raiding or trading excursions to Britain' (ibid). The latter statement lessens the potential for a physical Roman presence on Irish soil.

In 1996 Warner asked: 'So did the Romans invade Ireland after all, or not?' He cited two reasons for his question: 'first, this year's announcement of the

¹⁹ The misuse of this term can be seen recently with the birth of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's baby where 'some US television networks proclaimed the royal baby news by welcoming the arrival of the "future king of England", forgetting about the rest of the UK' (Magazine Monitor, 2013).

discovery of a 'Roman fort' at Drumanagh near Dublin and second, the almost hysterical attempt by some leading Irish archaeologists to rubbish the claim, in support of the non-invasion orthodoxy'. The promontory fort of Drumanagh has been recognized since the 1950s as having the potential to reveal Roman archaeology. It has, however, remained largely neglected until now. Waddell was conscious of the influence of ancient Irish literature which 'depicted an insular Celtic world unaffected by Rome' and 'was as strong in some quarters in the 20th century as it had been in the 18th' (2005, p. 1). He recognizes the prevalence of Celtic myths which underpinned the notion that 'there was archaeological corroboration for a migration of Celtic people to Ireland directly from Continental Europe and uncontaminated by any British influence' (ibid). Indeed Peckham noted: 'The promotion of a national heritage in the preservation of sanctioned sites during the 19th century ... involved the elimination of other local or nonconformist heritages that were deemed dangerous to national unity' (2003, p. 4).

The question of Romans in Ireland creates another dualism in the literature. Raftery adopts a similar approach to Jones when he considers that Drumanagh fort 'could have been a native Irish settlement serving as a distribution centre for Roman produce, but it is also possible that it was a foreign, perhaps Romano-British, establishment' (1994, p. 208). There is hesitancy in such statements, but the underlying agency can be read: there is no hybridity between the native Irish and the Romans. This will also be apparent in Chapter Three, where some definitions of Irish vernacular architecture make explicit reference to what is not included. Warner (1996) disagrees with Raftery, and notes the similarities between Irish and Roman cloak-fasteners, penannular brooches and early medieval Irish swords: 'early medieval Ireland has all the appearance of being, culturally, an heir to the Roman world of which, we are supposedly to believe, it was never part'. Therefore, the different cultural backgrounds of Warner (British) and Raftery (Irish) demonstrate the differing interpretations or reading of material culture, with the Irish approach clearly influenced by nationalism.

The government's research-led excavation scheme, the Discovery Programme, is now investigating the potential for a Roman presence in Ireland under the Late Iron Age and Roman Ireland (LIARI) Project. The most recent development was a 2012 conference: *Ireland in a Roman World*. Whilst the

conference title does not necessarily place the Romans within Ireland, this is certainly a major step forward through a research rather than development led agenda and shows how Irish archaeology is evolving to be more embrative in the 21st century.

The appropriation of prehistoric sites can be seen as a process of nationalism: the recognition of such sites as being the product of 'native' endeavour was not a by-product of the affirmation of Irish identity, but inherently bound into the process of nationalism. It represented a subjugation of colonisation through the careful selection of prehistoric sites deemed appropriate for self-identification, and the rejection of architecture and building materials which do not fit the accepted parameters of Irishness. Kumar notes one of the stanchions of nationalism: 'One does not join it, one is born into it' (2003, p. 24) and the archaeological record provided a tangible link to the 'natives', whilst at the same time disclaiming material cultural which did not accord with Irishness.

2.3 Written in Stone

The 'Céide Fields' is an expansive Neolithic settlement consisting of stone walled field systems, dwellings and megalithic tombs, located in the North Mayo boglands in the west of Ireland. The complex is about 5700 years old. When the climate warmed slightly around 3000 BCE the arable land was taken over by a blanket bog. The settlement was gradually consumed by the bog until its rediscovery in 1930s by a local school teacher, Patrick Caulfield. His son, Dr Seamus Caulfield investigated the site in the 1970s and 80s, exposing some of the features, and his probing of the bog assisted in mapping out the remainder of the complex.

In 1992 a visitor centre was constructed close to the site, and all of the current interpretative material dates to that time (Image 2). The audio-visual, *Written in Stone*, is presented by Dr Caulfield himself. The video ends with the following statement: 'Human settlement continues through to today in an unbroken chain – these people didn't leave'. Supplementary information sheets, which were also penned by Caulfield, contain the same autochthonic reassurances:

Those who left probably went no further than a few miles down the road. The bog never grew and farming continued in the low-lying

land around Ballycastle and eastwards along Killala Bay. Even though throughout our prehistory and history new peoples have come into the region, they would not have wiped out the native population. It is very likely then that there are few natives of North Mayo today who do not have the blood of these first farmers still in their veins.



Image 2: The Céide Fields with exposed Neolithic walls to the centre and left; visitor walkway to the right; visitor centre in the background. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Answering the posed question in the supplementary literature as to the origins of these farmers, Caulfield is mindful of the opinions of his academic contemporaries at University College Dublin: he cites Professor Rúaidhrí de Valera's favourable comparison of megalithic tomb typologies between North Mayo and France: 'some of the features of those tombs pointed to a direct French origin for these people'. Whilst Caulfield acknowledges the earliest origins of farming in the Near East and the possibility that the Céide farmers could have come from Britain, his conclusion is unequivocal: 'But of the actual people who came to Ceide Fields the short answer is – either direct from France or else from just a few miles down the road.' Evans accepted that 'the theories of western entry proposed in the 1950s by de Valera and Rynne for Megalithic court tombs... were unconscious products of cultural nationalism' (1968), what Billig could describe as 'banal' nationalism (1995). Dr Caulfield's

analysis of the Céide Fields is clearly using the same argument: these settlers did not come through what is now Britain, they arrived on the west coast of Ireland without being tainted by other influences, and therefore it is an authentic native archaeological complex.

The archaeological remains at the Céide Fields are mainly located beneath the bog. They have been exposed in areas to facilitate their study, and also to provide tangible remains for visitors' appreciation (Image 3). This lies in sharp contrast to upstanding monumental remains such as Newgrange and Knowth, Neolithic passage tombs located in County Meath which will be discussed later in this chapter. Zuelow describes the visitor centre at the Céide Fields as 'a building designed to communicate meaning...that springs like the pyramids at Giza from the Irish countryside' (2009, p. 166). Therefore, the antiquity of the site is implicit in the form of the visitor centre, compensating for the immediate lack of remarkable and definitive upstanding archaeological remains. The visitor centre contains several life-sized reconstructions of elements of the site, one of which is of 'The Ballyglass House' found near the Céide Fields. The accompanying interpretation board draws the Neolithic past into the present: 'The rectangular house with large central room is strikingly similar to the traditional house of the region.' The reference to vernacular buildings in the above narrative serves to project these Neolithic people into the present, accentuating an ethnic link between pre-history and the current local inhabitants.



Image 3: Exposed stone boundary wall, the Céide Fields. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The interpretation boards in the visitor centre remark on the significance of the Céide Fields:

It was a peaceful community living in peaceful times. The pattern of unprotected family dwellings scattered through the countryside indicates there was no threat either from within or from outside the community. It establishes the depth of tradition which lies behind the economy and the rural settlement pattern found in Ireland today. The dispersed settlement pattern scattered through the countryside still remains the same. Cattle raised on standing grass are still the single most important item in the Irish economy.

Such a description is akin to 'the heritage industry's 'recovery' of the past' (N.C. Johnson, 1999, p. 188) and the narrative draws the archaeological past into the present through tangible links in the landscape. Whilst the interpretation boards conjure an idyllic landscape, the detrimental impact of such notions of 'dispersed settlement' will be evaluated in Chapter Three.

2.3.1 'Totally authentic' World Heritage

The Céide Fields was added to Ireland's tentative UNESCO *World Heritage List* in 2010. The justification for inclusion states 'the Céide Fields are totally

authentic in that the stone field walls have quite simply not been disturbed in over 5,000 years' and 'a deliberate decision was taken not to "reconstruct" in any way, even though most of the walls had already collapsed prior to the growth of the bog' (2010). The emphasis on their legitimacy, the 'totally authentic' nature of the remains, can be reflected on in several ways. The 'discovery' of the field complex infers purity, a lack of interference and contamination, from the time of its original demise: it can be asserted that other waves of cultures have not meddled with the remains. In addition, the Céide Fields are located in the west of Ireland, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, the prehistoric nature of the site is further compounded by its favourable geographical proximity, and so it is deemed to be 'totally authentic' and genuinely 'Irish'.

The message being conveyed by the interpretation of the Céide Fields is clear: this Neolithic complex was assembled by peoples coming directly from France, and not Britain; the people of North Mayo can claim to be their direct descendants; the site is 'authentic' with no reconstruction; the Neolithic house type is reflected in the vernacular tradition found in the region today. In addition, the stones essentially speak for themselves: they have sufficient veracity so as not to warrant any conjectural reconstruction. Stone, as a building material, is also imbued with Irishness: in 1922 the *Irish Builder and Engineer* declared Ireland to be 'a stone country' (Anon) in a binary opposite to manufactured brick with its British connotations. Therefore, the Céide Fields could be construed from several angles to embody the notion of Irishness and the west.

If the Céide Fields are deemed to fit widely accepted parameters of 'Irishness', then one should contemplate the treatment of other Neolithic sites which don't necessarily embody the same characteristics. The 'Brú na Bóinne' World Heritage Site is located in County Meath, just north of Dublin on the east coast of Ireland. The treatment of this site after independence is worthy of analysis as it reveals the contested nature of Irish identity when a monumental site does not sit comfortably with the aforementioned 'western' parameters of Irishness.

2.4 Newgrange Passage Tomb

Newgrange passage tomb is located in County Meath, near the River Boyne, on the east side of Ireland. It has been dated to 3200 BCE, the Neolithic period of Irish prehistory. The tomb was 'discovered' in 1699, when a local landowner, removing stones and earth from the mound, uncovered the entrance to the tomb. Thereafter, it became of interest to antiquarians, throughout the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. It is now a National Monument and forms part of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site.

The mound measures from between 78.6m to 85.3m in diameter. Prior to 1960s excavation, the height of the mound ranged from 10.9m at the south elevation, and 13.4m at the north elevation (O'Kelly, 1982). It is enclosed by ninety-seven large kerbstones, laid lengthwise, arranged around the circumference of the mound. It covers an area of one acre, and was estimated to be composed of 200,000 tons of earth and stones. Newgrange displays a wide range of petroglyphic (megalithic) art. The art is incised on the stones and includes a variety of forms, including: spirals, circles, lozenges and zigzags.

The mound houses a passage and chamber, of which the walls and roof are built of large slabs which O'Kelly (1982) claimed were laid without mortar. The roof is formed with slabs laid transversely, balanced on top of the passage orthostats. The tomb chamber lies off centre in the mound and is divided into three niches, which result in a cruciform layout. One orthostat is inscribed with a triple spiral, an incision which has since been adopted as the symbol of Irish archaeology. The roof of the chamber is of corbel construction, and lies 6m above floor level. A 'roof-box' was discovered during excavation, in 1963, located above the passage entrance. It was found to have a solar alignment: on the shortest day of the year, December 21st, the midwinter sunrise shines through this roof box and illuminates the passage and chamber for 17 minutes.

2.4.1 Reclaiming Newgrange

McCarthy outlines the appeal of Newgrange in the late 19th century as 'representing Ireland's past greatness, and contributed to an evolving sense of Irish identity' (2005, p. 125), and Kohl links this to nationalism whereby 'the process of national identity formation is continuous and ongoing' (1998, p. 235). Kumar explains its development in the late 19th century whereby 'lacking a state, one was forced to put one's claims as a legitimate nation in cultural, not political, terms' (2003, p. 24). The use of what are now deemed iconic archaeological sites, most notably Newgrange and the Hill of Tara, in constructing an Irish cultural identity in the 19th century can be recognised here.

However, McCarty's supposition contrasts with Trigger's belief that religious differences (Protestant/Catholic) influenced Irish nationalism:

their interest in the past did not stimulate a major involvement with prehistoric archaeology, despite the presence of Newgrange and other extraordinary prehistoric monuments in Ireland. Instead, Ireland's Golden Age was identified with the historically documented early Christian period that followed the conversion to Christianity of a supposedly ethnically pure Celtic Society. (1996, p. 253)

Chapter One recognises the role played by the Celtic Revival in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the symbols adopted are explored by Sheehy (1980) and McBride (1999). One of these symbols, the Round Tower, persists in portraying Early Christian Ireland. The selection and designation of monuments by the Board of Works has been documented since the late 19th century: in 1907 the Register of Inspections of Ancient and National Monuments noted that they 'decided to abandon' the ruins of a church, round tower and cross in Clogher, County Tyrone, as there was found to be 'No Round Tower there'. This indicates that round towers were considered a criterion for the selection and designation of Christian remains as National and Ancient Monuments, and one could conceive that Irish values were integral to selection and neglect.

Newgrange attracted the interest of the public in the 19th century: the number of visitors had increased significantly with the development of the railway and subsequent 'Great Northern Excursion Tours' (Board of Works, 1889). Renfrew

and Bahn recall the interest taken by 19th century antiquarians in Native American burial mounds and 'their enduring belief in a vanished race of Moundbuilders' (2000, p. 28) and in Ireland similar interest was shown by 19th century antiquarians in Newgrange (O'Kelly, 1982). The Hill of Tara was certainly used by nationalists to evoke the antiquity of the nation, and this will be discussed later in this chapter. But Newgrange, a monumental piece of archaeology, could be seen to have popular appeal to all strands of Irish society, as evidenced by the large number of 19th century visitors.

O'Kelly recalled that in the early 19th century the patrimony of Newgrange was contested: 'most of the other writers attributed Newgrange to the Danes and influences were also invoked from Egypt, India, Ethiopia, Phoenicia, Celtic Gaul, and so, in fact, almost any race under the sun was considered eligible save for the natives themselves' (1982, p. 35). In 1833 George Petrie described Newgrange as the 'Pyramid of Ireland'. McCarthy cites Petrie's work as 'the first popular publication to hammer home the notion that Newgrange was built, not by Phoenicians, Egyptians or even Danish mariners, but by Irish people, and reflected a previous period of insular achievement in Ireland's history' (2005, p. 125).

The denigration of the abilities of a 'native' population in constructing such sites was not just confined to Ireland. In the early 1890s Cecil Rhodes was convinced that Great Zimbabwe was the work of the Phoenicians. M. Hall traces the late 19th century investigations of the site, including Rhodes' employment of antiquarian Theodore Bent 'who was considered an expert on Phoenicia' (1995, p. 34). Hall notes the early 20th century work of David Randall-MacIver who 'rejected amateur, Biblical interpretations of the site, and argued that Great Zimbabwe was part of Southern Rhodesia's ethnographic record' (1995, p. 35). However, Hall points out that Randall-MacIver achieved this 'not by elevating the 'Makalanga' to a higher cultural status, but by bringing the workmanship of Great Zimbabwe down to native level' (ibid). Smith outlines this 19th century attitude: 'In the past there was very little recognition of minority, ethnic or indigenous cultures...the history and culture of indigenous peoples were often suppressed or destroyed by colonial powers who considered them to be inferior, primitive, or even barbaric' (2003, p. 172). Therefore, comparisons can be drawn from these colonial narratives: the Irish also had to reclaim Newgrange and prove its sophistication.

2.4.2 'West world pyramid'

The Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882 had resulted in Newgrange, and the associated mounds of Knowth and Dowth, being taken into State care. In 1890 the Board of Works commenced conservation and repair works, initiated due to public concern about the deterioration of the site. In a letter dated 2nd September 1889 to the Board of Works, Patrick Traynor expressed his concern for the state of the monument:

Sir, I recently paid a visit to the great sepulchral mound at New Grange, Co. Meath, and very much regret to have to say that the interior shows most unmistakable signs of fast approaching ruin...the ground on all its external surface appears to have been supersaturated by the recent very heavy rain which is now teaming through all the courses of the stonework...If some measure is not at once adopted to make a scientific examination and to devise a remedy for the rapidly approaching ruin of this most wonderful and interesting prehistoric work, there will very soon be little more than a confused mass of collapsed stones and clay to be seen on the site of this west world pyramid.

This letter was one of many from the general public, expressing concern for the state of the monument. Another letter to the Board of Works, dated 22nd December 1896, claimed 'The passages leading to the caves are quite muddy and wet and very disapproachable in wet weather, particularly in the parts of the passage where visitors have to creep along. This sticky puddle should be remedied and the passage coated with coarse gravel which would be clean and would not hold the wet on the surface.'

In the 1890s the Board of Works introduced wooden beams, concrete and props to shore up lintels and orthostats, removed earth to expose the decorated kerb stone and erected a six-foot retaining wall above the kerb, to the rear of the mound (O'Kelly, 1982). The above demonstrates the level of value with which Newgrange was held in the late 19th century: the number of people visiting the site and the works undertaken to the site to accommodate them. The Board of Works attempted to address the deterioration of the tomb which was highlighted in letters written by concerned citizens such as Traynor.

2.4.3 Reconstructing Newgrange

Ireland gained independence from Britain in 1922, and 40 years later Bord Fáilte Éireann (the State Tourist Board) purchased Newgrange and three acres of land around it and consequently presented these to the State through the Commissioners of Public Works, to 'ensure access for the public at all reasonable times' (O'Kelly, 1982, p. 10). Visitor numbers to Newgrange grew from the 1940s and 1950s after limited archaeological excavations triggered renewed public interest. In 1962 Michael J. O'Kelly, Professor of Archaeology at University College Cork, was appointed to undertake the excavations and these went on to last thirteen years. O'Kelly discovered the solar alignment of the roof-box, and methodically removed thousands of tons of mound material over the course of the excavation, exposing the stone skeleton of the tomb and passage. The roof of the passage was dismantled during excavation to allow for the straightening of the passage orthostats which created better visitor access to the chamber. Two roof slabs were removed to the National Museum, Dublin, as O'Kelly deemed the art they displayed to be of major significance, and in their former positions were otherwise obscured from public view (O'Kelly, 1982). The removal of so much material from the site resulted in the predicament of having to reinstate the shape of the mound. However, the reinstatement of the original earth and stone was perceived as detrimental to the stability of the passage and chamber, therefore modern techniques were introduced to lessen the compressive load of the mound (ibid). A concrete tunnel was constructed around the entire passage and its roof in order to reduce the compressive load of the cairn. It was designed with space to accommodate inspection of the roof and passage. The entrance to this structure is via a manhole, located in the mound surface.

Packing stones in the chamber were consolidated with concrete mortar, to prevent visitors from taking souvenirs. A cowl was erected over the entire chamber area, to lessen the compressive mound load on the roof, and to prevent water seepage. Of the latter, O'Kelly records it was composed of 'a pyramid of concrete drain-pipes...covered by a steep pitched roof of thin concrete slabs...covered by cairn material so that the finished surface of the cairn is now 2.8m above the capstone of the chamber and has proved effective as the chamber remains dry at all times' (1982, p. 113). The use of concrete and cement required the installation of a drainage system. But, in 1989 the north of the mound partially collapsed, caused by the blockage in the system

(Republic of Ireland, 2002). Remedial efforts included the insertion of gabions and the incorporation of cantilevered slabs over the exposed and re-erected kerbstones, to minimize erosion by rainfall. This cantilevered shelf was also a prototype for the reconstruction project at the adjacent Knowth passage tomb (ibid).

The conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange's facade was carried out by the state body, the Office of Public Works, after the archaeological investigation was completed in 1975, and the form it took was based on O'Kelly's interpretation of the excavation. O'Kelly had uncovered various layers of deposition, which included a significant amount of white quartz. As the quartz lay in the bottom layer of deposition, O'Kelly became convinced that the mound was originally faced with this material. Water rolled grey granite boulders were found mixed in this layer. The reconstruction included the replacement of some material removed from the mound; construction of the revetment wall which was stabilised with a wall of reinforced mass-concrete; the utilisation of quartz and granite uncovered through the archaeological investigation to construct the outer revetment, and secured with cement mortar. O'Kelly (1982) noted of the reconstruction that the granite was 'randomly distributed throughout the facing', as a pattern could only be established on a conjectural basis.

The above demonstrates substantial levels of intervention and conjecture. Stout and Stout (2008) note that at the time the proposed restoration was greeted with 'growing unease'. They describe the quartz wall as:

inflicting a 1960s standard of office-block design upon a structure that had stood for five thousand years and had been a ruin for four thousand of them. It was the last time in Ireland that scientific opinion, no matter how well founded, and a modern aesthetic would be allowed to impinge so forcefully on the ancient. (2008, p. 5)

Newgrange has also been described as having 'an unfortunate municipal look to it' (Lalor and Robertson, 1995, p. 394). The appearance of Newgrange can be deemed to be comparable with the modernist style of architecture which was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s: an architectural solution was imposed upon a prehistoric monument. During the same period many Georgian buildings were being demolished in Dublin, paving the way for their

replacement with mock Georgian replicas or mass concrete and glass construction. Stamp assesses the outlook of British planners during that period who 'demanded a *tabula rasa*' (2007, p. 4). Such attitudes are explored in Chapter Five in the 1960s and 1970s town planning of Dublin. '*Tabula rasa*' is Latin for 'clean slate', and this modernist approach can be recognised in the conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange: the patina of age was removed from the monument, and a modern day aesthetic executed: the clean lines of the revetment wall indicate the modernist reconstruction. The 19th century value of Newgrange was underpinned by appropriation: the sophistication of the monument was such that it was not deemed by the British to be the work of the native Irish. The appropriation and elevation of the monument by the Irish has justified destruction in the 20th century. However, such destruction was undertaken by scientific deconstruction: archaeological excavation. The consequent conjectural reconstruction has projected a modern iconicity of Newgrange which is seriously flawed in terms of authenticity.

The conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange's façade can be equated to Robert Venturi's 1977 sketch whereby the structure has 'no symbolic form; just a box with a sign pointing itself out' (Evers and Thoenes, 2006, p. 800). Whilst Newgrange can be seen as a product of Modernism, the dramatic post-reconstruction appearance can also be considered as the structure signposting itself in order to heighten its significance. Comparably, Knossos, which was excavated and rebuilt by Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941) in the early 20th century, was partially reconstructed using concrete, and Jokilehto recognises that 'the site has become a 'monument' for archaeological restoration' (1999, p. 191).

Indeed, Evans was himself guilty of exploiting nationalism in order to further his own profession: he excavated and reconstructed Knossos from 1900-14. Bintliff describes how 'Evans revitalization of a wondrous world of peaceful prosperity, stable divine autocrats and benevolent aristocracy, owes a great deal to the general political, social and emotional 'Angst' in Europe of his time.' (cited in Renfrew and Bahn, 2000, p. 559) However, Lowenthal acknowledges the lack of public scrutiny of authenticity: 'The wider public unabashedly enjoys reconstructions. Few have the taste or the training to appreciate the past simply from fragmentary remains. Heaps of fallen stones convey nothing

to the ordinary spectator; only reconstruction makes them coherent and evocative.’ (1985, p. 280-82)

The Burra Charter, The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999, provides what Earl (2003) describes as ‘precise definitions’ of ‘conservation’ and ‘preservation’. It defines ‘conservation’ as ‘all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance’ and ‘cultural significance’ as:

the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. (1999, p. 2)

The Charter implies the value of ‘cultural memory’, and this has become a significant aspect of Newgrange from the 20th century onwards. The Charter further defines ‘preservation’ as ‘maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration’ and ‘restoration’ as:

returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material; Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric. (ibid)

The works undertaken at Newgrange can undoubtedly be defined as ‘reconstruction’, differing from ‘conservation’ as the aesthetic of the mound was dramatically altered and the fabric compromised. Therefore, strands of its ‘cultural significance’ and authenticity were removed. It can also be argued that the works cannot be termed ‘reconstruction’ as the earlier state of the monument is unknown: it is conjecture. The nature of this conjecture is amply demonstrated by the different interpretation of the sister mound, Knowth, as discussed below. The Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site was inscribed in 1993, after the completion of the Newgrange reconstruction, despite one of UNESCO’s tenets of inscription being authenticity. Its designation therefore implies an international approval of the reconstruction.

The rationale behind the state’s interest can be summarised by Tilley et al. where ‘in archaeology in the 1960s, material culture was primarily regarded as reflecting ethnic identities, the diffusion of ideas among different groups,

invasion, migration and social change. Artefacts provided spatial and temporal markers of ethnic identities and primarily reflected ideas in the minds of their makers' (2006, p. 2). The combination of this approach in Ireland, combined with nationalism can be ascertained from the reconstruction, and the resultant engorged 'monument' signposted a glorious native past. McCarthy considers that 'heritage can only be understood within the context of the present – heritage value only has significance in the here and now, and therefore, reflects our present society as well as our desires for the future' (2005, p. 123). Therefore, the fluid nature of value at Newgrange can be compared to the Board of Works late 19th century reaction to 'vandalism' at the site.

2.4.4 Vandalism at Newgrange

On 31st December 1898 *The Drogheda Independent* reported on the occurrence and nature of unauthorised works at Newgrange, with the banner proclaiming 'Vandalism at Newgrange':

On St Stephen's Day²⁰ this world-famed tumulus was visited by two eminent Irish antiquarians, members of the Royal Academy. They noticed with regret the defacement of some of the markings, caused by thoughtless persons scribbling and scraping their initials, but were particularly grieved to find the name in full, of a local, chiselled in letters an inch long, across the face of the most precious stone in the cavern, with the date – XMAS, 1898, the 'careful' execution – the very name itself indicating that it was no 'junior' hand did it. In future the 'artist' should seek 'one niche higher', otherwise he will have an unpleasant communication from Mr Soady of the Board of Works in whose care those ancient National Monuments are vested.

The perpetrator of the 1898 'vandalism' had been virtually named and shamed in the local press, with little to disguise the fact that it was a Mr F. Senior, and not 'junior', who had committed this act. The legalities of a possible prosecution were clarified within the Commissioners of Public Works and the Ancient Monuments Preservation Committee noted on 13th February 1899 that 'This case was mentioned by Mr J. Ribbon Gorstin, and the Committee were informed of the action taken by the Board in requesting the Constabulary Authorities to prosecute if possible'. Eire defined various forms of 'illegal acts': 'those committed against the established laws of a community. The first type

²⁰ 26th December

is the individual and isolated iconoclastic act. This involves a single person who strikes out against a cultic object as a private act of rebellion' (1986, p. 152). The Royal Irish Constabulary Office, based at Dublin Castle, reported to the Board of Works on 27th March 1899: 'there is no doubt whatever that the offence was committed by Mr F. Senior, a clerk in the Drogheda Steam Packet Office'. However, they appreciated that a successful prosecution would act as a deterrent to potential future offenders: 'There is...quite sufficient evidence to go on with; and even though a conviction might not be obtained, still there would be a sufficient case made to satisfy the public that the matter had been energetically dealt with, and to deter others from committing like depredations.' The seriousness of the crime is evident in the constabulary's staunch support: 'In case the Board of Works should decide to prosecute, the constabulary will give every assistance in their power.'

On 30th May 1899 Mr F. Senior pleaded guilty to the offense and was fined 1/s and £1 costs. Sir Thomas Deane, Board of Works Inspector of Ancient Monuments, applauded their successful prosecution and suggested 'that all the names written or painted on the stones at New Grange and Dowth should be removed', an approach which was not acted upon. Deane also called upon a 'notice of successful prosecution to be fixed on site'. In August 1899 a file note cited the installation of three of the following deterrent notices to be placed on site:

Ancient Monument, New Grange. The public are hereby informed that at the Petty Sessions held at Slane on the 30th day of May 1899, on the prosecution of the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland, a person was convicted and fined, with costs, for injuring or defacing this monument.

By Order

H. Williams, Secretary, Board of Public Works, Custom House,
Dublin, 11 July 1899

Urquhart considers the importance of such graffiti today, particularly when associated with a historic event (1999). She cites examples where graffiti is valued in Scotland including that inscribed by Norsemen at Maes Howe and French prisoners in Edinburgh Castle in the early 19th century: 'These inscriptions are now regarded as part of the history of the monuments themselves; providing a social history of life and events at that time' (1999, p.

3). Other instances of conserved historic graffiti include the anti-Nazi inscription in Uranienborg, Oslo: 'Vær tro mot H7', translated as 'Be the true to H7', with H7 invoking Haakon VII, King of Norway, exiled during World War II. This piece of graffiti constitutes a nation affirming action, not just when inscribed, but also when preserved: a Perspex screen has been fixed over it, an intervention which serves to further elevate its value through proactive conservation (see Ofrim, 2008). Therefore, they have 'heritage' value: there is a permanence and irreversibility to such inscriptions, and the formal penmanship is visually attractive, in opposition to the form of modern graffiti, as seen at Ashby de la Zouch Castle, Leicestershire, UK (see image 4). The screen covering the Oslo graffiti has in itself has been become a template for contemporary spray-painted graffiti. Although historic graffiti would have been considered vandalism when originally inscribed, it is today considered of significance in Ashby de la Zouch where it signifies the Victorian interest taken in the monument after Sir Walter Scott used the castle as the setting for his 1819 novel *Ivanhoe*.

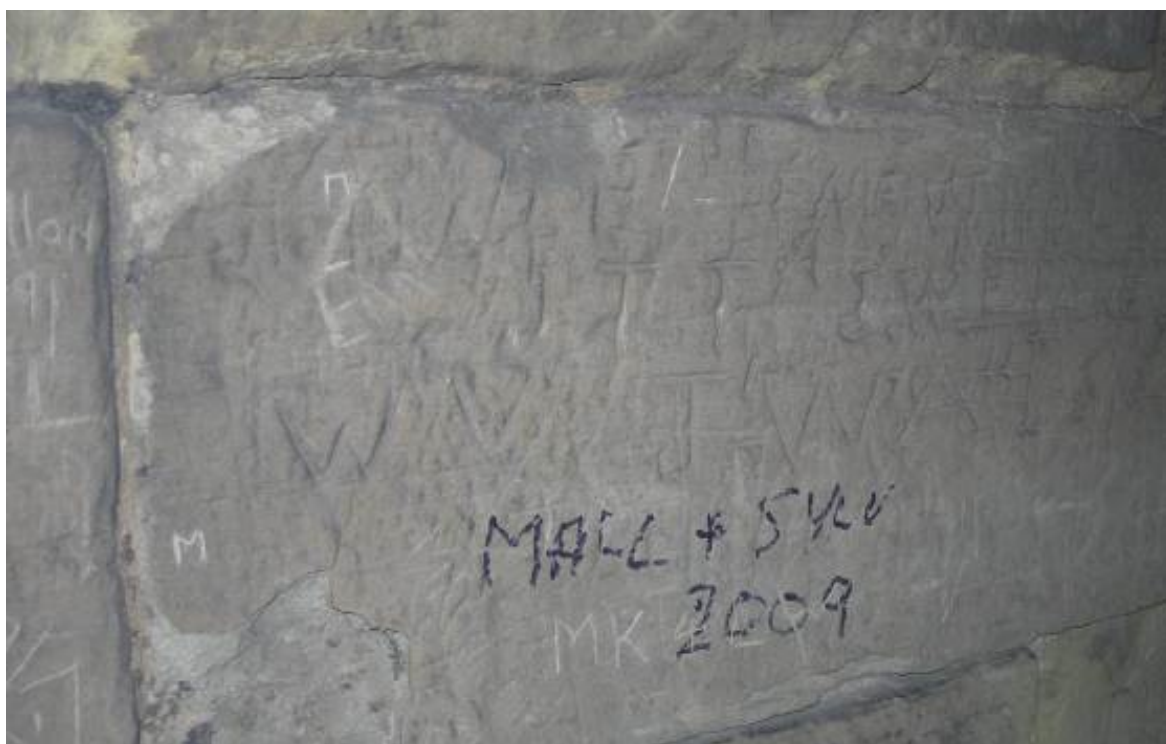


Image 4: Historic and contemporary graffiti, Ashby de la Zouch Castle, Leicestershire (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The above demonstrates that the 19th century 'vandalism' of Newgrange can be appreciated in its context as part of the behaviour of visitors. Heritage values are fluid, and one could maintain that Mr Senior's 'illegal act' pales into insignificance whilst assessing the impact of archaeological investigation and conjectural reconstruction on the monument in the 20th century, arguably what Gamboni (1997) would describe as state sanctioned vandalism: iconoclasm from above. The successful prosecution of Mr Senior resulted in the installation of a gate at the tomb entrance, with the key being held by an appointed caretaker. 20th century Irish nationalism has seen Newgrange stripped of its patina of age and irreversibly altered in order to accommodate visitor access.

2.4.5 Acceptance of Newgrange

In the immediate aftermath of its completion the conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange was not significantly critiqued in the literature. Harbison (1992) makes no reference to it, and O'Kelly himself appears oblivious to the value of a patina of age:

The present appearance of Newgrange comes as a surprise to those who have not seen it since its pre-excavation days when it was overgrown with trees and scrub, loose stones everywhere, the whole exuding an air of abandonment and decay; and visitors have said to us that it is now 'too modern looking'. This is to forget that Newgrange must have been 'modern looking' also to the Boyne valley people of about 2500 BCE when it was first built. (1982, p. 115)

The veracity of O'Kelly's quartz revetment wall has waited until after his death (in 1982) to be challenged in archaeological circles: Sweetman (1985) and Bradley (1998) have contested the original sequence of construction and collapse of original retaining material, which has ultimately resulted in the criticism of O'Kelly's interpretation. Cooney assesses its significance in the present, citing the value of the reconstructed monument in the heritage industry, and ultimately in Irish identity:

The striking character of the reconstruction means that it stands out in photographs, it has become iconic itself ... because of the way in which the quartz façade has become central to public perception of

the monument, it is now seen as an integral part of the monument.
(2006, p. 706)

Hirsch proposes that 'an intact articulated object ... may be presumed to alter its material composition, if at all, only partially and very slowly' (1982, p. 128). The composition and appearance of Newgrange changed radically and quickly, yet it remains 'iconic' and perceived as 'intact', with the UNESCO World Heritage designation underscoring its authenticity.

Newgrange could be argued to have veracity as much of the material used for the reconstruction of the façade was recovered through the scientific excavation. Spooner suggests that 'authenticity ... has to do not only with genuineness and the reliability of face value, but with the interpretation of genuineness and our desire for it' (1988, p. 199-200). The recovery of this fabric through scientific excavation and its dissemination and interpretation by a noteworthy archaeologist imbues the fabric with authenticity: its provenance is recognised. The 'desire' for the site and its reconstruction can be argued as a facet of postcolonialism, 'a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings' (Slemon, 1994, p. 16), and this will be explored further in the next chapter. Whilst recognising that ownership of Newgrange was contested in the 19th century the modern reconstruction conveys an act of repossession. Additionally, Cochrane explains how authenticity is imbued by the 'authority' of the site's tour guides which is 'reinforced by some of them having excavated with professors Michael O'Kelly and George Eogan' (2006, p. 273). All of these facets equate to Newgrange's legitimacy. It was noted earlier that the Harvard Archaeological Mission sampled pre-Norman archaeological sites from around the country, as these were regarded as being the product of native Irish endeavour. After the Norman invasion in 1169 CE, the east was widely regarded as being contaminated by foreign influence. It can be argued that the 20th century interventions into Newgrange were also influenced by its eastern location: the Céide Fields are regarded by Caulfield as 'totally authentic' as the site conforms to a western and rural cultural identity. Newgrange has thus been made 'totally authentic' through modern interventions, and the devices used to underpin this are explored below. Assmann defines 'myth' as 'foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins' (2011, p. 38). The

archaeological resource provides the tangible hook through which the myth can be attached, thereby giving it veracity.

2.4.6 'Amazing technology for its time'

Traynor's concern for the state of Newgrange in 1889 was cited earlier. He reported the 'very heavy rain which is now teaming through all the courses of the stonework'. Traynor may have exaggerated this claim in order to hasten the response of the Board of Works. However, the successful function of ancient technology has become a form of legitimisation, and this is closely linked to authenticity. Hirsch acknowledges that 'we simply do not rely on observational criteria when we judge of the identity of some matter which partially composes an object' (1982, p. 125). One could argue that the accompanying narrative constitutes a material construct which legitimises the nature of the object in question.

The theme of ancient technology, unchanging, but remaining fit for purpose, follows through traditional craft skills and archaeological construction practices. Tour guides assert that the chamber roof of Newgrange passage tomb has never leaked, and this is supported by reputed archaeologists including Harbison (1992) and the Office of Public Works (2007). As Cochrane noted earlier, some of the tour guides worked on the excavation, and therefore their intimate knowledge of the site underpins their narrative. Harbison asserts that 'recent excavations have shown up some clever and intricate techniques used in building the mound, particularly the stone packing above the chamber, and also the use of a channel on the upper part of the stones of the passage so that water filtering down from above could be drained off rather than dripping into the chamber – which remains remarkably dry' (1992, p. 265-6). One could therefore ask why O'Kelly felt it imperative to construct 'a pyramid of concrete drain-pipes' which 'proved effective as the chamber remains dry at all times'. The concealed modern intervention keeps the passage and chamber watertight, whilst fuelling accounts that this ancient roof 'never leaked'. Letters from the archives however dispute this: clearly the roof did leak and O'Kelly's heavily engineered intervention also testifies to this.

The interpretation and presentation of prehistoric sites and traditional/primitive skills is not seen as 'implying denigration' as Douglas (2002) was concerned, but rather a validation of the 'ancient Irish race'

genetically unchanged from 9000 years ago. Smith refers to this as 'ethnicism': 'a movement of resistance and restoration' (1986, p. 50). With no obvious ethnographic characteristics to provide definitive ethnic differences from the British, other forms of cultural expression and tradition become enunciated and exaggerated through nationalism. Douglas notes: 'I suspect that our professional delicacy in avoiding the term 'primitive' is the product of secret convictions of superiority' (2002, p. 93). Therefore, one could suggest that a further binary opposite could be added to Quirke's categories, cited earlier: 'enlightened' and 'primitive'.

It could be proposed that in the context of Ireland 'primitivism' has become entwined with 'tradition'. This terminology is found in common usage where Irish heritage is concerned. Hobsbawm and Ranger summarise that 'the object and characteristic of 'traditions', including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition' (1983, p. 2). Hobsbawm defines 'invented traditions' which 'normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past' (1992, p. 1).

Torgovnick traces the historiography of the term 'primitive':

When we say "primitive" today, we generally designate certain social formations within relatively isolated areas of Africa, Oceania, South America, and other areas of the world – social formations characterized perhaps most clearly by the absence of tools and technology widely available elsewhere. Such societies have been the traditional objects of ethnographic research and have thus been represented in the West according to available ethnographic categories. (1990, p. 19)

The American anthropologist, Franz Boas (1858-1942), 'led the way in establishing that race, culture and language were separate aspects of human existence. In so doing, he demolished the "Social Darwinist position that biological and cultural evolution were part of a single process".' (Green and Troup, 1999, p. 173) Torgovnick cites the legacy of both Boas and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) who 'in later decades ... claimed that primitive modes of thinking and cultures were not "simpler," just different from Western thinking and cultures. The antievolutionist, cultural relativity of these views

was available fairly early in the history of anthropology, and it competed with views of primitive societies as “early,” “simple,” and “developing” forms of human existence.’ (1990, p. 19) Many people actually defended these societies as being more authentic than industrialised and oppressive ones. This resulted in challenges to colonial and Western superiority, underpinning 20th century attitudes to de-colonisation. Independent Ireland also championed the positive connotations of its primitive culture, as will be demonstrated below.

In an attempt to prove a prehistoric maritime link between Ireland and the Basque Country, Gavin (2008) meets Cliadhbh Ó Gibne who claims to have been ‘brought up steeped in the tradition of currach making on the River Boyne’, adjacent to Newgrange. Ó Gibne notes of the prehistoric settlers: ‘These people carried their knowledge of craft building through generations for thousands of years’. Gavin continues: ‘This versatile craft is made of little more than hazel wood, leather hides and traditional skills that go back millennia. And it works perfectly: there’s nothing wrong with this. This is amazing technology for its time’. Despite being aesthetically unremarkable (there is no visible incised art on the corbels) the Office of Public Works has produced postcards illustrating the corbelled roof of Newgrange’s chamber. The packaging of the simple roof structure on such postcards compounds the ‘watertight’ narrative in a manner not dissimilar to Ó Gibne’s craft: both work ‘perfectly’, albeit with major modern structural interventions. Burch notes how ‘such merchandise bears all the hallmarks of the heritage industry’ (2005, p. 9) and Zuelow recalls that a visit to the Brú na Bóinne visitor centre ‘is as much like going to Disneyland as it is visiting an historic site’ (2009, p. 166). N.C. Johnson recognises the influence of nationalism on such sites, where ‘the heritage industry...has often been viewed as a mechanism for reinscribing nationalist narratives in the popular imagination’ (1999, p. 190). Kitzinger noted ‘the most powerful frame is perhaps the hardest to detect – because it comes across as a transparent description of reality’ (2007, p. 151). The simple postcard image of the chamber roof has an implicit meaning in the ‘nationalist narrative’.

