

'REIMAGINING THE NATION-STATE' by Jim Mac Laughlin (2001)

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REIMAGINING THE NATION-STATE

The Contested Terrains of Nation-building

by Jim Mac Laughlin (2001)

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From the back cover:

This book assesses competing modes of nation-building and nationalism in the social sciences through a critical reappraisal of the works of Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and A.D. Smith. Focusing on the contested terrains of nationalist ideology, it explores the historical connections between Ireland and Great Britain as a case study in the clash between big nation British nationalism and minority Irish nationalism. Locating the historic nation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mac Laughlin also examines the specificities of minority nationalisms in the nineteenth century. Thus he shows how nation-building was used as a strategy for class rule and social closure. The nation-state, he argues, was constructed by the bourgeoisie as cradle for bourgeois morality and power. As such it contributed to the marginalisation of whole sectors of nation-building societies, including racial and ethnic minorities, foreign aliens, Gypsies, nomadic communities, slum-dwellers and the propertyless poor. Finally, Mac Laughlin calls for a place-centered approach to nationalism which recognises the symbolic and socio-economic significance of territory to the different scales of nation-building. Thus *Reimagining the Nation-State* is only partly about the evolution of Irish nationalism. It is a study of minority nationalisms which shows how small nations have functioned as Balkanising forces to challenge the hegemony of dominant states and threaten the territorial integrity of historic nations.

In this sensible, subtle, and wide-ranging analysis of nation-building in Ireland, Mac Laughlin uses Irish history to illuminate nationalism as a modern process and uses his sophisticated theoretical understanding of nationalism to illuminate Irish history. A major contribution to the discussion.

Immanuel Wallerstein, *Yale University*

Packed with insights about the historical-geographical specificity of nationalism and nation-states, using Ireland and the nationalisms of Ireland as its empirical touchstone. Mac Laughlin places the history of nationalism in Europe in the whole misbegotten history of racial stereotypes, religious prejudices, and, above all, competing elite political projects of nation-state-formation, hitherto reserved by many scholars for discussion of nationalism in colonial settings at some distance from a Europe presumably without its own internal experiences of colonialism.

John Agnew, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Mac Laughlin writes with a sharp brilliance about the intersection between places, politics, systems and cultures. At once lucid and subtle, *Reimagining the Nation-State* illuminates the continuing importance of national constructs while steering clear both of nationalist myth-making and of a surrender to global blandness. Treating nations as works of political imagination, he shows how they can be imagined anew.

Fintan O'Toole, *Irish Times columnist, critic and author*

Jim Mac Laughlin is a political geographer at University College, Cork. He has published widely on state-formation, nationalism, emigration, racism, and the politics of social and environmental sciences.

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4 Theorising the Nation: 'Peoplehood' and Nationhood as 'Historical Happenings'

Nation as Construct

This chapter adopts a quite different approach to nation-building than that taken in most historical accounts, including those written at the height of two divergent and uneven strategies for nation-building in late nineteenth-century Ireland. The latter present students of nationalism with more problems than they do solutions. One way of regarding these generic histories of nationalism and Unionism is to see them as the ideological components of much wider literary and cultural renaissances then sweeping through the south, and north, of Ireland (Kiberd, 1995, pp. 263-85; Lloyd, 1993, pp. 19-26; Stewart, 1967, pp. 32-42). As integral elements in two quite distinctive cultural 'awakenings', they were instrumental in creating - or more accurately bringing to fruition - organic expressions of popular nationalism and Unionism where none previously existed. Thus they either justified Irish nationalism and condemned Ulster Unionism, or they defended the latter and vilified the former. As elsewhere in nation-building Europe, including Britain, they 'invented tradition', 'created' national culture, and constructed national identities from a rich admixture of folk history and historical myths (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1996, pp. 1-14, 263-83). As Gellner suggests, such 'awakenings', while presenting themselves in this light, generally created' nations where none previously existed (Gellner, 1983, p. 48). Thus the nationalism and Unionism found in histories and political pamphlets written at the height of nation-building represented 'the crystallisation of new units' suitable for conditions then prevailing in different parts of Ireland and used 'as their raw material the cultural, historical, and other inheritances from the pre-nationalist world' (Gellner, 1983, p. 49). To the extent that this chapter does focus on nation-centred generic histories of nation-building it does so in order to show how they popularised and promoted the cause of 'their' nation, often, as we have already seen, by disparaging that of their opponents, including their Unionist nationalist opponents.

This chapter treats Irish nationalism and Ulster Unionism as rational expressions of political regionalism and suggests that they were much more than simply 'political ideologies'. As programmes for constructing a nationalist Ireland or a Unionist Ulster, they literally penetrated into every corner of nation-building Ireland. As momentous 'historical happenings' they influenced the way individuals, social groups and ethnic collectivities related to each other and to the land that they literally inhabited. In his *Making of the English Working Class*, a classic study of the origins of working-class consciousness, E.P. Thompson classified class as a major 'historical happening' (Thompson, 1968, p. 9). Like 'nation' it was never simply a structural component of a wider social or international system. As such class formation, like nation-building, always owed as much to agency and agents as to conditioning structures. Thus for example Thompson insists that the English working class 'did not rise like the sun at an appointed time - it was instead present at its own making'. So also with nation-building and the 'making' of national consciousness in nineteenth-century Ireland. Here 'big-nation' nationalism as in Ulster Unionism, and 'small-nation' national separatism as in Irish nationalism, did not simply separate out 'coloniser' from 'colonised' at this late stage in the development of Irish and

Unionist modernities. Expressions of national consciousness here had a fluency which, like class, can evade analysis if we attempt to stop them dead at any given moment and anatomise their structure.

This chapter is divided into four parts. Section one discusses Anderson's anthropological definition of the nation as an 'imagined community' and examines some of the major paradoxes of nationalism in the nineteenth century as these relate to Ireland (Anderson, 1983, p. 15). The second section examines the anomaly of Irish nationalism and the rationality of Ulster Unionism in a nineteenth-century world where 'big-nation' unionist nation-building was the accepted norm, and where separatism was widely ridiculed. This section critically analyses the writings of Eric Hobsbawm, one of the strongest defenders of 'big-nation' nationalism on the left. This section contains a debate on his views on 'historic' nations in the nineteenth century and, to a lesser extent, in the contemporary world (Hobsbawm, 1988, p. 107). It outlines his views on the political and economic criterion of nationhood in the nineteenth century. This includes a discussion of the pitfalls, again as Hobsbawm perceives them, of nationalism and national separatism in an ethnically divided society like Ireland. Section three introduces Wallerstein's concept of 'peoplehood' to the discussion of Irish nation-building and critically adapts the logic of Thompson's analysis of 'class' to that of 'nation' and nation-building in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, pp. 73-84). In so doing it seeks not so much to evade but rather to confront the essential commonalities and distinctions between 'class', 'nation' and 'peoplehood' in late nineteenth-century Catholic Ireland and Unionist Ulster. Thus I agree with Thompson, and to a lesser extent with Hobsbawm, when these writers suggest that class consciousness, unlike national consciousness, is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter voluntarily (Hobsbawm, 1982, p. 79; Thompson, 1968, p. 10). However, as the final section shows, class consciousness in Ireland as in other nation-building European countries, was also intimately linked to national consciousness and to historic constructions of 'peoplehood'. This meant that in the contested terrains of nineteenth-century nation-building Ireland, class consciousness was never a 'pure' class experience and was always much more than the sum of its parts. Here, for example, the class consciousness of workers and small farmers was intimately bound up also with two very different and diametrically opposed views on nation-building and the nation. This meant that class consciousness in Ireland was not forged on an abstract plane. Like national consciousness it was forged on the anvil of nation-building and was articulated in a plurality of social class and regional contexts. National consciousness in Ireland was probably more nation-centred than in already existing nations elsewhere in Europe, including Britain. Whether in the north or south of Ireland it expressed the material and cultural interests of groups who were intent on realising the political potential of 'peoplehood' and nationhood in nation-state and national form. This again was quite unlike the situation in 'really-existing' nations like England, France and Germany. Here the class consciousness of workers and rural sectors of society generally did not

threaten the territorial integrity of the nation-state. In Ireland the quest for 'peoplehood' united different social classes across broad cultural fields in two different parts of the country. Yet it did not stop at that. Constructions of 'peoplehood' here gave rise to quite new social relationships between different social groups. It also forged new organic relationships with territory and resulted in the formation of social blocs whose leaders insisted that 'the people' had a right to their own nationhood and their own nation-state. That is why the 'nation' in Ireland always entailed notions of historical and territorial relations. However, unlike in more powerful European nations, statehood in Ireland has involved something more than an organic relationship with the territory of the nation. It also involved territorial contestations which resulted in acceptance or rejection of geopolitical and geo-ethnic relationships with the United Kingdom and the Empire. Thus nation-building and nationalism in Ireland existed at two levels. One of these, as we have seen, was a 'small-nation' nationalism which was essentially separatist in that it sought the 'breakup' of nineteenth-century Britain. The other was a 'big-nation' nationalism which was essentially unionist and nationalist in outlook. Both were expressions of national consciousness that were literally rooted in real places in different provinces of nation-building Ireland. They were also embodied in very real people, in people who by their actions and political behaviour showed that they were willing to fight for the right of 'their nation' to survive. Finally, it will be argued, these different expressions of 'peoplehood' or 'nationhood' were the regionalised institutional constructs of an historical capitalism which reflected not only the uneven development of capitalism but also, and much more significantly, the uneven development of national separatism in Ireland. First, however, we must look at Anderson's rather abstract model of the nation as an 'imagined community' in order to appreciate the role of print capitalism and the ethnic intelligentsia in something as concrete as Irish nation-building. Therefore the section that follows provides the broad theoretical context for understanding rival approaches to nation-building in Ireland in the nineteenth century.

Anderson's Nation: An 'Imagined Community'?

Anderson has pointed to three paradoxes which, he argues, have perplexed theorists of nationalism in this century. The first stems from the contradictions between nationalist assertions regarding the antiquity of nationalism on the one hand, and evidence from historians, social scientists and historical geographers pointing to the historical and spatial contingency of nation-building and nationalism on the other (Anderson, 1983, pp. 13-15). As Smith and others have demonstrated, this means that we have at least two schools of thought on nation-building and nationalism. One belongs to the nationalists, and what he terms the 'primordialists', those who insist upon the 'naturalness' of the nation as a territorial unit, including those who stress the 'naturalness' of nationalism as a political ideology. To the other school of thought belong the modernists and non-nationalists, those who look upon the nation as a social and territorial construct, which emerged, in the western world at least, chiefly in the course of the

nineteenth century (Smith, 1986, p. 7). This latter school of thought also stresses the historical and spatial contingency of plebeian and 'banal' nationalism. Like Anderson, and others belonging to the constructionist/modernist school, it emphasises the role of print capitalism and mass education in nurturing 'the imagined community' of the nation as a prelude to the formation of the nation-state. Whereas 'primordialists' emphasise the altruism, and indeed the spirituality of nationalism, elevating it to the status of a state religion, the scepticism of modernists has caused them to stress what Billig refers to as the banality of nationalism in this century, as well as in the last one (Billig, 1995). Thus, despite the claims of nationalists and social Darwinists to the contrary, modernists insist that nation-building never was the product of primordial forces. Neither was it inspired by pure altruism, or the product of autonomous social forces operating independently of time and place (Agnew, 1987, pp. 167-93; Mac Laughlin, 1987, pp. 1-17). It was instead the outcome of a whole range of socioeconomic and political forces operating across space and within quite specific socio-historical and spatial contexts. So much for the first set of paradoxes of nationalism discussed by Anderson.

