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**P.S. O'HEGARTY (1879-1955) AND THE
IRISH SEPARATIST MOVEMENT**

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

PhD

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Relations**

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For Mam and Dad

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nationalist career of Patrick Sarsfield O’Hegarty - Irish separatist, literary critic, historian and exponent of an ‘intelligent patriotism’, which he emphasised as the key to asserting Ireland’s independence from English occupation. O’Hegarty was a member of the IRB Supreme Council, Sinn Fein Executive and prominent member of the Gaelic League during the early part of the twentieth century. He began his separatist career as an enthusiast of the Sinn Fein programme and brought to the movement a twentieth century style Fenianism that also embraced the Gaelic cultural revival as a means to create a sense of shared existence between the different cultures in Ireland.

During the period 1906-1914 O’Hegarty believed he witnessed the best and most productive period of the Sinn Fein movement but held serious misgivings and became severely disillusioned with the revolutionary and doctrinaire tone that Sinn Fein adopted after 1916 which, he believed, created the conditions for the Civil War in 1922. Indeed his political views were very much shaped by the split in Sinn Fein over the Anglo-Irish in 1922 and the partitioning of Ireland and his polemical book The Victory of Sinn Fein offers a vivid account of the reasons behind the demise of the original ideals of Sinn Fein.

O’Hegarty counts as a significant eyewitness and commentator during the momentous events of 1914-22 whose aftermath still reverberates in Ireland today.

The chapters are divided into themes that O’Hegarty turned his broad and liberal mind to and cover in detail some of the most challenging issues of the period such as the role of the Catholic Clergy and the Anglo-Irish cultural revival.

This thesis seeks to show that there was more to O'Hegarty than just an agitator for national independence and that he was willing to ask difficult, and seek solutions to, vital questions of culture and identity that many of his contemporaries chose to ignore.

O'Hegarty was a key thinker in the separatist tradition who influenced many significant nationalist figures such as Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. He encouraged his generation to take a wider view of cultural and political matters and, arguably, his influence was increased after national independence through his writing of A History of Ireland under the Union which became a set historical text in Irish schools for fifteen years.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ireland two over-riding forms of nationalism have contended with each other. The first is British nationalism, which is largely a product of state-building, of conquest, territorial incorporation, imperial expansion and contraction, and of the establishing of remarkably continuous state institutions. Here, state-building has preceded nation-building. The role of a national intelligentsia is historically secondary. In nationalist Ireland however, the project of nation-building is typically understood as preceding 'state-building.' As in the case of most nineteenth and twentieth century nationalisms elsewhere, intellectuals in Ireland have been to the forefront in 'constructing' or 'imagining' the nation, as investors and guardians of the national heritage, as key mobilisers of popular national movements armed at overthrowing the existing state dispensation. Liam O'Dowd, On Intellectuals and Intellectual Life in Ireland: International, Comparative and Historical Contexts (Belfast, 1996), p.16.

Approaching the intellectual, cultural and political beliefs of P.S. O'Hegarty requires the drawing together of the multitude of roles he undertook within a long and industrious life. O'Hegarty, during various stages of his life, was an historian, prolific journalist, editor, civil servant, book seller, propagandist, literary critic and acquaintance of Arthur Griffith, Bulmer Hobson and Michael Collins not to mention his literary friends who numbered among them Robert Lynd, George Russell (AE), W.B. Yeats and many other noted contemporaries in Ireland during the early twentieth century.

The one theme that united all of the various roles described above was O'Hegarty's deep veneration of the Irish nationalist tradition, and more specifically the Fenian/IRB programme to which he dedicated his time and energies, as did his younger brother Sean, although it must be stated their lives took very different and dramatic courses.

The Irish separatist movement owed its provenance in the twentieth century to a minority of dedicated Irish nationalists' intent on exposing the constitutional framework of the Irish

Party and its popular mandate as an inadequate method for the establishment of a culturally and politically distinct Irish nation free from its colonial tie to the United Kingdom.

As a separatist, O'Hegarty traced his separatist lineage to the United Irishmen movement, who, in the tradition of the French Revolution and its Republican ideology, asserted Ireland's independence through force of arms in their failed rebellion of 1798. This model of armed resistance toward the ensuing 1801 Act of Union was followed by two further rebellions in 1803 and 1848 before the Fenian movement, founded by James Stephens in 1858, embraced physical force rebellion as the only means whereby the union with England could be severed and Irish independence obtained. The Fenian rebellion of 1865 met with the same fate as its predecessors but remained a cabalistic and significantly marginalized movement in the background of continuing constitutional Irish agitation for independence. It was left until the early twentieth century before Fenianism experienced rejuvenation in its direction of Irish separatist policy under the influence of Denis McCulloch, Bulmer Hobson and Tom Clarke, from 1905 onwards. This group also featured O'Hegarty as a prominent exponent of, and commentator upon, nationalist intellectual thought. O'Hegarty was born into a family, which very much reflected the Fenian philosophy and was schooled at the North Monastery in County Cork and, customary to a Christian Brothers education, would have been enthusiastically introduced to the Irish language. From this background two of the central characteristics of his Irish separatism, the Fenian outlook and the centrality of language to an Irish national identity, burgeoned to become essential components of both his IRB and Sinn Féin membership.

After gaining distinction in his secondary education at North Monastery, O'Hegarty spent a brief time as a law clerk from 1895 before entering the civil service as a postal clerk in 1897. Here, O'Hegarty's career was to have a profound impact on his Irish separatism, as,

from an initial posting in Cork, he was moved to London where he lived and worked from 1902 to 1913. As an Irish émigré in London, O'Hegarty quickly established himself at the heart of the separatist movement where he was to become secretary of the separatist organisations the Dungannon Clubs, the Gaelic League, sit on the Executive Council of Sinn Fein and member of the Supreme Council of the IRB representing the South East of England. In 1914, O'Hegarty was transferred from London to Shrewsbury and later Welshpool before resigning from the Post Office in 1918 after refusing to take the oath of allegiance, which had become a mandatory practice for all civil service employees at this time. Returning to Ireland O'Hegarty managed the Irish Bookstore in Dublin while continuing to campaign for Sinn Fein and independence until the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921. At this point, he was appointed Secretary of the Irish Department of Posts and Telegraphs, a post he held while writing articles on contemporary Ireland and the previous revolutionary period, until his retirement as a public servant in 1945. It was from this period that O'Hegarty devoted his time to completing his magnum opus A History of Ireland Under the Union, a masterly analysis of Irish nationalism examining the period from 1801-1922. He was to complete this 'work of wide reading and dense texture'¹ in 1952, three years before his death in 1955.