Newgrange is included in *1001 Historic Sites you must see before you die* (Cavendish, 2008). Cavendish inadvertently rotates an image of the passage and chamber and the legendary corbelled roof becomes the floor: ‘The inner passage, with massive slabs lining the walls and interleaved flat stones making

up the floor' (2008, p. 218). The status of the corbelled roof is thus unintentionally dismissed: the roof/floor is visually simplistic in the context of a popular publication, but it is this very basic but sophisticated construction which is drawn upon in the academic dissemination and subsequent commodification of the asset: the 'primitivism' of the stone. It is only through reading O'Kelly's account of the excavation that one becomes aware that above the 'watertight' chamber roof lies 'a pyramid of concrete drain-pipes'.

Harvey (2005), in line with many other authors, overlooks the invasive conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange, but the Draft 'Brú na Bóinne Research World Heritage Site Research Framework' recognises: 'There is a serious deficit of information with regard to the post-excavation presentation of the monuments and the justification and recording of this aspect of the site's history' (Smyth, 2008, p. 43). As shown above, investigation of the conjectural reconstruction exposes the myths which are embellished in the literature, and perpetrated on site and in the merchandise.

2.4.7 Performance and Newgrange

Newgrange has become part of a 'performance' infusing the mound with intangible heritage: on the shortest day of the year, 21st December, many are drawn to Newgrange to be part of the winter solstice spectacle. The number of people allowed into the chamber to witness the rising sun illuminating the passage and chamber is limited, with most places gained through an annual draw. The event is widely reported in the media, and the potential weather conditions monitored for several days prior: a cloudy sky would prevent the event from occurring. Reporting for *RTÉ* in 2010, Dowling, referencing Ireland's severe economic downturn, noted the success of that year's event depended 'on the sun gods and whether they want to shine on us ... 21st December 2010 was not one of those days'. However, the solar alignment was only rediscovered during O'Kelly's excavations in 1963.

In 2003 the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage defined 'intangible cultural heritage' as:

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This

intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The Convention identified the manifestation of such heritage in 'oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship'. December 21st and Newgrange has become an annual ritual act, part of the mound's intangible heritage. But, it can be recognised that the custom of awaiting the sunrise has not been 'transmitted from generation to generation': this ritual is less than fifty years old, and those who go to Newgrange to celebrate the light entering the chamber are inventing ceremonies around it: the form of celebration is just as conjectural as the mound's physical reconstruction.

In 2011 Scotland hosted *The Gathering*, a yearlong event during which the diaspora were summoned back to celebrate their place of origin. In 2013 Ireland is hosting *The Gathering*, a 'year of welcomes', where 'Ireland will open its arms to friends and family from all over the world, inviting them home to locally organised gatherings in villages, towns and cities'. Irish actor Gabriel Byrne has cynically described it as a shakedown of American tourists during difficult economic times (Condit, 2012). The motif of *The Gathering* draws on the triple spiral petroglyphic art found on one of the orthostats in Newgrange's chamber, but the stylisation of the spirals as fireworks hones in the celebratory nature of *The Gathering*. This places Newgrange, and thus Ireland's archaeological past, at the centre of Irishness for the diaspora, and Cochrane recognises the power of Newgrange's petroglyphic art which is 'perceived to be 'authentic' (2006, p. 256).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett feels that 'the arts festival may have become the safe and appropriate place to be different, to be "ethnic". As such, these festivals have long been the repository of imagined communities and invented traditions' (1998, p. 242). The Gathering could also be deemed to be a

'performance', a festival whereby it is 'safe' to be Irish through a legitimisation of Irish identity both at home and abroad. Urry (1990) refers to the external assessment and enjoyment of culture as the 'tourist gaze'. However, it can be argued that when inverted this becomes a 'performance': manufactured 'intangible heritage'.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett considers ethnography and performance where the minority group 'perform themselves, whether at home to tourists or at world's fairs, homelands entertainments, or folklife festivals – when they become living signs of themselves' (1998, p. 18). The ritual nature of the winter solstice at Newgrange can be interpreted as underpinning the narrative of the 'natives' which embodies possession of the material remains. This will also be considered later through the mass protests held at the Hill of Tara during the M3 motorway construction, widely condemned by protestors as state sponsored destruction: vandalism 'from above'.

2.5 Knowth

The Knowth tomb complex is located near Newgrange, in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site. It is classed a National Monument, and dates to the Neolithic Era, 3300-2900 BCE, being contemporaneous with Newgrange. Professor George Eogan, University College Dublin, was the chief excavator of Knowth. He cited the pre-excavation measurements at: 9.9m in height, 80m in diameter (east-west) and 95m in diameter (north-south) (1986).

Detailed excavation at Knowth significantly reduced the ground level, revealing not only more of the principal mound, but seventeen other satellite tombs. The main tomb covers an area of 1.5 acres. Many of the Knowth tombs have kerbstones, 250 of which exhibit megalithic art. During excavation Eogan found the main section of the mound to be stratified with complex layers of loose stone, boulder clay and shale (1986). Unlike Newgrange, the presence of a tomb in the great mound of Knowth was only conjecture. In 1967 the western tomb was discovered; in 1968 the eastern tomb was uncovered, lying back to back with the western tomb. These are of a similar construction to the chamber and passage at Newgrange.

Eogan notes that Europe has nine hundred stones with recorded megalithic art located in fifty passage tombs or related sites. Four hundred of these are

found in Brú na Bóinne. Therefore, the Knowth cemetery contains 'more than a quarter of the known megalithic art from all other areas of Europe, including Ireland...and has about 45% of the total known megalithic art from all Irish passage tombs' (1986, p. 169). The principal mound at Knowth was subject to periods of human activity: during the Iron Age a ditch was dug inside the kerb; seven Early Christian souterrains (storage or refuge features) had been constructed; in the Medieval period a grange or settlement was built on top of the mound, the remains of which were uncovered during excavation. Later a modern ditch, a field boundary, bisected the mound (Eogan, 1986).

2.5.1 Conservation and Reconstruction

The mound of Knowth was long suspected to be a man-made feature, and thus was of interest to antiquarians. But, Eogan (1986) notes that this site was subject to very little archaeological investigation prior to 1960. In 1941 limited excavation revealed the presence of a kerb around the main mound. Eogan directed a research-led archaeological investigation from 1962 to 1998. This long time scale resulted in much of the mound material being removed.

Eogan's excavations revealed quartz on the bottom layer of Neolithic deposition. This quartz was interspaced with granite and mudstones. In contrast to O'Kelly's (1982) interpretation of the presence of quartz and water rolled stones at Newgrange, Eogan proposed the presence of the stone settings as either slippage from the mound sides, or a purposefully arranged feature (1986, p. 48). However, Eogan felt excavation had not yielded enough evidence to support the former theory, and stated: 'We cannot rule out the likelihood that this spread, or at least the lower part was a deliberately laid feature' (ibid).

The reconstruction of Knowth began during the main period of excavation. By 1988 reconstruction had been completed on six of the satellite tombs, while excavation continued at the main tumulus. The overall objective of the work in 1988 was to 'open the site to visitors on a phased basis over the next few years (Cumming, 1988). The main mound was the final element to be restored, with all works being completed and opened to the public in April 2002.



Image 5: A 'setting' outside the west tomb. Eogan believed these stones were not structural, but laid for ritual purposes, and therefore his conjectural reconstruction differs to that of O'Kelly. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The conservation and reconstruction work was carried out by Dúchas²¹ with the assistance of *European Union Structural Funding*. The Department of the Environment and Local Government stated: 'From the very start the approach taken was to conserve and present all excavated features, even if not of the same period' (Government of Ireland, 2002, p. 42). But, Cumming (1988) notes 'our main priority should be to present the Neolithic features of the site'.

The interventions at Newgrange included the construction of a concrete chamber and cowl, designed to carry the compressive load on the reinstated mound. Eogan adopted a slightly different approach at Knowth: instead of replacing all of the original mound material, a lightweight fill was introduced which included original cairn material and polystyrene blocks to a volume of 1144m³. As at Newgrange, a reinforced concrete portal, with walls and roof slab, was constructed around the east and west passages and chambers to take the major thrust of the imposed mound loads, and assist with the

²¹ Dúchas was a short-lived part of the Office of Public Works, and was abolished in 2003 during the M50 controversy. It is Gaelic for 'heritage'.

prevention of water penetrating from the overlying mound material. The mound surface was regraded with soil on the outer slopes, and the remains of the medieval grange marked out with gravel on the top of the mound. The souterrains remain apparent, adjacent and on top of the mound. The ditch (thought to be a modern field boundary) remains bisecting the mound, and this has been fixed with wooden and gravel steps to facilitate visitor access to the top of the mound.

Cumming noted in 1988: 'The approach to the presentation of Knowth will have to be different from that of Newgrange and Dowth where the passages and chambers are the main attractions for the visitor. Because of the dimensions (height restriction) it will not be feasible to bring the general visitor along the passages into the chambers'. However, it can also be argued that the high occurrence of megalithic art at Knowth led to a focus on visual presentation: a cantilever shelf was installed above the kerbstones around the full circumference of the mound. The aim of this intervention was to showcase the megalithic art whilst reducing the potential for weathering. Therefore, the mound had adopted an unfortunate mushroom-like appearance, adding to Zuelow's 'Disneyfication' claim (2009). Due to the lack of feasible access to the original tombs, a visitor chamber was constructed inside the mound body. Whilst the stated government agenda was to show all periods of occupation, the Neolithic interpretation dominates the site. Visitor access and display dictates the interpretation of Knowth. While Newgrange depends on the performance, its sister tomb Knowth is reliant on physical veracity as a side show to Newgrange. Overall, both sites moved from being an 'unintentional monument', which Riegl regarded as 'reveal[ing] the passage of a considerable period of time' to an 'intentional monument' – 'recall[ing] a specific moment or complex of moments from the past' and whose 'commemorative value has been determined by its makers' (1903). There is no doubt that originally the Brú na Bóinne tombs were conceived as intentional monuments: Newgrange, Knowth, and the third unexcavated tomb, Dowth, lie in close proximity to each other, on the highest part of three hills, overlooking the bend of the River Boyne. But the reconstruction of Newgrange and Knowth recalls specific genres: Newgrange is a product of the modernist architectural movement; Knowth reacts against this with a softer aesthetic.

The conjectural reconstruction of Knowth differs from Newgrange in one significant way; Eogan had interpreted the quartz layer as 'settings', and these were left on the original exposed ground level outside the east and west passage entrances. Eogan believed the settings served a ritual rather than a structural purpose, in line with the views of Waddell (1998) and Bradley (1998). The prolonged and intensive excavation of Knowth produced a differing set of conservation approaches to Newgrange. As a research-led operation, the issues of conservation and reconstruction were incorporated at an early stage for the satellite tombs. Nevertheless, the lack of an overall conservation strategy resulted in much destruction of the main mound through over-excavation.

2.5.2 Archaeological Outcomes

Archaeology has the potential to release the knowledge of sites which in turn can address intellectual needs. However, the most destructive form of archaeological investigation, excavation, had been employed at Newgrange and Knowth - sites of a similar age and typology. The intellectual gains were comparable, but the ultimate loss of authenticity was considerable. Over-excavation is considered a main threat to archaeological sites on the World Heritage List. Cleere states, with regard to the archaeological profession: 'It may be argued that some of them concentrate on excavation without heed for the future of the site in terms of understanding and conservation' (2002). He cites the twenty-year excavation of Buddhist monasteries in Sri Lanka: 'The gain in knowledge gradually reduced as more and more repetitive information emerged from the excavation' (ibid). Newgrange and Knowth revealed similar finds, yet the interpretation differed significantly between O'Kelly and Eogan.

Heffernan's assertion that 1960s Ireland had little time for medieval archaeology could be explained by the context of much university and government attention being granted to these two Neolithic sites. Despite the differing interpretations, they remain a celebrated part of Ireland's prehistory. The controversy at Wood Quay, whereby Viking remains were hastily excavated in order to prepare the site for Dublin City Council's new offices, could be played in juxtaposition to the attention Neolithic sites received in the same period. This would clearly play to an Irish nationalist narrative: 'native' sites being elevated and scientifically explored, whilst medieval sites were disregarded. Trigger states that 'the evidence produced by the excavations at

Wood Quay of Dublin as a Viking centre during the Dark Ages, although exciting much local public interest, accorded less well with a Celtocentric nationalist view of Irish history' (1996, p. 257). Ronayne describes the renaming of the Boyne Valley as 'Brú na Bóinne' an 'ideological operation conflating past and present temporalities in the production of a Neolithic celticity' (cited in Waddell, 2005, p. 2). This accords with Trigger's 'Celtocentric nationalist view', and is evident in the widespread adoption of Newgrange's triple spiral as a Celtic symbol.

However, the context of these different sites must be appreciated: Wood Quay was part of a development-led excavation – the site was uncovered while the ground was being prepared for the new corporation offices. Newgrange and Knowth were research-led enterprises – there was no development pressure, other than the development of visitor facilities, to hasten their excavation. Therefore, selection and neglect of archaeological heritage both resulted in destruction, but a lack of interest in medieval archaeology is more a product of public archaeology. Dr Harold G. Leask was Inspector of National Monuments from 1923 to 1949. Carey describes him as 'a defining voice on Irish medieval architecture' (2003, p. 24). Leask regularly penned reports on medieval buildings in the Commissioner of Public Works Annual Reports, such as his treatment of King John's Castle, Carlingford (1939), and published several books including *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses* (1941), and three volumes of *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings* (1955-60) which addressed the medieval period. In addition, Françoise Henry published *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions 800-1200 A.D.* in 1967, which demonstrates that it was not just Leask investigating the medieval period. Therefore, even in the early stages of the development of the Irish Free State, there was interest in medieval archaeology and architecture. The denial of this interest sustains Irish nationalism, and the Carrickmines Castle controversy would appear to conform with that agenda.

2.6 Carrickmines Castle, Co. Dublin

Carrickmines Castle was an Anglo-Norman site, dating from the 13th century, and located in south county Dublin. It was a fortified site, featuring two enclosures, a revetted fosse and the remains of houses, workshops, kilns and wells. The site extended over eight acres (Cullen, 2002). Up until the year 2000 the only apparent surface remains were that of a small gatehouse.

In 2000 the site was subject to development-led excavation. A major section of the planned M50 from Dublin was intended to run through this site. But, in a manner similar to Wood Quay, pre-development excavation revealed the extent of the site. €6 million was spent on two years of excavation from 2000-2002, and over 100 000 artefacts were unearthed (Cullen, 2003). Many of the structures uncovered were of stone and upstanding. Despite the good state of preservation of the site, the government and National Roads Authority indicated the planned road would remain on course, thus bisecting and destroying much of the site. Cullen (site archaeologist for Carrickmines Castle) described the fate of the Carrickmines as 'one of those Celtic Tiger moments, when the drive for progress crashes headlong into the demands of the past' (2002).

Amid public outrage at the destruction, the government considered that a major roundabout planned on the site could be 'raised and tilted to preserve some archaeological features' (Cullen, 2002). They also proposed to retain 50 metres of fosse (bank) beneath the roundabout, and preserve two medieval structures beside the motorway. But, apart from the literal islandisation and isolation of the features, by way of a roundabout, the context of the site would be destroyed. The upstanding remains would become a decorative roadside feature: a convenient piece of public art, but without the need to commission an artist. The government also vowed to reconstruct the fosse in another location, and build an archaeological heritage park, an act which would have removed the authenticity of its context. Cullen questioned: 'Why would anyone want to visit an interpretative centre here, when most of the sights are either somewhere else, underground, or right next to a busy motorway?' (2002). Comparably, in Northamptonshire, UK, the Registered Battlefield of Naseby was bisected by the A14 link road in the early 1990s. The Royalists and Parliamentarians fought there in 1645, and English Heritage confirmed that 'Although a new road separates the main battlefield from the site of the baggage train, the course of events is still readily understandable on the ground' (1995). However, threats to sites can result in them becoming 'heritage': the road controversy brought the value of the battle site to the fore, with English Heritage adding it to their Battlefield Register after the road's construction. Indeed, Hamilton recounts the 'battle' to save the site, and by way of enticing the public to visit ironically notes 'Naseby is easily reached from the new A14 M1-A1 link road at Rothwell exit' (1994).

The relocation of the M50 was considered, but was countered by the fact that adjacent locations had not been excavated, and could therefore reveal even more subsurface archaeology. The government reiterated that the new proposal would save 60% of the site, while the protestors stated 80% would be destroyed (Cullen, 2002). Activists set up a camp at the site, and the protest was followed closely by the media. O'Brien (2003) noted that by reducing the size of the interchange and roundabout, much of the site would be saved. But, it was revealed the interchange was located in an opportunistic area, adjacent to the undeveloped lands owned by Jackson Way – a major development company associated with rezoning controversies with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (Clinton, 2004). Opponents to the road scheme took the matter to the Supreme Court, where it was established that Carrickmines Castle is a National Monument. However, in 2004 the government introduced an amendment to the National Monuments Act, which in summary, gave the Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government power to demolish National Monuments. The change in legislation resulted in the government being able to perform acts of legal and state sanctioned vandalism. But, if one were to reflect on Ireland's apparent lack of interest in medieval archaeology, then the destruction of Carrickmines Castle, by the government, would accord with Irish nationalism. However, the vitriolic public reaction against the destruction attests against this.

Ronayne (2008) outlined the level of corruption which underpinned the development of the land around Carrickmines Castle, and government tribunals exposed this at ministerial level (The Mahon Tribunal - The Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments). She notes the archaeologist who undertook the initial site assessment 'failed to stress the site's high significance. This assessment was described by a European Commission report as 'flawed', with significant shortcomings on 'some points of vital importance' (2008, p. 117). Ronayne recalls with some irony that 'this company was later awarded the salvage excavations contract' (ibid).

In 2006 the *Irish Independent* reported that the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) had:

blocked the re-sale of lands at Carrickmines after a lengthy investigation into suspected breaches of the Proceeds of Crime Act. The court heard that the total value of the 107 acres in

Carrickmines, Dublin – if they had continued to be zoned agricultural – would have been around €7.9m. But after rezoning to industrial, 17 acres alone were immediately valued at €61m. The land was owned by Jackson Way properties Ltd...CAB chief, Det Chief Supt Felix McKenna, said in an affidavit to the court that it was his belief that the rezoning decision on December 16, 1997, of Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council was procured by corrupt payment to county councillors. (O'Loughlin, 2006)

In July 2013 a corruption trial began in Dublin Circuit Criminal Court, where businessman Jim Kennedy stands accused of paying bribes to councillors 'in return for their votes to rezone land' in Carrickmines (RTÉ, 2013). One could consider that the Celtic Tiger economic boom created an Irish conceit. Trigger's assessment of such medieval sites as 'exciting much local public interest' but 'according less well with a Celtocentric nationalist view of Irish history' could be deemed to be the rationale behind such governmental attitudes and actions. Of the controversy, O'Keeffe opined that 'the public has found little at Carrickmines at which to "remember" its past or in which to invest any part of its identity' (2005, p. 148), a statement which plays on the anti-medieval bias apparently at play. If it is correct to assume that medieval sites are neglected in favour of those prehistoric sites which better showcase a 'native' Irish identity, then the destruction of Carrickmines Castle to facilitate the construction of the M50 motorway during the Celtic Tiger period could be deemed to accord with such a hypothesis. However, such contentions become flawed when sites which are heralded as the very symbol of Irish identity are threatened with a comparable fate, namely the Hill of Tara and the M3 motorway. More mundane pressures seem to come into play and trump nationalist concerns, including profit incentives, plain economics and good old fashioned corruption.

2.7 M3 and the Hill of Tara

The Hill of Tara is composed of a number of prehistoric sites, the earliest of which is the Mound of the Hostages, a passage tomb dating to 1800 BCE. The hill is enclosed by an Iron Age hill fort, and within this are two linked ringforts: Cormac's House and the Royal Seat (Harbison, 1992). The Lia Fáil (Stone of Destiny) is sited within Cormac's House, and Harbison notes that 'kings were crowned on the stone, and tradition says that it roared when the king was

accepted' (1992, p. 270). The site also incorporates various other earthworks. In comparison to the great mounds of Newgrange and Knowth, the Hill of Tara is not particularly remarkable. It primarily gained its significance in the 19th century.

Trigger cites the earth comprising the Hill of Tara as 'play[ing] important roles as foci of national sentiment' (1996: 249). In 1843 Daniel O'Connell, the 'Liberator', held a 'Monster Meeting': by reminding the Irish of their ancient associations with the island, they could be inspired to seek freedom from the British. The number of people purported to have attended this rally varies widely from 100,000 to 1.5 million. The use of 'The Tara Brooch' in furthering Irish 19th century nationalism was cited in Chapter One, but it should be noted that the brooch has no definitive associations with the Hill of Tara: the National Museum of Ireland notes 'its provenance was attributed to Tara by a dealer in order to increase its value' (2013), and the reproduction of the Brooch is assessed by Camille (1992).

The audio-visual presentation, in the nearby heritage centre, recalls that Tara was the 'mythical royal capital of Ireland – people go there now to assert their Irish identity'. Hughes and West admit that 'on first glance, Tara today doesn't look much ... but audio-visuals at the visitor centre deconstruct just what those mounds represent, as if peeling away layers from this time-hallowed ridge' (2009, p. 247). Underpinning the lack of immediate visual stimulus at the site, Hughes and West choose instead to illustrate their narrative with an image of reconstructed Newgrange. As Cooney stated earlier, 'it stands out in photographs'.

2.7.1 Tara and Irish identity

The enduring cultural significance of the Hill of Tara can be appreciated from an image which forms the rear cover of an Irish government publication on the site (Bhreathnach and Newman, 1995). Tara, albeit located near the east coast of Ireland, has not just become the centre of Ireland, but a central point on the Earth's surface: the spherical nature of the image, with a discernible lower atmosphere, is indicative of a celestial object. Harbison also underlines Tara's central role in Irish prehistory where 'all old Irish roads led to Tara' (1992, p. 270).

The latter myth and sphere-like image are products of Irish nationalism. Kumar describes the cultural nation as 'an objective fact. It is not an 'invented' but a 'primordial' entity, existing since time immemorial' (2003, p. 24). The Bhreathnach and Newman image is filled with the names of other archaeological and historical sites, all flagging the Irish nation. Drogheda is included, no doubt for its association with Cromwell, a notorious figure in Irish history, although revisionist historians such as Reilly (2000) and McElligott (1994) challenge his unsavoury reputation. The Irish landscape, with recognisable reference points, wraps around the eastern part of the sphere, omitting reference to Britain, the empty space to the east-south-east comparable to the English considering Ireland as constituting 'empty space' during the 17th century English 'Plantations'. The Atlantic shoreline is emphasised to the west, populated with Irish archaeological and historic sites. These sites, even those with dissonant heritage, swirl around the epicentre of Tara, invoking a primordial being.

2.7.2 'Save' Tara

The levels of cultural significance which have been layered upon Tara in the 19th century during the development of Irish nationalism are widely recognised. But, in a controversy not unlike that of Carrickmines, the landscape setting of the Hill of Tara was threatened by the construction of the M3 motorway. The pro-M3 campaign defended the proposed motorway on the grounds that it did not go 'through' the Hill of Tara, but the impact the motorway would have on the landscape setting of the monument was considered sacrilegious.

Archaeological excavation is, by its very nature, the most destructive means by which to acquire data, but is also a proactive method of acquiring information as part of development-led excavations. Excavations around Tara did identify new sites, which were destroyed through excavation. Ronayne (2008) considered the excavation methodology to be as inadequate as that at Carrickmines. Comparably, the current approach to the Hill of Tara on the M3 is flagged with eponymous brown heritage signs: see Image 6 located on the motorway slip road. Tara is linked with the spiral of Brú na Bóinne, located on the 'Boyne Drive', and the two attractions are neatly packaged together on one road sign.



Image 6: M3 exit, Junction 6. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

2.7.3 Protest

The Sixth World Archaeological Congress was hosted by Ireland in 2008. Countries have to bid for the privilege and Smith acknowledges that the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) had only received bids from Ireland and Colombia: 'Both were excellent, and both had strong organising teams and excellent institutional support. Ireland had an edge because of clear and viable budget. The fact that Ireland was a safe destination was also an important factor in people's thinking at that time' (2013). Ireland's desire to host the Congress was no doubt fuelled by the country's good economic prospects whilst congruently linking its heritage, on an international stage, back to a prehistoric past.

Conference proceedings were interspersed with mid-congress tours, one of which was to 'Tara and Navan – Royal Landscapes'. The timing of the Congress coincided with the height of protest against the construction of the M3 motorway. Irish archaeologist and author, Conor Newman, conducted the tour, which was followed by the protestors. On reaching the Mound of the Hostages, several protestors sat on the prehistoric mound and conducted a silent demonstration.



Image 7: The Mound of the Hostages, World Archaeological mid-congress tour, 2008. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

One Australian archaeologist reacted with horror to their behaviour, telling them angrily that she was of both Irish and Aboriginal decent, and they were disrespecting her ancestors by sitting on the grave (Image 7). Value is subjective: had the Australian visitor realised the dearth of human remains inside the tomb after an excavation of 1955, she may have been less vocal in her protest: the excavation was as similarly invasive as that described above at Newgrange and Knowth. Graham and Howard suggest 'material heritage sites may comprise no more than empty shells of dubious authenticity but derive their importance from the ideas and values that are projected on or through them' (2008, p. 4). Tara is an intrinsic part of Irish nationalism, and the acerbic protests are symptomatic of the value placed upon 'empty shells', but the value systems differed from another culture's reverence for human remains.

The nature of performance was discussed earlier with consideration for Newgrange and Knowth. Performance can be construed as a form of possession - an 'ethnic' or 'native' ritual which through its very ethereal nature

defies criticism. The protest around the Hill of Tara could be considered a performance. However, this was not just for Irish people to partake in: several of the protestors had British accents, and some members of the WAC tour joined the protestors on the Mound of the Hostages.

2.7.4 The destruction of landscape

McCarthy places the value accorded to heritage in contemporary contexts: 'Rather than being a physical object, heritage is a historically contingent cultural process, and is an instrument of cultural power that involves the mobilisation of the past for present circumstances' (2005, p. 123). The vitriolic campaign against the construction of the M3 motorway needs to be assessed against what has been done to these sites as part of place-making, and also myth-making. Perceptions of destruction are subjective, and the discernment of value needs assessing on a case by case basis. The Carrickmines controversy resulted in the government having power to undertake state sanctioned iconoclasm. In light of the medieval nature of the remains at Carrickmines, O'Keeffe's earlier comment would appear to comply with Irish nationalism, as an archaeological site did not form part of Irish identity. However, the Hill of Tara debate transcended layers of value and meaning. Carrickmines may have exposed corruption in the heart of the Irish planning and development system, but this only caught widespread public attention when the debate moved to the Hill of Tara. However, the character of the Irish landscape has been incrementally eroded since the 1930s through a lack of development control and implementation of planning policy. This will be discussed in the next chapter, but in the context of Tara such inconsistencies only come to the fore when an iconic site is threatened. Despite one mode of Irishness being concentrated on rurality and the west, there is an inconsistency in the attention and value placed on archaeological sites which can be argued to be no more than empty shells. However, such ensembles become theme parks, whereby their physical manifestation is contained and becomes part of the heritage industry. Outside the defined boundaries of the iconic sites, the wider landscape is left to economic vicissitudes perpetrated by individuals taking advantage of loose planning controls and corruption.

In an impassioned plea to save the landscape around the Hill of Tara one protestor posted the following on the World Archaeological Congress's mailing list: 'So here I am an indigenous Irish person asking for help and for you to

live up to the ethics you set your organisation' (Bleach, 2008). It was noted earlier in this chapter that Victorian anthropologists searched for the 'native' Irish, and this protestor attempts to underpin her plea by stressing her ethnic Irish identity, an identity which is being threatened by interference with an intrinsic component of that identity. Whilst archaeology can so far be deemed to have been influenced by nationalism, advances in DNA testing are resulting in the emergence of an 'ethnic community' with disturbing racial connotations. Bleach's claim to be 'an indigenous Irish person' is now being supported by positivist scientific research.

2.8 The 'Ethnographic Present'

Price noted that 'many of the descriptions available on Primitive Societies are written in a tense known as the "ethnographic present" a device that abstracts cultural expression from the flow of historical time and hence collapses individuals and whole generations into a composite figure alleged to represent his fellows past and present' (1991, p. 57). While Price discredits such views in relation to assessments of ethnic/primitive art in non-literate societies, in the Irish context this description would reinforce the 'unbroken link' between the Neolithic past and the 'natives' in the present, and McCarthy recognises the inherent nature of such values as 'a historically contingent cultural process' (2005, p. 123).

Price further considers Franz Boas's 1927 observations on 'stressing the conservatism of Primitive Art and the heavy weight of tradition on its makers' (ibid). The espousal of this in terms of reinforcing a native tradition is apparent in the popularity of 'traditional' crafts (both production and sale) in Ireland, and the support this receives at a national level. The *Crafts Council of Ireland* is funded by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and has been in receipt of government funds since 1976. Their logo makes a direct link to Ireland's prehistoric past by employing the famed spiral, which further emphasises the persistence of Irish nationalism. However, Ireland's Occidentalism creates tension when claims of ethnicity are voiced, and this will be seen later where positivist methodologies are increasingly being exploited to reinforce ethnicity in the media and literature.

Whilst it could be argued that nationalism has underpinned the accentuation of a native Irish identity, external factors must also be considered. It is acknowledged that 'Britishness' or 'Englishness' acts as a foil to Irish identity

(see Kiberd, 1996), the juxtaposition reinforcing both countries' separate identities. However, there were additional external stimuli during the formative years of the Irish state in the early 20th century.

Marquardt identifies the influences that the French art historian Françoise Henry was subject to in early 20th century Paris 'where pre-industrialized life was being rediscovered as 'natural'. Growing out of attitudes born by colonisation in the 19th century, but now assimilated into literary and artistic movements, people from places like Paris sought 'simpler', even 'primitive', lifestyles to observe and copy' (2012, p. 7). Henry went on to undertake an archaeological excavation on Inishkea North, off the coast of County Mayo, from 1937-1950, and looked at extant remains on Inishkea South and islands off the coast of Achill. Marquardt suggests that Henry 'felt...an attraction to the inhabitants of regional areas in Ireland' (ibid). The Commissioners for Public Works provided grants for such excavations, and reported 'the scheme as a whole proved satisfactory as a medium for the relief of unemployment, yielding at the same time valuable archaeological and historic finds' (1939, p. 23). These employment schemes remain in Ireland under 'FÁS: the Irish National Training and Employment Authority', and it provided most of the unqualified staff who excavated Ardfert Cathedral, noted in Chapter One.

Henry was principally concerned with Early Christian incised art, and much of Ireland's petroglyphic art was only uncovered during archaeological excavation from the 1960s. Additional external influences are found in the Harvard Archaeology Mission, as discussed earlier. This in itself sought to reaffirm a native Irish identity. Therefore, the Irish cultural nation was not just an internal invention, but reinforced externally.

2.9 Return to Positivism: 'Blood of the Irish'

In 2008, *RTÉ* (the Irish state broadcasting service) aired a two-part documentary called *The Blood of the Irish*. The subtitle was: *Who are the Irish and where do they come from?* The programme's presenter, Dairmuid Gavin, intoned in the opening scenes: 'Many of us [Irish] are descended from the first settlers who made Ireland home ... and for me, the most extraordinary discovery is that their blood still flows in our veins'. Gavin works with the widely acknowledged fact that the first settlers arrived in Ireland circa 7000 BCE. Using the *Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* (*Book of Invasions*, dating to the

Middle Ages) as a starting reference, the narrative considers the reference within that manuscript to the Milesian invaders coming to Ireland, from Spain (see Bhreathnach and Cunningham (2007)). The presenter travels to Connemara on the west coast of Ireland, where a Spanish influence is locally considered to be as a result of the floundering of the Spanish Armada off that coast. However, Highley traces the manner in which the Gaelic hierarchy ingratiated themselves to the Spanish after the Flight of the Earls. During the Plantation period, the heads of Gaelic clans fled the country, some of whom sought refuge in Catholic Spain. In order to further their plight, Highley notes how they claimed they were:

'direct descendants of King Gathelo who was married to Scotá, daughter of the Pharaoh King of Egypt. This Gathelo fled from the plagues with which God punished Egypt through the agency of Moses; he embarked with his people and his wife Scotá and did not land until he reached Galicia [northwest Spain] and, having conquered Biscaya, Asturias and Galicia, he proclaimed himself king of the territory. One of his descendants, a king called Milesius, sent his sons with a fleet of sixty ships, which sailed from the port of La Coruna, to conquer and populate Ireland.' (2008, p. 152)

Therefore, legend has it that the west of Ireland has links with Catholic Spain, thus affirming the genetic and religious ties between the two countries. But Highley regards this as a construct, a narrative which would have better endeared the Gaelic earls to the Spaniards.

In *The Blood of the Irish* Gavin appears to select a local at random: Páraic (Tanti) MacDonncha. When questioned by Gavin, Tanti reveals his conviction of his own Spanish roots, given his dark skin and eyes. Gavin requests a sample of saliva from Tanti, in order to have the provenance of his DNA determined. The programme proceeds to outline how the first people may have arrived in Ireland, calling on many noted professors and academic Irish institutions to support his theory. The supposition throughout the documentary is that the first settlers came by boat from the Basque region of Spain, and not over a land bridge from Britain prior to the post Ice Age sea level rise as previously hypothesised. It is notable that throughout the programme, DNA samples are seemingly taken at random from locals in the west of Ireland, and not from the east.

In its closing scenes, a delighted Tanti is advised by Dr Giapiero Cavalleri of *EthnoAncestry* that he carries a genetic marker which they refer to as 'Ancient Irish' (Y chromosome marker: M222) which is 'indigenous' to Ireland. This genetic marker is also prevalent in the Basque region, which Dr Cavalleri believes supports the theory that the first settlers in Ireland came from there. Dr Cavalleri assures Tanti that he is 'a pure Gael'. Gavin, the presenter, puts down his pint of Guinness and hands Tanti some photographs of locals from the town of Bermeo in the Basque country. 'Have a look at these photographs. Do you think these lads in the photographs would have the sense of place here [Connemara]? I went to the Basque country and found people that may be related to you'. Gushing, Tanti replies: 'Sure, they're nearly exactly the same as we are here. They look like Irish fellas. I mean, that particular photograph could be taken here, or any of the local hostelrys from Galway to Clifden. Or anywhere along the West coast.'

The documentary was produced by *RTÉ Factual*, and broadcast during a primetime television slot, and went on to win *Best Documentary Series* in the 2010 Irish Film and TV Awards. It makes ample use of scientific genetic analysis and Mesolithic artefacts in order to support the narrative. The emphasis is predominantly on the west coast of Ireland, with scenes of Ireland's multiculturalism being shot in front of the General Post Office, O'Connell Street, Dublin, which implies that Irish ethnic identity is less pure.

When questioned by the presenter on the importance of collecting DNA, Dr Cavalleri and Dr James Wilson from *EthnoAncestry* explain that with so much migration to Ireland, it is important to capture DNA profiles now. The implication is clearly that with so many other ethnic groups coming to Ireland, pure Irish DNA will become diluted and polluted. While much is made of Tanti's Basque roots, Oppenheimer (2006) considers two principal origins of the first settlers into the British Isles: the French-Spanish Ice Age Refuge and the Ukrainian and Moldavian Refuges. Therefore, it would not be surprising that Tanti had DNA which could be traced to the north of Spain. However, this fact is used extensively in the documentary in order to stress his origins, and to associate the initial colonisation of west of Ireland, through Atlantic sea routes, and not through Britain.

2.9.1 The Basque illusion

In order to assess *EthnoAncestry's* dissemination of DNA, I submitted a sample to *EthnoAncestry* for assessment. Their findings are presented below (Image 8). The text noted my mitochondrial DNA (i.e. for the maternal side) belonged to Group H, and is commonly associated with the Basque people. It further noted 'this group was carried to the British Isles both by the indigenous inhabitants and later arrivals' and 'is very common in the Basque people of Spain, the most frequent group [found] over all of Europe'. My DNA sample was posted from Britain, with no reference to my Irish origins. This, again, reinforces Oppenheimer's findings that the origin for such DNA is often from the Basque region. Yet, *EthnoAncestry* exploit this by using a very narrow methodology and presentation of findings on primetime television in order to stress the endurance of a native Irish people on the west coast.

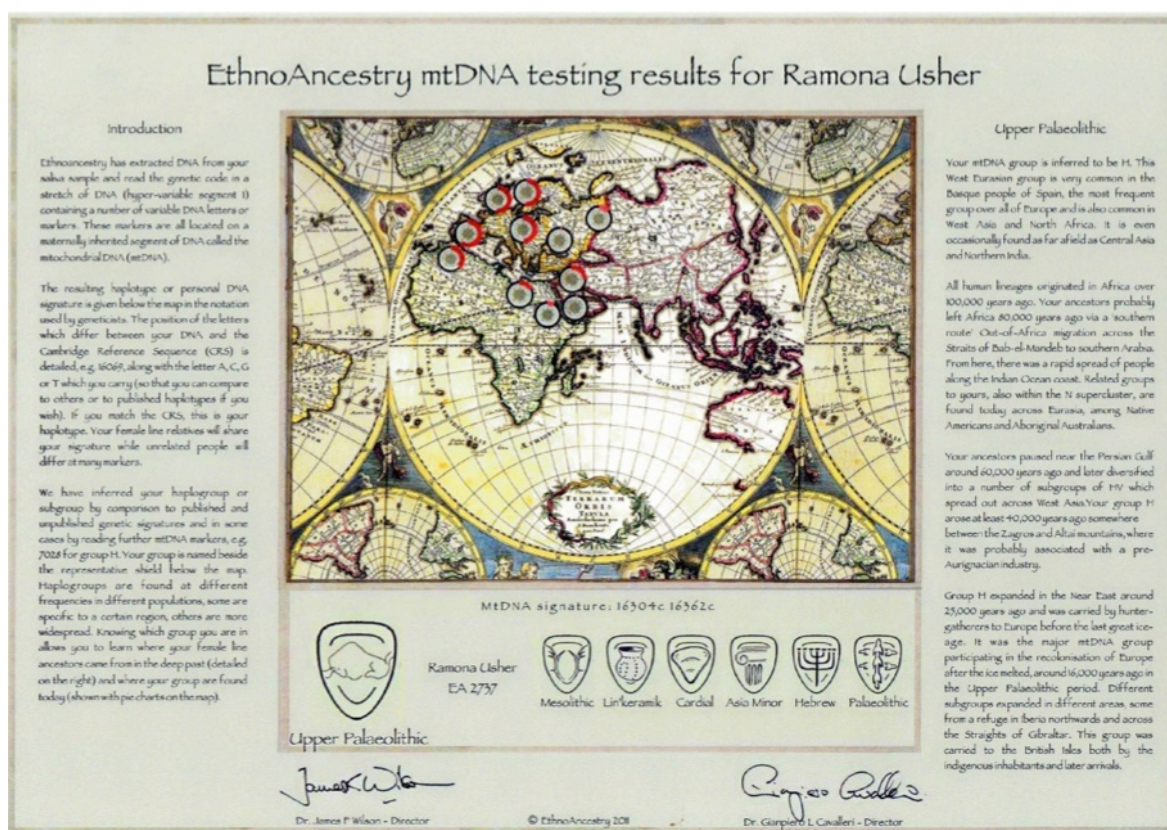


Image 8: Ramona Usher's mitochondrial DNA results. *EthnoAncestry* (2011).

Mallory is dismissive of claims of ethnicity made by such abstractions: 'Distinguishing a Lithuanian, Pole or Chinese from a 'real' Irishman would be as idle and meaningless as distinguishing someone whose genes had come from an early Mesolithic colonist from northern Britain, a Neolithic farmer from Scotland' and provides 'a word of warning for those who seek some form of Irish genetic purity: it doesn't exist' (2013, p. 240). Lloyd also advises that

superficial analysis of colonisation can result in 'either bad abstraction or a positive catalog of singularities' (2000, p. 379), and equally, nationalism can produce the same generalisations and underdeterminations. This is not just confined to human genetics: in 2013 researchers at the University of Nottingham found that snails in the French Pyrenees and Ireland shared the same genetic profile, one that is not commonly found in Britain. They deduced that the snails were carried to Ireland in boats 8 000 years ago directly from France (Melia, 2013). However, *RTÉ News* declared dramatically that 'Snails may provide clue to origins of Irish people' (2013). This again demonstrates the oversimplification in the reception of such research: instead of stating that 'some' Irish people may have originated from France, it was generalised to the widespread 'origins of Irish people'.

2.9.2 Ireland's ethnic nationalism

Yack claims that 'ethnic identities, like political identities, are 'part of a contingent and ever-changing legacy of shared memories and communal identification'. Culture, rather than ethnicity per se, is the fundamental ground of identity' (cited in Kumar, 2003, p. 26). This is perhaps more relevant in non-literate societies where the transmission of heritage over time results in the change and evolution of ideas and traditions. However, in the Irish context, the unbroken line, the persistence of an original static culture, is desired. Far from progressing to a state of what Kearney (2007) describes as 'post-nationalism', the rise in public archaeology, and notably easier access to genetic profiling, is resulting in a resurgence of 'ethnic' nationalism in Ireland. Smith's (1986) recollection of Ireland's Catholic identity was cited earlier. Yet, this Catholic identity has been challenged since the 1990s with the emergence of widespread physical and sexual abuse committed by the Catholic Church. This, combined with Ireland's growing multicultural society in a globalised world has diminished the importance of Catholicism as a mode of 'Irishness'.