As he sees it, the second paradox of nationalism stems from what he calls the 'formal universality' of nationality as a socio-cultural concept, versus the 'particularity' of its concrete manifestations both historically and today. Thus nationalism today exists in a whole variety of forms and contexts in many, but - as Rwanda, East Timor and Kosovo have recently demonstrated - in no means all parts of the world. In the nineteenth century in particular, nationalism was by no means a ubiquitous ideology, even within continental Europe. This was a century which saw the world, including the European world, clearly divided between powerful self-governing nation-states on the one hand, and colonial societies and peripheral small nations ruled from the real centres of national power on the other hand. However, for most of this century we have taken it for granted that everyone should have a 'nationality', and indeed a national homeland. As the examples just referred to demonstrate, this clearly is not the case. So also in the nineteenth century it was powerful societies, especially those organically linked to historic homelands, with sufficient human and natural resources to sustain nation-states and dominate 'mini-nations' at home and carve out colonies abroad, who were deemed to have the first claim to national self-determination. The manner in which they articulated their nationalism, and indeed their national colonialism, was what gave the nineteenth-century world political map such diversity and cultural mix. If that diversity has since then been eroded through the homogenising forces of globalisation this should not blind us to the cultural -even the ecological - richness of that world, including that which stemmed from the plurality of nationalisms that ranged across a metropolitan world then consisting chiefly of Europe and North America. The appeal of nationalism to Europe's minority nationalities, including Ireland, at that time can be partially attributed to a belief in nationalism as the Angel of History and harbinger of progress. It was not only Herder who believed that each ethnically defined people, in western Europe at least, had something special to bring to the

construction of a 'civilised' and multicultural Europe. Many struggling nationalities also believed this, including small nations within bigger nations. Prominent among the latter were Catholic nationalists in nineteenth-century Britain, the Scots in the United Kingdom, the Basque people and Catalans in Spain, and the Quebecois in contemporary Canada.

For Anderson the third great paradox of nationalism, historically as well as today, has been its power to mobilise people in large numbers, versus its philosophical poverty as a political ideology. Thus, he argues, unlike others 'isms', nationalism has never produced its great thinkers. It has produced instead bands of followers led by passionate leaders without any clear-cut social or political philosophy beyond that of 'national liberation'. Thus nationalism has produced no Marxes, no Hobbes, no Tocquevilles or no Webers. Instead the relative 'emptiness' or shallowness of its ideology has caused Nairn to argue that nationalism has been 'the pathology of modern developmental history' (Nairn, 1977, pp. 329-34). Rooted in dilemmas of helplessness and modernity, in the nineteenth century as also today, it possessed almost the same capacity for mass descent into dementia as neurosis does in individuals. That is why to its sceptical opponents at least it appears at once an irrational, irreversible and 'incurable' social force (Ignatieff, 1998).

To resolve these paradoxes Anderson suggests that we treat nationalism less as a political ideology comparable to other ideologies. We must equate it instead with much deeper and more integrative belief systems. We must treat it, in other words, as a form of national 'kinship' which has its own belief systems or 'religion'. Historically at least nationalism was never simply an ideology in the way that Liberalism, Socialism or even Conservatism were ideologies. It was always much deeper than these. It was something akin to a state-centred creed which had as its goal the construction, or defence, of something as sacred as the nation-state. This meant that nineteenth-century nation-builders recognised the significance of territory not only in symbolic terms, but also as a national and ideological resource. They saw nation-building as a way of interpreting, exploiting and reorganising social space (Williams and Smith, 1983, pp. 502-8). They interpreted nationalism as an ideology which in the widest possible sense was more akin to a religion than a state ideology.

Rather than treat nationalism, and indeed the nation, as givens, as things to be spelt with a big 'N', Anderson proposes both an alternative approach to nation-building, and an alternative definition to 'the nation'. For him the nation is 'an imagined political community', which is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is an imagined community because the members of even the smallest nation can never hope to meet, or even hear of, all their fellow members. Yet in the mind of each citizen resides an image of the national community tied together usually by a common history, a shared geography or national territory, a common culture, common religion and common language (Anderson, 1983, pp. 14-16). The nation is imagined as inherently limited because even the large

nations of the nineteenth century, and unlike the empires which they spawned, set clear limits to the extent of the nation. Even the largest nation had finite - albeit elastic - boundaries beyond which lay other nations. Despite their hunger for colonial possessions, nations in nineteenth-century Europe never 'imagined' themselves as coterminous with humankind, even though many considered themselves the 'Lords of Humankind'. Finally the nation, according to Anderson, is imagined as 'sovereign' because it developed in the aftermath of the French Revolution and during the course of the industrial and commercial revolutions that transformed the political and economic life of a large part of Europe in the nineteenth century. Geilner has suggested that this was not so much a century which saw the awakening of nations to self-consciousness - it was instead a period which saw the invention of nations where none previously existed. That is not to suggest that nationalism promised what it could not deliver. Neither did it always masquerade under false pretences. Nations were historical and geographical creations whose 'imagining' was conditioned by the historical and geographical circumstances in which they evolved. This was because, as Anderson suggests, rational secularism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought with it its own modern darkness for which nationalism acted as an antidote (Anderson, 1983, pp. 17-21). In particular the ebbing of certainties, especially those of a political and religious nature - belief in the divine rights of monarchy, teachings on the origins of life and the nature of moral order - left in their wake a whole array of doubts and sufferings that once were assuaged by religion but could now be soothed by belief in the nation and in nationalism. Anderson, however, is very careful not to suggest that nationalism was not somehow or other 'produced' by the erosion of religious sensibilities which somehow or other 'superseded' religion. In order to throw new light on the historic appeal and mobilising force of nationalism he simply suggests that we align it, not so much with other ideologies - Liberalism, Conservatism or even Socialism - than with larger cultural and belief systems like Christianity, Islam and Confucianism. Viewed thus, nationalism in the nineteenth century was a veritable new Angel of history. Nairn has described it as a 'Janus-like' and 'hydra-headed' creature, one that was capable of looking forward as well as backward (Nairn, 1977).

As Anderson sees it, the possibility of imagining the nation arose when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions underlying western life since well before the Middle Ages lost their appeal. The first was the idea that sacred script languages offered privileged access to deep ontological truths because they were inseparable from them. The second was the belief that societies are naturally organised around divinely ordained monarchies and dynasties which implied that human loyalties were always, and everywhere, necessarily hierarchical and centripetal in character. Anderson's third cultural conception suggested that history and cosmology were indistinguishable because the origins of the world and of men were essentially identical. When these conceptions of spirituality and temporality began to break down and lose their appeal human lives had a tendency to go into a spin and lose their rootedness. The old everyday certainties

of pre-modern life - belief in an afterlife, acceptance of loss of freedom, belief in the rights of monarchies and landed elites - became meaningless. The new scepticism that grew out of the dusk of traditional modes of thought was spread chiefly through the secular channels of news-papers and the other products of print capitalism. These in turn made possible a new form of 'imagined community', the nation. They did this by fostering nationalism and elevating it almost to the status of a state religion that gave new meaning to life and rooted people in the meaningful landscape of the nation-state. Viewed thus, I shall argue, nationalism in countries like Ireland, Spain and Poland prolonged the political power of the Catholic church. Here also it gave many people a new lease of the spiritual, by simultaneously giving them a political future and mission civilatrice, both in their quasi-sacred homelands at home and in their colonial possession abroad. As a result nations were never simply countries. They literally were the Fatherlands and Motherlands of peoples, at least in Europe and in the wilder outliers of White settler society in the colonial world.

It has been suggested that the true value of Anderson's perspective on nations lies only partially in its emphasis on the nation as an 'imaginative construction' (Cubitt, 1998, p. 56). It also resides in the whole area of articulation of national identity, especially in the creative elaboration and reinforcement of different senses of community at local regional and national levels. These were the levels at which the imaginative power of nation-building agents were exerted in the contested terrains of nineteenth-century Ireland. This suggests that the 'Irish nation', and 'Unionist Ulster', were as much socio-geographical realities as 'mental' or 'imaginative' constructs. More than that, the imagined power of nation-building in both parts of Ireland was fostered and sustained through the labour and discursive habits of a whole range of actors, institutions and social groups, including, not least the press and the political establishment.

Anderson's phenomenological and constructionist approach to nationalism is also a modernist one. It suggests that nations 'happen' when and where people-as-creators of the nation can imagine themselves as part of a nation, and as part of a national collectivity. Anderson suggests that this happened initially in western Europe, specifically in France, Germany, Britain and Italy, in the period between the dusk of the eighteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth century. It was no coincidence that it coincided with the emergence of the national bourgeoisie in these European countries. After the French Revolution, and especially after the English industrial revolution, a whole range of important infrastructural and structural shifts occurred in western Europe which literally reconstructed countries here as regionally united territories. As Harvey has shown, these 'happened' at different national scales and included the cultural, political and economic transformation that accompanied the spread of modernity (Harvey, 1982, pp. 34-45; Harvey, 1992, pp. 10-38). Equally important were the spatial transformations which turned many European countries into functioning geographic units. These facilitated the development of the new 'imagined communities' of nations by allowing the inhabitants of Europe's 'new'

countries - 'new' in the sense of being recently unified, or recreated through the forces of modernisation - to now think of themselves as 'a people' and play around with different abstract ideas of themselves as constituting a nation. The French Revolution showed that popular revolution was not only possible but that it had to be contained if it were not to jeopardise the interests of the national bourgeoisie. The industrial revolution, accompanied as it was by processes of industrialisation, a heightened commercialisation of agriculture, and the spread of bourgeois and petty bourgeois values, provided the developing societies of western Europe with a blueprint for the successful nation. Hence nations were not just 'imagined communities', each with its own distinctive styles of living and thinking. They were also the building blocks of modernity and the territorial expressions of national capitalism. As such they were to be strictly confined to the metropolitan world and were not for replication anywhere in the colonial world, in small, peripheralised nations like the Basque country, Gatalonia, Brittany, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Anderson plays down these particular aspects of nation-building. He also ignores the marginalisation of Europe's ethno-nationalities, including the Irish, as a result of 'big-nation' nation-building in the nineteenth century. In filling in these gaps in Anderson's argument Eric Hobsbawm and Immanuel Wallerstein point us in the direction of a more rounded, cultural, historical materialist theory of nation-building and nationalism.