O'Hegarty's political beliefs fused the central tenet of Fenianism, which consisted of the use of physical force to expel the English presence in Ireland, with the romantic literary and cultural revival of the early twentieth century through the Anglo-Irish tradition and the Gaelic League. Both these political and cultural themes that dominated O'Hegarty's outlook were expounded by him through Sinn Fein led by Arthur Griffith, whom O'Hegarty praised as the champion of nationalist Ireland. Sinn Fein was a genuine movement which offered a

¹ R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch* (Penguin, 1995), p.315.

radical alternative to a largely discredited Irish party and Home Rule movement. O'Hegarty opted for Sinn Fein's constitutional approach to obtaining Irish independence as he believed it offered the best separatist model to follow for the realisation of an independent Ireland.

O'Hegarty's advocating of physical force was not an arbitrary one as it was based on the moral justification for such action against the English occupation of Ireland. Furthermore, it could only be justified as a legitimate course to take if, as stated in amended IRB constitution,² it was democratically supported by the majority of the Irish population and there was a realistic prospect of expelling the English forces. This interpretation of physical force was to have important repercussions for O'Hegarty's separatism.

For O'Hegarty, Sinn Fein represented the purer side of nationalism as through its policies, expounded in the advanced nationalist press that he wrote for, particularly the United Irishman, transcended the narrower views of prominent nationalist figures such as D.P. Moran, whose ethnic based nationalism co-existed alongside O'Hegarty's pluralist definition of what Irish nationalism consisted of. Sinn Fein, in O'Hegarty's eyes, was above ethnic and party political interests during the first decade of its existence and this was the view O'Hegarty kept with him despite the changes that occurred within the movement after the tumultuous events of 1916 and the Easter Rising which once more transformed Ireland's political landscape.

O'Hegarty was a key figure in the rejuvenation of the IRB which had fallen upon hard times after the 'New Departure' in which the Land League, under its leader Charles Stuart Parnell, failed to bring forth a measure of Irish independence and the Irish Party which had successfully reunited after the downfall of Parnell as leader, and the resulting split in the

² Leon O Broin, 'Revolutionary Nationalism in Ireland: the IRB, 1858-1924, Vol.11, p.111 in T. W. Moody, (Ed.), (Belfast, 1978), *Nationality and the Pursuit of Irish Independence: papers read before the [12th] Irish Conference of Historians*.

party was resolved in 1900 under the leadership of John Redmond, once more found favour with the majority of Irish nationalists.

O'Hegarty's move to London in 1902 was a very significant development in his political career as it was here that he met some of the most influential people in his life including the celebrated essayist and pacifist, Robert Lynd, and the future leader of the IRB, Michael Collins, the latter, like O'Hegarty, finding employment at the central post office at Mount St. Pleasant, and, significantly, it was O'Hegarty who had originally signed Collins's IRB membership card. It was also while in London that O'Hegarty corresponded with his former schoolfellow and lifelong friend Terence MacSwiney, through which some of the most penetrating insights into O'Hegarty's mind are revealed regarding the political situation in Ireland and the aspirations he held for the Irish nation. Significantly, it was 'under the leadership of Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott in Dublin, Denis McCullough and Bulmer Hobson in Belfast, and P.S. in London, the IRB achieved a new dynamism and attracted younger members to its cause.'³

The purpose of this thesis is to bring together the political and intellectual thought of this significant but neglected key figure in Irish nationalism during a time when both external (for instance the wider concerns of the English government such as the impact of satisfying nationalism's minimum demands for Home Rule) and internal political and social forces (such as the competing voices of the Irish Party and Sinn Fein) were to have an overwhelming impact on an unstable Ireland, the repercussions of which, continue to reverberate in Ireland, north and south, even today.

A discussion of O'Hegarty and his place in Irish history has been undertaken because the contemporary view of O'Hegarty has not altered or undergone any serious analysis outside

³ V.E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p.5.

traditional characterisations of significant Irish nationalists who believed in two fundamental truths; the sanctity and centrality of the Irish people as consisting of a nation state and the necessity of freeing her from the colonial bonds believed to have been imposed by English Imperialism. This was perceived as engendering an intense Anglophobia among those of O’Hegarty’s generation who championed the Irish language and culture over English culture. Given the political implications inherent in these beliefs and the depth of opposition to its aims, felt most particularly amongst Ulster Protestants, the received wisdom concerning O’Hegarty and his place in separatist thought focuses upon the stereotypical assumption of his straightforward defence of the nationalist position and the tendency to depict him as therefore incapable of addressing the more challenging questions illuminated by nationalist claims in the face of unionist opposition. Indeed, O’Hegarty’s major work, A History of Ireland under the Union has typically been taken as a version of Irish history which unionists quote from as a justification for resisting Catholic majority rule and for remaining a part of the United Kingdom rather than being absorbed into a united Irish government. An example of this can be seen in Peter Gibbon’s examination of The Origins of Ulster Unionism⁴ in which the ‘Catholic particularism’ associated with the nationalist movement, as perceived by unionists, is demonstrated through Gibbon’s use of O’Hegarty.⁵

Principally this thesis seeks to address and find solutions to the following questions:

- 1) What were the arguments O’Hegarty deployed in arguing the nationalist case for a pluralist Ireland?

⁴ Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: the formation of popular protestant politics and ideology in nineteenth century Ireland* (Surrey, 1975), p.4.

⁵ Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: the formation of popular protestant politics and ideology in nineteenth century Ireland* (Surrey, 1975), p.4. For instance Gibbon cites the following from *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.660: ‘there is no bigot anywhere quite as bad as the narrow Protestant bigot.’

- 2) What were the obstacles that acted to prevent O'Hegarty's inclusive vision of Ireland from emerging both endogenous (such as his nationalist contemporaries holding alternative visions of Ireland) and exogenous such as the unionist population of Ireland's wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom?
- 3) Given the above, could O'Hegarty make a sustained case for a pluralist nationalism acceptable to all traditions in Ireland given the intense situation described above?

In order to answer these pertinent questions this thesis not only draws on O'Hegarty's more well known works such as A History of Ireland under the Union and The Victory of Sinn Fein but also from his more ephemeral works such as his views on Sinn Fein in, Sinn Fein: An Illumination and his views on the Ulster question in, Ulster: A Brief Statement of Fact. Moreover a comprehensive survey and examination of his journalistic writings which spanned from the late nineteenth century until his death in 1955, has been undertaken in an effort to present a fulsome picture of O'Hegarty and the competing interpretations of nationalism and unionism, culture and identity, that fought for supremacy in the Ireland of his time. In this regard they stand as important publications and documents in understanding the mindset of nationalism. These documents offer the reaction of liberal nationalism to major events such as the arming of the Irish Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteer Force against the backdrop of the Great War and its impact on Ireland and the reaction of the British government. Principally, they offer an insight into Sinn Fein which started as a literary debating society and, following the 1916 Easter Rising emerged into the movement in Ireland which the British government was forced to come to terms with over the future of Ireland.