Wiwjorra, identifying the 19th century roots of German archaeology, recalled how these were:

related to the development of nationalistic and even racist ideology: on the one hand, national-romantic Vaterländische Altertumskunde (patriotic antiquarianism) has developed out of German philology by extending its focus from written sources to antiquities, whereas

prehistoric anthropology on the other hand was influenced by race ideology. (1996, p. 164)

It can be argued then that attempts by the Irish to establish themselves as an 'ethnic' race in the present will not just bolster nationalism and further differentiate them from the British, but it could also have more sinister outcomes with the country's multi-cultural society as the state is in the grip of a grim economic recession. Greece is also experiencing a severe economic crisis, not helped by the imposition of an austerity package instigated by a German chancellor, and this has seen the rise of the Neo-Nazi styled 'Golden Dawn' party. Perhaps Ireland will not go to such extremes: the Irish Republican party, Sinn Féin, followed closely developments in South Africa in the 1990's. Identifying the Irish in Northern Ireland as an oppressed ethnic minority, Maillot identifies 'the links between Sinn Féin and the ANC [African National Congress] have been successfully explored by republicans to highlight the parallels between the two struggles' (2012, p. 131). She further notes that 'A mural portraying Nelson Mandela appeared on the streets of West Belfast as early as the mid-1980s' (ibid). Sinn Féin recognised itself in the same fight for independence, and by association with a black, African, political minority, identified the Irish as a truly 'ethnic' race. This is mirrored by Sir Roger Casement, whose 'rebellious association as an Irish nationalist between his struggle on behalf of the Congolese and his voluntary enlistment on behalf of Egyptian and anti-colonial resistance' associated the native Irish in the early 20th century with other ethnic and minority groups (Said, 2001, p. 178). Such approaches can be summarized by Kohl and Fawcett who contend that 'some archaeological tales are not innocuous, but dangerous in that they fan the passions of ethnic pride and fuel the conflicts that today pit peoples against each other' (1995, p. 6). However, Hobsbawm did not see the influx of minorities in Ireland as problematic; conversely he recalled that the Irish traditionally 'welcomed lesser nationalities which did not challenge the greater' especially when appearing in the limelight of the 'English stage' (1990, p. 36).

The emphasis on the western point of entry for the first settlers creates a conundrum for the appropriation of Neolithic sites located in the east of the country. Lucy recalls one of the earliest tenets of archaeology 'the identification of 'peoples' (now often termed 'ethnic groups') in the past. Such identification has traditionally been made through the study of distributions of material culture, with the geographical spread of characteristic artefacts being

seen as marking the territory of a particular group' (2005, p. 86). Quinn reiterates Ruaidhrí de Valera's Céide Fields premise, outlined earlier, however, he adds: 'It has been claimed that the masterbuilders of the Boyne Valley complexes in the east of the island were the design descendants of those pioneering farmers in north-west Mayo' (2005, p. 141). However, such an assertion is not found in the literature, and the square form of houses found at the Céide Fields complex compared to the rounded nature of the Brú na Boinne tombs could be argued against such a relationship. Herity and Eogan (1977), stressing an outdated 'invasion hypothesis' theory (see Waddell, 1978) indicted the movements of people around Ireland in prehistory. The fact that the Céide Fields pre-dates Newgrange by 500 years accommodates suggestions that the tomb builders arrived in the west of the country and gradually moved to the east, thereby making sites such as Newgrange 'more Irish' as they are perceived to have been constructed by the first settlers. The association of a western Neolithic site with an eastern one provides Quinn with the means to legitimate the 'Irishness' of the megalithic tombs found at Brú na Boinne, located in the east. Quinn's assertion serves to 'mark the territory', but expands it east from its traditional western conclave.

Chapter One outlined the theoretical position of Irish archaeology in the 20th century, most notably the perseverance of cultural-historical approaches and the influence of nationalism on the elevation of particular sites which facilitate the narrative of a native people, distinct from the Normans/English/British. However, Irish nationalism was not the only influence on this: the sophistication of some of Ireland's megalithic structures led many to believe that they could not be the work of the native Irish. Eggers stated: 'Since the beginning of the 19th century two questions have stood at the forefront of the aims of prehistoric studies: the question of the age of prehistoric finds, in other words, chronology; and to which people they can be ascribed, that is the ethnic interpretation' (cited in Collis, 1996, p. 175). Whilst the credit for Newgrange is today not considered to be anything other than the product of native engineering, the consolidation of English colonialism can be read in the earlier interpretations of the site.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that archaeology is celebrated in popular culture as it is a vehicle which holds veracity through its scientific and

academic basis, ultimately providing a means with which Irish cultural and genetic differences with the Normans/English/British can be declared and celebrated. The works undertaken to Newgrange and Knowth in the 20th century were part of an Irish affirmation process. The resultant quashing of authenticity in order to create a spectacle and performance can be read in terms of Ireland's position in the Modernist movement. Located in the east of the country, sites such as the Hill of Tara were reclaimed by the Irish: Daniel O'Connell's 'Monster meetings' created an Irish cultural identity in the east of the country and during the mid to late 20th century two of the Brú na Bóinne tombs were 'recovered' through conjectural reconstruction. However, the Céide Fields, located in the west and by inference, free from outside influence, is 'totally authentic', affirming a western and rural identity.

The assessment of genetic profiling has considered this as a reaction to globalisation and Ireland's multi-cultural society, in addition to the apparent veracity that such research can bring to Irish 'ethnic' identity. There is a perceptible shift from Irish nationalism to an 'ethnic community' in the 21st century, accommodated by positivist techniques such as genetic profiling which has disturbing consequences given the 1930s Irish accommodation of such research, and the inherent 'purity of race' agenda. The next chapter will evaluate the supposed continuation of Irish culture through an examination of the treatment of vernacular buildings in the 20th century, and parallels will be drawn with the persistent cultural-historic approaches identified in archaeology.

CHAPTER THREE

LITTLE HOUSES IN THE WEST

3.1 Introduction

The importance of the west of Ireland in locating and asserting Irishness was considered in relation to the archaeological resource in the previous chapter, in particular, the evolution from Irish nationalism to an 'ethnic community', thus giving the concept of 'Irishness' more veracity. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how vernacular architecture has been appropriated as the 'true' architecture of the Irish. This chapter examines how elements of Irish identity were constructed through vernacular architecture in the 19th and 20th centuries, and how this is facilitated at national governmental level. However, the participation of individuals will also be explored through subtractive and additive alterations to traditional historic buildings. The contemporary responses to vernacular architecture will be assessed, and the physical threat to their fabric exposed.

3.2 19th century narratives

Mr and Mrs Hall's *Hand-books for Ireland* were mid-19th century tourist guides written with a romantic and picturesque approach to the landscape. The extent to which these guides are a colonial construct has been examined by O'Connor and Cronin (1993) whereby the Halls' depictions of the landscape were generally devoid of a human populace and the land considered 'empty space'. Slater recalls that 'by ideologically detaching the peasantry from the landscape, the Halls were replicating the silences of the 17th century cartographers as they excluded the cabins of the native Irish from their otherwise accurate maps' (2007, p. 11). Slater also notes that when the Irish are acknowledged 'their cottage dwellings [are] mostly described as hovels' which, when identified as located in landscape described as 'picturesque by a landscape connoisseur ... were at risk of eviction as the landlord cleared these unsightly objects from the potential picturesque landscape' (ibid). Slater is therefore proposing that the Irish natives were threatened by the aesthetic whim of their landlords.

The historic distinction between the 'native Catholic Irish' and 'Protestant Ascendancy' was spawned after the introduction of the Penal Laws in the 17th century. Somerset Fry distinguishes between the two class systems whereby:

The Protestants, nearly all English or Scots but including a few Irish families, comprised no more than a quarter of a population ... yet owned nearly all of the land, ran most of the businesses, filled the government and judicial posts, and provided both officers and men for the army and the navy. Their manners, customs and speech were English. Below them, unconnected with them by any ties of history, culture, or common interest, speaking the Irish of their forefathers and not the English of their conquerors, were the country's Catholics, a depressed, subjugated people, without rights, who lived more poorly than any other peasantry in Europe and felt for their masters little but hatred. (1988, p. 168)

This rather narrow and nationalistic quotation demonstrates how the differences between the Irish and English/British are often found in the literature, and was and is used to justify ardent Irish political nationalism after the establishment of the Free State in 1922. These class differences were illustrated in the *Weekly Freeman* in 1886 with the 'Two Christmas Hearths': the 'Big House' of the landlord sits on the hill, brightly lit, while the Irish tenant farmer anchors the foreground. Standing in front of his hovel, his wife and children huddled by his feet, he looks longingly or perhaps resentfully, at the Big House. The contrast between the vernacular building and the landlord's 'Big House' is profound. Dooley explains the adoption of the latter term where it 'traditionally referred to 'big houses' by the wider community (but very seldom it seems, by landlords themselves) ... Even the houses of the lesser gentry were big in comparison to those of the largest Irish tenant farmers' (2001, p. 9). However, these representations are polarised between the rich and poor, and Foster notes the lack of middle ground where 'there may be a case for seeing the Irish middle class of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as subjects marginalized by a new official history' (2001, p. xvii).

Kennedy (1993) considers how the romantic appeal of the Irish peasant house was drawn upon in the 18th and 19th century pictorial tradition by Paul Henry, John Henry Campbell and Thomas Sautell Roberts, amongst others. For the latter two, the thatched cottage frames the picturesque depiction of the Irish

landscape, whereas Henry's 'A Connemara Landscape' has rows of thatched cottages sitting beneath a brooding sky with the dark shape of a mountain in the backdrop.

In the second half of the 19th century the thatched house gained political iconography whereby the use of newspaper sketches and the advent of photography recorded the forced evictions of tenants from their thatched houses, especially after the Irish Famine (1845-52): Photography composes a narrative of the past which is sometimes at variance with the discontinuous narrative of political and cultural history. Hickey recalls of photographic collections such as the Lawrence Collection 'their documentary evidence of thirty years of peaceful progress, democratically and constitutionally, does not accord with a version of history which stresses violence' (1973, p. 8). However, Hickey's views can be challenged with a discerning inspection of the Lawrence Collection which contains several images of evictions, such as those found below.

Other 19th and early 20th century photographic collections recorded evictions, most notably the Wynne Collection (mainly taken in County Mayo) and that of John Millington Synge (1871-1909). Thompson argues 'The arrival in force of photography in travel writing both challenged the limits of the genre and at the same time reinforced with visual documentary authority the range of stereotypes that had long been travel writings' signature' (1999, p. 113). These colonial stereotypes concerned late 19th and early 20th century photography of inhabitants of the West of Ireland which Thompson describes as 'reminiscent of early nature or zoological photography. It is as if [the photographer] were describing the difficulty of photographing animals' (1999, p. 119). Carew (2012) attests to the 'ape-like' character in which the native Irish were depicted in 19th century magazines such as *Punch*, and the previous chapter demonstrated how the 1930s Harvard Mission attempted to reverse this stereotype. The paternalistic and derogatory approach of the English/British is therefore easily recognizable in such travel writing and visual recording.

What is most significant about such images is the type of building which is portrayed (in the example from the *Illustrated London News*) and recorded in the Lawrence Collection: the buildings are thatched and the walls are

composed of random rubble stonework, with a whitewashed finish. The structures are modest in size, and the outbuildings, adjacent to the house, are indicative of the rural location and farming practice. This building typology has immediate resonance with the Famine, by association with the eviction narrative.

3.3 Vernacular buildings and the Famine narrative

Evans juxtaposed the formality of English Neo-classical architecture against traditional Irish building forms. He proposed that 'native' Irish houses, dating from the 18th century, were more often found in the north and west of the country 'where English influence was weaker' and is also quick to point out the traditional thatch roofing material (1977, p. 16). Such buildings have gained much currency as representing a native building tradition, especially when geographically remote from the east of the country.

The thatched house has gained ideological associations with the Famine, mainly through the narrative of the British landlord against the destitute starving Irish. The Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, Northern Ireland, presents a story of migration from Ulster to America in the 19th century, using the Presbyterian Mellon family as the storyline. The Folk Park contains vernacular buildings, which through neglect, threat or donation, have been removed from their original context and rebuilt at the park. In assessing the interpretations by two groups of students (one group from Northern Ireland, and one from the Irish Republic) of the museum narrative, Kelly noted: 'As expected, many of the southern visitor group were surprised at the lack of reference to the famine, which formed a large element of their migration-education and heritage, whilst the northern group did not reference this issue as much.' (2004, p. 8). In the Republic of Ireland there are attractions which aim to explore the Famine, both directly and indirectly, as will be seen at Turlough and Strokestown. However, unlike the Ulster American Folk Park, and indeed other attractions in Britain including St Fagan's, Wales and the Weald and Downland Museum in England, there are no local vernacular buildings upon which to construct the museum message. The Strokestown Famine Museum is based in the outbuildings of a neo-classical country house, and the juxtaposition of this will be assessed further below.

3.3.1 The National Museum's 'Irish Folklife Collection'

The collections held by National Museum of Ireland are divided into four categories: Archaeology & History; Natural History; Decorative Arts and History, and Country Life. The first three are located in Dublin at Kildare Street, Merrion Street and Collins Barracks, respectively. The 'National Museum of Ireland – Country Life' opened in 2001 in Turlough Park, County Mayo, in the west of Ireland. It claims to be 'home to the National Museum's Irish Folklife Collection and houses the national collection of objects representing Irish traditional life.'

The collections are housed and interpreted in a 'purpose-built stone-clad building' (Image 9), designed by the Architectural Services of the Office of Public Works (Doyle, et al., 2004, p. 5). This lies adjacent to Turlough Park House, a Victorian country house and 'home of the Fitzgerald family to whom the estate was granted under the Cromwellian land settlements of the mid-17th century' (2004, p. 6). The guidebook introduces this as part of the attraction: 'The original drawing room and library of the 'Big House' are open to the public and furnished as they may have looked in 1900' (2004, p. 5). The guidebook describes the interior and remarks upon the Irish provenance of materials, including 'local grey limestone', 'Connemara marble fireplace', a piano 'built in Cork' and tables made in Kerry around 1900. The use of 'native' building materials is significant in the nation forming narrative, and this argument will come to the fore with consideration for the restoration of the General Post Office and Custom House in the next chapter. The narrative around the 'Big House' concludes with 'The library, a place of study, was also where the Fitzgerald's tenants would pay their quarterly rents' (2004, p. 8).



Image 9: National Museum of Ireland – Country Life, Turlough, County Mayo: modern wing. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The collection of Irish 'folklife' was initiated in the late 1920s by the new Irish State which was 'supporting efforts to record and collect the folklore of Ireland', and in 1935 the Irish Folklore Commission was founded. The Director of the National Museum, Adolf Mahr, opened the first folklife exhibition in 1937 (Doyle, et al., 2004, p. 9), and his support of the Harvard Mission was discussed in Chapter Two. It was officially opened by President Éamon de Valera. Crooke (2000) traces the development of the National Museum of Ireland from the 19th century to the present, but her work just pre-dates the creation of the Country Life division.

The galleries at Turlough contain artefacts relating to traditional skills including those associated with farming, fishing, trades, community life and domestic activities. The exhibitions rely on traditional materials, techniques and folklore to convey the message. The similarities between agricultural tools from the medieval period and 20th century are remarked upon in the exhibitions. Although the interpretation does not go so far as to make explicit links between prehistory and the present, as found at the Céide Fields in the previous chapter, the longevity of craft skills is apparent: 'Some ancient fishing techniques such as spearing survived in local tradition' (Doyle, et al.,

2004, p. 33). The prevalence of unchanging Irish traditions, surviving from the distant past, in spite of colonisation, was recognised in Chapter Two. The theme of 'ethnology' does arise in the Museum's own definition of the 'Folklife' and 'Folklore':

Folklife deals with the popular traditional way of life, the objects made in the informal oral tradition and their associated skills. These objects and skills are part of an oral folk tradition.

Folklore deals with the intangible aspects of life: stories, myths, traditional beliefs and practices, often outside the realm of formal religion. Today folklife and folklore are increasingly studied as part of ethnology, which treats of life in the present as well as the past. (Doyle, et al. 2004, p. 11)

In the Museum, 'folklife' and 'folklore' usurp the term 'social history': the latter does not appear in the narrative. Welskopp describes the merits of social history where, in the 20th century,

It brought up the question of social inequality in the study of the past, and introduced the workers and the underprivileged masses to the historical record. It explained the process of industrialisation, and of social change and conflict in a broad sense. It pioneered the integration of economic, social and political analysis into the history of entire societies. (2003, p. 217)

Therefore, the discipline of social history is linked to 'industrialisation'. While Evans and Davies (1962) are accused of using archaeology to legitimise Partition (see Chapter One), the Republic of Ireland can use the industry of the north to disassociate itself from the British. Salazar recognises that 'Ulster's economic prosperity seemed to be closely interconnected with the underdevelopment of the other provinces. The former depended on the free access to British markets, the latter was rooted in an exploitative system of land tenure held by the British state and also in the destructive competition of British industrial products' (1998, p. 373). Salazar acknowledges the attraction of 19th century industrial Belfast to poorer Catholic migrants from other parts of Ireland. Today, such historic economic distinctions reinforce the use of 'folklore' in the Republic, as opposed to 'social history', and this was seen in Chapter Two with UCD's 'School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore & Linguistics'.

3.3.2 Locating Irishness

The location of the National Museum of Country Life at Turlough Park must be assessed: Turlough House was purchased by Mayo County Council in 1991 from the Butler family, descendants of the Fitzgeralds. Mayo is a marginal economic county, and the Council, 'recognising the need for a major tourist attraction in the county' (2001, p. 7), developed the project in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and the Department of The Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht²² and The Islands, and the nomenclature of the latter will be explored later. The new gallery is built into the formal stepped gardens of Turlough House, a development which can be argued to adversely affect the formal landscape setting of the original house.

In 2001 the new building won the *Irish Architecture Award*, with the judges describing it as 'A bold and dramatic modern building which enhances the existing house and site and creates a wonderful public facility'. Opinions on the style of the building can be subjective, but the vivid separation of the new element which houses the Country Life collection from the 'Big House' is obvious. The contrast between the two facilitates the separation of the native Irish from the landlords (see Image 10). The only interaction comes when the visitor can enter the house and view where the tenants used to pay their rent to the landlord. The museum chronology begins with the aftermath of the Famine: 'Between 1850 and 1950 the people who lived in the countryside struggled with the devastation brought by the Great Famine and its aftermath' (Doyle, et al., 2004, p. 12). By drawing the visitors' attention to the exchange of money, from tenant to landlord, the class and monetary differences between the two are polarized.

²² Clusters of Irish speaking areas, principally found in the north-west, west, south-west and south-east of the country.



**Image 10: Turlough House (right) and the modern wing (left).
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The physical separation of the two buildings serves to emphasise this, and in addition there is a distinct contrast in style and form: one being Victorian Gothic, the other smooth faced and low-lying. The location of this division of the museum, in the west of Ireland, amplifies the museum message. The placement of the new building with the old can also be considered to play on such mediums of representation: the new block is not neutral, but loaded with meaning.

3.3.3 Strokestown Park, County Roscommon

Turlough Park is not the only visitor attraction where such contrast is found. Strokestown Park is an 18th century Palladian mansion, located in County Roscommon in the west of Ireland. The Mahon family acquired the lands in the same manner as the Fitzgeralds did at Turlough. Strokestown Park was opened to the public as a privately run visitor attraction in 1987.



**Image 11: Strokestown House, County Roscommon
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The stable block houses 'The Irish National Famine Museum'. However, the museum is a private enterprise, and the use of 'National' in the title serves to give a false association with, and thereby authority from, the main 'National Museums'. The use of hierarchy between the house and ancillary buildings again serves to enhance the division between the destitute Irish and the landlords. The main house is Palladian in style, while the stable block is finished with exposed random rubble stone and is of vernacular proportions. In a similar vein to the Museum of Country Life, the natives are physically and ideologically separated from the upper classes through the physical placement of different messages in contrasting buildings: the Anglo-Irish and Ascendancy class remain associated with formal architecture, the 'Big House', while the Irish are allotted to either new construction or vernacular buildings.



Image 12: The Irish National Famine Museum, adjacent to Strokestown House (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

In terms of Strokestown Park, placing a Famine Museum in a building constructed and lived in by the upper classes would not be widely favoured, and the building typologies are convenient ways in which to place the different attractions whereby one message informs the other. However, the construction of the Museum of Country Life in the immediate setting of Turlough House was a deliberate act of physically vying the native Irish against the upper classes in order to strengthen the underlying message. Turlough House and Strokestown Park and their associated museums are physical constructs whereby their built fabric is manipulated in order to reinforce a Natives/Landlord/Famine narrative. There are other ensembles of buildings which, as unintentional monuments, exploit accounts of the Famine, and one example, The Deserted Village, County Mayo, is considered further below.

3.3.4 Deserted Village, County Mayo

The 'Deserted Village' is located on the slopes of Sleivemore, Achill Island, County Mayo. The 1838 Ordnance Survey recorded 137 houses, but the remains of over eighty houses now survive. The interpretation board at the site provides an account of the archaeology of the area, followed by the history of the village and its decline, particularly after the Famine.

A quote from University College Dublin's Folklife collection is described in the interpretative material as 'poignant': 'To the old people, the land of Sleivemore was like a blessed place: they had their houses and living, and their graveyard and everything else there, and everything was taken off them'. The latter refers to the acquisition of much of Achill Island by the protestant Achill Mission Estate after the Famine. Ownership was eventually passed to the Land Commission, which is noted in the interpretation as 'redistributing the holdings amongst the people' after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. The estates of the Ascendancy class were subdivided and parcelled out after Independence, resulting in the land ownership patterns apparent today.

The 'unbroken line' tradition of the Deserted Village is reinforced by the assurance that the displaced inhabitants moved to the nearby settlement of Dooagh, where their descendants 'live today'. The use of the word 'today' is akin to Caulfield's assertion in Chapter Two that the descendants of the Céide Fields farmers can be found in North Mayo 'today'. The houses that have survived in the Deserted Village are roofless, with bare stone walls. Originally this type of building would have had a lime washed exterior and most likely a thatched roof. Image 13 illustrates one such building in the Deserted Village. The graveyard, which remains in use, can be seen to the centre-right. In the top centre of the photograph, a cluster of white buildings can be seen, and in the top right, a large scattering of modern houses at Keel.



**Image 13: The Deserted Village, County Mayo.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The modern developments are a combination of houses for residents and holiday makers. The cluster of white buildings in the top centre can be seen in more detail below. Whilst one is implored to 'Rent an Irish Cottage' (see Image 14) these buildings are essentially a late 20th century tourist development. References to the vernacular are highlighted by the white walls, raised gable ends (traditionally used to hold down thatch at the gable end) and chimney stacks. The dramatic setting beneath Sleivemore and their close proximity to the Deserted Village gives the development currency by association. The skeletons of the buildings in the Village serve to create a place-myth around which the narrative of the Famine is constructed.



**Image 14: 'Rent an Irish Cottage', Achill Island, County Mayo.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

3.3.4.1 Unintentional monuments

With consideration for buildings, Forty feels that 'references to 'character' almost always raise issues of 'meaning', and this must be taken into account in analysis of the term. In particular it has been through the word 'character' that the successive debates over what has sometimes been called the 'crisis of representation' have been conducted' (2000, p. 120). The character of small domestic vernacular buildings is generally interpreted as having stone wholly or partly in their composition. Walls of random rubble buildings were lime washed or lime rendered: this created a protective insulating layer. There are various ways in which to apply this skin: in Scotland the practice is called 'lime harling', and, as the name insinuates, the lime is thrown or hurled against the walls in lumps. Lime finishes require regular maintenance, with lime washes applied annually. Internally, walls were also finished with a lime plaster.

The buildings of the Deserted Village do not have a physical beneficial new use: their diminutive sizes do not make them feasible for restoration and re-use: their value is in their ability to convey a Famine narrative. Indeed, the houses were never intended to be inhabited throughout the year: they were used for transhumance, which was the seasonal movement of stock to

summer pastures, in this case, Sleivemore mountain. The on-site interpretation, however, refers to the buildings as houses, not referencing their intended seasonal use. This omission serves to enhance the perception of families huddled in these small abodes on the side of a mountain, in a device not unlike that used in the 'Two Christmas Hearths' discussed earlier.

When the houses were abandoned after the Famine, the lime render and plaster were no longer maintained. This, over time, fell away, exposing the stone. Patches of internal plaster are apparent in some buildings: the internal, relatively unexposed location meant that some of this has survived (see Image 15).



Image 15: Exposed stone walls, the Deserted Village, County Mayo.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The exposed stone has come to be recognised in Ireland as the continuation of a vernacular tradition, and this will be explored below. These buildings have a patina of age: they have been weathered over time and what can be seen in the present is not how they would have appeared originally or even a century ago. Hobsbawm's 'Invented tradition' was noted in Chapter Two, where it is 'taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (1992, p. 1). This was recognised in that

chapter in relation to the positioning of a 'suitable' native Irish past in the pre-Norman period. Abandoned vernacular houses assist in defining Irishness in opposition to the English/British, and this is greatly assisted by the scattered vernacular dwellings around the countryside. These are Riegl's unintentional monuments to the native Irish and the Famine. The character of these buildings represents a particular narrative which underpins Irish nationalism.

3.4 Post-independence longing

In 1922 the Irish Free State was established, and the conflict and architectural destruction contiguous with Irish independence will be considered in Chapter Four. In the 1930s the government was intent upon the construction of new houses in rural areas, mainly for agricultural workers. These were often of cheap modern materials such as concrete. Those in the rural areas continued to build wherever they could, also utilising modern materials. Commenting on the Town and Regional Planning Bill in 1938, and problems associated with unauthorised house construction, one minister stated:

I think the whole country is a beauty spot and that we are adding to the amenities of the beauty spots by putting these lovely, cheerful, bright homes in them and by taking our rustic peasantry, which is the nation's pride, out of the conditions in which foreign governmental control placed them – unhygienic, antediluvian and appalling conditions, conditions which would not be suitable for pigs.
(Madden, 1938)

The type of houses to which Madden is referring is not made clear, but it can be deduced that he is referring to the poorest form of vernacular dwelling: hovels. There is also an explicit association of the peasantry with rurality. Despite the apparent poor quality of the vernacular housing stock, associations with Irish identity and the west continued. O'Leary considers this in relation to nationalism where 'The Irish political class has taught us to see ourselves as a rural people. Yes, I'm thinking of De Valera's cosy homesteads and comely maidens dancing at the crossroads' (2008). Eámon De Valera was President of Ireland from 1959-73, but first came to prominence through his participation in the 1916 Easter Rising, a rebellion which will be explored in the following chapter. O'Leary uses the often misquoted part of De Valera's 1943 St Patrick's Day speech 'The Ireland that we dreamed of'. De Valera described:

A land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age.

The speech provides ample fodder for assessments of nationalism, and O'Leary's misquotation can be read in the present as a reaction against De Valera's nostalgic reminiscences. But De Valera's cogitations must also be read in the contemporary context of global affairs: Ireland was neutral during the World War II, and referred to the conflict as the 'Emergency'. Its neutrality had a positive impact on the built fabric of the country, as compared to Britain, and this will come to the fore in Chapter Five. While De Valera does not specifically refer to 'comely maidens dancing at the crossroads', Wulff recognises 'dancing Irishness has been a political statement for a long time, since the cultural nationalist revival, and it still is' (2005, p. 59). Wulff also traces the origin of the 'comely maidens' misquotation where:

The mistake has occurred partly because the version of the speech which was printed in the *Irish Press* (1943) diverges from what de Valera actually said ... [he] said 'happy maidens' on air, but it was printed as 'comley maidens'. Nowhere does 'dancing at the crossroads' appear. (2008, p.12)

Therefore, De Valera's speech is often misquoted and placed within a nationalistic framework, and his authority (having been involved in the 1916 Easter Rising) makes the extracted quotes more powerful. The power of such misquotations will come to the fore in Chapter Five in relation to the architectural destruction of Georgian Dublin.

3.4.1 The Vernacular as National Monuments

Whilst Madden (ibid) expressed concern for the abodes of the peasantry, only nine years previously a select few such houses were being considered for special protected status. The first form of legislative protection of the built heritage in Ireland involved ancient monuments. Such monuments had initially been protected under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, 1892. Ireland was then politically under British rule, with legislation dictated by Westminster. The introduction of the Act was compelled by the The Irish Church Act, 1869, which 'disestablished the Church of Ireland by withdrawing

state recognition and support [and] placed under the protection of the Board of Works any church or ecclesiastical ruin deemed to be of historical or antiquarian interest and in need of conservation, but no longer used for public worship' (Lohan, 1994). Therefore, medieval churches were disbanded, but the Act would serve to protect their fabric. Thurley cites the reaction to this in London, where 'What was galling to these campaigners was that in 1892 the Irish received an Ancient Monuments Act that extended protection beyond prehistoric monuments to 'any structure, erection of historic or architectural interest or any remains thereof', making it possible to add medieval monuments to the schedule' (2013, p 56-7).

One of the earliest measures enacted by the newly formed Irish government was the National Monuments Act of 1930, reflecting the importance of archaeology in Irish nationalism, as considered in Chapter Two. While introducing the Bill, Parliamentary Secretary Bourke, stated: 'I move that the Bill is described as the 'National Monuments Bill' rather than the more usual 'Ancient Monuments Bill' is not without some significance...apart from the preservation of the national language I think there is nothing more likely to conduce to the development of a strong and healthy national spirit in the country than an informed and intelligent interest in these memorials of the past' (1929). This can also be considered a conscious move from the legislative protection previously afforded by the 1892 Act, introduced by the English, to protection defined by the infant Irish state: the political nation is implicit in the title of the 1930 Act: 'National' Monuments.

The Bill was widely welcomed by the Dáil. However, one member noted:

I do not think it goes as far as I want it to go...we have houses occupied at one time by other notable people who have contributed largely to the building up of this State in one way or another. I suggest that the Minister would, at a later period, take that matter into consideration and make provision in the Bill which would insure to the Irish people the preservation and maintenance of these historic buildings. (Anthony, 1929)

As a consequence, amongst the ancient sites and monuments on the national register, including the Hill of Tara, Newgrange and Knowth, Patrick Pearse's Cottage, County Galway was also designated a National Monument. Pearse

was the leader of the failed 1916 Easter Rising. He had spent much time in the Cottage prior to the rebellion, and with its whitewashed walls and thatched roof, it was reminiscent of the style of traditional architecture prevalent in Ireland in the 19th and early 20th century.

Harbison describes Pearse's Cottage as 'A three-roomed cottage which the patriot Padraig Pearse (1879-1916) used as his summer residence. There are bedrooms on either side of the living room which has a fireplace, cooking and eating utensils as well as a spinning wheel. The west bedroom served as a study. The items on display are replicas of those used in Pearse's time' (1992, p. 162-163). The Office of Public Works featured the Cottage in their annual review, *Oibre*, in 1966 as part of the 50th anniversary commemorations of the 1916 Rising. They also featured Michael O'Dwyer's house, Co. Wicklow. O'Dwyer was involved in the 1798 Rebellion.

Pearse's house was burned down during the Civil War in 1921, and O'Dwyer's house rebuilt (complete with a thatched roof) between 1946-48 by the 1798 Wicklow Memorial Association. Neither house contains original internal features or artefacts, but both have been fitted out in keeping with the relevant period of occupation. Despite the loss of original historic fabric and contents, both houses are protected as National Monuments, therefore redolent of the 'empty shells' of archaeological sites considered in Chapter Two. They are located in designated Gaeltacht areas, and so *Oibre* reported on both in Gaelic. The publication points out that O'Dwyer's house was 'formally opened by the President of Ireland on 10th August 1948' and in the case of Pearse's Cottage many visitors come from the United States (1966, p. 14).

Therefore, the selection and neglect of vernacular buildings are influenced by cultural and political nationalism: they are elevated when associated with prominent figures in Ireland's independence narrative, but also act as dissonant heritage through association with the Famine, as seen earlier. Both values centre on the archetypical dwelling: stone and white washed walls, finished with a thatched roof. There is also a palpable nostalgia associated with such buildings, a sense of loss in the face of Ireland's postcolonial identity. Mullane states: 'Unconnectedness springs from the interpenetration of two very different sets of cultural norms. Traditional local references are now ignored, most likely forgotten in our post-colonial collective amnesia. In

the context of our difficult history, this phenomenon is as regrettable as it is predictable' (2000, p. 76). The loss of 'traditional local references' should be regarded in the context of the government's drive for more houses during the 20th century. In 1973 the Minister for Local Government felt that 'Proposals for residential development in rural areas—one house or a small group—should be granted if at all possible' (Tully, 1973), thereby creating a connection between the native Irish and rural living.

The subdivision of land after the formation of the Free State was noted earlier. In comparison, 'just 189,000 families own two-thirds of the Britain's 60 million acres, of which nearly three-quarters is owned by the top 40,000 ... Meanwhile, Britain's 16.8 million homeowners accounted for barely 4 per cent of the land' (Cahill, 2001). Therefore, piecemeal development of land has been stifled. In Ireland, this was encouraged historically at national level by the Land Commission (Somerset Fry, 1988). Hourihan observes that 'Irish identity is still not fully an urban one, despite the fact that a majority of the population lives in cities and towns' (2000, p. 91). Notwithstanding this, there is now a high proportion of one-off dwellings in the countryside.

3.5 Contemporary responses

It was noted earlier in this chapter that the one particular element of the vernacular which receives most attention today is thatched roofs. In 2005 the Department for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) commissioned a *Report on the Present and Future Protection of Thatched Structures in Ireland* (Mullane and Oram, 2005). This report estimated that there were approximately 1300 – 1500 thatched roofs recorded in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), with 734 on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). This compares to over 26000 listed buildings in England with some form of thatched roof, and 23 in Scotland with 'thatch' or 'thatched' in the list description. Whilst it is recognised that England historically and currently has had a higher population than Ireland, and consequently has more buildings, it is noteworthy that *English Heritage* has produced just one guidance note on thatched roofs. In Ireland there several publications and surveys published by the *Heritage Council*, DAHG and Department for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG).

The interest in thatch is not new: the first survey of thatched buildings was undertaken in the 1940s by the Irish Folklore Commission which aimed to 'collect information on traditional roofing, thatching and materials' (Mullane and Oram, 2005). It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that the number of surveys increased significantly (ibid). FÁS, the Irish National Training and Employment Authority commenced a thatching traineeship in the early 1990s, and this continues into the present. FÁS's emphasis on craft skills can be paralleled with the same authority's training programme on archaeological sites, cited in Chapter Two. There is clearly a governmental agenda in terms of associating craft skills with 'native' building traditions, and inducing nationalism through archaeological training. The consequent dearth of craft skills relating to other aspects of conservation not deemed to accord with Irishness will be exposed in Chapter Five. Therefore, despite the relatively low number of thatched buildings, there remains a significantly high interest at governmental level in this roofing material. But, this was not always the case.

In 1940 one government minister, Mr Madden, recognised the lack of skills and the cost of maintaining thatched roofs: 'It is utterly impossible to get a man to do a decent permanent lasting job on a roof to-day, a fact which we had evidence and proof for the last quarter of a century and years long before that. It is impossible to get a thatcher, and even the patched up old job that you will get from a man to-day who is attempting to do it costs the rural people something like £1 a day.' In more recent times the government has recognised the conservation deficit in relation to thatch, and runs a grant scheme. In 2004 the DEHLG (a.) printed an explanatory Memorandum on 'Grants for the Renewal or repair of Thatch Roofs of Houses'. There are several conditions for eligibility, such as that the house in question must be a normal place of residence (not a holiday home); the work must be carried out 'in accordance with good thatching practice' and the house must have previously had a thatched roof. It also stipulates that 'the work should be undertaken by an experienced tradesman, skilled in the use of thatching materials'. This is despite the fact that as the Mullane and Oram noted in 2005 that there is no national accreditation scheme.

What is also noteworthy is the level of grant, based on geographical location: 'A grant of €3,810 ((€5,714) in the case of a house situated on certain specified islands off the West and South coasts of Ireland), or two-thirds of the

approved costs, in the case of a medical card holder 80% of the approved cost subject to a maximum of €6,530 – (€8252.30 for the islands) as determined by the Department whichever is the lesser, is payable in respect of necessary works of renewing or repairing the thatched roofs of houses.’ Clearly there is a bias to the islands and the west of the country. It has been noted earlier that Irishness is located in the west of the country, and such grant schemes reinforce this at national governmental level.

There is a clear expectation that the property will be located in a rural location as the application form requests a ‘sketch showing how to get to house from nearest town/village, showing approximate distances and showing the nearest prominent feature such as a church, creamery or school.’ This conjures images of rurality by citing the typical institutional buildings found in towns and villages, while the mention of ‘creamery’ signposts an agrarian setting to such buildings.

Mullane and Oram (2005) suggested the following as one of their actions ‘All buildings where the historic thatch survives should be placed on the relevant Record of Protected Structures soon as possible’. This has been actioned by those compiling the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Cumming (2011) confirmed that surveyors compiling the inventory will include any historic building which has an original thatched roof. This process of selection for protection founded purely upon a singular roof material is in marked contrast to the established criteria adopted and espoused by English Heritage as part of the English system of designating listed buildings. While many buildings with thatched roofing are indeed included on the statutory lists, it would be exceptional to find a building or structure which has been considered worthy of protection solely or even primarily because of its roofing material. The English Heritage *Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings* (2010) include a wide variety of criteria for qualification which encompass not only specific building technologies and architectural styles, but also cultural, historical, social, functional and age related factors, which confer value justifying conservation.

The Irish preoccupation with a single building element, the thatched roof, betrays a narrowness of focus which uplifts a culturally traditional icon, the rural thatched cottage, to a position of high conservation value, but in doing

so, ignores and demotes other building forms which are part of the nation's built heritage and have an equal right to be considered for protection. Unlike the English system, there is no objective process for appraising candidates for protection, and it is noteworthy that, while designation in England lies in the hands of an independent government 'quango'²³, applying accepted national criteria, the responsibility in Ireland remains with local authorities, subject to local circumstances, tastes and political pressures. The latter will be considered further in Chapter Five.

There are further divisions within definitions of thatch, and Irish government departments are keen to highlight differences between formal and informal buildings finished with thatch: 'There are two distinct forms of historic thatched roof: the vernacular thatched roof, now most often found on traditional cottages, and the architect-designed, cottage-orné thatched roof' (DEHLG (b), 2004, p. 141). Therefore the DEHLG draws clear divisions between the formal and informal use of thatch. Mullane and Oram took such differentiation further. They recognised three categories of thatch: 'Scavenger', 'Vernacular' and 'Landlord' (2005). The first was associated with 'the poorest houses where whatever came to hand was used, heather, broom, bracken, marram grass. All but 'dead' now outside folk museums'. The 'Vernacular' was accepted as that used on the 'majority of houses'. However, 'Landlord thatch', a term derived from its use by the descendants of English settlers who remained significant owners of property, therefore 'landlords', was deemed consciously romantic thatch on buildings such as gate lodges, often borrowing English decorative styles. Its use was a conscious design decision rather than a response to local materials and styles and was 'romantic' in the sense of a reference back to the English ancestry of its perpetrators. This is the originator of today's reed thatching, still borrowing English styles. This form of thatch belonged to the upper classes (the landlords). It was 'consciously romantic' and one could construe that the untainted Irish style, without English references, held more veracity as a native tradition through its unconscious, or un-designed, development.

3.5.1 Omission of Slate

Mullane and Oram concluded that 'the traditional thatched roof has become symbolic of the vernacular heritage and is considered to be the indigenous

²³ Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation

roofing material' (2005, p. 142). This is clearly at variance with the other forms of roofing on vernacular buildings, such as slate. Mullane's definition of such buildings adopts a folklife approach akin to that found earlier in the National Museum's Irish Folklife Collection, but she does go on to observe:

The research emphasis on vernacular rural dwellings has excluded, with some notable exceptions, other vernacular building types in town and countryside. Certain aspects even of vernacular dwellings have been omitted like local slate roofs, the industrial vernacular and buildings of professions other than the farming community. (2000, p. 75).

Why these are omitted is not pursued significantly, but her recognition is noteworthy. In terms of other roofing materials, there were slate quarries in Ireland, but affordability was an issue. McAfee (1998) acknowledged that a substantial amount of slate was imported from Wales, which is widely recognised for its role in the industry: the purple hue of Welsh slate is indicative of its origin, while a green hue identifies slates sourced in Cornwall, UK.