To summarise Anderson's highly generalised account of the origins of national consciousness. Operating as it does at a supranational European level, and at the level of the post-colonial Third World, his model of nation-building is highly generalised indeed. Its universal 'truths' are arrived at not so much through careful analysis of the specificities of nation-building in concrete social and spatial settings as by broad-ranging and highly insightful historical arguments. For that reason his analysis of the emergence and spread of national consciousness largely ignores the specificities of nation-building in 'actually-existing' countries. More to the point, it does not contain anything like a regional geography or social class analysis of nation-building in either the nineteenth or the twentieth century. With these comments in mind it is still useful to summarise Anderson's highly influential (if not very detailed) account of the origins of national consciousness. Thus as he sees it the convergence of capitalism with print technology, particularly in the peculiar conditions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, gave birth to print capitalism both as an industry and as a mass medium. This in turn created the possibility of a new form of imagined community which was radically different, both in its morphology and in its political loyalties, from the great global communities of the past, like for example Christendom, the Islamic Ummah, and China's Middle Kingdom. Each of the latter had its own sacred rites and languages, as well as clearly defined rules about membership and admission. The basic morphology of the 'imagined community' of the nation mapped out, albeit in the very roughest of terms, the terrain upon which the modern nation-state was constructed. The national print languages of these new imagined communities were of political,

geographical and ideological importance. Thus for example they were often, but by no means exclusively, responsible for the shattering of older dynastic realms into territories that were, vernacularly at least, relatively homogeneous. Equally important, they united hitherto disunited societies, especially those, like Ireland and Spain, marked by high levels of rural parochialism and a fragmented regionalism. After the French Revolution the 'nation' was something to which other societies, including the Irish, could consciously aspire. For others, particularly those in ethnically divided class-structured societies, nation-building had a 'Balkanising' effect and fear of the 'risen people' ran deep into the established institutions of power and privilege. Here the nation was often as not imposed from above in order to contain plebeian protest from below. As the section that follows suggests, this was not the way nationalism had evolved in Ireland, or Ulster, by the late nineteenth century.

Hobsbawm's Nation and the Nation in Ireland

Hobsbawm's most comprehensive analysis of nation-building and nationalism is to be found in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Published in 1990 under the subtitle 'Programme, Myth, Reality', this work is of interest to students of nationalism in general, but it is of particular interest to students of nationalism and Unionism in Ireland. Thus for example it testifies to the fact that Hobsbawm, like most nineteenth-century defenders of nation-building, still is more sceptical of 'small-nation' nationalism than he is of 'big-nation' nation-building. It also points to the fact that he belongs to the modernist school which traces modern expressions of nationalism to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hobsbawm sees nations as dynamic constructs of historical capitalism. However, the juxtaposition of 'myth' and 'reality' in the subtitle suggests that he now believes nationalism to be well 'past its peak'. Certainly he is extremely sceptical of 'small-nation' nationalism, both in the nineteenth century and also today. This scepticism stems from his doubts about its progressive credentials but it does not extend to a critique of 'big-nation' or 'unionist nationalism' in the nineteenth century. Indeed Hobsbawm betrays a high level of Euro-centrism, and Anglo-centrism, when he insists that powerful, unified and 'moderately large' nation-states are the suitable units for modern capitalist society. This argument suggests that ethno-nations and minority nations were expected to accept their lot as part of, and not set themselves apart from, these dominant nations. Hobsbawm generally accepts the legitimacy of this approach to nation-building. He rarely misses an opportunity to stress the divisive effects of small-nation nationalism on the territorial integrity of powerful nations. He is particularly scathing in his comments on the emptiness of national separatism as a political programme for the working class in the nineteenth century.

Nations and Nationalism's intellectual origins are also significant. The work is a condensation of many years studying nation-building and nationalism, but its more immediate origins were a series of lectures delivered at the Queen's University of Belfast in 1985. As Hobsbawm himself states, the location of these

lectures suggested the topic'. He chose Belfast, the provincial capital of one of the oldest and most contested terrains of separatist and unionist nationalisms as a place to deliver his thoughts on two topics which have engaged him throughout a long and extremely rich intellectual career.

Hobsbawm's other writings on nationalism are scattered throughout his histories of European modernity and the triumph of industrial capitalism. These begin with *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (Hobsbawm, 1962). Herein nationalism is described, rather ominously, as the force which split the general movement in favour of European revolution after the French Revolution into national, and ultimately into nationalist camps. In western Europe at least, but not in Ireland, it was, he insists, a middle-class ideology. Thus for Hobsbawm, as also for Benedict Anderson and Anthony Smith, the progress of nationalism was intimately bound up with the emergence of a secularised middle-class intelligentsia. By and large, he argues, its progress was marked also by that of print capitalism, specifically by the output of textbooks and newspapers preaching the gospel of nationalism and written, usually, in standardised vernaculars. These vernaculars subsequently became the official national languages of European nations. Aside from the problematic example of the Irish 'national movement' under Daniel O'Connell, Hobsbawm suggests that the great proponents of nation-building in Europe were 'the lower and middle professional, administrative and intellectual strata, in other words the educated strata' (Hobsbawm, 1962, p. 170). Although he does not say as much, these nationalist leaders contributed to the modernisation of their nation-states, and to a secularisation of political ideologies.

There were a number of exceptions to this general rule. Significantly, most of these were relatively small, non-industrial nations on the peripheries of Europe. They included Ireland, Poland, the Basque country and Czechoslovakia. Here the hegemonic power of a rural-based Catholic church, coupled with low levels of industrialisation and urbanisation, meant that nationalism was a force for controlling the pace of modernisation which allowed new hegemonic groups to control levels of exposure to secularism and modernity (Larkin, 1972, pp. 625-34). This in turn meant that in Catholic nation-building Ireland, as also in the Basque country and Poland, nationalism was an introvertive force which impeded the process of secularisation. Indeed Basque nationalism was not so much a product of linguistic distinctiveness as a strategy which allowed the Partido Nacionalista Vasco to resist modernity and oppose direct rule from Madrid from the late nineteenth century down to the mid-1960s (Heiberg and Escudero, 1977, pp. 47-55). Similarly also in Catholic Ireland national separatism, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was a strategy for controlling the pace of modernisation by attuning it to the interests of the middling tenantry rather than those of a beleaguered Anglo-Irish ascendancy. In focusing almost exclusively on the secular liberalism of 'big-nation' nationalism, however, Hobsbawm gives a distorted image of the specificities of nation-building in a rural society like Ireland. He particularly misreads the material and ideological

significance of nationalism in small nations like Ireland which did not have a powerful national industrial middle class or a well-organised industrial proletariat. Here advances in nationalism were measured by the progress of church-building, the spread of elementary education, the success of the provincial press, and by improvements in any means of communication which could bring ordinary people out of their parochial worlds and lead them on to the 'institutional' or 'procedural landscape' of the modern nation-state.

Hobsbawm suggests that pre-Famine Ireland presented 'the only Western national movement organised in a coherent form before 1848' that was 'genuinely based on the masses' (Hobsbawm, 1962, pp. 170-1). Yet he implies that this was a non-progressive movement because it was controlled by traditional forces and under the influence of the Catholic church. Thus, he argues, the national movement here 'enjoyed the immense advantage of identification with the strongest carrier of tradition, the Church'. Like other students of modern nation-building, Hobsbawm finds it difficult to decide whether this national movement was a proactive articulation of native nationalism or reactive expression of peasant traditionalism. When discussing such national movements, he sometimes opts for the former, but at other times he opts for the latter interpretation. In the case of Ireland he wisely stops short of labeling O'Connell's 'national movement' a nationalist movement. Instead he sees it simply as a 'mass movement of agrarian revolt' organised in 'secret terrorist societies which themselves helped to break down the parochialism of Irish life'. However, despite his expertise in the whole area of 'primitive rebels' and 'social banditry', Hobsbawm fails to appreciate the extent to which the plebeian leaders of agrarian revolt in Ireland at this time had more in common with 'social bandits' than they did with modern nationalists (Hobsbawm, 1958). In his pioneering study of social banditry published several years after *The Age of Revolution*, Hobsbawm describes social bandits as 'peasant outlaws whom the lord and the state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society'. As such they are 'considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported' (Hobsbawm, 1969, p. 17).

'Primitive rebels' and 'social bandits' made up the rank and file of Irish secret societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They were by no means unique to Ireland at this time. We find them all across Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We also find them in the colonial world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including in countries where their activities could not be construed as 'nationalistic' or 'state-centred' in any modern sense. They are marginalised people who refuse to submit to state-centred controls. As a result they stand out from their fellows and in so doing often 'find themselves excluded [from mainstream society] and therefore forced into outlawry and crime"' (Hobsbawm, 1969, P. 24). Those who flocked to their secret societies were peasant activists and radicalised craftworkers. They were not the prophets or social theorists of a modernising and nation-building Ireland. By

and large, in other words, they were not individuals from whom novel political visions or national plans for the social and political reorganisation of Ireland as a nation-state could be expected.

Social banditry of the sort we have been discussing, while common throughout history, tended to thrive in 'transitional societies' across Europe from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries. It was especially common in societies, like late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland, caught up in the transition from tribal and kinship systems of social organisation to variants of capitalist modes of production, whether in agriculture or in industry. Indeed, in Ireland's case as elsewhere in the peripheries of Europe, agrarian unrest and social banditry were most widespread during the transitional phase linking the disintegration of kinship societies to the emergence of free labour markets and agrarian capitalism. Moreover, it was capitalist modernisation, not just failure of their paramilitary tactics or any supposed lack of political acumen, that ultimately contributed to their demise. They were literally out-dated in their own lifetimes and bypassed by history. This was clearly the case in Ireland, but it was also true of other European countries like Italy and Spain (Macfarlane, 1833). Here economic development, particularly when accompanied by improvements in communications and growth in the apparatus of the state, deprived secret societies and other pre-modern expressions of social banditry, of the very conditions they required in order to survive. They did not simply decline through take-over by, or incorporation within, wider nationalist political movements, as nationalists themselves imply. They disappeared also underneath the barrage of social and infrastructural change that created a new Ireland in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Interestingly, however, and despite the appropriateness of such a categorisation to agrarian unrest in pre-Famine Ireland, Hobsbawm never really applies it to the leaders of Irish secret societies. Yet it could be argued that those engaged in this form of rural agitation were more like social bandits than modern-day nationalists or nation-builders. This is another way of saying that they probably were more reactive than proactive in their political outlook. They certainly played a highly ambiguous role in the transformation of Irish society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was because they were, like Hobsbawm's social bandits, 'not so much political or social rebels, let alone revolutionaries, as peasants who refused to submit, and in so doing stood out from their fellows' (Hobsbawm, 1969, p. 17). As a group they were little more than symptoms of crisis and tension in Irish society. As such they shared another characteristic of the classic social bandit - i.e. they did not possess a programme for national social change, preferring instead to follow the leadership of their social and political 'betters', in this case Daniel O'Connell. The latter is described by Hobsbawm not so much as a nationalist as 'a moderate middle class autonomist'. He is lavishly also described as a 'golden-voiced lawyer demagogue of peasant stock' who was 'the first ... of those charismatic popular leaders who mark the awakening of political consciousness in hitherto backward masses'

(Hobsbawm, 1962, pp. 169-70). Although he uses the term 'charisma' here Hobsbawm never really defines it. For that reason he misses the true nature of relationships between 'leader' and 'led' in the pre-Famine national movements of Ireland. Weber understood this term to mean 'an unstable amalgam of extraordinary personal leadership and emotionally grounded followership in structurally contingent and historically uncertain situations'. He went on to argue that 'the charisma of a person can be converted into the charisma of office (e.g. priest, pope, president), but in either case it is subject to the probability of routinisation and the constraints of everyday life, especially if problems of securing material resources and leadership succession push the nonrational basis of charisma into a more rational and bureaucratic direction' (Weber, 1978, pp. 1381-469). Gramsci, like Weber, also used 'charisma' in a very explanatory fashion, and in a whole range of very specific regional and historical contexts. He clearly attached great importance to the role of charismatic leadership during a period of historical transition such as that experienced in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He defined 'charisma' as any quality which causes a leader to be followed in spite of his lack of legitimate or institutional authority (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 210-11). The historical preconditions conducive to charismatic authority exist when critical awareness replaces naturalistic spontaneity in periods of deep-seated historical change. It is then that the artful or charismatic leader can lead subordinate masses to overthrow an old 'naturalistic' schema and build a new one. As one such leader, O'Connell achieved the former but never realised the latter. He acquired 'charisma' through active and conscious co-participation and 'compassionability' with subordinate social groups in Irish society. He particularly cultivated close links with the great masses of the discontented Irish Catholic poor. In so doing he developed what Gramsci called a 'living philology', which literally allowed him to almost read their minds. This more than any of his notorious other more personal qualities transformed O'Connell into a Gramscian 'collective man'. The Cork-born Irish writer and novelist Sean O'Faolain captured the essence of O'Connell's leadership skills very well when he aptly labeled him 'the king of the beggars' (O'Faolain, 1980). Yet in a letter to his friend P.V. Fitzpatrick written in May 1839, O'Connell inadvertently revealed his almost quasi-racial dislike of those whom he led. In it he states: 'I never will get half credit enough for carrying [Catholic] Emancipation, because posterity never can believe the species of animals with which I had to carry on my warfare with the common enemy. It is crawling slaves like them that prevent our being a nation' (quoted in O'Faolain, 1980, p. 10). Here, interestingly, O'Connell inadvertently also offers his own quasi-racial explanation as to why he thought Ireland could not become a modern nation like other European nations in his time -i.e. the bulk of the Irish were like a 'species of animal' and were not 'fit' for nationhood. Indeed what makes this statement all the more remarkable is the fact that it accorded well with European Enlightenment thinking on who should and, more especially, who should not aspire to nationhood and acquire statehood in the nineteenth century.