This methodology has been supplemented by bringing together and fully evaluating the existing secondary literature on O'Hegarty⁶ and analysing whether it is representative of his views and portrays him in a fair and consistent manner.

Collating this material has involved research at the Archives Department located at the University College Dublin (UCD), the Newspaper Library in Belfast Central Library and the Spencer Library at the University of Kansas, which contains the P.S. O'Hegarty Collection and where I was awarded a Kenneth Spencer Fellowship travel grant in order to pursue my studies. In utilising these resources many of O'Hegarty's private papers and more obscure journalistic writings have been located and examined in order to form an intellectual biography of O'Hegarty. As with many of the published materials in which O'Hegarty is quoted from as an eyewitness to events or in depicting the separatist interpretation of Irish history, the UCD Archives Department proved an excellent resource in piecing together the fragments of O'Hegarty's correspondences. Here, the Batt O'Connor papers and the Ernest Blythe papers were particularly relevant for O'Hegarty reminiscences regarding the period before the Treaty. Moreover at UCD while examining the Richard Mulcahy Papers, this individual's criticisms of The Victory of Sinn Fein were located, and in the Terence MacSwiney papers invaluable letters and personal correspondences between O'Hegarty and MacSwiney were discovered. The National Library of Ireland's Archives Department proved invaluable in making available the Bulmer Hobson papers which gave an insight into the thinking of the IRB Supreme Council and the evolving separatist mindset of the period especially in the formation of the Dungannon Clubs in 1905. Access to the O'Hegarty collection at Kansas University enabled the piecing together of the source

⁶ See for example Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Oxford, 1987), which refers to O'Hegarty's desire to see in Ireland a separation of politics from clerical interference, a theme developed in chapter one of this thesis. Also David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1911-1921* (Cork, 1998), which adds weight to O'Hegarty's views regarding the provenance of the 1919 Anglo-Irish War.

material O'Hegarty used in his writing of nineteenth century history and for the leaflets and propaganda he collected especially during the Irish Civil War (1921-3), and the personal comments he added to them.

This thesis is structured thematically, spanning the cultural and political thought of O'Hegarty, tracing the ideals he developed through Sinn Fein and the disillusionment with the trenchant beliefs and opinions he encountered in his attempts to re-invent the nation along the lines of his civic and pluralistic ideas of Irish society.

Chapter One examines an institution which O'Hegarty believed was a major obstacle in the implementation of these ideals. The reason for beginning my discussion on the Catholic Church during the nineteenth century is that, by then, from the beginning of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church had risen to become a significant and powerful force in Irish society. The chapter questions how a Fenian such as O'Hegarty, who was in the minority of the nationalist tradition and indeed the country, could feasibly launch an attack on an enormously powerful institution that, in many ways, stretched across the secular as well as the temporal domains of the majority of the Irish population. The fact that the Catholic Clergy were deeply embedded into the catholic people's perception of Irish identity was to cause major difficulties in his call for the strict delineation of the temporal and secular spheres and in relegating the clergy to a strict adherence to the former. Chapter One, therefore, describes the clash of idealism between the separatist tradition as defined by O'Hegarty and the role of the Catholic Clergy in Irish society.

O'Hegarty's modern approach to the problem of the clergy in politics as he saw it owed a lot to the writings of the Fenian, Charles J. Kickham in the 1860s during the high point of Fenianism in Ireland. O'Hegarty was to experience many of the problems as his Fenian ancestor. The clergy could readily deploy moral arguments against the use of physical force

which was a mainstay of the Fenian programme for achieving Irish independence and were highly experienced by O'Hegarty's era in retaining and bolstering their prominent position in Irish society, acting as the moral voice of the majority of the Catholic Irish. O'Hegarty's position is examined through his correspondences with Terence MacSwiney. Significantly, his letters to MacSwiney in Cork are penned from his occupational residence in London, his movement away from Ireland seeming to have a critical impact on his views on the clergy and their role in political matters as they contain his criticisms of the long-standing clash of the clerical and political positions that he was eager to find a resolution. This chapter takes an historic perspective as defined by O'Hegarty and seeks to explain why he believed that the clergy had ruined every separatist movement from the nineteenth century on.

Chapter Two seeks to explain the reasons behind why O'Hegarty formed his views on Irish culture and why he placed particular emphasis on the promotion of the Irish language as the foremost duty among Irish separatists, a duty to which he placed enormous energies in learning the language himself and bringing up an Irish speaking family. In this respect the Gaelic League, established in 1893, which sought to re-introduce the Irish language to the Irish people was an essential arm in the separatist canon of Irish nationalist projects. The movement, largely directed by Dr. Douglas Hyde, was an attempt by Irish nationalists, in the period following the fall of the great nationalist leader Charles Stuart Parnell to add a keynote of respectability and enthusiasm toward Irish culture and to encourage the learning of the Irish language as a framework through which cultural diversity in Ireland could be accepted by all traditions on the island. It was a non-sectarian body set up at a time when in

cities such as Dublin and Belfast clubs and societies were usually organised on a religious basis.⁷

Irish cultural revivalism was therefore vital to O'Hegarty's extension of the physical force tradition of Fenianism as the ability of the Irish people to express themselves culturally as a distinct nation, distanced from the Anglicisation of Ireland during the nineteenth century that O'Hegarty felt was bolstered by Daniel O'Connell's neglecting of the Irish language. O'Hegarty's arguments, most keenly expressed through his series of articles in Irish Freedom, entitled, 'Fenianism in Practice: An Irish Ireland Philosophy', was written to inform and encourage all projects, clubs and societies with a separatist bent, that they were Fenians at heart and doing good work for Ireland predominantly, as they were working toward Irish emancipation. Within these articles O'Hegarty placed particular emphasis on the Gaelic League as the main artery through which the civic virtue he extolled could be realised. O'Hegarty as an elected member of Ard Choiseide would have been involved with the teaching of the language as he believed that the implicit message of the Gaelic League was liberal and pluralistic in outlook. This chapter seeks to explore the drawbacks to O'Hegarty's philosophy relating to the Gaelic League and the promotion of the Irish language as a main factor in forming a solution to the cultural differences that were palpable between unionists and nationalists in the early twentieth century. Moreover, how O'Hegarty's call for the de-Anglicisation of Ireland was seen, particularly among the Ulster Unionist population, as an attempt to override their British affiliation and impose an alien culture that, even if a modicum of Home Rule were implemented, would lead to their cultural and economic estrangement in Ireland. Furthermore, this chapter questions whether

⁷ Flann Campbell, *The Dissenting Voice: Protestant Democracy in Ulster from Plantation to Partition*, (Belfast, 1991), p.339.