The mass emigration to the United States and elsewhere during and after the Famine resulted in finance being sent home to Ireland from these emigrants. The building shown in Image 16, located in County Kerry in the south-west of Ireland, would have been thatched originally (note the steep pitch and raised gable ends), but was later re-roofed with slate. With such additional income in the late 19th and early 20th centuries corrugated iron roofs would be installed instead of thatch, and other alternative materials, such as slate, made affordable. The value of corrugated iron in the present is recognised by Thomson (2011) in the British context, and internationally by Mornement and Holloway (2007). Ní Fhloinn identified a break in the Irish vernacular tradition as starting with 'sending home the slates of houses' by Irish emigrants in America (1994, p. 43). The validity of claiming that such developments were 'breaks' rather than an evolution of the vernacular is questionable. Perhaps slate and corrugated iron do not sufficiently accord with Irish cultural identity. The neglect of other forms of roofing materials creates a narrow band of selectivity which manifests itself in the tourism industry.



Image 16: Abandoned vernacular house with slate roof, County Kerry.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

3.5.2 Thatch and place-myth

Thatch and stone can be considered the most iconic materials in terms of the representation of vernacular buildings in Irish tourism. Zuelow refers to the 'importance of landscape in tourist discourse' and 'perceived tourist demands' in relation to Ireland and its visitors (2009, p. 179). With the mass emigration of many Irish after the Famine has come a persistent influx of Irish-American visitors. Often searching for their Irish roots, and lured by the promotional material of *Bórd Fáilte* (the Irish tourism board) their expectations of Ireland consist of a welcoming people, and green undisturbed landscapes peppered with thatched cottages (see Zuelow (2009), Wulff (2007) and O'Connor, (1993)). Mills is critical of the Glencolumbkille 'Folk Museum', County Donegal, which 'presents, to the untrained eye, a hamlet of authentic structures. Yet each vernacular building is no more than a replica of those used locally in each of three successive centuries' (2007, p. 115). He extricates the cultural nationalist narrative which 'presents a view of the Ulster, truly Irish community, ignoring the area's links to Scotland and later America' (ibid). The inauthentic is offered in this 'museum' as the true architecture of the natives. Equally, this is offered to visitors through the holiday cottage.

On the Aran Islands, off the west coast of county Galway, the local residents gradually move into modern bungalows. Close by, newly constructed thatched cottages, with incongruously straight whitewashed walls and thatched roofs, stand idle for most of the year due to the seasonal nature of the tourist industry. The use of modern walling materials, with impermeable finishes, results in a lack of ventilation. This, combined with the seasonal use of the open fire, results in the thatch retaining moisture and rotting before the end of its expected life-span of approximately twenty years. Whilst promoted as 'native' to foreign visitors, the reality of the vernacular house is no longer tolerated as the ideal for the Irish to inhabit. The retention or restoration of the traditional Irish house has become something to appease the 'other': the 'other' in this case being the external visitors rather than the British oppressor. If the Irish are no longer residing in thatched dwellings, other modes of self-perception are required, and this can be seen in the removal of render from historic buildings.

3.5.3 The Anti-Scrape movement and the penchant for rubble

In 1993 Catholic Ireland was shocked by the publication *Forbidden Fruit*, whereby Annie Murphy recounted her love affair with Catholic Bishop of Galway, Eamonn Casey. She recalled a visit with him to Augustus Pugin's mid-19th century St Mary's Cathedral, Killarney, County Kerry. Casey had elected to 'restore' the cathedral by removing the Victorian plasterwork 'ruined by decades of damp', and had 'decided to strip it off entirely so as to reveal, through bare stone, Pugin's original design' (1993, p. 15-16). Casey recollected the public opposition to his plans: 'Pious people have the sharpest of teeth. But you'll soon be telling me who was right' (ibid).

The *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB) was founded in 1877 by William Morris, Philip Webb and J.J. Stevenson. They were reacting against destructive renovations of churches, where layers of fabric were being removed in order to expose the medieval character of the buildings. They also became known as the 'Anti-scrape' movement. Denslagen (1994) presents the fierce debates had between Stevenson and one of the main perpetrators, Sir George Gilbert Scott in the 19th century. Scott was responsible for the removal of the external plaster from the towers of a monastic church in St. Albans, of which Stevenson argued: 'To remove it was to tear a page out of the records of English history. I have never been able to understand the curious delusion

which possess many modern architects, that plastered surfaces on walls are inconsistent with the Gothic style' (cited in Denslagen, 1994, p. 75-6). Stevenson considered the benefits of whitewash and its 'beautiful' and 'delicate' appearance. He asked 'Why should we be so eager to expose the stonework which the original builders never intended to be seen?' while at the same time recognising the problems the removal of such an insulating and protective layer would cause, including the penetration of damp to the detriment of historic fabric (ibid).

SPAB are today regarded as the purists in conservation, however, their core values provide a benchmark in how to approach conservation, including the desire to repair, not restore; the use of responsible methods; complement not parody; the regular maintenance of buildings; the provision of information on the building, including its composition and history; only to undertake essential work; respect for the integrity of historic buildings; the need to fit new to old; the application of appropriate workmanship; the employment of appropriate and responsible materials and respect for age (2009). In the 19th century SPAB was concerned by the loss of historic fabric which had been accumulated during the evolution of buildings. Scott and others were exposing the archaeology of buildings with little regard for later accumulations. However, Killarney Cathedral was constructed in the 19th century, not long before Stevenson and Scott's heated debates. Casey was not attempting to expose earlier layers: the plaster was part of the Cathedral's original design and finish. He wanted to expose the structure of the building, and the revelation of 'Pugin's original design' is akin to removing the cladding on modern buildings in order to expose the structural steel. Murphy remarked later 'I was impressed by the 285 foot high Cathedral spire. Inside, my first impression of St Mary's was of soaring pillars, Gothic arches and white limestone, rough and bare as if the skin had been peeled off it' (1993, p. 17).

Casey was not alone in stripping the plaster from 19th century churches. St Brendan's Church, Ardfert, County Kerry also had the same treatment in the 1990s. The internal plaster was removed and the exposed stonework repointed using an inappropriate cement based mortar (see Images 17 and 18).



Image 17 and 18: St Brendan's Church, County Kerry. Internal plasterwork removed. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The trend is not just confined to churches. O'Leary (2008) asserted that 'the nationalist idyll is a rural one': the buildings of the 'native' Irish compound the differences between these and the architecture of the former colonisers, the British. Thatch has become symbolic of the Irish vernacular tradition. However, with the accelerated loss of the thatched cottage Irish nationalism has lost a tangible representation of Irishness. If one of the significant characteristics of 'Irishness' is on the wane, other forms of cultural reinforcement come to the fore. McAfee considers the extensive use of render where 'In Ireland practically every traditional stone building – farmhouse, townhouse or shop – was rendered' and distinguishes this finish with that of public buildings with 'stone which was meant to be seen' (1998, p. 172). Salvadori contends that 'in considering the aesthetics of a building, one must carefully distinguish between those buildings in which the structure is relatively unimportant, and those in which the structure is essential to the appearance of the building' (1990, p. 289). The structure of vernacular buildings can be claimed to represent tradition and intangible heritage: it was noted in Chapter One that the type of walling material employed, stone or mud, dictated the form of the building which imparts a particular aesthetic.

Conversely, the materials used in formal architecture, ashlar masonry, brick, terracotta, faience and so on, are based on aesthetics which dictate the form.

3.5.4 'Don't get stoned, get plastered'

In the 1990s a trend began in Ireland whereby the render of vernacular buildings was removed in order to expose the random rubble construction beneath. Mullane called this pursuit 'lumpy wall syndrome' (2000). The Heritage Council, which recognised that this subtractive change is falsely held to be a traditional Irish building style, tried to halt this trend with their catchphrase 'Don't get stoned, get plastered' (Battersby, 2001). As noted in Chapter One, random rubble is the principal building material in vernacular buildings in the north and west of the country. The lime render (or lime wash) is also part of the vernacular tradition. This imparts a more formal appearance, especially when smooth, similar to stucco. By removing the render, a more 'rustic', but inauthentic, appearance is achieved. The removal of the render can be found in towns and villages across the country. McAfee assesses the impact of this 'current fashion' where it should be 'condemned as it is changing the original visual and aesthetic character of Irish towns, villages and individual houses. It also creates problems with rain penetration, heat loss, deterioration of timber lintels, internal plasterwork and paint' (1998, p. 172). Therefore, in a manner not unlike the loss of authentic archaeological remains, Irish nationalism is incrementally resulting in the loss of historic fabric, the render, which will eventually contribute to the deterioration of historic building fabric.

In 1922 the *Irish Builder and Engineer* stated: 'In Ireland, the question of brickwork is of some considerable though not primary interest. This is a stone country, and therefore, so long as masons are to be obtained in the country districts, masonry will hold its own' (Anon, 1922). It can be argued that although the 'lumpy wall syndrome' was not endemic in the 1920s, assertions about the components of Irish buildings materials were politicised even then: brick being associated with large cities, and stone with the countryside: the denial of Georgian buildings as forming part of an 'Irish' building tradition will be assessed in Chapter Five. But, stone was used for construction in 19th century Dublin. Exposed brick fell out of favour with the Victorians, and the formal rendering of buildings, new and old, became the vogue. With the advent of steam transportation, the suburbs of Dublin developed along railway

routes. Dún Laoghaire²⁴, County Dublin, expanded in the 19th century, with rows of Victorian villas. Stone was used for the building substrate, with the rectangular shape of brick utilised for door and window openings.



Image 19: Victorian terraced house, Dún Laoghaire, County Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Such buildings are now subdivided into flats, and the cultural aspirations of the basement dweller in Image 19 are obvious. The subdivision of the property is apparent by the number of rubbish bins: one for each of the three flats. The formality of the basement storey has been given a rustic makeover by the removal of the render and exposure of structural components of the building which include stone and brick. The fabrication of this vernacular character is accentuated by the presence of the brick building to the right. Therefore, this practice of removing render from architecturally polite buildings can be called the 'vernacularised-formal': a late 20th and early 21st century facet of Irishness.

²⁴ Formerly called 'Kingstown', but was renamed in 1921. The politics behind the renaming of streets and places in the post-independence period is explored by Whelan (2003).

What is also noteworthy about this image is the presence of iron railings. During World War II British homeowners were asked to donate their railings for the war effort, with people led to believe that these would be melted down for artillery. These personal gestures made people feel that they were helping the war effort, but in reality it has not been categorically proven that their Georgian and Victorian railings were used as such. Such individual actions are reminiscent of the render being removed from buildings as a collective reinforcement of nationalism. Ireland remained neutral during the war, and so these period buildings retain many of their original boundary treatments. Such buildings, a product of British colonisation and the Anglo-Irish, contain more historic features than their British counterparts.

The removal of render usually results in the re-pointing of stonework. The finish often employs inappropriate cement based mortar and the inert nature of this material is detrimental to building fabric. Mortar, traditionally the cheaper material, is subservient to the main fabric: stone, brick and so on. Lime mortar is softer than the principal walling material, and its subservient and sacrificial nature allows the building to breathe. The removal of render usually necessitates repointing as mortar will be removed from joints through the forceful and mechanical removal of the outer skin of a building. A lack of crafts skills and conservation expertise in Ireland, which will be explored in Chapter Five, results in cement based mortars being applied, quite often with a 'ribbon' finish: the mortar joint stands proud of the surface, and the supposedly subservient re-pointing material becomes the principal visual focus. The inert cement based mortar will not allow the stonework to breathe, and as the latter natural material expands and contracts with environmental factors, stonework spalls and cracks. This allows moisture into the building resulting in damp. The contrast between a traditional lime rendered finish and the false 'lumpy wall' finish can be seen in Images 20 and 21, both located on the same street in Ballyheigue, County Kerry. The strong colours often found applied to such renders impart a character of their own. Therefore, historic buildings are being damaged through subtractive change which is underpinned by Irishness and nationalism, and such acts will eventually lead to their deterioration.



Image 20: 19th century rendered building, Ballyheigue, County Kerry. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)



Image 21: 19th century building with render removed to expose random rubble substrate, Ballyheigue, County Kerry. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

There are building owners who will not undertake such invasive and irreversible works: various frontages of public houses can be observed around the country where the external render has not been removed. Instead a random rubble finish is painted on. The vernacular, or perhaps now, the tradition, is fabricated through additive as well as subtractive change. The aforementioned examples at least preserve historic building fabric. The removal of historic finishes is irreversible, and on the whole will require fewer people with essential craft skills to maintain them. If Irish identity is located in the countryside, then the owners are bringing the countryside to Dublin through the addition of stonework or removal of render.

3.5.5 Imagined vernacular

Further consideration must be given as to why an exposed random rubble finish is held to be authentic. Returning to the 'unintentional monuments' of abandoned vernacular buildings, it should be recalled that having been abandoned from the mid-19th century, the protective outer layer of render has fallen away. The ruins of these diminutive dwellings remain with their outer skin deteriorated to the extent that their core composition is apparent.

In Britain, surviving medieval timber framed buildings are often found with a black and white 'magpie' appearance: the timbers painted black and the infill panels finished with a white or light coloured paint. Oak turns silver in colour over time, but the deterioration of timber was sometimes remedied by the insertion of packing stones, bricks, and later, cement. Painting the timber black obscured such interventions, but 'close examination of portions concealed by later extensions often shows that the blackening is not original' (Brunskill, 1994, p. 247). The black and white colour scheme was a Victorian aesthetic, and the solid lines and blocks of colour instil a more formal appearance, with the same intentions as the lining out of stucco to suggest ashlar masonry. The misinterpretation of patination is also found in archaeology: Waddell reflects on references to 'broad green spears' in Irish medieval texts recounting mythology which 'may reflect an antiquarian familiarity with well-patinated bronze specimens and a desire to attribute them to a heroic past' (2005, p. 14). Therefore, the state and/or colour of an object or structure found in the present engender its original appearance with the same patina, which in turn implies a direct inheritance and unbroken line. The works executed at Newgrange and Knowth, as discussed in the previous

chapter, attempt to reconstruct the original appearance of the mounds by removing the patina of age. That conversely required extensive intervention in order to site a 'living', albeit contested, Neolithic monument into the present. And, as noted earlier, it was the very removal of accumulated layers that spawned the 19th century conservation movement.

Aleida Assmann considers the concept of 'working memory':

'Nothing is more familiar to us than the permanent removal of forgetting, the irretrievable loss of valued knowledge and vital experiences. Underneath the roof of the historical sciences, these uninhabited relicts and abandoned resources can be stored; they can also be refurbished again in a way that they offer new possibilities of connecting to working memory.' (cited in Eckstein, 2006, p. 108)

It appears that tradition in Ireland is defined by the present, Hobsbawm's 'invented tradition': the manner in which unintentional monuments are encountered today is given as presenting the past in the present. The patina of age is ignored as a historical phenomenon, whereby the passage of time imbues character. The character found in the present is appropriated to a period of colonisation: the veracity of the exposed stone invokes a simplistic peasantry, oppressed, especially through the Famine narrative by 'the Other'. Vernacular dwellings have become repositories for collective memory, and they in turn 'connect to working memory', the concealed stone becomes a 'resource' when exposed. In turn, the application of stone imbues collective memory: individual home owners have the capacity to proclaim that they are partaking in Irishness by stripping cultural memories for collective ones.

In the 1990s such modern developments were characterised by neo-Georgian developments: colonnaded porches and classical void to mass piercing. Such polite buildings were a reflection of Ireland's expanding economy and conveyed aspiration. In the 21st century the trend turned: Irishness could be expressed through additive change. Selected parts of one's abode could be adorned with a skin of random rubble stone, clad against a breeze block substrate. The entire building is rarely accorded this treatment: the cost of stone would have been prohibitive. However, references to the imagined vernacular could be incorporated, usually in the most used part of the exterior,

the principal points of entry (pillars, garage and porch), which are clad in stone (see Image 22).



Image 22: 21st century house, Banna, County Kerry. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

3.5.5.1 Imagined vernacular in Britain

Additive and subtractive change is not just the preserve of the Irish. In 1980s Britain many homeowners expressed their upwardly mobile aspirations by facing their modest Victorian brick terraced houses with stone cladding. When undertaken on a terrace, this applied finish results in a property standing out from the uniformity of the remaining terrace. The craze for stone cladding was fuelled by a desire to convey one's ambitions. Stone cladding is not ashlar in appearance: its coarse texture is more akin to random rubble construction. Such a rustic, if not vernacular, finish attempts to imbue the sense of a country cottage, albeit set incongruously in an urban setting. This was seen earlier in Dublin, with Bodhrán public house's 'painted' stonework. It is difficult to remove stone cladding as the adhesive sticks to the face of brickwork, and removal usually results in the brick face being torn away in the process, causing irreparable damage. The example below (Image 23) is Waterloo Promenade, Nottingham, UK. This terrace is located in a Conservation Area.

When this home owner applied this cladding planning permission was not required. The local council was dismayed with the effect this work had on the collective appearance, and consequently removed the right of other homeowners in the terrace to do the same. Subsequently, national planning regulations were changed to bring this kind of work within the scope of planning control.



Image 23: Waterloo Promenade, Nottingham, UK. (Photographic credit: Peter Smith).

In 2010 *The Guardian's Weekend Magazine* showcased a new trend of exposing the internal wall substrate: 'painted or raw, exposed brick is the home accessory du jour' (Booth, 2010). Noting that 'bare brick is a statement piece in its own right', Booth advised readers to 'limit your brick to one wall', and pre 1950s walls may 'expose hidden gems'. The removal of an internal insulating layer is not advisable: historic buildings need to 'breathe', an original internal plaster finish allows moisture to pass through the walls. The loss of such plaster can lead to damp and a reduction in the thermal performance of buildings. However, this trend demonstrates the cyclical nature of attitudes to historic fabric. The exposure of brick in Britain has a rationale similar to the removal of external render in Ireland: it allows an individual to

stamp their own character on a historic building, based on wider taste and trends it becomes a fashion. However, the drive behind the Irish approach differs from that in Britain. If the substrate of Irish vernacular buildings, both internally and externally, was wholly composed of brick, would such works be undertaken? This will be considered in Chapter Five, where the Victorian render is being removed to expose Georgian brick beneath through well meaning, but misplaced, appreciation for Georgian architecture.

Clifton-Taylor asked 'should a building be judged, and enjoyed, for the texture and colour of its materials, as well as for its design? Or are the former to be dubbed a Romantic 'extra', scarcely relevant to the central theme of architecture?' (1972, p. 365). The removal of lime renders is unauthentic and results in the loss of historic fabric. But, aside from the cultural nationalistic connotations, it should be acknowledged the exposure of stone and brick gives a building more texture and character than an otherwise plain rendered surface (see Image 24). The roughness plays with light, casting shadows on the surface. This was a device used in ornamental plasterwork in neo-classical buildings, whereby the folds and intricacies of the plaster created depth, and added life as the shadows shifted throughout the day. Therefore, basic aesthetics should be given credence in the argument against the removal of render and the application of stone cladding.



Image 24: 19th century building with render removed, Tralee, County Kerry. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

In Britain *Building for Life* (Collins and Quinn, 2012) has been adopted as a document to guide the construction of new housing schemes. It encourages such developments to be sustainable and responsive to context and to have architectural quality. Inevitably they adopt mock Georgian and Victorian features, such as the proportions of windows and architectural detailing. One feature that is encouraged is the chimney stack, which serves to add detail and interest to the roof line. However, property developers will not go to the expense of installing fireplaces, so the chimney stacks are fake and planted on, and some developments have experienced problems of the stacks rotating and falling as there is no chimney breast beneath to support them (Image 25). Aspiration to a certain point in the past is not just the preserve of the Irish, and inauthenticity which panders to this past creates problems in Britain of a similar ilk to that in Ireland, whether it is the application of stone cladding, exposure of brick, or structural instability of fake chimney stacks.



Image 25: New housing development, Mount Sorrell, Leicestershire, UK. Chimney stacks in centre are rotating. (Photographic credit: Tim Peach)

3.6 Conservation in the 21st century

It was noted in Chapter One that definitions of vernacular buildings in Ireland are distilled to the point that other walling materials are neglected, namely mud and timber. Mud wall construction is accepted as a vernacular material, with most buildings of this composition found in the south-east of the country, where building stone was scarcer. With regard to timber frame buildings, the occurrence of which in Britain was acknowledged earlier, Casey and Rowan categorically remove their existence from the Irish vernacular record: 'The last surviving timber-framed building in the region [North Leinster], the Bathe House in Drogheda, was demolished in the early 19th century.' (1993, p. 89) There is scant representation of Irish timber framed buildings, with the main use of timber being recognised in windows, doors and roof structures. However, the incidence of timber in the archaeological record is widely accepted where 'Dwelling houses of all classes, as well as early churches, were usually of wood, that material being easily secured and easy to work with ... In fact the custom of building in wood was so general in Ireland that it was considered characteristic and 'after the manner of the Scots' (Neeson, 1991, p. 42). Harris dates the period of timber frame construction from the 13th to

the late 18th or early 19th century (2001, p. 3), and the exploration and conservation of these building typologies form part of a particular field, the archaeology of buildings, in Britain today.

Neeson's reference to the 'Scots' relates to the 17th century Plantation of Ulster, where people from Scotland and England were 'planted' in the province. Mills earlier cited the amnesia of a Scottish influence in relation to Glencolumbkille, located in Ulster. Stevens Curl provides evidence dating from 1802 from the Rev. G.V. Sampson that houses in Coleraine, County Derry, were 'framed in London, in the reign of Elizabeth and James the First [late 16th/early 17th century]' (1986, p. 45). Stevens Curl refutes accounts which attribute the origin of the timber frames to London 'It must be stated at once that there is not a shred of hard evidence that the 'houses were framed in London' and shipped to Ulster. To start with, there would have been no point, as the new County of Londonderry possessed plentiful supplies of timber ... English timber imported to Ulster would have been rather like sending coals to Newcastle, but it is clear that items such as nails, ironwork, tools, locks, and so on were brought in from London (ibid)'.

The supposed importation of materials associated with colonisation is important in terms of nationalism: not only are the people seen as interlopers, their building styles and the fabric of construction are also construed as literally belonging to the 'other'. This is most apparent with brick, as will be seen in Chapter Five. However, remnants of timber frame medieval construction are being uncovered in Ireland, the most recent example in the west of Ireland: Ennis, County Clare (Historic Towns Forum, 2012). Therefore, narrow definitions of vernacular buildings are omitting evidence of timber framed structures, which could potentially be lost through a lack of knowledge and awareness. However, a recent conservation project involving a mud walled building, Mayglass Farmhouse, has changed perceptions of the vernacular.

3.6.1 Mayglass Farmhouse, County Wexford

Mayglass Farmhouse is located in the east of Ireland, in County Wexford. This two-storey lobby entry house, with a central hearth and outbuildings, was built over a number of phases, beginning in the 1700s to the late 1800s. The

buildings in the complex are of mud wall construction, lime rendered, with thatched roofs.

The last inhabitant of Mayglass was Seamus Kirwan, who died in 1995. The house was inherited by a neighbour who had taken care of Mr Kirwan prior to his death. The Heritage Council has claimed that Mayglass is unique, having never been modernised by Mr Kirwan or his ancestors (Heritage Council, 2003). The house has no bathroom, running water or electricity. Any repairs to the house had previously been carried out by its owner by mending and patching when necessary. The new owner attempted to maintain the farm complex, but was eventually overburdened with the maintenance and repair of the building. The plaster started to decay, the thatch began to deteriorate, the main farmhouse became damp, and without a sufficient thatch covering, the mud walls of the out buildings began to collapse.

In 1957 Evans recorded the following adage: 'As soon as the fire dies, the house dies'. This is rooted somewhat in reality: with buildings composed of mud and stone, the hearth regulates humidity internally, which assists in the reduction of damp. Mayglass was no longer inhabited after the death of Seamus Kirwan, which meant a hearth was not maintained. Thus, the building began to rapidly deteriorate due to damp. This, combined with the lack of time and knowledge of repair of the building by the new owner, resulted in the building rapidly decaying. The new owner then sought advice from the Heritage Council.

When the Heritage Council investigated Mayglass they realised the significance of the complex: a rare example of a three hundred year old vernacular farmhouse that had never been modernised. The interior had retained much 18th and 19th century furniture and fittings which had been used up to the demise of Mr Kirwan. The Heritage Council began to refer to Mayglass as a 'time capsule' and in early 1998 they commenced a programme of emergency repairs and conservation works. One aspect of the emergency repairs was to construct a temporary steel barn over and around the farmhouse in an attempt to arrest further water ingress and deterioration. The barn remained throughout the two years of conservation works.

The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands' (DAHGI) conservation guidelines recognised 'the increasing rarity of mud and sod

walling' and the importance of conserving them (2001, p. 133). They also called on 'expert advice' to be employed, and advised against inappropriate modern interventions such as damp proof courses. This is the extent of conservation advice given by the Department, with regard to this building material. In contrast, much advice is provided for thatch roofing and stone walling. This can be explained by Mullane: 'In the context of conservation, thatch and most often the thatched house has been the defining element of what is vernacular. Indeed thatch is considered the most important aspect, and sometimes the only one, which receives financial support for conservation' (2000, p. 71), and such fiscal measures were cited earlier. Ní Fhloinn points out: 'Thatched buildings act as a barometer. They are easily identified so that their loss is noticed by people generally' (1994, p. 61). Therefore, Mayglass represented a significant departure from the norm: it shifted Irish conservation policy away from thatch, despite the roof being finished with this material.

The Mayglass conservation project brought many stakeholders together through the formation of a steering group to manage the project. These included Dúchas (the Heritage Service), the Heritage Council, the Department of Irish Folklore in University College Dublin, the National Museum and the late Christopher Zeuner from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in England. The steering group adopted the following conservation philosophy: 'To adhere to the highest standards of conservation, with minimum intervention, repairing rather than replacing, and where interventions are necessary, they are fully reversible' (Hanna, 2000).

The project, named 'Mayglass 2000', also aimed to 'identify and study the appropriate traditional techniques for repair and maintenance of the mud-walled building so typical of this part of Wicklow; increase awareness of the qualities of these buildings among the local population; promote awareness of the importance of the Mayglass 2000 techniques for repair and maintenance among owners and the craft workers who work on the buildings; establish links with other European regions who face similar problems of conserving their stocks of important traditional buildings' (Hanna, 2000). With financial support from the European Union 'Raphael Programme' and the Heritage Council, the conservation of Mayglass began in early 1998. It was adopted as a Millennium Project, given its proximity to the year 2000.

Aside from the protection of the house via the steel barn, the building was also 'de-infested of woodworm and other damaging organisms using a non-chemical method whereby heat was pumped into the house under controlled conditions' (Hanna, 2000). This method is called 'Thermo-Lignum' or heat treatment. This technique was developed in Germany and 'the principle is to ensure stability of moisture in objects during the cycle of elevation of the temperature to 52°C and the return to ambient temperature' (Pinniger, 1996). The process takes between 15 and 24 hours, during which species such as the death-watch beetle, woodworm and clothes moth are killed. The placement of the equipment for this treatment is temporary and the absence of chemicals makes this process sound appropriate. As the house was suffering from severe damp, this process also helped to dry out the building.

The National Museum catalogued the interior and contents of the house. Professional conservators repaired the contents where necessary. The methods employed are unknown to the author. These contents were replaced in their original position after the conservation work was completed on the house. The original parlour wallpaper was 'expertly cleaned, repaired and re-attached where necessary' (Hanna, 2000).

Major conservation works were undertaken for the walls of the house and outbuildings and roofs. The original early 18th century walls of the house were constructed of mud brick laid on a stone footing 60cm high. Wren (1998) notes that the north-east gable wall used timber in its construction, and the rarity of survival of such a building material was cited earlier. Its use in the 18th century was actively prohibited: Gailey states that in that period the Irish parliament had forbidden its use 'in wattling the walls of houses or cabins or outbuildings, in any kind of gad or gads, wyth or wyths of oak ash birch hazel or other tree whatsoever' (1984, p. 197). This was a consequence of the Great Fire of London, 1666, whereby the prevalence of timber exacerbated the extent of fire spread. Neeson recall that 'Until the 18th century highly ornamented wooden houses were common in Dublin, Drogheda and other towns (though new ones were banned following the Great Fire of London in 1666)' (1991, p. 42). Thus the north-east gable wall is significant in the Irish context due to the little use of wood, and rarity of survival of such features.

Crushed glass and pottery were found below the stone footings during archaeological investigation. Ashurst notes that 'the addition of crushed glass and crushed shale were traditional rodent preventatives' in mud walled buildings (1988). Many parts of the farmhouse walls had deteriorated. Mud bricks were made on site to patch repair the walls. The mud was sourced locally and mixed with small quantities of straw. Samples of the walling materials had been analysed and the correct proportions and materials selected for the new mud bricks. Ashurst (1988) recommends the reuse of the mud to be replaced, and this was also used for making bricks at Mayglass. The mixture was placed in traditional wooden moulds for one day, and then removed from the moulds and laid out to dry, a process which takes three weeks in the summer and two months in the autumn (Hanna, 2000). Local craftspeople carried out the work, but much advice was sought from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

Hanna (ibid) described how 'wooden inserts were screwed in to hold the new mud bricks in place'. This intervention was necessary to bind the new mud bricks to the old, as the old were 'settled' and the new would take time to do this. Any compression of the new bricks would be remedied by more patch repair, until these have settled. The chimney was also strengthened and repaired in this manner. Lime render and mortar was used for binding and finish. The walls were scored to hold the render. The top layer of thatch on the farmhouse was re-thatched using a technique which is traditional to the locality, but no longer commonly practiced. A local thatcher was found to undertake the work, having studied techniques in other local buildings (ibid). But, supply of suitable material was a problem. The original thatch was of oaten straw. This has to be harvested slightly green and allowed to ripen.

Straw harvested using modern farming methods is unsuitable for thatch, and wheat straw has become more common for this practice. Hanna (2000) notes the increasing problems of sourcing traditional thatching materials: 'Modern farming methods have meant that the traditional long straw is no longer available, and has to be specially grown. Meanwhile, Irish reed has deteriorated in quality because of pollution in watercourses. The result is that straw from the UK is being used more and more'. In 1999 the Heritage Council undertook a public campaign in the national media to find suitable oaten straw. Two local farmers came forward and offered to supply the oaten straw

and to harvest it in the traditional technique using a reaper binder (Heritage Council, 2003).

The outbuildings were also subject to substantial works. It was established from the deteriorated remains that the original roofs had wheaten straw thatch and hazel spars. The roof was reconstructed using these materials. The walls were also extensively rebuilt using the methods described earlier for the main house. Although this can be referred to as 'reconstruction', it is not on a conjectural basis. The materials were analysed and photographic records were available to illustrate the original buildings. This rebuilding helped to re-establish knowledge of traditional building techniques that had no longer been practiced. Again, the craftsmen and materials were sourced locally.

Other repairs were undertaken to the floors, windows and internal joinery, and documented before and after. The previous owner had repaired as necessary up until his death. The conservation work at Mayglass can be seen as a continuation of his work, but with greater financial assistance and advice. University College Dublin installed a system of environmental monitoring in the house in order to 'establish the behaviour of this and similar structures over time' (Hanna, 2000).

Mayglass was conserved not as a visitor attraction: it was not opened to the general public, but access is granted to those who work or have interests in the field of conservation, vernacular architecture and folklore. It is intended as an 'educational tool', and training in traditional building and conservation skills will be carried out there. The Heritage Council believe that public access would require too much intervention that would 'destroy the integrity of the place, its special qualities and the conservation work which has been done so painstakingly' (Heritage Council, 2003). A fire is maintained in the hearth, as was done by the previous owners, to keep the building free from the damp that had occurred in the late 1990s. Mayglass is treated as a living entity, or the excavated remains of a human body, which must be treated with sanctity and respect. It is shielded from unscrupulous observation, and the deference is akin to the erection of enclosures around human remains on display in museums, for example: the screens around the 'bog bodies' in the National Museum of Archaeology & History, Dublin.

This project did help to shift the traditional conservation focus away from thatch and onto the little studied area of mud walling in Ireland. The decision not to allow visitor access is also a shift from previous heritage policy which has often included a tourism remit in conservation, as seen with Newgrange and Knowth in the previous chapter. The project has had more far reaching effects, for example, its reintroduction of traditional skills. Thus, theoretically and practically the Mayglass project has been successful in fulfilling its original objectives of a high standard of conservation. It can be argued that the reliance on people and resources from Britain continues to alienate the field of Irish conservation, even with vernacular buildings, and evidence of this situation will be further compounded in Chapter Five. The reliance on vernacular architecture, rurality and the west has not just had a bearing on historic fabric, but has had a detrimental impact upon the wider Irish landscape.

3.7. The consequences of Irishness and the rural idyll

Mullane wrote regretfully 'Ireland has only recently seen the establishment of a National Folk Museum, and we have no state institution which deals comprehensively with vernacular architecture. There is no policy with regard to the future of traditional buildings, there are no plans for maintenance and, as yet, financial commitment is very limited' (2000, p. 74). Mullane's work was published in 2000 as part of a collaboration titled: *The Heritage of Ireland: Natural, Man-made and Cultural Heritage; Conservation and Interpretation; Business and Administration*. A year before its publication the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1999 was enacted and introduced comprehensive legislative protection for historic buildings: 'protected structures'. The Act was designed to oblige all planning authorities 'to create a record of buildings to be protected because of their special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest'.

The two main supporting measures in 1999 were a new scheme of grants for protected buildings, at a cost of £3.9 m., to be administered by the principal local authorities; and conservation expertise deployed in the local authority service to enable them to carry out their function under the Act and to administer the grant scheme. The then Minister for the Environment and Local Government proudly declared: 'These initiatives show our commitment to

sustainable development by encouraging the use and reuse of the existing building stock so that those buildings which have been in use for many decades or even centuries, will continue in use for years to come - not as museum pieces, but as buildings which adapt and change as society and life itself adapts and changes,' (Dempsey, 1999). This approach is currently practiced in the UK: due to a shortage of houses the government there has set housing targets for local authorities. New housing developments are planned and constructed on Brownfield or Greenfield land, with construction in the Greenbelt not generally viewed favourably. The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) only allows isolated dwellings in the countryside if they can demonstrate exceptional quality or innovative design.

Mullane's earlier comments, made in 2000, can be regarded as typifying how the built heritage is often regarded in Ireland. Vernacular architecture and the rural west are considered to belong to 'heritage', a term which implies value. This is compounded by terminology used not just within government departments, but with the naming of those actual departments. The Irish Heritage Council's website supports this argument further. The Heritage Council was established in 1995 under the 'Heritage Act'. This act defines national heritage as 'monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways'. The 'Architecture' section of the Heritage Council's website contains publications on thatched roofs, and information on grant schemes for buildings on Irish farms.

This lies in sharp contrast to English Heritage's website, where amongst a substantial number of online publications relating to conservation, there are several guides to conserving stone and brickwork, re-pointing with lime, repairing sash-windows, as well as a publication on thatching. It will be noted in Chapter Five that Dublin City Council's 'Conservation Section' references English Heritage and Historic Scotland conservation guidance, a consequence of the paucity of such advice in Ireland.

In addition, the designations of the cultural elements of Ireland at national government departmental level should be considered. In 1996 a government reshuffle created the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. This western identity was examined in the previous chapter in relation to the

archaeological record. English is generally used as a first language throughout Ireland, but the 'Gaeltacht' denotes small regions where the Irish language is adopted as the first language. Gaeltacht regions mainly lie along the south and west coast of Ireland, for example, in Kerry, Galway and Mayo. The 'Islands' are also generally associated with the west coast of the country, many of which are inhabited by native Irish speakers. Kelly stresses: 'On the island of Ireland, where concepts of 'national', 'heritage' and cultural identity are contested and problematic, the role of cultural organisations, policy formulators and museum sites takes on added significance' (2004, p. 2).

All of the above sanctioned thousands of new houses in the countryside, as rural living has been embodied in Irishness. Foster recalls that this was encouraged by the government when the 'Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was able to produce another useful Celticist argument, stating that his 'vision of rural Ireland is a populated countryside' and advocating 'the Celtic plan of dispersed settlement' rather than 'forcing people' into towns and villages.' (2007, p. 161). This was bolstered during the economic boom of the 1990s to 2007. House styles from the mid-20th century were and are placed parallel to the road, with no regard to historic field patterns; the building materials are alien, taking little inspiration from vernacular traditions; they are not sheltered from the environment for protection, but stand proud and domineering over the landscape. Many local authorities provide design guidelines for buildings in rural areas. Kerry County Council (1996) recommended:

Dwellings should not be located on the skyline, waterline or in prominent locations. Where rising ground exists on or adjacent to a site, this should be used to provide a backdrop to the dwelling. The existing traditional house form in an area, its scale and materials should be taken into account in any design ... Finishes should be simple with the minimum number of finishes being used. All external finishes should be neutral in tone, colour and texture, except where the dominant natural materials make the use of other materials more appropriate. The use of stone cladding, non-traditional type stone and brickwork should be avoided. (1996, p. 70)

However, due to a lack of planning control, such guidelines are not adhered to by developers or homeowners, and are not enforced by local authorities. What

has resulted is a rash of mass produced bungalows which embody little sense of place and context.

3.7.1 *The Celtic Tiger*

The lack of Irish planning control and associated corruption was considered in the previous chapter in relation to Carrickmines Castle and the Hill of Tara. Abuse of the planning system at local authority level across the country has resulted in an unsustainable building pattern whereby one-off houses have been tolerated in the countryside. This was accommodated after independence where the subdivision of Ascendancy estates resulted in the parcelling off of their estates by the Irish government, and assisted by the rejection of an urban identity. The lack of planning controls in the countryside has incrementally eroded the character of the landscape.

Infrastructure in the countryside is not sufficiently developed to cope with one off houses and ribbon development. Mullane (2000) identifies the retention of one vernacular feature in modern houses: the fireplace and associated chimney. However, in many places, this is borne out of necessity, as, beyond major cities, gas and oil heating infrastructure does not exist, never mind broadband internet connections. This has resulted in a reliance on fireplaces and oil tanks for each property for heating, in addition to individual septic tanks for each property as there is no rural mains sewerage system. In 2012 the European Union fined Ireland €2 million for not regulating the installation and use of septic tanks (Reilly, 2012). Therefore the rural bias is having an adverse impact on the character of the countryside and its environmental health, and this relates particularly to dwellings dating from late 20th to early 21st century. Conversely, the re-use of vernacular building stock has not been actively encouraged.

In 2007, during the height of the property boom, Corlett lamented 'the threatened passing of the vernacular Irish cottage' (2007, p. 30). The rationale behind abandonment and lack of reuse included 'more recent generations were ashamed of their old home places and replaced them with modern bungalows' in addition to nostalgic retention through 'an unwillingness on the part of some owners to do away with the old place' (ibid). Corlett cited the drive for more energy efficient homes as a reason behind their neglect: 'will the new drive for energy efficient houses be the final nail in the coffin?' In

the context of an archaeological publication (*Archaeology Ireland*), Corlett implored the recording and documenting of the houses: preservation by record. The re-use of the houses is not seriously considered as 'these buildings rarely lend themselves to restoration' due to the loss of 'organic' materials with which the roof (thatch) and interior fixtures and fittings (timber) were composed. This author assumes that the vernacular building stock is made up of small thatched dwellings.

In the current economic downturn Scott (2010) estimates there are 300,000 vacant, new, dwellings in an Irish population of 4.2 million. 'Ghost estates' abound: housing developments abandoned after the financial downfall, lying half-finished and empty like the Deserted Village in County Mayo. This can be contrasted with the property bubble in the Britain, where the rehabilitation of historic buildings featured prominently in progression up the property ladder. The need for financial incentives for the adaptive re-use of historic buildings is widely recognised in the Britain, and will be discussed in Chapter Five. But given the huge numbers of newly constructed properties lying empty in Ireland, there will be little impetus for the development of empty historic buildings which inherently bear a conservation deficit: the financial gap between the investment required and the end worth. The 2011 Census found that the highest number of vacant houses were to be found in the north-west, west and south-west of the country. There is a separate variable available for the number of vacant holiday homes, and the highest number are in Donegal (north-west), Kerry (south-west) and Cork (south). Locals were ultimately priced out of their local property market through the construction of holiday homes in these places, with those from the east having paid for the construction.

Ireland has been one of the countries worst hit by the global financial meltdown, or 'Credit Crunch'. One property developer, Tom McFeely, had become a multi-millionaire through the property developments of his company 'Coalport Developments'. Despite being a former member of the Irish Republican Army, imprisoned in the H-Block for the shooting of a Royal Ulster Constabulary officer and having spent fifty-three days on hunger strike in 1980 in the Maze Prison, he claimed at his bankruptcy hearing in Dublin that he should be treated as a 'British subject who should not be subjected to the Republic of Ireland's "punitive" bankruptcy rules' (O'Leary, 2012). Britain's

bankruptcy rules are more lenient than those in Ireland. In the face of this, McFeely's preferred political mode of identity, 'Britishness', held more benefits for an Irish political nationalist. The source of such political nationalism is rooted in Ireland's independence narrative, and the manner in which this is constructed will be considered in the next chapter.

