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CHAPTER 7 : ARTISTS

Invisible Art

From time to time in the course of my work on this thesis I have found myself explaining its subject-matter to art-critics and members of art-institutions in Ireland, both north and south of the border. After a number of these encounters I could predict with absolute accuracy what the response would be when I mentioned my inclusion within the scope of my research of images of the Northern Ireland conflict made by professional artists. Every time I would be assured that I was pursuing a non-subject, for such images scarcely existed. This has also been the attitude assumed in the handful of published comments on the general role of professional artists in relation to the present troubles.¹

The inaccuracy of this general assumption should become apparent in the course of this chapter, particularly if it is borne in mind that the works discussed in it are only a cross-section of the fine-art imagery produced in relation to the Northern Ireland conflict. Why then is the belief in the lack of such images so persistent?

One can in part attribute it to practical reasons. A fair proportion of the works discussed in this chapter have never been exhibited. Moreover there has been no general show on artists' reactions to the troubles comparable to the numerous exhibitions on themes such as Ulster portraits and Ulster landscapes. Individual artists have often

kept their works on the subject hidden from public view. Sometimes one or two may be included in a one-man show. Very occasionally a whole one-man exhibition has been devoted to this theme.

However the chief reason for the belief that there has been little fine art work relating to the Northern Ireland conflict appears to be a set of attitudes about what the relationship between fine art and the present troubles can be and should be. These attitudes are held in common by artists, art-critics and members of art institutions. They are made very clear in the arguments offered for not exhibiting troubles art work, and for the lack of such art work in the first place.

Various reasons for the reluctance to exhibit works relating to the Northern Ireland conflict have emerged from conversations with artists in the province. Gallery-owners and administrators have feared that at best such works would prove unsellable and at worst they would provoke further conflict, including possibly an attack on their premises. Artists have felt that such images might increase the province's confusion by adding to the already vast amount of comment on the political situation, and that they were unlikely to be assessed as good art.¹

In actuality the fears about the provocative nature of art works relating to the Northern Ireland conflict have been generally unfounded. On only one occasion to my knowledge have works on this theme provoked a major rumpus because of their subject-matter,² and although art galleries in the province have been the target for bombs, none of these attacks appear to have been provoked by the nature of the works shown by them. Nor have works relating to the troubles proved difficult to sell. Indeed in some cases it seems likely that both their

¹. When in 1972 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland requested opinions from approximately fifty of the province's artists about the feasibility of an exhibition of troubles works, the two dozen or so who replied generally shared this last fear, and the project was abandoned.
². See below, pp.879-883.
purchase and their commission has been encouraged by the desire, shared by local inhabitants and visitors to the province (notably the British Army), to acquire souvenirs of the dramatic events of the past thirteen years. The fear that works on this theme would be classified as bad art has been far more justified. Very few artists have made works relating to the present troubles without incurring at best puzzlement and at worst stringent criticism of their political and aesthetic quality from fellow-artists, art-critics and members of art institutions.

In general these criticisms have accused art works about the troubles of being too superficial or too propagandist. Very similar lines of argument have been employed by those attempting to explain why there has been (supposedly) so little output on this theme. It has been repeatedly suggested that artists have been too close to the events of the past thirteen years for the processes of absorption and reflection required in the production of fine art images;¹ that it is too easy for art works relating to this subject to be assimilated as propaganda by one side or the other;² that artists should be and generally are, superior to the kind of bitter politics to be found in Ulster;³ and that anyhow the vast array of media images have covered the troubles very effectively, leaving the artist little in the way of a significant role.⁴

Embedded in the belief that there have been few art works about the troubles, the theories about the causes of this, the reasons proffered for not exhibiting such work, and the criticisms of it when

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1. "In London this summer, talking to the Ulster artist William Scott he reminded me that Picasso's great mural Guernica was painted in Paris away from the event which motivated it." (Flanagan, op cit, p.44).
2. "One's images could appear partisan and attract either unwanted support, or aggressive criticism." (McWilliams, op cit).
3. An attitude particularly strongly apparent in Mike Catto's "Making Sense of Ulster."
4. This was a comment made by a very significant proportion of the artists who talked to me about their work relating to the troubles.
shown, are three very considerable misapprehensions about the nature of art in relation to political violence. The first of these is that when discussing the relationship between art and violence it is necessary at the same time to assess the quality of such art. This dual approach, implicit in the analyses already mentioned, derives from the evaluative, market-oriented style of English art history, and has been particularly strong in Northern Ireland, where most writing on local art has been in the nature of art criticism rather than art history. It is an approach which serves only to confuse an already complex issue. In this chapter I shall analyse the handling of the troubles by artists who can be considered as professionals, by virtue of the training which they have received, or their acknowledgement in terms of public exhibition of their work. Their standing within the professional artworld, and the quality of their works on this theme is a separate matter which I leave to the art-critics.

The second major misapprehension is that in order to handle the theme of political violence the artist has to proceed overtly, with representations of soldiers, bomb victims, flags and so on. Clearly it is fatally easy to go to the opposite extreme, by labelling virtually all art work produced in a conflict area like Northern Ireland as being about that conflict. In this thesis I have tried to strike a reasonable balance by representing as art works about the troubles, pieces so described and analysed by their makers, and critically re-assessed as such by myself, through direct confrontation with the original wherever possible, and consideration of its position within the political and cultural context in Northern Ireland. Many of the works surviving this process of interrogation are oblique rather than overt comments on the northern conflict. It may be because of this
that they have been ignored or forgotten, although many of them have been publicly displayed.

The third main misapprehension lies in the belief that the fine artist is an individual creator inhabiting a kind of vacuum in which he or she moves freely, untrammeled by involvement in a political and social situation, a local visual tradition or international art conventions. This belief, which results in discussion of the art work purely in terms of its status as the product of an individual creativity, prevails throughout the western art world. It derives ultimately from the view of the artist as a lonely, embattled creator, pursuing his individual vision, promulgated by subscribers to romanticism from the late eighteenth century onwards. Even in cosmopolitan art centres like London or New York it is doubtful whether there are any artists who live this kind of disembodied existence, and in a small-scale, marginal area like Northern Ireland, where formalised art-life is small, and individual involvement with the community inescapably strong, such a life is clearly impossible.

In this chapter I shall therefore start by analysis of art works relating to the Northern Ireland troubles with three sections titled History Paintings, Portraits of Leaders and Heroes, and Art institutions. In these I will outline the kind of cultural and political identities available to Northern Ireland artists as a result of the way in which the fine arts have developed in the province. Then, in two sections titled Catholic views? and Protestant views?, I shall look at works relating to the present troubles by artists from the province's two religio-political communities, employing a method of

1. A belief summed up by the following sentence in Mike Catto's "Making Sense of Ulster":

"Since a controlled iconic version of history is essential to those who have manipulated political power in the North and South of Ireland in this century, there is an understandable distrust of the sheer open-endedness of art."
analysis which attempts to ascertain the interplay of local and international cultural and political elements in their work, while leaving open the question of their individual creative handling of those elements. In the following section, titled Outsiders, I shall turn to consideration of a number of artists outside Northern Ireland who have made art works relating to the present conflict there. I will emphasise how their distinctive views of the Ulster troubles are shaped not only by geographical distance, political climate and personal inclination, but also by the way their art institutions direct them towards very different concepts of the nature of art and its political function. Finally, in the Conclusions I will argue that the approach to the relationship of art and political violence employed in this chapter demonstrates the need for a greater awareness in such discussions of the mediating effect of cultural traditions and conventions in which both art and politics play a part, and through the screen of which political events are perceived, or obscured.

History paintings

In Chapters 2-5 it became apparent that works by Northern Ireland artists attempting to deal with the present troubles have often been crucially affected by the traditions of popular imagery operating in the province's two communities. I now propose to consider the kind of political and artistic identities made available to such artists as the result of the way in which the fine arts have developed in the province. In order to do this I will look first at the development in Ireland of two artistic genres which in western art tradition frequently carry an overt political emphasis. These may be loosely
categorised as history paintings, and portraits of leaders and heroes. It will be my aim to show that not only have these genres been handled in significantly different fashions by artists from the two communities in Ireland, but that they have been differently appropriated and validated by those communities. In the subsequent discussion of art institutions I will offer an assessment of the extent to which that process of appropriation and validation has been affected by the development of artworld organisations in Ireland.

It was in the second half of the eighteenth century that contemporary events and episodes from national history first began to be significantly featured alongside religious subjects, classical scenes and portraits in the work of European artists.¹ Painters working in Ireland were not slow to adopt this newly-fashionable subject-matter. Amongst the earliest work by the Cork-born artist James Barry was a scene of St Patrick baptising the King of Cashel. According to legend:

"The barbarian prince, when the apostle concluded his exhortation called loudly to be baptized, and such was the hurry of the one, and the fortitude of the other, that when the Saint, implanting his iron shod crozier in the ground, struck it unwittingly through the convert's foot, he uttered not one murmur, nor yet moved a muscle, but conceiving it to be a part of the ceremony, stood and was baptized." ²

On moving to Dublin from his native Cork in 1763 Barry chose to submit this picture for exhibition by the Royal Dublin Society. The painting met with great success. The Society awarded him £10 as a

1. A succinct and stimulating discussion of the development of history painting in Britain can be found in Roy Strong, And when did you last see your father? The Victorian Painter and British History, Thames & Hudson, 1978.

recognition of its merit, and it was subsequently acquired by some members of the Irish House of Commons who presented it to their assembly. For long it was believed that the painting was burned in a fire in Parliament House in 1792. However recently a very damaged work has appeared in Dublin which seems to be Barry's original painting and there is also an oil sketch of the same subject in the possession of An Taisce. Moreover the lengthy disappearance of this picture did not entirely negate its influence on subsequent Irish art. Barry's career was well-recorded and appears to have been widely-known in early nineteenth century Ireland. Possibly because of this, or possibly because the legend of St Patrick's baptism of the King of Cashel was in itself an oft-repeated part of Irish tradition, it was a subject which reoccurred intermittently in Irish painting and sculpture throughout the century.

However Barry himself painted no more scenes from Irish history. This was not from a lack of interest, for his reading notes contain many passages transcribed from books dealing with early Irish history. Nor was it due to lack of encouragement for he was urged to depict such scenes by at least one of his Irish contemporaries, the historian O'Halloran. The key to his abandoning of native subject-matter lies in his patronage by the Anglo-Irish politician Edmund

2. His Works were published in 1809, only three years after his death.
5. See David Irwin, Neo-Classical Art, Faber, 1966, p.98.
6. O'Halloran's letter to Barry in 1791 was printed in The Nation Dublin, 2 Dec 1843, p.122.
Burke, whose political and aesthetic theories turned the young artist to making paintings and prints relating to American rather than Irish affairs.

It was two artists of English extraction, Francis Wheatley and Thomas Robinson, who made paintings recording some of the tumultuous events which took place in Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century. Wheatley painted large eye-witness scenes of volunteer reviews, of which the most important is *Volunteers at College Green* (ill 230) in Dublin in 1779, and he also depicted Henry Grattan speaking in the Irish House of Commons in 1780 on the motion "That the people of Ireland are of right an independent nation and ought only to be bound by laws made by the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland." These events had considerable impact at the time, and were seen by later Irishmen as important historical and emotional landmarks. Yet Wheatley's paintings, despite his fondness for the theatre, lack dramatic impact. Lucid, attractive, gay, even lively, they are aggregations of individual figures and details rather than coherent, exciting events held together by the significant gestures of the main actors. Indeed, in the House of Commons painting, Grattan is submerged in a sea of other figures, his pointing hand lost against his white waistcoat, potential focus on him dissipated by the apparent inattentiveness of his listeners.

Wheatley's sense of drama may have been inhibited by his actual presence at these two occasions - contrast his imaginative reconstruction of the Gordon riots a few months later - and also by his intention to make the paintings pay their way through exhibition, raffling and the sale of engravings, the market for which would

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230. Francis Wheatley/A view of College Green with a meeting of the Volunteers on 4 Nov 1779 to commemorate the birthday of King William III/ oil on canvas/72 x 128 ins (182.9 x 325.1 cms)/ National Gallery of Ireland.
naturally be increased by the number of likenesses he could pack in. The three procedures were successfully carried out with the first painting, which became sufficiently well known to influence other Irish works of the period (ill 231), but the second ran into difficulties and was only engraved in the early twentieth century.

A few years later Thomas Robinson made a similar attempt to record contemporary Irish events. Born in Windermere, Robinson came initially to Dublin, hoping perhaps to find there a market for portraits painted in the style of the English George Romney, whose pupil he had been. In 1793 he moved north. At the time of the rebellion 1798/9 he was living in Lisburn and decided to depict the nearby Battle of Ballynahinch, which took place on 13 June 1798, and in which the United Irish forces in the North, led by a Lisburn draper, Henry Monro, were decisively defeated by the government troops under Major-General George Nugent. By November of the same year his painting of the battle (ill 231) was exhibited with other pictures at the Exchange Rooms in Belfast.

In his advertisement for this exhibition in the Belfast News Letter, Robinson proclaimed that the "Picture contains many original portraits and is a faithful representation of the Field of Battle and its events." This is a very accurate summary of its character. Like Wheatley's paintings, the many recognisable faces included in it were designed to promote various kinds of fund-raising involving the painting itself, and to encourage local patrons to commission portraits from the artist. The advertisement went on to say that

4. 6 Nov 1798.
231. Thomas Robinson/The Battle of Ballynahinch/1798/oil on canvas/$\frac{54}{4}$ x 84 ins (139 x 213.5 cms)/Aras an Uachtarain.
admittance to the exhibition was "one British Shilling" and that "The above-mentioned Picture will be disposed of by Raffle; Subscriptions (taken by Mr Robinson) one Guinea each. Subscribers free to the Exhibition." On 13 November a further advertisement proclaimed that the exhibition would continue a week longer, and that Robinson, intending to remain in Belfast for some time, would undertake portraits at the rates of 5gns for a three-quarter view, 7gns for a Kit-Cat and 12gns for a half-length.

Probably because of this desire to appeal to as wide a market as possible, the painting is episodic, generally accurate,¹ and with no great feeling of personal commitment to the events it depicts, apart from what appears to be a careful pro-government stance. However Robinson's careful tailoring of product to market appears to have paid off. It was warmly acclaimed in the Belfast News Letter,² there were about sixty subscribers to the raffle for the painting, and the winner was the second Marquis of Hertford. Bishop Percy, friend and patron of Robinson, wrote to his wife on 23 December 1798, that:

"the picture will now be hung up in the Marquis's house at Lisburn to be viewed by all who were at the battle of Ballynahinch, many of whom had their portraits drawn in it."

Success is the keynote. Yet a warning touch of bathos follows, which indicates the precarious and fluctuating role of the artists at this time. For the bishop adds:

"Robinson has painted three urns for my glen. This has the happiest effect imaginable."³

¹ On its general accuracy see Crookshank & Glin, Irish Portraits, p.61. One inaccuracy, noted in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, (hereafter PRONI), The '98 Rebellion, HMSO, Belfast, 1976, facsimile 87, is that the death of Captain Evatt shown in the centre of the picture took place at a different stage of the battle.
² 6 Nov 1798.
³ BM 32 335/116, quoted in W.G. Strickland, A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Maunsel, Dublin, 1913, entry on Robinson.
Indeed in the subsequent careers of the Marquis of Hertford and Thomas Robinson we can see how political and artistic decline went hand in hand in Northern Ireland. The Marquis, who, in the early days of the Volunteer movement had spoken vigorously in the English House of Commons in support of their claims for economic and religious justice in Ireland, from the late 1780s increasingly turned his interest to events elsewhere.\(^1\) He was a forerunner of the aristocratic exodus from Ireland that followed the events of 1798 and the Act of Union in 1801.

For an artist such as Robinson this aristocratic exodus was disastrous. The Belfast middle classes were not antipathetic to culture; indeed in the period of peace and prosperity which followed the Act of Union in the North, cultural institutions flourished in the city. But they did not support the new style of history-painting as Thomas Robinson had hoped they would. Technically he had been on the winning side in 1798 - but his work thereafter bears the smell of defeat. In 1804 he painted another vast picture variously entitled *Review of the Belfast Volunteers or The Entry of Lord Hardwick into Belfast as Lord Lieutenant, 27 August 1804.*\(^2\) In July 1807 he exhibited it in the Old Exchange Rooms and tried to dispose of it by lottery.

Despite a glowing notice in the *Belfast News Letter*,\(^3\) general enthusiasm for the painting appears to have been lacking, so Robinson took the picture with him when he removed to Dublin in 1808 and exhibited it at the Society of Artists in 1809 as *A Military Procession in Belfast in honour of Lord Nelson.* To this end he changed

\(^1\) DNB,
\(^3\) 31 July 1807.
the background from a realistic representation of Donegal Place to an idealised view. No such event as a procession in honour of Lord Nelson took place and there was never any statue of him in Belfast. Despite the changes the picture remained unsold, and was eventually given to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners by Robinson's son in 1852.¹

It is a sad and troubling episode. The picture had been originally intended to commemorate a real event, and

"to hand down to future generations the likenesses of the principal inhabitants assembled in one of the most beautiful parts of this improving town." ²

From the key that is still preserved with it, one can still identify many of Belfast's notable inhabitants at that time, including the artist himself, gazing hard and sidelong at the viewer. Despite alterations the picture still retains an atmosphere of friendship, a feeling of civic consciousness, a sense of occasion. And although it clearly owes much to Francis Wheatley's earlier painting, it is also, with its framing architecture and gaily coloured flags and uniforms, an authentic record of the sense of theatre, of acting out, which constantly spilled over into the real life activities of the Volunteers. But by the substitution of a fictitious statue, completely alien to the original meaning of the occasion, the reality of the scene is falsified. Dead bronze replaces living flesh and it is a significant loss of nerve.

Not only did the exodus of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy from Ireland following the Act of Union diminish the potential support for paintings of Irish history; it was also one of a succession of developments which encouraged a division in that support. In the

late eighteenth century English artists like Wheatley and Robinson, and the native Catholic Barry were able to find equal enthusiasm for their pictures of Irish history amongst the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. To a certain extent the same was to be true of artists whose history paintings were directed at the Irish middle-classes in the nineteenth century. But as political and religious divisions increased, following the succession of rebellions in 1798, 1803, 1848 and 1867, and the various campaigns for and against Catholic emancipation and home rule for Ireland,

so Irish artists either abandoned the genre of history-painting altogether, or produced the kind of scenes which could be appropriated equally easily by Protestants or Catholics, or tailored their work to the cultural and political tastes of one or other community. It is this last group of artists that will largely concern us here.

It was undoubtedly the country's Catholic community who exhibited the stronger taste for scenes of Irish history throughout the nineteenth century. By the middle of the century Daniel O'Connell's supporters in the Young Ireland movement saw Irish nationalism as strongly dependent on Irish culture.

"It is the summary name for many things. It seeks a literature made by Irishmen, and coloured by our scenery, manners and character. It desires to see art applied to express Irish thoughts and belief. It would make our music sound in every parish at twilight, our pictures sprinkle the walls of every house, and our poetry and history sit at every hearth. It would thus create a race of men full of a more intensely Irish character and knowledge, and to that race it would give Ireland." 1

In pursuit of these aims members of the Young Ireland group made strenuous efforts to encourage contemporary Irish artists to paint scenes from their country's history. In a short article in *The Nation,* their spokesman Thomas Davis listed events appropriate for depiction. These ranged from the arrival of the earliest Irish settlers (the landing of the Milesians), through their conflicts with subsequent invaders (Brian Boru reconnoitring the Danes through Clontarf), to the efforts of the Anglo-Irish patriots in the eighteenth century (Grattan moving liberty), and the conspiracies of the United Irishmen (Tone, Emmet and Keogh in Rathfarnham garden). Recent or contemporary scenes, such as Father Matthew administering the pledge in a Munster county, were also included.

The Young Irelanders took a number of practical steps to encourage the production of works on these themes. In their widely read and influential journal *The Nation* they constantly praised the work of Irish artists such as Barry, Forde, Maclise, Hogan and Mulready. They displayed suitable history paintings at their own ceremonial occasions (Thus the scene of Grattan addressing the Irish parliament produced by Nicholas Kemy for a descendant of the orator, was hung over the president's chair at the elegant banquets of the Eighty-Two Club.) And both through the Repeal Association, the political organisation which they helped to marshal in support


2. Charles Gavan Duffy, *Young Ireland, A fragment of Irish History, 1840-5,* T. Fisher Unwin, 1896, vol 1, pp.151-2. There is a somewhat muddled collection of correspondence and accounts relating to the painting in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland which makes little clear beyond the fact that Kemy was working on it in 1842 for Grattan, and that great care was taken over its accuracy, existing portraits of the protagonists being endlessly consulted. The Eighty-Two Club was formed by the Young Irelanders in an attempt to rally behind O'Connell those Protestants and Catholics who held aloof from the more popular Repeal Association. In its imagery it strongly emphasised the traditions of the Anglo-Irish patriots in the eighteenth century.
of O'Connell's campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union, and
through cultural organisations in which they were involved, the
Young Irelanders offered prizes to artists who produced suitable
depictions of Irish history. The prizes offered by the Repeal
Association in 1843 for paintings, sculptures, engravings and
architectural design¹ do not appear to have been awarded. By this
time however the Young Irelanders were joining Protestant artists
and scholars in a number of organisations designed to foster the
visual arts in Ireland. In 1844 William Smith O'Brien was elected
to the Royal Dublin Society, formerly a Conservative camp, and at
the same time, mainly by the influence of Thomas Davis and John
Pigot, a society representative of every kind of political view-
point was formed for the establishment of a National Gallery of
Ireland.²

The initial impetus for this society seems to have derived
from members of the Royal Irish Art Union, the familiar triumvi-
rate of Thomas Davis, George Petrie and Frederick Burton as usual
playing key roles, although Stewart Blacker was the most important
leader.³ The Art Union itself had Young Ireland links (Davis ser-
ved on the committee and the works of Burton and Petrie figured
among its purchases, engravings and prizewinners), and declared its
intention of encouraging Irish art by means which they had advoca-
ted, awarding cash prizes to outstanding artists in various fields,
purchasing and exhibiting works for distribution as prizes to its

¹. See the advertisement in The Nation, Dublin, 2 Dec 1843, p.1.
². Duffy, op cit, vol I, p.70 and p.126, and vol 2, p.35 and p.45;
William Stokes, The Life & Labours in Art & Archaeology of George
Petrie, LLD, MRIA, Longmans, 1868, p. 163 and p. 208; and Grace
Calder, George Petrie and the Ancient Music of Ire-
³. Third Annual Report of the Royal Irish Art Union, Dublin, 1842,
p.13; and Fourth Annual Report, 1843, pp.9-11 and p.56.
subscribers, and in addition providing an annual engraving to each subscriber. In some ways it achieved considerable success. It managed to weather the Parliamentary inquiry into Art Unions in 1843 and produced figures which demonstrated a far healthier financial state than its English counterparts. It also played a significant role in the increase of art purchases in Ireland.¹ But it was frequently criticised for its lack of support of native artists, its failure to foster the development of print-making in Ireland and its policy of selecting the works to be distributed to prize-winners, rather than allowing them to make their own choice.² It seems to have come to an end in 1847. Its demise/probably hastened by the formation of a rival National Art Union in 1845, committed to the production of its engravings in Ireland, and aimed at a more popular market, with an annual subscription of 5s rather than a guinea, selection of prizes by the winners, and the intention of improving the taste of the manufacturing classes.³

How far were the criticisms of the Royal Irish Art Union as failing to encourage 'National Art', and as elitist, justified? Certainly non-Irish works figured amongst its awards, particularly in later years,⁴ but nonetheless it did give a certain amount of

³. The Nation, 6 Dec 1845, p.123 and p.127. The new venture met with little success however. It had to bring a Scottish engraver over to Ireland to make its subscribers' print (The Nation, 11 Sept 1847, p.775), and it was soon distributing engravings of non-Irish subjects (The Nation, 19 Feb 1848, p.118). The Art Union of Ireland, established in 1858-9, ran into similar problems, although it managed to survive until at least 1863-4.
⁴. Cyril Barrett, in his article on "Irish Nationalism and Art 1800-1921", points out that in 1844 "the only vaguely nationalistic engraving offered by the Royal Irish Art Union to its members was Burton's 'The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child'. The others were
encouragement to Irish artists, such as Burton, Petrie, N.J. Crowley, G.F. Mulvaney, H. O'Neill and Daniel Maclise, approximately half of whom were permanent residents, and to such 'national' subjects as Red Hugh O'Donnell, Emigrants leaving Ireland, St Patrick baptizing Aengus, and The Limerick Piper. The criticism of the Royal Irish Art Union for its elitism appears to have been more justified. Indeed by 1845 William Smith O'Brien, with his sharp eye for the taste of ordinary Irish Catholics, was writing to Thomas Davis:

"I wish much that you could get something done by the Repeal Association towards providing good prints, very cheap, for the poor. I observe in almost every cottage where absolute destitution does not exist a disposition to hang up prints on the walls. Generally they are wretched productions, having neither grace nor truth. Could we not induce some competent artist to give us lithographic sketches, which could be circulated to hawkers and pedlars at a low price? Religious subjects appear to be the most popular — military come next. Temperance prints also are not uncommon. It would be well to invite proposals, with a view to see what sort of artists we should get." 5

However Davis lacked the common touch. His chief concern was to win over the Protestant middle-class by cultural means, and his fastiduousness made him retreat from contact with the peasants. Thus, while he could see that the artist should study the objects of daily life, not linear examples — "Better for him to draw chairs and tables, bottles and glasses, rubbish, potatoes, cabins or kitchen utensils than draw from the lines laid down by other men" — his

1. Prize-winning composition in outline by S. Watson in 1846 (Strickland).
2. Prize work by W. Brocas purchased in 1842 (Strickland).
3. Prize-work by G.F. Mulvaney purchased in 1845 (Strickland).
4. See below, pp. 748-750.
concepts of human form were shaped by the Greek perfection of Flaxman's drawings, and he advised the student to study classical casts rather than Irish peasants, who seemed to him:

"an indifferently-made, ordinary, not very clean, nor picturesquely-clad people..." 1

And although he admitted that an alternative list of suitable Irish subjects for the painter could have been obtained "from the Poor Report, Carleton, Banim's or Griffin's stories, or better still, from observation," 2 he chose instead to publish one in which historical, military and religious subjects predominated.

Some attempts were made by the Young Irelanders to educate the popular eye. A Pictorial History was launched, with texts by John Cornelius O'Callaghan and illustrations by Henry MacManus, lithographed by W.H. Holbrooke. 3 Despite a lengthy and very interesting advertisement for the project, the burden of which was:

"that an attempt should be made to render Ireland and Irishmen known to themselves and the civilized world, through better sources for information than foreign libels, anti-national piles of stone and alien caricatures." 4

only four prints - of the Siege of Limerick, Patrick Sarsfield, the Battle of Clontarf and Brian Boru - seem to have appeared. Possibly their relatively high price - sixpence plain and a shilling coloured 5 - made unattractive what Strickland characterised as

1. Davis, op cit, p.117.
2. Ibid, p.113.
5. The Nation, 2 Dec 1843, p.1. See also the article on "Seditious Pictures" in p.120 of the same issue.
"roughly-done catchpenny productions." The need for illustrations was never entirely forgotten and the Royal Irish Art Union was encouraged to introduce a prize for them, but the books urged as suited to the draughtsmen's pen were always learned histories or middle-class novels, the style held up for admiration the elegant linear work of Flaxman, or Retsch or Maclise.¹

One should not under-estimate the achievements of the Young Irelanders in stimulating the production of Irish history paintings during this period. Artists closely associated with them produced works which have continued to act as cultural touchstones for both leaders and followers in the struggle for Irish independence. Henry McManus's pungent little painting Reading the Nation² was in the collection of the former Young Ireland leader Charles Gavan Duffy until it was bequeathed to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1903; J.P. Haverty's painting of O'Connell and his contemporaries: the Clare election 1828, was presented to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1950 by the then Taoiseach or Prime Minister, Eamonn De Valera; and the same artist's painting of O'Connell addressing the great repeal meeting at Clifden was favourably reviewed by The Nation in 1845,³ shown in the Dublin Exhibition of 1853,⁴ displayed at a nationalist dinner in 1864, and can now be seen in O'Connell's family home, Derrynane Abbey, in Co Kerry.

¹ The Nation, 1 Feb 1845, p.266; 19 April 1845, p.457 and 29 Nov 1845, p.106. Davis had works illustrated by Flaxman and Retsch in his library.
² Reproduced in de Breffny, op cit, p.203.
³ Barrett, op cit, p.401.
⁴ The Nation, 19 July 1845, p.665.
This last painting strikingly resembles images of Christ with his apostles preaching to crowds in the wilderness; similarly Haverty's lithographs of the Seven Sacraments, set as they are in the open countryside or the family home, are very close to traditional scenes of the life of Christ. It is difficult to tell how conscious this was. Both the practice of the Catholic religion in penal times, and of nationalist politics in Haverty's own day was often, of necessity, confined to such settings. Moreover, as an artist working in oils for lithographs, Haverty's style tended to be soft, blurred and somewhat sentimental, a factor which might have inclined him towards the imitation of similar religious paintings or prints. A certain element of intention in the settings adopted for these scenes seems to be indicated however by a few phrases in his catalogue for them:

"if the artist could boast for his undertaking, an inducement beyond the mere novelty and picturesque character of his subjects, it was, perhaps, a latent hope that they might contribute to the development of domestic Irish History, where, probably, it may best be sought, - in the religious rites of the people. Home is at once the test and the reward of character - and Religion may be termed a nation's home..." 

Indeed by producing works which recorded and crystallised the fusing of nationalist and religious sentiment during this period, artists like Haverty provided images which were to crucially affect the future development of patriotic feeling in Ireland. In Haverty's (ill 232) Penance, or Petrie's Last Round of the Pilgrims at Clonmacnoise (ill 151) or J. Howard Burgess's Pilgrims at the High Cross at Arboe, Co

1. In the National Library of Ireland.
2. Haverty made a series of oil-paintings of the Seven Sacraments before he lithographed them. The whereabouts of these is now unknown, although there is in a private collection in Northern Ireland a much over-painted picture of the Penance scene which may possibly be by his hand. However he was a much-copied artist so the attribution must remain open.
3. Catalogue Raisonné of the Seven Sacraments in Ireland, including the reception of a Nun, together with Portraits of Eminent Irish Characters, painted by J. Haverty, RHA, N. Clarke, Dublin, 1830.
232. J.P. Haverty/ Penance, in The Seven Sacraments, painted and lithographed by J. Haverty, 1846/ lithograph/ 6 3/8 x 8 3/8 ins (16.2 x 22.5 cms)/ National Library of Ireland, JLB.763/ Photo: NLI
Tyrone, 1 or Frederick Burton's The Blind Girl at the Holy Well, 2 we see humble Irish Catholics practising their religion at their country's ancient Christian monuments and sites. These three elements of peasantry, pious religiosity and ancient relics, were generally beloved by the mid-Victorian public, and were frequently repeated in paintings of the period without any nationalist significance. Indeed both Petrie and Burton were from the Protestant community, and politically committed to the retention of the union with England. But certainly Haverty and Petrie intended to imply in their pictures that the Irish peasants in their religious practices were linking themselves to the ancient traditions of their country in a way which endorsed their national identity. And their intentions were clear to many of those who saw these works, both at the time and subsequently. To this day the priest saying mass for his faithful congregation out in the countryside in the penal period, is a theme frequently represented on the banners of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and on prints or paintings hanging in Irish Republican homes. It remains a summary image for the Irishman's sense of belonging to an ancient, native, persecuted Catholic race.

There are however certain notable deficiencies in the paintings of Irish Catholic history produced during this period. There were no paintings of political challenge. The imprisonment of O'Connell, or, at a later date, of the "Manchester Martyrs", were not for example recorded by Irish artists. Nor were the terrible sufferings brought by the Famine years in 1840s, sufferings greatly increased by English maladministration. Apart from An Irish family discovering a blight in their store (1847), by Daniel Macdonald, or McDaniell or Macdonnell, 3

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the chief visual records of these terrible years are the engravings in the *Illustrated London News*, and the paintings of the Scottish artist Erskine Nichol. This is in strong contrast to the kind of committed, challenging, political history paintings being produced by artists like Goya and Delacroix in other European countries in which the nineteenth century was marked by nationalist and republican struggles.

Moreover, as Cyril Barrett correctly emphasises,¹ the Irish history paintings of this period were often swamped by the enormous number of other pictures exhibited alongside them — and they disappeared. Thus of the dozen or more nationalist history paintings listed by Barrett as having been shown at the Irish exhibition at South Kensington in 1888, only one is now preserved in the National Gallery of Ireland.

The reasons for the deficiencies in Irish history painting in this period appear to have been both political and artistic. For all the would-be rebellious republicanism of small groups like the Young Irelanders, or the Fenians during the nineteenth century, the major Irish nationalist movements of this period were at pains to emphasise the constitutional, legitimate nature of their protests. And although the Protestant ascendency no longer controlled the country's cultural organisations to the extent they had in the past, it is clear that the sizeable number of Irish Catholics now organising and attending both temporary and permanent displays of Irish art preferred their history-pictures to present side-long, unprovocative attacks on the political status quo, or not to raise the national question at all.²

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¹ Barrett, *op cit*, p.402.
² This point is well argued in Barrett, *op cit*, pp.406-409.
Moreover Irish Catholic history painting during this time lacked the involvement of the country's most effective artists, who were lured away by the far superior rewards available elsewhere. Daniel Maclise's *Marriage of Strongbow and Eva* (ill 49) was produced as a design for the great scheme to decorate the Houses of Parliament in London. There were no equivalent commissions available in Ireland. And Maclise had been able to establish both his financial security and his ability as an historical artist through his work as an illustrator for London publishers. Such employment was only rarely available in Ireland, for until the last quarter of the century, the majority of illustrated books and journals dealing with Irish subject-matter were published in London, not Dublin, Cork or Belfast. Similarly Frederick Burton, of whom the Young Irelanders had high hopes, and who drew for them the title-page for their collection of writings titled *The Spirit of the Nation* (ill 152) seems to have painted subjects like *The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child* because of an ethnographic rather than a nationalist interest, and was lured away from Ireland by promises of a more prosperous existence elsewhere, making copies in Germany, and eventually becoming a highly successful director of the National Gallery in London.

If patronage of history paintings by Ireland's Catholic middle classes in the nineteenth century was sporadic and uncertain, its sponsorship by the country's Protestant community was virtually non-existent. This was particularly noticeable in Belfast, where increasingly the country's Protestant wealth was concentrated. No scenes of

1. See above, pp.154-6 for a discussion of this painting.
3. See above, pp. 154-156.
THE RELIEF OF DERRY.
JULY 30th 1689.

Presented with the "Belfast Weekly Post."

233. The Relief of Derry, 30th July 1689, supplement to the Belfast Weekly Post of 18 Aug 1883 black and white/lithograph/10 1/4 x 16 1/4 ins (26 x 42 cm) Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Irish history seem to have been commissioned or bought to hang on the walls of the splendid mansions built by the city's leading businessmen. This deficiency became particularly noticeable when from the end of the nineteenth century they helped to finance more elaborate banners for the Orangemen, and their brethren in the Apprentice Boys and the Royal Black Preceptory. The local sources to which the painters of those banners could turn for inspiration were scanty. Their Williamite scenes had to be based on the works of English, and Dutch painters, engravers and medallists,\(^1\) or, in the case of the Derry siege, the lithographs issued by Belfast printmakers from the 1860s onwards (ill 233).\(^2\) For the events in their own subsequent history there was nothing they could turn to, no paintings of the Battle of the Diamond, or of the early parades of the Orange Order, or of the great Protestant meetings of the mid-nineteenth century. Even the commercial and industrial history of their city was scantily recorded.

For successive generations of Northern linen manufacturers the favourite images of their industry were the eighteenth century prints of its rural beginnings made by William Hincks for members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy involved in its early development (ill 234). They were shown in the textile section of the Industrial Exhibition in Belfast in 1876, they appeared on the walls of successful manufacturers' suburban mansions in the 1902s\(^3\) and they continue to hang in houses belonging to men whose factories now make terylene shirts.

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1. See above, Chapter 2.
2. The earliest I have seen is a chromo-lithograph of the Relief of Derry issued by James Magill in Belfast in 1861.
3. See the Robert Welch photos 10/37/4-10 dated 1924 of Strathiearn, in the Ulster Museum.
234. William Hincks/Beetling, Scutching and Hackling Flax 1783/grey on white/stipple-engraving/113/4 x 153/4 ins (30 x 40 cms)/Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.
or nylon carpets. Occasionally one finds a nineteenth century drawing or advertising poster of a mill, but always the buildings are neat, spotless and apparently uninhabited.\(^1\) Representations of the ship-building industry are equally rare and one-dimensional. There were various marine painters working in Belfast during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, notably the extremely competent J. Glen Wilson,\(^2\) but their works are always of completed ships, never of the building processes involved.

For a rare example of a local painting of work in progress we have to turn to Samuel McCloy's *Blacksmith's Shop* of 1875.\(^3\) It is of course a rural rather than an industrial scene. This is not entirely false. Professor Green has described the important role played by blacksmiths, along with millwrights and clockmakers, in the early days of industrialization in Northern Ireland\(^4\) and forges remained important in the province's rural towns till the Second World War. Just so it was not entirely unrealistic for the Portadown weaver Robert Donnelly, whose poetry welcomed the arrival of mechanization, to portray servants smaller than the master in his primitive broadsheet picture of Moyallin House.\(^5\) To this day their exist small mill-villages such as Edenderry in which the factory-owner is regarded as

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1. See H. Magenis' meticulous pencil drawing of Owen O'Cork's Spinning Mill, dated 1864, in the local history collections of the Ulster Museum, and the poster of the Island spinning-mill at Lisburn, probably dated from the 1890s, in PRONI (D1436).


3. Exhibited at the Bell Gallery in Belfast in approximately 1975 and now in a private collection in Northern Ireland.


5. In Armagh County Museum, along with another drawing of Eden Hall which includes a railway station and factory (reproduced in W.H. Crawford, *Domestic Industry in Ireland: the experience of the linen industry*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1972, p.66.)
the father-figure, and quite literally, as in Donnolly's picture, the measure of all things. What is significant is that one might have expected more of McCloy, who was one of the Irish painters whose style came closest to the pre-Raphaelites.¹ His failure and the failure of others to observe the industrial development which was taking place, particularly in Belfast, may be attributed to various factors. In the first place it was still difficult for the professional artist to earn a living in Northern Ireland. McCloy, a native of Lisburn, after apprenticeship to the Belfast firm of engravers of James and Thomas Smyth, and study at the city's School of Design, had left for further education in London, followed by a teaching job at the Waterford School of Art. He only returned to Belfast twenty-five years later for a stay of ten years, after which he went back to London.² The Blacksmith's Shop, painted at the beginning of this return visit, has the warm and pleasant glow of an emigrant's childhood memories, rather than the direct observation and fresh living colour of some of his other scenes.

The purchaser, like the artist, spent little time in Northern Ireland. Sir Richard Wallace, grandson of the second marquess of Hertford who had won Robinson's Battle of Ballynahinch (ill. 231), bought the picture during an electioneering trip to Northern Ireland during the 1870s (the family by tradition provided the parliamentary representative for McCloy's native town of Lisburn).³ The purchase seems to have been part of a general attempt to curry political favour

1. See his Daydream, acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland, in 1974.
2. See the entry on McCloy in Strickland, op cit, and Eileen Black Samuel McCloy (1831-1904), (exhibition catalogue), Lisburn Museum, 1981.
3. DNB
by cultural patronage. Wallace bought at least one other painting by McCloy, titled Irish Festival, and gave generous support to such events as the 1876 Industrial Exhibition in Belfast but he soon disappeared back to Paris and he or his successor must have ceased to value McCloy's work, for it was recently on the art market in Northern Ireland, not in the magnificent Wallace Collection in London.

More mundane depictions of local industry were also lacking in Ulster, for trade unions were slow to develop in the province, and until the closing years of the nineteenth century they appear to have carried few of those banners with elaborate industrial scenes and emblems which were such a feature in mainland Britain and Southern Ireland from the 1830s onwards.