O'Hegarty was equipped with the terminology that could reach across the cultural divide and invoke a sense of collective Irishness or cultural cohesion among both unionists and nationalists and whether his idealism was open to a more narrow interpretation among his nationalist contemporaries.

Chapter Three builds on the indigenous cultural basis of O'Hegarty's nationalism set out in Chapter Two. However, it introduces another important element in that it widens the parameters of O'Hegarty's cultural mindset and develops upon the theme of the civic virtue he sought to inculcate among the citizens of Ireland. In the early twentieth century controversy had arisen over the cultural impact of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition and whether it was classifiable as Irish in origin, theme and content. The controversy developed over a body of literature that was distinctly ascendant in social class to the majority of the populace, which gave rise to questions over whether it could legitimately lay claim to the Irish heritage from which it derived much of its inspiration. These controversies were given added piquancy in that they took place against the backdrop of the Irish language revival which in the eyes of the nationalist majority rendered the Anglo Irish literary tradition even more characteristic of an English source and basis than an Irish one. These controversies were extended to include issues concerning immoral content, the debasing of the naturally moral Irish character and the propagandist harm such depictions served to hinder Irish self-government in the eyes of the English government and the English population in general. O'Hegarty took a completely different view to his contemporaries and asserted that there was no doubt that this literature was Irish in origin and that it played a key patriotic role in the cause of Irish independence. He was to write about the specific case of J.M. Synge's 'The Playboy of the Western World' in which the above criticisms of Anglo-Irish literature coalesced. O'Hegarty made a positive contribution to the arguments that had developed

between W.B. Yeats, who represented the artistic defence of the plays produced at the Abbey Theatre and Arthur Griffith and D.P. Moran, who in their different ways were critical of the Anglo-Irish tradition. O'Hegarty exemplified toleration and sought a *via media* between the hot-headed reactions he detected dominated opinion on both sides. What is striking about O'Hegarty's views, expressed in a series of articles entitled 'Art and the Nation' and published in the Republic, was his ability to envision the cultural repercussions of these arguments and that the natural outcome of undisguised calls for censorship from nationalist quarters could only work to the detriment of the Irish nation's artistic standing and development. Moreover his interposition was borne of healing the divisions between the contributors to the Anglo-Irish literary tradition and separatists because it was proving intrinsically damaging to the spiritual and cultural relationship he worked toward and wished to see developing in Ireland. Again the emphasis in this chapter is whether O'Hegarty's civic notion of culture was capable of breaking across the barriers relating to ethnic culture and identity.

Chapter Four tackles O'Hegarty's political views and traces the beginning of his disillusionment with the Sinn Féin movement following the Easter Rising of 1916. Up until this point O'Hegarty spoke of a 'golden age' of separatism which he claimed began to decline sharply after the events of 1916. This period, previous to the Easter Rising, had marked for O'Hegarty the high point of Sinn Féin where toleration and an inclusive philosophy existed simultaneously as the overriding and defining features of the movement. Yet the massive influx of support for Sinn Féin that was engendered through the identification of the movement with the purpose of the Easter Rising was, as O'Hegarty termed it, a 'double edged sword.' While the executions and martyrdoms of the leaders of the 1916 rebellion rejuvenated nationalist Ireland on an unprecedented scale in support of

Irish independence and ‘blew a separatist wind’, to quote O’Hegarty once more, in the country, at the same time, it attracted into the Sinn Fein movement undesirable elements who proceeded to dilute the original Sinn Fein ideals. For O’Hegarty, this dilution led to the doctrinaire interpretation of the ‘Republic’ as the immediate goal of Sinn Fein. O’Hegarty was distraught by the fact that instead of continuing with the original Sinn Fein ethos the leaders of the movement, Griffith included, did nothing to calm the nationalist population down or make any attempt to avert the gradual slide into the guerrilla tactics enforced during the Anglo-Irish war. P.S. O’Hegarty’s brother Sean O’Hegarty is introduced into this chapter as he provides an example of the lack of cohesion and direction that came from the newly set up, in 1918, ‘underground’ Irish government, known as An Dail. O’Hegarty’s despair at the idea of violence as being intrinsically associated with Sinn Fein is related here. Ultimately, that this form of warfare sullied not only Sinn Fein but the IRB as it was not consistent with the ‘swift sword thrust’ or moral uprising against England that physical force represented for O’Hegarty. This view of physical force, held by O’Hegarty, is examined in relation to Richard Mulcahy’s criticisms of O’Hegarty’s position as an opponent of the Anglo-Irish War as depicted in The Victory of Sinn Fein and through his journalistic writings. This chapter asks was O’Hegarty realistic in his belief that civil disobedience and parliamentary abstentionism, i.e. the original tenets of the Sinn Fein programme could have been re-introduced given the highly charged political climate following the 1916 insurrection. In particular, reference is made to his book Sinn Fein: An Illumination, written in 1919, in which he sought to re-stamp on Sinn Fein its original goals and ideals.

O’Hegarty’s disillusionment with Sinn Fein is traced and explored in Chapter Five, this time, in relation to the eventual peaceful settlement between Ireland and England ratified in

the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. O'Hegarty had supported the Treaty from the moment of its announcement and this chapter examines his reasons for doing so. It also examines his opponents, the anti-Treatyites, concentrating on two groups in particular, de Valera and the women of the Sinn Fein movement, Cumann na Bhan. O'Hegarty determined that within these groups the seeds of the bitter and searing split within Sinn Fein were developed over an 'oath and a figurehead', which consisted of the main objectionable points included in the Treaty. This had led to the civil war that Ireland endured during 1921-1922. O'Hegarty's vociferous attacks on his opponents are mainly taken from The Victory of Sinn Fein and are notable for his defence of the Treaty using separatist arguments, thus invoking similar language to those who claimed to be defending the separatist and republican traditions. It also contains personal disclosures O'Hegarty shared with Michael Collins and the pragmatic considerations for accepting the Treaty and also questions whether O'Hegarty sacrificed his idealist notions of Irish independence in order to generate support for the Treaty which in the light of the conservative nature of the Irish Cumann na Gaedheal government he was still able to justify acceptance of the Treaty on separatist grounds.