Looking back on the obstacles to nation-building early in the nineteenth century,

and comparing this to the situation confronting the Young Irelanders in the 1840s, Charles Gavan Duffy, one of O'Connell's staunchest critics, also alluded to the social inadequacies of the Irish poor as an impediment to nationhood in the first half of the century. Thus he stated:

Marvellous as were O'Connell's energy and resources, they were not sufficient to move the mass of prejudice and dumb indifference which confronted him. The bulk of the people were gifted with a generosity which shrank from no sacrifice, but they were ill-equipped ... The majority could not read or write. They had got a political training, which in some degree compensated for their want of culture or self-knowledge - they had learned concert, self-reliance, the necessity of making mutual concessions, and the lesson invaluable to a suffering people, the secret of their own power, but they had been taught for the most part as men are taught before the invention of writing. Their courage was not fortified by knowledge, or that pride of place which feeds the self-respect of nations. (Boyce, 1991, p. 150)

This statement is uncannily close to the ethnic constructs of nationhood in the writings of Benedict Anderson and Anthony Smith. Like them, Duffy stresses the importance of reading, writing and print capitalism in the construction of the 'imagined community' of the nation in Ireland. To appreciate the full import of this statement, however, and to understand the difference between O'Connell and the Young Irelanders, we have to realise that below O'Connell were social bandits, men organised in regionally based, parochial, self-help organisations. In Hobsbawm's eyes, these men were deemed to have 'no ideas other than those of the peasantry'. They were 'primitive rebels' or pre-modern political activists, not ideologists or prophets of nation-building. As Hobsbawm suggests, and as O'Connell and Gavan Duffy also imply, they were not of the stuff from which nations were made. Neither, as we have seen, were they men from whom 'novel visions or plans of social and political organisation were to be expected'. Left to their own devices indeed, it could be argued that their political actions would not have added up to a social movement, let alone a nationalist movement. But for the leadership of O'Connell, they would simply have acted as a surrogate for a social movement.

Hobsbawm shows how O'Connell himself entered the Irish historical stage not as a nation-builder but as a charismatic leader of peasants, craftworkers and other marginalised groups who were witnessing the demise of one moral economy and the birth of a new, and much more laissez faire political economy of the landed aristocracy and the middling tenantry. This was a period when older customary and organisational forms of politics based on deference and respect for Anglo-Irish authority were being swept away by the twin forces of modernisation and rural capitalist commercialisation in Ireland. The latter benefited the emergent middling tenantry more than they did the rural and urban poor. O'Connell emerged out of this period of socio-economic and moral confusion when

traditional leaders in petty bourgeois society and the landed ascendancy - e.g. landlords, middlemen, church leaders, strong farmers, merchants and the professional class - were becoming more and more detached from subordinate groups in urban and rural Ireland. The latter included not only the peasants but also poor tenant farmers, craft workers, the urban poor, and the proto-industrial working class of town and country alike. Gramsci notes that it is with these groups, and at precisely such periods of crisis, that traditional political conventions fail and new political strategies emerge. In the case of pre-Famine Ireland the crisis of authority brought on by the early modernisation of Irish society meant that the field was literally opened for the adoption of violent solutions and the operation of 'unknown forces' by what Gramsci terms 'charismatic men of destiny' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 429). O'Connell's charisma must be measured with this conflict between the 'represented' and the representatives' clearly in mind. In particular it derived from his ability to impress and steer 'social bandits' - i.e. lesser 'men of destiny' - away from 'violent solutions' and 'unknown forces' into a grudging acceptance of the emerging hegemony of their 'natural' and national 'social superiors' among Catholic church leaders, the urban and rural lower middle classes, the more substantial bourgeoisie and the new class of Catholic professionals.

As we have already seen, the hegemonic ascent of this broad Catholic bloc was made all the easier when famine and emigration decimated the ranks of the subordinate but radicalised poor. Yet it was the radical poor, as well as the bottom layers of the petty bourgeoisie who, in O'Connell's time, provided the grassroots support for great 'mass meetings' organised in support of Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union. These, significantly, were organised with the help of priests, teachers, farmers and a whole range of other Catholic activists. These groups also had their own political agendas, they were the very people who, later in the century, were to the forefront of nation-building all across the south and west of Ireland. They were particularly opposed to the Act of Union because it made Ireland an integral part of a unionist nation and seemed to heighten their status as second-class citizens in a land which they increasingly looked upon as 'their own'. They were just then beginning to appreciate the potential of national separatism to resolve their social and political problems, not least the problem of political leadership. When the pre-Famine 'under-classes' whom they claimed to represent disappeared from Irish society through famine and emigration, the way was quite literally clear for proto-nationalist and national movements to undergo the transition to become fully-fledged modern state-centred nationalist movements. Thus, by the second half of the nineteenth century, new social and political leaders and new social movements emerged to articulate the interests of tenant farmers and the urban middle class.

In many parts of the rural south and west of Ireland all this not only contributed to a consolidation of the spiritual and political power of the Catholic church. It also marked a geographical extension and social deepening of the political power of the Catholic church, particularly in disadvantaged rural areas (Larkin, 1972;

O'Shea, 1983). In such places, as we shall see, secular leaders and the intelligentsia were so thin on the ground that the poor were led chiefly, and often only, by 'their' priests and religious leaders. In such areas, as in the contemporary Islamic world, religious leaders often acted as what C. Wright Mills termed 'organisational men' (Rahnema, 1994). They also led the poor into a grudging acceptance of their hegemony as something that was in the interest of the poor as well as in the interests of the struggling middle classes in town and country alike. This meant that they did not so much represent the 'pure' class interests of the landless poor or the lumpenproletariat, two groups who were anyway regularly excluded from the moral and political structures of the nation-state everywhere in Europe. Instead they used their hegemony to prioritise the interests of the social classes from which they derived, namely the Catholic middling tenantry, the shopocracy, the merchant class, the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, and the professional class. From then onwards Ireland's 'men of no property' were well on the way to being represented, almost exclusively, by substantial men of property. The latter, as we have seen, sought to make the Irish nation a cradle for petty bourgeois Catholic respectability. They did this by marginalising the interests of the indigenous poor and dismantling the faltering hegemony of an Anglo-Irish ascendancy.

Hobsbawm's appraisal of the Irish national movement under O'Connell, together with his assessment of agrarian revolt in pre-Famine Ireland, are of interest to students of Irish nationalism for a number of reasons. In the first place he describes Ireland as a 'backward' and 'mass' society. In so doing he displays a poor understanding of the nature of agrarian revolt and social change in a country that was already fragmenting into distinctive social classes and ethnic collectivities, and into distinctive national and nation-building regions. Indeed Hobsbawm seems more at home describing class formation and social change in industrial societies in mainland Europe, and especially Britain, than in a peripheral and rural society like Ireland. Second, he shows little understanding of the complexities of the political geography of nation-building in Ireland at a time of great social and economic transformation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular he ignores the fact that the agricultural heartlands of Catholic Ireland were already caught up in twin processes of capitalist modernisation and class formation in the first half of the nineteenth century (Lee, 1981, pp. 9-11). This added to the power of the middling tenantry and the Catholic church while simultaneously strengthening the power of the Catholic intelligentsia, the merchant class, the professions, and the urban Catholic middle class. Even at this stage these groups were articulating a nationalist agenda for Catholic Ireland. They were certainly acquiring more say in the political and economic affairs of the country than Hobsbawm's plebeian leaders or 'social bandits'. It was from these groups, not the rural poor, that the leaders of national and nationalist movements in rural Ireland, as elsewhere in mainland Europe, were to derive later in the century.

Hobsbawm's next major comments on nationalism come significantly, in a

chapter called 'Building Nations' in *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, first published in 1975. This is significant precisely because he, like others, now sees nations as the major building blocks of European capitalism, the cradles of its bourgeois societies. He defines the period as the 'springtime of peoples'. Yet it also saw the emergence of international tensions between nation-states, growing territorial claims on the colonial world, an intensification of rivalries between big nations like Britain, France and Germany, and the incorporation of minority nations into the large 'core' nations of nation-building Europe. Yet criteria of nationhood at this time, he argues, gradually shifted away from ethnic factors like religion and language towards their economic potential and military capacity. In this work, and later on in a *New Left Review* paper on the breakup of modern Britain, he gives a clear impression of being opposed to separatist nationalism per se. In his description of the specificities of nation-building in the late nineteenth century he argues that:

a strong case can be and was made ... for a certain type of 'nation-state', though it has little to do with nationalism in the current sense ... such nations were the building blocks of world capitalism during a lengthy period of its development, and with it of bourgeois society in the 'developed' world .. They represented that crucial element - the creation of internal conditions (e.g. a 'national market') and the external conditions for the development of the 'national economy' through state organisation and action. The case for such nation-states was not nationalist in the current sense, inasmuch as it did not envisage a world of nation-states irrespective of size and resources, but only one of 'viable' states of medium to large size, which consequently 1. excluded a large number of 'national' groups from statehood, and 2. de facto abandoned the national homogeneity of most accepted 'nation-states'. (Hobsbawm, 1977, p. 4)

For Hobsbawm, therefore, the criterion of what he terms 'historic' nationhood was 'the decisive importance of the institutions and culture of the ruling classes or the educated elites' (Hobsbawm, 1988, p. 107). The basis of this sense of nationhood, in other words, was economic and political, and not necessarily 'ethnic'. He goes on to imply that small nations like the Irish were 'unhistorical' or 'semi-historical'. This was because, like other champions of the 'big nation', Hobsbawm assumed that the nation must not only be national - it must also be 'progressive'. Aside from rural Catholic Ireland and a small number of other peripheral societies in northern and eastern Europe, the objective of this 'historic' nation-building was 'unification', not just the desire for 'independence'. Faced with the national aspirations of small nations, Hobsbawm suggests that the defenders of this genre of nation-building had three choices: 'they could deny their legitimacy or their existence altogether, they could reduce them to movements for regional autonomy, and they could accept them as undeniable but unmanageable facts'.