Not only were there virtually no nineteenth century depictions of the history or contemporary achievements of Northern Ireland's Protestant community. There were also very few works in which they celebrated their religious ethos. Whereas Irish Catholics could see their religious traditions recorded in the works of artists like Petrie, Haverty and Burton, and attended churches which were occasionally adorned with altarpieces recording New Testament scenes, like the Piccione paintings in St Malachy's chapel (ill 153), there were no Protestant equivalents. Ornament, especially carved ornament, was lavished on the splendid ecclesiastical and civic edifices raised by Belfast's Protestant community in this century, but figures were generally abhorred.

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1. See the catalogue of the exhibition in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.


Once again the extent of this lack is confirmed by the religious paintings used as models by Orange banner-painters from the late nineteenth century onwards. They turned to religious high art for their inspiration but it was not local religious high art. Their sources were almost invariably prints after English academic paintings like M.M. Hughes' My Faith,¹ or Thomas Jones Barker's The Secret of England's Greatness, (ill 70), which dates from about 1860 and was engraved in 1864,² or Searching the Scriptures by T.C. Thompson, an artist who was born in Belfast and trained in Dublin, but made his career in London. This last pictured is now in the Ulster Museum, and was recently copied for the banner of the Sandy Row Orange Lodge no 514, Joshua's Loyal Defenders. (Several of the warding staff in the Museum are Orangemen from nearby Sandy Row). This was completely above board, but a few years ago museum staff, worried by the absence of one of the landscape paintings in their collection, were at first startled to see a copy of it on a new banner used in the Twelfth parade, and then amused by its speedy reappearance amongst their collections.

The desire to emulate the achievements of the fine artists is clearly strong. Indeed I know of one Orange banner from the Ards peninsula on which the miraculous draught of fishes is painted in a style strongly reminiscent of the Raphael cartoons. But unlike their counterparts in the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other Catholic nationalist organisations, Orange banner-painters have been unable to turn to representations by local nineteenth century artists of their own historical and religious traditions.

¹. See above, p. 200.
². Discussed in 'This Brilliant Year', Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1887 (exhibition catalogue), Royal Academy, 1977, p.31. The painting is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.
To a limited extent this situation changed in the twentieth century. While the Catholic community received from Irish artists a few, generally sidelong subject-paintings relating to the tumultuous cultural and political developments which took place in their country from the 1890s onwards, the Protestants also began to see some of their history and their industry recorded by artists from their community. But their acceptance of those works often remained tentative and grudging.

Between the 1890s and the 1920s Ireland witnessed a cultural revival, violent internal political and social conflict, an armed rebellion against the English in 1916, further conflict with English forces in 1919-20, the partition of the country in 1921 into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, and civil war within the Free State in 1921-22. Yet the artists witnessing and at times involved in these events produced very few history paintings related to them.

It might well have been expected that Jack Yeats would have made pictures employing scenes from Irish history past and present during the turbulent cultural and political developments in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. His father, the painter John Butler Yeats, was familiar with republican circles and painted the veteran Fenian leader, John O'Leary. His brother, the poet W.B. Yeats, was heavily involved in the Celtic literary revival, and helped to urge on the republican movement, with his play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.¹ His sisters were prominent in the craft industries of the period which fostered the return to Celtic ornament.² But Jack Yeats's own response to Celtic revivalism and to the political

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¹. See above, pp. 165-168.
². See above, pp. 493-494.
events of the ensuing years was initially tentative and sidelong.

Yeats's first full awareness of the republican movement came in 1898 when he was present at the Sligo centenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion, and painted a watercolour sketch of a local figure dressed up as Robert Emmet.¹ From this time he increasingly turned to Irish subject-matter, including republican scenes such as an IRB Meeting in 1905,² and the lying-in-state of O'Donovan Rossa in 1915.³ Yet while these records have a certain eye-witness value, none of them were more than mere sketches. Despite Bruce Arnold's assertion that working for English illustrated papers gave Yeats a lasting fondness for the depiction of events⁴ it is clear that public happenings, even of the level of significance of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral rites, had little appeal for him. This cannot be explained solely by a lack of permanent involvement in Irish affairs before his final return in 1910, nor by the need for a more settled political climate in which to paint works of this kind. Later essays, such as the Funeral of Harry Boland (1922)⁵ or Going to Wolfe Tone's Grave (1929),⁶ although they are full-scale oil paintings, by no means rank among Yeats's major works.

¹. Cuimneachán, 1916 (catalogue of the exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising), National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin 1966, p.89, and Jack B. Yeats centenary exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, 1971, p.29 (ill) and p.145. W.B. Yeats helped Maud Gonne to direct similar celebrations in Dublin. See Thompson, op cit, p.46.
³. In the National Gallery of Ireland. See Cuimneachán, pp.31-2 and Jack B. Yeats centenary exhibition catalogue, p.25 (ill) and p.145.
⁵. In the County Museum, Sligo. See Cuimneachán, pp.88-9 and Jack Yeats centenary exhibition catalogue, p.50 (ill), and p.148.
⁶. Cuimneachán, pp.87-8 and Jack Yeats centenary exhibition catalogue, p.63 (ill), and p.150.
What Yeats did learn as an illustrator, whether for the English papers or Gaelic children's readers or his own broadsheets and broadsides, was a feeling for dramatic moment, conveyed by bold lines, strong silhouettes and an unerring sense of interval in the handling of worked and blank pictorial areas. His illustrative work also gave him a taste for urban incidents which was shared by no other Irish artist at the time, though it may have been encouraged by the beautifully painted, strongly realistic scenes of the seedier side of London life then being produced by Sickert and the Camden Town Group. It is this visually dramatic but emotionally complex and oblique handling of low-key, predominantly urban incidents which characterises Yeats's great paintings of the period immediately preceding and following the 1916 rebellion. No heroes roam the western bogs or gunmen shoot it out in the ruins of the GPO, but the women reflect on the conflict which surrounds them in the Dublin streets or at a country race-meeting.

In Bachelor's Walk, In Memory, a woman mourns those killed and injured by British soldiers while city life continues around her. In Communicating with Prisoners (1924) a group of girls converse with republican women prisoners in Kilmainham Jail. The composition is lackadaisically simple, completed by a hoarding covered with incongruous advertisements, misty roof-tops, a great expanse of cloudy Dublin sky. The mood is similarly relaxed; the girls might almost be watching birds in flight or one of the many sporting events in which Yeats delighted. And in On Drumcliffe Strand/women edgily assess the republican figures in their midst, in one of Yeats's most ambitious

1. See Irish Art 1900-50, pp.70-1.
2. See above, pp. 170-171.
235. Jack B. Yeats/On Drumcliffe Strand/1918/oil on canvas/24 x 36 ins (61 x 91.5 cms)/National Gallery of Canada.
and haunting nationalist paintings. The scene depicted is Drumcliffe Races which took place in Yeats's native Sligo every August. Although it is possible he went to the races he made no mention of it and the painting is not known to relate to any specific incident. Its date however is significant:

"The expressions on the faces of the local people as they see the Volunteer and his companion approach may be indicative of the mixed feelings of the ordinary Irish people of the period, some of whom had sons or husbands at the front fighting in the Great War and others who were sympathetic to the fight for independence. It was not until the latter half of 1918, after this picture was painted, that Sinn Fein won a major political victory, and the general support of a people who were totally opposed to conscription." 1

The painting is permeated with an electric air of unease. The twisting heads and shifting glances of the group who play out the little drama are lit by the raking glare of the evening sun. Crammed into one corner of the foreground, pushed against the viewer's attention, their disquiet is heightened by contrast with the idyllic view behind them in which sidecars wend their evening way back to the mountains which seem to have been for Yeats' symbol of the unchanging, enduring nature of Ireland.

Not only were Yeats's paintings relating to the cultural and political events of this period few and sidelong. They also remained relatively little known. Bachelor's Walk was not exhibited until seven years after its completion and remains to this day in a private collection; Communicating with Prisoners was not exhibited until 1945, and was acquired by the relatively inaccessible Sligo County Library and Museum in 1962; On Drumcliffe Strand was also first shown in 1945 and was in private hands from then until 1964, after which it was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada.

Works by Yeats did provide political inspiration for some of those who sought the establishment of an Irish republic in these years, and since approximately the middle years of this century they have helped to shape the more general concepts of national identity held by a wide range of Irish men and women. But it was not the history paintings described here which had this impact.\footnote{1}

Like Jack Yeats, William Orpen was personally acquainted with Irish political leaders of this period. He admired the work of Parnell and of the leaders of the Land League, particularly Michael Davitt, whom he knew and painted.\footnote{2} He supported Larkin's work during the great strike in Dublin in 1913.\footnote{3} He was opposed to the arming of Ulster, supported the republican gun-running through Howth, and was appalled by the subsequent shootings by the British Army at Bachelor's Walk.\footnote{4} Yet when between 1913 and 1916 he made three major paintings relating to contemporary events in Ireland, his approach was markedly sidelong, satirical and bitter.

The first of these paintings dates from 1913. Titled *Sowing the Seed* it shows a young, nude girl, scantily draped in a cloak, scattering seed on the ground from which spring two joyful naked cherubs, while a clothed middle-aged couple express shock and disgust. Orpen variously interpreted this painting as being about the activities of Sinn Fein, personified by the girl, or about the difficulties of introducing modern education into Ireland.\footnote{5} The second painting,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item On the works by Yeats which have been influential in shaping the Irish national identity see below, pp. 754-755.
\item Orpen, op cit, p.82ff and Arnold, op cit, pp.288-9.
\item Orpen, op cit, p.9 and Arnold, loc cit.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Western Wedding was completed in 1914. In a rocky mountainous Irish landscape, a simple country couple receive a robed priest's blessing at the foot of a roadside crucifix. Standing around are the priest's assistants, the witnesses, a fat farmer and a woman on a white horse, a fiddler, some children, an old drunkard leaning against a wall with a litter of pigs at his feet and Orpen's new grey Rolls Royce. The half-reverent, half-mocking attitude towards Irish piety can also be found in The Holy Well, which dates from 1916 and in which nudity is again used for shock value.

What these paintings appear to convey is Orpen's deep sense of the gulf that lay between his own sense of national and cultural identity, and the Sinn Fein stress on an Irishness centred in peasant, Catholic values. This gulf was not the result of the superficiality or lack of grasp of political affairs frequently attributed to Orpen by those who look too much at his published writings and too little at his work. Certainly he was confused by Irish politics, and, as an Anglo-Irish Protestant, about his own role in them¹ - but so were a great many Irish men and women in this period. Certainly he lacked knowledge of Irish peasants, and relied on his pupil John Keating to bring him back suitable costumes from the Aran Islands for use in these paintings.² But this confusion and lack of knowledge did not derive from an incapacity on Orpen's part. During the next few years he was indeed to demonstrate very effectively his ability to appreciate the values of humble men and women, and to grasp the complexities of contemporary politics. As an official artist for the British in the 1914-18 war he produced a whole series of deeply moving and dignified drawings of ordinary soldiers injured and shell-

1. Orpen, op cit, p.6ff and Arnold, op cit, pp.21-3.
236. Sir William Orpen/The Holy Well/1916/oil on canvas/92 x 73 ins (234 x 186 cms)/National Gallery of Ireland
shocked on the Western Front, and two paintings of the Peace Conference at Versailles which display a devastating ability to use sheer painterly skill to combine apparent subservience to official pomposity with a ruthless attack on its manoeuvrings, hypocrisy and vanity.

The gulf which Orpen felt between himself and developments in Ireland was rooted not so much in incomprehension as in a sense of cultural rejection. When Keating made a heartfelt appeal to him to return to Ireland, he told him flatly that he owed everything to England.\(^1\) Indeed it was in England that he had built up his very successful career as an artist, while in Ireland he found his attempts to improve art-education rejected, despite his long and fruitful work as a teacher at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art between 1902 and 1914.\(^2\) Although his father and other relatives continued to live there he spent only one day in Ireland between 1915 and his death in 1931. And indeed his three major paintings on Irish themes were scarcely known there until recent years. *Sowing the Seed* was acquired by Adelaide Art Gallery. *The Western Wedding* was shown in the New English Art Club in London in 1914 and disappeared following its purchase by the Marquis Matsukata for his collection in Japan;\(^3\) and *The Holy Well*, which was in the NEAC exhibition in 1916, was finally acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland in 1971. All three pictures were illustrated in Konody and Dark's book on Orpen, published in 1932,\(^4\) but given the rapid decline in his artistic reputation after his death, and the critical stance of these works, it is not surprising that Irish interest in them remained minimal until the recent reappraisal of Orpen's work, marked by the centenary exhibition of his work at the National Gallery of Ireland in 1978, and the publication

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3. It is believed to have been destroyed along with others of Matsukata's paintings in a London warehouse during the Second World War. A study for the painting was purchased by the National Gallery of Ireland in 1933. (See *Irish Art 1900-50*, p.57.)
4. See p.704, note 5.
of Bruce Arnold's major study of him in 1981.

Meanwhile although subjects from the history of Ulster's Protestant community were suggested as suitable for the talents of members of the Belfast Art Society in 1893\(^1\) it was depictions of that community's involvement in British history which were most prominent in the early years of the twentieth century. On 1 July 1916, in the opening hours of the Battle of the Somme an estimated 2,500 members of the 36th (Ulster) Division were killed. By a kind of tragic irony many of them were members of the Ulster Volunteer Force, formed to resist British support for Home Rule in Ireland; and they went over the top on the day which in the old-style calendar saw William III's victory at the Battle of the Boyne.

A painting of this event (ill 237) was made by J.P. Beadle, one of England's best-known depicters of military subjects. He had a personal interest in its subject for his wife came from Co Armagh, and he was a cousin of a Colonel McNamara who died on 1 July 1916, leading the men of the First Royal Irish Rifles in this battle.\(^2\) Beadle was also well acquainted with Sir James Stronge, a leading member of the Unionists in Ulster, and was in correspondence with him about details of the painting. When it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1917, it was viewed there by a Mr R.J. Woods, almost certainly on the prompting of Stronge. It was subsequently purchased from Beadle by a committee headed by Stronge\(^3\) for a fee of £250 (reduced by the artist from £500). One thousand coloured collotype reproductions of it were prepared by a local printer. These were sold to defray the

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3. The papers of this committee are in PRONI D1327/3/20.
237. J.P. Beadle/Battle of the Somme/1916/oil on canvas/
42 x 76 ins (106.8 x 193.1 cms)/Belfast City Hall/
Photo: B. Loftus.
cost of the picture's purchase, and to raise funds for the UVF Patriotic fund, the UVF Hospital for Limbless Soldiers and the Ulster POWs Fund. The painting itself was ceremonially handed over to Belfast City Council and still hangs in the City Hall. Only half of the coloured prints appear to have been sold, possibly on account of their high price (£10 for a signed proof and £4 for an unsigned one). However applications for permission to copy it on to orange drums and banners were soon received¹ and it remains a frequent banner-subject to this day.

Beadle was not the only painter to supply a pictorial memento of the Ulster Division. The Belfast artist William Conor made an illustration of their famous charge which was sold for £4.14s 6d. Coloured prints of the picture for framing were available for 6d each, and Christmas postcards for 1d, all the proceeds going to the UVF hospital fund.² Indeed Conor was employed by the British government as an Official War Artist in both World Wars, his task being to record Ulster's contribution to the war effort, a task which gained him a certain amount of local recognition.

It was also Conor who was employed to record the official establishment of the Northern Ireland statelet, although the manner in which he obtained the commission, and the way in which he was treated by his patrons, tells much of the attitude towards artists of the ruling Ulster Unionists during this period. It was the successful Ulster émigré artist, Sir John Lavery, who suggested to the new rulers of Northern Ireland that Conor should be employed to record the opening of the province's first parliament by King George V on 22 June 1921

¹. ibid.
On the day of the opening Conor sat in the press gallery sketching away, but then had to present a pastel draft to the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava for criticisms, which duly came:

"the figure of His Majesty is too broad in comparison with his height - it would do no harm to make him a little taller even if it is not true to life - Her Majesty shan't, I think, be represented in a hat as the ladies-in-waiting are in hats. The Members of the House of Commons must be facing His Majesty, even if it means that their faces cannot be seen. The colour of the coats of the parliamentary officers in the picture are not correct, they are too light a blue. I shall be so glad to give you all the assistance I can in the way of detail. I think that Sir F. Money-penny's position in the picture, though not that which he actually occupied, should be retained. I think Lord Londonderry must be shown as sitting in the front bench of the Senate and not with the House of Commons Members."  

Conor clearly ignored the Marquess's suggestions, and appears to have relied instead on his own records and a black and white photograph of the occasion. It was not however a painting of which he was proud, and indeed it lacks a sense of occasion.

More problems arose over the payment for the picture. Conor had reluctantly agreed to the low fee of £200 but was not to receive even that. Incredibly, the committee responsible for the commission had decided to raise the money by subscriptions from the members of the new House of Commons and Senate, and although these included some extremely wealthy men, they contributed no more than £131 6s 0d, which was duly paid to Conor. It seems that their meanness derived not so much from an antipathy to Conor's picture, as an antipathy to any kind of picture at all.

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2. Quoted Wilson, op cit, p.19.
3. Presumably the same as the photograph of the occasion reproduced in Richard Broad et al, The Troubles, Thames/Macdonald Futura 1980, p.93.
238. William Conor/The Opening of the First Northern Ireland Parliament, 1921/oil on canvas/35 5/8 x 55 1/4 ins (90.5 x 140.4 cms)/Parliament Buildings Collection, Stormont, Belfast/Photo: Blackstaff Press.
In 1932 Conor was given a second commission for a large historical work. Probably as the result of prompting by Arthur Deane, the energetic curator of the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, Sir Robert Baird, proprietor of the Belfast Telegraph, requested Conor to prepare a large painting titled *Ulster Past and Present,*\(^1\) to cover a long wall in the antiquities gallery in the Museum. This was not the first commission of this kind to be given to a local artist. In about 1903 J.W. Carey decorated the Ulster Hall with scenes from Belfast history, and in the 1930s the local printer Thomas McGowan commissioned a series of old Belfast views from Frank McKelvey for presentation to the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery. However both these sets of paintings were essentially hack reconstructions, based on previous paintings and old photographs, and made by men who had trained as illustrators (Carey had worked for the printing firm of Marcus Ward, and McKelvey for the poster printers, David Allen) and had progressed little further than that role.

Indeed Conor's painting suffers from some of the same limitations. He too had worked for David Allen's. He learnt more from the experience than McKelvey, and put to good use the bold lines and waxy crayons characteristic of lithographic poster designs. He also broadened his horizons by study at the Belfast College of Art and by visits to London, Paris and New York. Yet his work remained apparently untouched by the exciting developments taking place in the art of those cities. He preferred his own style which he characterised as "Presbyterian".\(^2\) And indeed the down-to-earth approach which he implied by that had its own merits. But it did not include a feeling

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1. Illustrated ibid, pp.52-3. The painting is now displayed above the museum's industrial hall.
2. Wilson, op cit, p.18.
for good composition or accurate anatomy, qualities which were to evade him throughout his career. Hence the somewhat flat, limp nature of this mural.

Nevertheless it is of interest for two reasons. In the first place it demonstrates the continuing willingness of some members of the small circle of artists and writers in the Protestant community at this time to see themselves as linked to Ireland's pre-Plantation cultural traditions. In the early years of the century Conor had been sufficiently influenced by the Celtic revival to sign his works with the Gaelic form of his name for a brief period. And the Irish warriors seen advancing over a hill past a great dolmen in the left-hand section of Ulster Past and Present are clad in costumes very similar to those designed by Conor, after consultation with an eminent Dublin archaeologist, for the Pageant of St Patrick, performed in the same year as this picture was painted.¹

In the second place Conor depicted in the right-hand section of this painting the men and women employed in Northern Ireland's leading industries of shipbuilding and linen manufacture. Indeed throughout his life it was these employees whom he drew and painted, whether at their work or in the small Belfast streets where they lived. Some members of the province's middle-classes resented Conor's use of subject-matter they would have preferred to forget. A friend of his recorded that, when he advised a wealthy art-lover to buy one of Conor's mill-worker drawings, the man replied:

"My wife doesn't like them things. She worked in a mill herself, and the neighbours might say yon was a portrait of her, when she was young."²

¹. Wilson, op.cit., pp.7-8.
². Ibid., p.12.
(A similar reaction to scenes of local industry can be seen in the lack of enthusiasm displayed by Belfast Corporation for the Shipbuilding and Flaxspinners triptychs completed for them in the 1920s and 1930s by that eccentric Anglo-Irish artist, R. Ponsonby-Staples. Although originally encouraged by the then Lord Mayor, Sir Daniel Dickson, and intended for the City Hall, where Ponsonby-Staples thought they would be more worthy adornment than "vermilion-coated Aldermen and Mayors", these massive works finally ended up in the museum after the artist had received an exceedingly miserly payment for them).

But although Conor never made much money from his paintings he was a widely admired artist in Northern Ireland by the 1930s, and from the late 1950s was accorded his measure of public honour, including a Civil List pension granted to him in 1959 by Captain Terence O'Neill, then the province's Minister of Finance. He had indeed become something of a local institution, whose depictions of shipyard men and shawled linen workers provided Ulster Protestants with a strong sense of cultural identity.

Some have seen in Conor's works and their eventual acceptance an unwillingness on his part to challenge the political and social status quo. There is indeed an element of truth in this assessment, but as a recorder of Belfast back-street life Conor sometimes had a perceptive eye for the impact on the city's inhabitants of the political and social tensions inherent in Northern Ireland following partition. In the Ulster Museum there is a picture painted by him in approximately 1922 and titled The Latest News (ill 239). On the

239. William Conor/The Latest News/1922/oil on canvas/
19 x 14 ins (48.2 x 35.5 cms)/Ulster Museum/Photo:
UM.
back of it Conor wrote:

"The news-vendor's shop is always a centre of interest in any little back-street. It is there that the inhabitants keep in touch with the movements of local interest or of the great world. You will always see a group scanning the windows or reading the contents bill of the daily press. This little group of elderly men and young women was actually seen on the Old Lodge Road during the troublous times in Belfast. They were reading, with some apprehension, the doings of the previous night: the number of killed, wounded and the houses burned. I made rapid notes on the spot and with the aid of further studies, expressed in paint what I saw, when the impression was fresh and clear." 1

It is indeed a vivid, offhand depiction of the anxieties of these years.

In the middle years of this century other artists from Northern Ireland's Protestant community besides Conor used both pen and brush to capture the teeming life of industrial Belfast. To his warmth painters like George and Arthur Campbell or Colin Middleton added a new appreciation of developments in the art-world outside Northern Ireland, so that they could see in the distant silhouettes of the shipyard gantries the dancing shapes found in a Paul Klee drawing, 2 or in the singing colours of red-brick Belfast on a summer's evening the joyful intensity of the Fauves.

However a very different image of Belfast and its industries is celebrated in the two murals commissioned from the local artist John Luke in 1951 and 1961. The first of these, in Belfast City Hall (ill 240) was commissioned by the local Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts 3 as part of Northern Ireland's celebration of the Festival of Britain.

1. Notes made by William Conor in September 1922 on the back of the painting.
3. Later the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
240. John Luke/Mural celebrating the history of Belfast/1951/oil/180 x 372 ins (457.6 x 944.9 cms)/Belfast City Hall/Photo: B. Loftus.
"The theme was something of an historical complicated emblem of the city's past. The Town Charter of 1613 is being read out by a figure in Jacobean costume, a kind of stereotype for Sir Arthur Chichester. The assembled figures vary their costume from that period, and shipbuilding, not at that time a local industry, is represented on the right of the picture. The left hand side presents the handloom and weaver of the linen trade, and extending almost to the centre of the bottom edge... is a portion of grass-covered land, upon which three strips of white linen are lying, thus representing the bleaching of linen..." 1

The second, in the entrance hall to the new extension to the Belfast College of Technology, is a celebration of modern industry and technology in which scenes of ship-building, construction-work and engineering are woven together with views of the City Hall and towering office blocks with Concorde flying overhead. 2 Although commenced in 1961 it remained uncompleted at the time of the artist's death in 1975. 3

Luke's murals appear to have been the most generally accepted of all public works of art in Northern Ireland. And indeed although their painter was strongly aware of both the "Pat' and the "Scot" in himself, 4 and was as willing to paint a Madonna and Child for a Catholic priest 5 as a William III wallpainting 6 or a Masonic mural, his style of painting was a most intense expression of those visual and cultural attitudes which have been described above 7 as characteristic of the Orange tradition. His figures move in a timeless,

2. The mural is illustrated in Hewitt, op cit, p.105.
3. A third mural was painted by Luke for the Provincial Masonic Hall in Rosemary Street in 1956. It is illustrated in Hewitt, op cit, p.83 and shows Solomon surrounded by workmen building his temple.
7. In Chapter 4.
pristine world which is strongly geometric and precise, every detail clear by virtue of his flawless, almost carved technique. Indeed he came to art only by accident, quite literally. After a brief spell working in a spinning mill he found employment in the shipyards, carrying hot rivets to the riveters working on the hulls, and would have remained there had he not fallen while aboard a ship and badly injured a leg. Study at the Belfast School of Art, and then at the Slade under Tonks, with his fierce insistence on purity of line; a visit to Paris and an obvious interest in the work of the Cubists; and a growing absorption in Eastern mysticism, particularly Zen Buddhism - these contacts with cultural movements external to Northern Ireland only served to reinforce the passion for clean line, pure technique, decorative patterning and contemplation of the everyday object which derived from the cultural traditions of the Protestant community in Ulster, and which he refined into his own extraordinary and unique art.

The few history paintings celebrating the nationalist tradition which were produced after the partition of Ireland are very different from these northern works. In the early 1920s a highly dramatic illustration of the last hours of the fighting in the Dublin GPO in the 1916 rising was produced by a man called Will Paget. Who he was and where the picture first appeared it has proved impossible to establish. But the scene was to prove immensely popular. It has been endlessly reproduced in republican newsheets during the present

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1. Luke was in fact an exceedingly skilled stone-carver who made two plaques showing the arms of two successive governors of Northern Ireland (illustrated in Hewitt, op cit, pp.91-2).
troubles, and in 1979 a fresh version of it was produced by the young republican who was later to design the first of the H-block murals in the Rockmore Street area. Troubled by the lack of the equivalent in his own community to the William III images of the loyalists this man made his own oil-painting based on the Paget illustration, and had coloured prints produced from it (ill 241) which he sold through Provisional Sinn Fein outlets and his own personal contacts.

Meanwhile pictures of the events of 1916 had by no means gone out of fashion with professional artists from Ireland's Catholic community. As part of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Easter Rising in the Republic, the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin was host to an art competition for paintings and sculpture commemorating the rebellion. The works submitted covered virtually the whole range of art-styles employed in the 1960s, from the academicism of Thomas Ryan's *The Last Day 1916* (ill 242), to Charles Harper's highly abstracted, rough-surfaced painting of the execution of James Connolly. All however were romantic celebrations of moments in an historical event which challenged the validity of British rule in Ireland, in strong contrast to the careful, precise, timeless assertions of the status quo to be found in most Northern Ireland history paintings following partition.

2. See above, ill 19.
3. A large black and white poster reproducing Paget's GPO picture was also issued by a Dublin poster workshop some time during the present troubles.
241. Will Paget adapted by T. Clarke/A Terrible Beauty
Dublin's GPO, 1916/1979/coloured photo-gravure/
143/8 x 217/8 ins (36.5 x 55.5 cms)/Collection:
B. Loftus/Photo: Maire Concannon.
242. Thomas Ryan/The Last Day, Easter 1916/1966/oil on canvas/51½ x 63 ins (130.7 x 160 cms)/present location unknown.
When the present troubles broke out in Northern Ireland in 1968-9, the Irish history-paintings to which artists north and south of the Irish border could turn as exemplars were few in number and markedly divided in their political and cultural approach to the very concept of Irish history. The distinctiveness of this situation and its significance can best be appreciated if these works are considered in the wider context of the development of history paintings in Western Europe.

The problems faced by the painters of Irish history at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth were by no means unique. The whole business of painting scenes from national history, and particularly from contemporary national history was relatively new and chancy, in England, France and Spain, as well as in Ireland. New and chancy too were the forms of marketing associated with these pictures, the exhibition and the raffle. Indeed throughout western Europe the hey-day of academy or salon exhibitions in which large-scale history paintings were displayed was not until well into the nineteenth century.

What is striking is the relative paucity of Irish history paintings in the nineteenth century, particularly when compared to the immense number of them painted in England and France during this period. There seem to have been three main reasons for this. In the first place, following the Act of Union the shift of political power to London resulted in a double loss of patronage for history paintings in Ireland. Not only did many of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy move to England, but there was no incentive to establish in Ireland any equivalent to schemes like the decoration of the new houses of Parliament, for which Maclise's Marriage of Strongbow and Eva (11149)
was a proposed design, or the many public commissions available to French history painters like Gros and Delacroix.

In the second place Irish artists could not feel secure about their history in the way the English clearly did in this period. While to a certain extent the country's Celtic traditions were so distant as to be easily appropriated by both English and Irish, Protestant and Catholic during this period (with a few exceptions), subsequent events were in general too touchy to be easily handled without giving offence to one community or the other, so that only the most ambiguous paintings, like the *Marriage of Strongbow and Eva* were successful.

In the third place there was the evident reluctance of Belfast industrialists to encourage anything more than stiff portraits and decorous landscapes. This is in strong contrast to the situation in a number of English industrial cities during this period. In Liverpool and Birmingham for example the Pre-Raphaelites were well-patronised by local businessmen, and in Sheffield and Newcastle-upon-Tyne there were some interesting commissions for paintings of local industries.¹ It seems that Belfast's particularly strong Protestant ethos and the planters' lack of a sense of their own local history helped to prevent this kind of patronage.

This was in strong contrast to the attitude towards history painting of nationalist and Catholic Irishmen during the nineteenth century. For it is important to emphasise that despite the actual dearth of pictures of Irish nationalist history during this period, the theoretical commitment to the association of art, holiness and nationalism of the highly influential Young Ireland movement helped to establish a cultural and political nexus which was to remain

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¹. See below, p.763.
crucial in the attitudes of the country's Catholic community.

In the early twentieth century these factors continued to affect the history paintings produced in relation to political events in Ireland. The relative deficiency of contemporary pictures referring to the 1916 rising appears less curious if one remembers that Irish artists as diverse as Jack Yeats and William Orpen were still strongly involved in English culture, and that the majority of Irish men and women at this time remained deeply confused about the Irish question. And it is clear that the continuing lack of paintings related to the past and contemporary history of Irish unionists remained largely attributable to the general antipathy towards art of its leaders, and their unchanged commitment to British rather than local history.

In the years that followed partition there was a small revival in history painting north and south of the Irish border, but the old division in attitudes towards the genre remained much as before. Ulster's Unionists were more willing to recognise their local, industrial roots, but in pictures which tended towards timeless, crafted images, endorsing the untroubled continuity of the Protestant ethos in Ulster, much as a number of contemporary English artists celebrated the Festival of Britain and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with images reiterating the stability of British traditions. And Catholic nationalists continued to see art as a means of endorsing their historical identity, and to support paintings which glorified specific incidents in a romantic rebellious past, in a fashion common to states created by recent revolutions, like the USSR or Yugoslavia, but alien to the culture of the longer
established countries in the remainder of Western Europe.\(^1\)

Clearly the visions of Irish history available to artists from the Protestant and Catholic communities confronted by the recent conflict in Northern Ireland have not only been marked by strongly differing concepts of local art and history. They have also endorsed vastly divergent associations with traditions in the wider cultural and political field. And these differentiations are not peculiar to the one genre of history painting. They can also be seen in the portraits of the historical figures honoured by the two communities in Ireland.

**Portraits of leaders and heroes**

Portraits of leaders and heroes are the other main genre in which artists have traditionally explored their own political identity and that of the society in which they live. In Northern Ireland the types of such portraits appropriated to the political history of Protestants and Catholics are very different in both content and style. Whereas Northern Ireland Protestants turning in the past thirteen years to artistically-endorsed images of figures important in their history have generally focussed on a small number of monumental statues of crowd-venerated leaders, their Catholic counterparts have found their identity symbolised in a wide range of images of lonely, heroic victims, often depicted in a romantic manner. The differences between these images and styles have been fostered by a combination of political, religious and cultural factors.

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1. On a visit to Russia in 1972 I was taken round state-sponsored studios where artists devoted themselves to the production of vast history-paintings for the country's local museums. Yugoslav paintings commemorating their country's recent history were shown in an exhibition of Yugoslav War Art at the Imperial War Museum in London in 1973-4.
The tendency of artists from Ireland's Catholic community to paint portraits of heroic victims is observable from the seventeenth century onwards. They did so not so much because it was their inclination, but because there was a market for this kind of work. While supporters of the Williamite cause amongst the country's English and Scottish colonisers sought images of King William himself or of contemporary defeaters of the Jacobites, those Jacobites who remained in Ireland favoured portraits reflecting the melancholy of their situation, and the heroic fate of those of their number who had endured persecution for their Catholic faith. Garrett Morphey, the painter responsible for the prototype of the portrait of Oliver Plunkett (ill 243) which belongs to the National Portrait Gallery in London, but which from 1897 to 1982 was on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, was probably sympathetic to the idea of depicting a Catholic priest who had been executed for persisting in propagating the Catholic faith in Ireland, for he was himself an Irish Catholic. The Portland Papers state that in 1688:

"one Morphew a Roman Catholic painter drinking confusion to those who did not read his Majesty's declaration was attacked and beaten by one of the King's officers quartering in those parts [York]."

Indeed Morphey's political and religious sympathies are evident in his handling of this subject. One of Plunkett's hands rests on his heart, indicating religious devotion, the other holds a crucifix symbolic of his identification with Christ through his own martyrdom. These were gestures foreign to Protestant painters of the day, and no

1. See above, p. 71 ff.
243. Garrett Morphey/Oliver Plunkett/ca 1681/oil on canvas/20\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 17\(\frac{1}{4}\) ins (52 x 44 cms)/National Portrait Gallery/Photo: NPG
doubt encouraged in Morphey's work, because, like so many subsequent artists from Ireland's Catholic community, he was well-acquainted with the great traditions of European art. But Morphey also had a wary eye to his market, and after the Williamite conquest he was as ready to paint its supporters as the defeated Jacobites.

That Morphey's Plunkett portrait was also painted to meet a recognisable demand, appears to be confirmed by the existence of at least three versions of it besides the engraving made by J Vander-vaart in 1681.\(^1\) Subsequently Morphey's image appears to have gone out of fashion, or to have been regarded as too provocative, for none of these versions seem to have been publicly exhibited in Ireland until this century, and a cult of Plunkett does not seem to have been part of traditional Irish culture, even in the area round Armagh in which he chiefly laboured, possibly because he was too aristocratic to become a popular hero-figure.\(^2\) It was only in this century that the fortunes of both Morphey's image and its subject changed. During the period that the National Portrait Gallery variant was on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland postcards of it were steady sellers, and when in 1975, Plunkett was canonised a saint by the Roman Catholic church, his portrait was re-endorsed once again as emblatic of his countrymen's political and religious sufferings.

James Petrie's portraits of the leaders of the United Irish rebellions in 1798 and 1803 soon acquired a hallowed niche in the historic memories of Irish Catholics. Engravings after them were published in the early nineteenth century, and soon afterwards they

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244. J. Heath engraving, after James Petrie painting/
Robert Emmet/illustration in Sir Jonah
Barrington, Historic Memoirs of Ireland, Henry
Colburn, 1835, vol I, opp p. 65/actual size
were reproduced in two widely-read publications on recent Irish history, Sir Jonah Barrington's *Historic Memoirs*, first issued in 1835 (ill 244) and Madden's *United Irishmen*, published in 1846.¹ The continuing importance of these works to Irish political leaders is evident from their incorporation in the collection of historical pictures which was established in 1944 for display in the presidential residence by Dr Douglas Hyde, the then President of Ireland.

James Barry's images of the Irish rebel were very different from those produced by Petrie, although made in approximately the same period. Barry aspired to be a history painter, but apart from his early picture of *The Conversion by St Patrick of the King of Cashel*, he turned to scenes from biblical, classical and English history, rather than the story of his native land.² In his self-portraits however Barry used the romantic, heroic style just coming into fashion to create strikingly dramatic images of his self-perceived role as an Irish Catholic artist, battling against the world around him (ills 245 and 246).

Various interrelated elements seem to have been involved in these pictures. Barry's fluctuating championship of Irish political grievances, his self-conscious awareness of his own position as a member of much-mocked race, his personal identification with the heroic anguish of Christ, his reaction as an artist and a Roman Catholic against the diminution in noble subjects available to the artist as the result of the Church of England's opposition to a major scheme for religious paintings, his involvement in an embittered competitive profession, and

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¹ The engravings of Petrie's portraits in Barrington's work were also available as proof prints, at 2s 6d each.
² See above, pp. 677-678.
24". James Barry/Self-portrait/1780-1804/oil on canvas/32 x 25 ins (76.2 x 63 cms)/National Gallery of Ireland/Photo: NGI.
246. James Barry/Self Portrait/1802/reed pen and brown ink on paper/11¼ x 9½ ins (29.2 x 24.1 cms)/Royal Society of Arts.
the influence on him of contemporary artistic trends towards romantic portrayals of suffering, monumental figures - all these appear to have shaped these pictures of the artist as a suffering hero.

Barry's political views were by no means straightforward. Certainly the background from which he sprang was calculated to enforce a sense of English injustice towards the Irish. His father was a Protestant, but his mother, who apparently had the greater influence on him, is said to have come from an old Catholic family, which lost most of its estates in County Cork during the Williamite wars. Barry was brought up in the Catholic faith, and despite being assailed by doubts during his stay in Rome, clung to it till the end of his life.¹

Indeed some of Barry's identification with suffering heroes in his paintings may have derived from his Catholicism. His recent biographer William Pressly has suggested that the beads of sweat on Barry's brow in the Edmund Burke and Barry as Ulysses and his companions escaping from Polyphemus² were a means of identifying himself with the suffering Christ, traditionally depicted in this fashion in the paintings of the road to Calvary and Veronica's veil.³

But like many a subsequent artist from Ireland's Catholic community, Barry's political attitudes towards his native land were confused. While in letters, prints and paintings he made direct and indirect appeals to the English to improve their treatment of Irish Catholics, he also expressed embarrassed contempt for his fellow countrymen,⁴ and he knew he had no artistic future in Ireland. In 1798 he wrote bitterly:

4. Pressly, ibid, p.84.
"An Irish artist may think himself well of if his countrymen are not against him, in order to curry favour for themselves." 1

He maintained no contact with his relatives in Ireland, and never returned there, even when his father was dying. In his writings he rejected the theoretical republicanism of the United Irishmen.2 Indeed he greeted the Act of Union between England and Ireland with designs for a print celebrating the event, (although like many Irishmen at the time he may have expected more to have been achieved as a result, particularly with regard to Catholic Emancipation).

Yet the indifference and contempt displayed by the English towards Irishmen could sting him in conversation into emotional identification with the rebellion which the United Irishmen led in 1798. His Irish contemporary William Henry Curran recalls a revealing incident.