Chapter Six addresses the most difficult concept for O'Hegarty to explain and find a solution to, using his separatist framework. The partition of Ireland in 1920 into north and south marked the nadir of O'Hegarty's idea of a civic virtue existing and being shared among all Irishmen and women. O'Hegarty throughout his separatist career emphasised that the civic virtue he believed inherent in Ireland could be built up to finally transcend the cultural and religious differences of unionists and nationalists but ultimately his beliefs were shattered. O'Hegarty viewed partition as the worst possible outcome and in looking for an explanation for its realisation, blamed subsequent English government's politicking and

their creation of a 'false consciousness' among Ulster Unionists in order to maintain England's selfish material and defensive interests in Ireland.

The chapter addresses whether O'Hegarty's separatist arguments, although built upon notions of civic virtue and pluralism, were capable of instilling the common idea of Irish nationality before any other notions of civic identity that Unionists might proffer for remaining a part of the United Kingdom. It asks whether O'Hegarty could address and resolve the fears of unionists who adamantly refused to accept his central premise that Ireland was a unique and distinct nation and whether his notion of the Irish people, or 'underground nation' was capable of understanding the unionists sense of isolation from this idea.

Through O'Hegarty's correspondences with Ernest Blythe, an Ulster separatist, and his published work Ulster: A Brief Statement of Fact this chapter questions whether O'Hegarty really got to grips with unionist objections to home rule or any form of Irish independence and whether his concept of Irish nationalism was too monolithic in character to present a shared sense of collective unity among the different traditions in Ireland. Moreover did O'Hegarty ask the right sort of questions, i.e. that the rise of nationalism meant the erosion of protestant power in Ireland and therefore for protestants, a separate state with its own parliament but maintaining their British citizenship was worth going through in order to avoid the alternative?

CHAPTER I

THE CATHOLIC CLERGY

...and it was the identification of Nationalism with Catholicism – the religion of the dominant majority – and the consequent sectarian bitterness were the chief causes of Ireland's powerlessness and ill-fortune for many generations. ..but I want to emphasise the point that the nation must be so built up as to leave room within it for men of all creeds and no creed and that the one thing to be avoided in propaganda is anything which would help to identify Nationalism today with Catholicism. Our only possible basis of unity is a basis which will banish sectarianism utterly from all considerations of Nationalism, and which will build up the nation on a purely national basis, depending solely on the national appeal. Religion has its own sphere of action, and if it attends to that properly it will have no time to attend to purely secular concerns; if it goes outside its own province it must neglect its own function. Next to the British government in Ireland the greatest enemy to Nationalism has been the Political Church. Whatever political influence is exercised in Ireland from Rome is an immoral influence, an abuse of spiritual power, and as such it should be fought tooth and nail....The remedy is to create in Ireland a public opinion which will not tolerate interference in Irish affairs from either England or Rome, and which will force the Church in Ireland to recognise that its function is spiritual, not political.' NOTE. – The Editor of the "Republic" does not make himself responsible for all expressions of opinion of his contributors.

The Republic, (1907), 'Fenianism in Practice: An Irish – Ireland philosophy', IX, article entitled – 'The Chief Danger.'

The above extract, complete with the editor's assurance that these were the views of the author, alone provides a useful foundation for examining the views of P.S. O'Hegarty as it represents the controversial and polemical thoughts that characterised his Fenian position in the twentieth century. The article outlined how there were two perennial dangers that the Irish nation had to be alive to, the English government and the politicised clergy, if Ireland

were to successfully gain its independence from its political and social masters. O'Hegarty maintained that there was a source within Irish nationalism that was alive to these dangers, the separatist or IRB/Fenian tradition to which he was deeply committed. This movement had been formed to combat these forces as they carried the potential for subsuming the Irish people into an alien cultural, political and social system which was unreflective of their natural right to independence. The Act of Union in 1801 had begun the process by which the Irish people were becoming assimilated into English national culture and O'Hegarty believed that Fenianism was the best form of resistance to the process known to Irish nationalists as Anglicisation.

The Fenian version of England's role in Ireland depicted the latter as colonisers illegitimately seeking absorb Ireland into the British Empire through a mixture of repressive and assimilative measures ranging from exercising their superior military might during organised Irish resistance, political and social exclusion and educational policies designed to hasten the eradication of the indigenous culture. The permanent resistance to these measures was the spiritual mindset of the indigenous Irish people, an equally potent force, who remained unbowed despite suffering the indignation of occupation and the inability to express their distinct social and political culture. Following the 1801 Act of Union, which formally integrated Ireland into the United Kingdom, the idea of a united people or, as O'Hegarty described them, the 'Underground Nation' vigorously maintaining their cultural existence was an overwhelming expression of their right to govern themselves under their own cultural and political freedoms. This led to his description of those who refused to accept Anglicisation as a superior civilisation as their own and who remained unbowed and unbroken in their desire to maintain their unique civilisation and free themselves from English interference, as the 'Underground Nation'. Dating from the implementation of the

1801 Act of Union by the English government, O'Hegarty's history of the 'Irish people' was captured in his masterwork of the Irish nationalist movement A History of Ireland under the Union, justified Ireland's struggle to rid herself from the 'captivity' of England's political domination.

The Fenian movement which dated from 1858, under its founder James Stephens (see below), following in the tradition of the 1798 and 1848 rebellions advocated the use of physical force as the method most likely to fulfil the aim of gaining Irish independence from English colonialism. Due to this advocating of violent resistance¹ toward English governmental authority, Fenianism adopted a necessarily subversive and conspiratorial nature, thus becoming the focus of the Catholic Church's ire as a radical and disruptive element in Irish civil society. O'Hegarty was an archetypal Fenian, who, in holding these views, struck out against the Catholic Clergy's moral arguments aimed at ridding Ireland of its politically revolutionary elements. For the clergy to adopt this philosophy and seek to use their moral influence on their parishioners in dissuading them from the Fenian ideology was, for O'Hegarty, to eradicate the most viable method of establishing an independent Irish nation. O'Hegarty was a representative of the Fenian tradition who also found a natural affinity with the Sinn Fein movement formed and led by Arthur Griffith which promulgated a separatist but constitutional method distinct from the Westminster-centred policy of the Irish Party who formed the main artery through which nationalist Ireland's grievances were aired. Sinn Fein, in its early period, were considered a fringe radical group incapable of eating into the overwhelming support the Irish Party commanded amongst the nationalist electorate. In this respect Sinn Fein were largely ignored by the latter and, as O'Hegarty