The Celtic Tiger created a new 'upper class': that of the property developer and speculator, including McFeely. Twentieth century, post-independence Irish class systems generally avoided the standard 'lower', 'middle' and 'upper', as traditionally found in Britain. Instead, descriptive subcategories were adopted, as defined by Whelan and Layte (2004). Ireland joined the European Economic Community (now the European Union) in 1973, and the main social class at that time was 'Semi and unskilled workers not in agriculture', followed by 'Farmers'. This reflected the nature of employment, and the high number of farmers was indicative of the rural and agricultural economy of the country. The rise of the 'Professional and Managerial' class by the year 2000 is indicative of Ireland's strong economic performance at that time, and the development of the country's technology sectors. Farmers and agricultural labourers had become the minority.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has identified how vernacular buildings have been used to construct Irish identity and are appropriated as the 'true' architecture of the 'native' Irish. It explains how this attitude has developed since the 19th century through class differences. The location of Irish identity in the 20th century remained in the west, and museum narratives have been influenced by this tenet of nationalism, as demonstrated with the National Museum's Irish Folklife Collection.

Abandoned vernacular buildings, such as those found at the Deserted Village, represent a particular narrative which underpins Irish nationalism. They have an embodied meaning and the domesticity of this meaning invites people today to accentuate nationalism through their own properties through the removal of render or the application of a stone skin. While this can be seen to embody more Irishness, such actions are having a detrimental impact on historic fabric.

The vernacular architecture of the 'native' Irish continues to act as a mode of expression for nationalism in the present, but this expression has been externalised: it is not a form of architecture which the Irish continue to inhabit in large numbers, yet is marketed to foreign visitors as the native architectural language. In contrast, the various forms of vernacular buildings located in Britain continue to be occupied as domestic dwellings; their conservation part of the wider field of heritage, while land ownership and limits to development preserve the countryside there. A more comprehensive approach to, and further evaluation of, definitions of Irish vernacular architecture would help to extend the scope of buildings classified thus.

The consequences of rural living and a western identity, compounded by the state, have resulted in unsustainable building patterns. This has eroded the character of the countryside through its population with one-off houses. Therefore, the rejection of an urban Irish identity must be explored, and this will be considered in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRUCTING THE IRISH NATION

4.1 Introduction

The 1916 Easter Rising, War of Independence (1919-21) and Civil War (1922-3) were definitive moments in Irish 20th century history. The narrative around these conflicts centres on certain buildings in Dublin, including the General Post Office and the Custom House. Prior to this they were seen as iconic public buildings, built as part of the wider Georgian redevelopment of the city; after independence they became emblematic of Ireland's battle for self-rule. This chapter aims to critique the myths which have evolved around such buildings. By doing so, it demonstrates that Ireland's independence narrative is a continual process, and the politicisation of the very built fabric of these buildings undermines the value of conservation efforts made in the 1920s and the veracity of these buildings in the present day.

The preceding chapters considered how archaeology and vernacular architecture has been used in order to create an Irish identity which sets out the cultural and ethnic differences between the 'natives' and the later 'colonisers'. It was demonstrated that selectivity of the archaeological resource underpinned ethnic nationalism. Evidence of other cultures was and is ignored or when recognised, maligned. The veracity of archaeology as a scientific discipline gives such claims authenticity, however, the influence of nationalism on the discipline is widely acknowledged. The continuation of an 'ethnic' Irish people persists through traditional architecture with subtractive change and modern stone claddings. This serves to 'flag'²⁵ Irish nationalism.

However, consideration needs to be given to the material culture which represents the 'Other': the British. While 'Irishness' can be expressed and underpinned through the archaeological record, the physical manifestation of the British through the historic built environment provides a foil to play one culture off another. The architectural remnants of British rule in Dublin have long been held to reflect a period of colonisation through forms and styles of architecture which were not deemed to be 'native', and also through the

²⁵ The term 'flag' used here takes reference from Billig (1995) and his concept of 'Banal Nationalism'

explicit commemoration of figures from that period of rule. The destruction of buildings and statutes held to be iconic of the colonisation of Ireland by the British helped to sustain Irish nationalism in the 20th century.

Material culture associated with colonisation has long been held to have been actively neglected by the 'native' Irish as part of a process of de-colonisation, or as a manifestation of postcolonialism. McBride (1999) considered the development of nationalistic iconography: images which have come to represent Irishness such as the wolfhound and Virgin Erin amongst others. However, it will be argued here that the treatment of physical manifestations of the British is also a process of underpinning 'Irishness', whereby neglect, directly and indirectly of buildings and monuments is politicised and categorised as a process of 'postcolonialism' through iconoclasm.

Dublin itself has long been symbolically recognised as representing the 'Other' through the mapping of colonial frontiers. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin recall 'that which lies 'beyond the pale' (itself a metaphor invoking one of the earliest delimiting frontiers of colonial Ireland, the fence between the Protestant enclave of Dublin and the wild, Catholic lands beyond) is often defined literally as the other, the dark, the savage and the wild' (2007, p. 99-100), and Quirke's (2008) binary opposites, as discussed in Chapter Two, reflect this physical division. Smith noted "'national' identity...suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong' (1991, p. 9). Equally Dublin, historically considered to be Britain's second city, offers a definite space which the 'natives' could construe as being ideologically and physically occupied by the British. This is reinforced by the presence of 'iconic' public buildings: their form and the material construction of their facades are easily and sharply contrasted with a 'native' building tradition. Kincaid describes the General Post Office, Custom House and Four Courts as 'the physical representation of a hegemonic colonial attempt to carve out a space of civil society, to put the modern state and its institutions on display' (2006, p. 3). These colonial buildings contrast with the subjugated and native identity, and this was explored in the preceding chapters: the continuity of the 'Irish', genetically different and unchanged from the material evidence discerned from pre-history, into the establishment of an independent nation asserted an ethnic identity. The 'Pale' was a contained parcel of land which

could be appropriated by the British and reclaimed from them. However, the ethnic purity of the 'natives' could reside and persist outside of this imagined boundary. The reclamation of Dublin's iconic buildings attests equally to that process of Irish nationalism.

4.2 Easter Rising, 1916

On Easter Monday, 24th April 1916, approximately 1,600 members of the Irish Volunteers (led by Patrick Pearse) and Irish Citizen Army (led by James Connolly) marched through Dublin. Initially their presence did not cause unease: Kee described them as 'attracting particularly little attention on a Bank Holiday when the more normal holiday-makers had gone to the races' (2000, p. 549). However, the intentions of the group were soon made clear: one contingent entered the General Post Office (GPO), Sackville Street²⁶, and dispersed customers and staff by brandishing weapons and firing into the air.

Kee describes how 'amazed by-standers saw Patrick Pearse emerge on to the steps of the portico [of the GPO] and read a proclamation from 'the Provisional Government' (2000, p. 549)'. In the Proclamation of the Irish Republic the self-styled Provisional Government of the Irish Republic declared:

The right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people.

The Proclamation was signed by Thomas J. Clarke, Seán Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Éamonn Ceannt, James Connolly and Joseph Plunkett. The Union Jack was replaced with two flags above the General Post Office: a green flag embossed with a gold harp and the words 'Irish Republic' and a tricolour of green, white and orange, identifying the building as 'the headquarters of the new 'Republic'' (Kee, 2000, p. 549). The colours of the tricolour represented 'green for the Gaelic and Irish tradition, orange for the Unionists, and white for peace between them' (Coogan, 2004, p. 54).

²⁶ Sackville Street was renamed O'Connell Street after the establishment of the Irish Free State

The immediate source of the revolt, which became known as the Easter Rising, lay in the lack of implementation of the Third Home Rule Bill, (which became The Government of Ireland Act 1914) by the British government. In 1801 the Act of Union saw the closure of parliament in Dublin and the merging of Irish polity with Westminster. Governance now lay in London, much to the dismay of the Irish. The Government of Ireland Act 1914 would allow for self-determination, however, the outbreak of the First World War and objections from the Ulster Unionists thwarted its progression. The rebels, capitalising on the declaration that during the First World War 'Ireland's opportunity is England's adversity' (Foster, 1988, p. 479), sought help from England's foe, the Germans. The latter were acknowledged in the Proclamation as the Provisional Government's 'gallant allies in Europe'.

In addition to the GPO, several other key buildings became rebel strongholds, including the Four Courts, Jacob's Biscuit Factory, Boland's Bakery, South Dublin Union, St. Stephen's Green and the College of Surgeons. Of the British army's efforts to quell the Rising, Yeates notes the deficiency of the physical positioning of the General Post Office: 'The area around the GPO was the only place where the British were able to use their artillery with effect, gradually demolishing buildings around the rebel headquarters and forcing the garrison into the evacuation that heralded military defeat' (2011, p. 105).

The Rising lasted for six days, and the rebels were finally defeated by the British Army. Connolly observed that 'the sketchy nature of their planning suggests that most were driven less by a real hope of victory than by the idea of reviving nationalist militancy through a bold gesture' (2002, p. 514). Pearse and his associates were executed at Kilmainham Jail, ultimately becoming martyrs to Irish freedom. However, Yeates cites the emotive responses of Dublin citizens in the aftermath of the Rising whereby 'the sight of Lower Sackville Street with the odour of burnt wood and debris of all kinds was enough to make angels weep. All the old familiar landmarks were gone' and another who went to view the damage 'walk among the ruins...with a feeling of sadness, and at the same time holiness and exultation' (2011, p. 118). Foster also recounts the reception of the Rising where 'many accounts exist that record astonishment, derision and occasional inspiration' (1988, p. 481).

Yeates quantifies the amount of damage to the city's built fabric: '99,420 square yards of buildings were demolished as a result of bombardment and fire, primarily in the Sackville Street area, where 68,900 square yards were destroyed' (2011, p. 109). The GPO was gutted, a veritable skeleton remained with just the portico and structural envelope standing. Even the fabled 'steps' that Pearse had stood on to read the Proclamation were gone. But they had never existed: the building's threshold was always almost level with the street.

4.2.1 The 'steps'

Popular history leads us to believe that Pearse stood on the steps of the General Post Office to read out the Proclamation. Earlier, Kee recounted that Pearse had 'emerge[d] on to the steps'. Somerset Fry claims he 'appeared on the lowest step of the GPO's portico and read out the Proclamation' (1988, p. 286). Pearse's position during that iconic moment is reiterated in popular media where he 'read from the steps' (Duffy, 2009) and 'read out the Proclamation...from its steps' (Anchor House Dublin, 2013). It permeates popular fiction: 'I helped type up the Declaration of Independence for young Pádraig to read on the steps of the GPO' (Keyes, 2012, p. 10). However, more discerning sources claim that Pearse 'stood before the Ionic pillars' (Kiberd, 1996, p. 206) and the General Post Office's official website places him 'under the GPO portico' (An Post, 2010).

Wills (2009) elucidates how the myth of the steps manifested itself. She places the conjuring of the steps with a cartoon which appeared in the *Dublin Opinion* in August 1924: 'The portico appears to be drawn with steps, showing that the story that Pearse had read the Proclamation from the steps of the GPO was already accepted, even though the building had no steps' (2009, p. 145). The cartoon's reference to the General Post Office holding '30,000 patriots in 1916' refers to the need, after the establishment of the Irish Free State, for Irish people to associate with the original Rising which Wills refers to as an 'immense' 'pressure to claim participation'. Kiberd qualifies this as a state-down doctrine, where 'In the early decades, the new leaders soothed a frustrated people with endless recollections of the sacred struggle for independence. Commemorations abounded, the Irish version of this disease being the repeated political taunt "Where were you in 1916?" (1996, p. 552). Such claims of participation will be repeated later in this chapter in relation to

the destruction of Nelson's Pillar, which was located near the General Post Office on O'Connell Street.

Wills does not consider the placement of the building on a plinth further, nor questions the accuracy of the 1924 depiction. The portico has six columns, not four, but these appear to be sitting on a plinth which is higher than street level. The two lines in front of the portico could be interpreted as steps. But they could equally have been a simple underlining of a sketch, or a representation of the tram tracks which originally ran in front of the building, with the trams terminating at the adjacent Nelson's Pillar. However, the plethora of tourist information and guide books does not urge the visitor to stand on the steps: instead they compel the visitor to participate in the nation forming event by touching the bullet holes in the columns: the tangible manifestation of a historic event.

Ferguson recognises how 'the course of history has bestowed an almost mythical status on the simple brick and granite of Dublin's GPO' (2011, p. 32). The illusion of the steps in nationalist imagination ideologically elevates the building: in such a construct Pearse can be pictured standing above an expectant crowd delivering the Proclamation, when in fact a few interested bystanders stopped to listen. The Georgian portico was designed with reference to Neo-classical ideals which took inspiration from classical Greek and Roman architecture. The heavily ordered frontage of the Parthenon in Athens stands on a naturally elevated plinth, overlooking the city. Therefore, the General Post Office, aesthetically of a similar ilk, is raised both ideologically and physically, despite the fact that the Rising itself failed on political grounds.

The General Post Office was originally designed by Armagh architect Francis Johnston, who was in the service of the Board of Works. It cost £50,000 to complete and was opened in 1818. Ferguson describes the building as being composed of 'simple brick and granite' (ibid). The inner rooms were indeed composed of brick, and the politicisation around that particular building material will be considered in detail in Chapter Five. Part of the façade was constructed with granite sourced from Wicklow, Ireland. But the infamous portico was built with British Portland stone. The fact that Ferguson omits this imported material from his description of the building is important. The

General Post Office holds a significant place in the construction of Irish nationalist identity. Ferguson references 'native' buildings materials: the Wicklow granite. British Portland stone was imported: therefore forming part of a tangible relation with Ireland's former colonisers, the British. By omitting the reference to imported stone, the building is somewhat made purer and more Irish.



**Image 26: General Post Office, O'Connell Street, Dublin
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The pediment was surmounted by symbolic statues, designed by Irish sculptor Edward Smyth (who also worked on the Custom House): Hibernia, Mercury and Fidelity. These were damaged during the Rising, and have more recently been replaced by casts. Hibernia is centrally located, grasping a harp in her left hand and sword in her right; Mercury stands to her right, the winged messenger to the gods; and to Hibernia's left stands Fidelity, fundamentally associated with the postal service. In addition to the use of native building materials, the input of Irish craft skill facilitates native custodianship of the General Post Office. Hibernia and the harp are rich in Irish symbolism. Therefore, despite the General Post Office being a British institution it was

imbued with Irishness. However, as the casts have been replaced with replicas one element of intangible heritage, the Irish craft skill, associated with the building has been lost, undermining its authenticity. UNESCO's definition of intangible heritage was cited in Chapter Two and it can be argued here that the traditional craftsmanship of the General Post Office is part of its intangible heritage. However, the word 'traditional' does not immediately accord with Georgian sculpture and art history, and instead conjures images of the vernacular, as discussed in Chapter Three. The following chapter will argue that traditional methods of pointing brickwork in Dublin's domestic Georgian buildings provides a more explicit avenue through which such buildings can be accorded a more 'Irish' status.

The restoration of the General Post Office by the Irish government in the 1920s will be considered later in this chapter, but in the interim it is worth considering that the building is designated as a 'Protected Structure', which under the Planning and Development Act 2000, 'is a structure that a planning authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view'. Section 58 of this Act notes that 'any person who, without lawful authority, causes damage to a protected structure or a proposed protected structure shall be guilty of an offence'. The Irish system of legislative protection does not provide assessments of a building's significance, such as that used in England by *English Heritage*. Buildings there are 'listed', and the accompanying list description was originally only supposed to make clear the identity and location of the building. However, historic building assessors went further than their remit, describing the building and its features. Today, *English Heritage* is attempting to rewrite the list descriptions so that they make the 'significance' of the building more discernible to the lay person (HELM, 2012).

4.2.2 The 'bullet holes'

The significance of the General Post Office in nation forming events is clear from the account, above, of its pivotal role during the 1916 Rising. The damage inflicted upon the General Post Office during that time provides a tangible link to that event, especially the bullet holes (see bottom-left of Image 27) which form a part of the narrative around the building today. What would be interpreted now as an 'offence' under the Planning and Development

Act is deemed part of the buildings significance. Such unintentional memorials are common across Ireland, particularly after the damage inflicted during skirmishes during the War of Independence and Civil War.

The Fountain, in Ardfert, County Kerry was built in 1901 by the landlord of the local 'Big House', Lindsay Talbot-Crosbie, in memory of his brother. Constructed with local red sandstone, the structure incorporates architectural references from the nearby Hiberno-Romanesque cathedral through a rounded arch with incised chevrons. It provided a water supply for the villagers until the 1970s. O'Connor points out that the 'close observer will notice on the south easterly side of it several bullet marks which date from the night of terror in November, 1920, when the notorious Black and Tans opened fire indiscriminately on Ardfert Village' (1999, p. 30) (see Image 28). Despite having originally been conceived as an intentional monument, the bullet holes have imbued the structure with a nation forming narrative, and the involvement of the British Black and Tans accentuates and politicises this further. The bullet holes on the native red sandstone column, which supports the blind arch of Hiberno-Romanesque form makes this even more redolent.



Image 27: 'Bullet holes', General Post Office.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)



Image 28: 'Bullet holes', The Fountain, Ardfert, County Kerry
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Such tangible manifestations of conflict and revolution are by no means an Irish phenomenon. The 1989 overthrow of Romania's communist regime

began in Timișoara. The Opera House became an iconic part of the revolution where the insurgents attempted to form the Romanian Democratic Front on its balcony, a part of the building which holds as much significance there as the portico of the General Post Office in Dublin. The communist government's attempt at military subjugation can be seen on the façade of the building opposite the Opera House (see Image 29): the damage inflicted by artillery remains as a memorial to that the moment in Romania's history, in a manner akin to the bullet holes in the General Post Office.



Image 29: Opera House, Timișoara, Romania. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The Romania Revolution is part of recent history, therefore oral accounts of those events are available: whether there is 'pressure' to be part of the freedom narrative in Timișoara will be dictated by the passage of time and remains to be seen. Of the role of the General Post Office during the 1916 Rising, Wills notes:

The GPO brings together the symbolic story of independent Ireland with the story of Easter week in all its detail. The battle over those details, the determination to get the story right, has overshadowed the larger symbolism of the building ever since 1916. The struggle for accuracy, first by participants and eyewitnesses, and later by writers and historians, attests to the emblematic power of the building. (2009, p. 218-9)

However, in the case of the General Post Office an inadvertent falsity may have been perpetuated, not just with the steps, but with the bullet holes themselves. The General Post Office has 'emblematic power', and the bullet holes provide veracity that attests to such a tangible link with the Rising. Its station is such that when scaffolding was erected around the building in 2005, Reilly reported the following in the *Irish Independent* broadsheet newspaper: '1916 row explodes as An Post claims 'there are no bullet holes in GPO wall''. Apparently during a programmed 'gentle cleaning', Anna McHugh, Head of Corporate Communications of An Post (the Irish Postal Service) responded to a question:

Asked if the "bullet holes" were going to be filled by workmen during restoration work the An Post spokeswoman [McHugh] said the holes were not caused by bullets..."Anyway, it has always been understood in An Post that they were not bullet holes. Remember, the GPO was effectively destroyed in 1916 and was then rebuilt - not re-opening until 1929. Since then there's been climate changes, acid rain, pollution damage and simple weather erosion. There has been substantial renovation and rebuilding work on a number of occasions since 1929.

As noted earlier, the columns are composed of imported British Portland stone, which is an oolitic limestone recognised as being 'softer and more porous' than native limestone, essentially a slight on its robustness (Pavía and Bolton, 2000, p. 62). Woolfitt disagrees and notes that 'Portland is a durable stone with good weathering characteristics and it can be used for all exposures on buildings including elements which must endure the worst of the weather, such as copings and ground level plinths' (2009, p. 105). In a reverse of values, it should be noted that the area where Portland stone is sourced from in Britain is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, and this 'status was achieved because of the site's unique insight into the Earth Sciences as it clearly depicts a geological 'walk through time' spanning the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods' (Jurassic Coast Partnership, 2012). Pavía and Bolton's 2000 publication concerns Irish building materials, and one could construe an implicit denigration of this British stone which is at odds with the high value placed upon its source in Britain through its selection and elevation as 'World Heritage'. McAfee describes the physical make-up of oolitic limestone as:

chemically deposited, which means that calcium carbonate was dissolved by acidic water containing carbon dioxide, and then redeposited amongst sediments. These sediments (grains of sand, small pieces of broken shell, etc.) were near a beach where wave action continually rolled the sediment back and forth until it became coated with calcium carbonate to form egg shapes. (1998, p. 69)

Ashurst (1988) categorises the nature of decay of stone including acid rain and overzealous cleaning, and given that the General Post Office is almost two hundred years old, with a chequered history of damage and destruction, it is unsurprising that the 'holes' in the stonework may be attributed to something other than the battle for Irish freedom. The compressed modular composition of Portland stone could result in pock-mark shapes when subjected to weathering and human intervention. Such shapes could be misconstrued, in the appropriate context, as bullet holes. It is with irony then that Reilly recounts the replacement of the three statues that once adorned the building: Hibernia, Mercury and Fidelity. According to McHugh 'there was bullet damage visible on those statues' (ibid), but, as noted earlier, these have now been replaced with replicas. Therefore, it is not just authentic historic fabric, attributed to an Irish sculptor that has been lost, but also veritable evidence of the Rising.

The 'bullet holes' debate does not appear to have been resolved or developed further. The curator of An Post's museum, Ferguson, cited the popularity of the bullet holes:

Many people find bullet holes in the columns of the GPO every day. However, what they are looking at is often the series of holes which marks the place where special banners were hung in the past on occasions like St. Patrick's Day! The columns and facade of the GPO have been repaired at various times over the last eighty years and while I certainly do not discount the idea that damage from the battle in 1916 is visible in places on the front of the building, I have not myself seen what I am quite certain are bullet holes. (2013)

The association of the damage with Ireland's national holiday, St. Patrick's Day, can be seen as a conciliatory gesture, tangibly linking the holes of the columns with an inherently Irish event. As Venn notes: 'When one pays

attention to the reality of the process whereby knowledge is produced, one finds that a history of errors is far more enlightening than the narrative of untroubled rationality motivating the machinery of the progressive accumulation of knowledge' (2006, p. 45).

In 2011 Bates, reporting in a British newspaper, *The Guardian*, on the first state visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland, described how 'she was driven down O'Connell Street, past the general post office building, which still bears the pockmarks of bullet holes from the 1916 Easter Rebellion, the most potent symbol of a challenge to British rule'. Bates's lack of capitalisation of the General Post Office is noteworthy: reference to this building in Irish historiography would never impugn its significance by referencing the building in anything other than the capitalisation of each word.

The debate does give two valid reasons to disparage Portland stone: for its inability to retain the historic form of the bullet holes in its fabric; and/or: the creation of a falsity through the gradual decay of the stone. Had An Post considered filling in the 'bullet holes', as queried in Reilly's article, such a proposed action would most likely have needed Planning Permission as works affecting the character of the Protected structure or any element of the structure that contributes to its special interest. One could muse over a Conservation Officer's dilemma in considering such a proposal. Theoretically, had the 'bullet holes' been filled in without Planning Permission, An Post may have faced prosecution for committing an offence: unauthorised works to a Protected Structure.

Gamboni is cautious about the application of terminology: 'We are required...to be watchful of labels such as 'work of art', image', 'monument' or 'cultural object', since the allocation or not of a given artefact to one or other of these categories is very much at stake...in particular as a means to claim or deny protection, to condemn or justify destruction' (1997, p. 11). The 'bullet holes' contribute to the General Post Office's special character, and if Gamboni's caution is inverted, the allocation of significance to what could possibly be an untruth and a myth undermines the veracity of other palpable memorials to the chronicles of Irish independence.

The politicisation of historic built fabric has had a substantial impact of the field of architectural conservation, and this will be demonstrated in the next chapter. By unravelling myths, such politicisation can be seen to sit very much in the present. The narrative around nation forming events has thus far been demonstrated in relation to the symbolic General Post Office. But that was not just confined to that particular building in post-independence Ireland: Dublin's Custom House has also played a significant role in asserting Irish identity and demeaning the relics of the British presence on Irish soil.

4.3 The Custom House

The Custom House is located on the north bank of the River Liffey, Dublin. Designed in a European neo-classical style by the eminent architect, James Gandon, it was completed in 1791 after ten years of construction, at a cost of over £200,000. The sculptor was Edward Smyth, who, as noted earlier, also worked on the General Post Office. The building was part of a wider scheme of street improvements in Dublin undertaken by the Wide Street Commissioners from 1757.



Image 30: Custom House, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Referred to by Casey (2005) as a 'trophy building', the principal river front elevation contains three two-storey ranges, the central section housing a portico, and surmounted by a tall and slender dome. This southern elevation was finished almost entirely with British Portland Stone. Southern facing, with the wide band of the River Liffey in the foreground, the original Portland stone frontage would have gleamed in the sunlight, and have been reflected in the waters of the river. The building is also renowned for its twenty-nine bays, which provide a linear dominance in the city-scape.

It was initially used as the headquarters of the Commissioners of Custom and Excise, being located adjacent to Dublin Port. Its predecessor lay further upstream on Essex Quay, and was completed in 1707 to the design of Thomas Burgh and demolished in 1781. Casey describes the 'decades-old campaign to move Dublin's shipping downstream to a site adjacent to the rapidly expanding E suburbs' (2005, p. 141). In the early 20th century it was primarily used by local government and the Commissioners of Public Works (now the Office of Public Works). On 25th May 1921, during the War of Independence, the building was substantially damaged. The Dublin branch of the Irish Republican Army set fire to the Custom House, and the fire raged for several days. Casey (2005) notes a south-easterly wind blew the intensity of the fire away from the principal southern elevation, but Gandon's Portland stone dome, and the rear north and eastern ranges, were almost destroyed. The heat was so intense the Office of Public Works (OPW) (1991) noted that bronze was melted and limestone pulverised. Many of the files associated with the Commissioners of Public Works were lost.

The *Irish Builder and Engineer* displayed the destruction in its publication of June 18th 1921. 'The River front as it appears after the recent fire – it will be observed that the outline, with exception of the dome, is unaltered. The entire stonework of this front, with the east and west facades, has escaped almost entirely free of injury. Timber doors and window sashes, also, for the most part, escaped injury.' Gandon's dome appears to have melted in an undignified manner.

On June 4th 1921 the *Irish Builder and Engineer* reported on 'The Destruction of the Custom House':

On Wednesday of last week the citizens of Dublin, and, later, all those at home and abroad, in sympathy with the Arts, learned with dismay, mingled with incredulity, that Gandon's Custom House, the jewel of Irish architecture, the pearl of the 18th century Renaissance in Ireland, had been destroyed by fire. At first, the citizens refused to credit the report; alas, it was but too rapidly and too surely confirmed by the actual evidence of the eyes (1921, p. 393)

The journal went on to describe the building, and other such edifices in Dublin, as of 'fine architectural distinction that belongs to the period [18th century], a standard now unhappily fallen far from its former high estate' (ibid). There can be little doubt that there were those who also applauded the sacking of the Custom House. But, the Irish Republican Army's publication, the *Bulletin* described the damage as 'a military necessity', implying some form of regret, such as that found with the loss of innocent life during military conflict (cited in Whelan, 2003).

Indirectly, the *Irish Builder and Engineer* acknowledged the associations of such neo-classical architecture with the former ruling classes, also 'now unhappily fallen' (ibid). The aims of the Irish Republican Army were not to destroy a military base, despite the terminology employed, their aim was symbolic: to destroy a building which the British government had used to house a governmental function. The Custom House was the main base of the Commissioners of Public Works, and their tonnes of paper records fuelled the fire. Kohn recalled that 'nationalism demands the nation-state; the creation of the nation-state strengthens nationalism' (cited in Hutchinson and Smith (1994)). The sacking of the Custom House was a deliberate and politically motivated act of destruction which physically manifested the creation of a new political entity.

In an obituary, as such, the 18th June 1921 edition of *The Irish Builder and Engineer* set out to emphasise the input of Irish craftsmen in the finer detailing of the building and the incorporation of Irish symbolism, including the ornamental sculpture representing Irish rivers. On July 2nd the publication further emphasised local contribution by reiterating an article published in what it described as 'our London contemporary, the Architect':

What we have to fear in such a case is that “restoration” may be entrusted to the wrong man...it would be well in every way were the commission put into the hands of an Irishman...whose knowledge of the 18th century traditions of Dublin would be invaluable and enable them to give the local note which is fitting and desirable. (1921, p. 449)

By encouraging the employment of Irishmen and their skills, the building could be imbued with ‘Irishness’ and thus an obligation by custodians to value and maintain such structures as part of their intangible heritage. However, the article also infers that building ‘traditions’ were passed down from over two centuries previous, which plays on the rhetoric considered in Chapters Two and Three.

On the 7th December 1922 Minister Darrell Figgis asked the President of Dáil Éireann, William Cosgrove,

If his attention has been drawn to a Resolution recently passed by the Institute of Architects of Ireland, putting on record its conviction that the partially destroyed public buildings of Dublin, such as the Custom House and the Four Courts, should be most carefully preserved and, as far as possible, restored to their former condition, and that, in the meantime, all necessary steps should be taken to protect the walls and structure generally from injury by weather or otherwise, until restoration is possible? And to ask, further, what measures are being taken to attend to these matters?

The Custom House was not the only iconic building to have been damaged: the Four Courts and General Post Office also had substantial elements destroyed. The restoration of the three was considered together by the government, and the treatment of these latter two buildings will be addressed later. Cosgrove responded that whilst the weather was not deemed to have any significant impact on the buildings, ‘the question of reconstructing the buildings in whole or in part is a very large question which is receiving the careful consideration of the Government’ (ibid).

The impetus to restore the three main public buildings (Custom House, Four Courts and General Post Office) was not just internal. The Free State’s reaction to the destruction was being assessed externally, with the expectation that the newly formed country should see beyond the former political symbolic nature

of the buildings and reach a state of artistic appreciation. In 1922 the *Irish Builder and Engineer's* sister publication in London, the *Builder*, decided to break what they deemed their 'silence' on the matter of restoration:

The responsibility lies with those who seized the building [in this case, the Four Courts] and held it as a hostage, shielding themselves behind its beauty...One of the first acts of the new Ireland on restoration of order should be the rebuilding of the Custom House and Four Courts and we sincerely hope they will be re-erected as they were...it would be a calamity to the world if they are to be lost to us in their original form. (cited in Whelan, 2003, p. 141-2)

The tone is paternalistic: the newly founded state was being told to appreciate the artistic and architectural merits of these buildings by authorities other than the British government. The departure of Ireland from the Union is implicit in the use of 'new': responsibility for restoration was clearly being laid with the Irish. The symbolism of the buildings was recognised through their very destruction, with the Custom House subject to a well-planned attack. The politically motivated damage they suffered made prominent the contested nature of their continued presence on independent soil. These buildings were restored: the new government had a very pragmatic problem of housing its staff. But the very nature of the materials employed in the restorations has been played upon by those seeking to politicise the nature of Irish conservation. Basic economics does not accord with romantic nationalism, but the General Post Office was so emblematic in its association with the 1916 Rising that its reconstruction could not be questioned.

The Custom House, although occupied as part of the Rising, does not have the same nationalistic reverence. Macdonald considers the quandaries raised when the physical manifestation of Nazi 'heritage' is addressed, for example, their rally grounds (2006). She notes that 'such debate shows that heritage and the past are not simply subject to processes of remembering and forgetting, but that participants are also reflexively aware of the past and its possible significance in the present' (2006, p. 12). Attitudes to domestic Georgian buildings and the provenance of their built fabric, brick, will be considered in the following chapter, but debate on materials used to restore the Custom

House shows how conservation became politicised, not in the past, but in the present.

4.3.1 *Portland stone debate*

In her treatment of the reconstruction of public buildings in Dublin during the 1920s, Whelan observes: 'It is notable that in rebuilding the dome, native Ardraccan limestone was used, significantly different from the British Portland stone that had characterised the earlier dome' (2003, p. 141). Why this is 'notable' is not developed in her account, but in the absence of further explanation one could perceive an ulterior motive on behalf of the then Irish government. Casey (2005) on the other hand does not hold back. She admits 'there can be few more tangible expressions of Irish political and social aspirations in the aftermath of Independence' than the Custom House and the Ardraccan versus Portland stone debate (2005, p. 7). Casey asserts that 'economic depression and nationalistic sentiment dictated' the use of a native Irish stone for the reconstruction of the dome over the original British Portland Stone (ibid). Whelan and Casey are both recognized as authorities on this subject, but they do not acknowledge how 'nationalist sentiment' plays on foundation myths, while tedious, and thus less romantic, economic concerns do not accommodate such emotions. However, the use of native stone can be equated to 'economic patriotism' which Hans-Hagen acknowledges 'is not purely defensive in character, but also bears within it the seeds of aggressive nationalism' (2006, p. 58). The manifestation of 'aggressive nationalism' or iconoclasm will be assessed later in this chapter and also in Chapter Five with the destruction of Georgian buildings. Kiberd acknowledges that after independence 'poor leadership and scant resources condemned the nation for years to the status of an artisan economy, featuring local products' (1996, p. 522).

There are several versions of the Portland stone debate, ranging from the Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Public Works and the parliamentary debates of the period. The later literature, such as Casey's, is selective in the presentation of the 'facts'. What is absent from both authors' treatment of the subject is the following fact: The Custom House was 130 years old when it was the subject of attack by the Irish Republican Army. By 1921 the once gleaming Portland Stone would have developed a patina of age: the building is located in the largest city in Ireland, and also sited on a river bank adjacent to the

docks. Marine and atmospheric pollution from the burning of fossil fuels would have adversely affected the surface of the stonework. In addition, the building was subject to two fires: one soon after completion in 1791, and the more destructive fire of 1921. There were certainly elements of economic patriotism in the reconstruction, as demonstrated above with the GPO. However, the choice of Ardraccon stone for the dome was also influenced by an aesthetic and pragmatic approach: the freshly cut, but darker tone, of the Irish stone quite simply looked similar in appearance to the patinated Portland stone in the 1920s.

Such a patina of age is recognised in many cities, in particular Glasgow and Edinburgh, where industrial processes imbued the surface of their native sandstone with a carbonised finish. The removal of such a patina is always controversial as it can destroy historic fabric. Stone develops a harder 'skin' after cutting, as a new environment causes minerals to rise to the new surface. The removal of this 'skin' by chemical or abrasive techniques exposes the weaker interior, thus making it more susceptible to decay. In addition, a patina is part of the character of a historic building, elucidating its age. Therefore, the appearance of the Custom House would have changed significantly since the building was originally constructed.

In anticipation of the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Custom House, the OPW undertook major conservation works in the 1980s. The OPW, reporting on the works in its 1991 Annual Report, noted that there was little recording of the restoration works undertaken in the 1920s. With the availability of non-invasive methods of defect identification, including magnetometric surveys, the presence and location of ferrous metal, traditionally used for cramps, were identified. Ferrous metal cramps were traditionally used to pin stonework together, but once the cramps are exposed to water, they expand causing stonework to crack. Their structural function is lost. The OPW's stated aim was to conceal structural interventions 'so as to preserve the external appearance of the building' (1991, p. 6). While these interventions did not adopt a like-for-like conservation approach in terms of the original construction of the building, they did try to address the well-intentioned, but inappropriate reconstruction works of the 1920s.

The OPW made a decision to clean the stonework, a common and often ill-conceived intervention popular in the second half of the 20th century. Non-abrasive methods were used and this revealed that the dome, which was rebuilt in Ardraccon stone in the 1920s, was markedly different in appearance to the Portland stone of the principal elevations. Prior to the 1980s work, there was little difference in colour between the two materials due to an accumulation of patina on all of the external stonework (Cumming, 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that the use of native Ardraccon stone was not a politically motivated imposition on this civic building undertaken to showcase Irish building materials in contrast to the Portland stone on the remainder of the building, but rather a pragmatic intervention which, at the time, was not visually discernible.

As noted earlier, Portland stone is a limestone, grey-white in appearance, quarried from the Isle of Portland, near Dorset. Ardraccon stone is also a limestone, but darker in appearance, quarried near Ardraccon in County Meath. It was used in the construction of major public buildings, including Leinster House, Dublin, now the seat of the Dáil (Irish Parliament), thus was deemed to be a quality building material.



Image 31: Gandon's Dome in 2008. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Many tourist guides are keen to point out the difference in materials used on the Custom House: *Tourist Information Dublin* states: 'The results of this [1920s] reconstruction can still be seen on the building's exterior today – the dome was rebuilt using Irish Ardraccon limestone which is noticeably darker than the Portland stone used in the original construction' (2009). *Anchor House Dublin* also highlights the differences, however, it recognises the differences in ageing between the two materials: 'The Dome, having collapsed during the fire, was re-instated in every external detail, except that it was constructed using local Ardraccon limestone, rather than English Portland stone which Gandon had used. The stone has since darkened, and contrasts with the surviving Portland stone' (2009).

The Irish architectural discussion forum, *Archiseek*, contains the following thread:

Christine Casey...highlights apparently for the first time that the rebuilding of the drum of the Custom House in Ardbraccan limestone rather than Portland stone was as much down to political pressure as it was financial! (GrahamH, 2005)

The commentator goes on to note that the budget for the project had overrun considerably so cheaper Irish stone was utilised. However, Portland stone had been used 'in significant quantities' for part of the restoration project, but by the time Gandon's dome was being restored, money had run out. The commentator went on to say:

In the book [2005] she comes across as slightly vague as to precisely which was the dominant catalyst: the money or the politics, but in the interview she says: "...there was much debate in the Dáil when it was being repaired, as the politicians didn't want English stone to be used, so they got grey stone from Meath"

The final sentence is of much interest: On the 8th March 1927, near the end of the Custom House reconstruction phase, the use of Irish material for reconstruction topics was raised for the first and only time in the Dáil. Liam Mag Aonghusa²⁷ tabled a question regarding the provenance of stone for the reconstruction of the Custom House. Mag Aonghusa was previously known for his championing of film censorship, representative of conservative Catholic Ireland.²⁸ He asked three questions of the Minister of Finance:

- (a) what number of cubic feet of new Portland stone has been certified for as having been, or to be, used in the reconstruction work at the Custom House, Dublin;
- (b) the number of cubic feet of non-Irish stone used in the bases, columns and capitals of the supports to the dome of the Four Courts;

²⁷ Translation: William Magennis, University Professor of Philosophy at University College Dublin, and Independent TD.

²⁸ In 1923 he stated in the Dáil 'Purity of mind and sanity of outlook upon life were long ago regarded as characteristic of our people. The loose views and the vile lowering of values that belong to other races and other peoples were being forced upon our people through the popularity of the cinematograph'. Thus, Mag Aonghusa's view on the internal and external nature of the racial differences between the Irish and British was clear, and is afforded a wider contextualization in Chapter Two.

(c) if any material for use in those reconstructions of public buildings in Dublin is at present being quarried in any limestone quarry within the Saorstát²⁹.

E.J. Duggan³⁰ replied pragmatically:

The reply to question (a) is about 664 cubic feet; the reply to question (b) is about 1,700 cubic feet; the reply to question (c) is that a large quantity of Irish limestone has already been quarried and used in the reconstruction of these buildings, and no more is required at this stage; therefore none is being quarried at present. The general policy is to use Portland stone only where it is necessary to match the existing work, and to use native stone everywhere else: thus, the dome of the Custom House, formerly constructed of Portland stone, is to be reconstructed in Irish limestone; Tirconail sandstone will be used for the interior of the public hall of the General Post Office; and Kerry sandstone is being used instead of Bath stone in the interior of the Custom House.

The stimulation of the flagging economy was paramount to the new Free State government. The issue of building materials and stimulation of the industry arose with regularity in the *Irish Builder and Engineer*. In February 1921 the secretary of Greenock Housing Council, Scotland, wrote to the journal asking why Irish building materials were not being used to help solve the housing shortage: 'It makes one wonder if there is some sort of embargo against Irish materials' (Campbell, 1921, p. 75). The editor felt the letter was 'very interesting, and shows the difficulty there is in certain parts of England and Scotland in obtaining sufficient supplies of building materials' before going on to list the ample resources that 'every county in Ireland' had to offer (ibid). The idea of an 'embargo' would yet again politicise building materials. But, neither the correspondent nor the editor recognised there was a lack of skilled labour available after the First World War. This, coupled with the housing shortage, led to new building techniques and innovative materials being tried and tested, and is explored by Hayes (2000) in relation to Nottingham and Leicester. It wasn't until later in the year that the journal began to consider the other factors.

²⁹ Saorstát is Irish for 'Free State'

³⁰ Parliamentary Secretary, Department of Finance

On 19th October 1921 architect R.M. Butler delivered a paper to an 'Industrial Conference' in Dublin. The paper, on Irish building materials, was printed in *The Irish Builder and Engineer* three days later. Remarking on the quality of Irish stone, Butler acknowledged that it was cheaper to acquire this material from England and Scotland than to use native supplies. Irish stone was cited as more durable, but not easily worked, and the bad management of Irish quarries meant they were not cost effective or competitive. English stone was shipped to Dublin in blocks which were favoured by local stone cutters as they were less difficult to handle. Butler called for the establishment of an association which could help address these problems, and thus stimulate demand. Therefore, it does not appear that difference in cost between Irish and English materials was at issue during this period when it came to reconstruction.

The Commissioners of Public Works acknowledged the major logistical task which faced them in the restoration of the three sizeable public buildings (Custom House, Four Courts and General Post Office). They reported to the Minister for Finance that 'the greatest strain was put upon our architectural staff by the proceedings under the Damage to Property (Compensation) Act' (1924, p.3). The Commissioners were also tasked with arranging accommodation for the Oireachtas (parliament) in what was then described as 'temporary accommodation' in part of Leinster House and part of the Museum, which were 'not found very satisfactory' (ibid). With consideration for the reconstruction of public buildings, the fire resistance of proposed materials was a reasonable concern, especially after witnessing the loss of documents during the burning of the Custom House.