"Barry spoke much and warmly of politics, and took no pains to conceal that he was a sturdy republican. When he alluded to the Irish events of 1798, it was as 'the late civil war which they call a rebellion.' The only instance which I recollect the native impetuosity of his tongue to have broken out, was connected with the politics of Ireland. It was at a little evening party, given expressly in his honour. Several young ladies were invited to see an Irish lion and the noble animal roared for them'an 'twere any nightingale.' They were charmed with his pleasantry and his brogue. While they were ranged around him, the conversation was suddenly broken up by the entrance of a noisy, busy old gentleman, steaming with perfumes, and gorgeously attired – the late Mr N- of Soho Square. The pink of aristocracy pirouetted through the little circle, offered his scented snuff to the ladies, and opened a running fire of frivolous compliments in a loud squeaking voice, from the annoyance of which his own ears were fortunately saved by his excessive deafness. Barry eyed the antiquated beau with contempt, and was silent. But in a little time Ireland and her turbulent peasantry were mentioned. Mr N- announced himself to have been once an Irishman, tripped through the common-place doctrines of provincial policy, and summed up

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2. Introduction to the Works, pp.333-335.
by exclaiming that they should be 'all hanged, every man of them hanged.' This was too much for the Irish lion, and the ladies now had a roar in earnest. Barry started from his chair, strided across to the corner where Mr N- was standing, and arranging both hands into the form of speaking-trumpet, bellowed in his ear 'And what sir, should be done to those who force the Irish peasantry to these excesses?' Poor Mr N- was utterly confounded by a home-question, which even to this day is perplexing the greatest statesmen, and Barry in surly triumph returned to his chair." 1

Barry's emotional identification with Irish rebelliousness was expressed in these kinds of personal encounters, and in his aesthetic explorations of his own identity, rather than in political discourse, art or action. He quarrelled continuously with patrons and fellow-artists. 2 He was ridiculed as a wild Irishman and began to act the part. In Rome the pompous Nathaniel Dance, drew a malicious cartoon of him (ill 247) inscribed with the following lines:

"On his coming to Rome Barry swore with a frown
Every man who opposed him he'd kick or knock down,
Having found his mistake with the few that he tried,
Now, rather than quarrel, he'd kiss your backside." 3

Dance's conclusion was erroneous. Although caricatures were commonplace in artistic circles in Rome at the time, 4 the drawing seems to have done little to sweeten Barry's temper, and throughout his life he combined with rudeness and aggression doubts about his own ethnic acceptability expressed in an obsession with his physical appearance. One writer records him as saying seriously of

4. See above, p. 402.
24. Nathaniel Dance/Caricature of James Barry/ca 1766/pencil/10 x 7½ ins (25.5 x 19 cms)/British Museum, Department of Prints & Drawings/Photo: BM.
himself, "I am a pock-pitted, hard-featured little fellow."\(^1\) His contemporaries also commented on his small stature and his typically Irish features. Some saw in those Irish features a matter for contempt.

Gilchrist recorded:

"I have seen a characteristic pencil recollection from Blake's hand of the strange Irishman's ill-favoured face; that of an idealized bull-dog, with villainous low forehead, turned-up nose and squalid tout ensemble."\(^2\)

But most, while appalled by the slovenly negligence of his later years, credited him with a certain eloquence and nobility of expression.

"His person was below the middle size, sturdy and ungraceful. You could see at once that he had never practised bowing to the world. His face was striking. An Englishman would call it Irish, an Irishman a Munster face; but Barry's had a character independent of national expression. It was rugged, austere and passion-beaten; but the passions traced were those of aspiring thought, and unconquerable energy, asserting itself to the last, and sullenly exulting in its resources."\(^3\)

This impression seems to be confirmed by the various portraits of Barry by other artists, notably W. Evans' drawing from a cast taken shortly before his death (ill 248).\(^4\) His own self-image, as recorded in the extraordinary number of self-portraits he made with restless, probing intensity, appears to have taken two forms, one public and one private. In the public image he could maintain to the

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2. Thomas Bodkin, Paper on James Barry given on 20 Nov 1940, _Journal of the Royal Society of Arts_, vol 89, 13 Dec 1940, p.50. Bodkin points out Gilchrist may have misdescribed the drawing as Blake had a great admiration for Barry.


4. See also the portraits of Barry reproduced in Strickland, _op cit_.
end of his life (if current theories on the dating of his National Gallery of Ireland Self-Portrait are correct), a vision of himself as a romantic, heroically assertive young artist, grappling with the world (ill 745), while in the private image he depicted an aged, dispirited recluse, gazing somberly at his mirrored reflection, by the light of a flickering candle (ill 746). A note on the back of this drawing vouches for its accuracy.

"This portrait of Barry the painter I purchased shortly after his death. It was a favourite candlelight study of his, but never intended to be made public - as it was his intention that no portrait of him should be seen past the meridian of his life. He drew this a few years before his death with pen and ink and in his usual painting dress. From my long acquaintance with him I can answer for its being a strong characteristic likeness of that artist and most singular man. Chas Warren." 1

What these two images have in common is a stress on suffering, struggle and despair, and these are characteristics very common in the whole range of Barry's output. There seems no doubt that they were encouraged by Barry's real difficulties as a Catholic Irish artist. But they were also related to his peculiarly difficult temperament - and to the artistic fashions of the day.

Certainly, as we have seen, Barry encountered hostility and ridicule on account of his Irishness. And certainly he encountered problems as an artist because of his Catholic religion. His proposal that St Paul's should be decorated by Academicians with paintings of a scriptural nature, although accepted by the Academy itself, was turned down by the Bishop of London, on the grounds that "it would occasion a great noise and clamour against it, as an awful intrusion of popery." 2 The incident had a lasting effect on Barry.

1. Quoted in Irish Art in the 19th Century, p.18.
2. John Pye, Patronage of British Art, 1845, facsimile reprint by Cornmarket Press, 1970, pp.218-219. Pye, however, makes the point that the Bishop may have acted out of pique, not having been initially consulted about the scheme, and states his belief that the anti-papery outcry would have been minimal.
He had said in his letter of proposal that he saw the scheme:

"as the only means of establishing a solid manly taste for real art, in the place of our trifling contemptible passion for the daubing of little inconsequent things – portraits of dogs, landscapes etc." 1

and subsequently he frequently voiced the conviction that the Reformation was one of the chief causes for the lack of history painting in England.2

But Barry’s difficulties as an Irish Catholic need to be set in the context of the more general problems of art during this period, which William Pressly achieves very successfully in his recent study of the painter.

"Barry's personality was not atypical of a profession as fiercely competitive and chronically insecure as the one on which he had embarked. A man of great ambition and lofty intellectual aspirations, he needed to prove to himself as much as to others that he - a poor Irish Catholic - was a painter who could rise above his origins to take his place in the first rank. In the pursuit of this difficult goal he was obsessed with work, going out of his way to demonstrate that he had no time for the usual social niceties, expressing indifference toward areas normally taken for granted such as dress, food, habitation and family. The pressures created by his view of the world fed his violent temper; turned him into a solitary figure, secretive toward others lest they steal his ideas; and make him intensely jealous of those who were already prospering." 3

So great indeed was Barry's paranoia that he viewed himself as a martyr awaiting violent assassination.

Moreover Barry's difficult status as an Irish Catholic, his role as a member of a very difficult profession and his own obsessive personality were not the only factors contributing to his self-depiction as a suffering rebel. Artistic theories and fashions of

2. Notably in his An Enquiry into the real or imaginary Obstacles to the Arts in England, published in 1775, two years after the rejection of the St Paul's scheme (printed in the second volume of his Works). He also made comments in this vein in his lectures to Academy students, see Homan Potterton, Irish Church Monuments 1570-1880, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, Belfast, 1975, pp.13-14.
the time also played a part in these images. He is known to have had a predilection for monumental scale from his earliest work, but undoubtedly he was also strongly influenced by Edmund Burke's description of the sublime style, and the increasingly romantic taste for those classical sculptures which were on a monumental, heroic scale. Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* made a considerable impact on the youthful Barry, even before its author befriended him. It suggests that the sublime is rooted in man's strongest passions which are the feelings of terror aroused in him when danger or pain threaten his life. Such theories were much in vogue, and many of the artists and amateurs making the trip to Rome considered nearly obligatory for cultivated men during this period, cited as most worthy of admiration those monumental classical sculptures which were capable of arousing such passions. Barry was familiar with both these works and the books praising them, and his own paintings aspire to a very similar monumental grandeur. Indeed in the 1803 *Self-Portrait* (ill. 245) there are very direct references to such massive classical images of struggle and suffering. This self-portrait is related to part of a mural, *The Victors at Olympia*, which Barry painted for the Society of Arts building in the Adelphi round about 1780. In both mural and portrait Barry depicted himself as the Greek artist Timanthes, holding a conjectural reconstruction of the painting in which he supposedly displayed his ability in creating an aura of grandeur, by showing small figures of satyrs attempting to measure the finger of a cyclops. And in both

mural and portrait the statue of Hercules crushing the Snake of Envy which stands behind the head of Barry Timanthes appears to be a further reference by the artist to his involvement in the grand art of history painting, from which he refuses to be deterred by the envy of more fashionable portraitists.¹

Barry's self-depiction, in both his life and his portraits as a suffering, struggling hero taking on the world were clearly fostered by his own obsessive personality, and by artistic fashions of the day, but the relevance for these images of his status as an Irish Catholic artist should not be forgotten. How much influence they have had on the Catholic community in Ireland is however debatable. As we have seen Barry's career was spent in England and Rome, and although he was acquainted with leading Irish figures of the day, such as Burke and Curran, no major works by him were in Irish ownership at the time of his death. However Irish interest in Barry in the years following his death appears to have been fairly strong. Not only were his works noticed as soon as they appeared, by the Belfast Monthly Magazine.² The Belfast Penny Journal of 1846 also carried a "Memoir of Barry the Painter", and his name was frequently included in the lists of eminent Irish artists cited in the pages of The Nation. Works by him were also sporadically included in the loan exhibitions in Ireland in the second half of the century. Although curiously there were none in the 1852 Industrial Exhibition in his native city of Cork, pieces by Barry were included in the 1853 Dublin Exhibition which led to the founding of the National Gallery of Ireland in 1854,

². Vol 2 no 9, 30 April 1809, p.306, list of new publications.
the 1872 Dublin exhibition (a special display of his works), the 1873 Loan Museum of Art Treasures in Dublin (engraving), and the Cork International exhibition of 1902 (the 1803 Self-Portrait and one other work). In addition, a painting of Barry at work in his studio was shown in the Dublin exhibition of 1865 by Edwin Hayes, a London-based artist of Irish extraction best known for his marine paintings. Meanwhile from 1875 onwards the National Gallery of Ireland slowly acquired examples of Barry's output. The 1803 Self-Portrait (ill 245) was purchased in 1934.

A very different kind of political and social identity is proclaimed in the portraits of Northern Protestants painted during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest of these are by Joseph Willson, an artist about whom little is known, except that he worked in both Belfast and Dublin. Willson, like many painters at this time, attempted more ambitious works than his portraits. In 1782 he advertised in the Belfast News Letter his picture of Daniel interpreting to Belshazzar the writing on the Wall, which he was attempting to raffle.¹ And in 1786 another advertisement, this time for engraving of Willson's portrait of Amyas Griffiths, to be had at booksellers in Belfast, Lisburn, Newry, Derry, Armagh, Coleraine, Strabane and Downpatrick, was placed in The Belfast Mercury or Freeman's Chronicle.²

This journal expressed the opinion of the recently formed volunteers, and it is for his volunteer portraits that Willson is best-known. One of the finest of these is the portrait of Lieutenant Hyndman now in the Ulster Museum (ill 249). The image that it

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². 13 Jan 1786.
249. Joseph Willson/Lieutenant Hyndman/ca 1782-1785/
oil on canvas/30 1/4 x 25 1/4 ins (77 x 64 cms)/
Ulster Museum/Photo: UM.
conveys is one of quiet pride, in group membership, in trade, in the development of a city, in military association, and in political activity.

It seems fair to conclude that this image was one shared by artist and sitter, for they were acquainted, and shared similar commitments. Both were members of the convivial Masonic Lodge no 257, which flourished in Belfast from September 1780 to about 1785 (Hyndman appears in the list of members for 20 March 1782, Wilson in that for October 1783). Indeed Willson was employed as a portrait-painter by many of his fellow-members, such as Amyas Griffiths, John Brown and William Magee. Hyndman proudly displays in his buttonhole the emblem of this lodge, a medal embossed with a skull and crossbones, suspended on a blue and orange ribbon. He also shows off the wares in which he traded. He was a snuff and tobacco manufacturer and is shown here with a graceful pipe-full of his own blend; on the table on which he leans the beautifully-painted still life includes the label from the packet he used to fill it: "No 2 Made by R.H. and Andrew Hyndman Tobacconist. Belfast". Another kind of pride appears to be conveyed by the simple neoclassical architecture shown, in somewhat dubious perspective, behind

1. The lists, which are given in one of the two different issues of Ahiman Rezon, 5th edition, James Magee, Belfast, 1782, are reproduced in Millin, op cit, p.171.

2. The engraving of the Griffiths portrait is reproduced as the frontispiece to Griffith's Miscellaneous Tracts, published in Dublin in 1788; the John Brown portrait is reproduced in Millin, op cit, p.91 and three Magee portraits are now in the Ulster Museum.

Hyndman. This was the style used in Belfast's first public buildings, such as the Poor House in Clifton Street, towards which the Masonic Lodge 257 contributed on a number of occasions.¹ And there is pride finally in military association and political activity.

Hyndman's dapper uniform is that of a Lieutenant (Staff Officer in the Volunteer Ranks) of the Belfast 3rd Volunteer Union Company, which was established on 12 June 1778.² Like so many of his fellow-countrymen he rallied to the need for volunteer corps to protect England from invasion via Ireland; we know too that he rallied to the predominantly Northern movement to use the volunteers in support of the establishment of an independent Irish parliament in Dublin, for his name appears among a list on an address written by the Merchants of Belfast, dated 1 March 1782, to Travers Hartley Esq, offering congratulations on his election as the representative of the City of Dublin in that Parliament;³ but almost certainly he, like his fellow masons, would have opposed the United Irish attempt in 1798 to use their volunteer experience in rebellion against England in order to gain greater liberties for Ireland.⁴ A man of reason, rather than passion, one might conclude, a self-reliant representative of the age of enlightenment.


² Black, loc cit.

³ C.H. Wilson, Volunteer Resolutions, Joseph Hill, Dublin, 1782, vol 1, p.17.

⁴ On the involvement of Orange Lodge 257 in the Volunteer Movement and its loyalty in 1798 see Millin, op cit, pp.169-172.
To this conclusion Willson himself contributes. It seems that he may have been a volunteer himself, and that he attended the great Volunteer Convention in Dungannon in 1782.¹ He may well therefore have shared Hyndman's political views and that general feeling for democratic organisation so strongly embodied in the Volunteers.² Moreover the truly neo-classical balance, clarity, luminosity and tenderness of handling in his work helps to further this image of quiet pride in a civilised social and political self-reliance.

These characteristics can still be found in portraits of leading members of Northern Ireland's Protestant community in the early nineteenth century. In 1802 William Ritchie, one of the new hard-headed middle class replacing Northern Ireland's declining aristocracy³ allowed himself to be portrayed by Thomas Robinson in a remarkably elegant pose, leaning against a classical statue of Neptune, the god of the sea, while his ships are building behind him in an idyllic rural setting (ill 250). It was not a mere pose, Ritchie was a good friend to Robinson and his precocious son, and an ardent supporter of such civic improvements as the Royal Academical Institution, the General Hospital and the Poor House and Infirmary.⁴ And ship-building at this time was still closer to rural craft than modern industry, as can be seen in D. Stewart's watercolour view of Ritchie's dock, painted in 1805.⁵

1. Black, loc cit, and Crookshank and Glin, The Painters of Ireland, p.158.
2. Black, loc cit.
5. Two versions of this exist, one in the Ulster Museum, the other in the Belfast Harbour Commissioners collection.
25]. Thomas Robinson/William Ritchie/1802/oil on canvas/37 x 29\frac{1}{2} ins (94 x 75 cms)/Ulster Museum/Postcard: UM.
By the middle of the century however the image projected in portraits of Belfast Protestant middle-classes was very different. The change can be best conveyed by contrasting with the Ritchie portrait Richard Hooke's picture of William Herdman painted in about 1840 (ill 251). Herdman, like Ritchie, played an important part in the shipping trade; Hooke, like Robinson, was by Belfast terms a successful artist, patronized by the Marquess of Downshire, building up a considerable local practice and exhibiting at the Royal Hibernian Academy. Yet his image of Herdman, stark, unadorned, the hands clenched on nothing more significant than a handkerchief, embodies the ultimate reductionism of the embattled Protestant tradition. It is not without a solemn staring presence, and there are passages in it painted with a delicate fluency, but it is a repeatable formula rather than a unique image - indeed it was repeated, for there is another version in the collection of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. Hooke and his patrons both relied on the safe reproduction of similar objects. Born in County Down in about 1823, he was originally a carpenter. Showing a gift for painting, he was induced by Andrew Ferguson, manager of the Sion Flax-Spinning Mills, to take to portrait-painting. It was Ferguson who taught him photography, which he used in his portrait painting. The practice was common enough. From the mid-1850s photographers are mingled with artists in the Belfast Directories and by the early 1870s the following kind of advertisements are commonplace:

E.T. Church (late partner of R. Mayer) Artist and Photographer, 55 Donegall Place, Belfast. Cartes-de-visite on enamel. Cameo vignettes. Incaustic Portraits from £5.5s and upwards. A few choice Oil Paintings always on sale.
251. Richard Hooke/William Herdman/ca 1840/oil on
canvas/36 x 27\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins (91.5 x 70.5 cms)/
Ulster Museum/Photo: UM
Belfast's Protestant bourgeoisie were increasingly turning to tradesmen rather than artists for the few portraits they required. Herdman retained a certain prestige as a portrait-painter in Belfast - he painted three successive Lord Mayors between 1849 and 1880 - but he prudently married a rich widow from Manchester, and seems to have spent a fair proportion of his time there in his later years.

The late nineteenth century Northern Protestant taste for the minimum number of self-images, executed in style of hard solemnity, is endorsed by the nature of the statues to be found in Belfast. Throughout the whole of the century only three free-standing statues appear to have been erected in the city. The first of these was a bronze figure of Frederick Richard, the Earl of Belfast, by Patrick McDowell. This was erected in November 1855 in front of the Academical Institution. The shared characteristic of the subject, the sculptor and the occasion was that very Victorian attribute, sentiment. The Earl had literary interests, a strong sense of social responsibility, and a sympathy with Irish nationalism. In 1852 he delivered a series of lectures on the English poets of the nineteenth century in the Music Hall in May Street, for the benefit of the Library Fund of the local Working Classes Association; he composed several songs and had them printed and sold for Famine Relief; and he was inspired to Irish patriotism by the literary outpourings of Thomas

2. Hewitt, Art in Ulster: 1, pp.28, 144 and 162.
Moore and the Young Irelanders. 1 On his early death a statue of him was commissioned by popular demand from McDowell, and paid for with a public subscription of £1,500. 2 This sculptor, who was of Irish extraction, worked in London where he achieved considerable and well-deserved repute. His funeral monument to the Earl of Belfast, in the chapel at Belfast Castle, is an outstanding work, exuding pathos. The public statue was less successful, somewhat weak and simpering. It was however accorded a dignified welcome, with an unveiling by the Lord Lieutenant, and no less than two commemorative odes. 3

Twenty-one years later this figure was ousted from its plinth by a very different monument, whose subject, style and manner of inauguration were all symptomatic of the change in self-image which took place amongst the Protestants of Northern Ireland in the nineteenth century (ill 252).

The new figure was of the Reverend Dr Henry Cooke (1788-1867). Cooke played a decisive part in the striking change in temper of Presbyterian Belfast between about 1830 and 1860. Gone was the late eighteenth century tradition of liberal Presbyterianism, favourable to cultural development, and prepared to join forces with the Catholics against the overweening power of England and its established church. In its place was a beleaguered, violent religion, frightened by the massive influx of Catholics into Belfast in the mid-century.

"Catholics had been 6.5 per cent of its population in the middle of the eighteenth century; in 1834 they were 31 per cent; by 1848 some 43 per cent." 4

3. Ibid.
252. S.F. Lynn/Dr Cooke/1876/bronze/overall height approximately 180 ins (457.3 cms)/College Square East, Belfast/Photo: Northern Ireland Tourist Board
This new Protestantism was harshly intolerant of frivolous entertainment, and increasingly aligned with the prelacy, the Conservatives and the Orange Order. Cooke played a major part in these changes. It was he who in the 1830s:

"proclaimed the banns of political marriage between prelacy and Presbyterianism and hurled anathemas against Liberalism, Popery and the Repeal of the Act of Union." 1

It was he who opposed the institution of national education 2 and who led the mid-nineteenth century wave of Ulster evangelicalism. It was he who nursed the infant Conservative Party, and defied Daniel O'Connell's campaign for Repeal. 3 It was he who in the late 1860s finally detached the Presbyterians from the Young Ireland orientation.

Cooke contributed to the total redefinition of the Protestant tradition not only by what he did, but by the style in which he did it. To him in large part we owe the identification of Protestant religion and politics, the phenomenon of the political clergyman, the style of political oratory which is phrased in the language of the Bible. To a lesser extent he was also responsible for the development of a specifically Ulster rather than Irish Protestant tradition, when he voiced his opposition to O'Connell's visit to the province in 1841, in terms of the repulsion of an invader. 4 And in turning against O'Connell his own technique of mass demonstrations,

1. Beckett and Glasscock, op cit, p.32.
4. This is an idea I owe to David Miller. For an excellent analysis of the development of an Ulster consciousness at this time see Gilbert A. Cahill, "Some Nineteenth Century roots of the Ulster Problem, 1829-1848", Irish University Review, Dublin, vol 1 no 2, Spring 1971, pp.215-237.
he first introduced to Northern Ireland that frightening phenomenon, the massed crowd, which allows itself to be manipulated by a leader and therein sees its release from fear and confusion. Fear of the sheer weight of Catholic numbers, fear too perhaps of divine wrath as expressed in the mid-century famine and pestilence, fear of the multitudes of dead:1 all these may have encouraged the Northern Protestants to political and religious excess and to frenzied head-counts, whether of the 60,000 supporters of the Protestant Conservative Society that Cooke addressed at Hillsborough on 30 October 18342 or the 40,000 attendants of the first monster meeting of Ulster's religious Revival of 1859, in the Botanic Gardens of Belfast.3 The inauguration of this statue was in the same tradition. Its erection in 1876 was celebrated by a vast Orange Order demonstration, "an army of the loyal sons of Ulster" estimated at some 150,000, who used that recently-established means of mass transport, the railway, could reflect on their numbers by means of that mass medium, the photograph,4 and were addressed in highly Biblical oratory by that new leader of the masses, William Johnston of Ballykilbeg.5 The statue itself justifies far more than its predecessor the nickname of "the Black Man" which it inherited from it.6 Weathered green it may be, but the grim-faced divine, with a stark nobility akin to Herdman's, epitomises the black North far more effectively

2. Cahill, op cit, p.226.
4. An "instantaneous view" of the demonstration was advertised by the Belfast photographer Robert Seggans, in the Belfast News Letter, 12 May 1876, p.4.
5. Ibid, p.5.
6. According to Brett, op cit, p.47, the Earl of Belfast's statue was painted black, hence the origin of the name. Brett says Lynn's statue is meant to be a striking likeness.
than McDowell's simpering figure of the Earl.¹

Ironically Lynn had worked for a while in McDowell's studio.² The manner in which this and other commissions came to him under-
line the predicament of Northern Ireland sculpture in the nineteenth
century. Lynn was the younger brother of W.H. Lynn, partner to
Charles Lanyon, then Northern Ireland's leading architect, and it
seems possible this had much to do with his relative success, par-
ticularly as compared with Thomas Fitzpatrick, a gifted carver who
was his contemporary. Fitzpatrick, ignored by Strickland, but
rightly praised by Charles Brett for the vigour of his work, atten-
ded the Belfast School of Art and won the carving prize instituted
by Lanyon, but never achieved any great fame and appears to have
worked all his life in Northern Ireland. Lynn on the other hand, hav-
ing attended the School of Art at the same time, went on like
McDowell to become a successful sculptor working in England, assist-
ing Foley on the Albert Memorial and occasionally returning to Bel-
fast to contribute such well-known monuments as Cooke, and the
figure of Prince Albert on the clock-tower memorial to the Prince
Consort erected in 1870.³

These few monuments certainly came to hold an important place
in the political culture of Ulster Protestants. When at the time of
the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the political struggle over
the question of Irish home rule was at its fiercest, two postcards
were issued in support of the Unionists, which symbolised the impact
of Home Rule on Belfast with the demolition of the Albert Clock, the

1. The third statue erected in nineteenth-century Belfast, that of
the Reverend Hugh Hanna, unveiled in 1894, shared the same
ethos and style as the Cooke monument. It was blown up in
March 1970.
2. Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, Quarterly Notes, no 40, Summer
1919, p.13 and Strickland, op cit, entry on Lynn.
3. Strickland, loc cit.
collapse of the City Hall, and the erection of statues to such nationalist leaders as Redmond and Dillon (ill 253). And during the present troubles, similar images of destruction of the statues of Cooke and later leaders of Ulster Protestants have again been frequently employed to symbolise the impact of the conflict on Northern Ireland.¹

Yet the lack of public statues in Ulster prior to this century remains striking. Influence may have got Lynn the commissions and prestige which Fitzpatrick never acquired, but influence cannot completely explain away the yawning gulf between Belfast's splendid local carving and mediocre imported sculpture throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. There seem to be two possible explanations for this. In the first place there was the Protestant horror of images. And in the second place there was Belfast's political status as an Irish city. Dublin was the country's political capital, and therefore the main centre for public monuments. It was there that the memorials went up to English monarchs like William III (ill 11) and Queen Victoria,² English heroes like Nelson (whose vast column, erected in 1808³ was in strong contrast to Robinson's fictitious Belfast statue), Irish writers like Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Moore, and Irish political leaders like Daniel O'Connell.⁴

The numerous representations of O'Connell are a striking exception to the gallery of heroes and victims who have acted as the main

¹. A number of such images can be found in cartoons in loyalist newsheets.
². This memorial, by John Hughes, was unveiled in 1908. After its dismantling it was placed in the courtyard of Kilmainham Hospital in Dublin. An old photograph of it is reproduced in Peter Harbison, Homan Potterton and Jeanne Sheehy, Irish Art and Architecture, Thames & Hudson, 1978, p.256.
BELFAST UNDER HOME RULE. Making a Site for the Statue of King John the First of Ireland.

253. Unionist postcard/ca 1906-12/black and white/photo gravure/3½ x 5 ins (9 x 13.8 cms)/printed by W.C. Baird, Belfast/Ulster Museum/Photo: UM
identity figures for Ireland's Catholic population. This nineteenth century leader is almost invariable represented in his roles of shrewd lawyer or member of the English parliament (ill 254). The only exceptions to this somewhat monotonous rule appear to be the painting of O'Connell as a Herculean figure rescuing Erin from her bondage,¹ and the lithographs of O'Connell and the other "Repeal Martyrs" produced during their imprisonment in 1843–4.

Undoubtedly O'Connell suffered as greatly from the attentions of second-rate artists as he was later to suffer from the ineptness of second-rate biographers. But the usually sober image they presented was also true to his own character. He was not a rebel, being deeply opposed to militarism and the use of physical force. In place of these, he turned to manipulation of the gradually developing English parliamentary system and exploitation of the techniques of extra-parliamentary agitation, as the means of achieving Catholic emancipation and repeal of the Act of Union. In Ireland it was the latter strategy which was most noticeably to shape his enduring public image. The mass meetings which he held up and down the country, and the mass contributions to his Catholic and Repeal Associations made him a giant figure, the focus of the hopes of virtually the entire Catholic population. In 1843 the German Johann Kohl observed:

"Whoever travels in Germany or, in any other country, for geographical or ethnographical purposes, and wishes only to make himself acquainted with the character of the country and its inhabitants, need not trouble himself much about the personal characteristics of our distinguished men. To travel in Ireland for the same purposes, and to remain ignorant of O'Connell, the man who, as Atlas supports the earth, has taken the entire emerald isle on his shoulders, is next to impossible; for he is himself an

¹. See above, p. 149.
254. John Foley, completed by Thomas Brock/Daniel O'Connell monument/1867–1883/bronze statue on limestone pedestal and base/overall height 480 ins (1219.2 cms)/O'Connell Street, Dublin/Photo: Green Studios
ethnographical phenomenon, partly because for thirty years he has exercised an extraordinary influence over the formation of the character and the condition of his nation, and partly because he himself and his power is another phenomenon which can only be explained by the character of the Irish nationality.

The Irish are a people after the old model, a people almost without a counterpart in the world. In Germany, we have everywhere become too enlightened and too self-dependent for any authority. We laugh at all who call themselves prophets; but among the Irish the old faith in saints and miracles still exists. Here alone the mighty, the immortal, and the great still find a fertile soil, whence to obtain laurels and a halo. The Irish are enthusiastic, credulous, blind, innocent as children and patriotic so that they are ready to abandon themselves to the most ardent admiration of a talented individual, and to raise him aloft on their shields and shoulders, as the Roman were wont to elevate their generals. They are also unhappy, and desirous to be relieved from their sufferings, and their full, wounded hearts are consequently ever ready to applaud and shower down praises on him who manifests sympathy in their wrongs and devotion in their cause."

There is some evidence that this heroic outsized image of O'Connell did replace his more sober persona in his later years, partly as a result of his own efforts, partly as an outcome of the activities of his supporters. Indeed as early as 1827 another German, Prince Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Puckler-Muskau, who was sympathetic to O'Connell and contributed to his campaign funds, said of him

"His desire for celebrity seemed to me boundless"

and by 1842, according to Kohl, the metamorphosis into a public figure was almost total.

2. Ibid, p.85.
"O'Connell, in proportion as he has made himself public, has retained less of himself for himself than any other man in England. He everywhere gives himself up to the gaze and judgment of the public, whether in parliament or at public meetings, in the streets, at elections or in travelling. He scarcely ever ceases to lead a public life, and almost everything he does is done before the eyes of hundred or thousands. Peel, Wellington, and other great statesmen, hide themselves in the mysteries of their bureaux and cabinets, from which they issue forth in their public measures, and in person only in parliament, or at public dinners, O'Connell, the tribune of the people is almost public property, flesh and bone; he even speaks of his domestic concerns at his popular meetings, for he is enabled to support his house and his family only through the indirect assistance of the public." 1

The phrases Kohl uses are pregnant with meaning. O'Connell did indeed "give himself up to the gaze and judgment of the public" in the great open-air meetings which were orchestrated by his supporters in the Young Ireland movement - in 1843 alone he appeared at some 34 meetings at each of which more than 100,000 were estimated to be present. 2 And when not present in flesh and blood his image could be endlessly admired by his followers, whether in the shape of the life-size statue completed for the Repeal Association by John Hogan in 1846 (probably the first statue to an Irish nationalist leader in his lifetime) or a plaster copy of Peter Turnerelli's bust of him made in about 1828-30 (10,000 of these are reputed to have been sold) 3 or one of the Staffordshire jugs and busts produced from about 1830. 4 For he had indeed become public property. In a sense his followers bought a share in him, whether by their subscriptions to the Catholic Association in the 1820s or the

1. Ibid, p.87.
3. Strickland, op cit, entry on Turnerelli.
4. There are examples in the 1798 room in the National Museum in Dublin.
rent they paid to the Loyal National Repeal Association in the 1840s to replace the income O'Connell had lost by giving up his lucrative legal practice.

"Perhaps the present age will and must have its heroes well dressed and well fed. As the English debt is a burden which keeps all England together, so is the O'Connell tribute a burden which keeps together all repealers. Having once pledged themselves to pay so much, this promise obliges them to continue with O'Connell. They are probably astonished at the extraordinary amount of this tribute, which a man without any external power, and merely by his eloquence and zeal, has imposed upon them, and perhaps they value him more highly on that account." 1

And they could also make O'Connell their property by buying images of him. If they could not afford a Staffordshire figure, or a Turnerelli bust, they could, by the early 1840s, paste up on their wall an engraving of their hero cut out from the Illustrated London News 2 or one of the numerous Irish lithographs of him produced by Irish artists like J.P. Haverty.

The symbolic apotheosis of O'Connell as a monumental leader of the Irish nation was finally achieved after his death, with the erection of the statue of him in the Dublin street which now bears his name (ill 254). The scheme for the monument was launched by the Freeman's Journal in 1862, and the extent of public enthusiasm for the projected monument was confirmed by the massive demonstrations attending the laying of its foundation-stone in 1864. 3 However two competitions failed to produce a design acceptable to the O'Connell Monument Committee - "pretty peagreen quoins", "nice pink pillars and blue lamps", a Chinese pagoda with Gothic windows or the

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1. Kohl, op cit, quoted in O'Muirithe, op cit, p.91.
2. The front page of The Nation, the weekly paper run by O'Connell's supporters, the Young Irelanders, carried on 26 August 1843 an advertisement by the Illustrated London News of its illustrations including that of the monster meeting at Tara (ill 125).
depiction of O'Connell either "under a Gothic canopy apparently in
the act of making love to a young lady", or seated on a stove,
although all charming ideas clearly lacked the requisite seriousness.¹ It was decided therefore to commission John Foley to under-
take the work.

Despite Foley's Dublin origins, and his provision for the
city of a number of fine statues to such eminent Irishmen as Burke,
Goldsmith and Grattan² there was an outcry at the employment of "a
London artist." However when his design was put on public display
it met with unanimous approval. An attack of pleurisy contracted
while working on the Albert Memorial slowed down Foley's work and
he died before completing the monument. His assistant Thomas Brock
carried out the remainder of the work, chiefly the four Victory
figures round the base, and the whole monument was finally finished
in 1883. It is a suitably imposing construction and admirably sited,
but despite the figure of Erin trampling her fetters underfoot,
holding the Act of Emancipation in one hand while with the other she
points upwards to the Liberator, as figures emblematic of different
walks of Irish life gather round, the style employed is resolutely
British. And although it occasioned a somewhat premature commemo-
rative medal, the supposed admiration of fictional Irish patriots,
and two massive demonstrations in which contingents from Northern
Ireland participated,³ this statue appears to have retained little
significance for later generations of nationalists and republicans,

1. Homan Potterton, The O'Connell Monument, Gifford and Craven,
   Ballycotton, 1973, p.3.
2. Potterton, Irish Church Monuments, p.46.
3. William Woodhouse represented the projected monument on a medal
   issued to mark O'Connell's birth centenary in 1875 (National
   Museum, RIA 129). In Patrick Colum's historical novel The Flying
   Swans, the characters Ulick and Duineen admire the monu-
   ment on a visit to Dublin (Allen Figgis, Dublin, 1969, p.373
   ff). On the demonstrations in 1864 and 1882 see Potterton, op
   cit, p.2 and p.10, Tony Gray, The Orange Order, Bodley Head,
particularly in Ulster.

Far more influential for their sense of identity have been the images of suffering heroes produced during this period by the painter and print-maker J.P. Haverty, and the sculptor John Hogan. As we have already seen, Haverty was an artist strongly sympathetic to the ideals of the Young Ireland movement, and a painter of scenes which helped to crystallize in Irish nationalist thinking the association of Celtic remains, wild, untamed landscape and the courageous practice of a persecuted Catholic religion. But perhaps the most influential of all his works has been The Limerick Piper (ill 255).

This picture was immensely popular with Irish nationalists from its earliest appearance. When it was first shown at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1845 it was described by The Nation as "one of the sweetest and simplest, and by far the most Irish picture in the exhibition." It constantly reappeared at exhibitions of Irish art, such as those in Dublin in 1853 and 1861 and at the Guildhall in London in 1904. The Art Union print of it was disseminated the length and breadth of Ireland. And in its two versions the painting was at various times in the possession of leaders of Irish political culture, whether the Gore-Booths at Lissadell, or the Young Irelander William Smith O'Brien, who eventually gave his version to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1864.

The runaway success of this work appears to derive from its very availability, and the combined appeal of its theme and artistic treatment. The painting's subject was a real figure, the blind piper Padraig O'Briain, who played at the Crescent near Hartstronge Street

2. 31 May 1845, p.138.
255. J.P. Haverty/The Blind Piper/1864/oil on canvas/30 x 23 1/4 ins (76 x 59 cms)/National Gallery of Ireland/Photo: NGI
in Limerick every day. Haverty, who spent much of his career in the city, must have observed him there, but chose instead to depict him in a melancholy, autumnal country setting, accompanied by his daughter, a masterly appeal to sentiment. Nationalist viewers of the picture would also have been aware of the traditional role of Irish musicians as celebrators of native heroism. The use of Irish harps in this way and their subsequent appeal as nostalgic images of Ireland’s lost freedom, have already been discussed. The Irish or uillean pipes being played in this picture are also a distinctive national instrument, with political meaning attached to them. First developed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, they, like the Irish harp, became a subject of interest for antiquarians from the 1790s onwards. This was also the period of their popular hey-day. Nearly all the pipers of this period were, like the figure in this painting, blind. While the trade of itinerant musician provided employment for numerous blind men throughout Europe during this period, the almost total association between Irish music and blindness in pre-Famine days imbued a figure like this with a combination of national solemnity and melancholy and, possibly, the kind of irrational depths of emotion we associate with the phrase "love is blind". Indeed many nationally-minded artists, such as Thomas Bridgford, Sir Frederick Burton and Henry O’Neill chose to depict Irish pipers at this time, but it was Haverty’s work which became the national icon of this kind, probably

4. Irish Piper, ca 1843, in the National Gallery of Ireland.
5. Paddy Conneely, ca 1840, also in the National Gallery of Ireland, shown in Irish Art of the 19th Century, p.22, no 18.
6. Lithograph of Gandsey, the Kerry minstrel, which won a Royal Irish Art Union prize in 1842 (Strickland, op cit, entry on O’Neill).
due largely to its sentimental nature and its widespread distribution as an Art Union print.

A somewhat different image of the heroic victim was provided for Irish nationalists during the mid-nineteenth century by John Hogan, a sculptor much favoured by the Young Ireland movement. Not only did Hogan make some extremely influential images of Erin.¹ He was also responsible for numerous figures of the dead Christ, which were frequently shown in nineteenth century Irish exhibitions,² and eventually made their way into a number of Dublin and Cork churches. They, together with less exalted images of the same kind, such as the entombed Christ in St Malachy's church in Belfast, and the Sacred Heart prints which became so popular in Irish Catholic homes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (ill 82), may well have encouraged the ideas of blood-sacrifice which came so much to the fore in the thinking of republican leaders prior to the 1916 rising. And Hogan's Transfiguration (ill 58), which was, until at least the 1920s, in Patrick Pearse's local church in Westland Row in Dublin,³ looks like a very probable model for one of the posters commemorating that rising (ill 56). Memories of religious imagery seem also to lie behind the pose of the Cuchulain figure by Oliver Sheppard (ill 256) which stands in the Dublin GPO, and for many remains the most memorable monument to the rebels who fought and died there in 1916. In reality however, this statue was made at least four years before the rising, apparently in an atmosphere of artistic high jinks rather than nationalist fervour. Seamus

¹. See above, p. 157.
². Such as those at Cork in 1852 and Dublin in 1853.
256. Oliver Sheppard/The Death of Cuchulain/ca 1911-12/bronze/approximately 72 ins (183 cms) high/The GPO, Dublin/Photo: Bord Failte
O'Brien, Sheppard's assistant, recalls that an Italian model from the School of Art posed for the figure, the artist James Sleator sat for the head, and that he himself provided the drapery, "the hide of a Russian goat that I coaxed from my sister Nellie, who wanted to make a floor rug out of it."¹

Yet this seeming frivolity conceals darker realities. It seems likely that Sheppard and his Cuchulain statue played a part in development of the cult of the blood sacrifice by Patrick Pearse, one of the leaders in 1916. Pearse's brother William was a sculptor who studied under Sheppard at the Metropolitan School of Art in the early years of the century. Given Sheppard's continuing influence on his pupil, William's closeness to his brother (he taught art in his school at St Enda's) and Pearse's interest in Celtic culture, the possibility that the political leader knew and was influenced by the sculptor's work appears fairly strong.² The influence may indeed have been reciprocal. Sheppard's Cuchulain is a very exact expression in visual terms of the role assigned to the Celtic hero in Pearse's private mythology.