¹ The use of violence or 'physical force' was justified by the Fenian movement as representing the moral right of the Irish nation to free itself from English occupation.

commented, their differing perspectives on how best to pursue the Irish nationalist agenda meant they both appealed to different audiences and therefore rarely clashed in public debate in the decade before 1914.²

The purpose of this chapter is to define P.S. O'Hegarty's separatist reading of the politicisation of the Catholic Church and its pivotal role in the pursuit of Irish independence and is structured in the following way. The main arguments focus on how O'Hegarty, continuing the Fenian tradition in the early twentieth century, identified the politicised clergy as a threat to the pursuit of Irish national independence in a continuation of their policy in the nineteenth century. This accusation is analysed through the role of the clergy in the era of nationalist leaders such as Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stuart Parnell and Sinn Fein prior to 1916 when henceforward there was a general clamour among the clergy to support Sinn Fein's bid for power in the 1918 election and finally the role they played during the ensuing split in Sinn Fein over the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

This chapter also focuses upon a series of correspondences that occurred between O'Hegarty and Terence MacSwiney (who was also a member of Sinn Fein but not the IRB), which reveal much of O'Hegarty's views on the clergy and the impact on his thinking of his living in London between the years 1902 and 1914.

O'Hegarty's nationalist depiction of the relationship between England and Ireland or, as O'Hegarty would term it, between coloniser and colonist has often been criticised as traditionalist, or, as a biased depiction of the complicated relationship of continuity and change that characterised Irish history and its relationship to England.³ What will be examined therefore is the extent to which O'Hegarty's Fenian principles were forced to

² P.S O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.17.

³ J.C. Beckett, *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (London, 1972), p.16.

come to terms with the power that the Catholic Clergy had accrued in Irish society during the nineteenth century through the majority of the Catholic population's identification with their social and political leadership. It will be demonstrated that despite the tone of the opening quotation to this chapter, in which O'Hegarty attacked the clergy for their historical hindrance to the cause of Irish separatism, he was, like the Fenian movements that preceded him, reticent to fully confront the power of the clergy given their powerful position in Irish nationalist society.

It is important to emphasise that O'Hegarty was not embarking on a theological debate regarding the validity of the Catholic faith, rather, his focus was directed toward its ubiquity in the political sphere and the unfair advantage the 'priests in politics' held in seeking to influence the layman through their inherited moral superiority as clerics. Ultimately, for O'Hegarty, the Catholic Clergy were therefore hindering the right of the Irish people to govern their own future in an Irish parliament. As J.C. Beckett has noted, from the beginning of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church had risen to become a significant and powerful force in Irish society: "The Roman Catholic Church was the one public institution in which the great bulk of the people could see embodied their sense of a corporate national existence."⁴

As the Catholic people profited from the British government's educational reforms during the nineteenth century⁵ under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell nationalist Ireland organised itself for political agitation and formed a mass offensive against the engrained social structure of Irish society. This constitutional movement was primarily aimed at the Protestant ascendancy, who, whether as residents in Ireland, or, as absentee landlords, were

⁴ J.C. Beckett, *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (London, 1972), p.97.

⁵ The British Government, in an attempt to redress Catholic grievances, disestablished the Anglican Church in 1869, and, previous to this, in 1831, redesigned the schooling system so that both Protestant and Catholic children were able to receive denominational education in their respective faiths.

seen as the purveyors and certainly the main benefactors of English rule in Ireland. It was due to their identification with England that the Protestant ascendancy were seen by nationalists as forming the core of English repression in Ireland. The mass organisation of nationalists and the fear of open rebellion in Ireland led to the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act thus ending the discriminatory Penal Laws which had prevented the social aspirations of Catholics in Ireland. This was closely followed by O'Connell's agitation for the repeal of the union the purpose of which was to hand over democratic control to the Catholic majority in an Irish parliament.

Embedded within O'Connell's nationalist resistance to English hegemony in Ireland was the Catholic Church who, as a disciplined and organised body, enabled the disaffected Catholic majority population to form a sense of national identity and awareness of their right to manage their political affairs. As O'Hegarty related in A History of Ireland under the Union the clergy's involvement was crucial to O'Connell's campaign: 'only the church possessed a national organisation that extended into every part of the country and could act as a means of transmission between the urban middle class and the large tenant farmers who were the rural backbone of O'Connell's campaigns.'⁶ The clergy were an effective means through which a united nationalist front stretching across the town and country divide could be transmitted.

While British educational reforms during the nineteenth century led to an increase of the Catholic majority's sense of injustice regarding their position and methods for appealing to the English government the Catholic clergy had long been delivering their own brand of nationalist education. As primitive as this education was it proved highly effective in reinforcing the Catholic majority's belief that the English presence in Ireland was the cause

⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union*, (London, 1952), pp.462-3.

of their second class citizenship in their Irish homeland. The scholar Tom Inglis has drawn attention to this:

As late as 1845, an English commentator described the poverty of the Irish Catholic church as follows: “They worship in hovels, or in the open air, from the want of any place of worship. Their religion is the religion of three fourths of the population. Not far off, in a well-windowed and well roofed house, is a well-paid Protestant clergyman...crying in the wilderness...furious against the errors of Popery.”⁷

O’Connell had recognised the growing importance of the Catholic Church in the political landscape and as a result nurtured and developed a closer working relationship with the clergy.

Indeed O’Connell’s success with the Catholic population of Ireland was largely due to the organising power of the localised clergy and their fulfilling of the sociological needs of Irish Catholics.

The campaign led by Daniel O’Connell was for civil religious rights and freedom. It was a struggle for meaning and identity, and for the freedom to worship and preach. The willingness to adhere closely to the Catholic Church was located in a desire to be and be perceived as morally equal, if not superior, to their colonisers. In other words, it is important to see the change in Irish Catholic religiosity – that is people becoming more ethical, spiritual and closely allied to the institutional church – not just as an end in itself, not just as the fulfilment of some inherent natural allegiance to the Church, but as part of a struggle to attain religious, cultural and symbolic power.⁸

Moreover, in line with O’Connell’s position, the clergy were committed also to observing a strict form of constitutionalism which forbade any notions of armed resistance and this relationship developed symbiotically as O’Connell and the clergy condemned unequivocally the use of violence in any form.

⁷ Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), p.104.

⁸ Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), p.98-99.

Consequently running throughout the Catholic Church's philosophy in the nineteenth century and up to the time of the end of the civil war in 1923, the clergy had determined that it was better to work within the law for constitutional change in Ireland with O'Connell.