In 1929 the Commissioners provided an extensive report on the works to the Custom House, which had in the intervening period been progressing. They had set up a contract for the rebuilding of the dome, which was referred to as 'Gandon's Dome', with the capitalisation of the 'D' emphasising the importance of this element to the Commissioners. The terminology used in the report is noteworthy: the Commissioners refer to 'injury' to the stonework. The anthropomorphic term 'injury' was embedded in the 1879 Ancient Monuments Act, and also reused in the 1930 National Monuments Act. The Commissioners clearly saw these buildings as monumental and of value, to which harm had been done.

In 1929 the Commissioners referred to restoration of 'the former dome of wide celebrity as an architectural master-piece' as a 'special problem' (1929, p. 39). They were keen to highlight the care taken during the rebuilding whereby it 'was reinstated in every external detail: - the collected remnants of the injured stone, with the careful main measurements recorded during the taking down, giving the necessary data' (ibid). It is at this juncture that they admit, quite simply, the deviation from the original: 'the new stonework was, however, carried out in Ardbraccan limestone instead of the former Portland stone'.

The Commissioners 1928-29 *Annual Report* proudly featured a photograph of the completed Custom House on its first page. Although in black and white, it is apparent that there is little discernible difference in colour between the walls and the dome. Another image of the West Front also reveals quite dark stonework, revealing a patina of age. The Custom House is the main feature of the report, which supplies a history of the building, and a comprehensive review of the restoration works which had been on-going for the previous five years. The report declares the Custom House is 'undoubtedly one of the most beautiful buildings belonging to that period of architecture, not only in Ireland, but in the world' (1929, p. 6).

The damage caused by the 1921 fire is relayed in detail: the temperatures required to have reduced stone to dust: 1850°F. It also refers to three different stone types used in the original construction: Portland, granite and the locally sourced calp limestone. For the first time, the actual costs of undertaking the restoration project were revealed. The first estimate in October 1921 was £1,000,000. This would have involved complete restoration of the buildings, matching original materials like for like, and also updating the interior 'to suit modern requirements'. The Commissioners noted that this first estimate was at the very most, conservative. However, the report that 'less radical measures' were adopted, and 'the building has been restored with the minimum of change in the outer walls' (1929, p. 7). Clearly the external appearance was paramount: there was sensitivity to public perception. However, internally much could be altered as part of the wider modernisation of the building.

The Commissioners were keen to point out how the restoration of the building had actually saved money: 'Had razing and rebuilding been carried out the

cost at present day prices might have been some £700,000 as compared with less than £300,000 the actual cost of restoration' (ibid). What is most telling is the next sentence in the report: 'But apart from the question of cost, the methods adopted have preserved an irreplaceable and unique national monument' (ibid). The National Monuments Act was passed in 1930, with the Bill having been through parliament in 1929. The Commissioners were the custodians of Ancient, and later, National Monuments. The terminology it employed is in keeping with the parliamentary debates of that year. Therefore, the Custom House was being regarded as having as much importance as the ancient monuments which it was custodian of, for example, the Hill of Tara, Newgrange and Knowth. Thus, the use of other terms, such as 'injury' must be also regarded in that context.

It is clear that decisions were made based on conservation economics and not necessarily on politics, and the different appearance of the native and imported stone has only come to the fore after the 1980s cleaning. It is relatively easy to construe a nationalist bias on the basis of these archival sources: in 1927 the Commissioners reported on the extensive use of 'Irish Sandstone' and 'Irish Marble' to reconstruct the north stairs, but this can be attributed to that particular department demonstrating to central government that they were partaking in the economic stimulation of native building industries. They were also keen to highlight the improvements they had made to Gandon's original design, transforming dark cellars into 'well-lighted lower ground floor rooms' (1927, p. 6). They also established an intangible Irish link to the building.

Earlier in this chapter the replacement of the General Post Office's statues was noted. The statue of 'Commerce' which had surmounted the Custom House dome was replaced with a replica. However, the Commissioners emphasised the provenance of the craft skills involved: 'the new carvings, faithful replicas of Edward Smyth's renowned work, were executed by Dublin sculptors' (1929, p. 39). The restoration of the Custom House has been politicised in the present with the source of the dome's stone forming a central part in that narrative. The narrative is based on a combination of myth and the misinterpretation of actions taken during conservation and restoration: the reference to Irish crafts skills can equally be interpreted as the creation of jobs and the importance of this was noted in Chapter Two where employment

schemes were based around the provision of work on archaeological excavations. Chapter Two also considered the apparent infallibility of the chamber roof of the Neolithic tomb of Newgrange, and the succeeding chapter demonstrated that the pastiche stonework of modern houses is based on the appearance of vernacular buildings in the present, and not as originally conceived. And quite simply, the use of native marbles and craft skills asserted the 'Irishness' of these buildings in a manner which was not unkind to the spirit of conservation. Therefore, this shows how the analysis of myths removes the nationalistic layers attributed to historic built fabric: the politics at play abounded, but with a small rather than a large 'P'. However, overt nationalistic acts of destruction, such as that which will be seen shortly with Nelson's Pillar can be argued to have put nationalistic politics to the forefront of conservation and restoration.

4.4 General Post Office: restoration

The destruction of the General Post Office was considered earlier in this chapter, with the Wicklow granite and Portland stone façade remaining the only intact element of Johnston's original design. Restoration plans were drawn up by the (then) British government, but little was done other than to clear out debris. It fell upon the newly formed Irish Free State to reconstruct the building, and this was undertaken by the Commissioners of Public Works between 1924-9. Internally the floor plan was significantly altered and, as the Post Office had been extensively remodelled just before the 1916 Rising, little remains of Johnson's original design.

Wills recalls that 'the restoration was dogged by delays (they were still clearing the site in 1926) and complaints that builders and contractors were not taking their national duty seriously enough – there were wrangles over using Portland rather than Irish stone, and optimistic suggestions that the building works could be used to solve the problem of unemployment' (2009, p. 140). The significance of the building as a representation of the Easter Rising is accentuated by the two words 'national' and 'duty' which Wills employs: the first representing the national worth of the building, and the second, a call to arms, only in this case it is the battle of restoration that is being fought. Whelan recognised the significance of restoring the General Post Office, Four Courts and Custom House, whereby:

The reconstruction of these buildings, which had come to be seen in certain circles as symbols of British rule, formed an important part of government policy and considerable sums of what was scarce public money was expended in the process. (2003, p. 140)

The General Post Office had transcended from its hegemonic roots to a symbol of Irish independence:

The origins of the state resided in the burnt-out building on O'Connell Street...the idea of noble sacrifice at the GPO was firmly established as a foundation stone of the new Irish polity. (Wills, 2009, p. 139)

In relation to employment, plans drawn up in 1926 indicate the following marbles were sourced for internal finishes: Connemara Green, Kilkenny Grey Fossil and Cork Red. As with the Custom House, the emphasis was on the use of native materials and this was also taken as an opportunity to improve the interior of the building and increase fire protection standards. Such use would imbue the building with a more native characteristic and also stimulate the building industry. The Commissioners' *Annual Report* emphasised the origin of the materials used, whereby the 'large public office on the ground floor, which contains much decorative work in Saorstát stone and marbles and ornamental plasterwork' (1928, p. 9). The use of the term 'Saorstát', 'as Gaeilge' (in Irish), emphasises the origin of the materials. As with the Custom House, the choice of materials for the external public face and internal private space appears to have dictated decisions around their origins. The bullet holes are not mentioned by the Commissioners in their reports on the restoration, however, such damage posed logistical problems in relation to the Four Courts.

4.5 Four Courts

The Four Courts was initially designed by Thomas Cooley, and James Gandon took over the project after Cooley's death in 1784. It was constructed between 1776 and 1802, and accommodated the courts of Chancery, King's Bench, Exchequer and Common Pleas, hence the name 'Four Courts'. Casey, sensitive to 'gendered readings', notes that 'Boldness, depth, virility and power are attributes ascribed to the composition and massing of the Four Courts. By contrast, the Custom House has attracted appellations of poise, femininity, alchemy and finesse' (2005, p. 92-3). The building, as originally conceived, is

composed of a rusticated Wicklow granite base, granite façade, with Portland stone utilised for the 'portico, the peristyle of the drum, and to balustrades, statutory and carved ornaments in the central block and arcaded screens' (ibid). The dome is finished with copper, and is more squat in form than Gandon's other conception on the Custom House.



Image 32: Four Courts, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Although occupied as a key building during the 1916 Rising, the Four Courts was to suffer its most significant damage during the Civil War. It was occupied by the rebels who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty which resulted in the partition of Ireland: six counties in Ulster were to remain under British rule, and this has resulted in the 'Troubles' which have occupied a major place in politics between the Irish and British since. The provisional Irish government attempted to dislodge the rebels through armed force, with Whelan citing the 'bombardment of the building by rifle, machine gun and artillery fire' (2003, p. 117), but it was the detonation of a mine by the rebels which resulted in the most destruction. Aside from the loss of historic built fabric, the explosion 'destroy[ed] the national archives' (Bevan, 2006, p. 71). The *Public Records Office* was housed in part of the Four Courts, and indeed many archives were lost. The intentionality of the latter destruction was contested by rebels:

'Others suggest it was calculated cultural murder by the anti-treaty IRA' (Bevan, 2006, p. 70). He cites Tom Garvin's argument that "'effectively it constituted an attempt to murder the nation as a collective entity with a collective memory" by an authoritarian and anti-intellectual IRA' (ibid).

The fact that such architectural destruction was perpetuated by two opposing sides, both of whom were Irish, has resulted in a certain anonymity in the restoration of the building. In contrast to the restoration of the dome of the Custom House, the dome of the Four Courts is not contested. In 1925 the Commissioners of Public Works outlined the detailed work being undertaken at the Four Courts. As with the Custom House and General Post Office, this was seen as a principal public building worthy of reestablishment. Whilst the restoration of Gandon's Dome has demonstrably excited controversy, the dome of the Four Courts fared much worse in terms of modern conservation philosophy. In the main hall the eight granite faced piers were strengthened with 'cement mortar to the heart of the piers' and the dome was repaired with concrete, the use of which 'was decided upon chiefly because of its fire resisting and durable qualities and little maintenance expenditure necessary upon concrete structures as compared with either wood or steel framing' (1925, p. 5). The columns supporting the Dome were also renewed with patches of concrete. These materials are now deemed to be inappropriate for use with historic fabric, but in the late 19th century and for much of the 20th century, concrete and cement were heralded for their durable qualities, at odds with the subservient nature now appreciated of lime mortar and natural walling materials. They were extensively used on archaeological sites, as outlined in the Chapter Two, and deemed fitting at the time.

Sensitivity as to the source of materials was not as pronounced with the Four Courts, with the engineer's drawings for the repair of the east and west pavilions stating that 'all beams rolled steel, to British Engineering Standards' (1925). Therefore, after independence, the Free State government was pragmatically using the same construction standards as Britain. The composition of the dome itself was far more anonymous: it was originally finished with copper, a material which, over time, develops a verdigris, or green, patina. Sand cast and rolled lead sheet has similarly unidentifiable properties, which is why it has and is so vulnerable to theft: when stripped from historic buildings it can be easily melted down and resold. In the absence

of features such as the original craftsperson's marks, and more recently, the application of *SmartWater* which makes it forensically identifiable (English Heritage, 2011) such metals cannot be attributed to a definite source. Therefore, the reinstatement of the copper on the dome does not attract the same emotive and nationalistic response as the Custom House.

Earlier, Whelan described the renovation assault to which the Four Courts was subjected. In 1925 the Commissioners of Public Works described how 'The twenty-four Corinthian columns forming the peristyle of the Dome were renewed, and the old caps which were damaged by shell and rifle fire and by age were reversed and reset, and missing parts renewed in concrete' (1925, p. 5). In a manner not much different to lead and copper, concrete is an anonymous, manmade material. It is the modern form of such concrete buildings that provokes debate in terms of architectural value, the proposed demolition of the Birmingham's Central Library, UK, being one of note (BBC News, b., 2012). The columns of the dome were neatly turned around, with the fresh original faces displayed for public aesthetics. Therefore, while the damage (apparently) inflicted upon the columns of the General Post Office during the 1916 Rising has become part of a nationalistic and nation forming narrative, the damage inflicted upon the columns of the Four Courts was perpetuated by the Irish themselves, and therefore does not hold the same appeal.

4.6 The appeal of stone

In 1922 the *Irish Builder and Engineer* stated: 'In Ireland, the question of brickwork is of some considerable though not primary interest. This is a stone country, and therefore, so long as masons are to be obtained in the country districts, masonry will hold its own' (Anon, 1922). The veracity of brick can be identified scientifically in several ways, but colour is the most popular means, for example the buff tones of London stock brick. Stone has a very specific nomenclature and a local identity, and this is not just particular to Ireland as the quote above may imply. The White Cliffs of Dover are immediately associated with England, and their location on a principal shipping route between Dover and mainland Europe imbues more meaning through a sense of arrival and departure.

With regard to Finland's historic built heritage, Ringbom asks 'How can a style of architecture be 'national'?' (2000, p. 231). He contends that preservation of historic buildings and 'the appearance of a building could be assumed in a diffuse sense to express something of the character of the race and the nation' (ibid). Granite was a dominant walling material used to express Finish national character in architecture. However, the stone was not generally composed of ashlar masonry: the 1901-03 student union building of 'Poli', Helsinki; the Helsinki Telephone Company Building (1903) and Tampere Cathedral (1903-07) are all constructed with random rubble or rusticated granite. Casey defines 'rustication' as the 'treatment of joints and/or faces of masonry to give the effect of strength' (2005, p. 715).

Ringbom contended that the finish of the Church of Saint John, Tampere 'manifests one of the leading principles of the late 19th century's agenda of architectural reform, namely the tendency to underline genuinely crafted, chiselled quality, in other words, the building as a unique and individual creation as opposed to a mechanically replicated pattern' (2000, p. 235). The implications of a similar approach to Irish vernacular buildings was addressed in Chapter Three, however, it is worth considering now in the context of new architecture in mid-20th century Dublin. Ringbom goes on to note what influence art nouveau had on such buildings, with the simplification of walling textures. The effect of international architectural trends will be considered in Chapter Five, whereby the Modernist Movement played a significant role in the destruction of Georgian buildings. Lowenthal acknowledged the emphasis placed on 'native or ethnic achievements' at the expense of material culture associated with the British, and the use of "'peasant-Gaelic' architecture' after independence (1985, p. 334). However, Ireland did embrace international trends, and the Department of Industry and Commerce's new headquarters on Kildare Street, Dublin, signified this. It was completed in 1942, in a flattened, linear Art-Deco style, and the full height window above the principal entrance can be seen in Image 33 below. The sculptural relief was designed and executed by Gabriel Hayes (1909-1978), and represented a wide range of Irish trade from the aviation, tobacco, shipbuilding industries, to name but a few. Therefore, Ireland can be seen to embrace international architectural movements.



**Image 33: Department of Industry and Commerce, Kildare Street, Dublin
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The choice of Hayes as the sculptor was not a straight-forward process: the director of the project insisted on only employing men, and Hayes was female. Hayes was finally selected when the rest of the male opposition were gradually excluded through their submission of poor and weak designs, ineptness, and in one case, death. Hayes was thus the last choice (Government of Ireland, 1992).

However, in a decision not unlike the economic patriotism debate cited earlier in relation to imported and native stone, the initial design competition was 'limited to architects of Irish nationality and architects of other nationalities resident in An Saorstát for the past ten years' (Government of Ireland, 1992, p. 13). The façade is composed of Ballyedmonduff granite, sourced from the Dublin mountains. Granite, in Finland's case, could be immediately recognised as 'native'. To build with random rubble, or apply a rusticated finish, imbued character and strength in public buildings. In Ireland, the repeated local and regional nomenclature of stone in departmental reports and government debates reinforced the independence of the nation. The Ardbraccan of the Custom House and the Connemara Green, Kilkenny Grey Fossil and Cork Red

marbles of the General Post Office all gave independent and post-colonial Ireland possession and ownership of these buildings.

Ireland is not the only county to attribute such weight to the veracity of materials, nor is such sentiment confined to the early 20th century. In 2000 Morris reported in *The Guardian* that the managing director of the British Museum (which had been subject to a £97 million millennium remodelling) was 'deceived by a stonemason who used cheaper French stone for the [south] portico' instead of the native Portland Stone with which the remainder of the original building was constructed. 'Heritage experts were aghast when the scaffolding around the portico was removed to expose a startling mismatch in colour between the new startlingly light-coloured stone and the much darker rest of the building' (ibid). The contractor's rationale behind the provenance of the stone was reportedly financial with the French Anstrude stone costing £100,000 less than the native material.

Ackroyd (2004) recalled the significance of Portland stone to English sentiment:

The Portland stone of the [London] Customs House and St Pancras Old Church has a diagonal bedding which reflects the currents of the ocean; there are ancient oyster shells within the texture of Mansion House and the British Museum. Seaweed can still be seen in the greyish marble of Waterloo Station, and the force of hurricanes may be detected in the 'chatter-marked' stone of pedestrian subways.

Historical animosity between Britain and France was born out in the politics of selection. The French stone represented an interloper into a British institution. However, French Caen stone (a Jurassic limestone) has been used in Britain since the Norman period. The Normans imported the stone for the construction of Norwich Castle and Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral and the Tower of London. But, in the case of the British Museum the Anstrude stone was juxtaposed with the Portland, creating an immediate and disparate visual and physical contrast.

The introduction of native Ardbraccan stone to a British public building (constructed with Portland stone) located on Irish soil, is recalled in memory as a categorical political act. As with the contractor at the British Museum, such decisions are pragmatic, but not necessarily based on moral or political

reasoning. The various textures which characterise the stone, so admired by Ackroyd in a British context, have resulted in the new contested nature of the 'bullet holes' in the General Post Office. The power of historic fabric and architectural form has so far been recognised in this and preceding chapters. But, the reproduction of the independence narrative in other media needs to be considered.

4.7 Framing

The image of the General Post Office and Nelson's Pillar were popularly reproduced in picture postcards in the early 20th century. Both were iconic buildings, located adjacent to each other and easily captured in the same frame due to the wide thoroughfare of Sackville Street. The Neo-classical scale of both structures eclipsed buildings in the background, and dwarfed figures, trams, horses and carts in the foreground. The buildings on the east side of the street (opposite the General Post Office), also Georgian, did not provide the same vertical counterpart to the Pillar as the ionic columns of the General Post Office's portico.

Photographs of the damage to the General Post Office after the Easter Rising are now produced as postcards. Indeed, Yeates recalls that during the First World War, images of the 1916 Easter Rising were used by the Germans: 'It was no wonder that pictures of bombed-out Dublin streets quickly appeared in German propaganda posters, newsreels and postcards' (2011, p. 109). In 1996 the movie *Michael Collins* repeatedly uses the destruction of the General Post Office, and afterwards its burnt out shell, as a backdrop to many scenes. The building forms a focal point, terminating the view down North Earl Street. However, North Earl Street lies to the north: Nelson's Pillar, and more recently the 'Spire', occupy that vista. The General Post Office's portico, since inception, was never framed by a street. Whilst this movie is evidently employing artistic licence, it underpins the continual significance of the portico: despite the violence and language used in the movie it was granted a PG (Parental Guidance) certificate by the *Irish Film Censorship*, and conversely rated '15' by the equivalent British body. Therefore, it reaches a younger audience in Ireland, which again demonstrates the continual nature of nationalism in Ireland.

Woodward (2002) considers the emotive value of ruins: structures diminished over time, with a palpable patina of age, for example the Classical buildings of Rome and Greece. The destruction wrought by the Rising, War of Independence and Civil War immediately imbued the buildings with an air of antiquity: their neo-classical character was suddenly aged and the great gaps in the window openings creating a gaunt and ethereal quality.

Brett recalled that 'the technology of representation is not a neutral medium through which, transparently, a message passes unaltered from sender to receiver. It is itself a participant in the creation of the meaning' (1996, p. 61). The images of Dublin after the conflicts were initially taken as photographs, but their reproduction today as picture postcards by national institutions reiterates the independence narrative. The destruction of these buildings is sold as a commodity. Kitzinger noted 'the most powerful frame is perhaps the hardest to detect – because it comes across as a transparent description of reality' (2007, p. 151). These images show architectural destruction, but they are anchored by discernible features: the portico of the General Post Office and Nelson's Pillar. Kitzinger contends that 'frames are ways of organizing reality. They invite (but do not necessarily determine) particular ways of understanding the world' (2007, p. 157). These images are conveying an overthrow of power, with the authority of state buildings reduced to ruins, overlooked by key elements of that colonial architecture. Such ruins implicitly indicate the passage of time, forcing these buildings into antiquity.

The myths behind destruction and reconstruction during the independence period were explored earlier. One could argue that such myths are also frames which are difficult to detect: the 'steps', 'bullet holes' and 'Portland stone'. They are so bound into the tangible representation of historic events that they rarely questioned. However, there are certain events and acts of destruction which cannot be denied: namely the toppling of Nelson's Pillar in 1966 and the repainting of post boxes in postcolonial Ireland.

Warnke (cited in Gamboni) outlined the differences between 'iconoclasms "from above" and "from below"...the former, corresponding to the interests of those in power, tended to lead to a replacement of what they destroy by new symbols and to the prohibition of further destruction, whereas the latter, springing from political impotence, mostly failed to establish new symbols of

their own' (1997, p. 23). Therefore, one could compare the aftermath of those responsible for destroying those archives, with that of that of the destruction of Nelson's Pillar. The intention of the occupiers of the Four Courts is contested: they denied that they bobby-trapped the archives in the Four Courts, leading to the irrevocable loss of important Irish documents, citing it as an accident. They distanced themselves from such destruction, which bordered on recklessness and vandalism.

4.8 'Up went Nelson'

1966 was a fervent year in Ireland. It was the 50th anniversary of the failed 1916 Easter Rising. The *Irish Builder and Engineer* reported on the commemoration of the event, with the editor clearly frustrated at the number and variety of tangible memorials which were springing up, unrestrained (1966, p. 129). Across the country anticipation was building, with an expectation that something momentous was going to happen to mark the fifty years that had passed since the reading of the Proclamation in front of, or under the portico of, the General Post Office. On the night of 8th March 1966, a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army planted explosives around Nelson's Pillar on O'Connell Street. The events of that night were memorialised in the quickly improvised song that was to dominate the Irish singles chart in the following weeks: 'Up went Nelson', by the *Go Lucky Four*.

Reporting in *The Irish Times* in the aftermath of the bombing, O'Brien observed: 'Senior police officers who had the more congenial, less exacting, job of looking stately and supervising the work, were found, on close view, to be grinning broadly. "An absolutely expert job – not a window broken in the Post Office – perfect", said one. Said another: "I just met a man who was out in Easter Week [1916]. He tried to blow it up then and didn't succeed." And a third: "They will go wild about this in America".' (1966, p. 1). The relaxed nature of the police officers can be determined from a photograph taken at the time. The officers are framed by the General Post Office on the left, and the stump of the Pillar on the right: their posture is perhaps posed. Photographs abound with crowds held back by barriers, but their presence demonstrates the popular interest generated by the destruction. The comedy of the situation was exacerbated by the official Irish army: it carried out a controlled explosion to demolish the stump left from the Pillar. The 'controlled' blast blew out many windows in O'Connell Street.

The report of the second police officer in 1966 is noteworthy. In the aftermath of the bombing of the Pillar several people were arrested, but no-one was ever charged. However, there are many who claim to have been involved. This accords with the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising, when many claimed (rightly or wrongly) involvement in that event, and this was demonstrated earlier by Wills who noted that 'In the aftermath of the civil war the pressure to claim participation in the Rising was immense' and she underlined this with the cartoon in the *Dublin Opinion* where 'This building held 30,000 patriots in 1916' (2009, p. 145). There is a clear need to associate with the formation of the Irish nation, and also with nation affirming events such as the bombing of Nelson's Pillar.

Bevan states that 'Attacks on the buildings...of an oppressor by the oppressed have...become the lingua franca of nationalist and regionalist terror groups' (2006, p. 67). Chapter Five will consider how the term 'vandalism' was cited to describe the loss of the Georgian buildings in Dublin. Such destruction is seen in the present as politically motivated attacks on historic fabric associated with the British. The bombing of the Pillar, composed of Portland stone, was an act of iconoclasm. The naming of this action by the Irish Republican Army as 'Operation Humpty Dumpty' further denigrated the person to whom it was dedicated, and added to the mirth of the destruction. It was noted earlier that Gamboni is cautious about the attribution of value: 'We are required...to be watchful of labels such as 'work of art', image', 'monument' or 'cultural object', since the allocation or not of a given artefact to one or other of these categories is very much at stake...in particular as a means to claim or deny protection, to condemn or justify destruction' (1997, p. 11). The Pillar is an explicit reference to British colonial power, and Nelson an 'icon' of the British Empire. The destruction of the Pillar is rife with symbolism, as is the denigration of the person, Nelson. The police officers reported to be 'grinning broadly' concur with Gamboni's idea of widespread endorsement of such acts. He states: 'the use of 'iconoclasm' and 'iconoclast' is compatible with neutrality and even – at least in the metaphorical sense – with approval' (1997, p. 18). O'Brien's report featured on the front page of *The Irish Times*. The humorous nature of her account could also be deemed as 'approval' of the act of destruction. Overall, in the case of Nelson's Pillar, the motive for destruction was clear.

The debasing of other building forms across Ireland associated with the British also provides a platform for ridicule. O'Connell et al. listed some of these myths:

The large country house on the outskirts of the town has 365 windows; some of these were blocked up in the 18th century as a result of the window tax. Only when the house was finished was it discovered that it had been built without a staircase... the ruined barracks look odd as they do because the building was mistakenly erected to plans intended for a barracks in India. (1974, p. 22-23)

Although O'Connell recognises the intention of such demeaning folklore, these stories, whether true or otherwise, permeate Irish travel guides today. Gamboni asks 'And what of the countless other instances of official or covert attacks directed by both individuals and groups against works of art, monuments and images? Were they essentially disparate actions that could only be classified as all of a type by reference to the nature or status of their targets?' (1997, p. 10). Perhaps such myths serve as 'covert attacks', and the redecoration of post boxes in Ireland's postcolonial period attests to the power of such actions.

4.9 Post boxes

Billig (1995) coined the term 'banal nationalism', and the above could also be deemed to comply with that. Billig argued that 'daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition' (1995, p. 6). Other more explicit expressions of banal nationalism include the treatment of post boxes which were repainted from red to green after 1922. However, more recently, these have ceased to be 'banal'. In 1996 the IRA planted a bomb in a Manchester post box, and later fifteen boxes were sealed in the city to prevent further attacks. In 2008 Sinn Féin spokesperson Sean Crowe was resolute about the continued presence of these in the streetscape: 'It sends the wrong message for an independent state to have the crown on public post boxes. They are pieces of antiquity but using the boxes is sending the wrong signal. They are a throwback to old imperial days and are symbols of the past' (Myles, 2008). This is contrasted with the value attributed to red British post boxes by Westcott: 'For many communities, they are a reassuring presence - a cheerful, red splash that has stood out on British streets for a more than a century and a half' (2013).

The Irish postal service, An Post, has categorically stated the boxes will remain:

They are part of our history...they were bequeathed to us as part of the postal services and are part of our culture and heritage. We have no plans to make changes on the basis of any pseudo-Republican clap-trap. You might as well say that the fine building that is the GPO in O'Connell Street should be demolished to make way for some modern Republican building. (Myles, 2008)

A year later An Post published a history of the Irish post box, with the subtitle '*Silent servant and symbol of the state*'. It is with some irony that the author, Ferguson, reports: 'Curiously enough, it is likely that...very early post boxes would have felt particularly at home in today's green paint for the colour of all these early boxes – in Britain and in Ireland – was a shade of olive or bronze green!' (2009, p. 17) It was only after 1874 that post boxes were painted red for ease of locating. In a similar manner to the nomenclature of stone, discussed earlier, 'colour' is clearly another device or hook by which to convey identity and appropriation.



**Image 34: Post box, Kildare Street, Dublin.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The finishes on the British counterparts are intensely regulated. In 2002 *English Heritage* and *Royal Mail* jointly published a policy statement for 'Royal Mail Letter Boxes' which referred to them as 'national icons'. The statement is categorical about decoration: 'All Royal Mail letter boxes will be painted in standard red and black livery. No variation is allowed, except in very exceptional circumstances where there are genuine historical reasons, such as the use of green and black livery for some early boxes or Air Force blue for surviving George VI airmail boxes' (2002, p. 4). The colour reference number and paint type is specified from which they should not be deviated. However, exceptions were made to this rule during the London Olympic Games 2012: where:

Royal Mail has painted more than 100 of its iconic and much-loved red post boxes gold to celebrate every Team GB and ParalympicsGB gold medal won during the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The post boxes will remain permanently gold to

mark the achievements of the athletes and the historic Games (Royal Mail, 2012).

Post boxes were often photographed with the Union Jack, and people posing adjacent. This is a nation forming event, and the public participation is akin to those posing next to the 'bullet holes' in the columns of the General Post Office.

In August 2012 Rob Smith was arrested on suspicion of criminal damage for painting a post box in Lymington, Hampshire, gold: Royal Mail had recognised the Olympic achievement of sailor Ben Ainslie by painting a post box gold in his home town of Restronguet, Cornwall. However, in 2012 Ainslie was living in Lymington, and Smith commemorated his Olympic medals by redecorating a post box himself. Royal Mail referred to Mr Smith's actions as 'vandalism', but eventually agreed to strip and repaint the Lymington post box gold themselves, and the charges against Smith were dropped (BBC News, a., 2012). In Chapter Two Senior's act of 'vandalism' at Newgrange was considered an 'illegal act'. Smith's repainting of the post box was also considered by the object's custodians as 'vandalism'. But Smith was not doing what Eire would consider an 'illegal act': 'strike[ing] out against a cultic object as a private act of rebellion' (1986, p. 152). He was protesting at Royal Mail's selection criteria: the absence of value and special privilege apparent in Lymington created by the omission of a layer of paint.

Ferguson considers the speed in which the Irish post boxes were redecorated after 1922: 'What other measure could convey so quickly and universally the significance of the events that had taken place?' (2009, p. 42). That sentence could equally be applied to Royal Mail's application of 'Olympic' gold paint. The Irish paint colour was officially labelled 'Saorstát Green'. The provenance of materials was once again a theme for new post boxes, with Ferguson noting these 'were to be of "Southern Ireland manufacture wherever practicable"' (2009, p. 43). The redecoration included the incorporation in the letters S.E. for Soarstát Éireann and P&T for Post and Telegraphs. The former was sometimes set in a 'Celtic' stylised circle with a harp over. However, the redecoration could not obscure the raised Royal ciphers representing Queen Victoria and King Edward VII: Westcott notes that 'some of the royal ciphers on postboxes in Valletta (the capital of Malta) were ground off on government

orders' (2013). Malta gained independence from Britain in 1964, and in a manner similar to Ireland, such acts provided a tangible representation of independence. However, the removal of the royal insignia constitutes a state sanctioned irreversible act of destruction, and less of a palimpsest than the Irish equivalent.

Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Ireland was cited earlier, where she was driven past 'the pockmarks of bullet holes' on the General Post Office. Olivia O'Leary delivered a speech at a gala event in Dublin attended by the Queen and two thousand other guests. Referring to the Irish sensitivity to symbols she recalled that 'the post box that I post my letters in in Dun Laoghaire has only a thin green coat of paint over the old red crown' (2011). O'Leary's speech was well received, and her commentary comes across as relatively benign, given the congenial context in which it was delivered. However, the colour of post boxes is a flash point in Northern Ireland.

In early 2009 Quinn reported that the chairperson of the *Northern Ireland Assembly's Culture, Arts and Leisure* watchdog committee had been told to apologise for comments he made about the painting of post boxes in Northern Ireland. Barry McElduff, a Sinn Féin Member of the Legislative Assembly, reportedly defended those who had redecorated the red Royal Mail boxes in green. The paper described how fifty such post boxes had been painted in Strabane in September 2008. The following month a contractor was dispatched by Royal Mail to Newcastle, Co. Down to reapply the red livery. McElduff purportedly responded 'It is good that people are making peaceful political statements' (ibid). Earlier in this chapter, the colour of the flags hoisted above the General Post Office during the 1916 Easter Rising was acknowledged: the tricolour containing bands of green, white and orange. In certain parts of republican Northern Ireland kerbs are painted with the same livery in order to define territory and mark allegiances, and Billig makes 'a distinction between the waved and unwaved flag' (1995, p. 10). It is with some irony that the white of the tricolour originally stood for peace between the native Irish and the loyalist and Protestant Ulster Unionists: the republicans fly this symbol of peace and reconciliation, with its 'orange' band, as a reverent symbol of Irish nationalism.

The use of Saorstát Green in the early 1920s was hugely symbolic: post boxes can be found in relatively every village, town and city in the country. Ferguson (2009) recognises how the redecoration quickly conveyed a message across the country. The application of a redolently Irish colour over symbols of the British Crown conveyed subjugation by the Irish. Had the post boxes been removed this 'conquest' would not have remained chronicled as it is today.

It should also be noted that new post boxes designed after 1922 took their references from the existing: the basic Doric style pillar continued, but with a simplified cap and the incorporation of the Irish motifs, noted earlier. Ferguson (ibid) recalled an undated quote from the Irish author M.J. MacManus: 'That painting pillar-boxes green is a big step towards the establishment of an Irish Republic'. Young, of the *British Letter Box Study Group*, identified the commodification of the red post box: 'Walk into any tourist shop and you will see post boxes replicated in miniature as souvenirs' (cited in Westcott, 2013). Equally, the green post box and telephone box is packaged and sold, complete with the royal insignia (Image 35). This act of state sponsored vandalism, influenced by Irish nationalism, is packaged and sold, and this is similar to any repurposing after conquest.



**Image 35: 'Souvenir Die Cast Metal Telephone Box & Post Box'.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The 'independence' narrative behind the General Post Office, and its associated postal receptacles, sustains Billig's 'banal nationalism' and accords with Gamboni's 'approval'. Kincaid described the function of the General Post Office which 'symbolizes the worldwide network of information that colonialism helped produce and regulate. It renders the colony communicative with the wider world, intelligible within a colonial imagination' (2006, p. 1-2). In Ireland's postcolonial period the General Post Office and its post boxes equally inspired the nationalist imagination, and continues to do so through the persistence of nationalism, as noted earlier with reference to Northern Ireland. These are explicit symbols which reaffirm Irish national identity, reinforced by publications such as that from An Post's museum, *Letters, Lives and Liberty* (Ferguson, 2011). Many post boxes are given legal protection through their designation as 'Protected Structures' under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, establishing their value in the present.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the destruction and restoration of particular buildings have been instilled with politics, namely Irish nationalism, since the 1916 Rising. The assessment of the very fabric of construction exposes the creation of suitable pasts, and assists in untangling myths. Whilst the construction of a nation forming narrative is of interest, it must be recognised that these contribute to militant nationalism in areas which remain contested: Northern Ireland. In addition, the Ardbraccan stone debate has politicised what can now be construed as the earnest conservation endeavours of the 1920s Irish government. The perceived nationalist innuendo has flavoured architectural conservation with politics. However, intangible heritage has been lost through restoration projects and falsities constructed through the nation forming narrative. It is not just the form of the buildings that are contested, but their very built fabric. This intimation has not been assisted by explicit acts of iconoclasm during the Ireland's formative years.

The following chapter will consider the destruction of domestic Georgian buildings in 1960s and 70s Dublin, and will assess the impact that the actions discussed in this chapter have had on the wider field of architectural conservation. The buildings thus far considered are iconic: significant edifices of civic functions, and diminutive post boxes on street corners. The debates

surrounding the treatment of these structures in the 20th century highlight the narrative of Irish nationalism. However, the dominant historical architecture of Dublin is Georgian, and this has fared less well, physically and theoretically.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GEORGIAN DENIAL

5.1 Introduction

'Heritage' is contested and inherently political: heritage values are fluid, not fixed. The assignment of heritage value involves a process of selection, and ultimately, neglect, whereby material culture can either be ignored or denigrated, while other modes of heritage representation are elevated to underpin the identity of a nation. Hall contends that 'we should think of The Heritage as a discursive practice. It is one of the ways in which the nation slowly constructs for itself a sort of collective social memory' (2005, p. 25). The previous chapter demonstrated how in the 1920s the Irish government was behaving as a proud custodian of civic Georgian buildings. However, it was established that some actions are politicised post-event in order to reinforce nationalism through architectural destruction. By the 1960s attitudes towards domestic Georgian buildings were palpably charged with nationalism, and the iconoclastic act of destroying Nelson's Pillar politicised the destruction of buildings associated with British rule.

This chapter explores why Georgian architecture is contested in the Irish context. It will consider the threats to this architecture in the 20th century and assess the impact that politics, class and the very material of construction, brick, has had on attitudes towards such buildings. The aim of this chapter is to test the hypothesis that the destruction of Irish Georgian architecture from the 1960s onwards is retrospectively ascribed nationalistic overtones due to associations with other iconoclastic gestures during the same period in Dublin, and that this is influencing the definition of the wider field of architectural conservation, resulting in the incremental loss of elements of this and other periods of architectural heritage.

5.2 Dublin

After the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, Dublin became Ireland's capital city, and it presently has a population of over one million. Dublin has over 9000 historic buildings listed on the statutory Record of Protected Structures, representing 25% of the national stock of Protected Structures (Keogan, 2012). There are eleven designated Architectural

Conservation Areas, with an additional twenty-one proposed. In 2010 'The Historic City of Dublin' was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List with the 'Justification of Outstanding Universal Value' citing the city's 18th century development as 'a significant moment in the history of the Age of Enlightenment' in addition to its 'extraordinary contribution to world literature'. The number of buildings and areas afforded legislative protection would indicate that Dublin's built heritage is valued in the present. However, Dublin's architecture has not always been accorded such appreciation: symbols of the British Empire have been unceremoniously removed by acts of iconoclasm, such as the destruction of Nelson's Pillar stirred by such intent.

The motive for destruction of Georgian architecture in Dublin is proposed by O'Leary whereby:

The nationalist idyll is a rural one. Much of Dublin's character and its beauty bears the stamp of the old Empire...So we allowed the destruction of so much of these beautiful squares out of a sort of nationalist spite. Even now there is a reluctance among politicians to say proudly that they're Dubs. Look at ministers like Seamus Brennan, or Mary Hannifin, or Brian Lennihan. They can't wait to tell you that they're really from Galway, or Tipperary, or Athlone. Charlie Haughey needed to add Derry and Mayo to his background; and Bertie Ahern never forgets to add Cork to his. And in the Dáil, up to recently, speech after speech spoke of Mayo and Kerry and Cork as the real Ireland. (2008)

This can be seen as a manifestation of the location of Irish cultural identity in the west, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, and McManus recalls the consequences of this, where 'urban centres were not...truly Irish but were seen as "foreign" imports' (2005, p. 237).

Considering the development of the Irish economy in the second half of the 20th century, Kindred noted: 'This recent phase has seen damaging redevelopment and the emergence of conservation following periods of disregard or even hostility to its 18th century heritage, in what had unjustly and for political reasons been called 'colonial' architecture' (2009, p. 48). In 2001 Nowlan recollected of that period 'our record as a community, in relation to the care of our architectural heritage, in Dublin and elsewhere in the country was not a very happy one. Too often historic quarters and their

houses were seen as 'obstacles to progress' or were regarded, even by high office holders, as 'the relics of colonialism'. Ypma stated 'The rush to 'modernize', unfortunately, was also a rush to knock down everything belonging to the past', and he identified the manner in which Dublin's Georgian buildings were regarded after independence: 'The country's impressive collection of Georgian buildings was of little interest to the independent Irish, to whom it represented no more than a symbol of English Protestant exploitation' (1998, p. 13). Many authors note the large numbers of Georgian buildings lost: Casey cites the destruction of 'great chunks of the Georgian streetscape in the 1960s-70s' (2005, p. 76) and Lowenthal aligns destruction in Dublin with nationalism whereby 'Many remade histories are narrowly chauvinist, excluding the alien so as to emphasize native or ethnic achievements...the Irish have pulled down or left unprotected fine Georgian buildings, viewed askance as symbols of English oppression' (1985, p. 334). Therefore, architectural destruction is politicised through association with Irish nationalism and postcolonialism.

Ireland, considered one of England's first colonies (Young, 2001), gained dominion status in 1922, and the Irish Free State was born. The restoration of civic Georgian buildings, most notably, the General Post Office, Custom House and Four Courts was considered in the previous chapter. Generally, the built fabric of the city was redolent of classical architecture found in other British cities: commercial premises and domestic terraces were designed in the 18th and early 19th century in the Georgian neo-classical style, interspersed with mid to late 19th century Victorian developments and suburbs. Moore is unambiguous about the reception of Dublin in the mid-20th century: 'It is ... not difficult to understand how landscapes that are particularly unique, legible and imageable within a particular city, will become sites of contestation during economic and physical restructuring' (2007, p. 97). The contested nature of stone was deliberated in the previous chapter, but those debates surrounded particular civic Georgian buildings, where the government recognised their value and was proactively restoring them in the first decade after the establishment of the Free State.