When discussing national separatisms supported by 'Nationalist-Marxism' in this century and discussed in Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain*, he also points to three contradictions in the twinning of nationalism with Marxism. The first lies in the irreversibility of the national separatism once it has succeeded in Balkanising the unionist nation. The second has to do with the 'weakening' effect of separatism on the dismembered body politic of the once united working class. As he sees it, the real problem for left-wing supporters of nationalism - historically as well as today - is the fact that 'there is no way of turning the formation of "national communities" ...into an historic engine for generating socialism either to replace or to supplement the Marxian historic mechanism'. The third contradiction of separatism, he contends, is that there is no way of using the general argument in favour of Balkanisation 'as a specific argument for the independence of any one putative "nation"'. This, he adds, is a problem for nationalists as well as the left. Thus he states:

To assume that the multiplication of independent states has an end is to assume that 1. the world can be subdivided into a finite number of homogenous potential 'nation-states' immune to further subdivision - i.e. 2. that these can be specified in advance. (Hobsbawm, 1977, p. 12)

Later on in this argument Hobsbawm comes close to attacking all manifestations of nationalism as a betrayal of Enlightenment values. Thus he states, the real danger for all those who have the interests of workers at heart is:

the temptation to welcome nationalism as an ideology and programme rather than realistically to accept it as a fact, a condition of their struggle as socialists Quite apart from implying the abandonment of the values of the Enlightenment, of reason and science, such a conversion also implies a withdrawal from realistic analysis of the world situation, Marxist or otherwise. (Hobsbawm, 1977, P. 15)

Given these attitudes to small-nation nationalism and 'mini-nations', it is not surprising that Hobsbawm holds Giuseppe Mazzini, the ultimate unionist nationalist, in such high regard. Mazzini fought for Italian unity and independence throughout his life and as a consequence spent most of it in exile. He was deeply involved in revolutionary nationalism in the 1850s, at a time incidentally, when mass nationalism already was a force to be reckoned with in rural Ireland. In 1861 he was bitterly disappointed at the establishment of a unified Italian kingdom rather than a Republic. In his outline of 'Europe of Nations', first published in 1858, he envisaged a Europe comprising no more than eleven or so states, all of which were essentially multi-ethnic in character. Given the ethnic diversity of Europe at the time, it was inevitable that the majority of European nations, including Ireland, were not so much national as multi-national or multi-ethnic societies. Yet Mazzini, like Cavour, found it difficult to fit into his scheme the Irish, the most obvious upholders of popular nationalism in

his day. This was because as a defender of 'big-nation' nationalism, Mazzini was less interested in national independence than in the viability of nation-states. As a unionist nationalist he was opposed to the separatism in Irish nationalism just as he was opposed to the pulverisation of strong states and the creation of 'mini-states' in their wake. Hobsbawm concurs with Mazzini when he condemns mini-nations and is in favour of unified nation-states. Defending the latter as the 'natural units' of bourgeois society, he insists that, even among nineteenth-century nationalists, the prejudice against the pulverisation of states and the rise of mini-nations was 'deeply ingrained, at least in Europe'.

In his later writings, particularly in *The Age of Empire*, Hobsbawm identifies the period between 1880 and 1914 as a new phase in the evolution of modern nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1992, pp. 142-51). This 'post-Mazzini phase' of nationalism differed in three respects from the 'historic' nation-building we have been discussing so far. First, it abandoned the 'threshold' principle, arguing that any body of people, provided they considered themselves a nation, could now claim the right to self-determination. Second, language, ethnicity or religion now became the decisive criteria of potential nationhood in late nineteenth-century western Europe, including Ireland. Third, there was what he terms a sharp shift to 'the political rights' of the nation in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. This found expression in the right to have one's own flag, to have one's own national anthem, and to have a separate and separatist ethnic identity.

Hobsbawm insisted that nationalism in the 'historic' nations also implied a hegemony of the institutions and culture of the ruling classes or educated elites, assuming these were also supported by the common people. Aside from these 'historic' nations most other nations in Europe, including the Irish, were deemed 'unhistorical' or non-progressive because they were considered too small a nation to go it alone, or too poor to stand alone. Ireland presented these nation-builders with an even greater dilemma - it was home to a small-nation nationalism or national separatism which existed side by side, and in opposition to, a 'big-nation' unionist nationalism concentrated in the north-east but with outliers existing elsewhere in the country. Thus it harboured Ulster Unionists, the defenders of the 'historic' nation', and Irish nationalists who were supported by the majority of the Irish nation. Whereas Unionists were affiliated to the 'historic nation' of Britain, the Irish belonged to what Hobsbawm and other opponents of national separatism refer to as the 'unhistoric' nation of Ireland. This is what made Ireland such a contested terrain of nation-building. On one side were Ulster Unionists who saw themselves on the side of progress and industry. On the other were Irish nationalists who saw themselves as the defenders of tradition from the full frontal attacks of an Anglicised modernity. While the former paraded themselves - and were paraded - as loyal defenders of a unionist nationalism, the latter saw themselves as champions of the small nations in a lesser peripheral Europe carved out among less powerful nations. For that reason Unionists in the north-east also considered themselves racially superior and more progressive than Catholic nationalists. In defending the Union, they argued, they were

defending what they regarded as the moral economy of a Protestant people in a 'non-progressive' Catholic island society. In protecting the territorial integrity of the 'historic' nation in their corner of an 'unhistoric' Irish nation, Protestants of course were also condemning the nationalist minority in their midst to a permanent state of powerlessness. Reprehensible though this was, Unionist treatment of the nationalist minority here was not that different to the treatment accorded to minority groups in Europe's other powerful nations, including Francoist Spain and early twentieth-century France. Nineteenth-century nation-building regularly involved the coercive absorption or incorporation of minorities. Ulster Protestants looked to unionist nationalism as a way of keeping themselves within the fold of the progressive 'historic nation', while simultaneously banishing Catholic nationalists in their midst to a sectarian world of capitalist competition and religious intolerance. It was not, as Henry Patterson suggests, that the bourgeoisie in Ulster were able 'to mobilise the other classes in the Protestant community because they could plausibly present a victory for [Catholic] nationalism as leading to economic regression'. It was because Protestant unionist nationalism here was far stronger than Catholic national separatism. As he sees it bourgeois hegemony in the north-east of Ireland was:

based on a strategy of articulating Ulster's distinctive social and political history. This strategy was successful because, as in its economic positions, it reflected a particular reality: the existence of a distinct Ulster Protestant nation whose democratic right to self-determination was threatened by a nationalist movement which consistently refused to recognise that Ulster Protestants were not part of the Irish nation ... The threat to their material position and Catholic nationalism's disregard for their distinct political and ideological traditions made their [i.e. Protestant working-class] conflicts of interest with the bourgeoisie of secondary significance in relation to their shared interests in mobilising against the nationalist enemy. (Patterson, 1980, p. 145)

To argue thus, I have suggested, is to deny historical agency to Protestant workers and small farmers and reduce Ulster Unionism to the status of a Home Rule 'wrecking machine' under the control of the Protestant bourgeoisie (Mac Laughlin, 1980, pp. 15-27). Patterson is wrong also in interpreting Protestant resistance to national separatism in Ulster simply as proof of the existence of a distinct 'Protestant nation' here. Indeed the logic of his argument would imply that Ulster Unionism was an historical and political anomaly, and that it contained a level of ethnic isolationism which it never had, at this time at least. However, Unionist behaviour at this time was far from anomalous. Indeed it appeared so chiefly only to Irish nationalists, and in the specific contexts of nineteenth-century Irish nation-building. Viewed from the wider European perspective, it was a rational expression of political *regionalism* which sought to keep Ulster Protestants as part of, not apart from, that most 'historic' nation, the United Kingdom. Yet, according to Patterson, 'Unionist mobilisations' in the

Protestant north-east and in outliers elsewhere in Ireland were one and the same thing. They must be seen 'as in part an element ... in the struggle of an important section of the national ruling class against [Irish] Home Rule' (Patterson, 1980, pp. 147-9). Because he fails to see in Protestant opposition to Irish nationalism in the north-east an expression of 'big-nation' nationalism, he suggests that Protestant workers and small farmers here were motivated more by class interests than by nationalist interests. To suggest this is to miss the connections between class and national consciousness in late nineteenth-century Ireland, and Ulster. This also ignores the political geography of nation-building here in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Patterson, the integration of 'the economy of the north-east' with that of the UK 'went beyond movements of capital, labour and commodities'. Instead it:

provided the basis for an identification with a developing British labour movement and a theory of history which relegated nationalist demands to a past stage of historical development, thus denying its current legitimacy. (Patterson, 1980, p. 148)

In arguing thus, Patterson underestimates the wider context of plebeian Unionist working-class opposition to national separatism in Ireland. Like Hobsbawm, he seems to suggest the class consciousness of Ulster's Protestant working class was somehow or other formulated separately - even independently - from their unionist nationalist consciousness. Like Hobsbawm, he suggests that 'nationalism' in Ireland had 'nothing to offer' Protestant workers because it was narrowly interpreted as an Irish Catholic affair, something that had more to do with defence of Gaelic culture and protection of traditional values, than with economic advancement and political development. Thus his problematic contention that nationalism had 'no appeal for Protestant workers' because it belonged to 'a past stage of historical development'.

Patterson's arguments share a number of features with Hobsbawm's discussion on the naturalness of class consciousness and the divisive nature of national consciousness in ethnically divided societies. Both writers fail to identify different versions of nationalism and different scales of nation-building in nineteenth-century Ireland. They generally also fail to locate these conflicting nationalisms, in Ireland as well as Unionist Ulster, in their wider British and European contexts. Patterson, like Hobsbawm, also fails to explain why Unionists in Britain and indeed the empire were so anxious to retain the north-east of Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. Both writers conveniently also explain away the complex political geography of Ulster Unionism. In particular they suggest that all of Ulster did not come under Unionist rule primarily because Ulster Unionists were not interested in the underdeveloped west and south-west of the province. More significantly still, they fail to account for Catholic nationalist hegemony in these areas of Ulster, which as we shall see, dates from at least the 1880s.

Hobsbawm's comments on national versus class consciousness are more general but no less confusing than those of Patterson, especially when applied to the contested terrains of Ireland. They are also far less scattered than his extremely rich commentaries on the dialectics of nation-building and capitalism in nineteenth-century Europe. His comments on class versus national consciousness are largely confined to his well-known *New Left Review* paper on the threat of 'Balkanisation' to Britain published in 1977. This offered a highly stimulating and sustained critique of the consequences of the 'breakup' of nations by 'Balkanising' force in today's world. The paper was sparked by Nairn's neo-Marxist speculations on national separatism in Britain published in the same year. Hobsbawm used the *New Left Review* paper to express a strong traditional socialist opposition to ethno-nationalism in general. He saw this as a way of defending working-class unity and protecting the precious territorial integrity of 'big nations' in the contemporary world.