One of the main reasons for the clergy's and O'Connell's shared union of purpose and direction can be construed through O'Connell's attitude toward rebellion and the use of physical force. O'Connell repudiated Wolfe Tone, leader of the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798, as an instigator of immorality, indeed, as a 'criminal' who had brought the cause of Irish nationalism into disrepute:

As to 98 we leave the weak and wicked men who considered force and sanguinary violence as part of their resources for ameliorating our institutions, and the equally wicked and designing wretches who fomented the rebellion and made it explode... We leave both these classes of miscreants to the contempt and indignation of mankind.⁹

This attitude toward the use of rebellion and physical force coloured O'Hegarty's historical view of the clergy and of O'Connell, as he believed the use of physical force would prove essential for the eventual overthrowing of the English government in Ireland. As the clergy's standing in the eyes of the Catholic majority increased and their alliance with O'Connell's constitutional agitation became cemented, so too, they formed an important point of contact with the British government. Subsequently their future role as successful organisers solidified and they became the channel through which British legislation was related to the Catholic people. This policy of mutual cooperation with the English government emphasised, particularly as the century wore on, the Fenian perception of the 'priest in politics' as a consummately conservative force. Their role as intermediaries between nationalists and the English government particularly when they were seen to be

⁹ Paul Johnson, *Ireland: A Concise History from the 12th Century to the Present Day* (1981), p.7.

supporting British policy in Ireland earned the hierarchy the disparaging title of ‘Catholic Bishops’ working alongside ‘Castle Catholics’¹⁰ within separatist circles. Much of the resentment between the Fenians and the clergy centred on the clergy’s implacable opposition to the formation of secret societies such as the IRB/Fenians and their link to agrarian violence committed against Protestant landowners. Commencing from the 18th century onwards the Catholic ‘Defenders’ and ‘Whiteboy’ groups had been formed to direct these criminal activities in the name of disgruntled tenant farmers many of whom believed they had an historic claim to the land they now worked on for their keep. Such groups proved particularly effective in targeting the property and livestock of absentee landlords.

To re-emphasise the Catholic Church’s and O’Connell’s position, both had agreed on a strict philosophy of non-violent and constitutional means in pursuing their political programmes for Catholic emancipation and later repeal of the union. They condemned the destruction of property and the taking of human life under any circumstances.

O’Hegarty’s library¹¹ contains documented evidence of Thomas Drummond’s¹² appearance before the Select Committee of the House of Lords entitled, ‘On the state of Ireland in Respect of Crime Committed by the Ribbonmen’. In forming his views on the clergy what becomes interesting from O’Hegarty’s point of view was their centrality in the very substance of Irish rural life:

Q: Have you any means of knowing what course the Roman Catholic clergy have taken with regard to the riband society?

10 P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union*, (London, 1952), p.406.

11 The bulk of O’Hegarty’s library is located at the Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University.

12 P.S. O’Hegarty’s *A History of Ireland under the Union*, Chapter XII, is devoted to the good work that the civil servant, Thomas Drummond, did in Ireland during the period 1835-40. This detached view of the civil servant as a figure capable of taking a step back, free of bias, for the benefit of the Irish nation was a trait admired by O’Hegarty as this Chapter testifies to.

A: In every case they have taken a most decided part against ribbonism, in denouncing it wherever it was known to exist...¹³

As these agrarian societies formed a major factor in the rural life of Ireland the role of the parish priest was a pivotal one in either providing taciturn approval for the actions of these groups or in denouncing their acts as contravening Catholic doctrine. In the political context the clergy argued that these acts only succeeded in further alienating the Catholic people in the light of English common law and the sanctity of property rights therein.

The Fenians established in 1858 under the leadership of James Stephens and despite their avid denials of complicity in the committing of agrarian violence, inherited the clergy's long-standing revulsion toward secret societies and, as will be demonstrated were to further incur the clergy's wrath with their denunciation of the clergy's frequent forays and involvement in the pursuit of nationalist politics.

As a twentieth century Fenian O'Hegarty would have been fully cognisant of the existing animosity between Fenians and the clergy and in line with this background was to believe too that the clergy were an unwelcome voice in political matters. He contended that it was a misplaced presumption of the clergy to involve themselves in the political sphere as this was to deviate from their proper function in society which consisted of providing spiritual sustenance alone.

To demonstrate O'Hegarty's insistence on separating the clergy from political issues and to give a counter argument to his belief that the clergy should confine their remit to spiritual matters the view of a fellow separatist, Terence MacSwiney, follows below. The background to the clerical debate within separatism which generated these correspondences

¹³ Report on the State of Ireland in respect of crime committed by the ribbonmen of the Select Committee of the House of Lords (Dublin, 1839), p.128.

was fuelled by the ubiquity of the clergy throughout the nineteenth century in the Irish nationalist movement particularly in its alignment with Daniel O’Connell’s successful campaign in obtaining the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act and later in his unsuccessful attempt at repealing the 1801 Act of Union.

In its most immediate effect occurring just before O’Hegarty’s generation came to political consciousness and the romantic nationalism of the twentieth century took hold, the debate concerning the priest in politics centred upon the issue of the clergy’s role in the Land League under the leadership of Charles Stuart Parnell from 1880. Parnell, despite his essentially parliamentarian campaign was a figure for whom separatists, like O’Hegarty, readily ascribed separatist tendencies due to his gesturing toward Fenian physical force doctrine as a last resort and his more frequent threats to withdraw Irish MPs from the Westminster Parliament. O’Hegarty gave a primary place to Parnell after the Fenian movement in the separatist tradition, in A History of Ireland under the Union. He viewed Parnell’s downfall as the result of the clerical campaign to oust him from the leadership of the nationalist movement and that this had ultimately resulted in the ‘death of a lion’ in the cause of Irish independence.¹⁴

The following correspondences can be viewed therefore as coloured by these recent events and the different experiences of O’Hegarty as a resident in London, and his “stay at home”¹⁵ school-friend, Terence MacSwiney, demonstrate a measure of the tensions that were generated by the question of the ‘priest in politics’ within separatist circles. O’Hegarty,

¹⁴ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.588.