Pearse's worship of and identification with Cuchulain is not merely a matter of posthumous speculation, as by AE in The Living Torch and Michael,³ but of documented reality. The story that he was so impressed by the Celtic hero's deeds that at the age of ten "he went down upon his knees and vowed to devote the rest of his life to the freeing of Ireland"⁴ sounds suspiciously like pious myth, but

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1. Irish Art 1900-50, p.84.
2. See ibid, pp.82-3.
the mural at the entrance of his school, showing the boy Cuchulain
taking arms from the Druid, is well documented, along with its
Irish motto "I care not if my life have only the span of a night
and day if my deeds be spoken of by the men of Ireland." ¹ As
Pearse's friend Stephen McKenna said,

"He hoped no less than to see Ireland teeming with
Cuchulains". ²

And these Cuchulains were to be Christ-like rebels, for Pearse
read the Ulster Cycle as an image of the Calvary story, in which the
Celtic hero's blood-sacrifice redeemed from its primal sin the king-
dom of Emain Macha. A month before the Rising he made his farewell
speech to his own proto-Cuchulains, the students of St Enda's, and
said:

"As it took the blood of the Son of God to redeem the world,
so it would take the blood of Irishmen to redeem Ireland.″ ³

Had he seen Sheppard's figure, in which the dead Cuchulain
droops as the dead Christ droops in Michelangelo's Deposition figu-
res redemption achieved? Had he already envisaged it as his own
memorial? His father as well as his brother was a monumental sculp-
tor, and they must have been aware of the religious significance of
Cuchulain's pose, so soon to be used in the memorials to the Irishmen
who fought in another cause during the Second World War. ⁴

Clearly the genesis of the Cuchulain figure is a subject deserv-
ing more detailed research than has been possible or appropriate in
this context. But whatever the true nature of its origins were, it

1. Desmond Ryan, "A Man called Pearse", in Collected Works of Pad-
raig Pearse, Dublin, 1924, p.157, quoted Thompson, op cit,
p.29.
p.17.
3. Pamphlet in National Library of Ireland, quoted Thompson, op cit
p.77.
4. The memorial to the First World War victims from Queen's Uni-
versity Belfast uses the Deposition theme. For evidence of
interest in Cuchulain in Ulster previous to 1916 see above,
pp. 499-500.
rapidly became a symbol of extreme importance, both for Irish republicans, and for others. It was used on the service medal for those who fought in 1916, reappeared on a commemorative coin issued by the Irish Republic in 1966,¹ and during the period of the present troubles in Northern Ireland has been re-used for the Derry memorial to members of the Provisional IRA. Even Northern loyalists have laid a claim to this figure in recent years, on account of Cuchulain's significance as an Ulster warrior. A photograph of the GPO sculpture hangs over the desk of Andy Tyrie, leader of the Ulster Defence Association.²

Cuchulain however was not the only Christ-like hero-victim who inspired the leaders of the 1916 Rising, and the artists linked with them. Robert Emmet, the memory of whose abortive rebellion was celebrated in the period between 1898 and 1903, was also an important identity-figure for them. Patrick Pearse turned increasingly to thinking of Emmet's heroic, apparently futile gesture, after he moved St Enda's School to the Hermitage at Rathfarnham, a house with Emmet associations. By 1914 he was talking of him as a Christ-figure who had redeemed Ireland from acquiescence in the Union by his sacrifice. And at the time of the 1916 rising:

"Emmet was clearly Pearse's inspiration. Emmet influenced the Proclamation; Emmet's picture stood at the head of Connolly's bed; and Pearse commented with satisfaction that 'Emmet's two hour insurrection is nothing to this'." ³

It seems also to have been the figure of Emmet which first

1. For a reproduction of the medal see Dr A.E.J. Went, Irish Coins and Medals, Eason, Dublin, 1978, ills 77 and 78 and for the coin, ibid, illustration inside front cover.
attracted the painter Jack Yeats to an interest in the republican cause, for two watercolours referring to the commemoration of Emmet in the centenary celebrations of the 1798 rebellion are the earliest references to Irish politics in the painter's work.¹

Yeats was to leave no further images of Irish historical heroes whether past or present, but a number of works by him did endorse the heroic, sacrificial theme, in an indirect yet influential fashion. His early drawings and prints of peasants of the West of Ireland, with their emphasis on a fierce, feckless, independent existence, provided an enormously powerful summary of Irish rebelliousness and nonconformity, widely disseminated through frequently republished book illustrations and prints (ill 257). His late paintings took up the same theme in a slightly different fashion. Totally unable to accept the political compromise of 1921, he retreated into a highly personal individual world, his own "real Ireland", in which private heroes moved through idyllic dream-like landscapes, painted with flying impasto and soaring colour.² And in one particular series of pictures on the theme of the rose, he seems to have merged private and public meanings in a celebration of heroic failure.

The rose was a symbol of blood-sacrifice and of life rising from death much favoured by the leaders of 1916,³ and indeed by the painter's brother, the poet W.B. Yeats.⁴ It appears to have been used by the artist with this meaning in his early painting

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¹. A watercolour of a figure dressed as Emmet taking part in the Sligo celebrations of the 1798 rebellion is reproduced in the Jack B. Yeats centenary exhibition catalogue, p.29 and another dating from approximately 1900 and showing an old cottage interior with a print of Emmet over the hearth is illustrated in Crookshank and Glin, The Painters of Ireland, p.284.
³. See above, pp. 170-171.
⁴. See de Breffny et al., op cit, pp.200-201.
commemorating the tragic deaths at Bachelor's Walk in 1913. Now he employed it with a more personal significance, in works like This Grand Conversation was under the Rose, (ill 258).

"According to James White, he painted this picture after an Arts Club dinner where his colleagues had presented his wife with a paper rose, and had indicated by their eulogies of his work that they did not understand it at all. He returned home determined to paint from then on for himself and himself alone. Thus the painting shows the clown (the artist) and the haute ecole rider (his inspiration) meeting outside the ring after the act. Their private life is outside the audience's experience, and they only meet secretly, sub rosa, under the rose fastened to the haute ecole rider's whip. In this way, Yeats shows that the true meaning of the painting is the artist's secret." 2

Yeats' reputation as a major artist was not achieved until the post-war years however, when visitors flocked to the loan exhibition of his work in Dublin in 1945, 3 and collectors paid increasing sums for his paintings. 4 And meanwhile more mundane records of those who fought in 1916, and laboured to institute Ireland as a free and independent state, were distinctly lacking, as the compilers of the 1966 exhibition celebrating the Easter Rising repeatedly lamented. 5 William Orpen was one of the leading portrait-painters of his age, and his obsession with self-portraits and the ugliness of his own appearance seems to have involved an element of that ethnic self-questioning to be found in James Barry's works. But Orpen saw his career lying in England. This, not Irish rejection of his political suitability, must have lain behind the lack of portraits by him of Irish leaders of the post-1916 period. For John Lavery, who like Orpen had made his career in England, and worked as an official artist for the British during the First World War, painted numerous

1. See above, p. 170.
3. 1,500 daily (Irish Art 1900-50, p.16).
4. "Jack Yeats began to achieve great importance as a painter, and his pictures were sold for large sums of money, sometimes running into thousands of pounds" (Beatrice Glenavy, 'Today we will only gossip, Constable, 1964, p.182).
258. Jack B. Yeats/This Grand Conversation was under the Rose/ 1943/oil on canvas/14 x 21 ins (35.5 x 53.3 cms)/Private collection
portraits of this kind in the early 1920s. Roused from his usual political lethargy by the actions of the Black and Tans, and urged on by his politically ambitious wife, Lavery painted nearly all those involved in the Irish Treaty negotiations, in the hopes that his studio might provide a neutral meeting-ground for them. Most of these works, which he later presented to the then Belfast Museum and Art Gallery and the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin, are pedestrian but one, the picture of the republican leader Michael Collins in his coffin, titled *Love of Ireland*, was painted with strong emotion, for Collins had become a close friend of the Laverys, and the picture has become another icon of heroic self-sacrifice for Ireland.¹

Meanwhile in Ulster a very different image of leadership had been created, the image of Edward Carson as an over life-size orator, rousing crowds to a fever-pitch of political fervour (ill 259). It was not without parallel in the South, where Joe Cashman's memorable photograph of the trade union leader James Larkin has something of the same scale and crowd-holding drama of gesture, but the political role played by Carson, the style of the sculptor commissioned to make his statue, and its status as an open-air, public monument in an exceedingly grandiose setting, has given it a particular role in the ideology of loyalist Ulstermen.

Carson, as we have seen, deliberately fostered his image as an over life-size leader, addressing jingoistic, flag-waving crowds.² The sculptor chosen to commemorate him was well accustomed to conveying this kind of message. A London man called L.S. Merrifield, he

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² See above, pp. 298–9.
259. L.S. Merrifield/Sir Edward Carson/1933/Bronze/
overall height approximately 300 ins (762.1 cms)/
Stormont, Belfast
was chosen for the task chiefly on the strength of his war-memorials at Lurgan and Comber, of which the one at Lurgan is exceedingly aggressive. And the setting in which the statue was placed helped to endorse its basic theme. Commissioned in 1926, it was erected in 1933 and unveiled by its subject,¹ in front of the monumental parliament buildings constructed for the new Northern Ireland statelet established in 1921. Paid for by the British government and costing over a million and a quarter pounds,² these are a vast edifice in what can only be described as totalitarian neo-classicism. The style was commonplace throughout Western Europe at the time, being equally favoured in fascist Germany, communist Russia and inter-war England.³ But it fused here with the same kind of leadership image as that previously conveyed by the Cooke statue, identifying a public monument with a political status quo in a particularly potent fashion.⁴

Carson's statue was however the last major identity-figure produced by artists for Ulster's Protestant community prior to the present troubles. In contrast a number of artists continued to make variations on the theme of heroic rebellion and failure favoured by the Catholic community. Sean Keating, a pupil and then an assistant of Orpen, used the bravura oil-painting technique learnt from his mentor to make a number of paintings early in his career which showed republican guerilla fighters in heroic groups, clutching their weapons, eager for battle, sometimes with the tricolour draped beside them.⁵ These works seem to have had a measure of political influence.

Rev M. Dewar 1966
1. /Junior Orangeman's Catechism/, Question 54.
3. Walthamstow Town Hall on the outskirts of London is a striking example.
4. Information on the Carson supplied by David Hogg of the Central Secretariat at Stormont.
5. Irish Art 1900-50, pp.41-2.
Men of the South was in the collection formed for the presidential residence in 1942 by Douglas Hyde. And Keating himself achieved prestige and status as an Irish artist. He taught at the Metropolitan School in Dublin, represented Ireland in exhibitions abroad, and was President of the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1948 to 1962.

The Northern painter Gerard Dillon achieved little fame or success during his lifetime. He was indeed an immensely prolific and experimental artist whose work was very uneven. But amongst all the variety three kinds of imagery stand out as of major importance to Irish Catholic traditions: these were the adaptations from Irish High Crosses, the working class interiors, and the late scenes of clowns and death (ill 260). In the High Cross pictures he showed how the apparently simple gestures of their carvings could be used to thread together widely different aspects of human behaviour with a witty sense of ambiguity;1 in the working-class interiors he celebrated the crowded richness of everyday life; and in the images of clowns and death, he reworked the theme of heroic failure with allusions to Yeats and Picasso and Chagall, but also to the bleakness of his own life, dying of the illness which had already caused the death of his three brothers. These same ways of handling social and political realities were to be used by many younger artists from Northern Ireland's Catholic community when they tried to picture the impact of conflict on the small world in which they lived.

For it is evident that the artists working in Ulster since 1968 have received from local fine art traditions modes of political imagery which differ very little from those offered by the traditions of

260. Gerard Dillon/The Brothers/1966/oil on panel/
48 x 36 ins (122 x 91.5 cms)/ present
location unknown
popular symbolism examined in Chapters 2-5. In the Protestant community history paintings and portraits of prominent figures have tended to offer, like the images associated with William III and the Orange Order, a mode of vision which is stiff, crafted, unarty, minimal, focussed on timelessness rather than historical events, and on British rather than local history, little concerned with private human relationships, involved with a religion of public witness, and celebrating such legitimate leaders of society as royalty, representatives of royalty, soldiers, businessmen and ministers of religion. In contrast in the Catholic community, these genres of political art have tended to emphasise, like the images associated with Mother Ireland and the traditions of Irish nationalism and republicanism, a view of history which is painterly, romantic, arty, complex, figurative, focussed on events in Irish rather than British history, much concerned with private relationships, involved with a religion of personal devotion and celebrating suffering, heroic failures, such as artists, musicians, peasants and clowns.

The closeness of "popular" and "fine art" traditions of political imagery in Ulster is therefore abundantly evident. But in order to have some idea of their functional weight in the more general cultural history of the province it is necessary to attempt now to set them in a wider context and to see how they have been reinforced or eroded by art institutions in the province.

Art institutions

The traditions of history-painting and hero-figures available to artists confronted with the present conflict in Northern Ireland must not be over-emphasised. They existed, but, as Cyril Barrett
has rightly emphasised, they have only formed only an exceedingly small part of the output of Irish artists which, from the late eighteenth century onwards, has consisted overwhelmingly of depictions of the Irish landscape.

Moreover the artistic context within which Irish artists have made their decisions in the handling of the Northern Ireland conflict does not consist solely of a heritage of local artwork. Also crucial are the institutions in which these artists find endorsement of their participation in a culturally-manifest political identity. Patronage, art education, art exhibitions, permanent collections of artworks, jobs in the artworld - all these at the time of the outbreak of the Northern Ireland conflict were, both through their current functioning and their past history, structures suggesting to Irish artists where they belonged.

It is necessary therefore to give a brief overview of the distinctive development of such structures in Northern Ireland, with some consideration of their location within a wider British and Irish context. This will be seen to confirm the existence of two distinctive trends in the art history of Northern Ireland already suggested in this and earlier chapters. These are the general tendency of Irish Catholics and nationalists to lay claim to artists in a way not paralleled by either Ulster Protestants or the British, and the more specific opposition to the development of the fine arts by Belfast's predominantly Protestant manufacturers and businessmen from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. An exceedingly important aspect of these linked trends was that while Irish Catholics and nationalists constantly assimilated local art to wider traditions in Europe and

1. In his "Irish Nationalism and Art 1800-1921".
America, their counterparts in Ulster's Protestant community frequently ignored or rejected such traditions.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century the development of art-institutions in the north of Ireland was in no way greatly different from what happened in other provincial areas of Ireland, mainland Britain or indeed America. The lack of commissions for anything but portraits, the intervention of foreigners or itinerant artists, the need to fall back on other work such as acting or sign-painting, the rarity of aristocratic collectors owning works of merit from the main European traditions, the almost total absence of teachers of art—such handicaps to the development of local artistic traditions were as commonplace at this time in Cornwall or Pennsylvania or Cork or Scotland or Wales, as they were in Ulster.¹

It was in the nineteenth century that art institutions in Ulster began to differ in important respects from those in similar provincial areas. In part this was clearly due to the province's location within the political structure of Ireland. Dublin was the capital of the country, and despite the act of Union in 1800 it continued to receive from the British government, as well as local nationalists, the artistic endowments appropriate to such status. It was in the streets of Dublin that public monuments to English and Irish figures were erected;² it was in Dublin that the Royal Dublin Society, the Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Hibernian Academy provided the Irish artworld respectively with art-education, learned

². See above, pp. 65-67 and pp. 742-748.
research on the country's history and monuments and a major exhibiting society. And it was in Dublin that local moves to establish the National Museum, the National College of Art and the National Gallery were approved and given financial support by the British government in 1864.¹ Not all of these developments had a great impact on the development of cultural identities in Ireland. As we have seen the National Museum has served as little more than a dusty repository for a sometimes strange selection of objects from Ireland's past, and the deplorable state of the National College of Art until recent years rendered it singularly unattractive to would-be Irish artists. The establishment of the National Gallery of Ireland was crucial however. Generously endowed by both government and private funds and gifts from its earliest days, controlled by an admirably-constituted board of governors, including practising artists, and served by a number of fine directors, this institution rapidly acquired superb collections, displayed in an elegant and spacious building in such a way that some of the best Irish art could be seen in the context of rich European traditions.

The situation in Belfast was very different. Not only was the city limited by its provincial statute to municipal rather than national commissions and art organisations; the individual and corporate meanness of its city fathers also ensured that the local development of those commissions and organisations lagged far behind

what was happening in other provincial cities in the rest of Ireland and mainland Britain. Whereas local politicians and industrialists were honoured with statues in Bradford from the 1850s onwards,1 painters of industrial scenes were patronised by local aristocracy and manufacturers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sheffield in the mid-nineteenth century2 and notable collections of Pre-Raphaelite works were formed by businessmen in Britain's industrial midlands, Belfast had its three solitary statues of local figures in the nineteenth century, and only one collector of any note, Francis McCracken, an early patron of the Pre-Raphaelites.3

The divergence between the support given to art institutions by industrialists and businessmen in Belfast, and by their contemporaries in other provincial cities in England and Ireland was even more striking. In Liverpool the 1870s witnessed the donation of an art gallery to the city by Walker's the brewers, and the establishment by the Corporation of a Fine Arts Committee which sponsored a large annual Autumn exhibition, and bought works for a permanent collection.4 In Cork the Municipal School of Art was established in 1850, supported by the city's ratepayers from the mid-1850s, and provided in 1884 by Mr W.H. Crawford with a fine extension including

2. At Newcastle William Bell Scott painted his mural of Iron and Coal for the Trevelyan family in 1861 (See Francis D. Klingender, Art and the Industrial Revolution, Paladin, 1968, p. 189 and ill 112), and at Sheffield there is a very interesting collection of artwork for and about the local steel industry produced between 1850 and 1875. (See 1850-1875, Art & Industry in Sheffield, Sheffield City Art Galleries, n.d.).
an art gallery. In Belfast however the city's school of art established in 1850, although in many ways successful, failed to persuade the Town Council to grant it rate support, and received little backing from local industrialists. It closed its doors in 1858, and although it was revived again in 1870, the first niggardly rate support was only forthcoming in 1891, and as late as the 1930s it remained the only College of Art in the British Isles which was treated as no more than a subordinate department of the College of Technology. Similarly it was only in 1890 that a municipal art gallery of any description was opened in Belfast. Originally installed, along with the Belfast Museum, in rooms in the public library, of which it was a sub-department, it was only given independent status in 1909, and a proper home in 1929. Moreover the new government of the Northern Ireland statelet instituted in 1921 appears to have removed from the museum massive funds to which it was entitled as the result of the financial settlement made at the time of partition. The details of this misappropriation are too complex to go into here, but it seems that the Ministry of

1. 1724-1969, Scoil Ealaine Chathardha Craford, historical booklet produced by the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork.
2. The Corporation grants between 1891 and 1901 ranged from £100 to £250 pa.
3. On the general establishment of government art schools in Britain see Quentin Bell, Schools of Design, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963. On the history of the Belfast School of Art see typescript in the library of the Belfast College of Technology; K. Jamison, Retrospective Exhibition of the Belfast Art College Association, 1849-1960 (commemorative booklet); Annual Reports of the Belfast School of Design, 1850-1854 and 1873; William Gray, Notes on the Educational Agencies for promoting Science and Art in Belfast during the past fifty years, Northern Whig, Belfast, 1904; Belfastiensis, "The Old Belfast Governmental School of Design", Belfast News Letter, 22 Jan 1907; Souvenir booklet issued at the opening of the Ulster College of Art and Design in 1910; Government of Northern Ireland /Report of the Committee on Industrial Art, Cmd 169, HMSO, Belfast, 1936; and Strickland, op cit, pp.652-4.
4. The controversy was widely reported in Belfast newspapers in the 1930s. See for example, "An Artless Confession", Irish News, 7 Feb 1930, p.4; "Irish News, 8 Feb 1930, p.5; "Northern Colwyn Award" Whig, 26 March 1935, p.7; and "Colwyn Committee Award", Belfast News Letter, 29 March 1935, p.9.
Finance concealed knowledge of the funds from the Museum, that as much as £100,000 may have been involved, and that the Ministry's refusal to allow the Museum access to a reasonable proportion of this sum helped to delay the building of the much-needed extension to the Museum for a further twenty years.¹

Not only were Belfast's city fathers slow to back local art-commissions and institutions, they also severely limited the kind of art made available through commissions and institutions. Godliness, loyalty, political belligerence and industrial achievement have remained the main messages of the city's public works of art;² until well into this century the chief function of the school of art was to service the local linen and printing industries; and the art gallery was to endure a long history of rejection of proposed purchases because they were supposedly too modern,³ or too indecent,⁴ or not sufficiently loyal to traditional Williamite iconography.⁵

Only very occasionally did a temporary exhibition bring to the Northern Ireland public the kind of foreign or modern works so lacking in the Art Gallery's permanent collections. In 1906 local art societies, with the assistance of the notable Anglo-Irish art collector Hugh Lane succeeded in bringing to Belfast a superb exhibition of works by English, American and French artists, ranging from

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² See above, pp. 738-741 and pp. 756-757, and Brett, op cit, passim.
³ It appears to have been for this reason that the purchase for the gallery by the Haverty Trustees of a fine Jack Yeats painting of a Dublin street, titled Morning in the City was rejected by the city councillors. The picture was given instead to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1941. See Hewitt, op cit, p.79.
⁴ In the 1930s Wilson Steer's Mother and Child, bought for the Museum by the Contemporary Art Society, offended various elderly ladies, including the wife of the Town Clerk, on account of its nudity, and the then curator somewhat cravenly persuaded a London dealer to exchange it for an inoffensive landscape (Hewitt, loc cit).
⁵ See above, p. 99.
Burne-Jones and Millet to Degas, Renoir and Vuillard. This was followed by Japanese prints in 1908, a further Lane Loan in 1913, and an interesting Contemporary Art Society show of English painters in the same year. But, apart from a Rodin exhibition in 1932-3, and a show in 1935 by the English Unit One group, which included John Armstrong, Paul Nash, Edward Wadsworth, Ben Nicholson, Edward Burra, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, no further opportunities for seeing foreign or modern works of quality were provided until the 1960s, when the newly-titled Ulster Museum began to acquire major pieces by modern European, English and American artists, and to import temporary exhibitions of their work.

(The local Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, established in 1943, and transformed in 1961 into the present Arts Council of Northern Ireland, concentrated on mounting shows by local artists). Ulster artists who have wished to see old master paintings, or foreign and modern works of any quality other than through reproductions, have had to travel outside the province.

The dearth of good temporary exhibitions in Northern Ireland in this century is not unusual for a provincial area - but its lack until very recently of a permanent collection showing anything more than a poor selection of local works is virtually unparalleled. So too is the extent to which its exhibiting societies and commercial galleries were dominated by local industrial interests. As Martyn


Anglesea has recently made clear,1 between the 1870s and the 1890s Ulster art societies were almost entirely composed of members of the local printing industries, and it was the printing firm of Marcus Ward which launched the best-known commercial gallery of this period, Rodman's, which flourished from the 1870s to the 1930s.2 Some feeling for the style of works it displayed can be gained from the following report on an exhibition there, in Nomad's Weekly, in 1912.

"There are two Edgar Bundy pictures of the Restoration period, 'The Warrant' and 'The Arrest', full of colour that immediately impresses the visitor. Then never, perhaps, has the Dutch School of painting of so great merit and of such high standard been available in types of life and still life of wonderful cleverness. Mr J.W. Carey has an excellent work in 'In 1850', and Hans Iten, another Belfast artist, has no less than three pictures, all showing big advances. Still another Belfastman is Arthur D. M'Cormick, R.I, whose 'In the Captain's Room' is a delight. Mildred Buller, A.R.W.S. is at her best in 'In the Lap of Luxury', and Briton Riviere's 'There are none so deaf as those who won't hear' - a snappy terrier barking at two indifferent collies - is quite equal to anything he has attempted so far.

There are several choice works by Yeend King, V.P. R.I., and W.P. Frith, R.A.; while 'Afternoon Tea' by Georges Croegaert, must have admirers from its daintiness and exactitude. Pictures of Venice and Cairo are particularly fine. In fact the entire exhibition of 211 works is a very notable advance even on the exceedingly high standard Mr Rodman has accustomed us to." 3

From the early years of this century Northern Ireland artists did begin to break away from the dominance of illustrative work naturally associated with the printing firms, and to group together to show paintings and sculptures aspiring to participation in international art trends.4 But most of the best of them from this period

1. In his The Royal Ulster Academy of Arts.
2. See Sam Leighton, "Reminiscences of Local Art", Northern Whig, Belfast, 12 Nov 1931, p. 11.
until the 1950s left the province, generally to study in Paris or London, and then to return to a base in Dublin, from where they would make frequent excursions to the West of Ireland, to France, and in the post-war years, Spain.

There were various reasons why they left. There was the lack of a good local art collection already alluded to, the stifling puritanism of Northern Ireland, most eloquently described in the autobiography of Paul Henry,¹ the awareness of exciting new developments in Paris, the appeal to artists from both the Protestant and the Catholic community of the West of Ireland scenery and peasants celebrated by members of the Celtic Revival, and above all the failure of Ulster to claim its artists after partition in the way that the new Southern state increasingly began to do.

The establishment of the Northern Ireland statelet did occasion a small measure of feeling that the province should assert the existence of a distinctive group of Ulster artists. From about 1919 there were moves to have the Belfast Art Society renamed the Ulster Academy, in line with already existing Royal Hibernian, Scottish, and Cambrian Academies.² Indeed a very forcible statement on this issue was made in 1928 when the painter T. Eyre Macklin claimed that

"Ulster people had a character peculiar to themselves, and their art was different in expression to that of other people. Now that Ulster was an independent province, with its own Government, it was essential that it should have its own academy by which it would build up its own tradition ... such as had been so commendably done by the Royal Academies in England, Scotland, Wales and the Irish Free State. It would give art a recognised status in Ulster, and would make it an integral part of its national life."³

2. Anglesea, op cit, p.4 and p.56.
3. Quoted ibid, p.72.
The Belfast Art Society duly changed its name in 1930 to the Ulster Academy, and in 1950 it received permission to add the prefix "Royal" to its title.¹ This latter move was linked to the mood of celebration and cultural reassertion surrounding the Festival of Britain in 1951. Other actions at this time, notably the commissioning of the John Luke mural for the City Hall² and the publication by CEMA of *The Arts in Ulster*³ with a chapter on local painting by John Hewitt, were evidence of some measure of institutional recognition of Ulster artists. But who exactly those artists were, and in what precisely their definition as "Ulster" lay, remained a matter for debate.⁴ And although certain Ulster artists, notably William Conor,⁵ found it possible to live and practise art in the province, and obtained widespread public recognition there within their lifetime, for many others recognition and a sense of belonging lay south of the Irish border. It has not been impossible for the Ulster artist to succeed in English art circles. William Scott and F.E. Mcwilliam, two emigrés from the province's Protestant community, have both done so. But, particularly in the post-war years, it has been easier for Northern Ireland painters and sculptors to exhibit and sell their works in the smaller, less hotly competitive artworld centred on Dublin.

It is important to stress that this was not the case immediately after partition. The meanness towards the arts of the newly-established Irish state in the 1920s and the 1930s was legendary, and is

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¹ Ibid, p.76 and p.111.  
² Above, pp. 712-713.  
³ Edited by Sam Hanna Bell, Nesca A. Robb & John Hewitt, and published by George Harrap.  
⁴ Anglesea, op cit, pp.82-4.  
⁵ See above, pp. 708-712.
chronicled for today's reader in the various reports by Thomas Bodkin, director of the National Gallery of Ireland from 1932-1935.¹ Moreover this period was also characterised by a narrow-minded nationalism which led to the removal from Dublin streets of various public monuments associated with former British rule, notably the statues of George I and Queen Victoria. And in terms of education and jobs Ulster artists from both communities have generally turned from the 1920s to the present day to the improving facilities in their own province, and in the English art-colleges, rather than to the ill-organised and under-financed system of art-education available south of the border.

Nevertheless from the 1940s onwards it was the southern state which offered the Ulster artists recognition. The newly-organised Irish Exhibition of Living Art and the revived Oireachtas show were open-entry exhibitions which from 1943 onwards challenged the cause of Irish modern art in a way no northern exhibition did until the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Open Painting exhibitions in the mid-1960s. Commercial galleries selling modern works like Victor Waddington, the Dawson and the Hendriks were opening in Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s and stayed open. They did not appear in Belfast until Nelson Bell launched his gallery in 1964, to be followed in 1969 by Tom Caldwell and then by others. Indeed selling modern Irish works remained very difficult in the north until the late 1960s.

According to a present employee of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, very few works sold from their long series of shows by local artists in the 1950s, and a number of artists have commented on the fact that when the Irish Exhibitions of Living Art were shown in

¹. See his *The Importance of Art to Ireland*, public lecture delivered at Trinity College, Dublin on 24 June 1935, and printed At the Sign of Three Candles, Dublin 1935, and his Report on the Arts in Ireland, Stationery Office, Dublin, 1949.
Belfast as well as Dublin in the 1960s, £2,000-£3,000 of paintings might be sold in the Southern capital, while in the North purchases rarely totalled more than £20-£30. Not surprisingly therefore Northern artists from both communities chose to exhibit frequently in the Republic from the 1940s onwards.¹

Not only could Northern Ireland artists show and sell their work more easily in Dublin during this period. They could also see their work further endorsed by acquisition for the sizeable collections built up since the 1950s by such state and industrial organisations as the Bank of Ireland, the P.J. Carroll tobacco company, Coras Iompair Eireann (the state transport body), Great Southern Hotels, Guinness Breweries, and the Irish Hospitals Trust. There was virtually no equivalent to this kind of patronage in Northern Ireland.

And finally Northern artists could see themselves claimed by art institutions and politicians in the Republic as representatives of Irish culture, and thereby accorded considerably higher status than was possible within the Ulster and British context, for all the endeavours of bodies like the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. As we have seen, Irish nationalist politicians from Edmund Burke to the leaders of 1916 were frequently involved with the arts, and aware of their potential in endorsing Ireland's claim to independent status. And despite the meanness of the Irish state towards the arts in its early years, its politicians were quick to deploy young and avant-garde Irish artists as its cultural champions in the international arena. From the 1930s such artists were employed to decorate pavilions in international fairs and to represent their country in

¹ See the summary biographies contributed by Theo Snoddy to Mike Catto, *Art in Ulster: 2*. 
international exhibitions. Such opportunities were also available during this period to Ulster artists in the British context; W.R. Gordon painted the decorative friezes for the Ulster Pavilion in the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, and Morris Harding (ironically of English extraction), assisted by Poppy Mollen and John Luke, was responsible for a 150ft frieze for the Ulster Government's pavilion at the Glasgow Empire Exhibition in 1938. But in the postwar period there was no equivalent to the spate of exhibitions of Irish artists sent abroad from the Republic, to which Northern Ireland artists were invited to contribute. Early in 1974 an established artist from Northern Ireland's Protestant community, who had lived and worked in the province all her life, and shown her work with equal success in England and the Republic, commented to me:

"My husband and I were included in a touring exhibition run by the Southern Arts Council some years ago, toured all over America and Canada and so on, and they were quite happy to claim us as Irish artists. Up here they made no protest at all. There was no protest when people like George Campbell and Dan O'Neill went off to Dublin. And if we were to say tonight we're going down to the boat, go off, never come back, they'd probably give us our fare and say cheerio you know. No claiming of artists here, none." 3

This claiming of artists by the Irish Republic reached its peak in the late 1960s, with the heightening of nationalist consciousness at the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 rising. Artists from Northern Ireland's Catholic community contributed paintings to the exhibition of modern works commemorating the Rising; in 1967 they and their Protestant counterparts saw the first of the periodic

1. Hewitt, Art in Ulster;1, p.113 and p.160.
2. Such as the Exhibition of Contemporary Irish Painting, toured in the United States and Canada in 1950, and Contemporary Irish Art, shown at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1953.
Rose festivals bring together exhibitions of Celtic artifacts, modern international art and modern Irish art in a fashion which emphasised the status of Irish cultural traditions and their location within a wider context; and in 1969 they were to witness Charles Haughey, then Minister of Finance, introducing a scheme whereby painters, sculptors, writers and composers working in Ireland were to be free of tax on all earnings from work of cultural merit.

Meanwhile developments in Northern Ireland were further eroding local artists' sense of being claimed by their native province. The numerous jobs created by a rapid expansion of art-education in the province were principally filled by Englishmen, together with a small number of artists from the Protestant community. And simultaneously the receipt of vastly increased grants by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Ulster Museum seem to have induced a feeling of vertigo, countered by a recourse to a process of professionalisation which involved calling in outside experts, whether to judge the Arts Council's painting competitions or to assess the financial needs of the Ulster Museum. Longstanding feelings of inferiority were reinforced in the artists of Protestant extraction while their Catholic counterparts, some of them already antagonised by what they believed to have been blatant discrimination against them during their studies at the then Belfast College

1. See the summary biographies provided by Theo Snoddy for Catto, op cit.
2. There is a very notable change in tone in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland annual reports in the mid-1960s. In the 1964-5 report the introduction conveys an exuberant sense of expanding possibilities, but by 1966-7 it was making a somewhat panicky insistence on the need to raise standards in order to make proper use of the increased grant. For the outside assessment of the Museum, see Government of Northern Ireland, Ministry of Finance, Museums in Northern Ireland, Report of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, Cmd. 488, HMSO, Belfast, Dec 1965.
felt their hopes of local employment and recognition seriously undermined.

It is impossible to typify the range of feelings about the political status of their work experienced by Northern Ireland artists in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the present troubles in the province. However some sense of their nature and complexity can be given by describing the relevant experiences and attitudes of two painters native to the province who in 1968 had reached the age of thirty. One, from the Catholic community, believed that he had been the object of discrimination both during his studies at the Belfast College of Art and subsequently. A major commission had been given to him by a Catholic church in Ulster - yet he rejected his Catholic upbringing. He had contributed a painting to the Dublin show in 1966 commemorating the 1916 rising - but he had been appalled by the subservience displayed at its opening to politicians and public figures who had nothing to do with the ideals of that rebellion. His counterpart from the Protestant community trained as an art-teacher and was bitterly resentful of the English dominance of the best art-teaching jobs in the province. He was deeply opposed to Catholicism and its influence in Ireland, yet he felt that the strongest roots of his own art were in the ambiguous, "natural", world of the country's Catholic pre-planter population, not the neat, mechanized geometry of his own forefathers, and he was strongly aware that 90% of his works were bought by members

1. Two artists from the Catholic community trained at the college in the early 1960s have given me long and detailed accounts of such incidents as examination submissions mislaid, or marked against the tutor's recommendation. Their contemporaries from the Protestant community assert however that such incidents were commonplace for many students and not the result of sectarian discrimination.
of the Catholic community. The tensions felt by these two artists in relation to their political and cultural identity were not untypical in Northern Ireland during this period, and they seem to have been heightened rather than lessened by the generally good relations between artists from the two communities in Ulster, and the growing cross-border co-operation between institutions like the Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic.

For it must be remembered that virtually all the cultural institutions outside the professional artworld in Ireland have reinforced rather than eroded the sense of separate Protestant and Catholic cultural identities. Artists in the province may train, exhibit, work and socialise in a manner which takes no account of political or religious divisions. But during their formative years at the very least, the vast majority of them will have attended different schools, learnt different kinds of art, studied different histories with different images of their cultural heritage, attended different churches and chapels with different forms of religious imagery, lived in homes with different pictures on the walls, seen different newspapers, and been involved in sporting and cultural groups employing different badges and emphasising different traditions. The extent to which local artworks relating to Northern Ireland's present conflict have been conditioned by this cultural dichotomy will become apparent in the two sections which follow.

1. See below, pp. 849-850.
2. It remains true that most Catholic schoolchildren in the province learn Irish history, often with well-illustrated textbooks produced in the Republic, while their Protestant counterparts learn British history. Recently I was visited by an intelligent and inquiring sixth-former from a prestigious Protestant school which educates Northern Ireland's leading businessmen and civil servants. This young man had no idea who Wolfe Tone was, and was unaware that the United Irishmen were largely composed of Ulster Presbyterians.
Catholic views?

In the two sections which follow, I shall be looking at images of the Northern Ireland conflict produced by artists from the province's two communities. I shall do so by focussing on four main turning-points in their production. These are the decision to depict the Northern Ireland conflict; the selection of actual subject-matter; the choice of imagery employed; and the option for a particular style of presentation. My aim will be to establish the effect on those decisions of the political and social situation of the artist, of local visual traditions, and of the international art conventions prevailing during the past thirteen years. In doing this I will not be seeking to present images of the troubles by Northern Ireland artists as schematic products of these forces, but rather as evolved works by individual creators, making conscious and unconscious choices, affected by these factors, among others. I shall be trying in fact to set these images within some of their most important, though by no means their only contexts, rather than leaving them as disembodied encounters between art and politics or art and violence.

To enumerate here the possible social and political positions open to artists from Northern Ireland's Catholic community between 1968 and 1981, or the international aesthetic conventions available to them during these years would be over-cumbersome. These possibilities, and the choices made from them during the past thirteen years by artists from Northern Ireland's Catholic community, will therefore be allowed to emerge from the discussion which follows.

The way in which images and styles have been made available by local visual traditions during this period is however a major theme
of this thesis. It is as well therefore to summarise here the symbols and stylistic characteristics which have been established as dominant in the traditional imagery of Northern Ireland's two communities. In Chapters 3 and 5, Mother Ireland figures, green symbolism of various kinds, harps and Celtic imagery were established as some of the main themes traditional in the visual imagery of the province's Catholics. The extent to which they have been employed by Northern Ireland artists making works relating to the present troubles was also discussed, and it became apparent that Mother Ireland figures and Celtic imagery have both had a strong impact on the troubles works of artists from the Catholic community. In the opening sections of this chapter the significant involvement of local artistic traditions with the political aspirations of Irish Catholics has been examined, and the theme of single, heroic, suffering figures, pitted against social and political conventions, has been seen to be closely linked with that involvement.

In addition it has become clear in the course of these various analyses that the traditional imagery of Northern Ireland Catholics has exhibited certain marked stylistic characteristics. It is ambiguous; shape-shifting; all-embracing; much concerned with art; strongly figurative; often related to the devotional imagery of the Roman Catholic Church; and private.

In Chapters 2 and 4 it has been established that images of William III and the symbolism of the Orange Order have played a major role in the popular imagery of the Province's Protestant community, although they have been themes usually avoided by that community's fine artists. In the opening sections of this chapter the general lack of fine art celebrations of the history and heroes of the
Protestant tradition has also been established. Where such cele-
brations have been made, they have tended to focus on British
rather than Ulster history, and on such legitimate leaders of
society as royalty, representatives of royalty, soldiers and minis-
ters of religion.

Stylistic characteristics peculiar to the visual imagery of the
Protestant community have also emerged from these discussions. Such
imagery is usually stiff, crafted, unarty, minimal, focussed on
timelessness rather than historical events, little concerned with
private human relationships, and involved with a religion of pub-
lic witness. It will be a major concern of the following two sec-
tions to establish whether these two sets of symbolic themes and
stylistic characteristics have influenced the troubles works of Nor-
thern Ireland artists.

One of the first one-man exhibitions in Northern Ireland of
works about the troubles by a professional artist was George Camp-
bell's show at Tom Caldwell's gallery in Belfast in the summer of
1973. Campbell came from a mixed background, but he settled in the
Irish Republic quite early in his career and his paintings were
strongly rooted in the visual traditions of the nationalist, Catho-
lic community. He was born in Arklow in Co Wicklow, and schooled
in Dublin, but spent all his school holidays and early working years
in Belfast. His family uneasily spanned Ireland's political and
religious divisions. His mother was from the South, and his father
from Armagh. In later life he talked of the tensions of this time
of:

"holidays spent in trying again and again to re-enter the
family circle, each of us with sets of speech symbols
developed along fairly dissimilar lines, different histo-
ries even...
Somewhere along the line I was trying to come to terms with two sets of ideas and a period of confusion set in." 1

These family tensions, and experience of Ireland's earlier troubles in the 1920s and 1930s, drove him away from the complexities of politics and religion into private emotions and the world of art.

"I still like frequent escapes into myself and away from the brou-ha-ha. And there was plenty of brou-ha-ha, to put it mildly, in those days - what with the recurrent troubles and unemployment, groups running, shouting, throwing, soldiers and guns - all bewildering to a small boy, or adult for that matter. I still fail to understand the political maze or religious bigotry.

As an artist I'll settle for the tiniest of little Willie's drawings or little Mary's first piano exercises, rather than all the political or religious strife in the world." 2

It was in fact violence which drove Campbell to take up painting, but not the violence associated with the Irish question.