O'Brien contended that:

Perhaps one reason why Dublin's complex past has been neglected is because the new state had no postcolonial model to follow. As

Ireland was one of the first countries to break from the British Empire³¹ there was no well-worn path to tread, and many postcolonial cities have difficulties being embraced by their new state. (2012, p. 234)

This would suggest that, Dublin as a former colonial city, lived in and enjoyed by the colonisers before their apparent expulsion in 1922, was to bear the brunt of nationalistic and iconoclastic sentiment. The 'natives' were left with this legacy of dissonant built heritage and the process of independence could be expressed through the destruction of tangible links to the British Empire during a period of post-colonialism. The literature, cited above, would indicate this condition, but it can be somewhat dispelled through the aforementioned 1920s restoration projects. However, there are other factors that must be given due consideration whilst considering architectural destruction in Dublin. These include trends in International Modernism, craft skills and the conservation deficit.

5.3 Georgian Dublin

Georgian architecture is a style associated with the Age of Enlightenment. The proportions of void to mass piercing and arrangement of features such as windows, doors and architectural embellishments follow classical principles. The 'Georgian' period derives its name from the reigning Hanoverian monarchs in Britain between 1714 to 1830 – George I, II, III and IV. Ireland was then under British rule: the ruling classes in Dublin were influenced by the prevailing fashions in London and they commissioned the construction of buildings in Dublin which matched those of metropolitan and provincial Britain. An early 18th century model of town planning, the Wide Street Commissioners, resulted in the literal widening of Dublin's medieval streets and the development of Georgian squares, terraces and civic edifices.

There is a reflected regionalism within Georgian architecture – Edinburgh is recognised as displaying a distinctive Scottish Georgian style, while in Dublin Ypma acknowledged the Irish Georgian as being 'less pompous and more ascetic than its English counterpart' and a 'simpler, perhaps purer translational

³¹ O'Brien refers to Ireland as being one of the first countries to 'break from the British Empire', but it should be qualified that this occurred in the modern period, whereas British colonies in America broke from British rule in the late 18th century - the United States Declaration of Independence was adopted on 4 July 1776. The identification of periods of architectural history reflects these political changes. For example, Calloway (2012) categorises the American Colonial (1607- 1780) and Federal (1780-1850) architectural styles.

of the classical heritage on which the Georgian 'rule of taste' was based' (1998, p. 13). While comparing and contrasting the Georgian buildings of Dublin and Edinburgh, Rowan identifies 'the fundamental difference in the principal building material' between the two cities, brick and stone respectively: 'Where Dublin wins over Edinburgh is in the colour of its brick streets and granite pavements since the northern city built of a uniform sandstone can look dour and monochrome on all but the brightest of days' (2010, p. 263). There is a notable lack of stone ornamentation, for example string courses, on the external, 'public', faces of non-civic Irish Georgian buildings. Instead, Rowan finds that external ornamental expression occurs with the 'classical door case, formed in limestone and surmounted by a fanlight', but 'the fronts of Georgian town houses are shallow and flat, a row of them appearing as thin cliffs of brickwork punched with holes for the windows and almost entirely lacking in formal architectural modelling' (ibid). Image 36 illustrates the linear dominance of the frontages, unrelieved by a roofline, the latter concealed behind a high parapet; while Image 37 reveals the ornate internal plasterwork of 63 Merrion Square, and Images 38 and 39 the interior of one Georgian building at National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Lucey describes this as 'the severe reticence of the façade concealing richly ornamented interior spaces' and contrasts this with the architectural ornamentation with British Georgian 'articulated facades and unarticulated interiors' (2012, p. 198). Therefore, the elements of 'Irish Georgian' can be defined and granted a separate identity to British counterparts.



Image 36: Merrion Square East, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)



Image 37: 63 Merrion Square, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)



**Image 38 and 39: plasterwork, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The external restraint of Irish Georgian is cited in the UNESCO World Heritage Site justification which recalls that 'Dublin is a city of grand civic buildings and public spaces; and residences with plain brick exteriors and private, almost secret, interiors of high quality, perhaps a reflection of the social tensions of the city' (2010). The latter part of this statement is indicative of a form of conflict: 'the social tension', which accords with Hall's earlier contention that 'heritage' in nationalism can be used to construct the 'collective social memory'. However, Shaffrey Associates Architects et al recall the following restrictions promoted in the Wide Streets Commissioners minutes books & dispositions: 'Requirements were to do with materials used – brick and stone – and in some cases to the proportions of windows, and to the proscription (in some cases) against projections, house signs of various types, all with a mind to uniform street façades made up of many smaller speculative projects' (2010, p. 8). The notion of 'social tension' is somewhat dispelled by the uncovering of opposition to such austere regulations 'by site owners in Dame street [who] took legal action (1780s) against the commission about its overly particular strictures, [which] included nothing on brick or façade treatment as defined by the remit for this project' (ibid). Therefore, the austere Georgian

facades can be considered part of a strict aesthetic plan for the city, which were relieved by the grandeur of the iconic public buildings considered in Chapter Four. Today, such an urban design concept is recognised as the 'putty and gems' approach (Llewelyn-Davies, 2000), and the appropriation of the late 18th century design approach to politics is indicative of the manner in which the destruction of some of Georgian Dublin is linked with Irish nationalism.

5.3.1 Domestic Georgian – dissonant heritage

After the closure of the Dublin parliament in 1801, the centre of the political and administrative world shifted across the Irish Sea to London, and part of the socio-political world moved with it. Georgian terraces were vacated by the upper classes, over the next 150 years to be replaced by an influx from rural areas, especially after the Famine of the 1840s. Kearns (1982) charts the increase in population of Dublin from 1841 to 1900 as rising from 236 000 to 290 000. He observes:

The city was ill-prepared to cope with the burden, and competition for shelter became intense. The conspicuously spacious Georgian houses provided an alternative to new construction. When the houses depreciated in value, they were obtained by slum landlords who converted them to tenements for the poor. Some once elegant houses were inhabited by as many as sixty to eighty occupants. (1982, p. 272)

Therefore, run down Georgian buildings were appropriated by landlords and let out to the deprived: 'under such conditions of human stress and greed, utility replaced aesthetics' (ibid).

During the Second World War many cities in Britain were bombed by the Germans. Stamp (2007) notes the German Baedeker Tourist Guide to Britain was used by Hitler to select targets for the aerial bombardment referred to as the Baedeker raids: by destroying what was deemed heritage, and thus of value to the British, Hitler intended to damage national morale. Much architectural heritage was lost during the war. As a reaction to that loss protective legislation was drawn up, and the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act made provision for the creation of 'lists' of buildings of architectural or historic significance, to be protected. Jokilehto (1999) is mindful of the different approaches taken to post-war reconstruction: Coventry, UK,

embraced the Modernist movement whilst preserving the ruins of its Cathedral; whereas the reconstruction of the historic core of Warsaw, Poland 'was justified by its national significance for the identity of the Polish people' (1999, p. 285). Stubbs reflects upon the approach taken in Dresden, Germany where 'the quick replacement of traditional town architecture after World War II left the historic town with architecture that was little admired', but the Frauenkirche was eventually restored from its mound of rubble in the 1990s and early 2000s (2009, p. 113).

Ireland had remained neutral during World War II, and aside from bombs being dropped inadvertently on Dublin by disoriented German pilots, Dublin entered the second half of the 20th century with much of its Georgian building stock intact. However, these were occupied by the destitute of Dublin society. In Ireland's post-independence period these Georgian buildings remained in their maligned slum form. McQuillan recognises that 'few developing countries can afford the luxury of preserving their urban and architectural patrimony when the more pressing problems of hunger, disease, unemployment, and housing shortages seem insurmountable' (1990, p. 395). The Irish Free State had not managed to prosper after achieving independence, and the inadequacy of housing in Dublin was representative of a myriad of social problems.

Concern was often expressed to and by the authorities about the state of the Georgian domestic slums. Comparably, formal stone buildings in San Juan, Puerto Rico were occupied by migrants from the countryside after the Revolution in 1964. McQuillan notes the new tenants' intrinsic lack of knowledge of stone building care where they

... knew little about maintaining eaves troughs and down drains. The result was that rain water poured from the roofs, ran down the walls, seeped through the coral limestone into the ends of the mangrove poles which acted as joists, and eventually the ceilings and roofs collapsed and buildings folded inwards like a house of cards. (1990, p. 404)

Equally, Georgian buildings were maintained by neither landlords nor tenants, resulting in their gradual deterioration. Kearns (1994) is conscious of the hesitancy amongst tenants to call on their landlords to undertake repairs for

fear that the execution of remedial works would result in a rent increase. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that a tangible aspect of this decline was dramatically articulated; namely the high profile deaths of occupants. On the 17th June 1963 *The Irish Times* reported that an emergency meeting was held by Dublin Corporation: four people had recently been killed by falling tenements, and the most recent victims, two young girls, incited public furore and panic. 155 other families had left their homes, deemed unfit for human habitation (Joyce, 1963).

A flurry of questions was tabled during the Oral Answers session of the Dáil on the 18th June 1963, including concern over the condition, monitoring and responsibility for those 'old and dangerous buildings'. Deputy William Norton asked the Minister for Local Government, Neil T. Blaney, 'If, for example, a person owns a building and it is found by the Corporation to be unsafe, must the person take steps to demolish the building for the safety of the occupiers or have the Corporation power to do so and to recover the costs?' to which Blaney simply confirmed 'Yes'. Thus the animosity towards Georgian buildings was not just attributable to nationalistic sentiment: the deaths of eight year old Linda Byrne and her nine year old friend Marie Varley were instrumental in provoking animosity, and it was clear that the government had power to demolish unsafe Georgian buildings.

Tunbridge and Ashworth define 'dissonance in heritage' as concerning 'discordance or a lack of agreement and consistency...it keeps at the forefront the ideas of discrepancy and incongruity' (1996, p. 20). This discrepancy and incongruity is reflected in the occupation of the once fine Georgian houses by the lower classes of Irish society which represented to the occupants a continued oppression: they were confined in squalor, overcrowded into what were originally elegant abodes of the colonisers. The incompatibility of this situation was manifest: despite these buildings having been designed with an eclectic Irish Georgian style, they were conceived through British imperialism: polite architecture represented the British Protestant upper classes, a division of society to which the native Catholic Irish did not apparently ascribe, or from which they were excluded. Their transformation into tenements resulted in the subdivision of rooms in order to accommodate more families, and the poverty of the inhabitants meant them stripping away the interiors to burn for firewood (Kearns, 1994): they were active in deconstructing the buildings with

their bare hands to provide for basic human necessities. The intimacy of these small acts of destruction, carried out in the 19th and early 20th century, for personal rather than nationalist needs, is poignant when compared to the destruction of the General Post Office in 1916 and Custom House in 1921.

5.3.2 'Belted earls'

In 1957, six years before the fatalities, Desmond Guinness wrote to *The Irish Times*, asking:

As the Georgian Society seems to have lapsed, has anyone any objection to my restarting it? Our aims are to bring the photographic records up to date, publish further volumes of the Georgian Society's books, and fight for the preservation of what is left of Georgian architecture in Ireland. (Irish Architectural Archive, 2012)

Guinness was of Protestant Anglo-Irish extraction, with an Etonian and Oxford education. The disparity between his appreciation for Georgian buildings and the deplorable conditions which the less fortunate continued to suffer was profound. However, this particular discord between the natives and the Anglo-Irish was not new: Guinness wanted to 'restart' the Georgian Society. Harbison, Potterton and Sheehy recount the 'growth of interest in Irish Georgian architecture' in the early 20th century (1978, p. 235). This led to the establishment of *The Georgian Society* in 1909 'for the purpose of listing, photographing and studying the Georgian architecture of Dublin' (ibid), and when its work was completed it disbanded in 1915. This was twenty-eight years prior to the establishment of Britain's *Georgian Group* in 1937, and thirteen years before Ireland's independence. Therefore, one could marvel at such early foresight and appreciation. However, Foster identifies the agenda behind its establishment as a 'deliberately reactionary celebration of Georgian style' which lay in contrast to those who sought 'their cultural heritage in an exclusively Gaelic past' (1988, p. 167). Therefore, the foundation of the first *Georgian Society* can also be seen as an act of British nationalism effected by the 'colonisers' in the early 20th century. This contestation persists in Northern Ireland, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, with the repainting of post boxes.

Georgian terraces were also occupied by commercial concerns in the mid-20th century. In 1961 the *Irish Georgian Society* announced 'another attack is being made upon our Dublin architectural heritage, the worst attack so far. It is now likely that the existing façade of the E.S.B. [Electricity Supply Board]

offices in Lower Fitzwilliam Street will be demolished. This will leave a horrible gap in what is surely the longest stretch of Georgian domestic architecture in existence' (Guinness, 1961). Within that article, Guinness quotes from a letter printed in the British newspaper, *The Guardian*: 'The wide question is simply this: is there a public opinion in Ireland sufficiently concerned to put a stop to this vandalism, and if not, why not?' (ibid).



**Image 40: E.S.B. offices in Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

The terminology of 'attack' and 'vandalism' is combative, expressing a foreign intervention. The destruction was not reactive to slum conditions: this national utility company was to replace the Georgian terrace with a block influenced by the Modern movement, a style which will be considered further in this chapter. Therefore, the destruction could be criticised more thoroughly as it did not involve the emotive interests of deprived slum dwellers. Reporting on the ongoing situation on Lower Fitzwilliam Street, the journal the *Irish Builder and Engineer* reported on the 'struggle which has roused partisans amongst a large body of admirers of the city's Georgian architecture' (1964). A modern building would be easier and less costly to maintain than an 18th century converted domestic terrace, therefore the commercial rationale behind the destruction is discernible. In Image 40 the Georgian buildings on the right hand side depict a social hierarchy with the grand entrance hall on the ground floor, the piano nobile (Italian for the notable floor or level in a classical

building) on the first floor, with the diminutive height of the top floor uttering its low social status, usually reserved for the servant quarters. Such buildings are difficult to convert to commercial use given the numerous interventions required and the constraints of spaces. The ESB buildings to the left replaced much of the Georgian terrace. The massing of the façade made a subtle gesture towards the site's predecessors, with the cornice running at the same height as the originals adjacent, and the roof a diminutive and utilitarian feature designed to accommodate mechanical and electrical equipment: the subservient nature of Georgian roofscapes was noted earlier in Image 36. However, the Georgian hierarchy of floors has been omitted: these are all of the same dimensions indicating commercial utilitarianism. In a placatory gesture by the ESB, one of the surviving Georgian buildings in that terrace was turned into 'No. 29, the Georgian House Museum' and remains a visitor attraction today. However, (see Image 41) it has lost its original windows: the glazing is devoid of imperfections which indicate originality, and the window frames have 'horns'. The mortar pointing apparent on the Mount Street Upper elevation (left) contains traces of a particularly Irish method of tuck pointing, while the Fitzwilliam Street elevation (right) has been repointed with an inappropriate cement based mortar. The importance of these subtleties will be highlighted later in this chapter, but, for the interim indicate the loss of authenticity in a building which served to appease the loss of most of the original Georgian terrace.



Image 41: No. 29, the 'Georgian House Museum', Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Foster acknowledged the survival of 'remnants of the Anglo-Irish, or an idea of them based on the Dublin Horse Show and the *Irish Georgian Society*' in the 1970s (1988, p. 594). In 1970 the divergence of priorities was cemented by what has become popularly known as the 'belted earls' speech delivered by Kevin Boland (Minister of State) to the Irish parliament. Boland described members of the *Irish Georgian Society* as a 'consortium of belted earls and their ladies and left wing intellectuals', essentially exuding more British than Irish principles and values. Whilst sardonically acknowledging the 'aesthetic needs' of the Georgian preservation movement, he dismissed their concerns as lesser than the basic housing needs of those residing in the deprivation of inner city Georgian buildings. Boland clarified his stance on architectural conservation:

I make no apology whatever for saying that the physical needs of the people must get priority over the aesthetic needs of Lord and Lady Guinness and Deputies Dr. FitzGerald, Dr. Browne, Desmond and all the other Deputy Doctors that we have. I make no apology for saying that, desirable as is the preservation of old buildings of architectural merit, while I am Minister for Local Government and while the needs of the people for housing, water and sewerage

services remain unfulfilled, not one penny of the capital allocation that it is possible to make available to my Department will be spent on such preservation, desirable as it is. That is not to say that every possible effort should not be made to conserve as much as is feasible of this part of our national heritage for as long as possible.

This speech defined Boland's antipathy for Georgian architecture and the individuals and groups who were campaigning to save it. In view of the above, the influence of nationalism on the historic built environment can be considered in the following ways. The conservation of architectural heritage ultimately involves a 'conservation deficit'. This means the conservation of, for example, a Georgian building will cost more than a new build due to the specialist skills and traditional materials required for a conservation project. The money invested in conserving a historic building will not necessarily produce a financial return. Kearns (1982 and 1983) considered factors other than nationalism behind this destruction, namely the conservation gap and in 1986 Mawhinney was arguing for the establishment of conservation grant schemes at local authority level to alleviate the financial burden of conservation. Such monetary considerations have been assessed more recently in the British context by Burman, Pickard and Taylor (1995) and Allison et al. (1996). The additional resources required for conservation are widely recognised. In the UK this 'gap' is often filled through centrally and locally financed grant schemes, for example the *Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme* and the *Townscape Heritage Initiative*. In addition there is provision for 'enabling development' under UK planning laws. This allows for appropriate new development to take place at or near a historic building, and some of the profit from that development goes directly towards bridging the financial gap in the conservation of the historic building.

The newly formed Irish state had a struggling economy and thus priorities other than the upkeep of its architectural heritage: the prevalence of such prioritisations was cited earlier by McQuillan. Guinness recognised the need for additional resources, and set about raising funds and sourcing volunteers to restore Georgian buildings, not just in Dublin, but around the Republic. Earl (2003) contends there are three M's in the process of conservation: motive, means and manner. The *Irish Georgian Society's* motivation was the threat of destruction: they were reactionary. The 'means' were contested between the

government and its financial priorities, and the proactive fundraising undertaken by the Society. The manner concerns the more pedantic matters of conservation techniques and the type of materials employed. However, the importance of the 'manner' will shortly be seen as the more definitive issue in conservation today.

Guinness was an 'outsider', as observed by Boland. Guinness himself recognised his 'external-ness', noting that he had hoped his surname, the same as the iconic Irish stout, would endear him better to the cause of saving Georgian buildings in Dublin (Saving Our Heritage, 2008). Boland's reference to the 'deputy doctors' was an allusion to Trinity College Dublin, where prohibition of the enrolment of Catholics was only lifted in 1970. The elite and outsiders were pushing for conservation, and this did not align itself with traditional Irish nationalism. McQuillan acknowledged that 'two fundamental elements are necessary in any successful proposal for preservation: the cultural rationale must be strong and the economic feasibility must be clear' (1990, p. 395). In the case of Georgian Dublin, neither were high on the government's agenda. However, in Chapter Two the 'cultural rationale' and 'economic feasibility' were apparent in the reconstruction of Newgrange during the same period of architectural destruction in Dublin. The influence of nationalism and the potential for tourism income from such archaeological sites provided a just rationale for the works undertaken there.

Hughes and Hughes (2009) identify the issues faced in conservation when this is instigated by 'outsiders' or 'do-gooders' through an investigation into the dynamics of heritage protection and identity in the context of Transylvania's Saxon villages. Many of the German inhabitants left after the fall of Communism in 1989. The value placed on the historic buildings by the remaining Saxon population conflicted with the new Romanian and Roma inhabitants. This engagement is further compounded by the input of external bodies, for example the *Institute of Historic Building Conservation*, UK and associated university students behaving paternally towards inhabitants by 'teaching' good conservation practice in Romania (ibid). With the Irish Free State only having been established in 1922, Boland was clearly not appreciative of new forms of heritage value being handed down by outsiders and the Protestant academic elite from Trinity College Dublin. The lack of Irish cultural patrimony for the *Irish Georgian Society* resonates today: Zuelow

blurs the nomenclature of the equivalent amenity body in England and refers to it as the '*English Georgian Society*' as if it were the sister of the Irish body (2009, p. 141). It is in fact called '*The Georgian Group*', and such inadvertent categorisations result in the ongoing contestation of cultural ownership. However, Zuelow's lack of accuracy can be treated as minor in comparison to the misquotations which permeate the narrative for the battle for Georgian Dublin.

5.3.3 '*I was glad to see them go. They stand for everything I hate.*'

2008 marked the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the resurrected *Irish Georgian Society*. *The Irish Times* editorial acknowledged the half-century of preservation endeavours undertaken by the Society, and remarked on the changes in attitudes occurring during that period: 'Certainly, no Government Minister nowadays would be so ignorant and prejudiced as one of their predecessors, who said in the wake of two fine Georgian houses on Dublin's Kildare Place being demolished in 1958: "I was glad to see them go. They stood for everything I hate"' (2008).

The latter two short sentences permeate the literature relating to destruction of Georgian buildings in Dublin from the 1960s to the present. 'I was glad to see them go. They stand for everything I hate' first appeared in the editorial of the *Irish Georgian Society's* bulletin in 1961. Guinness was calling for a halt to the proposed demolition of the Fitzwilliam Street Electricity Supply Board Georgian buildings, as discussed earlier. Lamenting the lack of public or governmental awareness and concern for the proposed destruction, Guinness recalled hearing these two sentences being uttered by an unnamed government minister in 1957: 'It was, after all, a Minister of State who said to a visitor discussing the demolition of some Georgian buildings in Kildare Street, "I was glad to see them go. They stand for everything I hate."' (1961). The date of the quote differs between *The Irish Times* and Guinness by one year.

Kearns (1982) recalled these words as did McDonald (1985), however, both considered how property speculation, both by British and Irish developers, fuelled the destruction of historic buildings. This, they recognised, was coupled with the wave of Modernism in terms of architectural design which had taken hold of other European cities. The political inclination of destruction, however,

continued to be cited, with Lowenthal taking this further: he quotes Ireland's Minister of Culture in 1961 as uttering the now-infamous lines (1985, p. 334). Lowenthal credited his source for this quote to Guinness, as quoted in Kearns (1982). The unnamed government minister had become the Minister of Culture, and the date of the quotation has shifted from 1958, to 1957, now 1961. It is no longer a conversation overheard on a street corner in Dublin, but now a shocking and paradoxical opinion expressed by a minister whose department should have officially been concerned with caring for the national heritage. In 2006 Bevan reiterated the quote, citing Kearns (1982) as the source. Bevan reflected on the 'steady peacetime erosion of Georgian Dublin' whereby 'its severity was marked and, perhaps, reflected a continuing antipathy to the imported style: 'I was glad to see them go, they stand for everything I hate', said one Irish Culture Minister, Desmond Guinness' (2006, p. 69). Guinness, of course, was the founder of the *Irish Georgian Society*, the group set up to appreciate and combat this destruction, and Bevan's erroneous attribution of the quote clearly confused matters further.

In the literature, this quote has become legendary, almost mythical. As with any myth, it is embellished through retelling. Together with Boland's 'belted earls' speech, it is crucial in reinforcing the politics behind the destruction of Georgian buildings in the latter half of the 20th century. However, McDonald was unequivocal about such views, which he attributes to 'narrow-minded nationalists' (1985, p. 12).

But, the above demonstrates how these observations have become widely representative of that period, and provide legitimacy for the rationale behind architectural destruction. In 2008 O'Leary recalled 'we allowed the destruction of so much of these beautiful squares out of a sort of nationalist spite'. However, in the same year *The Irish Times* pushed the antipathy for Georgian buildings into the past, with 'stand' becoming the past tense (author's emphasis): 'They stood for everything I hate'. As noted earlier, Dublin's Georgian heritage is currently subject to much legislative protection, which is indicative of the fluid nature of heritage values.

5.4 Motive, means and manner

If Earl's 'motive, means and manner' are inverted in order to consider the rationale behind architectural destruction, then the above demonstrates the

widely held perception that the motive behind destruction was nationalism. However, other less controversial factors must be given consideration. In the first decade after the establishment of the Irish Free State the Irish government instigated a programme of repair and restoration of the city's 'gems' which had become victims of the independence battle. Gems are precious stones: the 'putty' within which they are set is subservient and sacrificial, just like the lime mortar which beds brick and stone. Georgian domestic and commercial buildings were the 'putty' that married the city together, and the initial loss of such buildings was incremental, in a manner akin to the incremental loss of timber sash windows in a historic building to uPVC. The poor state of repair of tenement conversions was cited earlier Georgian buildings, with some collapsing causing loss of life. Therefore, the motive was also fuelled by incremental loss and pragmatism. The means, or conservation deficit, was assessed earlier, but the ebb and flow of value and fashion merits due consideration.

5.4.1 International Modernism

Kearns (1983) was keen to point out that Dublin's 'face-lift' was mirrored in other European cities, where glass and steel construction (redolent of the new Modernist approach to architecture) were springing up on the sites of once 19th century edifices.

Taking Earl's last stage of conservation, the 'manner' in which the Georgian buildings were destroyed should be deliberated. The battles to save historic fabric on Fitzwilliam Street and Hume Street were lost. A monolithic edifice replaced the Georgian terrace on Lower Fitzwilliam Street – the new offices of the Electricity Supply Board replaced them. The Georgian buildings in Hume Street were replaced with architectural forms which were derived from their former neo-classical occupiers, replica Georgian buildings. Referring back to the 'means', the English property developers involved in the demolition of the properties of Hume Street argued successfully that the conservation deficit was too great (McDonald, 1985). One could argue the developers had ample time to rehearse this argument in 1960s Britain. Some British cities were notorious for embracing modernist architecture, and large numbers of Georgian and Victorian buildings were lost in cities such as London, Glasgow, Birmingham and Nottingham, to name but a few. Therefore, negative attitudes towards historic buildings were not just the preserve of the Irish: the Modern

Movement heralded a change in heritage values both in Ireland and Britain. During the mid-20th century, reactionary groups were being founded to campaign against the destruction of the historic built environment including *The Georgian Group* in 1937 and *Victorian Society* in 1958. Stamp (2007) outlined the causes for this destruction as including the bombing of cities during the World War II, town planning, the development of the road network in addition to the attitudes of property developers and elected representatives. He contextualises the post-war period within the Modern Movement as 'the naïve utopian dream, that human society can be transformed through architecture and the urban environment' (2007, p. 10). He recalls that the World War II:

discredited the old ways of doing things and encouraged so many to yearn for a brave new world in which the problems created by the legacy of the past – substandard housing, traffic congestion, industrial pollution – would all be solved by research and the application of science and reason. Planning therefore demanded a *tabula rasa* [clean slate], while the building industry and the speculators endorsed the lie that old buildings had a limited life and had to be replaced rather than reconditioned and converted. (2007, p. 4)

Whitworth recounts the number and quality of buildings demolished in Nottingham: 'In some cases the destruction has been deliberate – by politicians who had either an axe to grind or who decided that the architecture around them was out-of-date and needed to be replaced. Some property developers see buildings as commodities which can be purchased and destroyed without consideration of their architectural value' (2010, p. 5). Whitworth also considered the impact of air bombardment during World War II, and also changes in taste and fashion such as the advent of television threatening historic cinemas and the rise of the Art Deco architectural style. International Modernism resulted in the destruction of large parts of Birmingham. At the end of the 20th century *Birmingham Conservation Trust* restored the last 'Back to back' houses left in the city: such purpose built houses resulted in slum conditions akin to those in Dublin, and they are now preserved as part of Birmingham's social history and heritage. The Conservation Trust has integrated the Back to backs into their logo, and the

crane towering menacingly over is indicative of the destruction and threats to historic buildings there.

Stamp considers the loss of historic buildings in London, notably, Euston Arch. The 1837 arch formed the entrance to a railway station, and Stamp recalls that 'owing to the malice and philistinism of British Railways and Harold Macmillan's government, its unnecessary destruction commenced' in 1961 (2007, p. 115). The fluid nature of heritage values was noted at the beginning of this chapter, and in the case of Euston Arch there are now plans to recover the fragments from its grave for reinstatement (BBC News, 2009).

Ireland's '*tabula rasa*' was recognised in Chapter Two with the conjectural reconstruction of Newgrange. Despite such arguments in Britain, Irish Georgian buildings were being imbued with other dissonant values, and the impact of Modernism is generally not deemed to be the major rationale behind destruction. Kealy is one of the few who recognises Ireland's place within this international movement: 'For a time, modernity seemed to demand the obliteration of the past. While great loss was suffered in the 1960s and 1970s, Dublin's experience was no worse than that of many other European cities in that period' (2006, p. 4). However, the rationale for destruction, nationalism, persists in the debate.

The 'destruction' of Dublin would lead one to believe that the city lost much of its Georgian building stock. However, there are no statistics available: the *Dublin City Council Conservation Section* (2013), *Irish Georgian Society* (Henderson, 2013) and the *Irish Architectural Archive* (O'Riordan, 2013) do not hold any statistics on the number of buildings lost. This could be determined only by reviewing the material collected by the original Georgian Society and comparing this with historic and modern Ordnance Survey maps, in addition to extensive fieldwork. The extent of survival of historic fabric is reflected by the inclusion of the city on the UNESCO World Heritage tentative list: its ample surviving Georgian fabric merits the proposal, whilst the intangible part of the justification is achieved through Dublin's literary tradition. This lies in sharp contradiction to Hourihan who declared in 2000 'realistically, no Irish town or city can aspire to World Heritage status' (2000, p. 80). He further noted: 'Irish identity is still not fully an urban one, despite

the fact that a majority of the population lives in cities and towns' (2000, p. 91).

The recent addition of an urban core to Ireland's tentative list of 'World Heritage' is somewhat significant. Ireland currently has two designed World Heritage Sites: the Neolithic passage grave cemetery of Brú na Boinne, in County Meath, and the Early Christian monastic island site of Skellig Micheal, off the coast of County Kerry. The other current tentative sites include: the karst (limestone) landscape of the Burren in counties Clare and Galway; the Neolithic settlement of the Céide Fields in County Mayo, discussed in Chapter Two, the boglands of Northwest Mayo; the Monastic City of Clonmacnoise and its Cultural Landscape; Early Medieval Monastic Sites (Clonmacnoise, Durrow, Glendalough, Inis Cealtra, Kells and Monasterboice); The Royal Sites of Ireland (Cashel, Dún Ailinne, Hill of Uisneach, Rathcroughan Complex and Tara Complex) and the Western Stones Forts (UNESCO, 2010).

The inclusion of Dublin on the tentative list would provide a wider representation of Irish heritage, as those on the confirmed and tentative list are mainly archaeological, natural, and or western in nature. However, unlike designated cities such as Bath in the UK, Georgian Dublin is not to be celebrated in its own right, as another layer has been added: the literary tradition. Therefore, it is ironic that the Georgian setting of one of Dublin's most recognised literary pieces, *Ulysses*, was demolished in the 1960s and redeveloped for the Mater Hospital on Eccles Street.

On the 16th June, since 1954, individuals dress in Edwardian costume in Dublin to celebrate 'Bloomsday'. Leopold Bloom is the central character in James Joyce's iconic work, *Ulysses*, set during one day, 16th June, in Dublin, 1904. The fictional Bloom lived in No. 7 Eccles Street, a real Georgian thoroughfare in Dublin. In the 1980s, the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital was extended, resulting in the demolition of a long terrace of Georgian buildings on Eccles Street, including No. 7. The door was salvaged, and now resides, out of its original context, in the James Joyce Centre. So iconic is this door that postcards are sold in the Centre, with a basic context depicted: the seemingly battered grey ashlar door surround is briefly contextualised by red brickwork; the wider original setting has been bulldozed.

The 'intangible' heritage criterion being fulfilled by Dublin's literary tradition, however, it can be argued that the politicisation of architectural destruction has defined the wider field of conservation around Dublin and formal architecture. Irish conservation and architectural heritage has become synonymous with Georgian buildings: the *Irish Georgian Society* does little to dispel this myth: they declare the Society '*is* [author's emphasis] Ireland's Architectural Heritage Society', and their logo states they are 'Conserving Ireland's Architectural Heritage'.

Had the field of architectural heritage been less concerned with politics and nationalism, one could have argued that Dublin's Georgian architecture embodies intangible heritage: the domestic Georgian buildings incorporate Irish techniques and styles unique to Dublin. This will come to the fore later in this chapter in relation to styles of pointing with mortar. In Chapter Two UNESCO's 2003 definition of intangible cultural heritage included that which is 'transmitted from generation to generation', and craft skills are included with this. This was demonstrated in relation to Irish vernacular architecture in Chapter Three, whereby the government actively promotes the development of thatching skills. However, in a manner comparable to the Portland stone debate, the very fabric of construction of Georgian buildings is contested.

5.5 Brick

Earlier, Rowan recognised one defining characteristic of Dublin Georgian as 'the colour of its brick streets and granite pavements' (2010, p. 263). Susan Roundtree is unequivocal: 'Dublin is a city of bricks. In the Georgian core and Victorian suburbs streets and squares of brick buildings define its architectural character' (2007, p. 61). Brick is the dominant walling finish, and if the destruction of such buildings has been politicised, so has the very material of construction.

Many myths surrounded the provenance of brick in Ireland, with the dominant theory that it arrived on the island as ballast from shipping from Britain and Holland: such assertions make Dublin's Georgian building stock a more profound interloper. The 'imported' narrative is not commonly found in the literature, but permeates folklore. Pavía and Bolton cite Weir's research in County Clare, where he claims that Mount Ivers House near Sixmilebridge was built in 1736 from 'ballast bricks from Holland unloaded at Ballintlea, "and

reputably they were passed from hand to hand from the harbour to the house site''' (2000, p. 178). Clare County Library (no date) claims 'in 1730 the bricks to build Mount Ievers were brought up the river by boat to this point and then passed from hand to hand to the site, a further mile and a half away'. The manual handling of the brick over this distance implies a humble manner of mass transportation by the locals over a significant distance: the material itself becomes embodied with human endeavour, conjuring an image of a master and slave. In essence the building components are overshadowed by the means of passage of that material from its foreign origins down to a very local and empathic level.

It is very likely that brick from ballast was used in building construction in Ireland, but the amount of brick required for construction in urban centres such as Dublin, Limerick and Cork during the 18th and 19th centuries would not have been satisfied by ballast alone. In 1929 the *Irish Builder and Engineer* reviewed Thomas Humphrey's *The Irish Builder's Guide*, published in 1813. This volume was essentially a builder's price book, but the *Irish Builder and Engineer* reported on the aesthetics of building materials mentioned therein:

Of Limerick he says the new stone and brick buildings are unequalled in any part of Ireland. The brick buildings are sufficient to attract the eye of every traveller who has the least taste in architecture; all of the bricks are manufactured in the place, and sold so very cheap as to induce the inhabitants to build with so much spirit and energy. (1929, p. 65)

Lennon refers to the use of 'Holland brick' for the erection of stables in Dublin (2008, p. 26). The late 17th and early 18th centuries saw the rise in popularity of the Dutch architectural style of stepped and rounded gable-fronted houses. These are locally referred to as 'Dutch Billies': a reference to William of Orange. This style was introduced to Ireland by Huguenot and Quaker immigrants and British tradesmen. Beaulieu House, County Louth, was built in the 1660s, and has an overriding Dutch style, and is also one of the earliest known structures to incorporate brick in its architectural detailing. Such external influences are most likely to have flavoured lore behind the origins of brick. Ironically, the Chief Executive of *Dublin Civic Trust*, Geraldine Walsh, expressed concern that these buildings are increasingly being lost due to a lack of legislative protection, and 'this extraordinary phase in Ireland's

architectural history has almost entirely vanished and has been largely airbrushed out of history, with Georgian architecture influencing our modern view of how our streets formerly looked' (2011).

The assertion that brick was not traditionally an Irish building material is not supported by the existence of legislation including the 1730 Irish Act of Parliament penned by the Surveyor General Edward Lovett Pearse. This Act unsuccessfully tried to standardise the size of brick in the country. In 1771 the Burning of Bricks (Dublin) Act or 'An act to prevent the pernicious practice of burning bricks within the city of Dublin', or the neighbourhood thereof, was introduced. This act noted the manufacture of brick in the city was having a detrimental effect on the health of its inhabitants. Production was only to be permitted 'two measured miles from the publick lamps of city of Dublin' (Lennon, 2008).

In addition, historic maps support the existence of brick manufacture in the city centre: John Rocque's 1756 *Exact Survey of the City and Suburbs of Dublin* contains the following annotations to the west of Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street): 'Old Brick Field' and 'Old Brick Field Lane'. The fact that the term 'Old' had been adopted by 1756 is also an indication that brick production had been pursued for some time in Dublin. The development of Moore Street has removed all trace of this former brick yard. The Universal Advertiser (Dublin) recorded the presence of brick kilns near Leinster Street in its 1753-6 edition.

Pavía and Bolton (2000) trace the development of the industry in Ireland, and the work of Roundtree (1999 and 2007) has helped to dispel this myth through her research on the Irish brick industry. She does outline the extent to which brick was imported from the mid to late 19th century, due to the lack of industrial development in the mode of manufacture:

Kinahan, writing in 1888 about the state of Irish enterprise, commented that in Dublin, almost all the new houses in the modern suburbs were faced with Bridgewater bricks, roofed with Welsh slates, and floored with Baltic deals. This was in contrast to the beginning of the century when the best streets were built exclusively of brick burnt in close proximity to the city, and many bricklayers remembered when no foreign brick was imported. (2007, p. 69)

Therefore, the demise of the brick industry came after the Act of Union in 1801. The commencement of Queen Victoria's reign in 1837 heralded advancements in industrialisation, and classified architecture in this period as 'Victorian' in succession of 'Georgian'. The development of suburbs around Dublin was considered in Chapter Three, with the expansion of the railway system resulting in the construction of rendered villas. Therefore, the utilisation of foreign imports is more discernible in Victorian, and not Georgian, buildings. Murphy notes that 'if we (not unproblematically) think of architecture as an art form, then it is the art form that is still most directly tied to its patrons, with all the ideological problems that entails (2012, p. 4-5).' The very provenance of the material of construction, whether it be in Ireland or Britain, was being classified by the Irish as belonging to the British, the 'patrons', further distancing tangible links to this building form.

But the rejection of brick as a 'traditional' Irish building material may have had much to do with its associations with urban areas, Dublin being the most obvious, whereas the Irish vernacular tends to conjure images of stone, whitewashed cottages crowned with thatch roofs. Georgian brick was traditionally made by hand and the process of production gives it a regular structure and appearance which conveys formality and industrialisation: the very material itself embodies otherness. The main walling material of Dublin's domestic Georgian architecture is brick, whilst public buildings adopted stone ashlar finishes. As seen in Chapter Four, imported Portland stone was utilised on many civic Georgian buildings in Dublin.

However, brick has long been credited as being a vernacular building material in Britain, especially that which is hand thrown and moulded. Brunskill (2000) recognised how the employment of this walling material increased from the 17th century, namely through its popularisation in vernacular architecture through the influence of its use in 'polite' architecture, and also as a fire-resistant substitute for timber after the Great Fire of London. Brunskill also expands on brick in his 1990 work *Brick Building in Britain* and *Traditional Buildings of Britain* (1992), and *Vernacular Architecture* (2000). He illustrates how brick was used as a main walling material in vernacular architecture, with masonry utilised for dressings around windows, doors and for corner quoins. The converse in terms of brick and stone in the Irish vernacular tradition is true: random rubble made use of for the main façade, whilst the more

geometrical brick assists with the forming of openings. Thus brick tended to be found only in major cities such as Dublin and Cork as a major walling material, adding to its otherness.

Government guidance on the conservation of brick does acknowledge Ireland's once thriving brick industry, however, in the same breath states:

Radical changes in construction materials and methods, as well as politics, played a part in the demise of the traditional brickworkers employing hand-moulding techniques in Ireland. (Government of Ireland, 2009, p. 10)

There is no expansion as to why politics has had such a negative impact, but considering the available literature on the subject, it is apparent the political slant on architectural destruction permeates to the very fabric of construction. The government advice goes on to note that due to a lack of traditional Irish brickmakers, specials have to be imported for repairs to the Georgian and Victorian building stock.

Formal, as opposed to vernacular, architecture was not deemed to accord with true Irish identity. Such attitudes were aptly summarised by J.J. Robinson during his Presidential Address to the *Architectural Association of Ireland*, and printed by *The Irish Builder and Engineer* on the 19th November 1921:

It may be interesting to recall that practically no good architecture was produced in Ireland after the coming of the English. This was perhaps not so much due to any inherent badness in the Saxon, as to the fact that the culture of Ireland is different to the culture of England and would not mix or get absorbed in it seven centuries ago and will not mix or get absorbed in it today. (1921, p. 741)

The alleged ethnic purity of the Irish race has been discussed in Chapter Two, but this lack of hybridity also permeated the built environment. Expressions of a 'native' building style were considered in Chapter Three, but craft association with formal architecture tends to be dismissed. Regardless of the origins of the brick used to build Georgian Dublin, or the eclectic Irish Georgian style, the fact remains that these buildings were seen as having been constructed by the British upper classes. Such nationalistic sentiments indicated there was no hybridity between the 'native' Irish and the British colonisers, thereby affirming the continuity of a 'pure' Irish race. This is resulting in the loss of

particular craft skills, such as 'tuck pointing', and therefore the incremental loss of historic fabric.