However, in a little-discussed essay on 'Working Classes and Nations' published, significantly, in the journal of the Irish Labour History Society in 1982, he also makes a strong historical case for resisting small-nation nationalism and national separatism in the core economies of nineteenth-century Europe (Hobsbawm, 1982, pp. 75-85). In this paper he makes a number of distinctions between class consciousness and national consciousness which merit critical attention here. In the first place this essay, like the *New Review* paper, reveals Hobsbawm as a powerful defender of 'big-nation' unionist nationalism. In the paper 'Working Classes and Nations' he constantly insists that the class consciousness of Irish workers was impeded by divisions brought about through the rise of the nationalist bourgeoisie and the emergence of national differences. Second, like other traditional leftists, he regards the class consciousness of workers as more authentic and less divisive than national consciousness. Third, he completely ignores class formation in rural society and neglects the links between urban and rural interests in late nineteenth-century nation-building societies. Indeed Hobsbawm's analysis of class and national consciousness is weakest of all when dealing with the class interests of rural society and the relationship between rural and urban social classes. Like Patterson, he avoids any serious discussion of class interests in rural Ireland at a time when the combined population of the three largest cities was still well below one million at the opening of the twentieth century. Despite the existence of strong links between rural-based nation-builders and rural social classes, and notwithstanding the cultural and political consequences of nation-building for the urban working class, Hobsbawm focuses exclusively on the class question' as it related to the latter, not the former.

Written during a period of heightened political violence in Northern Ireland, Hobsbawm's reflections on the breakup of Britain is not so much an analysis of sectarianism and ethno-nationalism. It is nothing less than a history lesson which seeks to illustrate the errors' that Protestant and Catholic workers made when they fell under the influence of sectarian nationalist or Unionist leaders. Thus Hobsbawm implies that 'nationalism' was either an 'Irish affair', something

confined to the Catholic south and west of Ireland, or it was a product of sectarian rivalry that erupted in the north-east of Ireland in the late nineteenth century. In either case it was essentially conservative, an ideology concocted by the forces of tradition in order to weaken working-class unity. Referring obliquely, and very awkwardly, to 'southern Ireland' he suggests that the historic appeal of nationalism there was effective because nationalist agitation ... building on memories of a former political state or autonomy, or organisations embodying the separateness of a nationality (e.g. the Catholicism of the dependent people as against the Protestantism or Orthodoxy of the ruling state) were in existence before an industrial working class developed' (Hobsbawm, 1982, p. 82). This, he argues, was also the case in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the nineteenth century. Having explained the historic appeal of nationalism in these terms he next proceeds to condemn patriotism as a divisive force that is always inimical to working-class interests. In nineteenth-century Ireland, he suggests, national sentiment became an 'explosive' force which destroyed the cross-national unity of the working class because it was 'intertwined with issues directly affecting the state and its institutions'. Hobsbawm does not explain why class consciousness can take 'second place' to national consciousness either in the south of Ireland or in Protestant Ulster. This failure is all the more striking in the context of late nineteenth-century Ireland.

Here, as I have argued elsewhere, national consciousness was not only intertwined with the class consciousness of workers - it expressed itself in two separate oppositional forms, one of which was separatist while the other was unionist. Separatist nationalism had the support of Catholic workers, small farmers, the shopocracy, the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. While this genre of nationalism also had the support of the Catholic minority in the north-east, the real heartlands of Catholic nationalism lay outside this very distinctive region. The unionist nationalism of Ulster Protestants on the other hand reflected the interests not just of large landowners and industrialists - it also had the wholehearted support of Protestant workers, the middle classes, and the urban and rural poor. Here working-class consciousness was not secondary to the national consciousness of Protestant workers. It was inseparable from it. The class consciousness of workers in Ireland's case did not grow out of any primordial religious divide' - still less from a 'tribal divide' - in Irish society. As elsewhere in Europe and North America it constituted one part of much wider and often conflicting expressions of social identity. However, what made Ireland 'special', to some extent at least, was the fact that class consciousness here also evolved alongside two opposing and territorially based strategies of nation-building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet even here Ireland was not an exceptional case, as the history of class consciousness in countries as diverse and as apart as Canada and the Basque country clearly testify. In ethnically and regionally divided contexts of nation-building Ireland, class consciousness was clearly forged on the anvil of national consciousness. Because it was embodied in 'real people' and was not simply an abstract 'category', class consciousness could not, and rarely intended to, transcend the

national contexts within which it evolved. In the event it grew up behind the ethnic, religious and quasi-racial barriers separating an older established Protestant working class from Irish small farmers and a weakly developed Catholic working class at crucial stages of nation-building in Ireland and the UK. Often indeed the class consciousness of workers, including agricultural workers and small farmers, did not come into conflict with their religious, ethnic or racial consciousness. At other times, however, it did. Here as elsewhere in nation-building Europe and North America it was so intertwined with national and racial consciousness as to be inseparable from it. More than that, it was so central to the lives of ordinary people, so inextricably linked to their daily lives in very 'real' places - e.g. the north-east, the midlands and south of Ireland, the 'west' - that it became a crucial force in the struggle for nationalist and Unionist hegemony in the contested terrains of this fragmented nation-building Ireland (Fitzpatrick, 1998).

Hobsbawm's analysis of class and national consciousness is of interest to the student of Irish nation-building for a number of other reasons. In the first place it ignores the political geography of nation-building and nationalism in late nineteenth-century Ireland. This is particularly remarkable when one considers just what a patchwork of Orange and Green (including all shades in between these two colours) late nineteenth-century Ulster - and Belfast - actually was. It is all the more remarkable when one also considers the rootedness of two diametrically opposed expressions of national consciousness - one national separatist the other unionist - in different parts of Ulster and the rest of Ireland at this time. Thus Hobsbawm discusses class consciousness in Ireland in highly abstract terms when he portrays it simply as a 'product' of the 'proletarian condition'. As such, he suggests, it was assumed to be more 'logical' than national consciousness. For Hobsbawm also nationalist movements were to be condemned not only because they:

naturally accentuated the linguistic, religious and physical distinctions between 'their' sector of a heterogeneous working class and the rest, *but* also because their objects were by definition at odds with those of class consciousness. They sought to substitute the dividing line between 'the nation' (including both its exploiters and exploited) and 'the foreigners (including all workers classifiable as such) for class lines. (Hobsbawm, 1982, p. 79)

In a follow-up statement which comes close to suggesting that working-class consciousness is 'natural' while national consciousness is 'irrational' and 'divisive', he argues that it has always 'proved difficult to prevent class consciousness, since it arises naturally and logically out of the proletarian condition, at least in the elementary form of trade unions' consciousness, that is to say in recognition that workers as such need to organise collectively against employers in order to defend and improve their conditions as hired hands'.

In portraying working-class consciousness in such abstract and generalised terms, Hobsbawm, unlike Thompson, ignores the regional and national attachments of workers, the strong sense of place, and sense of community, that tied workers to 'their' place and 'their' nation. Thus the identification of Protestant workers with Loyalist Ulster, and with the ready-made nation of the United Kingdom, and Catholic workers with a nation-in-the-making like rural Ireland. For that reason two different varieties of cultural homogeneity emerged in Ireland. Both were products of objective relations of production, but they were also products of two different approaches to nation-building, and two very different images of the imagined community of the nation in Ireland.

Throughout this period of 'turbulent readjustment' the political and cultural boundaries of Ulster were modified so as to satisfy a modern unionist territorial imperative which was now making itself felt for the first time. As Gellner suggests, the transitional period in nation-formation in Ireland, as elsewhere in ethnically divided societies in mainland Europe, was 'bound to be violent and conflict-ridden'. This was especially the case in the north-east where Catholics and Protestants were locked in an unequal contest to establish nationalist and Unionist hegemony. Here 'rival cultures' and rival conceptions of 'peoplehood' coexisted as nationalists on both sides literally sought to capture 'the souls of men'. To do this they had to construct rival centres of political authority and capture territory for Catholic nationalist Ireland on the one hand, and for Protestant Unionist Ulster and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland on the other.

Wallerstein's 'Peoplehood' and Historical Constructs of Ulster and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century

In this chapter, and in much of the remainder of this work, I shall seek to overcome the dualities of 'class' and 'national' consciousness in Hobsbawm's analysis of nationalism. However, I now wish to suggest that one way this can be achieved is to combine Wallerstein's category 'peoplehood' with E.P. Thompson's historical approach to the 'making' of social classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Wallerstein, as for Hobsbawm, classes are 'objective' analytic categories which, under certain circumstances, realise themselves and thereby become classes *'fur sich'*, as opposed to classes *'an sich'* (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, p. 84). Viewed thus, however, classes are not simply or always products of the social relations of production. As statements about contradictions in an historical system, they are also quite unlike 'races', 'nations', 'ethnic groups' and 'peoples'. These are also territorialised descriptions of social communities, not simply sociological constructs or analytic categories. "lated

Thus as Wallerstein put it, 'the concept of race is re to the "axial division of labour in the world economy". The concept of "nation" is related to the political superstructure of this historical system, the sovereign states that derive from the interstate system'. As used in the Darwinian half of the nineteenth century these categories of 'race' and 'nation' tended to be applied more to powerful ethnic

groups than to weaker ones (Mac Laughlin, 1998, pp. 1014-15). They were especially applied to those organised within existing nation-states which selected their own cultural markers in such a way as to exclude 'the other', including other national minorities. Thus, unlike popular usages of race in Europe today, 'nation' and ethno-nationality in late nineteenth-century Ireland were used to self-consciously forge identities from within rather than have these imposed from above by hostile 'others'. The category 'race' was linked to social progress in Ulster in such a way as to inform bourgeois thinking about the limits of social and political change. This suggested that 'Honest Ulstermen', particularly those under the hegemony of the industrial bourgeoisie, would have unlimited cultural and development potentialities within the United Kingdom. Ulster's new ruling classes then not only saw themselves as lords of all they surveyed within this corner of the United Kingdom - they also saw themselves as belonging with the lords of humankind in general (Mackenzie, 1986; Springhall, 1986). Race thinking coloured their perception of themselves as a chosen people, a people with a mission civilatrice in backward Catholic Ireland. It also influenced perceptions of themselves as a people steeped in history and rooted in a progressive metropolitan domain. Because Catholics were viewed as 'a people without history', and because they were perceived to literally lack industry, they were excluded from this corner of the 'historic' nation in Ireland (Wolf, 1985). Like other European elites, especially their White Anglo-Saxon counterparts in North America, Ulster Unionists were impregnated with the ethos of change and social progress. They invested Industry, Trade and Commerce with the same divine authority that monarchy formerly claimed (Kiernan, 1972). Adam Smith called the Europe of these elites the magna virum mater, the mighty mother of men. The combination of unionist nationalism and anti-Irish racism in Ulster made this a powerful nation-centred and patriarchal place. As Unionists saw it, this bred great character in the 'honest' menfolk of Protestant Ulster and rendered them uniquely capable of great designs (Smith, 1972).

Because 'race' and 'nation' are so intertwined in many historical accounts of nation-building, it could be argued that Wallerstein suggests a too rigid division between these two categories in the contested terrains of a nation-building country like Ireland. Writing from a world system perspective, he suggests that 'race' arose primarily as 'a mode of expressing and sustaining core-periphery antimony'. 'National categorisation' arose originally 'as a mode of expressing competition between states' in an international system. He adds that race and racism 'unify intrazonally the core zones and the peripheral zones in their battles with each other'. 'Nation' and nationalism on the other hand 'divide core zones and peripheral zones intrazonally' (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, p. 79). The latter process operates in a complex intrazonal and interzonal competition for rank order whereby 'core nations' are considered more powerful than peripheral nations. That is why, for example, even apart from locational factors, a 'core nation' like Britain could be accorded much higher status than a peripheral nation like Ireland (Mac Laughlin, 1999e, pp. 53-66). This meant that Ulster Unionists always considered themselves to have the political advantage over

Catholic nationalists. The European interstate system in general, not just Britain, usually respected the rights of powerful nations more than it did those of small nations like rural Catholic Ireland.