"When war came, the blitz in Belfast and the resulting desolation, both in human and material terms, had a traumatic effect on me, and I found myself wanting to recall or perhaps exorcise scenes and emotions that had made such an impact on me. And so I began to make drawings - discovered that they were not too bad - and just went on from there. It was not a conscious decision, just a point when my life changed direction." 3

The same desire to exorcise the impact of violence drove Campbell to make paintings relating to the present troubles in Northern Ireland, but only after a lengthy pause. He held back because of


2. Ibid, p.27.

his old wariness of the unhappy complexities of Irish conflict, and because, like Edward Delaney, he believed that Irish history was cyclical and therefore his responses to the events of the late 1960s was simply a weary "here we go again." Eventually however the cumulative impact of the Northern violence drove him to make paintings of it. He had by this time been living in Dublin for many years but he had firsthand experience of what was going on in Ulster, as the result of visits to friends and relations there. Moreover the media imagery of the conflict made a very strong impression on him. He was deeply impressed by Clive Limpkin's photographic record of the early riots in Derry, in The Battle of Bogside, but it was to television pictures that he reacted with the greatest fury. He felt like going out into the backyard and shouting, and saw art as a means of coping with both the external violence and the violence within himself. As before he found himself strongly opposed to politicians. "An artist is not a thinking animal", he said to me, and the closest he came to a political observation was a declaration of support for the UWC strike. His response was almost entirely emotional.

When rendering these emotional responses to the Northern conflict into paint, Campbell intended to create something separate from his other work. He wanted to stop the aesthetic getting in between himself and what he was doing, and to look at the very visible violence of this period with a cold journalistic eye. He could not however escape his own artistic nature. For most of his career he had concentrated on two themes beloved of Irish artists of the

1. See above, p. 529.
Catholic tradition, landscape and music, dividing his time between
Southern Ireland and Spain. In all his work there was the sense of
drama, so characteristic of both those countries.

"It was immediately striking that he never painted
ordinary people or dull places. They did not catch
his eye. He had the reporter's sense for the vivid,
the unexpected and the intense."  

This sense of excitement was often conveyed in paintings of
sombre intensity, "dark with flashing lights, little climaxes that
emerge like fireworks in the night."  

This Spanish-Irish drama of theme and style came out very
strongly in Campbell's paintings of the Northern conflict. They
fell into three groups. The first group consisted of a number of
still lives. (Campbell later said "It was the pervading, horrific
still-life atmosphere, the almost night-marish quality of it all
that I had to comment on"). He painted the disturbing things he
had seen for himself in Belfast, burnt-out cars and buses, boarded-
up windows, and the black mark left on the pavement by an incendiary
bomb, which became for him a symbol of the negation of the situation.

In his next group of works, Campbell went on to depict figures
of soldiers and policemen. His aim was a certain coldness, a non-
dramatic non-aesthetic view, akin to journalism. Like many Irish-
men he felt that the English were a cold race, and he wanted these
men to look like robots or clockwork figures. It was an aim he
could not achieve. The soldiers are duly anonymous with their plas-
tic masks and shields, but they loom out of black and red murk with
all the portentous intensity of Campbell's habitual dark romanticism
(iii 261). And it is this same romanticism which is the keynote of
his last group of troubles paintings, a series of portraits of the

1. James White, foreword to a booklet on George Campbell by Eric
   Newton, n.d., p.5.
2. Newton, op cit, p.28.
261. George Campbell/Belfast riot scene/ca 1973/oil on board/30 x 37 ins (76.2 x 94 cms)/Students Union, Queen's University, Belfast/Photo Sean Watters
people involved in the troubles, bewildered old women, a tarred and feathered man depicted as a suffering Christ-figure, a small child with an old man's face.

Forty of these paintings were shown in Tom Caldwell's Belfast gallery in May 1973. Twenty-five of them sold, the last group of portraits proving particularly popular. But the purchasers were, according to Caldwell, mostly Campbell collectors or people who thought they should be buying this kind of work, and the general response, particularly amongst artists in the North, was one of suspicion. One young artist from the Catholic community for example, saw the works as "intensely contrived." Others described them as slick, and felt that Campbell was reaping healthy profits from the sufferings of others. (In fairness it should be pointed out that some of the proceeds from the exhibition went to the Irish Red Cross). To a certain extent this critical response was clearly rooted in resentment of the successful emigré artist, a resentment no doubt increased by Campbell's refusal to attend the opening of his show. In part too it may have derived from suspicion of picture-manufacture, given Campbell's well-known belief that painting was a job to be carried out every day on a nine-to-five basis. But in part it derived from an antipathy to Campbell's romanticism. And the net result of this general Northern antagonism to Campbell's paintings was to make it more difficult for subsequent artists to make and exhibit works on this theme.

Campbell's social and political position clearly had a crucial influence on his initial decision to deal with the Northern Ireland conflict in his work. He was both attracted to the theme and frightened, because although he lived at some distance from the violence, it touched on tensions and conflict in his family background which

1. See below, p.840.
still affected him. The decision once taken, his choice of sub-
ject-matter, imagery and style all appear to have been strongly
affected by his links with the visual traditions of Ireland's
Catholic community, and particularly with the paintings of Jack
Yeats. The overtness of his pictures, their concentration on
single figures or small groups of them looming out of the street
violence, his use of religious themes, his dark expressionist roman-
ticism, despite his desire for coldness, all show his involvement
with these traditions, an involvement which appears to have been
strengthened rather than moderated by his contact with the paint-
ing and music of Spain.

For Anne Davey-Orr, like George Campbell, making artworks about
the Northern troubles was a means of exorcising her own feelings about
violence. She was brought up in Northern Ireland and studied at the
Belfast College of Art, but then in 1962 obtained a scholarship to
Edinburgh Art College. There she was already starting to handle
violent themes before the conflict broke out in her native province.
In a one-woman show in Edinburgh in 1965 four sculptures were con-
cerned with the negro woman's situation in American society, the
inspiration for the works being some very explicit photographs of
the riots which were taking place at that time. During these years
away from Northern Ireland she also worked as a designer for Cullo-
den and The War Game, films made by Peter Watkins to emphasise the
horrific realities of war. Her work for him included making limbs
for battlefields.

Anne Davey-Orr's own contact with the Northern Ireland conflict
came in 1969. For the three previous years she had moved between
London and Belfast, writing art reviews for the Guardian and working

1. The following discussion of Anne Davey-Orr's work is largely
based on a conversation with her on 15 April 1981.
on arts programmes for the BBC. Now she found herself for a brief period editing BBC news in Belfast. Like many people in Northern Ireland at that time, she was totally unprepared to the scale and bitterness of the violence erupting round her, and the shock of what was happening was heightened for her by the apparent coldness of the people handling the news as it came into the BBC.

It was only later however, when she was living in tranquil surroundings in Co Kilkenny in the early 1970s, that Anne Davey-Orr began to deal with the Northern conflict in her own work. In 1975 she put together an exhibition of sculptures and drawings on this theme, which she showed first in Kilkenny, as part of its summer Arts Week, and then at the Glencree Reconciliation Centre in the Wicklow Mountains. What she wanted to do with this show was to exorcise her own sense of futility when confronted by the Northern situation, and to recreate for the complacent southerners the shock of the outbreak of violence in 1969. In order to do this she felt that it was necessary to jettison aestheticism. Whereas in her Edinburgh show in 1965 each work was a complete statement, a precious object, in 1975 she intended that the sculptures be viewed together as a group statement, not as individual pieces in their own aesthetic right. She wanted their impact to be as unrelenting and undiluted as possible, and to this end deliberately executed artistic principles. One reviewer described the sculptures as:

"dark gleaming brown torsos squatting on their low plinths and making no concessions to any preconceived ideas of smooth or seal-like perfection. Textures are rough, to say the least; there are bloody paint streaks on the surfaces; limbs have been chopped off, often arbitrarily it seems. The overwhelming impression is one of bursting force as if the sculptor has worked at great speed to retain at all costs - at times even aesthetic ones - her original inspiration."
The figures frozen in mute agonies at floor level make one turn with relief to the drawings on the walls, but many of these are studies for the sculptures; the rest are of Belfast fires and funerals, mobs, and the aimless old people and children on their out-skirts, caught up and wandering from one street encounter to another." 1

Like George Campbell, Anne Davey-Orr also felt the need to deliberately confuse reality and unreality.

"I wanted to reiterate the unreal feeling which surrounds the Northern violence (happening in the midst of urbane normality) by painting the very realistic figures a hard gloss black (my own image of each incident portrayed) and to create a surreal feeling by using very realistic blood on the shiny unreal figures (suggesting the intractability of the situation)." 2

Furthermore she wished to convey the sense of oppression she felt existed in Northern Ireland, both for her personally, (she was one of the students at the College of Art who felt she had been the victim of sectarian discrimination in the early 1960s), and for the Catholic community as a whole. This was a theme she continued to explore in later paintings about suffocation.

The exhibition did shock many of those who saw it

"A few middle-aged women had to be carried weeping to the street. A group of men attacked me verbally for bringing such horrors to their city. Two men came in and emptied their pockets onto the reception table and told me to take what money there was if it would help. Others gave me the clenched fist salute. Some just walked in, gasped and walked out again. Several friends fell into long depressions on first seeing the exhibition." 3

But an element of aesthetic appreciation was also involved.

Although the sculptures were deliberately left to disintegrate, the drawings sold well. She did not, as critics claimed, make any profit from them, but she felt her purposes might have been better

3. Ibid.
achieved with a television film. More saw the 5–10 seconds cove-
rage of the exhibition on RTE television than visited its two
showings, though they were well attended.

As with George Campbell, Ann Davey-Orr's decision to produce
works relating to the Northern Ireland conflict was precipitated
by the strong dislocation in her life and work between extreme
closeness and extreme distance from the outbreak of violence. Like
him she chose to deal very overtly with what was going on in the
streets of Belfast and Derry. And like him she wanted to murder
aesthetics in order to do so. But with her stronger awareness of
political and cultural movements elsewhere, the imagery and style
of her work were less tied to the visual traditions of the commu-
nity from which she derived.

To understand T.P. Flanagan's paintings of the troubles knowl-
dge of his social and cultural background is essential. His
upbringing was that of an isolated country child reared by aunts
in Co Fermanagh and spending the summers with them in Co Sligo. His
loyalty is to the Irish countryside, in which he sees no border. His
community is the world of artists and writers, particularly those
like Basil Blackshaw and Seamus Heaney who share his concern with
landscape and a sense of place.

As a child art was presented to Flanagan as a natural pursuit.
One of his aunts had studied embroidery and design at the old Dub-
lin School of Art, and later ran a school which Lady Gore-Booth had
set up in Sligo to teach the local girls how to knit and crochet and
make lace. She encouraged her nephew to paint, giving him a box of
watercolours when he was only five or six. Lacking other distrac-
tions he readily followed her encouragement.
"There wasn't much in the way of amusement laid on when I was small and I had to make my own fun. Naturally I turned to drawing and painting for entertainment, and I was not made to feel that I was wasting my time. In fact I was encouraged and what I did was admired, so that by the time I got to school I had a bit of an edge on the other children and any child, particularly if he is not very aggressive or forward, will tend to make use of a skill that separates him from the rest. Soon I became known as the drawer in the class and would make sketches of cowboys and Indians for the others."  

Later on he learnt the art of watercolour painting from Kathleen Bridle, who taught him how to handle still-lives and landscapes, and introduced him to the ideas of significant form currently being proposed by Bloomsbury critics such as Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Torn between his love of literature and painting, a visit to the Ulster Museum tipped him in favour of the latter, and he went to the Belfast College of Art. In those years immediately following the war financial and intellectual constraints meant that study elsewhere was never even considered. He was happy enough with the teaching, enjoying the constant life-studies, and himself went on to a successful career in art-education in Northern Ireland. Since 1955 he has been at St Mary's College of Education in Belfast, the main teacher-training centre for Catholic girls, and he has been head of their art department since 1965.

Like many of his Protestant counterparts Flanagan was placed on the defensive by the troubles. He was endlessly annoyed by people asking him how the violence affected his work. He felt very strongly that anything of value he might paint concerning the subject would be after a lapse of years.

"My best work is always retrospective. If this wasn't so, there would be nothing to stop me going out and painting barbed wire, the helmed soldiers, the tear gas and the armoured cars. The only image that did appeal to me right from the start of the troubles is that made when a petrol
The bomb has been thrown at a wall. It explodes into smoke and fire, and then the next day there is a sort of after-image left on the wall, which is rather like a blown rose. I remember going down the Falls with its walls decorated in this way and having the sensation that I was going through a peculiar, macabre flower garden. Though I never used this image, it appealed to me.  

He also felt that the massive media coverage of the troubles made figurative painting of the violence redundant. Characteristically his own reactions came to be expressed in an oblique, almost negative fashion, using the filter of landscape painting. Flanagan has always been concerned with the patterns of the seasons. From 1969 the theme of ice and freezing began to dominate his work.

"In the summer of 1971, when I started to assemble paintings for an exhibition I found that the major theme emerging was preoccupied with ice. Since 1969 my drawings and paintings have been concerned with the elements of water, and with reeds trapped and embalmed in winter frosts. In retrospect it seems to me that these pictures were natural in a community which historically, has its recurring season of hate and prejudice. I realised why, at the time I had turned to the severity of ice for symbolism."

The theme was fully developed in a diptych titled Ulster Elegy. Ostensibly this was about the two Rooney brothers, two postmen known to Flanagan, who went to the assistance of a boat in trouble on Lough Erne, but were trapped when the ice broke under them. Though they were inches from the shore, where the wife of one of them stood, no one was able to save them. When their bodies were recovered the next morning they were stiffened into almost hieratic poses. They were simple people and Flanagan imagined the numbness of their freezing as a symbol of the numbness of their lives, with this perhaps the

1. Interview with Caroline Walsh.
most significant event in them. He could feel the despair of the wife so near yet so helpless during that long evening and night. Later on he reflected on the general numbness of Ulster lives, their frozen nature, the way in which the troubles have given them significance and adrenalin, and the helplessness of onlookers like himself. Comment on public events spiralled out from personal feelings. It may be significant that Flanagan’s earliest extant painting is of skaters out on a frozen lake in Fermanagh. Did the boy he was then unconsciously select that theme as an expression of the numbness and drama of an isolated childhood? Or was his return to this theme simply because it came readily to observers of the conflict in Ulster’s water-threaded cities and countryside?

Certainly the themes of ice and water have been used by a significant number of Ulster artists as a means of making oblique references to the conflict in the province. Thus many of the poster-poems commissioned by the Arts Council during the early 1970s are redolent of ice, flood, death and decay, despite a deliberate attempt to select totally divergent artists and poets. Padraic Fiacc’s poem, accompanied by a photo of a brooding fibreglass sculpture by Deborah Brown, talks of his upbringing in Belfast with the sea to east and west:

"... threatening with danger
and it
would always darken suddenly."

Frank Ormsby also uses water as a symbol of resurgent unrest.

"at high tide the sea is under the city, a natural subversive. the farset, forced underground, observes no curfew, and, sleepless in their beds, the sullen drains move under manholes.

blame fall on the builders, foolish men. the strained civility of city, sea, breaks
yearly, snapped by native rains,
leaving in low streets the sandbagged doors,
the furnished pavements."

Over his poem broods John Middleton's photo-montage of Belfast build-
ings, a heavy black line running below them, a dour blank grey sky
above, a truly bleak image of urban despair.

But it is Flanagan who has made most persistent use of such
imagery in handling the Ulster conflict. The combination of numb-
ess and drama was again the theme of his next major series of works
concerned with the troubles, which he commenced in 1975. For some
time he had been absorbed in making variations on Poussin's Echo and
Narcissus.1 Although a long-time student of European art-history,
ever since early encouragement by his aunts and youthful journeys to
Paris, he had only come to admire Poussin in middle age, at the same
time as he came to sense his own increasing maturity. At first his
interest in the painting was purely formal. In a series of drawings
he explored Poussin's ordering of composition and colour, which to
him seemed a crucial problem. Through these studies he was grappl-
ing with questions such as what do you select, how do you arrange it
and how do you impose your viewpoint. Then came the death of Judge
McBirney, with whom he had a slight acquaintance. He was gripped by
the television image of the body being carried out under a sheet,
the foot sticking out.

"He was fond of the food and drink and there were all
these odd lumps and bumps under the sheet." 2

He came to see the Poussin figure as identified with McBirney,
and McBirney as identified with other victims of the troubles. He
painted a large version of the Poussin figure, in full detail, then

1. The painting is in the Louvre Gallery in Paris.
laid semi-transparent white over the figure, gradually obliterating it (ill 262). (Somewhere in the back of his mind was childhood memory of being told that Turner would paint buildings in full detail, then blot them out with his atmospheric effects). Over the whole he placed a heavy sheet of glass like a glass lid to a coffin. Life and death had been wrapped up and sealed away, just as with the Rooney brothers below the ice. Numbness reigned again. Painting of live and dead roses wrapped in cellophane took up the same theme. With their associations of weddings, funerals and mystery - shades of Jack Yeats' Beneath the Rose\(^1\) - they suggested "a tentative tenderness - an object refocussed in its own hermetic environment."\(^2\)

More direct imagery has emerged in his work. In 1976 he did a series of stark landscapes crossed by strands of barbed wire, related to memories of seeing the wire in Belfast in the mornings

"when it would be lined with bits of burnt paper, and debris blown up in the light, and it looked like some strange, venomous laundry line." \(^3\)

But it is the tentative Victim and Rose paintings which to Flanagan seem to voice most truly his reactions to the troubles.

"what people have got to realise is that what an artist does is not obvious. He doesn't have to set out to be an illustrator of an event. When he appears to have no reaction to his environment or to what is going on around him, that, if you like, may be his form of reaction." \(^4\)

This oblique approach by Flanagan to the Northern Ireland violence does seem to be related to his social and political position

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1. See above, pp. 754-755.
3. Interview with Caroline Walsh.
4. Ibid.
262. T.P. Flanagan/Victim/ca 1975/oil on canvas/
31 x 54 ins (78.8 x 137.1 cms)
within the province. He feels himself to be simply Irish and can recognise no border; but he lives within Northern Ireland and he is a mature man with an established position in the province's artworld. For these reasons the direct, relatively simple approach to the violence of the more distant George Campbell or the younger, more mobile Anne Davey-Orr, would have been very difficult for him.

The subject-matter through which Flanagan approached the troubles can indeed be seen to derive from private rather than public concerns, from his personal sorrow about the deaths of people known to him from his isolated country childhood and from his aesthetic interest interest in the works of Poussin. Yet the imagery and styles he has employed in handling these themes and subjects, have very strong links with the visual traditions of the Catholic community in Ireland. His Victim figure is a contemporary variation on an image long popular in that tradition as a symbol of Irish suffering, and bears indeed a striking resemblance to the Celtic slave of Provisional Sinn Fein posters (ill 27), the dying Cuchulain in the Dublin GPO (ill 256) the dead Christs entombed in many Irish Catholic churches and the recent depictions of Republican prisoners in Provisional Sinn Fein posters, murals (ill 19) banners and newspaper advertisements. (Moreover in evolving this figure from a painting by Poussin Flanagan was turning to mainstream European culture in a way very familiar amongst artists of his community).

His roses are another kind of national victim image used alike by Jack Yeats and the leaders of 1916. And his filmy layers of paint in all these pictures are closely related to the evanescent evocations of the water-laden Irish landscape so much favoured by its native painters during this century.
A similar involvement with the traditions of visual imagery inherited by artists from Ireland's Catholic community can be seen in Brian Ferran's paintings relating to the Northern Ireland conflict, which have been discussed elsewhere, in the sections on Mother Ireland figures, Celtic imagery and depictions of Orange processions. To a large extent Ferran's career has led him away from localised traditions. His work with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, where he was rapidly appointed to be director of art and film, his interest in international art movements which has led to various study-trips in Italy and the United States, his residence in a relatively peaceful, middle-class area of Belfast—all these factors might well have been expected to draw him away from involvement with local visual traditions. Yet his approach in his paintings to the problems and conflict of Northern Ireland, has chiefly been through the theme of the hero so strongly embedded in Irish Catholic culture. Indeed even his Orangemen are handled through this distinctly non-Protestant perspective. And his works relating to the troubles have also made play with the Mother Ireland theme, with the Celtic imagery so important to him from his schooldays onwards, and with Thomas Robinson's painting of the Battle of Ballynahinch (ills 32&23). Many other forms of imagery have fed his conflict paintings as well. Children's paintings, the graffiti on Belfast walls, the impact of the news of a little girl's death—these have all been important. And the style in which his pictures have been painted draws heavily on the brightly-coloured, flat, satirical handling of pop art. But at the same time his combination of humour with violence is rooted in a very prevalent Northern attitude to the troubles, and his work often has a strong romanticism...
and a feeling for the mainstream European traditions of figure-
painting, which are very much part of the visual culture of Irish
Catholics.

Those artists from Northern Ireland's Catholic Ireland's Catholic community who have lived in closer contact with the conflict
have reacted in a number of different ways. Some, like Liam Andrews
and John Vallely have swung between immediate, political comment and
traditional themes. Andrews is a middle-aged artist living in Bally-
murphy, where he is strongly involved in community education, par-
ticularly the teaching of Irish. In the early 1970s he painted a
couple of crib backgrounds for Fr Desmond Wilson, a local Catholic
priest also deeply involved in community action. These made an
ironic contrast between the nativity scene and what was going on in
the area. The first, painted in 1972, showed soldiers in action; the
second, dating from the following year, depicted a number of local
people, most of them with their backs to the crib, the adults drink-
ing and the children fighting. Only an old couple and a young girl
with a babe in her arms appeared to be taking any interest in the
birth of Christ. In more recent years Andrews has turned to nostal-
gic memories, painting scenes of old Belfast, some of which were
reproduced on a calendar sold in aid of Ballymurphy's Irish-language
school in 1976.

John Vallely's work demonstrates the still-powerful appeal of
traditional nationalist imagery. The son of an Armagh teacher, he
was taught to paint by his father, and after attending local night
classes, studied at the Belfast and Edinburgh colleges of art. He
received a number of grants from the Arts Council of Northern Ire-
land, and travelled widely in France, Italy, Spain and North Africa

\[1\] The following discussion of John Vallely's work is largely based
on a conversation with him in the summer of 1976.
between 1964 and 1969. However artistic recognition did little to increase his fondness for the Northern Ireland establishment and travel reinforced rather than modified his loyalty to traditional nationalist subject-matter. In the mid-1960s he carried out a mural for the baptistery of Loughmacrory Roman Catholic Chapel in Co Tyrone, and in other paintings at this time he dealt with themes from Celtic mythology, and dock-scenes of Irish political prisoners like the Manchester Martyrs, painted with exaggerated spikes surrounding them. These were later followed by studies of Irish traditional musicians.

During the early years of the troubles Vallely was involved in street politics through his membership of People's Democracy. Following a scuffle between People's Democracy members and the police in Ardglass where PD was attempting to prevent the breaking of a cement-strike by Dutch suppliers, he was imprisoned briefly in 1970. The Arts Council ensured him a supply of materials, and he painted a number of prison interiors such as View from the Circle (ill 263). Despite its slightly nightmare atmosphere, reminiscent of the works of Piranesi with its enmeshing web of black and white paint, he insists that this and other works done in jail were nothing more than formal exercises. He similarly dismisses his few paintings of rioters as being little more than sketches. Apart from his heavily emotive illustrations to Fathers Faul & Murray's booklet on internment titled The Hooded Men (ill 264) he has indeed rejected political art, continuing instead his series of musician paintings (ill 265).

1. On People's Democracy see above, p. 559 ff.
263. John Vallely/View from the Circle/1971-2/oil on canvas/ 54\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 35\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins (138 x 91 cms)/ Arts Council of Northern Ireland
264. John Vallely/Illustration in Frs Denis Paul and Raymond Murray, The Hooded Men, Dungannon, Co Tyrone, July 1974/black and white/actual size
265. John Vallely/Trio/1973/oil on board/48 x 53\(\frac{1}{4}\) ins (122 x 135 cms)/Ulster Museum/Photo: UM
In some respects these are universal figures, part of international folk traditions of which Vallely became aware during his travels abroad, and painted in monumental compositions with heavy impasto. Yet equally they are very much embodiments of an important thread in Irish nationalist tradition. Vallely is steeped in the world of Irish music. A fine musician himself, he and his wife participate in competitions at fleadh cheoils, the three-day events of traditional Irish music, dancing and literature, and by their teaching and publications have helped to encourage a remarkable growth in interest in the country's traditional music amongst young people. He is clearly aware of the historical significance of such music. On the walls of his home, alongside a copy of the 1916 proclamation framed in Celtic interlace, are two versions of Haverty's Blind Piper (ill 255), a good oil copy, and the Royal Irish Art Union print.¹

The other Northern Ireland artists from a Catholic background who have been in direct contact with the violence of the past thirteen years have produced a body of work whose themes, styles and under-lying attitudes are remarkably coherent, and strongly rooted in the visual traditions of their community.

Joe McWilliams² grew up with a strong sense that he was politically, socially and artistically an underprivileged outsider as a result of his Catholic background. He comes from the New Lodge area of Belfast which he looks back on as a "desperate, deprived, depressing area."³ His school he remembers as a dumping-ground for

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¹ See above, pp. 748-750.
² The following discussion of Joe McWilliams' work is based on a number of conversations with him, most particularly one which took place in January 1974, and on the transcript of Liam Thompson's interview with him in August 1977.
³ Interview with Liam Thompson.
children whose parents couldn't afford to send them to grammar school. He claims he was the first pupil in about fifteen years to take art O-level, and the first in about twenty to apply to the Art College. But it was at the Belfast Art College that he felt himself most strongly to be the victim of discrimination. Certainly the treatment of his work by the art college that he has described to me and others appears to have been blatantly unfair. It would however be virtually impossible to establish the veracity of his claims at this distance in time, and it must be remembered those artists from the Protestant community who studied at the Art College during this period believe that virtually all the students were treated unfairly, and that if there was an element of discrimination involved, it was probably based on class rather than sectarian divisions. However these reversals and the suspicion that they were to do with his Catholic background meant that McWilliams left the college feeling he was an outsider to the art-establishment in Northern Ireland, and during the mid-1960s he publicly attacked the constant awarding of the major prizes in the Open Painting competitions of the 1960s to London gallery artists, questioned the Ulster Museum's choice of modern paintings, and continually opposed what he saw as the over-cerebral, craft-rejecting pretensions of international modern art.

McWilliams' own work during this period followed strongly traditional lines. Like so many Northern Ireland artists his chief obsession was with landscape, and specifically with landscape as a kind of lost paradise. Although he was/city child, from the time he was given his first box of paints by his father at the age of six he would paint the country, drawing on his mother's memories, and on
holidays in her home territory of Rostrevor and the Mourne Mountains.

"I remember one time, painting, now this was when I was about eight, a woman milking a cow. Now I'd never seen a woman milking a cow in life before, in fact I'd barely seen a cow at close quarters. But it was this feeling for the country and my mother talking about living on the farm." 1

Although he himself rejected Catholicism he also carried out a commission for a large-scale mural of the Stations of the Cross in the Catholic church of St Mary at Aghagallon, Co Antrim.

With the onset of the troubles all this kind of work came to seem meaningless to McWilliams.

"My work which up to this time derived its existence from an emotive feeling for the countryside, the changing lights of Irish landscape, the effect of sunlight on Irish lakes, now seemed at best irrelevant, at worst part of the frightful mythology that every now and again imprisons the Irish." 2

Political involvement was for him no solution. He had joined first the National Democratic Party and then the Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1960s, but had left the one because it was too nationalist and the other because it was too unionist. In 1966 he had a piece in the Dublin exhibition of modern art commemorating the 1916 rising, but found himself very depressed by the opening, where the Anglo-Irish gentry received far more attention than the founders of the Irish republic. The spirit of socialism asserted in 1916 seemed to have gone altogether. He went out on the early Civil Rights and Peoples Democracy marches, but ceased his support when he felt they were becoming too violent and republican.

So, after a confused period of about two years, McWilliams began painting immediate reactions to the violence going on around him. Often he worked on the spot, fascinated by the drama of the

1. Interview with Liam Thompson.
streets. Orangemen and soldiers processed through his works.\textsuperscript{1} The ugliest subjects were transformed by the awareness of colour and light native to his tradition. An army post seen at dusk was recorded as a vivid pattern of blue and green shadows and lights, before he was arrested for his suspicious activity. Barricade rubble was built into his pictures, in one case being formed into an ominous bird shape, threatening the small figures of his parents seen in a small glow of light as though on a distant summer's day.

Sometimes he used media imagery. Newspaper headlines were incorporated by him into a composition titled \textit{Internment Week}, contrasting their false reporting with jarring imagery of parades and conflict. The media image of the paramilitaries was merged with Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly image to give the metal-box-headed, dark glassed, masked behind a mask figure of \textit{God protect us from our protectors}.

However McWilliams' strongest painting from this period was based on photographs shown to him by a solicitor friend (ill 266).

"He slapped down a series of colour photographs. They were of the back view of a man and it was just a mass of bruises, and he said 'look at his backside', and his backside was raw, it was like raw meat. And he said 'That's the man, that you read about today in the paper when the RUC said 'He gave a voluntary statement.'" \textsuperscript{2}

McWilliams transposed the photograph into a painting, deliberately placing it on a green background with an orange frame and adding the bald title in letraset. It is an angry statement on the traditional and immediate problem of the Irish victim, in which the lush, colourful paintwork often found in the visual imagery of the Catholic community provides an ironic contrast to the subject-matter.

\textsuperscript{1} See above, pp. 376-377.
\textsuperscript{2} Interview with Liam Thompson.
266. Joe McWilliams/He gave a voluntary statement/
1972/gouache/5 x 9 ins (12.7 x 22.8 cms)/
Private collection/Photo: the artist
exhibition of troubles works in 1974, but otherwise the show was successful and sold well. However the artist himself was discontented. Lapsing into apathy about the troubles, and feeling that matters were improving, he reverted for a while to painting lyrical landscapes. Troubles themes soon re-emerged however. In 1977 and 1978 he was largely absorbed in making works employing the symbol of the rainbow, which seems to have become a personal emblem of hope for him during this period, influenced partly by the activities of the Peace People, partly by an acquaintance with Picasso's peace murals during a summer visit to the south of France,¹ and partly by the real-life frequency of rainbows in Ulster's watery, changeable climate. McWilliams' rainbow is often shown in the very gutters of Belfast's streets, in mixed media pieces which question the multiple layers of pictorial reality.² In the summer of 1977 this theme was applied specifically to the troubles, in a work made by McWilliams for display in the Free International University presentation at the documenta exhibition in Kassel (ill 267). This piece centred round the charred door of an Ardoyne community centre in which the artist had been working. Because the door had been repeatedly fire-bombed he saw it as a kind of phoenix image and placed it above a flight of rainbow steps. It was surrounded by a series of reflections on the ambiguous role of doors in the Northern Ireland conflict, ranging from places of refuge to security gates, bricked up doorways and the sites of sectarian assassinations.

In his rainbow pieces McWilliams was again bringing together

¹. These murals were painted by Picasso in 1952 when, outraged by the Korean War, he decided to convert the deconsecrated chapel at Vallauris into a temple of peace.
². See the picture illustrated in Catto, Art in Ulster : 1, p.86.
267. Joe McWilliams and the Community Door/ca 1977/Photo: Belfast Telegraph
beauty and violence. He was also linking up the country and the city. These concerns remained very prominent in his Lovers Lane series of paintings made from 1978 to 1980. In these, shadowy masked figures lurk in beautiful country lanes, painted with all the detailed attention to the dappling of light and shade on wet ferns and grasses which McWilliams had been developing in a long series of landscapes painted in the Glens of Antrim. Inset in the foliage are newspaper cuttings referring to the murders during this period of well-known and little-known victims, whose bodies were often dumped in settings such as these.

Joe McWilliams started to paint pictures relating to the Northern Ireland troubles because he felt he could not do otherwise, because the violence was all around him, and because, partly as the result of his artistic and political background, he felt the need to protest against the system, but rejected violence and indeed politics, as a means of doing so. The subjects he chose to paint, with their emphasis on figures engaged in street conflict, or in isolation as mock heroes or very real victims clearly have strong roots in the visual traditions of his community. And by painting with an emphasis on colour and beauty and violence, an awareness of leading figurative painters outside Ulster, and a concern with bringing things together, McWilliams also showed how closely his way of seeing was related to that tradition.

Like Joe McWilliams Sister Theresa O'Neill, a Roman Catholic nun from Derry who attended the Belfast College of Art in the mid-1970s, delighted in found images relating to the Northern Ireland conflict. Pieces of street debris, the layers of wallpaper revealed in bombed and burnt-out buildings, media images dealing with

1. The following discussion of Sister Theresa O'Neill's work is largely based on a conversation with her on 30 June 1975.
violence, all appeared in her works.

"It is strange, even magazines have taken on a new role. They are no longer glossy rubbish, but tangible material from which I can draw images for my ends. There is a wealth about these images that I love. I'm using other people's very best and this makes me treat them with respect." 1

Such photos she felt were inevitably of people involved in dramatic situations and this drew her imagination towards them. However Sister Theresa did not wish to simply reproduce this collage which she felt was already in existence all around her, but to develop it in her paintings. Her initial approach was to focus on small details with fascinated intensity, drawing out all their implications.

"You know I had never thought that I was really conscious of what was going on at all, and I remember this morning I was going down ... to College when I picked up the bus ticket, and I usually collect lots of little bits which come to hand anyway. And on the back of the bus ticket they put the Confidential Telephone 2 number. And I just found this really absurd, really extraordinary ... that a piece of bus ticket which will go through the hands of practically every person in Belfast at some stage or another had this incredible thing on it which was linking up an everyday event with a nasty situation and making you conscious of it. You know, on a bus ride you don't think of the trouble except when you see a bit of it outside and I wasn't at all conscious of it and it was the bus ticket which made me so. So I felt I had to use it in some way ... I suppose I was always hitting at something that I felt was so blatantly obvious to me and I wanted to make it as obvious to someone else." 3

However one viewer of her early works said to her that as a religious she should not be dealing with such bitty, fragmented imagery, but with wholeness instead, and she herself felt a need to bring such fragments together and make something coherent of them. In many of her paintings and drawings at this time, small

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2. On the Confidential Telephone see above, p. 623.
3. Ibid.
intimate depictions of people were lost and isolated in vast areas of white space, reflecting much of what she felt about society. Gradually however she attempted to bring them together. In the Drawing Board piece she made during her first and second years at Art College she placed these little drawings in a series of little compartments. With a piece of plastic placed over the work they looked like figures in doll’s house. They were still isolated but at least they had somewhere to be.

Then she began to make a whole series of paintings in which repeated figures, often clowns, appeared behind collaged wooden fences, sometimes in association with the bus ticket motif (ill 268). Every section of these works had for her a range of meanings. The fence referred simultaneously to funfair shooting ranges, innocent garden fences and the security barriers erected in Northern Ireland towns and cities during the present troubles. Its repetition emphasised the relentless procession of events in Ulster, the endless sequence of pressures on every member of its society. The clown behind it symbolised for her man with his lack of experience, constantly trying out new things, and making a fool of himself in his attempt to reach what he wants.

Gradually this figure came to take on religious connotations. First of all he appeared in a further picture in this series with a halo, which Sister Theresa felt everyone should have. But simultaneously she emphasised his pathos by painting the halo like a target. And finally she made a highly complex painting of a Crucifixion in a garden. In this a jack-in-the-box crucified figure spirals up from layers of green and brown. These symbolised to her a cross-section of human growth in which no layer-individual
268. Sister Theresa O'Neill/Clowns/ca 1975/
mixed media/30 x 113 ins (76.2 x 287 cms)/
Belfast College of Art/Photo: B. Loftus
was complete in itself, but each was related to its neighbours.
This figure is set in a beautiful fenced-in garden. Violence, beauty, failure, meet together in a work greatly influenced by study of Persian miniatures, with their love of gardens, feeling for natural surroundings, overall beauty and communication of meaning with every part.

Like Joe McWilliams, Sister Theresa felt she could not avoid painting the Northern Ireland conflict because it was all around her, and like him she made works which were strongly rooted in the visual traditions of her community. Her focussing on people isolated yet linked in the world of urban violence, her use of the clown-victim-Christ theme, her turning to traditions of figurative art, her feeling for the interrelation of beauty and violence, and her concern with bringing things together, were not simply what one might expect from somebody in a Roman Catholic religious order — they were choices conditioned by her involvement in a specific Irish Catholic tradition.

Involvement in these traditions has also been a feature of Martin Forker's works relating to the troubles. Forker, like Sister Theresa, had joined a Catholic religious order, and worked with them in the Republic for six years, caring for mentally-handicapped children. He left them however in August 1969 and returned to his home in the Ardoyne area of Belfast just before the outbreak of the present violence. From then onwards he found himself in the thick of conflict. During the riots of August 1969 he had to move his grandmother from her home, as Catholics and Protestants alike were burnt out of their houses in the Ardoyne and Falls, Shankill and Crumlin areas. His brother, who had joined the RUC, was injured

1. The following discussion of Martin Forker's work is largely based on a conversation with him on 11 April 1981.
in a shooting, in which one of his colleagues was killed. Forker himself was trapped in the Belfast College of Art when a bomb exploded beside it, and was thrown across the room in which he was working. And during the early part of his married life he lived in the strongly republican, bitterly troubled and badly delapidated Turf Lodge housing estate.

Yet for many years Martin Forker avoided making works relating to the troubles. This was partly because he found little to admire in existing attempts to deal with this theme, and partly a result of his slow development as an artist. It was only in 1975, during his last year at the Belfast College of Art that he finally began to develop what he felt to be his own artistic voice, and to handle troubles imagery in his work. His studio at this time was a room in a building in the Falls Road run as a hostel for homeless men by the Catholic charity of St Vincent de Paul. He began to paint strongly expressionist portraits of residents in the home and then of members of his own family, trying to show the impact on them of both the conflict in their city and the social deprivation of the areas in which they lived. These works were followed by a number of more ambitious paintings and drawings in which he combined real and symbolic detail to convey the nature of existence in troubled Ardoyne and Turf Lodge. In one painting his policeman-brother is seen in the midst of burning Ardoyne, being offered an umbrella for protection by/boy-clown reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin, observed by his grandmother wearing the shawl traditional to old women in Belfast, and three figures of death. In other paintings a boy holding a dove as a symbol of peace is seen in the concrete fortresses of the Turf Lodge flats, or walking by
starlight down the Ardoyne street in which Forker spent his childhood. And in a whole series of drawings he depicted, with expressionist bitterness, the plight of the women living in Turf Lodge.¹

Martin Forker came to make works like these relating to the troubles because, like so many young artists in his community, he found himself and his family in the midst of the conflict. And in choosing to use in them images of the heroic victim, referring to figures like Vincent Van Gogh or Rouault's clowns or Charlie Chaplin, and a vivid, highly coloured, expressionist mode of handling, he showed how strongly he was rooted in the visual traditions of Northern Ireland's Catholic community.

Very similar imagery and stylistic characteristics can be found in the work of Brendan Ellis. When the troubles began Ellis was still a young art student, absorbed in technical problems. But already his paintings were an exploration of the relationship between people and their environment. When undertaking a series of portraits of fellow-students he asked his sitters how they wanted to be painted and what objects or setting they would like associated with themselves. The same principle is to be found in his paintings of children from the same period which have pieces of car glass or dead leaves built into them.

His first painting related directly to the conflict was based on an incident he himself had witnessed in the area where he lived, adjacent to the Falls Road, round about August 1972.

"There was a shooting one day, four soldiers got shot at and there was a couple hit. They pulled round, there's an alleyway at the back and they pulled into it. They dressed the two men that were hurt and I saw them out of the window... They left all this sort of debris around afterwards and I went out and collected it. Still have

¹. See above, p. 113 and ill, 30.
it... souvenirs... cotton-wool, pain-killing tablet, bandages, blood-stained and that sort of thing. And I just kind of brought it in and make a sort of still-life out of it. That was the first time I'd tackled anything like that ... I think it was the experience sort of brought it ... home for some reason or another." 1

This absorption in local events, local environments, also comes across very strongly in the painting of an alleyway that he did soon afterwards.