5.5.1 Tuck pointing

18th century Dublin brick was generally red in appearance, but adopted brown and buff tones from the 1820s (Casey, 2005, p. 4). Roundtree classifies Dublin's early 20th century bricks as 'a characteristic yellow biscuit colour made from clay obtained from pits at Slievenamon Road and the Iveagh Grounds (now Brickfields Park)' (2007, p. 68). Brick finishes do vary in accordance with the clay type and type of minerals present. For example, in Kent, the vernacular brick is yellow in colour, due to the high chalk content of the clay; Nottingham brick has orange/red tones, due to the high content of iron in the local clays. London buff stock bricks are noted to be poorer in quality, due to the amount of aggregate which is added, in that case, refuse.

18th century and early 19th century Dublin handmade brick was recognised as being of poorer quality, with the arrises (edges) of the bricks uneven. In order to make the brickwork look better, the type of pointing used was 'tuck-pointing'. This trompe l'oeil gave the appearance of fine thin joints and precise brickwork, thus making the building look grander and more opulent. There are distinctive forms of tuck-pointing. In Britain, tuck pointing is achieved by filling the joints in with a lime mortar to match the colour of the surrounding brickwork. Narrow joints are then lined out, and a thin fillet of lime putty is 'tucked' into these lines. Once a common craft skill, there are few specialists in Britain who are able to undertake this form of pointing accurately.

In Ireland, tuck pointing (or 'wiggling') is achieved by filling the joint with lime putty, ensuring a small fillet projects beyond the brick face. The surrounding area is then filled with a lime mortar which matches the colour of the adjacent brickwork. Both forms of tuck pointing fail when the coloured mortar falls away, or the lime putty 'tuck' is lost. In conservation terms a like-for-like repair is the ideal: using materials to match the original, and methods which match the original. As there are so few craftspeople available to undertake such work, and the materials (lime) are more costly than common bagged cement, repairs are costly. British forms of tuck-pointing are used, which has resulted in the loss of a distinctive Irish form.



Image 42: Irish tuck pointing, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

Keohane (2001) notes that English Tuck (as it is referred to in Ireland) is currently used in restoration projects in Dublin (see Image 42). Whilst Keohane does not provide an explanation, it can be deduced that the craft skills for such specialist work are not available in Ireland, and so the English Tuck is adopted, utilising craft skills from the UK. This is confirmed by Shaffrey Associates Architects et al. whereby:

Despite the fact that the term 'wiggling' has survived in common parlance amongst bricklayers to today, its application in the recent phase of facade renewals has been notably absent, the preferred technique being English tuck. This perhaps tells more about the growing gap between the professional and the tradesman/craftsman in Ireland...Of the recently renewed facades which adopted the English tuck technique, few match the quality of execution of what was observed from the surviving historic examples of wiggling (2010, p. 27)

Shaffrey Associates Architects et al have also undertaken surveys to ascertain if there are any historic examples of the English tuck style in Dublin, and having found none, reinforce their determination that only the Irish style be used in conservation projects (ibid). Therefore, so far it is evident that the

politicisation of architectural destruction has resulted in the field of conservation being defined around Georgian buildings, the style of which is not considered to embody enough 'Irishness' for craft skills to be developed and promoted, thereby resulting in the loss of intangible heritage and historic fabric. Further consequences can be deliberated through an assessment of the mock Georgian buildings constructed in the 1960s and 70s.

5.6 Pastiche

It is curious to note that many Georgian buildings were replaced in the 1960s and 1970s with pseudo neo-classical facades. These were often of bigger proportions than their forbearers, and walled with dark brown rather than 'wigged' or red dyed brick. However, the classical void to mass piercings was maintained, along with multi-paned Georgian sash windows and decorative doorways. This creates a problem in terms of political antagonism towards such architecture: if the mere presence of Georgian styled buildings in the capital of the Irish Free State (later Republic) were offensive to the independent Irish, why were buildings of a similar style permitted in their stead? Hanna (2009) recognises these as placatory gestures by property developers, attempting to appease the protests against destruction. Therefore, assertions that the motive for destruction was nationalism are undermined by the manner in which the buildings were replaced.



**Image 43: 1960s 'Georgian' doorway
Molesworth Street, Dublin.
(Photographic credits: Ramona Usher)**



**Image 44: 1960s 'Georgian' window
Molesworth Street, Dublin.**

It is only when the buildings are closely examined that it can be determined that they are not original 18th or 19th century Georgian buildings. The building in Images 43 and 44 is located on the junction of Molesworth Street and Kildare Street, Dublin, and was built in the 1960s to replace an original stretch of Georgian buildings. The door and surround utilise typical Georgian proportions, however, the simple fanlight is not typical of the very ornate cast iron variety which is generally found in this vicinity. The railings are not leaded into individual sockets in the stone coping, but instead are fixed to a single base rail which is fixed into the wall. This method requires little craft skill and takes less time to manufacture and install. The steps are not constructed in single lengths of stone, but instead each step is created with stone cladding, divided into several sections. This is a relatively modern method of treating stone, as traditional larger dimensions are more labour intensive to transport and manoeuvre into place.

The brickwork is laid in a sand and cement mortar, and the mortar finish is weather-struck. Traditional mortar is composed of sand and natural-hydraulic lime: however, these materials are more expensive, require particular craft

skills to mix and apply and are constrained by the weather as a natural-hydraulic lime can only be used when the ambient temperature is above five degrees centigrade. An original finish may have been tuck pointed or bagged flush. The bricks used for the lintel over the window and arched door surround are not rubbed to create an elegant bond and finish, but are instead placed as they are, which results in more mortar being apparent. Rubbed bricks are more expensive and have to be ordered specially.

The Georgian window has horns: a short nib of moulded timber which completes the joint between the side frames and central meeting rail. Multi-pane windows do not require horns as the number of glazing bars gives the frame strength. Larger sheets of glass became available in Victorian times and this resulted in less subdivision of windows. However, the larger sheets of glass were heavier and the corner of the frames required extra strength, thus the horn was introduced. Therefore, on a technical conservation level, one can discern that this is not an original authentic Georgian building, but the basic symbols of this architectural design had been flagged.

Kearns records this building as 'Neo-Georgian/replica infill' (1982, p. 279), and the extent of such mock facades is mapped by Kearns. Additionally, Kearns's map also records the survival of original Georgian buildings by 1982, which further undermines the narrative, discussed earlier, that Georgian Dublin was substantially destroyed.

The building in Image 45 can be defined as authentic, vernacular and Georgian. Perceptions of Dublin's Georgian domestic buildings rely on 'brick' to identify their character, but this building is rendered. The veracity of this building can be contrasted with the Dublin pastiche, illustrated above. The steps are composed of solid treads of stone, and the railings are leaded directly into stone. The fanlight and sidelights adopt the decorative detailing associated with Irish Georgian. The ground floor windows are original, without horns. These are marks of the building's authenticity. The render finish belies the vernacular substrate: this building is located in the south-west of Ireland, in County Kerry. Brick is not a common local building material in that area, and where found, is usually adopted as an angular form through which one can define door or window openings. Similar buildings in Dublin have exposed brick elevations, but in Kerry, given the crude appearance of random rubble

stonework against formal doors and windows, a render has been applied. The stone substrate would have been sourced locally, and craft skills employed from the surrounding townland.



**Image 45: Georgian building, Tralee, County Kerry.
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)**

This building could be considered to be at risk: it does not conform to the stereotypical vernacular tradition. But, given its western location and the formality of its appearance, the render could potentially be removed in order to give it a vernacular character: the 'vernacularised-formal', and the prevalence of this fashion was discussed in Chapter Three. Buildings like this are neglected in the literature and in local and governmental guidance as they do not conform to the polarised stereotypes which have developed between vernacular and formal architecture. There are additional problems with historic

buildings which do not fall within accepted parameters, and this will be considered below.

5.7 The Battle for Moore Street

Currently, only buildings which date after 1700 CE can be considered for 'Protected Structure' status. The 'Dutch Billies' on Moore Street, Dublin (Image 46) cannot become designated 'Protected Structures' as they pre-date 1700 CE, earlier than the Georgian period. However, those particular buildings gained political significance after the 1916 Easter Rising: several rebels took refuge within and eventually surrendered: Moore Street represents the last stand. The rebuilding of other sites associated with the Rising was discussed in the previous chapter. Moore Street is seen as having a purer connection with the Rising: the iconic public buildings received much attention due to the prominent nature of their appearance and destruction. Conversely, the aesthetic of Moore Street is more modest and domestic in nature and were therefore not subject to restoration. This has led to the belief that 'they are the only buildings used during the Rising to remain intact with features from the time' (RTÉ, 2013).



Image 46: Moore Street, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The context of the buildings has been threatened in the past decade with a proposed retail development, resulting in the government designating them as a National Monument. In Chapter Three it was noted that the same status was bestowed on vernacular buildings associated with rebellion including Patrick Pearce's Galway retreat, despite the scant retention of historic fabric. In Dublin, the interiors of the Custom House, General Post Office and Four Courts were substantially altered during restoration works in the 1920s. However, the Minister of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Michael Finneran, outlined the extent of historic structures remaining on Moore Street, where 'the façade of No. 16 was so badly damaged in the bombardment that most of the current façade brickwork probably dates from the late 1920s. Internally, there is an original 18th century staircase and original fireplaces' (Seanad Éireann, 2011). Therefore, retention of historic fabric has been inverted: the buildings retain the form of the Dutch Billie gables, but some are a 1920s reconstruction, while significant original features have been retained internally.

Earlier it was noted that Georgian 'pastiches' were constructed to replace originals, resulting in the loss of their entire historic character. Of Moore Street, Senator Mark Dearey noted 'the physical structures on the site are unprepossessing, that is no reason for us to be snobbish about them or to show a lack of respect' (ibid). This statement is regretful: Dearey is bemoaning the lack of iconicity of what is considered to have been the last stand of the 1916 rebels. The buildings are considered by many to be a 'battlefield', for example, RTÉ (2013). However, like the battlefield of Naseby, cited in Chapter Two, there is often scant evidence of conflict for the untrained eye to discern. And, unlike the politicisation of the rebuilding of the Custom House dome, or the 'bullet holes' on the General Post Office, the 'public' face of Moore Street does not offer an immediate and tangible link to the 1916 Rising: the external walls have been rebuilt with smooth machine made 1920s brick and the buildings represent domestic mundaneness. Instead, the significance of the buildings has been flagged with a plaque (Image 47), pointing itself out in a manner similar to Robert Venturi's 'monument' cited in Chapter Two.



Image 47: Plaque commemorating 1916, Moore Street, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)

The fact that the building contains a rare early 18th century interior is overshadowed by the signposting of a nation forming event, and whilst Walsh regretted earlier that the attention given to Dublin's Georgian legacy is 'influencing our modern view of how our streets formerly looked', it can equally be argued that the nation forming narrative, underpinned by nationalism, also has a negative impact on significant historic fabric: the interiors are rare, but concealed from public view. The intangible evidence of the 1916 Rising overshadows the architectural significance of the buildings. However, it is not just pre-1700 CE buildings which are neglected ideologically: Dublin's Victorian architecture is also a little investigated area.

5.8 Dublin's Victorian Heritage

The reliance on Britain for particular craft skills was noted earlier, and this is also apparent in the wider field of conservation: an *Institute of Historic Building Conservation Conference* in Dublin in 2008 fielded most of its speakers from Britain, again signifying the lack of development of the field of historic conservation in Ireland. Geraldine Walsh of *Dublin Civic Trust* presented one of their projects at that conference. She explained that at 21

Aungier Street later Victorian render was removed in order to expose the Georgian brickwork beneath.



Image 48: Victorian alterations to Georgian buildings, The Quays, Dublin. (Photographic credit: Peter Smith)

It could be considered that as a result of the previous destruction of Dublin's Georgian buildings, well-meaning acts are being undertaken in order to reverse that trend, with the resultant loss of later, valid, additions. This results in the loss of alterations which reflect changes in architectural taste and fashion. In Chapter Three the removal of render from vernacular buildings was contemplated, and the Victorian dislike for exposed brick was cited. Earlier, Walsh noted that Dutch Billies were given less attention due to the prominence of the Georgian conservation movement. However, Walsh is guilty of neglecting Victorian alterations in order to underpin the Georgian qualities of facades. Image 48 demonstrates the variety and distinctiveness that Victorian alterations have given to Dublin's Quays: these are Georgian buildings which have undergone historic interventions. The significance of the Victorian suburbs and their imported bricks was cited earlier, and this period of architecture has only recently been subject to study and critique.



Image 49: Kildare Street Club, Dublin
(Photographic credit: Ramona Usher)



Image 50: Victorian lamp posts, Dublin
(Photographic credit: Peter Smith)

The development of the canal and railway systems resulted in the development of the Victorian suburbs, of which Killeen states 'Nothing will shake the generalisation that Dublin is a Georgian city ... Nevertheless, the city can claim to be as much a Victorian creation as a Georgian one' (2012, p. 121). Therefore, the attention given to the destruction of parts of Dublin have also defined, erroneously, the dominant architectural style of the city. Developments in the mid to late 19th century adopted the Victorian style, with the Kildare Street Club's (1859-61) polychromatic brickwork and stone embellishments representative of this style (Image 49). Additionally, Victorian embellishments crowd the streetscape of the city, most notably, the post boxes, discussed in Chapter Four, the iron railings mentioned in Chapter Three and the distinctive and ornate street lights, seen in Image 50. These accoutrements benignly signpost the Victorian contribution to Dublin's architecture, but the city's architectural heritage is dominated by the Georgian narrative. Britain has an established *Victorian Society*, whose remit is comparable to that of the *Georgian Group*. However, the dominant conservation campaign group in Ireland is the *Irish Georgian Society*. If the Heritage Council is deemed to cater for vernacular buildings, as seen in Chapter Three, then all other formal architecture is classified under 'Georgian', and the nuances of periods before and after this are lost or diluted. Reporting

on the existence of an Architectural Officer in the *Heritage Council*, Battersby stated: 'There is more to Ireland's architectural heritage than Georgian Dublin' (2001).

However, the conservation of formal architecture not only has to contend with the dominance of Georgian, it also competes with the attention given to archaeology. For example, the Heritage Council's grant allocations for 2009 awarded €51 000 towards architectural research, while €183 500 was awarded to archaeological research (Heritage Council, 2009). There is a clear, but implicit, prioritisation of the archaeological record over the existing historic built environment. Additionally, the *Irish Georgian Society* plays upon the 'natives' narrative in relation to Dublin's Georgian slums, further distancing Irish cultural patrimony from its formal architectural heritage.

5.9 Return to the countryside

It was noted earlier that the *Irish Georgian Society* celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008. In recognition of this they commissioned a documentary, *Saving Our Heritage*, where the prime focus is an interview with the founder and former president Desmond Guinness. Guinness initially contextualises the documentary with the case of 13 Henrietta Street, Dublin. This Georgian building had been converted into a tenement in the 19th century which Guinness recalls was last occupied by thirty-six people sharing one tap and lavatory: 'It was a terrible slum, but at the same time, look at the beauty of it'.

In the 1970s Michael Casey borrowed £12,000 interest free from the Society to restore the building, with the understanding that it would be repaid within three years. However, they were inconvenienced by Dublin Corporation who took five years to 'to get all the slum tenants out and rehoused in the countryside'. Guinness goes on to note that 13 Henrietta Street is visited by American groups associated with the *Irish Georgian Society* and 'this is the first place they come'.

The rehousing of the tenants to the countryside could be read as a paternalistic or colonial return of displaced people back to a bucolic setting. The urbanity of the Georgian townhouse is played against the simplicity of a humble country life. This chapter acknowledges that Georgian buildings were

converted into tenements after the Act of Union of 1801 which resulted in what Kearns describes as 'an exodus of wealthy and powerful persons, and property values plummeted' (1982, p. 271). The houses were appropriated by landlords who let them out to a growing market 'of impoverished rural Irish who fled the countryside during the mid-19th century great famine' to find work in the city (Kearns, 1982, p. 272). The rehousing of slum tenants in the 'countryside' in the 1970s plays on the 'natives' and 'colonisers' narrative. In this instance, Guinness is righting a wrong by acknowledging the repatriation of the slum dwellers to the countryside. Smith identifies such approaches by 'indigenous upper-class allies', whereby 'the educator-intellectuals found both in the life and symbolism of the people and their popular historical traditions. The first way was through a return to 'nature' and its 'poetic spaces'. This nature and these spaces are quite specific; they constitute the historic home of 'the people', the sacred repository of their memories' (1991, p. 65). Guinness, through such statements, is not just reaffirming his role as the outsider, but also further marginalises formal architecture from definitions of Irishness. Such sentiments also overlook the socio-economic communities and ties which these residents had evolved and developed, in Dublin, since the 19th century.

However, many former inner city residents were actually rehoused by the government in social housing complexes on Dublin's periphery, the most notorious being Ballymun. This complex included seven towers, all patriotically named after leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising. Long recognised as a problem area since its inception in the 1960s and 1970s, Ballymun is currently being regenerated with low rise housing and the demolition of the tower blocks. Guinness's slum dwellers were more likely to have been rehoused in Ballymun than sent home to the countryside. However, the terminology he uses is redolent of the displacement of the natives involved in colonialism.

Guinness also acknowledges that 13 Henrietta Street is the first place they bring American visitors. The current owner has not fully restored the building: the Society's DVD pans around half-finished rooms with remnants of stucco and raw openings where once grand fireplaces would have stood: the loss of these architectural features is arguably indicative of slum tenants vandalising the building. The building could be considered to act as a link between the former grandeur and the later occupiers whom Kearns accepts 'had neither the

resources nor the inclination to live in the style of their predecessors' (ibid). The formality juxtaposed with degradation complements an Irish-American emigration narrative to which the Famine is central.

5.10 Conservation today

The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides for the protection of historic buildings. One of the main features of the Act is:

Planning authorities have a clear obligation to create a record of protected structures [RPS] which includes all structures or parts of structures in their functional areas which, in their opinion, are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. This record forms part of a planning authority's development plan. (DEHLG, b., 2004, p. 15)

Therefore, Protected Structures are designated by local councillors, and not by a central expert committee such as English Heritage, Historic Scotland or Cadw in Wales, further adding to the politicisation of conservation in terms of local politics rather than nationalism. This leaves the process of selection open to abuse in a country plagued by planning irregularities, as seen in Chapter Two in relation to Carrickmines Castle. Local planning authorities are supposed to take guidance from the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) which is compiled by the DEHLG where they 'can assess the content of, and evaluations in, an NIAH survey with a view to the inclusion of structures in the RPS' (2004, b., p. 21).

An initial NIAH was carried out in 1997 in Ballina, County Mayo and it suggested nearly two hundred buildings there were of interest. In September 2000 councillors on the Urban District Council described the inventory of Ballina as 'unworkable and unrealistic' (Connaught Telegraph, 2000). Councillor Ernie Caffrey stated: 'I do not mind preserving something of rare architectural significance, but I cannot see any architectural or other reason why many of these buildings are selected. These are ordinary houses.' (ibid) Councillor Johnny O'Malley wanted to reject the inventory completely, as otherwise it would place 'an impossible burden' on people who owned property on the list (ibid). The DEHLG states that 'The NIAH is intended to provide planning authorities with information to inform their choice as to what should be

designated for protection...The planning authority has the autonomy to assess the content of and the evaluations in an NIAH survey.’ (2004, b., p. 22)

In October 2000 six Ballina councillors decided to withdraw legal protection from three buildings in the town. These included a Victorian bank premises, and one of the oldest buildings in the town, Ballina's first hotel. The former hotel had been rated as significant in the NIAH. The owner, Eddie Melvin, applied for planning permission to demolish the building and construct an apartment block and retail unit on the site. *An Taisce* (the National Trust for Ireland) and the *Irish Georgian Society* registered objections to this plan, and Melvin withdrew the planning application (McDonald, 2000). McDonald states that Melvin ‘lobbied the local councillors, clearly with success’ and they unanimously decided to remove protection from the building. Councillor Frances McAndrew stated her view that the building had no merit, and had also found an engineer who stated the building was ‘structurally unsound’. McDonald (ibid) reported ‘parish-pump politics, otherwise known as clientilism, has emerged as the latest threat to Ireland's architectural heritage.’ Councillor Johnny O'Malley stated: ‘If we list this building, we will imprison this man [Melvin]. We cannot marry what he wants for the building and what Dúchas wants. There is a need for business in the town and we cannot stifle development.’ (ibid)

In relation to the Victorian bank, the councillors decided that ‘since it had become a private house, it would be an invasion of privacy to list it’ (ibid). The inclusion of a building in the RPS is not deemed so, by the following:

While legislative changes for the protection of architectural heritage must be considered in the context of a citizens constitutional property rights, individual rights and freedoms may be curtailed where such a restriction is deemed to be in the interests of the common good. The making of development plans by local authorities is considered such and therefore not an infringement of property rights, (DACG, 1996, p. 101).

However, in the early days of the Celtic Tiger economy, individuals were profiting from the property boom, and lobbying and de-listings became commonplace. Local authorities also took advantage of this form of localism: in 2009, McDonald reported that two buildings on the RPS were to be

demolished in County Clare to make room for a roundabout, and in 2012 Hickey cited the case of 'a landmark building' in Dingle, County Kerry, which was 'to be taken off a list of protected structures, despite a warning from a senior planning official that many old buildings in the West Kerry town have already been knocked down.' Again, the rationale for destruction was another road scheme. In 2007, a County Tipperary councillor supported the proposed demolition of a protected Georgian hotel in Clonmel: a planning application was submitted to replace it with a high rise commercial development. When the developer's plans were thwarted by the protected status of the building, the councillor described the outcome as being impinged by the 'heritage barrier', and proceeded to lobby for de-listing (Kelly, 2007). Comparisons can be drawn with the fate of Carrickmines Castle, and the impact of the M3 motorway on the landscape setting of the Hill of Tara in the heady day of the Celtic Tiger. With economics so high on the agenda, profiteering triumphed over heritage. However, Keogan (2012) noted that Dublin was one of the few local authorities where the public made representations to the City Council to have their buildings added to the RPS. The higher profile of conservation in Dublin, created by architectural destruction, has fuelled interest in these buildings.

5.10.1 Conservation and education

The Irish third-level educational system demonstrates the lack of development of the field of conservation. In 2010 Irish universities offered the following under-graduate courses which relate to this research:

| Degree topic: | Number of courses: |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Conservation | 0 |
| Heritage | 2 |
| Architecture | 50 |
| History | 200 plus |
| Archaeology | 200 plus |

**Table 2: Undergraduate courses
(Figures sourced from: the Central Applications Office, 2010)**

The two 'Heritage' degrees are offered by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in its Galway and Castlebar campuses, which are located in the west of Ireland. The subject matter and place of study accord with the concept

of Ireland's heritage being located in the west. The humanities subjects of Archaeology and History remain popular, with Irish universities offering over 400 courses on these subjects. Architecture has less appeal with fifty degree courses on offer. There are no degrees with 'Conservation' as the primary subject, but it should be noted that the architecture courses touch on this area.

The Central Applications Office offered the following post-graduate courses in 2010:

| Postgraduate topic: | Number of courses: |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Conservation | 2 |
| Planning | 1 |
| Archaeology | 11 |
| Architecture and art history | 2 |

**Table 3: Post-graduate courses
(Figures sourced from the Central Applications Office, 2010)**

University College Dublin (UCD) provides the only Masters degree in conservation, the Masters in Urban and Building Conservation. This course was established in 1986 'in recognition of the need for additional expertise in the conservation of historic buildings and towns'. UCD acknowledges the degree is aimed at professionals who are established in their field (UCD, 2010).

Trinity College Dublin provides the second conservation course: a Post-graduate Diploma in Conservation and Building Repair. The course prospectus indicates the programme provides more of a foundation to the subject, with materials, built fabric, repair and preservation offered as subjects. The course is coordinated by Sara Pavía who has published extensively on the conservation of traditional Irish buildings materials. The recommended reading list that Dr Pavía provides her students relies heavily on British publications, as do many of the other Irish publications concerned with conservation (Trinity College Dublin, 2012). For example, a recent government guidance note on the repair of bricks cited seven British and three Irish publications in its further reading section (Government of Ireland, 2009). Equally, the Conservation Section of Dublin City Council recommends literature penned by English Heritage and Historic Scotland, and it can be assumed that this is a result in the lack of equivalent Irish material. Therefore, in a manner akin to the use of

tuck-pointing styles from Britain, Irish conservation remains inherently bound with the country's former coloniser.

5.11 Conclusion

The destruction of intentional monuments to the British Empire can be classified as acts of iconoclasm during the Ireland's formative years. However, the demolition of Dublin's Georgian buildings from the 1960s has also been ascribed nationalistic connotations. Whilst the literature cites the rationale for destruction as Irish nationalism, this research demonstrates that such negative attitudes to formal architecture have been politicised post-event. The destruction of domestic Georgian buildings cannot be simply regarded as representing nationalistic sentiment. This argument loses credibility when compared to the fate of such buildings in Britain during similar periods of redevelopment.

There are, however, other motives for the rejection of Georgian buildings: Irish cultural identity has evolved from the 19th century with an explicit rural and western bias. Urban areas do not traditionally accord with Irishness. Their very fabric is imbued with formality and the products of industrialisation, namely brick. Brick is not regarded as a vernacular material: it is formed through mechanical processes, and this contrasts with 'native' stone vernacular buildings.

The narrative surrounding Dublin and Modernism stresses the level of architectural destruction during that period. This would leave one to believe that very little of Georgian Dublin remains. However, this is countered by the number of historic buildings which remain, and affirmed by the proposed UNESCO 'World Heritage' designation. However, the emphasis on 'Georgian' Dublin has led to other periods of architectural history being neglected academically, most notably, Victorian Dublin.

Whilst the battle to save Georgian Dublin has created awareness and appreciation, provincial formal architectural heritage remains at risk due to a lack of perceived significance. The current system of legislative protection allows value judgements to be dictated at local level, and the absence of objectivity threatens the future of those historic buildings.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Irishness

This research set out to determine how 'Irishness' is mediated through particular aspects of material culture. It initially recognised Irishness an evolving condition, the variability of which provides insights into the political and cultural relationships between Ireland and her former coloniser.

The growth of Irish nationalism in the 19th century has been well documented, as set out in Chapter One. Irish nationalists wanted to distance their vision of being Irish from any English/British influence or achievement. So they endeavoured to craft narratives depicting a 'Golden Age' of Irish civilisation and nationhood which flourished independently long before the Norman invasion. Therefore, nationalists felt it was expedient to draw on Ireland's 'suitable' distant past, to galvanise the population to aspire to independence. Using attempts to revive the Gaelic language and consolidate a Catholic, and often interlinked, Christian identity, it is clear that the pre-colonial past was used to authenticate nationalist aspirations and establish connections with that past. The rationale behind these traditions endorses Laurence's observation that 'accounts of the past are moulded by people and movements in the present to serve their own needs.' (2008, p. 154)

Political nationalists were very selective in marshalling history to legitimise the creation of the Irish Free State after 1922. After independence the government's penchant for conserving its historic monuments selectively harnessed the power of archaeology to exert a deep-rooted sense of continuity and 'power of place' admirably illustrated by the 'restoration' of the Neolithic Passage Tomb of Newgrange, the three-spiral motif becoming an iconic symbol of ancient Irish culture. By looking back to a time when the High Kings of Tara supposedly ruled Ireland, the Irish State emphasised its justification for re-asserting independent statehood despite the traumatic upheavals of the events surrounding Independence themselves. Cultural nationalists promoted the revival of Gaelic as the national language to give cohesion to the aspiring nation before an independent state was practical. Political nationalists, upon the establishment of the Irish Free State, sought to legitimise their nationhood

by striving to locate 'Irishness' in the prehistoric past and early Christian era, connected to their present by the restoration of iconic ancient monuments, which spoke of a sophisticated indigenous culture owing nothing to the former colonial power.

This is contrasted with the architectural legacy of colonisation - dissonant heritage - reassessed after independence and assigned new values in order to explicate the foundation of the political nation. Therefore, the weaving of myths into narratives around archaeology and the historic built environment provides a compelling discourse on the fluid nature of heritage values. This ultimately demonstrates that the material culture which is recognised as most embodying Irishness – archaeology and vernacular architecture - is markedly more at risk than architecture which is reflective of colonialism.

6.2 Archaeology

The west of Ireland has been championed as an area where pure, uncorrupted, Irish natives could be found in the 19th century and early 20th century. 'Golden ages' are recognised as a significant facet of Irish nationalism prior to the formation of the political nation. Therefore, the pre-Norman sites considered in this thesis are regarded as authentic manifestations of Irishness in the archaeological record. The Neolithic Céide Fields are heralded as 'totally authentic' and unquestionably the product of native effort, and this message is reinforced through narratives in the adjacent interpretative centre whereby the descendants of the Céide Field farmers apparently remain today in the west of Ireland. Verification of this stance is being sought internationally through the placement of the site on the tentative UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Neolithic sites of Newgrange, Knowth and the Hill of Tara are presented as original witnesses, despite being little more than empty shells. However, they are incongruently located in the east of the country, which has traditionally been regarded as contaminated by English colonisers. Daniel O'Connell reclaimed Tara by summoning the native Irish to the iconic Hill, conjuring a glorious past and inciting discontent with the colonisers. After independence, the dramatic 'conjectured reconstruction' of Newgrange and Knowth made memorable images, such that they acted as a signpost both literally and metaphorically, directing attention towards the official story of the 'native'

Irish past and drawing that past by frequent reproduction of its artwork into the present with seamless continuity.

These reconstructions have received scant critical attention in the literature: the value of the artefacts found, original mode of construction, and the ritualistic and sophisticated solar alignment of Newgrange take precedence. This incongruence is also reflected at the site, whereby tour guides do not dwell on the 20th century interventions, but marvel at the perfection of the chamber roof at Newgrange. The archival evidence drawing attention to the leaking chamber and the modern waterproofing measures is ignored: a tangible connection with the ancient past is highlighted with the 'watertight' chamber roof, a mediation of cultural memory.

The state's complicity in the restorations is borne out by the unchecked excavations permitted at Newgrange and Knowth. As National Monuments in state care, these archaeological excavations required authorisation from central government. Michael O'Kelly's protracted excavation at Newgrange essentially removed the flesh from the bones of the monument, necessitating a reconstruction which in essence was speculative. The visitor experience is clearly a key part of the reconstruction, with display and physical access accommodated to the detriment of both the character and appearance of Newgrange and Knowth.

The suppositions between O'Kelly's findings and George Eogan's at Knowth have barely been critiqued. Each archaeologist arrived at a different interpretation of the original appearance of the mounds, and unfortunately these were implemented at the respective sites. Hobsbawm claimed that 'nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so' (1990, p. 12), and the current appearance of the mounds is popularly regarded as an objective fact. They have been 'selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized' (Hobsbawm, in Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p. 13). The rituals created around Newgrange reflect 'the form through which cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life.' (Assmann, 2011, p. 6) In contrast, sites located in the west of the country are more likely to be deemed 'totally authentic': their veracity is enhanced by their favourable geographical location, and this was demonstrated by the narrative around the Céide Fields which attempts to shape cultural memory.

Alternative and increasingly popular 'positivist' approaches to Irish identity are evident in the use of genetics to categorise Irishness. Anthropological endeavours in the late 19th and early 20th century aimed to achieve similar outcomes through the scientific methodology of eugenics, which is now recognised as highly questionable. Those studies were externalised with assessments undertaken by those intent upon 'rescuing the image of the Celt' in America (Carew, 2012). In the present, genetic studies are applied *internally* as a mode of self-identification in an increasingly globalised society. Therefore, it can be deduced that the nature of 'Irishness' is evolving in response to contemporary cultural changes. There are potentially disturbing outcomes to such modes of identity: by emphasising a lack of hybridity with the British, and other nationalities, the path is left open to racist appropriations. Parallels can be drawn between the 'totally authentic' remains at the Céide Fields and the corresponding 'authenticity' sought through genetic profiling: both are profiting from the extrapolation of generalisations from limited evidence.

The losses of Wood Quay and Carrickmines Castle accord with the premise that the Irish were not interested in medieval archaeology. However, this notion becomes flawed when the Hill of Tara and M3 is evaluated. Whilst the route of the motorway evoked much protest, the government proceeded with this infrastructure project, employing excavation methods acknowledged as archaeologically deficient (Ronayne, 2008). Therefore, material culture which accords with Irishness is at risk. Sites that embody the tenets of that nationalism have been compromised through over-excavation, expediency, corruption and economics. Carrickmines was not destroyed because it represented a period of the archaeological past not deemed to represent Irishness: it was demolished for private financial advantage. Ireland's economic boom demonstrated that the values of heritage are fluid: the landscape setting of a site which personifies Ireland's 'Golden Age' was destroyed by the chosen route of the M3 because it was quite simply the most economically expeditious path.

6.3 Vernacular architecture

Thatched cottages with a stone finish are construed as the true architectural expression of the 'native' Irish, augmenting a 'suitable historic past'. However, the emphasis on one building typology narrows the definition of vernacular buildings to the point of neglect. This form of architecture sits at one end of the spectrum of Irishness, whilst Irish Georgian is its polar opposite. Categories of buildings, which do not meet these tight definitions, are overlooked physically and academically.

Thatch receives much attention in the literature, and the government actively facilitates and encourages the development of thatch apprenticeship programmes, in a manner not unlike archaeology. But other important craft skills, such as tuck-pointing, are neglected resulting in a lack of expertise. Tuck-pointing is inherently associated with Dublin's Georgian architecture, and therefore does not accord with Irishness.

Irishness is also mediated through the application of stone to modern buildings and the removal of authentic lime render finishes from vernacular facades in order to expose their stone substrate. These are 'new monument[s] that only remember the past, but no longer houses it.' (Marquardt, 2007, p. 5) Whilst the literature recognises that this is not an authentic finish, there has been little investigation into this widespread practice. This research has demonstrated, through comparison with 19th century practices in Britain, the perception that removing plaster and render is falsely believed to reveal the 'true' architecture of a building. Such actions spawned the conservation movement in Britain and led to a coherent conservation philosophy there, which permeates the discipline today. But a lack of knowledge sharing between Irish and British conservation bodies results in the misplaced continuation of this custom in Ireland.

The removal of render exposes the stone substrate, which is falsely construed as a facet of Irish architectural identity. It can be deduced that this is a manifestation of a changing measure of Irishness in domestic architecture in the late 20th and early 21st century, where cultural memories are being stripped for collective ones. Additionally, it can be seen as an expression of Irishness in an increasingly globalized society, despite the falsity of the exposed stone finish. Although the exposed stone finish imbues character, the

immediate impact is the loss of historic fabric - the render. The exposed stone finish will lead to the deterioration of these buildings through the use of inappropriate impervious mortars such as cement. The consequent occurrence of damp will result in the deterioration of internal finishes, including plasterwork, and eventually the loss of these vernacular buildings. Therefore, a significant facet of Irishness is now most at risk. This is, ironically, the very heart of the cherished nationalist identity symbol, the memory site of the vernacular dwelling in its idyllic western rural setting.

Whilst the ideal of rural living remains a national aspiration, the actual historic buildings themselves are falling by the wayside as too small or difficult to adapt to modern living, or are being modified in ways detrimental to their longevity. In their place are soulless modern versions, scattered across the rural landscape, many intended for holidaymakers rather than local people. The culmination of this process will be that ultimately little tangible historic fabric will survive: the 'ordinary' components of built heritage are at risk through the misappropriation of Irishness.

The practices outlined above result in less demand for traditional craft skills to repair lime rendered facades and for the material itself: hydraulic lime. It was noted in Chapter One that the Japanese conservation philosophy sees intangible heritage as being inherently bound into craftsmanship: traditional skills are passed on over generations, ensuring that historic buildings are conserved and maintained with appropriate techniques and materials, thus embodying cultural memory. This research demonstrates that historic material is being lost, in addition to traditional techniques.

Stone has been identified as a mnemonic of Irishness, but another prevalent historic building material, brick, is regarded as a foreign import: physically and ideologically. This is assisted by the geographical location of brick built buildings, mainly found in Dublin. If 'native' Irish identity is to be found in the west, then Dublin, located in the east, exemplifies the British colonial presence in Ireland. Therefore, it can be deduced that the cultural-historic approach as found in archaeology permeates into recent history, with the waves of English/British architectural influence grouped in and around Dublin. This research shows that out-dated archaeological approaches manifest themselves

in modes of identity in postcolonial Ireland, to the detriment of the historic built environment.

6.4 Georgian architecture

The destruction of iconic buildings during armed conflict (the Easter Rising, War of Independence and Civil War) resonates through the edifices of the General Post Office and the Custom House. Analysis of the evidence of these conflicts proves that myths have been fabricated around formal architecture which reinforce their nation forming narratives: they underpin Irishness and become part of collective memory in the absence of original witnesses. Hobsbawm (1992) recognises that invented traditions are often deployed at times of traumatic change. This was particularly apparent with the 'bullet holes' in the columns of the General Post Office, a tangible manifestation of conflict, but now more mundanely deemed a product of weathering.

The choice of stone used to reconstruct the damaged Custom House dome was widely regarded as a product of Irish nationalism in the immediate period of postcolonialism (Casey, 2005). However, this research demonstrates that the employment of native building stone over imported British Portland stone was a pragmatic economic decision. The native stone used to reconstruct the Custom House dome did not look aesthetically different from the weathered Portland stone during the 1920s reconstruction. It is also noteworthy that the Irish government did import Portland stone from its former colonisers in the immediate aftermath of independence in order to restore other parts of the Custom House. Therefore, the political bent behind the use of materials is questioned by this research. This can be seen as a construct of collective memory: the difference in the appearance of the Custom House dome was only exposed through cleaning in the 1980s.

The destruction of Nelson's Pillar in 1966 was an overt act of iconoclasm. This research argues that the timing of that act during a period of architectural Modernism politicised the destruction of Georgian buildings. The literature drives forth the rationale behind destruction: the nationalistic spite, the hatred. However, when comparisons are drawn with similar periods in Britain, the destruction can be deemed to sit in the context of International Modernism. This was hitherto explored little, and this thesis opens up further avenues for exploration through comparisons with Britain. 1960s

developments in urban areas in the west of Ireland should be investigated, and the loss and rationale behind architectural destruction there explored. This should include the cities of Galway, Limerick and Cork, the latter two retaining a significant number of brick Georgian buildings. The incongruity of their western locations would provide a wider context for architectural destruction and conservation.

Whilst the rationale for the destruction of architecture associated with the British has been a significant component of this thesis, it is also important to note that these buildings are now the least at risk. Billig made 'a distinction between the waved and unwaved flag' (1995, p. 10). The collateral damage inflicted upon the General Post Office and the intentional damage to the Custom House and Four Courts waved the flag of nation forming narratives. But their reconstruction is also a mediation between cultural and collective memory. The destruction of some of Dublin's Georgian buildings in the 1960s and 70s has made those buildings 'hot'. The surviving iconic and Georgian buildings of Dublin are reasonably safe: Keogan (2012) noted that 9000 are on the Record of Protected Structures, and Dublin City Council is one of the few local authorities where individuals approach the council to request further additions to that list. The designation of eleven Architectural Conservation Areas in the city means that buildings within the boundaries cannot be demolished without planning permission. Conservation pressure groups have evolved in the defence of Georgian 'heritage'. Whilst the extent of past loss is not documented, the proposed inclusion of Dublin on the World Heritage List attests to the amount of Georgian fabric that actually survives there, and more importantly, is valued as a facet of Irishness.

The eclectic Irish style of Georgian architecture, and its particular mode of construction, has resulted in craft techniques such as wiggling which are not found elsewhere. Such forms of intangible heritage could have formed part of the justification for the proposed World Heritage site of Dublin, but instead, Dublin's literary tradition is used to address this criterion. The World Heritage bid also omits the Victorian contribution to the city, which demonstrates how the battle to save Georgian Dublin has narrowed perceptions of the city's architectural legacy.

Conservation is perceived as embodying 'Britishness'; archaeology and the vernacular accord with 'Irishness'. The former has been underpinned and expounded by the reliance on conservation advice and craft skills from Ireland's former coloniser. The unintended, and unfortunate, consequence is the loss of Irish historic construction techniques, such as wiggling, to British counterparts. Irish universities continue to respond to demand for degrees in archaeology and history, but offer very few opportunities for the study of architectural conservation. There are however small victories which demonstrate changes in attitudes: the restoration of Mayglass Farmhouse heralds a new and far more sensitive and internationally acceptable mode of conservation, albeit focussed on a vernacular building. The anticipated archaeological examination of Ireland's Roman heritage appears to be on a similar course.

Previously espoused accounts explaining the fate of Irish material culture embodied in its built heritage ascribe motives derived from nationalism. But these are too simplistic, and this research has demonstrated that the theoretical approaches of cultural and collective memory warrant further investigation, in addition to other factors which include national economic expediency, private commercial gain, corruption and purely local circumstances.

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