Yet Wallerstein, unlike Hobsbawm, recognises a place for small nations in this nineteenth-century world order. Thus he argues that 'any group who sees advantage in using the state's legal powers to advance its interests ... in any sub-region of the state has an interest in promoting nationalist sentiment as a legitimisation of its claims' (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, p. 82). The nationalism of 'sub groups' acts as a sort of social cement, tying urban and rural classes together in a quest for statehood, while simultaneously binding them to the history and territory of 'their' nation. These 'sub groups' in turn use their 'pastness' as 'a central element in the socialisation of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimisation'. Their 'pastness', as we shall see, is pre-eminently a moral and political phenomenon. It can be defined in terms of attachment of territory, and in terms of historical association and socio-political groupings. Viewed thus, unionist nationalists and national separatists in Ireland used their own distinctive brands of 'pastness' to promote state-level uniformities. However, their nationalisms were also the consequences of these same uniformities as realised in the socio-political and economic landscapes of late nineteenth-century Ireland. Both expressions of nationalism were mobilised to claim 'national' territory, and to defend, or reinforce, the cultural and ethnic homogeneity of 'their people'. This meant that ethnic intolerance and religious bigotry, on both sides of the nation-building divide, were not primordial attributes of 'warring tribes' in Ireland. They developed out of the longing which each ethnic sub group had for oneness, uniqueness and cultural purity. The Irish experience of nation-building was not unique in this respect. As elsewhere in Europe the 'nation' at this time signified unity and purification. In Ulster's case this translated into 'a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'. In the Republic of Ireland it meant a Catholic constitution for a Catholic people.

While recognising the role of race-thinking in dividing the colonised from the colonisers and legitimising the hegemony of powerful nations in a global arena, Wallerstein underestimates the part played by racism in the legitimisation of ethnic supremacy within nations. In nineteenth-century Europe, for example, 'race' was frequently used for 'expressing and sustaining core-periphery antimony' within nations. But it did not just express conflicts of interest between nations and their 'colonial possession'. In Unionist Ulster, as in Anglo-Irish Ireland, 'nation' and 'race' were so intertwined in anti-Catholic discourse that it was impossible to distinguish one from the other. Catholics in general were attributed with 'racial' and 'national' characteristics which made them 'unfit' for self-government. Those in the north-east were considered especially 'unfit' to have any say governing a 'progressive' and prosperous province like Ulster. For that reason they were literally placed below Protestants, the 'chosen people' of God in an otherwise 'superstitious' island society. Thus the 'nation' was fused

with 'race' to justify an axial division of labour within Ulster, one wherein Catholics held down low-status jobs, and often inhabited quite different worlds, to those of Protestants.

Wallerstein stresses that ethnic groups as socio-historical constructs can correlate heavily with objective social classes, particularly when the latter literally 'realise' themselves as classes *fur sich*. Unlike Hobsbawm, he does not portray classes in abstract terms. Neither does he insist that they are more 'natural' than ethnic or nationalist constructs of peoplehood. For Wallerstein, class consciousness is first and foremost 'people-based'. Class associations, including trade unions, employers' groups, workers' organisations, farmers' grouping, the intelligentsia, and coalitions of professional workers, are never simply social abstractions. They also have implicit, and de facto, 'people bases'. Like 'nations' and 'ethnic groups', they are what E.P. Thompson, in his discussion of class formation, called 'active processes'. Similarly also 'nations', 'classes' and 'ethnic groups' did not develop independently of each other. They did 'rise like the sun at an appointed time'. They were historical and geo-ethnic happenings, in the sense that very real people were 'present' at their making. As Wallerstein puts it, 'peoples have names, familiar names ... and they seem to have long histories' (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, p. 172). This was especially the case in Ireland where Unionism literally 'named' Ulster as a place apart from Catholic nationalist Ireland, and 'named' Protestants as loyal defenders of the Crown in Ireland. National separatism on the other hand 'named' the Catholic Irish as a nation distinct from the United Kingdom.

Finally Hobsbawm, like other traditional leftists, all too often bemoans the fact that workers in Ireland, especially in Ulster, have organised themselves in 'people forms'. Wallerstein on the other hand sees this as a perfectly natural and unavoidable historical development. For him, it is impossible to have class activity that is entirely divorced from 'people-based political activity'. We have seen this in national liberation movements all across the colonial world in the 1960s and 1970s. We see it also during the 'spring-times of peoples' in Europe, including Ireland, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was a period when the nation-building processes which fostered the construction of 'peoplehood' were inextricably bound up with class formation and the growth of class consciousness in concrete regional settings. 'Pure workers' organisations then were as rare as 'pure rural organisations' were, simply because both were so deeply embroiled in the whole process of 'people formation'. In this period, as also in the 'Third World' since the 1960s, class struggles 'were also national liberation struggles, and class-based political activity' was often 'extremely nation-centred'. Unlike Hobsbawm, Wallerstein puts as much emphasis on 'peoplehood' as on 'class consciousness' in his analysis of these institutional constructs of historical capitalism. More than that - he insists that 'peoplehood' has been 'an essential pillar' of historical capitalism. 'Peoplehood', he argues, has kept pace with ethnic geography of individual nations on the one hand, and that of the new world order on the other. Thus we have become more, not less,

attached to 'peoplehood', this in part is because it has been an important expression of *Gemeinschaften* in the nation-building world of the nineteenth century and in the globalised contemporary world. Thus, unlike Hobsbawm, his analysis allows for different political geographies of nation-building and nationalism, just as it allows for different scales of nation-building in the nineteenth century and today.

Wallerstein also points to the links between nationalism and the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century. Like Hobsbawm he argues that nation-states historically were essential pillars in the evolution of a European world system under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie. Focusing on the cultural aspects of nation-building he insists that the whole idea that a society should be integrated, that it should 'have one language, one culture, one race', that it should have the right to self-determination, was a product of nineteenth-century western political thought. Showing a greater appreciation of the specificities of nation-building in a small peripheral nation like Ireland, he also asserted that 'the creation of strong states within a world-system was a historical prerequisite to the rise of nationalism, both within the strong states and in the periphery'. This, he argues, was because nationalism conferred citizenship upon members of the state while simultaneously transforming them into collective social and ethnic solidarities. In rural Catholic Ireland these solidarities emerged, in modern form at least, in the course of the nineteenth century. They emerged partially as a reaction against 'big-nation' nationalism in Ireland, and partially because of the rise of a native Catholic bourgeoisie who felt that they too had a right to self-determination. In Catholic Ireland these social groups looked on nationalism as a cultural defence - a hedge against the untrammelled forces of modernisation or 'Anglicisation' - and as a strategy for developing Ireland's peripheral capitalism.

To conclude this discussion of 'peoplehood' and nation-building as it applied to nineteenth-century Ireland. It is suggested that Unionist and nationalist 'peoplehoods' emerged in Ireland chiefly during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was a period when 'as a result of common experience, inherited or shaped', people articulated the identity of their interests as between themselves and other people (Thompson, 1968, p. 9). At this historical conjuncture Catholic nationalists in the south and Protestant Unionists in the north-east articulated their interests 'as against other men and women whose interests were different, and usually opposed to theirs'. A sense of 'peoplehood' here was linked through a whole range of socialising agencies and class mechanisms to two different scales, as opposed to two different types of national consciousness. This was what gave rural and urban communities throughout the north and south of Ireland such a heightened sense of place, a sense of themselves belonging either to an Irish nation-in-the-making, or to the already-existing and unionist British nation. This in turn literally raised the whole contentious issue of territorial attachments in an island economy marked by strong regional and cultural differences. Yet Irish nationalism and Ulster Unionism were much more than ideological constructs or

forms of 'imagining' that could be imposed from above on an ethnically divided society by its hegemonic bourgeoisie. They embodied the essence of 'common sense' for many ordinary people who lived out their lives, not in an abstract plane of 'social relations of production' but in the very real, and very different, regional contexts of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They informed whole aspects of life, including attitudes towards politics, progress, community, religion, work, land, history and identity. That is why national separatism and 'small-nation' nationalism as in Irish nationalism, perhaps even more so than the 'big nation' of Ulster Unionists, was also socially constructed as an ensemble of sensibilities that were projected across a wide range of social, cultural and territorial fields.

The sections that follow look at locational aspects of nation-building and nationalism in general and then in Ireland in particular. The anomalous state of nation-building here presented nationalists, national separatists and contemporary theorists of nationalism with many classic examples of the difficulties involved in building nations from the ground up. They also emphasise just how difficult it is to theorise, and generalise, about nation-building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Despite the plethora of descriptive and highly partisan accounts of nationalism and Unionism in Ireland in the nineteenth century, critical theoretical accounts that seek to explain, rather than simply describe, legitimise or condemn these ideologies have been few and far between. Then, and to a lesser extent now, most Irish nationalists took the naturalness of 'the nation' in Ireland for granted. They either condemned Unionism as a conspiracy to wreck Irish Home Rule through bigotry or malice, or insisted upon the congruence of the nation-state with the 'national' territory. In so doing they maintained that the island of Ireland was the natural basis of a 'united Ireland' and mobilised nationalist ideology to lay claim to the 'national' territory. In tracing Unionist power to the Tory heartlands of the United Kingdom, they underestimated the strength of plebeian Unionism in the enclave economy of the politically distinct north-east of Ireland. They ignored the rootedness of plebeian Unionism in this part of Ireland where conflicting, but no less legitimate, claims to nationhood were being articulated by Protestant Ulstermen. In literally claiming space as their own and for their own, Irish nationalists and Ulster Unionists clearly renounced the geographies of Irish nationalism and Unionism in the different regional contexts of nineteenth-century Ireland. In taking the logic of 'their' respective nation for granted nationalists and Unionists alike failed to see the 'Irish nation' and 'Unionist Ulster' for what they were, namely geographical constructs and political aspirations which were products of concrete historical transformations, the outcome of regional and historical 'happenings'. What these historians failed to stress was that their respective 'nations' were never 'natural'. They had to be invented. They were not simply products of geography or history. Thus others since then have shown that the nation in Ireland as elsewhere in Europe had to be mediated through a whole variety of historical agents, and agencies, that were

rooted in particular places or countries. In nineteenth-century Ireland, as also in France, Germany, Italy and Poland, the nation-building agents included the church, the national bourgeoisie, the provincial press and the educational establishment, as well as infrastructural networks of roads, railways and canals.

As we have already seen, most nation-centred historians in nineteenth-century Europe not only described but strongly defended nation-building processes at work in 'their countries'. This was particularly the case in powerful nations where, as a result of the influence of social Darwinism, nationalist historians regarded it as inevitable that strong nations would prevail over colonial societies abroad and weaker nations at home. In Ireland's case Catholic nationalists Anglicised the causes of the country's social and economic problems and nationalised their solutions. Their defence of nationalism was not only a separatist and nation-centred vindication of Ireland's right to self-determination. This was one of the earliest, and most forceful demands for the 'breakup of Britain' ever to have been articulated. The Irish were not only calling for the 'Balkanisation' of Britain - from their nation-building outpost on the margins of Europe they were calling for the creation of a new world order which would accord small nations the same rights that large nations had garnished to themselves through the Balkanisation of dynastic empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It would be wrong to suggest that it is only modern-day expressions of ethno-nationalism that can contribute to regional instability in countries as far apart as former Yugoslavia and Indonesia. Small-nation nationalism in late nineteenth-century Ireland also threatened the regional stability of the United Kingdom. It was widely recognised that the success of nation-building here could have serious repercussions for the regional stability of Britain's imperial possessions.