"That one was about the entry behind there, the alleyway. It's round about where I live and there's been a couple of shootings and things like that; there was a body found in it once. And I wanted to say something about it in the painting. And at the same time it's a place where ... local couples and all hang about as well. I thought there was a curious sort of comparison, not so much a comparison but a very close ... there was violence of several different types going on ... The drunks hang about there and they're inclined to get really rough in it and a lot of bottles breaking and things like that there and people get slashed you know." 2

Gradually these direct representations of local violence became pervaded by an awareness of their universal significance, and by that element of make-believe which Ellis felt was shared by children and artists, with their ability to transform the odds and ends of urban life, making old pencils stand for cigarettes, clothes-peg for bullets. Thus a painting of dead plumbers was based on a real incident in which two plumbers were shot dead by soldiers who mistook the pipes in their hands for guns, but the pose which Brendan Ellis chose to use for them was based on a photograph of two dead men in the desert after the Six Days' War. This was both to avoid what he saw as the over-dramatisation and romanticism of most photographs of the Northern Ireland troubles, and to stress the universality of death. The position of the bodies was also

2. Ibid.
deliberately chosen for its ambiguity. The men might be working
or sleeping or dead. The only sign of tragedy was the bullet-
hole in the window.

Religious imagery also began to pervade Ellis's paintings of
the troubles at this time. Thus a tarring-and-feathering which he
had witnessed rapidly acquired the poses and symbolism of a Cru-
cifixion scene.

"It was very like a crucifixion ... a modern type of
 crucifixion ... I used myself as the ... figure
 crucified. I make a very literal representation of
tarring and feathering by putting a ... noticeboard
round his head with the word 'tout' on it, which is
usually what they did tarring and feathering for,
being unfaithful to their companions. The lamp-post
I like because you don't see many of them about now,
very rare ... but it's never a tree, always a lamp-
post. The guy with a ladder and the bucket at the
back, he made up a cross-like effect for me ... but
at the same time I thought him particularly valid for
a tarring and feathering ... in the crucifixion sense
in that you have to ... tie the guy onto the lamp-post,
and you have to get up above him to pour the tar over
him, so you really need a ladder and the guy who does
it. I think I was thinking more about the crucifixion
when I put him in. The pillow-case attached to the top
of the spar ... is just the feathers ... I didn't want
to destroy the figure by pouring a lot of black paint
over him and painting feathers on him ... I wanted the
suggestion. The children round the bottom were the
last thing to go in and they were very literal ...
that's exactly what I saw, the tarring and feathering
that I saw, the kids danced around it ... like a maypole
or anything like that, they ... danced around and jeered
at the guy, that sort of thing ... Again it's the com-
plete unreality of the thing ... I was thinking about the
crucifixion, I stuck him on the top of a hill ... The
hill lets everybody see. It's above you and you can see
it and you can't get away from it. The same way as I
suppose that the crucifixion symbolises that. You know
on the top of the hill, it's about as high as you can go
apart from flying." 1

Eventually Brendan Ellis destroyed this painting, using it as
the basis for a large polyptych of the Deposition, influenced by
Roger van der Weyden, in the possession of the College of Art in

By the end of 1972 the element of unreality was becoming very dominant in Ellis's paintings, notably in a series of pictures of injured men and women falling backwards into the sky. In part the floating, dreamy, upside-down nature of these works was due to the strong influence on the artist of the paintings of Chagall, in part to the growing unreality for him of the Northern Ireland violence. He found himself during this period exclaiming at the beauty of a burning building, or advancing down a street raked by bullets, until he was pulled to safety by a friend.

In reaction to this unreality Brendan Ellis painted in December 1972 a series of half a dozen harshly direct pictures of victims of the violence, sprawled in the squalor of Belfast's rubbish-filled alley-ways. Having brought himself down to earth in this fashion, he began to turn away from the incidents of violence to more complex consideration of the nature of the individuals who caused them, and of the society in which they took place. Again the new style paintings were strongly influenced by Ellis's considerable interest in European art traditions. He looked widely at earlier works dealing with conflict and violence. Goya he rejected as a reporter; Uccello's *Rout of San Romano* appealed to him because of its ambiguity; the popular paintings of the First World War he enjoyed for their heroics and their detail. But it was Max Beckmann's harsh, expressionist, complex pictures exploring the strangeness of life in inter-war Germany which had the strongest and most long-lasting influence on his work. From them he learnt how to construct more elaborate groups of apparently disparate figures and to show their interrelationships in a claustrophobic world of violence,
269. Brendan Ellis/Deposition/ca 1974/acrylic on canvas/71\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 48 ins (181 x 122 cms)/Belfast College of Art/Photo: B. Loftus
without losing his grip on everyday reality.

Thus in The Bus Queue (ill 270) the playing with reflections and the uncertainty whether the queue is in the shop-window or outside it, recalls Ellis's former fascination with unreality, but is grounded in direct observation. Objects are still highly ambiguous, but this is now strictly in accordance with the facts of the situation. The umbrella looks menacing, but then the furled umbrella, for long carried in Orange processions, had recently been sharpened and used as a weapon by the loyalist Tartan gangs. The parcel too looks dangerous, but with good reason, for are there not two tell-tale wires sneaking away from it? And the cross-section of society which includes a strange Mr Fate figure, summing up "the faceless men, the figure in the crowd that plants the bomb and does the shooting", is deliberately jammed into the framework of the shop window, "to show how crammed and close-knit ... folk are."¹ Violence is no longer seen as external, it is part of each and every member of society. Equally the artist is no longer cast in a falsely dramatic role in the play of violence. In this painting he appears in the guise of a blind saw-player sitting outside the window. The man is a real Belfast character, William Campbell, known as "Wee Willy Winkie", who played outside one of Belfast's big stores for forty years or so until his death in the late 1960s.² Ellis knew him well. He loved the sound of his playing and thought him "the happiest figure I've seen about this town for a long, long time." Campbell is also a symbolic representation of Ellis's own role as an observer of street level life. And he is one of the latest figures in the Irish Catholic tradition of images of the blind musician, who

¹. Ibid.
². See the photograph in the Belfast Telegraph, 12 January 1969, p.8.
270. Brendan Ellis/Bus Queue/1973/oil on canvas/
60 x 70 ins (152.5 x 177.8 cms)/Belfast College of Art/Photo: Sean Watters
sings the true story of his native land.

In 1975 Ellis went to the Royal College of Art in London for two years. The work that he produced during this period and subsequently continued to explore the wider ramifications of violence in Northern Ireland society but with new means. He began, like Beckmann, to use the traditional religious format of the triptych, in order to convey the progression of historical events, or the interrelationship between different individuals and groups, and increasingly he made line as well as colour the carrier of emotion. Thus the figures in the Good Samaritan triptych (ill 29), verge on caricature, but every line and hatching which goes to make them carries a charge of meaning. Clothing is twisted into tension, corrugated iron drums down its barrier, a battered carrier bag is angry evidence of a hand-to-mouth existence.

Brendan Ellis, like most of his fellow-artists in Northern Ireland's Catholic community, has been driven to paint the present conflict because it is all around him. Like most of them he has chosen to deal with the realities of street violence and to handle them in paintings drawing heavily on themes traditional to his community, notably the heroic victim set apart from society, whether the crucified Christ, or the blind musician. Like most of them too he has chosen to handle such imagery in an overt, emotive, figurative fashion, which is heavily influenced by the mainstream traditions of European art, and much concerned with drawing together the disparate elements of Northern Ireland's violent little world.

Ellis has had a distinct influence on succeeding generations of students in the Belfast College of Art. Many of his pictures have been retained in the College's collection, and he
taught there in 1977-8. Amongst those he taught, two in parti-
cular, Brian Sproule and his own brother Fergal, have shared his
interests and stylistic approach.¹ Both paint Belfast street
scenes with the same kind of directness. In Brian Sproule's case
the subjects are remarkably similar—assembled groups of street
types, lovers in alleys, dead bodies, rubbish. In Fergal Ellis's
case the similarity is more generalised, rooted in a strong interest
in German expressionism acquired from his brother.

These two artists are close friends, and saw themselves shar-
ing the role of belligerent outsiders during their time at the Col-
lege of Art, a role possibly encouraged by Brendan Ellis's own
obvious antipathy to some of the college teaching staff. Both felt
they were being dictated to too much by the teachers and argued con-
stantly about their project work. Sproule in particular felt he was
being deliberately discouraged from figure work. Both felt that
other students were shutting themselves off from local concerns,
turning instead to internationalism and action painting, largely
under the influence of what Sproule called secondhand teachers from
England. In their own work both rejected artistic perfectionism,
working very speedily from the imagination. Sproule attempted a
few more complex pictures but found himself swamped by them; Ellis
rejected canvas in favour of board, as much from dislike of the
labour of stretching it, as from distaste for its springiness.

As with Joe McWilliams, this outsider stance was as much poli-
tical as artistic. Ellis felt that he and Sproule were in a Catholic
minority. He himself painted political subjects from time to time,
such as a hanged man in a prison cell, referring to the death of

¹. The following discussion of the works relating to the troubles
by these two artists is largely based on conversations with
Fergal Ellis on 11 December 1979 and with Brian Sproule on
20 December 1979.
Brian Maguire (ill 271),¹ but he found that fellow-students were reluctant to discuss such works because of their fear of the religious divide. Sproule felt that the political paintings made while they were at the Art College were a way of getting back at the institution. Even the fact that he had to hide a painting of an IRA funeral from the cleaners clearly gave him a kind of satisfaction.

Despite their joint front these two artists produced works which differed in important respects. Brian Sproule's paintings are firmly based in his own experience of Belfast's street life. Aged thirteen in 1969, he was involved in some of the early Belfast riots, and he was present at the blowing-up of Sheridan's Bar in the New Lodge Road, shown in a picture now owned by the College of Art. The republican involvement of his friends motivated him to produce paintings of subjects like the H blocks. He also knew about half a dozen of the victims of the Shankill Butchers.² The majority of them were from his school; two died just by the street where he lives. To make a painting on the subject seemed only natural.

Sproule also has a very direct relationship with his audience. His paintings hang on the walls of the clubs in which he organises disco sessions, or are given to friends. (Somewhat incongruously his Shankill Butchers painting was chosen as a wedding present by a friend.) The direct communication of personal experience is of more importance to this artist than any painterly niceties. He has a strong interest in artists who have dealt with political conflict elsewhere, and has studied the works of Goya, Ben Shahn and Diego

¹. Who committed suicide in Castlereagh RUC Centre on 14 May 1978.
². The name generally given to the Shankill Road-based perpetrators of a particularly gruesome series of murders of Catholic victims in the mid-1970s.
271. Fergal Ellis/Brian Maguire/ca 1978/oil on
board/38½ x 18 ins (97.8 x 45.8 cms)/
Collection: the artist/Photo: B. Loftus
Rivera, but he rejects the paintings of the troubles by outsiders like Micheal Farrell and Rita Donagh as too arty, and his own favourite works are deliberately simple scenes of the bodies of the victims of sectarian violence sprawled in street rubbish, backed by Belfast's Cave Hill, or of such domestic details of Ulster's violence as the father cleaning his rifle beside his small son's cot (ill 272). Northern Ireland's conflict lives at home for much of the time, and Sproule, moving around a constant circuit of clubs and friends' houses in Catholic areas of Belfast, has often been a witness of it.

Fergal Ellis has also painted from direct experience. One of his foundation year works was about a Protestant youth converted to Catholicism, who played football with his brother. He was murdered and his body was dumped in the entry at the bottom of the street in which the Ellises live. Most of Fergal's paintings however are either portraits of friends and individual types painted with the intensity of icons, or scenes derived from literary inspiration. He is deeply interested in writers as diverse as Dostoievsky and Liam Flaherty, Camus and Alan Sillitoe, and has himself written a large number of short stories which he often uses as a basis for his paintings. Children are a constant theme in both the stories and the pictures. Like his brother Brendan he identifies very strongly with them. He finds them easier to co-operate with than adults, and sees them as the same kind of victims and outsiders as himself. A particular obsession is the idea of the child born dead. This emerges very strongly in two of his paintings. One shows a woman with a child in a graveyard. The gun she carries is a symbol of the marital conflict which Ellis sees as widespread in Northern Ireland. The other is of a man beside a child's coffin in a church,
42 x 42 ins (106.7 x 106.7 cms)/Photo: B.
Loftus
a scene made all too familiar by media photographs during the present troubles. In both an almost childlike distortion and simplicity ram home the horror.

Brian Sproule and Fergal Ellis have chosen to make paintings about the Northern Ireland conflict both because its impact has pervaded the Catholic areas of north and west Belfast in which they have lived, and because producing such pictures is a kind of gesture against both the political and the aesthetic status quo. The type of imagery they have used, with its direct representations of republicanism, its strong concern with death, religion, women, heroes and victims, and its simple, emotive, figurative style shows how strongly they are rooted in the visual traditions of Northern Ireland's Catholic community.

In the late 1970s another small group of young artists from the Catholic community began to make works dealing with the Northern Ireland troubles. Like Fergal Ellis and Brian Sproule they trained at the Belfast College of Art; and like them they felt strongly involved with their community. But in addition their images relating to the troubles were conditioned by the growing interest in various forms of photographic imagery which was evident at the College of Art in this period.

Dave Scott¹ is the son of Protestant parents holding very strong socialist beliefs. He was one of the large number of young artists who emerged from his community in the late 1950s and early 1960s as the result of the encouragement they received from the art-masters then teaching in Annadale school, in south-east Belfast. However, instead of proceeding straight to art college Scott spent

¹. The following discussion of Dave Scott's work is largely based on a conversation with him on 11 July 1979.
ten years after leaving school working as an aircraft draughtsman, a graphic designer and a commercial artist. During part of this time he was employed in England, and enormously enjoyed the irreverent upsurge of creativity that was taking place there, breaking traditional moulds.

In the late 1960s Scott became involved in political developments in Northern Ireland. He was for a time a member of People's Democracy, and he has continued since this period to support political and cultural activities in Northern Ireland's Catholic community, by supplying cartoons for political newsheets, making sleeve-designs for records of traditional Irish music and republican songs, and producing his own prints as comments on political events in the province.

It was in the early 1970s that Scott began to paint pictures relating to the troubles. Painting had always seemed to him a highly glamorous activity, partly because of the cost involved, and he set about these works with characteristic speed and extravagance, producing approximately 200 pieces, some of them as large as 5' x 4', in 1971 and 1972. (They were exhibited in Dublin in 1974; most were sold, and the rest were given away). The majority of these works placed a single figure or a small group of figures in a surreal setting which emphasised the bizarre nature of the violence in Ulster. Many of them were based on incidents in which Scott had been involved. His obsession with all kinds of warfare also surfaced in the numerous pieces involving faceless and gas-masked soldiers. The fluctuating relationship between sex and violence was likewise a major theme. An element of harsh, surreal humour, partly influenced by Scott's interest in the German expressionists and the works of Magritte, was often evident. A friend who
asked for a landscape for Christmas got a pleasant seaside picture, but on the rocky shore stood three soldiers in gas masks and riot gear dragging a battered victim (ill 273). A polite request for a more suitable picture was met with another seaside scene, this time with a single soldier in riot gear shooting the seagulls. (Ironically by the late 1970s Scott was having to churn out the very kind of West of Ireland landscapes he despised, in order to make some money). More personal feelings were also involved. One picture used a haunting combination of real and surreal imagery - hands turning into bunches of bananas, a beautifully detailed brick wall, a dustbin seen with strange clarity - to convey the curious sensations invoked in the process of interrogation, of which Scott himself had experience.

Scott eventually ceased this series of paintings because he felt that too strong a vein of fascism was coming through in them. He turned instead to making collages and montaged slides, in which many of the same images were fused together to make statements about sex and violence, history and violence and the war-game ethic. It seems possible that this exploitation of popular media imagery was encouraged by his studies at the Belfast College of Art in the late 1970s. Certainly a number of other students attending the college at this time were absorbed in similar processes, and using them to make works related to the troubles. Not only were collages of the debris a strong element in Sister Theresa's pictures. \(^1\) Fergal McConnell was also exploiting photocopied images as a means of handling the scenes of flag-carrying processions observed from his Falls Road home, \(^2\) and

1. See above, pp. 801-804.
2. See above, pp. 377-378.
273. Dave Scott/Landscape/ca 1972/oil/present whereabouts unknown
was constructing whole pictures from grids of mock-identity cards made from fragments of local traditional symbols, photographs of soldiers and riots, portraits of the Pope, passport photos of himself and images of robots and clockwork toys. And Pete McGuinness, another young artist from the Catholic community, was demonstrating the audience manipulations involved in media-imagery of the Northern Ireland conflict, while turning increasingly to video films as an easily accessible means of challenging the intrusive, stereotyped views purveyed by press, television and security force cameras in Ulster.

McGuinness felt himself to be "a minority within a minority," while he was at the College of Art. Not only was he strongly aware of his Catholic background, he also felt he was set apart from the majority of the other students by his entry into the college via an adult education college rather than a school, by his overt interest in the political situation in the province, and by his commitment to film, still as yet a relatively new medium for art-students in the province. A strong feeling of being against the system comes through in his work. His constant target has been the debasement of visual and verbal language by the mass-media, and many of the pieces made by him attack such debased imagery as applied to the events of the past thirteen years in Northern Ireland.

McGuinness's earliest works on this theme were collages of press-photographs. A very typical example was his juxtaposition of a Don McCullin photo with horses from a fairground carrousel. This was intended to show up a variety of deficiencies in ways of seeing the Northern Ireland conflict. He deliberately chose one of McCullin's very photogenic and dated pictures from the early 1970s, trying to

underline the falsely epic nature of his work, a quality he felt was still being sought by the newspapers. The fairground horses were shown careering round a corner, emphasising how photographers use two-dimensional photographs to reproduce three-dimensional events, and how people continually go round corners not seeing each other.

Such relatively simple pieces were soon followed by more complex expositions of media distortions of events in Ulster. In 1979 a grisly photo of a bomb-victim, taken from the book Survivors, formed the basis of two pieces of work. In the first McGuinness made two fibreglass casts representing the mutilated body, pasting on pieces of the Belfast Telegraph and spraying the figures black and white. In doing this he was trying to convey the implications of positive and negative, the deficiencies of black and white in conveying information, and the ease with which visual imagery of Northern Ireland's troubles could be obtained, denying privacy, dignity and self-determination to its inhabitants, who, he felt, were still capable of true emotion about what was going on. This last theme was more explicitly taken up in his second Survivors piece. In this he made a number of postcards of the bomb-victim picture (ill 274) and placed them on a display-rack at the public entrance to the Art College degree show. Although he did not expect people to remove them, he did place one card in each space so that he could easily see if any were taken. Thirty out of the total of fifty disappeared.

Pete McGuinness also turned his attention to images relating to wider social issues in the province. He has attacked tourist

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1. A compilation of words and pictures about the survivors of the Ulster violence, made by the Belfast Telegraph journalist Alf McCreary and published by Century Books in Belfast in 1976.
274. Pete McGuinness/Bomb victim postcards/1979/
Photo: Pete McGuinness
posters of the beauties of Northern Ireland's countryside, not with the superficial device of collaged imagery of street violence, but with a single, careful black spot. This device, adopted from magazine illustrations to an article on migraine, came to have overtones of bullet holes, single and implacable, as well as references to the whole theme of positive and negative which has a strong fascination for McGuinness. Three sets of clothes, for a man, woman and child, symbolising the family, were also attacked by him in the same way.

In his most recent work McGuinness has turned to exploring ways of countering the debased imagery of the mass-media. Film, like postcards, he sees as being available to the non-artist, and he has tried to use it to give back to those outside the art elite, even if only by a symbolic gesture, some measure of control over visual communication. In his short film For the Prisoners, he shot details of the countryside in Co Clare which it would be hard for the prisoners in their cells to remember accurately, and in a planned film called Belfast House he intends to show a camera going into a house in the city, viewing its occupants and contents, underlining the massive collection of such information by the security forces.

Dave Scott, Fergal McConnell and Peter McGuinness were all strongly influenced in the production of their troubles works by their knowledge of the widespread manipulation of media imagery by young artists and art-students throughout the western world in the 1960s and 1970s. Scott became familiar with this kind of work in London in the 1960s; McConnell had been abroad on various study-trips; and McGuinness had considerable admiration for work of this kind produced by Richard Hamilton in England, and by Adrian Hall, an English artist who taught at the Belfast College in the 1970s.

1. On Adrian Hall, see below, pp. 870-871.
But the concerns handled in this fashion by these young artists were rooted in their own close experience of the troubles, and in their identification with the problems of Northern Ireland's Catholic community; the themes of street violence, repression, victims and prisoners to which they turned were part of the traditions of that community; and the kind of overt, emotive, highly figurative style which they employed derived from its visual heritage.

In general the artworks relating to the Northern Ireland conflict by artists from the province's Catholic community can therefore be characterised as: numerous; the product of artists close to the impact of violence and often involved in politics or community work; painted; overt; romantic; concerned with bringing things together; and made with a sense of a local figurative tradition in which the theme of the heroic victim is very strong.

In contrast the troubles works by artists from the province's Protestant community discussed in the following section will be seen to be: generally less numerous; the product of artists isolated from the violence and involved in peace-movements rather than political and community work; often drawn, sculpted or constructed rather than painted; sidelong; and only semi-consciously dependent on a local tradition of neat, crafted work, in which the city and the macabre are two very strong themes.

Protestant views?

Very few of the older, more established artists from Northern Ireland's Protestant community have made works relating to the present troubles in their province. Those who have, have made a limited number of pieces on this theme, and have then returned to more
275. T.E. Spence/The crucifixion of Ulster/1973/coloured photo-gravure print reproduced from an oil painting/22\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 18\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins (56.5 x 47.5 cms)/Produced by the Peace People in 1977/Collection: B. Loftus/Photo: Pete McGuinness
accustomed subjects. Colin Middleton produced his handful of
Angry Shapes paintings and drawings (ill 109). T.E. Spence, a
retired Quaker businessman and well known landscape painter,
confined himself to one work, titled Ulster crucified, which he
gave to the Peace People for their offices and which they repro-
duced as a colour-print (ill 275). Based on press photos rather
than direct experience, it was painted straight onto the canvas
without any preliminary drawing, and is related to a number of
religious paintings he has done. It was done for himself and
he regarded it as having no great significance. Gladys Maccabe
would have liked to shut her eyes to the troubles entirely. How-
ever her eldest son insisted on driving her round the troubled
areas in the early days of the conflict. Despite herself, she was
so grieved by the fact that "our people were putting up barricades
against our people" that she did a short series of drawings and
paintings of the troubled streets (ill 276). The motivation for
these works was very much in accordance with Gladys Maccabe's
feeling for all-Ireland cultural traditions, and their lively
reportage is characteristic of her flair for crowd-scene of every
kind. But she never returned to this subject-matter again.

Lawson Burch was approximately thirty when the troubles broke
out in 1968. A native of Belfast, he had trained as an art-teacher
and had also attended evening classes at the Belfast College of Art.
Like a number of his contemporaries in the Protestant community he
resented the apparent favouring of pupils from certain schools by the

1. See above, pp. 378-379.
2. An example is in the chapel of the Friends School at Lisburn.
4. Some of the drawings are reproduced in Gladys Maccabe, "The
Agony of Belfast", Everyman, Benburb, Co Tyrone, no 3, 1970,
pp. 81-6.
276. Gladys Maccabe/Barricades, Belfast/1971/
medium and dimensions never recorded/
Imperial War Museum (destroyed by fire)/
Photo: IWM
Art College in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the recruitment by the college of a large number of lecturers from England, who were strongly committed to pursuing the kinds of art then internationally fashionable. Burch himself chose to paint landscapes in a highly crafted, finished style, influenced by the works of Colin Middleton. Yet paradoxically neither he nor Middleton seem to have had a feeling of being rooted in a particular part of the Ulster countryside. Both have lived in practically every county in the province, and Burch has found himself unable to identify with any particular area.

"I find it difficult I think to identify myself with my immediate environment most of the time ... This is why I can't understand the patriot, you know. I mean what do patriots do, do they love their country in terms of hedges and fields and mountains and rivers and streams? You know I think that probably in every country I could find things that I could identify with, mountains and trees ... But I've always found it difficult ... I lived for example for a couple of years in Tyrone on the Donegal border, at Castlederg, and possibly felt more at home there with my environment, but couldn't quite fit into the community there who regarded me as some sort of an import." 1

Part of this rootlessness may be attributable to the nature of Burch's employment, for from 1967 onwards he was a peripatetic reading-teacher moving round both Catholic and Protestant schools, in the country and the cities. This mode of life also affected his troubles pictures which he began to paint in 1973. They were in his own words "visual glimpses ... things seen from the car", 2 rather than works formed from the experience of the troubles in one particular area, and they were painted by a man who, partly as the result of his work, found it very difficult to distinguish between Catholic and Protestant.

2. Ibid.
Indeed some of the images employed by Burch, such as a clown wandering down a city street, a funeral and a crucifixion, might well seem to derive more from the Catholic than Protestant traditions. But in choosing children as the most frequent subject of these pictures, and by employing the mode of handling that he did, Burch was clearly influenced by the visual heritage of his own community. Children have constantly been stressed in the imagery put out by propagandists working for government bodies and Protestant political parties during the present conflict.¹ This seems to be evidence of a grave uncertainty about the future. It is also an oblique, unspecific, unpolitical way of attacking those who have been employing violence in the province during this past thirteen years. This obliqueness is very much part of Burch's paintings of children affected by the troubles. Indeed the owner of Child at a Window (ill 277), was outraged when I asked to have it photographed in connection with my work for this thesis. To her the painting was simply an attractive picture of a small girl, regardless of the fact that the artist describes it as being about children who are kept indoors by their parents in troubled areas.

Many of Burch's paintings deal with similar effects of the troubles on people at their periphery. Even in his street scenes the figures represented are generally wandering about their business in the dreary wastelands caused by the violence in Belfast. These are very different from the action-packed scenes of violence and its immediate effects habitually painted by Lawson Burch's contemporaries in the Catholic community. Moreover Burch has continued to employ the beautifully crafted, neat style favoured by

¹. See above, Chapter 6, passim.
277. Lawson Burch/Child at a Window/1974/Present
location unknown/Photo: Sean Watters
artists like Luke and Middleton, with its careful layers of glazes and scumbles, rather than the crude, vigorous, expressionist handling of his Catholic counterparts.

Craft and neatness are also characteristic of various series of drawings relating to the Ulster conflict made by the artists from the Protestant community. John Kindness is a versatile draughtsman, who since he left the Belfast College of Art in 1974, has supported himself by freelance work as a graphic designer. Even during his years at the College he was using his command of a wide range of drawing techniques and styles to parody and question various modes of vision related to the troubles. His work then included a series of drawings of the Twelfth of July parade, parodying Eisenstein's film notes, an idealised architect's drawing of a block of flats complete with a sniper at the top, and a schematic drawing of Belfast's shipyards laid out like a gun-chamber, the ships resembling bullets.

At the end of his course at the Art College, Kindness wanted to present his diploma material in book form, but the College insisted he make a more substantial show. He therefore translated these stylistic send-ups into three dimensions, constructing a museum of the troubles, complete with shop dummies dressed up in the uniforms of Belfast street gangs, a bomb factory and explosion area, a shrine to a dead man, a sacred heart painting complete with a sheep's heart and blackthorns (ill 278) and so on. Decaying food and rubbish were liberally used, and the college authorities were outraged. This was not at all suitable for visiting relatives and representatives of art institutions.

1. The following discussion of John Kindness' work is largely based on a conversation with him early in 1979.
THE SACRED HEART.

A CONVENTIONAL PAINTING OF THE SACRED HEART. EXCEPT FOR THE HEART & THORNS. THE HEART WILL BE A RAW SHEEP HEART & THE THORNS WILL BE BLACKTHORN.

The bad taste was of course deliberate. Kindness was fed up with the complacency with which artworks were being absorbed, and when he left the College in the late 1970s he continued to produce graphic works which employed offensive imagery and wildly varying styles in an attempt to jolt people into awareness of what was going on around them. He was involved with a number of other young artists and graphic designers in producing a series of political comics,¹ and he issued his own picture-story, *The Hand*. This booklet attempted to tell one of the stories of the troubles lying behind the media's treatment of the conflict. Its final image looks like an amateur photo of a dead body taken for a newspaper— it is in fact a mock-up (ill 279). The story leading up to this is of Sammy, a Belfast youth, seen first in his (Loyalist) home sewing a red hand badge on his jacket, then out with his mates. He flaunts his bee-bap or skinhead haircut, throws a dead bird into the chip fryer at the Chinese take-away and is the victim of a random sectarian shooting on his way home. The story deflates romanticism of any kind about the troubles. Sammy's last thought is of revulsion at the dog's shit into which his head falls.

The mockery of romanticism in this booklet is aided by the deliberate use of a succession of wildly varying visual styles. A great admirer of James Joyce, Kindness wanted to add to each episode the prejudices a particular style would convey. Some of the allusions are high-flown. The frontispiece portrait of Sammy for example, is modelled on Ingres' portrait of Napoleon, who as a military hero would have gone down well in Belfast, Kindness thinks.

¹ I hope to discuss these elsewhere in a study of the various kinds of press imagery relating to the Northern Ireland conflict.
But many of the ironies used would have been available to any reader. Sammy's bee-bap hair-style is described and illustrated in the manner of children's encyclopedias and his unheroic death is drawn like a Superman comic (ill 279).

The tale was also deliberately intended to be accessible to people of either community in Northern Ireland. Particularly after seeing the polarisation of attitudes in the Art College after the Bloody Sunday shootings, Kindness has been determined to put forward the effects of the troubles on ordinary human lives in a way which would support the politics of neither community. (Although his own background is Protestant, he was heavily influenced by his mother, a Scottish atheist). He was additionally concerned that The Hand should be easily available. Cheaply produced, by a Belfast print co-operative, priced at 20p. and widely sold through newsagents, it embodied Kindness's belief that artists should make far greater use of increasingly cheaper modern methods of printing for unlimited editions of their work. Sales were quite good and the level of interest was high but he felt that the response was not sufficiently enthusiastic to warrant another venture of the same kind. A similar picture-story about three girls from a tobacco-factory remains unpublished.

Donald Owen Craig1 was another young artist from the Protestant community who wished to use his considerable abilities as a draughtsman in order to shatter local complacency about the Northern Ireland conflict. In February 1977, sparked off by the experience of hearing a record of Bessie Smith singing Strange Fruit, Craig began to make a series of drawings about the violence which he hoped to publish in booklet titled Strange Leaves. The forty or so drawings which he

1. The following discussion of Donald Owen Craig's work is based on a conversation with him on 25 October 1977, and with his sister on 6 February 1980.
279. John Kindness/page from The Hand/1975-6/offset-litho/11 3/4 x 8 1/4 ins (30 x 21 cms)
swiftly completed convey a fierce loathing for war, and are made in pen and ink in an incisive style which owes much to the work of Goya, Grosz, Klee and Shahn (ill 280). (Craig had studied at the College of Art in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and had a strong knowledge of art history. In other works he made variations on paintings by Ghirlandaio, Piero di Cosimo and Tintoretto). Biblical influences were also very strong. The frontispiece to the projected book showed a bible open at the passage describing Jesus weeping over the city, with parts of the pages blanked out and covered by ink stains, a form of visually teasing imagery Craig imitated from German propaganda leaflets of the First World War. Drawings separate from series also used religious imagery, notably several depictions of Christ on a cross flying the Union Jack and the Tricolour.

In making these images Craig was driven not by direct contact with the Northern violence but by a longstanding fascination with war and by his own personal sufferings. He collected toy soldiers and always went to war games when they were mounted in Belfast. He also knew much sorrow in his own life, which ended in 1979 at the age of thirty, and he seems to have poured much of his personal anguish into his bitter images of the troubles.

Jack Pakenham,¹ like Donald Owen Craig, has sought to shock Northern Ireland's apathetic spectators of the troubles with works drawing heavily on private and personal emotions. Pakenham was born in Dublin in 1938, but was raised in an orphanage in Millisle in Co Down until the age of nine, and since then has lived in Belfast. He trained as an English teacher, not an artist, continues to teach English in a secondary school in East Belfast, and is as interested

¹. The following discussion of Jack Pakenham's work is based on a conversation with him on 8 Nov 1976.
280. Donald Owen Craig/"Smile Please"/1977/pen and ink/8\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 11 ins (21 x 28 cms)/Private collection/Photo: Maire Concannon
in writing poetry as in painting. His pictures have always been disturbing, much influenced by his admiration for Francis Bacon, and his series of paintings about the troubles are deliberately unsettling.

"I did not wish merely to record or illustrate since the camera did this more than adequately but wanted to produce a kind of collective scream that would work directly on the nervous system, shocking people who had become almost apathetic, anaesthetised over the years by horror after horror, shock after shock." 1

However for a long time Pakenham could not find the exact and appropriate imagery to produce this shock. He tried using the clown-figure which has featured almost as much in his work as that of his friend Gerald Dillon. But it was to be a ventriloquist's doll, bought for his son several years previously, which unleashed a series of about thirty pictures painted with fevered intensity in 1975 and 1976. For Pakenham it became a potent image of manipulation and menace.

"And so the doll with his inane optimistic grin even in death, his pathetic little body in grotesque positions, became for me both victim and terrorist... the ultimate manipulated little man whose words are only what someone else gives him... the friendly humorous Ulsterman who sets up his friend for an ambush with a Judas smile... the innocent who faces his torturers, grinning in the vain hope that it is all some kind of game like those played by the school bullies and he will be allowed to go home." 2

The little figure is deliberately ambivalent, neither man or woman. He plays games with people's lives, becomes a pawn himself, is hanged, tarred and feathered, and blown to pieces, shoots his counterpart in a scene modelled on Goya's two men killing each other as they sink into a bog, faces two ways like Ulster politicians,

2. Ibid.
and prefers to see, hear and tell nothing like most of Northern Ireland's population (ill 281).

This vision of the Northern Ireland conflict as a game has been held in common by many local artists. But it tends to be those from the Protestant community like Middleton, Craig and Pakenham who see it as a very grim game, while their counterparts in the Catholic community, like Ferran and McWilliams, take a more lighthearted view. This is probably because in general Ulster Protestants feel more manipulated by the paramilitaries than do the province's Catholics, and in particular it has been the Protestant Ulster Defence Association which has adopted the title of a children's television programme "Romper Room", for its sessions of torture and punishment. Pakenham himself was prompted to seek a manipulative image for his paintings because of the involvement of many of his former pupils in the UDA, and he was able to turn to a file of drawings of UDA demonstrations for the hoods which he used in several of his pictures, finding their connotations of masks and blindness particularly appropriate.

Other images came readily to hand. The shattered windows giving onto darkness could be seen everywhere in Belfast streets and are a constant image in the works of Magritte, by whom Pakenham has been greatly influenced. The bare room in which his dummy is often to be found is reminiscent of the attic studio in which he works. The steep perspective given to its floorboards and to the pavements in other paintings in the series is used deliberately to convey the acute unbalance of Ulster society. Private and public worlds come together in these disturbing scenes in a violent, aggressive fashion.
281. Jack Pakenham/"Speak No ... See No"/1975-6/
acrylic and emulsion/36 x 36 ins (91.5 x 91.5
cms)/Photo: Jack Pakenham
Indeed Jack Pakenham's use of strongly painted images to convey deep feelings about the Northern Ireland conflict makes him something of an exception amongst artists from the Protestant community. Most of them approach this topic with oblique, often drawn images which demonstrate their political and cultural unease about it. This obliqueness has even included concealment of identity. Robert McDowell, who studied first at the Belfast College of Art and then in the mid-1970s at the Slade, has used the pseudonyms Hugh Alexander and Sean O'Dubghail for his small number of collage-pieces and performances relating to the troubles. This ploy he felt enabled him to speak with several voices, and to break with past failures.¹ It was also part of his mocking, wordy send-up of existing and potential artistic approaches to the troubles. Thus "Hugh Alexander's" I Study Violence in Northern Ireland (ill 282) is a parody of the artwork as sociology.

Graham Gingles² distances himself from the troubles in a different fashion by making small, boxed, mostly drawn images which are both fragmentary and universal. When the present conflict commenced in the late 1960s, Gingles had just returned to Northern Ireland after completing a year's teacher-training course at the Hornsey College of Art (he had previously studied at the Belfast College). At first he made no references to the violence in his work. This was partly because he felt that the media images of events like Bloody Friday were so powerful as to make the artist virtually redundant, but also because of his own particular political and geographical context. Although he himself is politically uninvolved, he comes from a strongly

². The following discussion of Graham Gingles' work is largely based on a conversation with him on 30 September 1982.
282. Hugh Alexander, Study Violence, 1972, Collage, 34.5 x 27 ins (87.6 x 68.6 cms), Collection: Robert McDowell, Photo: B. Loftus
loyalist background (his grandfather's UVF rifle hangs on the living-room wall), and knowing the internal discriminations within the Protestant community, he felt no sense of identification with the Civil Rights protests, which he saw as being largely made on behalf of the province's Catholic population. Moreover he had no direct contact with the violence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as he both lived and worked in relatively peaceful areas some distance from Belfast.

Like Donald Owen Craig and Jack Pakenham, Gingles was driven to use troubles imagery largely as the result of distress in his own personal life. A series of deaths amongst those close to him precipitated him towards visual analyses of the nature of mortality. After a few large pictures of victims of the violence sprawled on pavements, depicted in the painterly, expressionist style he had employed since his early days at the Belfast College of Art, he began in approximately 1972 to make the small, boxed reconstructions of violent incidents which have continued to preoccupy him to the present day (ill 283).

In many of these pieces there is a very strong awareness of what Gingles calls "the if factor". Thus the fire-blackened remains of a little room, with a charred and shrivelled dummy-corpse, provide eloquent testimony of the swift and fateful power of death to destroy somebody who might so easily have escaped if he had walked out a minute or two before. A desire to commemorate individual victims is also dominant. Many of these little memorials are personal monuments to acquaintances of the artist killed in the troubles, or to victims of other forms of violence with whom he has felt some form of involvement, whether the couple found dead by him in the wreckage of
283. Graham Gingles/Untitled/1977/mixed media/9\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 15\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins (25 x 40 cms)/Collection: the artist/Photo: the artist
a car on his way home from work, or the man who hanged himself in
the public lavatories of the town nearest to Gingles' home.

The commemorations of these victims are grim. Blood spatters
wails; flies feed on corpses, as life on death; little dummies are
bound to chairs or lie in tombs. There is never, as in the Catho-
lic portrayal of victims of the violence, any sense that life follows
death, or that suffering has some meaning. The Protestant fear of
guysome mortality remains very strong. Only in recent years have
these little boxed memorials become less claustrophobic, with
references to the world-wide effects of crime and political violence
(in the piece illustrated here, the left-hand section initially com-
morated an Israeli shot in a helicopter at the time of the Munich
Olympics), or to the funeral monuments of foreign culture, whether
Viking ship-burials, Egyptian tombs or Italian roadside shrines to
the victims of traffic accidents. In the majority of these works
Gingles reconstructs crimes (his brother works in a forensic labora-
tory in Queen's University, Belfast) and in doing so questions both
the artist's reconstruction of reality, and the viewer's voyeuristic
involvement with it.

In these little boxes, and in others Graham Gingles has made on
sexual themes, artful construction, often with use of mirrors and
distorted perspective, draws the viewer in to examine the details of
the fascinating though repellent scenes they contain. This voyeuris-
tic element is related to diverse parts of the artist's personal his-
tory, ranging from childhood memories of "What the Butler Saw" machi-
nes, to the experience of living in a small Ulster community where
every move is observed. It also appears to be linked to the essen-
tially private intention of these works. Although they have been
exhibited on a number of occasions in group and one-man shows in dealers' galleries and art institutions in Ulster, the Republic of Ireland and mainland Britain, few have been purchased. Gingles has no real need to sell his works, for he continues to support himself by teaching art, and he regards these constructions as made for himself, with no public role.

In the style of their making as well as in their content, these little boxes reveal Graham Gingles' strong involvement with the visual traditions of his community. Not only are they distinctively rooted in those traditions by virtue of their emphasis on personal rejection of death and violence as without any meaning, political or spiritual. They also display that fascination with neat, crafted, drawn structures and grids in which violence erupts, which is to be found in the work of so many artists from this community. This kind of approach comes easily to a man like Graham Gingles, whose father was a painter-decorator, and for whom art was not so much a road to truth and beauty, but the kind of job you might pursue if you showed some talent, and you were not inclined to go into your father's business or the local bank.

Something of the same feeling for the relationship between established order and violence seems to underly the few three-dimensional pieces relating to the troubles produced by artists in the Protestant community. In his *Irish State* pieces (ill 113) Gordon Woods challenged the grids and protection devices of science, and his own activities as a builder, with the often wicked but inexorable forces of nature. In his gradually constructed and destroyed geometrical floor-sculptures of sand, rope and wooden bars, John Aiken has explored general aspects of the way in which
architectural forms carry with them interrelated experiences of order, violence and decay, drawing partly on his own Northern Ireland background. And in his Connector (ill 284), Bob Sloan has similarly balanced construction and destruction, purposeful labour and inexorable fate, connection and distance.

Sloan comes from a working-class family in the Donegall Pass area of Belfast. He was one of a whole group of young artists who were encouraged by the teaching of Ken Jamison and Wilfred Stewart at Annadale School in the 1950s, and who were also affected by the general commitment and strong social consciousness of the teaching staff in the school at that period. His interest in art was balanced by an equally strong involvement in mathematics, science and geometrical design, and it was only after some persuasion by his art-teachers that his parents agreed to let him attend the Belfast College of Art.

Like most of those who went to the art college at this time, Bob Sloan felt that it had given him virtually nothing in the way of an art training. However, he subsequently spent two years in the early 1960s at the Central School of Art in London, where he was given considerable encouragement. Because he had been offered so little technical information at the Belfast College, he began during this period an exploration of the processes of sculpture which has remained a feature of his work ever since. He also began the experiments with the concept of balance which have continued to be a major theme in all his output.

In 1965 Sloan returned to Northern Ireland and a career in


2. The following discussion of Bob Sloan's work is based on a conversation with him on 2 Sept 1982.
284. Bob Sloan/Connector/1975-7/wood, marble, chrome, steel, rope, sandbags/33 x 167\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 19\(\frac{3}{4}\) ins (84 x 425 x 50 cms) Arts Council of Northern Ireland (now dismantled)/Photo: Bill Kirk
teaching art. He soon became involved in the early civil rights activities and when the marches started he virtually stopped making his own artworks for a number of years, because he felt them to be totally irrelevant to what was going on around him. From the late 1960s until approximately 1974 he was involved with the Northern Ireland Labour Party, designing election posters¹ and leaflets for them, and doing paste-ups and cartoons for their newsheet Labour Challenge. Then gradually in the mid-1970s he began to make artworks again. He had no intention of dealing with the troubles in them, for he felt the conflict was too close and too serious to handle in a public fashion, and that he could only make statements about his own personal situation, which might subsequently be seen as relevant to wider events. However between 1975 and 1977 he found himself gradually developing in Connector (ill 284), a sculptural analysis of certain themes related to the Northern Ireland situation.

The piece was a fusion of various ideas. The E.M. Forster dictum "only connect", drawings of a little bridge over a road up to the Giant's Ring at Ballylesson, the Peace People's habit of meeting on bridges, the upside-down concept of bridges keeping people apart, and of the tensions required to keep bridges in position, his own involvement in renovating an old house, and commitment to manual labour, the strange contrasts between the new business buildings constructed in central Belfast in the mid-1970s and the temporary assemblages of sandbags and safety barriers made as a result of the troubles - all these were elements which fed into this work. Yet, paradoxically when it was eventually dismantled, supposedly because birds had attacked seeds sprouting in the sandbags and children had

¹. Such as the 1969 poster illustrated in Gary Yanker, Prop Art, Studio Vista, 1972, p.92.
sawing on the ropes, Bob Sloan found himself annoyed at its lack of permanence. However, after developing the theme of ritualised barriers in constructions made for the Northern Ireland contribution to the Free International University's workshop at the documenta 6 exhibition at Kassel in West Germany in the summer of 1978, he took this theme no further.

The oblique approach to the Northern Ireland conflict apparent in Connector and the constructions associated with it, and their emphasis on the tensions between man's engineered constructions and the disruptive natural forces within him, are characteristics shared by a number of works relating to the troubles made by artists from the province's Protestant community. Thus in the paintings made by Patric Coogan in the early 1970s, ambiguous and ominous bags and parcels threaten explosions which will destroy the crumbling but beautiful brickwork and paving stones of Belfast's back streets (ill 285).

By the time he attended the Belfast College of Art in the late 1960s Coogan 1 was already a mature man. Although he came from a mixed background, his training and inclinations led him to pursue the kind of painfully-acquired meticulous technique long favoured in the Protestant community. Like Conor, Luke and Middleton he had already mastered a craft before he entered the art-college. Memories of his work as a sign-writer can be found emerging in his works, and the series of paintings started in 1972, which came eventually to refer to the troubles, derived their initial motivation from his seeing the demolition of the beautifully-painted houses in the small streets near to the Art College. He felt moved both to return to his roots, and to record a fast-disappearing Belfast.

1. The following discussion of Pat Coogan's work is based on a number of conversations and letters, but principally on a conversation on 11 Oct 1976.
285. Pat Coogan/untitled/ca 1973/oil on canvas/
    present location unknown/Photo: Sean Watters
Other influences were also involved. While at the Art College he was taught for a year by the hyper-realist English painter Charles Oakley, many of whose works hint at the menace lurking below the surface of ordinary objects in Ulster.\(^1\) At this time Coogan also developed a strong interest in the surreal paintings of de Chirico, and made a series of variations on one of them. His own deserted, meticulously painted streets with their lurking sense of violence owe much to the work of this artist. He sees this element of disruption as an acknowledgement of all that is unruly in his own nature, knowing that most of the time he paints buildings because he can control them. On only one occasion has he made a work openly portraying the violence and its impact on a specific victim; he was appalled when a short time later a close relative was killed in similar circumstances.

Of all the elements affecting Pat Coogan in the making of these paintings however, it was the example and teaching of his friend and mentor John Luke which was the most important.\(^2\) Their friendship continued from approximately 1960, when Coogan attended evening classes held by Luke at the art college, till the older artist's death in 1975. From him Coogan learnt both an intense absorption in technical skills, particularly the glazes in which Luke had achieved such mastery, and a profound feeling for painting as a form of meditation on the eternal present manifest in the most ordinary objects. To Coogan painting a brick wall glowing in the sun is like trying to capture a religious revelation. So greatly does he value every-day objects that each brick in such a painting is remade by him as he works, resulting in a rich, contemplative presence to which no reproduction can do justice.

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Pat Coogan is not the only artist precipitated by the present conflict into an appreciation of Belfast's red brick beauty. In 1973 Camille Souter, an artist who lives and works in the Republic, but is long familiar with the North, made two paintings of this subject following a visit to Belfast to walk through the back streets and see what was really going on,¹ and one of Dave Scott's paintings focussed on the details of a brick wall, just as the artist had done while he was being questioned by the army.² The city streets and pavements also became an important element in Joe McWilliams' series of rainbow pictures. But Coogan's images of brick and stone are set apart from these works by that meticulous, lovingly crafted technique, and that tension between man's control and the violence within him, so characteristic of artists from the Protestant tradition.

The same absorption in making pictures of Belfast in which technical struggle is crucially important can be found in a series by David Crone³ dating from the late 1970s. Crone, like Bob Sloan, was one of the group of talented young artists brought on at Annadale School in the 1950s. Despite parental qualms about the possibility of obtaining a job with a training in art, he studied at the Belfast College, an experience which he supplemented by working trips to England during the college holidays, and a visit to the documenta and Venice Biennale exhibitions in 1964, subsidised by an Arts Council of Northern Ireland travel scholarship. Since leaving the College he has earned a living teaching art.

¹ Conversation with Camille Souter, 28 July, 1975.
The paintings are in the Ulster Museum. One of them is reproduced in The Delighted Eye (exhibition catalogue), The Arts Councils of Northern Ireland and the Republic, Belfast and Dublin 1980, no 76.
² Above, p. 817.
³ The following discussion of David Crone's work is based largely on a conversation with him in March 1980.
Initially, when the present troubles in Northern Ireland broke out in 1968-9, David Crone felt that the media imagery of the conflict made paintings relating to it redundant. He was also put off approaching the violence in his own work by seeing George Campbell's paintings, which he felt to be very superficial.¹ And he found it impossible to cope with earlier images dealing with conflicts elsewhere, such as Picasso's Guernica. Moreover he himself had no direct contact with the violence around him, though he was very aware of the overall sense of oppression.

Gradually however Crone began to be ashamed of his longstanding habit of going away from Belfast to find the kind of formally satisfying landscapes which he explored and analysed in his semi-abstract paintings.² Simultaneously the experience of teaching foundation year students for the College of Art from the mid-1970s returned him to an interest in painting figures (drawing from the model is an important element in the foundation year course). And because this new job involved travelling right across Belfast every day by train and bus, he found himself absorbed in the whole experience of moving through a city on forms of public transport which allowed an openness to people, weather and buildings not possible in the cocoon of a car. What he gradually evolved therefore in the late 1970s were a series of paintings in which figures move in and out of the buildings and light and weather of the city, subject to the ceaseless change and flux so apparent to Crone since the present troubles began, ambiguously positioned between the real world of the city streets and the fantasy world of the shop windows, trapped within their environment, and also vaguely menacing (ill 286). In these works it was not only

¹. See above, p.782.
286. David Crone/ Figures in Landscape/ 1979-80/ watercolour and charcoal/ 15 3/4 x 19 3/4 ins (40 x 50 cms)/ Photo: D. Crone
the narrative themes which were important to Crone. The paint
itself, his struggle with it, and the forms it threw up were also
of crucial significance. In his troubles works, as in those of
Bob Sloan and Pat Coogan, the tension between making and chance,
order and violence, has been a major concern.

Denis McBride¹ has shared David Crone's concern with bringing
together the feelings associated with the country and the city. The
two artists are in fact long-standing friends. They were at Anna-
dale and the College of Art at roughly the same time, and have con-
tinued to discuss their work together. McBride himself comes from
a mixed family in the lower Ormeau area of Belfast. From childhood
he was familiar both with the periods of strain and worry associ-
ted with the summer marching season, and with the feeling for
country life to be found amongst the people in his area of the city,
with their closeness to the markets, and their strong involvement in
horse dealing and bird fancying.

This interrelationship of country and city has continued
throughout his career. While he was training as an art-teacher in
London in the mid-1960s he would return to the space and relaxed
time-scale of Ulster virtually every weekend, and after his marriage
and move to the tranquility of Glenarm, a village on the Antrim coast,
he continued to maintain his city links, with his journeys into Bel-
fast to teach at the College of Art and his frequent trips to Lon-
don's museums and art galleries.

McBride's sharp awareness of Northern Ireland's sectarian ten-
sions and feeling for the interpenetration of country and city life

¹ The following discussion of Denis McBride's work is largely
based on a conversation with him on 7 August 1979, although
I am also indebted to Liam Thompson for supplying me with a
copy of his interview with McBride in August 1977.
was apparent in his work even before the outbreak of the present troubles. In 1964 he was present at a demonstration outside the Belfast City Hall led by Ian Paisley, protesting at the flying of the flag at half-mast on the occasion of Pope John XXIII's death. This event made him realise Paisley's strength and magnetism. Round about the same time he remembers seeing a press-cutting about Paisley and Faulkner leading a loyalist march through the strongly nationalist village of Dungiven. The two events stimulated a painting titled London 1964? which encapsulated his reflections on them from his position as a student in the metropolis. Painted in a pop art style, it was based on the kind of multiple reflections to be found in the windows of London's tube-trains, and incorporated fragments of gable-end slogans relating to Paisley. Since the late 1960s McBride has been at Glenarm, which is relatively untroubled (though he at one time took his turn as a night-time vigilante), but working in Belfast left him exposed to a certain amount of danger. Thus he was very close to the bomb which exploded beside the art college buildings in 1972.

Denis McBride's paintings of the troubles are therefore those of a man who has a strong personal awareness of the impact of violence, but yet can to a certain extent distance himself from it. Belfast from Glenarm is a fairly typical title. In it he used the physical marks made by the troubles, bullet-marks on walls, the strong and sculptural shapes of fortified police stations, the interruptions to traffic flow caused by ramps, all city phenomena, but analysed at leisure for their visual content, in the slightly Cubist style McBride was using in the early 1970s. In another painting of the same period, of birds flying at Glenarm:
"there were these very squat sea-gulls, with their wings fully out and they were chasing each other around the rock crevices and so on. And in certain lights they became quite cross-like. That was just an image I had picked up from Belfast at the time when there were so many thousand dead." 1

Most of McBride's paintings about the troubles were stimulated by very gentle personal feelings about the sorrow of it all, rather than by reactions to the spectacular trappings of violence. Media reception at Glenarm is poor. News received by word of mouth, or at some interval after the event, and pondered over has influenced him most:

"the images are not derived from burned-out buses, or buildings that have been blown-up. I'm just saddened by things that stop you. Kids of four or five, there was one wee girl that I think, was shot at a barricade, six years old. And you look at your own child of six and its really sad that something as arbitrary as a bullet flying through the air, nobody shoots six-year old children. But something just as unlucky as being in one spot at a particular time, should end that relationship in a very hard way ... I can work from that very sort of sad level, work from an image which is derived from reading of incidents like that." 2

The image which resulted in this particular case was a visual expression of the story of the little girl's life, building from the bottom of the picture upwards with sweet, pretty colours.

This gentle sadness was not merely personal indulgence but related to what McBride knew of the victims of violence. A friend from student days whose sister was raped and murdered talked very gently about the troubles, with no feelings of hatred or vengeance. One of his students who survived an assassination attempt appeared to nurse no desire for retaliation, expressing only sadness that he had seen an ordinary working-class man, shooting another working-

1. Denis McBride, interviewed by Liam Thompson, August 1977.
2. Ibid.
class person. In his painting *Gone but not forgotten*, McBride tried to give expression to this feeling that people should simply be hurt when someone dies and not exploit death as in paramilitary funerals. He also made monoprints about sectarian murders in which he bruised and wounded lines, as the bodies of the victims had been bruised and wounded. In an attempt to explore the feelings of victims and murderers he took photographs of himself in hoods, recalling both paramilitary hoods and the hoods pulled over the heads of sectarian violence.

A similar sense of identification lies behind the pieces which McBride made in relation to internment, a subject on which he felt very deeply. He was strongly aware that he himself could have been lifted, that with his beard and the sort of clothes he wore he was a suspicious-looking character. He saw the whole process as unjust and a horrific abuse of people's liberty, and was appalled by the refusal of some to believe that it was actually going on. Two works in particular relate to his feelings on the subject. One was the grey envelopes piece, a sad comment on the way people could be processed and shut away and forgotten. Remembering the piles of old grey envelopes you see in a solicitor's office he tinted envelopes grey to age them, and arranged them in stacks so that they looked both individual and the same, like the internees. The other work was was *Ulster Bouquet.*

In recent years McBride has given up making paintings about the troubles, partly because he became slightly appalled at the kind of things he was producing, partly because he developed an interest in other subjects. However in 1977 he painted a picture which brings

out most effectively his feelings about the sadness of the conflict, living in Glenarm, where deaths are few but very personal, much more being known about them than in the city. *Northern Incident (Peaceful) (ill 2)*, is about the suicide near Glenarm of a young Belfast man who shut himself in his car and poisoned himself with carbon monoxide from the exhaust. His death may or may not have been related to the troubles. He was apparently a proficient sportsman, who swam and went hang-gliding and sand-yachting. It appalled McBride that somebody with such energies should drive twenty-eight miles out from Belfast to die a slow, deliberate death. As in so many of his pictures sweet colouring is offset by menacing shapes, the machinery of the car and its billowing cloud of gas, trapping the man in his death. The city has brought its sadness to the country.

McBride, with his mixed background and his combination of Protestant reticence and Catholic-style lush figuration, is the kind of Northern Ireland artist who reminds the observer of the importance of not over-emphasising the differences between painters and sculptors from the province's two communities. Friendships, admiration, shared problems and shared obsessions have continually linked Ulster artists from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds when handling the present troubles in their work. A very sizeable proportion of the small number of artists working in the province meet each other at such social occasions such as private views of exhibitions, and any antagonism or sense of separation there expressed generally derives from personal antipathy, aesthetic opposition or professional jealousy rather than political opposition. Individual friendships disregard the community divide. Thus Fergal McConnell and Colin McGookin
shared an interest in media-imagery during their studies at the Belfast College of Art, and it was McGookin who suggested to his friend the possibilities of a work made from identity cards. Colin Middleton and Brian Ferran are also well acquainted and have on occasion exchanged paintings. Moreover Middleton's skill as a craftsman and pattern-maker has had an influence on Ferran's work and that of Catherine and Joe McWilliams as well as on that of Lawson Burch. Similarly Gerald Dillon's clowns have meant as much to his friend Jack Pakenham as to Sister Theresa O'Neill. In addition all local artists have confronted some of the problems involved in making images relating to the troubles. Time and again they have cited their need to establish a distance from this subject-matter, their sense of being swamped by media-imagery of the violence, and the confusion created in them by the bewildering procession of events during the past thirteen years. It is therefore of little surprise that the same obsessions have emerged in their work, so that for example, the feeling that the troubles are a strange kind of game is held in common by artists as diverse as Brendan Ellis and Colin Middleton, John Kindness and Sister Theresa.

Yet the differences between the kind of works relating to the Northern Ireland troubles produced by artists from the province's two communities described above remain very discernible. Indeed they can be clearly detected even in the images about the troubles made by children in Protestant and Catholic schools in Northern Ireland. Whereas the Hell's Angel emblem reproduced in Chapter 4 (ill 102) refers to the conflict with exactly the kind of indirect, abstract, macabre, secret society symbolism seen as characteristic of Protestant traditions, in the school over the road the pictures made at the

same time by Catholic schoolboys of the same age showed what was going on around them with the direct figurative approach traditional to their community, (ill 287).¹

To a certain extent one can attribute these differences to political factors. Artists from the Catholic community have generally been much closer to the violence of the past thirteen years and to the political activities connected with it. Catherine and Joe McWilliams, Liam Andrews, Martin Forker, Brendan and Fergal Ellis, Dave Scott, Brian Sproule, Peter McGuinness, Sister Theresa and Fergal McConnell have all been living in troubled areas of Belfast. John Vallely, the McWilliams and Dave Scott, were all to a greater or lesser extent involved in People's Democracy, while Brian Sproule's circle of friends includes a fair number of people with republican views. This closeness and involvement extends to the very youngest. A Catholic school-child will describe to you his drawing of a violent gun-battle outside an army-post as "The view from my window", (ill 287), a Catholic art-teacher will tell you that most of his former pupils are now members of the Provisional IRA. Artists from the Protestant community have generally been far less directly involved in the conflict, living in peaceful areas of the country or the city, with little contact with violence or political activities.

Besides the closeness of Catholic artists to the troubles, there is a sense in which a whole range of expression is permissible to them in a way that it is not to Protestants. Personal experience of street-level harassment in the case of John Vallely, Dave Scott,

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¹ These isolated examples have been selected on the basis of a number of visits to schools in Belfast and Derry in 1974, subsequent study of the school art shows mounted at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland headquarters in Belfast and a view of the entries submitted to the Irish National Teachers Organisation Peace Poster competition in 1973.
287. Drawing from a Catholic secondary school in West Belfast/ 1974/actual size
Brian Sproule and Fergal McConnell, and real or imagined artistic discrimination in the case of Joe McWilliams, the Ellis brothers, Peter McGuinness and Brian Sproule have legitimated for them a whole series of protest paintings, in both the political and artistic sense, for which there are no Protestant equivalents. Again the same situation obtains for children. While their teachers may be deeply opposed to the republican paramilitaries, they cannot help but sympathise with the street level pressures which encourage children to make drawings in which buildings are labelled "Informers in these Flats", or a gruesome depiction of Bloody Sunday is accompanied by slogans like "Brits Out" and "God Safe Ireland". For most Protestants on the other hand, the troubles are in themselves evidence of dissent against their traditional role in the province. Hence, in part, their relative unwillingness to depict them, and to let their children depict them.

But the differences between the handling of the troubles by artists from the two communities in Ulster are attributable to more than political factors. It has been clear from the above account that these artists' choice of content and style for their imagery relating to the troubles has remained strongly conditioned by the visual traditions available to them. Thus artists from the Catholic community remain obsessed with the theme of the heroic victim, depicted in a colourful painterly fashion, while their counterparts from the Protestant community are more concerned with the relationship between order and violence, handled in neat, drawn or constructed images in which the grid pattern is a frequent motif.

The persistence of such traditional modes of vision in the work of Ulster artists is largely attributable to the institutions through which they obtain an understanding of the nature of art. This can
best be understood if one considers some of the attitudes towards visual imagery mediated to Northern Ireland artists by such institutions at various turning-points in their careers.

In the first place the reception given to the earliest attempts and aspirations of Ulster artists by their parents is likely to vary considerably, according to the community to which they belong. Whereas Catholic parents tend to encourage their children to paint, and to pursue a career as an artist, their Protestant counterparts often attempt to direct their children towards more secure and financially rewarding occupations. Thus while T.P. Flanagan was urged on in his earliest artistic efforts by his aunts, John Vallely was first taught art by his father, and Joe McWilliams was bought a box of paints as a small child, Bob Sloan's parents had to be persuaded by his art-teachers to let him attend the Belfast College of Art, and Graham Gingles' career in art was regarded as something of a second best option. Schoolteachers confirm this general difference in parental attitude. When visiting two primary schools on either side of the Falls/Shankill peace line early in 1974, I was told that the parents of children in the Protestant school took little interest in their artwork, while approximately a third of their Catholic counterparts would pin up their children's paintings on the walls at home.

Indeed Catholic schools themselves tend to display considerably greater enthusiasm for art than their Protestant counterparts. Not only are their art classes generally more exuberant but throughout the school buildings walls are covered with pictures and statues, both religious and secular, in strong contrast to the bare formality of most Protestant schools. (It must be remembered that although all Northern
Ireland school-children take the same art-exams, regardless of their religious affiliation, their teachers come from training colleges separated by the sectarian divide. The same differentiation also remains manifest in the churches and chapels used by the different denominations. The net result, as a commentator on the recruitment of artists in America has noted, is that children from a Catholic background are more likely to turn to art because it is seen as an expression of and sharing in the creativity of God.¹ (The same commentator believed that the parents of these children also took pride in a gift which would lead them to mix in superior social circles. This is clearly applicable to Northern Ireland where the Catholic community is still largely massed within the lower social groupings).

That children from Northern Ireland's Protestant and Catholic communities are encouraged by parents, schools and churches towards different forms of imagery and different attitudes towards art as such, has been clearly apparent to some of the lecturers at the Belfast College of Art. Charles Oakley's comments are fairly typical.

"Very, very generally the 'Bible illustration' figurative art appears to be a more Catholic idiom, and Protestant art a pale reflection of things that are imagined to be up-to-date and 'British'. These differences are still visible in the Diploma shows sometimes - what is instilled from birth does become part of your way of seeing, and is really difficult to change." ²

Indeed, as Oakley indicated, the Art College itself has had little impact on these separate ways of seeing. The considerable increase in funds made available to the College since its incorporation in the Ulster Polytechnic in 1971 have made it possible to take

² Letter to the writer, 19 Feb 1974.
the staff and students on study-trips to Europe as well as England and the Republic of Ireland, to bring in a wide range of visiting lecturers, and to provide the kind of equipment and facilities which encourage diverse experimentation. But, largely because of the province's small scale and general poverty, most of the students have continued to live at home or to visit home regularly at weekends. The resulting strength of their links with their local community have become very apparent in the above discussion of the work of those who have produced imagery relating to Ulster's present troubles.

Moreover when the Northern Ireland art student leaves the Belfast College the institutions which shape his or her subsequent career continue to reinforce rather than challenge those links. Almost invariably he or she will pursue a career teaching in the relatively well-organised and well-funded local education system. In doing so he or she will inevitably be reinserted into the visual traditions of his or her community, given the virtually total sectarian division between schools in the province and their reluctance to accept teachers from across the community divide.

Some alternatives to local modes of vision have been provided by exhibitions brought in to the province from outside, but these have been severely limited by the troubles and a number of other factors. On the whole the Ulster Museum has survived unscathed, and since 1971 it has been able to exhibit in its vastly improved art galleries both its own growing collection of international modern art and a wide range of large-scale temporary exhibitions of modern art, crafts, and photography. Its pattern of attendances appear to have borne little relation to the impact of the troubles, as they climbed to a peak in 1974, dropped back again between 1975 and 1977, and commenced a gradual rise
again in the late 1970s.¹

However despite its location in Belfast's relatively peaceful university area, the museum has to a limited extent felt the impact of the violence of the past thirteen years. In 1971 a proposed loan exhibition of masterpieces of twentieth century British art was abandoned because it was feared it might suffer damage, at a time when the violence was at its height, and in 1978 the Art for Society show which came to the museum from London's Whitechapel Art Gallery was opposed on political grounds by members of the museum's staff and its trustees.²

For the Arts Council of Northern Ireland the troubles have meant greatly reduced attendances at its own gallery,³ several closures due to bomb damage,⁴ destruction of other local venues round the province supported by it⁵ and the closure or cancellation of incoming exhibitions for fear of possible damage to them. In the summer of 1969 a

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2. See below, pp. 879-883.
3. In 1969 visitors to the Arts Council gallery averaged about 350 a day; at the height of the troubles in the early 1970s there were rarely more than 35 and often as few as 5 or 6; and by the late 1970s the level was generally around 50 visitors a day (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Annual Reports, Belfast 1969-1981, and information supplied by Brian Ballard, the Council's exhibitions officer, in 1979.)
4. The Arts Council gallery suffered damage from bomb attacks on neighbouring buildings in September 1971, July 1974 and April 1982. On the two latter occasions the damage was sufficient to require closure for several months to allow repairs to be made.
5. From 1969 to the mid-1970s schools and town halls round the province were requisitioned as army billets. Not only were they temporarily unavailable as exhibition spaces, but they often became the target for terrorist attack and disappeared completely. Derry's gallery space for example, which operated very successfully from 1965, became an army billet in 1969. It was vacated in 1973, renovated with financial assistance from the Ministry of Defence and burnt down within two months of its opening in 1976. Only in 1978, after the acquisition of another space, did the city once again have a gallery, which since then has acted as a major centre for both local and outside art, music and poetry.
big show of British and American artists from the Kasmin Gallery was being exhibited by the Arts Council in Belfast. As buses and houses burned they became uneasy. They were occupying a building which also housed staff from a number of government departments; their plate-glass windows, chosen to lure passers-by, began to look increasingly vulnerable to bricks and bombs; and their insurance company telephoned to point out that they were not covered in the event of civil disturbance. The exhibition was removed to a safe place, word got round and other galleries in London and elsewhere became reluctant to lend exhibitions. This reluctance became more marked after the Arts Council of their own accord cancelled an exhibition of optical and kinetic art to be loaned from the Denise René gallery in Venezuela. Since then outside shows have been mounted but generally in low-key fashion.

These pressures on institutional venues, coupled with the small number of dealers' galleries in the province until the late 1970s, have also helped to reinforce the strongly centralised organisation of exhibitions of local art in the province, and the lack of the kind of independent, avant-garde venues in which contemporary artists feel prompted, even encouraged, to challenge the status quo in its various cultural, political and social manifestations. Since the beginning of the present troubles there has been no regular independent group exhibition showing the work of young artists in the province, and only since 1978 have the Orchard Gallery in Derry and Art and Research Exchange in Belfast provided independent venues for local and outside avant-garde art. Without such centres of licensed protest, Northern

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1. The Octagon Gallery has been operated in Belfast by a small group of art-enthusiasts since 1972 is relatively independent and sympathetic to young artists but not specifically committed to avant-garde work.
Ireland artists, already wary of anything which might increase the antagonisms in the province, have rarely made public political gestures. Indeed the only one known to me is the painting made by Gordon Woods in the aftermath of the shooting of thirteen civilians by the British Army on Bloody Sunday (ill 288).

Woods is a lecturer in art education at the New University of Ulster at Coleraine. Previous to the Bloody Sunday shootings his work had contained no reference to the Northern conflict, and consisted largely of landscape paintings. In the aftermath of the shootings, friends who were involved in the Civil Rights march came back from Derry appalled, and the university students went on strike, holding a three-day discussion of the situation. Woods throughout stressed the relevance of art to any situation, and as a form of proof painted 13 Human Deaths, I think? (ill 288), straight off in one hour twenty minutes, abandoning his usual slow and scrupulous technique of building up thin layers of paint on the canvas. He used the horizontal bands of colour then prevalent in his paintings but in a much more direct and violent way. The bottom band is heavily disrupted, and the thin line of red across the centre is totally out of character, a squeal of violence and pain across the streaked greens and browns suggesting the windblown grass surrounding the area in which he lives. The title was deliberately chosen, "Human" to stress the nature of humanity, and the question mark because it was still not known if some bodies had been dragged in to add to the number of the dead, or others removed for fear of identification as IRA officers. The painting was put up on an easel in the university hall and greeted with spontaneous applause. Many students discussed it with Gordon Woods and it led to the greatest sense of communication he had experienced through his work. Next day he found that the porter
288. Gordon Woods, 13 Human Deaths, I Think?/ 1972/
oil on canvas/48 x 48 ins (122 x 122 cms)/
Collection: the artist/Photo: Gordon Woods
had pasted a piece of paper over the bottom concealing the words "13 Papish Bastards", which somebody had scribbled on. Woods removed the paper, saying that the statement was part of the picture. Even years later the painting stirred up strong feelings. A Belfast gallery-owner refused to include it in a show of Woods' work, fearing that it would cause trouble.¹

Indeed Woods' freedom to make such a protest-piece in the first place was largely due to his fairly prestigious employment by a new university, drawing its students at that period from both communities in Northern Ireland and from outside the province, and generally fairly free from sectarian tensions. He had the public status and open venue generally denied to artists in the province.

For not only is there considerable centralisation of exhibition opportunities for young artists in Northern Ireland. Their acquisition of public status within the province is also largely determined through awards and commissions administered through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, or by the various local churches.² Independent patronage or sponsorship by local businesses, councils, or community organisations is virtually non-existent. The prime movers and controllers of such apparently independent ventures as the Art in Context scheme of public works of art which has operated since the early 1970s, or the community murals painted in Belfast since 1977, are always central organisations such as the Arts Council or the Belfast College of Art. Local artists are not generally claimed as representatives of the Ulster people, and when they are able to exhibit outside the province it is very rare for them to do so as Northern Ireland artists. Most frequently such opportunities come to them in

¹ My discussion of this piece is based on a conversation with Gordon Woods in January 1974.
² This point can be confirmed by studying the artists' biographies provided by Theo Snoddy for Catto, Art in Ulster: 1, p.151ff.
the shape of exhibitions of Irish art, organised in the Republic, more rarely in general group-shows of modern British art. \(^1\) The institutional organisation of art in Northern Ireland, as well as local political and social factors, and the personal predilections of its artists orientate those to an approach towards the troubles heavily influenced by the visual traditions of the community to which they belong.

**Outsiders**

When one looks at the works relating to the present conflict in Northern Ireland made by artists originating outside the province, the specific characteristics of the troubles imagery produced by Ulster artists, and the particular factors contributing to those characteristics become more clearly apparent. These works by outsiders fall into two main groups, those made by artists who originate in the Republic of Ireland, and those by artists from mainland Britain.

Artists from south of the Irish Border who have handled the Ulster conflict in their work have often chosen to do so with themes shared with their Northern contemporaries. Like them they have re-examined the role of such traditional symbols as the Mother Ireland figure and the suffering hero. Like them they have turned to major works in European art history as a source of inspiration. And like them they have approached the general issues raised by the conflict through personal reactions to its impact on those close to them. But they have handled these themes in a very different way from the Ulster artists, using not the modes of vision traditional to the two

\(^1\) Confirmation of this can be found in the same source, which also makes plain that dealers' galleries and group-shows in the Republic continue to play a significant part in the promotion of Ulster artists.
communities in Ireland, but cooler, more knowing styles currently or recently in international vogue. Moreover they have shown a far greater interest than their northern brethren in the wider issues relating to the Ulster conflict, such as the involvement of international economics, the role of the family in Irish politics, and the network of political relationships between mainland Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic. And in contrast to the political reticence of Northern artists, they have also made a number of very overt political protests about events in the North. These southern approaches to the Ulster conflict are the constructions of individual artists working not only in a political context markedly divergent from that which has obtained in Northern Ireland during the past thirteen years, but also in an artworld whose institutional organisation predisposes them to types of work very different from those favoured by their Northern contemporaries.

That the Northern conflict has encouraged some artists from the Republic to reappraise themes and symbols traditional in Irish visual imagery has already been established in previous chapters. What needs to be emphasised here is that they have done so with cool, distancing styles appropriated from recent and current international art fashions rather than local, more distinctively Irish modes of vision. Thus the variations in style and handling employed on the one picture surface in Micheal Farrell's *Madonna Irlanda* (ill. 33) ultimately derive from the experiments of the Pop artists in Britain and America in the 1960s, and by their deliberate negation of the concept of individual artistic style convey an attitude of cool, distanced observation and disinvolve very different from the emotional and aesthetic personal commitment implied by the local detail, unified style and strongly
handled paint of a Northern work such as Dave Scott's *Belfast Shawlie* (ill 31).

This elimination of the artist's personal involvement is even more apparent in recent works exploring the contemporary resonances of traditional Irish symbolism made by James Coleman and Noel Sheridan. In these installations combining reconstructions of existing traditional images with videos exploring their ritual associations, the emphases on the importance of the artwork's concept and its status as a process rather than a product, and the role of the viewer in its development, are related to the various kinds of conceptual and installation art made in Europe and America in the 1970s.¹ Thus in James Coleman's *Strongbow*, first set up in 1978:

"A cast of the tomb of Strongbow, symbol of Anglo-Norman settlement in Ireland, is associated with a colour video of two hands in the position of prayer, one the green of Irishness and the other the orange of later settlements. Slowly the hands begin to clap, the pace rises and, as the sound mounts to a crescendo, the green and orange increasingly mix."²

And in Noel Sheridan's *Irish Dancer* piece installed in the *Without the Walls* exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in February 1980, a video of boys' legs performing Irish dancing was projected in a high booth whose walls and floor were smothered with silkscreen posters of Irish republican heroes, while traditional music played, and a woman's voice urged:

"Tense yourself, don't jump, leap, stay tense, don't forget now."

These works share with their more traditional Northern Ireland counterparts a highly personal, at times romantic assessment of the function of Irish ritual symbols. But by presenting that assessment through


media normally accepted as serving documentation rather than art, they offer it to the viewer in a cool, open fashion drained of many of the aesthetic overtones of the traditional artwork.

Other forms of cool distancing adopted from recent international art fashions can be found in Robert Ballagh's many works relating to the Northern Ireland conflict. His earliest paintings tackling the subject were of marchers. They were the result of Ballagh's strong personal feelings about the weakness and vulnerability of such columns, whether of refugees in the Second World War and Vietnam, or of unemployed workers in Dublin during the 1913 lockout, and at contemporary labour exchanges, or of civil rights protesters in America and Northern Ireland. (Ballagh had participated in the northern marches and had experience of unemployment shortly before painting these pictures). But the style in which these figures are depicted is not the kind of expressionism or crafted abstraction which come most readily to Northern artists, but the cool, ironic stylization favoured by many pop artists of the period, used here to reveal the lack of feeling for these rows of figures endlessly marching and counter-marching, often set in circular frames referring to the visual consumption of their plight through the world media. Similarly, when in 1972 Ballagh chose to rework three previous political paintings by major European artists, he did so not with the expressionist bitterness to be found in the works of Northern artists like Donald Owen Craig (ill 280), but with the cool simplifications of the pop artist, emphasising the form and content of the original works by

1. The following discussion of Ballagh's work is largely based on a conversation with him on 20 June 1975.
2. These were exhibited along with the bulk of Ballagh's work relating to the Northern conflict, at the Orchard Gallery in Derry in Sept-Oct 1979.
3. It was only at a later date that Ballagh saw the similar but slightly more romantic marcher-paintings by the Spanish artist Juan Genoves.
Goya, David (ill 289) and Delacroix, by eliminating any hint of personal handling, and relating them to events in the North by a leaflet juxtaposing them with news photographs of the violence, rather than by incorporation of such imagery in the paintings themselves.¹

At the time that he made these works Ballagh had some hope that they would be sufficiently simple to convey to a wide audience a message of outrage at the various kinds of violence being practised in Ulster. In fact, although all three found ready purchasers, there was little public understanding of them. Indeed, when the painting illustrated here was exhibited in the window of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland gallery in Belfast, there was no comment on its reiteration of David's protest at the futility of political strife, merely a polite objection to the nudity of its women. This lack of comprehension encouraged Ballagh to further variations on the paintings in the late 1970s in which their photo-realist juxtaposition with indifferent guests at a private view, or the clutter of the artist's studio, questions their pretensions to deal with reality. During this same period he also made a number of works in which, like the American pop artists Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns, he probed the draining off of emotion from political realities by such banal popular images as a mirror printed with the image of a show-band massacred by loyalist paramilitaries, and the actual numbers of the victims of the Ulster violence.²

The distancing from the Northern conflict in the works relating

¹. A similar handling of previous masterpieces of European art can be found in the work of the English pop artist Patrick Caulfield, although these paintings by Ballagh were uninfluenced by him.
². In the Memorial Wall now installed in Victoria Street in Belfast. The showband piece was prompted by personal feeling. Ballagh knew the victims and was familiar with their way of life from his own experiences as a travelling rock musician.
289. Robert Ballagh/The Rape of the Sabines, David/1970/acrylic on canvas/96 x 72 ins (244 x 183 cms)/Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork/Photo: Robert Ballagh
to it by artists from the Republic of Ireland is apparent not only in their use of the cool, impersonal conventions recently favoured by many internationally fashionable artists, but also in the interest displayed by many of them in the wider political issues linked to the conflict. Thus Paul Cox, in a series of paintings made in 1972 and 1973, expressed his belief that the involvement of the British army in the North might have as much to do with the price of oil as immediate issues, and that the media viewer of their involvement was implicitly supporting such a role, by showing British soliders walking across road markings or lying amidst oil cans, framed in stylized television screens, on which gun-sights were superimposed (ill 290). And a few years later John Devlin emphasised the dependence of the Northern conflict on the preservation within Irish family life of the country's bitter political traditions, in a series of works in which ordinary, indeed often highly respectable members of Irish society, were shown to be involved with objects redolent of extreme republican or tribal attitudes (ill 291).

Both these artists sought to expose such connections with the distanced formality of pop-art and photo-realism. For his analysis in *Menage a trois* of the political interrelationships between mainland Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic, Brian King chose to develop his previous use of the highly fashionable type of installations in which natural forces such as heat, cold, wind and tides produce a sequence of events.

1. This discussion of Paul Cox's works is largely based on a conversation with him on 29 July 1975.
3. Presented at the *Without the Walls* exhibition.
4. On these earlier works by King see Dorothy Walker, "Installations and Performance in Ireland", p. 40.
290. Paul Cox/Television soldier/1972-3/acrylic on board/present whereabouts unknown
Poiblaigh na hÉireann.

The Provisional Government

irish to the public Ireland.

We declare the resurrection of every right and liberty, and the resolve of every people of Ireland by the establishment of a republic. We declare the inhabitants of the North of Ireland as free of the authority of the central government, and ask for their support.

We pray that those who serve the people, in the defense of the children, may be worthy of the highest devotion to which it is called.

John Devlin/Les Enfants Terribles/1976/oil, acrylic and silkscreen/67 x 80¼ ins (170.2 x 203.2 cms)/Photo: John Devlin
"He constructed a large open cube, lined with mirrors, being the land area of Great Britain at the scale of 1 sq inch to 1 sq mile, inside that, another cube of the land area of the Republic, filled with turf briquettes, and suspended over that, a perspex cube of the land area of Northern Ireland, containing orange water. On a pedestal beside the cubes, he placed a £20 note with the message: 'Take the money if ... You ... Voted Conservative, or Accept the Monarchy, or Went to public school, or Wash your car on Sunday morning, or Believe the BBC, or Could recognise an Old Etonian tie.' The money was taken within minutes of the start of the exhibition, activating a beam mechanism which released a metal arrow. This dropped right through the Northern Ireland box releasing the orange water into the turf beneath. Nothing more happened for a few days until the saturated turf started to expand and to break its box, invading the clean, inward-looking England box with a soggy mess of turf which would eventually break the mirrors." 1

Yet again the artist's personal touch was virtually eliminated, leaving natural processes and the intervention of the viewer to complete an analysis of the wider political interrelationships involved in the Northern conflict.