The other tradition in writing about nationalism in Ireland championed what was considered the much more 'respectable' cause of Irish Unionism. In Ulster at least this genre of nationalism defended the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Those supporting this tradition insisted that Ireland's future was best left in the hands of British Unionists, the widely recognised 'Lords of Humankind'. As a 'superior people' in a 'troublesome' land, Ulster Unionists were proudly proclaiming their membership in the United Kingdom, both because they were already commercially united with it and because Britain anyway was considered the model nation which other struggling nationalities, apart from the Irish, sought to emulate. In so doing Ulster Unionists recognised the existence of two expressions of nation-building in nineteenth-century Ireland, but insisted that theirs was the more legitimate because it had the sanction of history and race theory.

Nation, Place and Class in Nineteenth-century Ireland

Anderson, Hobsbawm and Wallerstein all point to one of the persistent paradoxes of nineteenth-century nation-building - the fact each nation proudly proclaimed its own distinctiveness, yet, in western Europe at least, all were the product of

more or less similar nation-building processes. This was also the case in nation-building Ireland. The latter included the nation-building agents and agencies we have already been discussing, print capitalism, the popular press, the provincial press, the bureaucratisation of society under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, national education and elaborate networks of road and rail communication which reduced the relative costs of travel within Ireland and Britain. Taken together, all of these made social interaction and inter-regional communication at a 'national' level both possible and imperative. They certainly made it easier for large sections of the population to think of themselves as a modern 'nation'. Thus more and more members of society now had what Anderson calls a 'vertical and horizontal sense of comradeship' with people they had never met, or even seen before. Equally important, they could also 'imagine' their country as a national homeland, a compound of territory, society, environment and politics. At this stage in its evolution the 'nation' referred to much more than the possibility of becoming a nation. It designated instead a concrete reality, that amalgam of language, religion, economy, way of life, territory, history and politics that formed the basis of the nineteenth-century nation-state. It was what one writer recently labeled a 'unit of analysis with a holistic undertow' (Jordanova, 1998, p. 199). As such it gave meaning to life, precisely because citizens of the nation found shelter from the storms of modernity, from its ennui, its faceless-ness, its rootlessness and its meaninglessness. As members of the nation were forged into an organic community they also developed deep, often spiritual, attachments to the country they inhabited. They began to develop a sense of identity, a sense of place and a Herderian sense of mission. So there developed a collective memory, a collective vision of the future, as citizens of the nation developed a capacity to project themselves forward as a people of distinction, and with a distinct contribution to make to the wider world of nation-building.

Central to the imaginative construction of any nation, not least in nineteenth-century Ireland, was the assumed existence of national collectivities and the very real existence of agents and agencies capable of transforming the country into a nation. As we have already seen, this coincided in Europe with the rise of the bourgeoisie, including the petty bourgeoisie, the emergence of the popular press, the growth of national education and the spread of other 'nationalising' agencies associated with the development of the modern administrative state. It 'happened' especially with the imaginative conversion of 'national' culture, and the 'national' territory, into a compound of community, economy, environment and mentality (Cubitt, 1998, p. 16). This in fact is what we mean when we talk of the nineteenth-century nation as 'organic community', as opposed to the transient assemblies of citizens and non-citizens in pre-modern and pre-nationalist societies. In Ireland as elsewhere in Europe this organic community of the nation had to be constructed through a careful nurturing of inter-class and inter-regional alliances. This was achieved through the cultivation of a common sense of identity and the teaching of shared myths and common history. This encouraged citizens of the nation to invest, culturally and psychologically, and not just materially and politically, in the national territory as a 'national

homeland'. Given the multi-ethnic and multi-national character of most societies in nineteenth-century Europe, including Ireland, nation-building regularly involved the coercive absorption or incorporation of minorities into the nation of the dominant majority. We have already seen that nation-building even on the Irish scale had profound implications for Irish Travellers and also resulted in the marginalisation of workers, women, the rural poor and religious minorities. Ireland's absorption into the United Kingdom is of course a classic example of ethno-nationalist incorporation at a higher and much more extensive scale. That small ethno-nations like Ireland were expected to assimilate into the nation of the dominant majority, in this case Britain, is clear from the writings of liberal unionists like John Stuart Mill. His *Considerations on Representative Government*, published in 1861, contains one of the strongest, and highly racist, defences of this process to be found anywhere in the writings of nineteenth-century political theorists. Mill contended that:

Experience proves that it is possible for one nationality to merge and be absorbed by another; and when it was originally an inferior and more backward portion of the human race, the absorption is greatly to its advantage. Nobody can suppose it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of the French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people - to be members of the French nationality .. than to sulk on its own rocks, the half savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlanders, as members of the British nation. (Mill, 1946, p. 65)

Although he does not name Ireland here, elsewhere Mill staunchly defended its absorption into Britain. In defending 'big-nation' nationalism, liberals like Mill clearly questioned the rationality of ethno-nationalist minorities like the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh and others who chose 'to sulk on [their] own rocks'. As we have already seen, the process of absorption and integration was particularly lengthy and tortuous in the case of Ireland. What matters here is that it was greatly intensified in the latter half of the nineteenth century when 'big-nation' British nationalism led to renewed efforts on the part of Unionists to make Ireland part of the United Kingdom by attempting to 'kill Irish Home Rule with kindness'. It was then in particular that renewed efforts were made to bring the Irish, 'the half savage relics of past times ... into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people' like the British. More importantly still, however, this was happening just as it became possible for the Irish to imagine themselves a nation in the modern sense of the term.

Catholic Ireland then was only one example of an attempted assimilation of an ethno-nationalist minority into the nationhood of the majority. In Spain, France and Germany, as also in the countries of Scandinavia, ethno-national minorities were incorporated into the nation-state of the dominant majority. As these cases

show, minority nations were regularly expected to accept as rational the democracy of majority, even if it did not serve the interests of minorities. Nationalist parties representing the latter were considered sectionalist or 'regional parties'. For that very reason they were expected to assimilate to the mores of the dominant majority and accept as democratic the decisions of democratic majorities. This was because, being sectionalist and regionalist, ethno-nationalist minorities were also considered non-progressive. Because they were not 'emblematic' of the nation as a whole they were expected to accept absorption in the majority nation on its terms. Thus marginalisation of minorities was often considered justified on the grounds that minority interests ran counter to 'national interests', including the need to literally hold the nation together and prevent falling apart. If, as in the case of nationalist Ireland, they threatened the territorial integrity of the dominant nation, they had to be coerced or, as was later the case, forcibly partitioned.

All this suggests that the process of marginalisation which resulted from nation-building also had clear spatial implications. In nineteenth-century Ireland, as in post-independence Africa, some regions were considered too valuable to be lost to rival nations. Some had more symbolic significance than others. Some places were considered dispensable, while others were regarded as indispensable to the nation-building drive. Yet underlying all of the spatial implications of nation-building was the desire to link the 'imagined community' of the 'nation' to the 'national' territory. This was how the nation literally was constructed. Moreover, in the nineteenth century at least, it was constructed as an organism linked to a national territory with sufficient social and economic potential to hold its own in a world then dominated by powerful nations. Thus, in order to qualify as nation-states, nineteenth-century nations had to command a national homeland, just as they had to be inhabited by citizens with sufficient developmental potential to place their nation alongside the progressive nations of the world.

This, as we shall presently see, was considered problematic in the case of Catholic nation-building Ireland. In supporting unity with Great Britain, Ulster Unionists not only believed themselves to be more rational but 'better' nationalists than Catholics. The latter were considered irrational because they sought secession from a united kingdom in the process of becoming a united nation under a national bourgeoisie. The 'irrationality' of the Irish was stressed at a meeting of some 300 Unionists in Donegal in the remote north-west of the country in March 1886 when one speaker declared that:

It seemed remarkable at this period of the nineteenth century, when minor states were asking for the protection of greater states, that a section of the Irish should ask to have the country launched forth as an independent entity - a speck in the ocean. (*Donegal Independent*, 27 March 1886; quoted in Anderson, 1989, p. 154)

Much in the same manner that the United States during the Reagan

administration constructed El Salvador and Nicaragua as threats to its internal security, Ulster Unionists and the Conservative party constructed Irish Home Rule as a threat to the integrity of the British Empire and the death-knell of landlordism. The *Donegal Independent* of 17 July 1886 predicted that Home Rule would lead to the 'dismemberment of Empire'. Three months earlier the *Coleraine Constitution* said it would lead to 'the loss of India'. The fiercely pro-Union *Londonderry Sentinel* believed it had 'incited the Indians to agitate', adding that, if passed, this Bill would 'stir up the natives in every country over which the British flag waves'. It pointed out that:

a revolution so complete as to turn a whole class accustomed to rule for centuries from their seats of power, and to place over their heads another class long accustomed to obey, is a dangerous policy. (Quoted in Anderson, 1989, p. 153)

In their efforts to construct their organic nation, Irish nationalists had literally to scramble for territory, including symbolic territory, anywhere they could get it. As these statements show, they were unlikely to find such territory in the staunchly nationalist-unionist north-east. Nineteenth-century Irish nation-building contained strong elements of geographical exclusion and inclusion. In the industrialised north-east it lost out to Protestant Unionists, while elsewhere in the country it entailed inclusion of underdeveloped, yet culturally vital regions like the barren western seaboard. Nation-building here also subordinated urban interests in Ireland to the interests of the rural Catholic bourgeoisie. This meant that the agricultural heartlands of the country always had higher priority than urban centres and the underdeveloped peripheries. The fact that the north-east chose to stay within the United Kingdom also inadvertently contributed to the social disintegration of communities throughout Catholic nation-building Ireland well into the twentieth century. In losing the country's most industrialised province to the unionist nation of Great Britain, rural Ireland continued to lose large numbers of young adults to emigration, not least emigration to mainland Britain and the United States, as migration to the industrial heartlands of Ulster never was an option for these 'surplus' sons and daughters of nation-building Ireland. Indeed the peripheralisation of rural Ireland during the first thirty or forty years of the state was not unconnected to processes of core-formation which caused this part of the country to be linked with mainland Britain, and not with nation-building Ireland. While Ireland was integrated into the world economy through the commodification and internationalisation of Irish labour, Unionist Ulster remained an integral part of the UK economy. In the event Marx's fatalistic prediction that Ireland's people would be 'banished by sheep and ox', had largely come true, not least because they did not have access to the industrial labour markets of Unionist Ulster.

This 'scramble' for territory, which was all-important for a small nation like Ireland, was no less evident, even if it was not so extreme, in Unionist Ulster. Here, as a later chapter will show, impoverished counties like Donegal, Cavan and

Monaghan, all of them part of the historic province of Ulster, could be set apart from Unionist Ulster without too many, at least in the Unionist heartlands, lamenting their loss. They could be dispensed with because they were considered of no great symbolic significance, and of still less political or economic significance, to 'Protestant Ulster' as it fought to maintain its position as an enclave economy within the United Kingdom. It was not just that inclusion of these counties would have stretched the boundaries of Protestant Ulster beyond the bounds of Unionist control. The post-Famine relic landscapes of west Ulster in particular were considered by Unionists as 'backward' and 'tradition-bound'. For that reason they were literally considered to have no place in a commercially 'advanced' and 'successful' community like 'loyalist Ulster'. In the event these western counties fell under the hegemony of a Catholic nationalist petty bourgeoisie which often had only very tentative links with nation-builders and powerholders elsewhere in the country.

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