Yet it is also true that artists from the Republic have made the kind of overt, highly personal, political protests about that conflict rarely attempted by their Northern contemporaries. As early as 1969 Micheal Farrell gave vent to his personal feelings about the situation in Ulster in an impromptu speech he made on reception of the Carroll's prize at the Irish Exhibition of Living Art, held that year at Cork. He is recorded as having said:

"Art is above politics but not (above) humanity. As an artist and a man I have never used my work for any political end. I am so moved by wrong and know what is right with regard to the horrific happenings to the North of this island. This is a personal statement. I am withholding my work from the North of Ireland. I will not let it go to be shown in a gallery supported by that regime. I will in the future not allow my work to go North and this will be made a condition of sale until that State has achieved the basic fundamentals of a decent society." 2

1. Dorothy Walker, "Without the Walls", p.22.
A number of other southern artists, including Robert Ballagh, associated themselves with this resolution. Although both Farrell and Ballagh subsequently revised this stance, in light of their greater appreciation of the complexities of the northern conflict, and their growing belief that the artist's participation was more politically effective than withdrawal, they continued to make pungent public protests about events in the province. In 1972 the opening of the Living Art exhibition was again the setting for a dramatic break with artistic conventions prompted by northern events. On this occasion it was Robert Ballagh who chose to make public his anger about the Bloody Sunday shootings, (ill 292).

"He has thirteen figures chalked all around the gallery at strategic points... someone has lain down and he's drawn a chalk line around him and they've done that thirteen times. He's deliberately put them where on the opening day nobody could avoid them. He has gone over each of them and poured pig's blood over each of them, so that at the opening of the gallery everybody came in with their suitable twee champagne and they were trampling through it and they bloody walked it all through the bloody gallery, up the stairs and they were stepping through it. And the thing worked." 1

At this exhibition Ballagh and Brian King were also involved in a performance with Brian O'Doherty, an artist from the Republic who achieved a considerable reputation as an art-critic in New York in the 1960s. O'Doherty, dressed in white, lay on a table while Ballagh and King painted him, one with green paint starting from his head, and one with orange paint starting from his feet.

"As the green and the orange drew nearer to each other, the white peace-space shrank and an extraordinary tension and even anxiety was felt at its disappearance. The colours met, however, and continued on, mixed over the body, which was the obvious solution and brought a corresponding sense of relief." 2

1. Description by the Northern Ireland artist Roy Johnston recorded at a meeting of the Troubled Image Group in Belfast on 19 Nov 1972. Chalking round the outline of a murder victim, is part of security forces procedure. See the photograph in the New Letter, Belfast, 2 March 1973, p.1.
292. Robert Ballagh/Bloody Sunday protest at the opening of the Irish Exhibition of Living Art in 1972/Photo: Robert Ballagh
At the same time Brian O'Doherty changed his name to Patrick Ireland until such time as British troops left Ireland and all its citizens were granted civil rights.

Since this time both Farrell and Ballagh have continued to be publicly involved in political protests about developments relating to the northern conflict. In the mid-1970s Farrell wrote to the President of the Republic protesting at Ireland's maintenance of the death penalty for major crimes, including those committed with political intent, a gesture he recorded subsequently in an artwork exhibited in Dublin in 1977, and in 1980, when one of his Madonna Irlanda series was shown in the International Connection exhibition at the Round House Gallery in London, it bore an inscription stating that it would not be completed until the two Irelands were one. Meanwhile Ballagh has continued to lend his support to political protests about events in the north, providing a drawing for example for the cover of a recent book on the H-blocks issue (ill 293).

Clearly the freedom of artists from the Republic like Farrell and Ballagh to make such public political protests is strongly linked to the actual political context within which they have operated. Distanced as they are from the immediate impact of the violence in Ulster, they can make clear-cut statements about it without fearing that their protests might lead to attacks on themselves, or further exacerbate the conflict. Moreover they are from a state in which open association with a socialist or republican viewpoint is very rarely an impediment to the artist's career. Both Farrell and Ballagh are highly successful and indeed Charles Haughey, the present Prime Minister of the

2. Frances Spalding "A Sense of Ireland", Art about Ireland, Dublin, vol 2, no 1, April-May 1980, p.20.
ON THE BLANKET
TIM PAT COOGAN
THE H-BLOCK
STORY

293. Robert Ballagh/Book cover/1980/red and black on white/actual size
Republic, was recently painted by Ballagh. Similarly the academic painter Thomas Ryan and the young illustrator Jim Fitzpatrick have been able to provide visual imagery to those opposed to the involvement of the British forces in Northern Ireland (ill 294), without any harm to their different forms of success. Such political freedoms are not available to artists in Northern Ireland, or, as we shall see, in mainland Britain.2

However, the distinctive nature of the works relating to the northern conflict produced by artists from the Republic of Ireland, with their cool, international modernity, their interest in wider issues and their openness to overt political statements, cannot solely be linked to the political context within which they have been produced. These characteristics are also related to the institutional organisation of the visual arts in the Republic,3 which has encouraged artists from that country to a strong interest in commercial art, a marked commitment to travelling, exhibiting and working abroad, and a well-established sense of their public role in their native land.

In the first place the virtually total disorganisation which prevailed in art-education and art-training at every level in the Republic until very recently,4 resulted in the country's aspiring artists either seeking a training in commercial art, or travelling abroad for both formal and informal art education, or, most usually, doing both. Thus the technical perfection, knowing coolness, and

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2. See below, p.36.


A BRITISH ARMY MURDER

by

Fr. BRIAN J. BRADY
Fr. DENIS FAUL
Fr. RAYMOND MURRAY

LEO NORNEY (17 years)
killed by Black Watch Regiment, 13 September, 1975
involvement in the latest modern art movements manifest in the work of the artists discussed in this section, can only be accurately understood if one knows that virtually all of them have at some stage in their career worked as commercial designers, and all have spent lengthy periods studying and working in major art-centres in Europe, America and even Australia. (Indeed Farrell has lived in Paris since 1971, and James Coleman has been based in Milan since 1970).

The inclination to work abroad is further linked to the disorganisation of the Republic's education system in that very few jobs as art-teachers have been available to southern artists, particularly when compared with their contemporaries in Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. This state of affairs also has further implications, in that artists in the Republic are not reinserted into their country's native visual traditions as are their art-teaching counterparts in the north.

In the second place, the public recognition accorded to artists in the Republic is far greater than it is in Northern Ireland. With the boom in the Irish economy which commenced in the late 1960s and only began to falter very recently, southern artists have had continued opportunities to show in dealer's galleries, to carry out commissions for industrial patrons, and to obtain state recognition by the award of highly-publicised bursaries, or by inclusion in state-backed exhibitions promoting the image of a country increasingly confident of its ability to combine modern economic expansion with its more traditional values. These opportunities, coupled with their involvement in the international art world, and with the mutual support and

2. Dublin has approximately 20 such galleries, most of them highly successful.
3. Such as the Aosdana scheme launched by Charles Haughey's present govern in 1981.
4. Such as the Delighted Eye, International Connection & Without the Walls shows mounted as part of the Sense of Ireland festival in London in February and March 1980.
encouragement provided by artist-organised group-shows of modern Irish art such as the Living Art and Oireachtas exhibitions, and by art-centres like the Project in Dublin, have helped to foster in the artists discussed here a strong sense of their local and international standing. And that in turn has encouraged the modernity, wide analyses and overt political comment so characteristic of their works relating to the Ulster conflict. In the Republic as in Northern Ireland artists' individual views of the troubles are conditioned as much by the institutions shaping their careers as by their more directly obvious political context.

In some respects the artists in mainland Britain who have dealt with the Northern Ireland troubles in their work, have approached them in a manner similar to their contemporaries in the Republic of Ireland, sharing with them a preoccupation with media representation of the conflict, and with the international developments linked to it. However the attempt by many of these British artists to chart and assess the distances between the observer and events in Ulster, or between the realms of peace and violence, is distinctive. So too are the styles of operation they have chosen to employ. Many of them have made strongly conceptual pieces dominated by soft, shabby, muted imagery, with much use of ephemeral materials. This kind of imagery, and the highly personal approach generally accompanying it, are characteristics also exhibited in the various performance-pieces by English artists relating to Northern Ireland. In these an element of sado-masochism has frequently been visible as well. In contrast to these highly personal works there have been a handful of very overt Political statements relating to the Ulster conflict made by English artists.

To a certain extent these salient aspects of the artworks relating to the Northern Ireland conflict made by artists in mainland
Britain can be linked to the personal and political contexts of their makers. Thus emphasis on distance from the violence, highly personal imagery, and inclination towards softness, can be related equally to the geographical distance of Northern Ireland from the mainland, the lack of political discussion of the conflict in Britain, the personal links with the province of the majority of these artists, and the fact that a significant proportion of them are women. But these factors are themselves related to the institutional organisation of the visual arts in Britain, with its centralisation on the metropolis, its domination by dealers, critics and art institutions, and its general lack of confidence in artists as political commentators and representatives.

For two English artists in particular the impact of the media on people's perceptions of the Northern Ireland conflict has been a major preoccupation. Both are women who have had experience of living and working in the province during the troubles. Philippa Goodall, an art lecturer from Birmingham, who was born in Northern Ireland, was in the province from 1968 to 1973, during her husband's employment there as an architect. During the early part of their residence in Ulster they lived near Ballymena, where she taught in a boys' secondary school, after completing her training as an art-teacher at the New University of Ulster at Coleraine. For the last eighteen months they were in Belfast.

Although Philippa Goodall¹ had some direct contact with the violence during that latter period, and indeed began to make images relating to the troubles after the Bloody Sunday shootings, it was not until her return to Birmingham in 1974 that she made a whole

¹. The following discussion of Philippa Goodall's work is based on a conversation with her on 20 Jan 1976.
295. Philippa Goodall/Untitled/1973/photocopy with pencil and coloured ink/16½ x 11⅛ ins (42 x 29.7 cms)/Collection: the artist/Photo: B. Loftus
series of works on this theme. In them she used media pictures of soldiers, guns and gunmen (ill 295)\(^1\) to analyse and criticise their unreal image of the conflict. Often they are filtered through grids as a kind of visual equivalent to the way they are sieved and selected prior to reaching the public. Their drama is undermined by first photocopying them and then tinting them with soft, sweet, shabby colours. And their machismo element is further eroded by ironic juxtapositions with superman, (Goodall is a committed feminist), flowers and the bodies of the victims on Bloody Sunday.

Suzan Swale\(^2\) is also an art lecturer from the Midlands, and taught in the Belfast College of Art during the academic year of 1973-4. Although she knew others who had taught in Northern Ireland she had never been there previously herself. Always of a nervous disposition she found the physical and mental violence terrifying. (She was close to a number of bombs, and endured the strains generated by the first loyalist workers' strike in May 1974). And yet, like Philippa Goodall, she found the violence unreal - until it appeared in the media. So it was that most of the works about Northern Ireland that she made deal with media imagery. On a bed of sand a coffin wrapped in polythene and covered with a mirror spews photographs out of a hole where the head should be - the pictures are a jumble of violent scenes from Belfast and details from great works of art. On a panel single shots from the television coverage of the Bloody Friday bombs freeze for our horrified gaze the image of men scooping the remains of the victims into polythene bags.

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2. The following discussion of Suzan Swale's work is largely based on a conversation with her on 19 July 1974.
296. Suzan Swale/Paper Garden wall-floor piece/1974/
Photo: Suzan Swale
These are interposed with photographs of Ms Swale's husband. In front of a vastly enlarged photograph of a bombed office, its papers strewn all over the road, some newspapers are hung out on lines like washing, while others lie in stacks on the floor. Ants crawl out from between them (ill 296). The photograph on the wall is the reality, in front of which the papers look ineffectual. Yet it too comes from a newspaper. The lines on which the papers hang are lines of communication, covering the space between the viewer and the "reality". Yet as so often in these works by Swale, they reveal distances rather than shorten them. Few of them even touch the "reality". None of them touch the viewer.

Adrian Hall is another English artist who has taught at the Belfast College of Art during the present troubles. He was the principal lecturer in sculpture there from 1972 to 1979. A Cornishman, with previous teaching experience in New Zealand, he has made a number of works exploring the wider political developments linked with the Northern Ireland conflict. In Silk Street (ill 297) he attempted to demonstrate some of the ways in which those involved in the struggle have been manipulated by powers external to the province. The work brings together photographs and drawings of three main kinds of subject matter: the new buildings in Silk Street on the fringes of the City of London; the violence in Northern Ireland; and sexual pornography. Hall intended it as a protest against the people who write the lines, whether in Northern Ireland, or the pages of Playboy magazine or on the English building sites employing Irish labourers. Most of the images selected in pursuit of this aim had

1. It appeared on p.7 of the Belfast Telegraph for 21 Jan 1972. The caption ran "Documentation of terror. Documents strewn over the roadway of Victoria St today after terrorists planted a bomb in the offices of Barrie's, potato importers."
297. Adrian Hall/Silk Street/1978/mixed media drawing with photographs/33 x 45 ins (83.8 x 114.2 cms)/Irish Contemporary Art Society/Photo: Adrian Hall
some kind of personal resonance for him. The rubber bullet was given to him by a friend, the Silk Street buildings were outside another friend's flat in London, and one of the Northern Ireland photographs had for a long time been stuck up on his studio wall. (It shows a bullet-riddled and blood-stained hut in Whiteabbey, Co Antrim, in 1976, following a shooting attack on a mixed group of Catholics and Protestants enjoying a card game).

In contrast the images employed by Conrad Atkinson to demonstrate the links between events in Northern Ireland and developments elsewhere appear to be public, political and almost completely impersonal. Thus in his Silver Liberties piece (ill 298), made for the Art for Society exhibition in 1978, an Irish tricolour forms the background to juxtaposed photographs of men alleged to have been tortured during interrogation in Northern Ireland, of Steve Biko, the black leader killed in prison in South Africa, and of Liddle Towers, alleged to have been kicked to death by police in Newcastle-upon-Tyne after his arrest on a charge of being drunk and disorderly. 2

Similarly the work about Northern Ireland made by Atkinson for the exhibition "Un Certain Art Anglais" shown in Paris early in 1979 consisted of two large rosettes, one a development of the Easter parade rosette reproduced above (ill 116), the other showing Northern Ireland as a red heart in the centre of Europe. And both the installations and the postcards prepared for Atkinson's show at the Project Gallery in Dublin in April 1980, titled The Golden Triangle and the Weight of History, assembled maps, sketches, statistics and diagrams in order to convey the impact of the violence in Northern Ireland, and the links between the conflict and wider economic and political

1. The following discussions of Conrad Atkinson's work is based on conversations with him on 6 March 1975, 7 June 1975, and 26 February 1980.
298. Conrad Atkinson/Silver Liberties - A Souvenir of a wonderful Anniversary Year/1978/4 acrylic paintings with collage of photos and newspaper clippings and barbed wire/total 84 x 192 ins (213.5 x 487.8 cms)/Photo: Eeva Inkeri
developments in Europe.

Moreover the same emphasis on apparently impersonal document-
tation was apparent in an exhibition by Atkinson dealing with the internal politics of Ulster. This show, commissioned from the artist by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and mounted in their gal-
lery in Belfast in 1975, was titled A shade of green, an orange edge. The bulk of it consisted of photographs of wall paintings, graffiti, posters and leaflets taken by Atkinson during a series of visits to Ulster three months previous to the exhibition,\(^1\) a wall of photos documenting the Bloody Sunday shootings, and a display advocating the introduction of a Bill of Rights in the province. This last included a series of video-taped interviews with former internees.

Yet Conrad Atkinson's apparently impersonal handling of the Ulster conflict is deceptive. In much of his recent work on this theme the imagery has become increasingly emotive, with his intro-
duction of the heart as a symbol of Northern Ireland's central importance in European politics, and his use of his own hands as a base on which to display words and images relating to the Irish problem.\(^2\) And his interest in this subject-matter in the first place was closely related to his own background as a native of Clea-
tor Moor, a Cumbrian mining village largely populated by descendants of Irish immigrants, and still marked by bitterness between Prote-
tant and Catholic, orange and green.

Indeed exploration of the Northern conflict motivated partly by personal links, is very common amongst these British artists and

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1. These were accompanied by a collection of written grafitti, snatches of verse and comments relating to the conflict lar-
gely compiled by this writer.
2. A practice also used in connection with a number of other poli-
tical issues in recent years by Atkinson, and often annotated with the following quotation from the Russian constructivist artist El Lizzitsky: "May the overthrow of the old world be imprinted on the palms of your hands."
helps to explain some of the characteristics of their work. Thus Philippa Goodall's deliberate muting of media images appears to be linked to her continuing warm feelings for the country in which she was born, and Suzan Swale's exploration of the distances between the viewer and the event were rooted as much in her personal sense of distance from England and her husband as in the perceptual dislocations introduced by the mass media. Similarly Rita Donagh and Sonya Knox, two artists working in Britain but with Irish roots, have been much concerned with charting the distances in time and space between various elements in the Ulster conflict.

When Rita Donagh\(^1\) commenced her Ulster Series she had not visited Northern Ireland\(^2\) but was strongly aware of her own family links with the Republic.\(^3\) Gradually in a long sequence of drawings and paintings, she plotted areas of time and space and emotion relating to the Ulster conflict, with the kinds of signs and symbols employed by map-makers and geometricians. The opposition of red and green at the Irish border, the location of megalithic burial places in an area of the Republic, the fragments of debris flying through a photo of a bomb explosion by Clive Limpkin,\(^4\) the crosses put out for those killed on Bloody Sunday and in the Kent State massacre, the paving-stones on which city victims die, all were analysed and logged in this fashion. It was only however when she saw a photograph in the Sunday Times\(^5\) of the body of a victim of the Dublin bombs covered with

\(^1\) The following discussion of Rita Donagh's work is largely based on a conversation with her on 7 Nov 1974.
\(^2\) She has subsequently been to Belfast a number of times, generally as a visiting lecturer for the College of Art.
\(^3\) Three out of four of her grandparents were Irish.
299. Rita Donagh/Evening Papers, Ulster/1972-74/
oil, collage and pencil on canvas/55 1/8 x
78 3/4 ins (140 x 200 cms)/British Council/
Photo: John Mills
newspapers that a whole range of personal feelings were unleashed in her — about the kindness of the gesture, the immediacy of the bomb exploding as people bought their newspapers going home from work, the killing of the Irish by the Irish, and her own links with the city of Dublin — and she was enabled to complete a final picture with this huddled, obliterated form (ill 299).¹

Sonya Knox, an artist reared in Northern Ireland who has trained and worked in England, has also, like Rita Donagh, sought to chart and map out the relationship between public and private areas of emotions and events relating to the Ulster conflict. In her performance Echoes from the North (ill 300), first made at the Acme Gallery in London in the summer of 1977, and then repeated at the Project Gallery in Dublin on 14 August 1978 and the Belfast College of Art on 9 Oct 1979, she has recalled by various means her memories of an Ulster Protestant childhood and their implications for an understanding of the present conflict, in what she has described as

"A process of bandaging/unbandaging revealing/disguising, protecting, hard materials/soft, endurance." ²

In a simple grey dress reminiscent of a nurse she walked round and round through a great tangle of barbed wire, parts of which she bandaged together and then pulled out to nail to the walls, while the four cassette recorders which she gradually unwrapped spoke her memories of the tangled, conflicting attitudes towards their political identity of herself, her parents and those amongst

¹. My discussion of the evolution of this series is largely based on my conversation with Rita Donagh together with Sarah Kent's analysis of these works in Hayward Annual '78 (exhibition catalogue) Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, pp.78-9: photographs of Ms. Donagh's preparatory drawings kindly supplied to me by the British Council; and Rita Donagh (exhibition catalogue).
². Booklet accompanying the performance.
300. Sonya Knox/Invitation to "Echoes from the North" performance/1978/Collection: B. Loftus
whom they lived. Implicit in all the elements of this work was
the constantly shifting power of memory to shape political atti-
tudes, and the contradictory desires within observers/artists
confronted with the personal and public impact of the Ulster con-
flict, to reveal and suppress their thoughts and emotions about it.

From these descriptions and discussions of images relating
to the Ulster conflict by artists from mainland Britain it should
be apparent that not only do they concentrate on particular themes,
but also that they employ modes of vision distinct from those to be
found in the work of artists in Northern Ireland and the Republic.
The figurative imagery so noticeable in the artworks produced north
and south of the border is virtually absent. The maker's touch is
not eliminated, as in the images constructed by the artists from the
Republic — indeed in some of these works, such as Silk Street and
Evening Papers 1972-4 it is an important element in the picture's
message — but that maker is an assembler of existing images, a docu-
mentor of facts and actions, and an organiser of muted statements,
rather than the creator of an overt, strongly committed and perso-
nal viewpoint.

It is possible to envisage these stylistic characteristics as
related to a number of factors. One can see their muted, low key-
approach as linked to the lack of political debate in mainland Bri-
tain about the Northern Ireland issue. Or one can attribute the
soft, gentle nature of many of them to their production by women
artists (an analysis somewhat undermined by the cutting anger of much
of Suzan Swale's work). Or one can locate them as stages in the
individual output of artists much influenced by some recent fashions

1. This analysis of Sonya Knox's performance is based on watching
   it in Dublin and Belfast, and on conversations with her on
   these occasions.
in art. Certainly the Ulster images by Adrian Hall and Rita Donagh are clearly related to their recent absorption of some of the practices of conceptual and land art, in which the image on the wall becomes the document of thought or action. Equally, it is true that Sonya Knox's performance contains an element of the masochism frequently characterising this recently fashionable art form, and that Suzan Swale's pieces must be seen in the context of the commitment of the sculpture department of the Belfast College of Art in the early 1970s to facilitating work exploring the area between two and three-dimensional artworks.

But the very influence of these fashions on English images of the Northern Ireland troubles is related, like the dominance of women artists as makers of these images, and the almost unanimous avoidance in them of overt political comment, to the institutional organisation of the British artworld. Since the mid-1960s most British artists have trained in art schools strongly emphasising their need to pursue an individual creativity, and have then supported themselves by teaching art, while attempting to achieve recognition through acceptance by a London dealer's gallery, and critical acclaim for their one-man-shows mounted in that setting. During the 1960s the operation of this system was effervescent and optimistic, paralleling the economic boom then taking place in Britain. Young British artists were patronised by a wide range of individuals and organisations, well-advertised in the newly-established newspaper colour supplements, part of fashionable society and launched into international prominence as

1. Pending the publication of the Arts Council of Great Britain's report on the living conditions and career structures of visual artists, the best summary description of the current organisation of the British artworld, and its implications appears to be Richard Cork's "Art for Society's Sake", in Art for Society (exhibition catalogue), Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1978, pp.47-54.
evidence of Britain's new economic and cultural vitality. However, with the economic slump in the 1970s, patronage by anybody except art institutions virtually disappeared, the relevance of the visual arts to a depressed nation was increasingly questioned, and governments, particularly Conservative governments, became increasingly wary of promoting abroad any art which appeared to question the political and social system obtaining in Britain.¹

In response to this situation many artists in Britain appear to have sought to produce kinds of imagery which side-stepped the increasingly inefficient metropolitan dealer-critic system. Hence the turning to forms of imagery favoured by British artists handling the Northern Ireland troubles, with their emphasis on unmarketable documentation, installation and performance, their high involvement of women, less committed to career structures than many men, and their occasional deliberate flouting of convention by incorporation of overt political comment.

Yet the continuing grip of existing institutional procedures and conventions on such attempts to produce art-forms outside the system is very apparent in the works relating to the Northern Ireland conflict described above. Philippa Goodall's attempts to distribute her Ulster images in book or postcard form came to nothing. A large postcard of press-images of the impact of violence in Ulster produced by Suzan Swale had no effect on the English friends to whom she sent it. Her other Northern Ireland pieces, while rejected as altogether too arty by her former students at the Belfast College of Art, were shown in the Grabowski Gallery in London in the

¹. Thus when works by Conrad Atkinson relating to the Ulster conflict were exhibited in Paris and New York, there were objections on both occasions from the British Ambassador (Atkinson, op cit, pp.23-24 and p.55).
summer of 1974, and one of the works was bought by the Tate Gallery.

Most of the works in Rita Donagh's Ulster Series are owned by institutions like the British Council and the Ulster Museum, and an attempt to make them more accessible through the Gallery London led to a highly esoteric review in the art-magazine Studio International. Adrian Hall's Silk Street was bought by the Contemporary Irish Art Society. Sonya Knox's performances have been confined to art-centres and art-colleges. And even Conrad Atkinson's attempts to handle the Northern Ireland situation in ways not normally permitted by the British art-system, have provided evidence of its continuing grip. While his images of the Northern Ireland conflict have been widely shown in Ulster, in mainland Britain, in the Republic of Ireland, in France and in America, no works relating to the conflict by Northern Ireland artists appear to have been shown outside the island of Ireland except for the handful included in the Art for Society exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1978. The metropolis continues to dominate the modes and functions available to artists' images in Britain today.

Indeed, the reception accorded to the Art for Society exhibition when it came to Northern Ireland in November 1978 strikingly emphasised the different roles given to visual imagery on the mainland and in the province. In order to establish this it is

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necessary to give an account of what actually happened.

The Art for Society exhibition consisted of works by over a hundred socially and politically committed artists from all over the United Kingdom, and was initially shown at the Whitechapel gallery in London in May and June of 1978. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland negotiated to bring it over to Northern Ireland, offering it to the Ulster Museum as part of the Queen's University Festival in November 1978. (It is common practice for large exhibitions sponsored by the Arts Council to go into the much bigger temporary exhibition gallery at the Museum.) The Museum was pleased to accept, although they later asked to be given the right to 'edit'. It is not known whether any of the Trustees saw the exhibition in London. They certainly had ample opportunity to do so as the exhibition ran at the Whitechapel for over a month.

When the work arrived and began to be unpacked some of the museum's attendants were concerned by the nature of particular works and threatened to boycott the show, claiming that they had union support. The works to which they particularly objected were Conrad Atkinson's Silver Liberties (ill 298) and another piece which used the slogan "Ban the National Front." The Northern Ireland media gave wide coverage to the attendants' threat. Subsequently the trustees of the Museum, claiming that they were acting completely independently, said the show would not go ahead unless five pieces were withdrawn. They were Conrad Atkinson's piece, two paintings by the Northern Ireland artist, Jack
Pakenham, attacking all paramilitaries, and two pieces by English women artists on the subjects of rape and the stereotype of the muscle-bound male.

The Whitechapel Gallery and the Arts Council then put forward a compromise in which the pieces in question would be shown elsewhere, whilst the main exhibition went ahead in the museum. A simple statement would appear in both venues explaining that there had been objections to those works. In the light of this suggestion both sides agreed to a meeting of all interested parties on Monday 6th November. Midday on the 5th however the organisers had a sudden phone call telling them that the trustees had reached an irrevocable decision not to show. Later the same day a one sentence press release was issued to the same effect.

At this stage I have to declare an interest in the proceedings. I had an uncontroversial poster in the exhibition and had staying with me an English artist who had come over to instal his equally uncontroversial work in the show. Together with other artists involved, community activists, the museum's professional staff, trade unionists and the general public we made individual protests about the trustees' decision and helped co-ordinate a largely spontaneous picket and sit-in of about a hundred people at the Museum on Friday 10th November. Meanwhile the artists responsible for the 'objectionable' works telegramed the Museum and the Arts Council, offering to withdraw if it would help the exhibition to go ahead. As an upshot of this the trustees agreed to see a deputation
of three people, and eventually after listening to arguments from them, and the various other parties involved, revoked their decision. The exhibition was shown in two parts, the rejected works in the Arts Council gallery and the rest in the Ulster Museum.

The general view of this whole episode held by the press and by public opinion in Northern Ireland, is summed up by a cartoon, drawn by a local artist and reproduced in the "Belfast Telegraph" (ill 301). People felt that the attendants had bullied the trustees. Certainly the role of the attendants in the affair was very interesting. To a large extent their protest was manufactured by two of their number, both Loyalists, one a city councillor representing Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. As is usual with that party they made skilful use of the media, particularly radio and television, to put across their stridently expressed views. It is a moot question whether they represented the remainder of the attendants, who were by no means all hardliners and included a number of Catholics. These spokesmen claimed that by displaying such provocative works the Museum would expose the attendant staff to abuse and possibly danger. By themselves creating such a furore they had of course brought about a situation in which abuse or attack were likely. (It should be remembered that an exhibition by Conrad Atkinson was shown three years earlier in the Arts Council gallery without any fuss or repercussions, and that earlier in 1978 the Almost Free Show displayed Long Kesh hankies by loyalists and republicans in the same gallery without prior publicity and encountered no problems despite drawing in to the gallery many of Belfast's younger and tougher citizens.) It seems likely too that there may have been a certain amount of low-level intimidation of the other attendants and some of the professional staff who protested about the exhibition's cancellation. And to many of the attendants,
301. Joe/Cartoon about the cancellation of the Art for Society exhibition at the Ulster Museum in 1978/Belfast Telegraph, 10 Nov 1978, p. 8
making life difficult for the trustees gave them added leverage in an existing dispute about wage levels (though this was not, as was claimed at the time, a dispute which had official union backing).

However, and this was a point widely ignored at the time, there was no need for the director and the trustees to capitulate to the attendants. There is in the Ulster Museum no demarcation about hanging or handling of exhibitions, which can be, and indeed often are undertaken by the curatorial staff. Why then did the trustees align themselves with their attendants, thereby considerably undermining the professional status of their staff and the national standing of their museum, which had recently been a runner-up in the Museum of the Year award?

The answer lies partly in the composition of the Board of Trustees itself and partly in a wider conflict of attitudes about events in Northern Ireland. Under the Museums (Northern Ireland) Order, 1973 the board of the trustees is composed of one person appointed by the Queen's University, one person appointed by the New University of Ulster, three persons appointed by the Belfast City Council and nine appointed by the Department of Education. Despite constant pressure from the unions there was no representative of either the attendant or the curatorial staff union, which might have defused the situation. (Belfast was also grossly over-represented considering the museum's national status, although that probably did not affect the issue.)

It would be unfair to cast either the trustees or the attendants as complete villains. Much of the feeling aroused during this episode was generated by a belief that Northern Ireland is culturally and politically dictated to by the metropolis. Most artists in the province were strongly

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opposed to censorship of the exhibition, and their criticisms of the show when it was eventually made available generally centred, as in mainland Britain, on the elements of mystification and banal propaganda involved in many of the works included in it. But those in Ulster who opposed the exhibition's display of works challenging local political and sexual conventions did so not merely out of bigoted support for loyalism and puritanism, but also because the works in question were predominantly English, avant-garde, large and one-sided in their attitudes. Conrad Atkinson later claimed that he would have made Silver Liberties (ill 298) somewhat differently if he had known it was to be shown in Northern Ireland. Certainly its scale and its total rejection of Ulster Protestant traditions and politics,¹ was an example of that cultural colonialism and naive political expousal of the Irish republican cause so often found amongst liberal and leftwing observers in England and so bitterly opposed by Ulster loyalists. Art for Society was a title which very accurately conveyed the clash in world views centreing on this work.

Conclusions
For indeed the artists approaching the Northern Ireland troubles in their work have not done so in a fashion dictated purely by their personal aesthetic consciousness or by political developments in the province during the past thirteen years. Their approach to this subject, the themes and images they have used, and the style in which their works have been made have all been related to their location within the practices and conventions of a distinctive way of seeing pervading all visual imagery across the spectrum from fine arts to mass media, and that way of seeing whether it be peculiar to Ulster Protestants, Northern Ireland Catholics, citizens of the Irish Republic or inhabitants of mainland

¹. See Atkinson, op cit, pp. 19-20.
Britain, is crucially related to social, political and economic as well as cultural factors. The artist may be seen as existing for society, but is inescapably in society, and produces work for the full understanding of which a knowledge of the social construction of culture is a necessity.
CHAPTER 8 : CONCLUSIONS

The introduction to this thesis proposed that the approaches to visual imagery adopted in it would achieve two ends, namely the provision of insights into the nature of the Northern Ireland conflict, and of exemplary modes of discussing the relationships between visual imagery and political developments. It is now appropriate to consider whether these aims have been achieved, and the wider theoretical and practical considerations raised in their pursuit.

By looking at visual imagery in Northern Ireland as an interrelated whole, instead of accepting the usual separation of fine art, popular imagery and the mass-media, it has been possible to discern two distinctive ways of seeing in the province, held by its two politico-religious communities. The separation between them is not absolute. Borrowings, overlap and shared characteristics have been apparent. But in general the opposition between a Protestant mode of vision favouring timeless, abstract, crafted, divided, unarty, hierarchical, legitimate and public images, and a Catholic mode of vision favouring historical, figurative, arty, all-encompassing, romantic, rebellious and private images has become very apparent. And this opposition has been seen to spread right across the field of visual imagery, from the most elaborate works of the fine artist to the simplest badge or cartoon. What in effect this overall approach to visual imagery in Northern Ireland has revealed therefore is that the conflict in the province is not only between people who hold very different political and religious viewpoints, but also between people whose very mode of seeing and therefore comprehending political, religious and other aspects of their lives is distinctive and to a large degree
separate. More particularly the constant evidence in this thesis of the involvement of religious traditions and practices in these distinctive modes of vision severely erodes the commonly-held view that the Northern Ireland conflict has nothing to do with religion.

A number of objections to these conclusions may be raised. It may variously be argued that they merely reiterate a view of Northern Ireland culture already widely held in the province, that they set individual makers of visual imagery in Ulster within a determinist framework allowing no freedom or value to their work, and that they are of little relevance to discussions of the relationship between visual imagery and politics in other contexts.

Certainly the distinctive cultures of Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics have long been a matter for comment at every level of society in the province. However what I hope this thesis has achieved is an exposition of the way in which those cultures have been and continue to be constructed by a series of groups and individuals affected by a variety of political, social and artistic factors, so that the images and modes of vision pertaining to them have acquired layers of meaning, and are continually available to a very wide range of uses and functions. In other words these distinctive cultures are not vague, mysterious, determinist forces but constructed entities amenable to change.

This approach in itself is fiercely opposed to any form of reductionism, and I have constantly been at pains in this thesis to represent the makers of Northern Ireland's imagery as affected but not

1. Perhaps the most eloquent discussion of this theme is W.R. Rodgers' "Conversation Piece. An Ulster Protestant", The Bell, Dublin, vol 4 no 5, August 1942, pp. 305-314.
wholly determined by political, social, artistic and economic factors. Moreover, although I have seen the question of value as a matter to be discussed elsewhere than in this study, I do not wish it to be thought that the Protestant or Catholic mode of vision are in themselves sectarian, or that one or other has the greater cultural or human value. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. (Speaking personally I find the ability of the Protestant mode of vision to bear witness to the horrors of war encouraging, but its equal tendency to neat, abstract conformity worrying. Conversely Catholic imagery's figurative grasp of humanity with all its flaws has a strong appeal for me, while I find highly disturbing its often over-easy sublimation of suffering and failure. But these are matters for discussion elsewhere).

That the divided culture of Northern Ireland, and the social, political, economic and artistic factors encouraging it are distinctive, there can be no doubt. It has been evident throughout this thesis that the small scale of the province, the strength of its political and religious divisions, its geographical, economic, political and cultural marginality, and the dominance of kinship networks within its society have fostered the development of image-makers whose work tends to extend into a number of fields, rather than being confined to a specialised practice, and who are generally located within the Protestant or Catholic visual tradition, rather than within international modes of vision. In this situation the wholeness of visual imagery and its close inter-relationships with social, economic and political factors are particularly apparent.

1. On this see in particular Rosemary Harris, Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster, Manchester University Press, 1972.
Nevertheless the validity of discussing visual imagery in this way rather than as a direct product of political events, or the transcendent creation of individual imaginations can be extended, both to political cultures closely paralleling that which obtains in Northern Ireland, and to more general situations in which visual images and political developments are interconnected. The confrontations of Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, and of whites and blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia come readily to mind as examples of conflicts between world-views similar to that taking place in Ulster. And more generally it is possible to see how the ways of approaching the interrelationships between visual imagery and political developments employed in this thesis could be used in analysing political culture in more central, less divided polities in which the existential reality of the divisions between categories of visual imagery are more apparent, and their living function less immediately obvious than in Northern Ireland.

The attention to context of images emphasised in this study could be replicated in analyses of press images, locating them in the newspaper as a whole entity constructed by many hands. The focus on the intersection between private and public imagery could be employed in a study of the dissemination, styles and use of personality posters. The exploration of visual images as part of living rituals could be applied to research on the regalia of state occasions including that employed by the spectators. The concept of visual images as part of transactions between groups and individuals could be utilised in analyses of the commissioning and celebration of public monuments. The evolution of images through their continuing use could be explored in relation to such potent elements in national consciousness as the paintings of John Constable. The sense of the interplay between fine art and popular imagery
and of the way institutions mediate styles of seeing could underpin studies of the actual living relationships between the fine arts and the worlds of advertising and political propaganda. And the interest in the way visual traditions are constructed could support an analysis of the development of Protestant religious imagery in Britain between the Reformation and the present day, and its relationship to the validation of the nation-state.

Positing such possible approaches to visual imagery in other contexts raises the question why in fact they have not been adopted (it would certainly have made the writing of this thesis much easier if such studies had already been in existence). As has already been made plain in the introduction the theoretical basis for them is not lacking. In particular Mary Douglas's adaptation of the socio-linguistic studies of Basil Bernstein\(^1\) provides clear indications of ways in which visual language can be related to social, political and religious factors, and T.J. Clark's development of Pierre Macherey's emphasis on the significance of gaps and sticking points in visual imagery\(^2\) offers an important means of locating some of the most revealing elements in any visual code. Similarly the overlap and interconnection between modernisation and traditionalism generally emphasised throughout this thesis is a topic familiar in much recent writing in the fields of history, political science and sociology.

That these theoretical generalisations have not generally been pursued into the areas explored in this thesis appears to be due to the separation and limitation of academic disciplines described in the introduction, and to a more general aversion in academic studies to

grappling with current issues in the field. This latter tendency is strongly underlined by some of the defects in this piece of research and the reasons for their existence.

Undoubtedly the weakest chapter in this thesis is that about the Green traditions. This is due to a number of factors. Some of these are peculiar to Northern Ireland. Partly because of the nature of the culture native to the Catholic community, and partly because of that community's political situation, written and illustrative records of its visual traditions are very patchy. And given the nature of the present troubles, and my own strong English accent, I have been cautious in my research about contemporary uses of visual imagery within that community.

But these localised problems point to more general defects in existing academic approaches to visual imagery. The organisation of academic institutions and the training provided by them lays such a heavy emphasis on written and visual documents that it requires a very strong commitment to move outside the library, lecture-halls and seminar-rooms in order to observe, record, question and analyse the living functions of visual imagery. So rarely does this happen indeed that the student who attempts this approach is often faced with a dual task. Not only must he or she provide a thesis, but also a description of the very field of evidence on which that thesis is based. Hence, in part, the length of this piece of research.

The rarity of such studies also leaves the student ill-equipped for tackling them. This thesis would have been considerably improved had its writer had some training in interview techniques (without which all the academic paraphernalia of questionnaires and representative samples lose virtually all their value), better knowledge of photography as a working tool, and a far stronger grasp of the institutional organisation
and technology of modern printing, advertising and mass-media. Instruction in such basic techniques and background information rarely appears to be part of the training of the art historian or the sociologist.

The kinds of tunnel vision described in the introduction to this thesis will persist until the academic community encourages the crossing of disciplinary boundaries, and a two-way interchange between its own personnel and the practical specialists of the outside world, whether they be wall-painters, local historians or advertising agents. The images in conflict are not only those of William and Mary, Orange and Green, Politics and Artists, but of art-historians and sociologists, anthropologists and historians, academics and practitioners. Their divisions perpetuate the war in the mind's eye.
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