¹⁵ Tom Garvin, in his introduction to P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1998), p.xvii.

writing years later in an obituary of his friend W.P. Ryan¹⁶ in Dublin Magazine set the tumultuous political background in which he and MacSwiney discussed the issue:

Ireland in London was then, in 1902, convulsed by the question whether clergymen should be eligible to be members of the Ard-Choise de the London Gaelic League, of which Liam was honorary secretary, and he and I were slaughtering each other weekly in *New Ireland*, in the *United Irishman*, and other papers of the time.¹⁷

During his years of employment in England as a civil servant O'Hegarty experienced London's metropolitan environment and in reference to the politicised clergy, the way the English cleric as opposed to the priest in Ireland, remained detached from the political process. The issue of the priest in politics forced many Irish separatists with a Catholic upbringing in the twentieth century into uncomfortable positions given the historical enmity over the legitimate use of physical force in the pantheon of Irish resistance to the English presence in Ireland. The following correspondences between O'Hegarty and MacSwiney therefore provide an interesting insight into how the emotional influence of the clergy could affect separatists to varying degrees. For O'Hegarty the issue of the priest in politics had become a much more simplified concept as one only had to escape the confines of Ireland and view the clergy from an external perspective to clarify their objectionable influence to the separatist cause. Yet through MacSwiney's views the dilemma that many separatists experienced regarding the ubiquitous and more complex role of the priest in Irish society are revealed. It appeared that MacSwiney wrote the following lines in the assumption that O'Hegarty would agree the sentiments:

¹⁶ A contemporary of O'Hegarty's, W.P. Ryan, held a similar view to O'Hegarty in his advocating civic nationalism and like O'Hegarty became an anti-censorship campaigner in independent Ireland. They differed however over the importance of socialist thought to the remedying of Ireland's political and economic shortcomings.

¹⁷ *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1939.

There are many in our ranks who seem to regard priests as our natural enemies and I heartily wish they would show us their backs as I am convinced they are a greater source of danger to our cause and our ultimate hopes of success than all of the power of the British Government.¹⁸

O'Hegarty though, was not of this opinion and informed his friend of his position regarding the potential sources of danger that the clergy represented to the separatist cause:

From your letter I suppose you'll be surprised to hear that I'm an anti-cleric...I don't hold that the priests are our natural enemies but I do think strongly that they have acquired the habit and that nothing but strong determined action will break their effort. They ruined every movement - directly or indirectly - since the passing of the Maynooth grant in 1795 and we have to put them in their places if we are to do anything. Even today the United Irishman is an 'atheistic' paper and daren't be openly sold outside of the towns. There's no use in shutting our eyes to the fact that the hierarchy are governed indirectly from London through Rome...

You say the rock on which we are most likely to founder is the antagonism between Separatist nationalism and the Church. Quite so, but I would not put it just like that way; I would say the antagonism of the church is with nationality. If we are going to even make anything out of Ireland this question must be faced openly and strongly on its merits and not on its prejudices....At the same time I do not quite understand your point of view. You appear to assume that anti-clericalism is atheism, which it is not. Anti-clericalism as I look at it and as most fellows I know look at it is simply anti-political-priestisms. We all know that a distinction must be - or rather should be - drawn between the priest as Irishmen and as individuals and as ministers of religion. So far, so good: How are you to draw the distinction? If an ordinary layman runs counter to nationalist principles you are apparently defending liberty to go for him to the best of your abilities, man to man, and he defends himself, it is a fair battle and the man who is right wins. Can you argue with the priest as an individual, can you reason with him, can you fight him as Irishman to Irishman? You cannot and it is there that the whole difficulty lies. If you say a word against the political priest, against any political action or dogma of his, you are an atheist, a damned soul, you are anathema....You may do the magnanimous and try to distinguish between the priest and the church but he won't let you, he deliberately and immorally utilises his priestly influence to supplement the want of reason in his attitude.¹⁹

O'Hegarty's polemical and anti-clerical tone would have been read with great surprise by his former schoolfellow especially in relation to his description of the priest as capable of

¹⁸ Terence MacSwiney to P.S. O'Hegarty, *Terence MacSwiney Papers*, University College Dublin, Special Collections, P48/374-378.

¹⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty to Terence MacSwiney, *Terence MacSwiney Papers*, University College Dublin, P48/374-378.

engaging in an 'immoral' use of his "priestly influence." O'Hegarty was the first to suggest that MacSwiney would probably have been shocked to know that he, (O'Hegarty), was 'anti-clerical' regarding the clergy's political role in Irish nationalism as if the very notion of 'anti-clericalism' within the confines of Ireland was an unthinkable one. O'Hegarty and MacSwiney had attended the same Christian Brothers school, North Monastery in County Cork, which undoubtedly would have had a similarly profound impact on their particular brand of Irish Nationalism fuelled as it was by the Christian Brothers and their determination to produce educated Catholics fit for middle class occupations. Yet the difference's in O'Hegarty's and MacSwiney's views were palpable and O'Hegarty was to continue with his anti-clerical tone broadening his condemnation of the priest's influence in Irish politics to the source and apotheosis of the Catholic Clergy's power base in Rome. O'Hegarty identified and attacked the conflict of interests he believed existed between the clergy's allegiance to the Roman Pontiff as head of the Catholic Clergy and the demands placed on those who had sworn fealty to the cause of Irish Independence notably separatists such as himself. As a final point of criticism O'Hegarty revealed the source of his iconoclasm, as that of being able to view the clerical-political dilemma externally, away from the clerically-enclosed atmosphere of Ireland itself:

Ireland not having independence enough to demand recognition of Rome as Ireland is only regarded as a means of converting the heathen, of gathering Peter's pence, of wringing a concession or two from England for papal schemes. The Catholic Church in Ireland wants reform root and barrel, quite as much as it did on the Continent prior to Reformation. We have no true religion in Ireland for our religion is alien not national. Most of the fellows here are anti-clerical to a greater or lesser degree....It is only when a man leaves Ireland that he begins to see straight on some things, this amongst them.²⁰

²⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty to Terence MacSwiney, *Terence MacSwiney Papers*, University College Dublin, P48/374-378.

This final sentiment expressed by O'Hegarty above that, 'It is only when a man leaves Ireland that he begins to see straight on some things, this amongst them', and in his description of how London in 1902 was 'convulsed by the question of whether priests should be members of the Ard-Choisede' (a debate which reflected the wider implications of clerical membership in positions of influence), it can be surmised that O'Hegarty's residency in the English capital proved to have an enlightening impact upon his youthful mind.

While the Catholic Clergy proved very important in managing the social and cultural adaption of the emigrant Irish in London,²¹ L.H. Lees has drawn attention to the impact of the Irish living in London during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as having being greatly exposed to the more secular ideology of fellow London workers and to the lifestyle of the Evangelical Protestant.²²

The experience of nationalism amongst Irish émigrés took place in an environment where radical views could be aired more freely within the London-Irish community without the pressure to conform to the traditional provincial community values which were rooted in the parishes of Ireland. In Ireland the idea of the clergy as forming a central presence in the lives of the population contrasted deeply with the cosmopolitan environment of London. As revealed above through O'Hegarty's and MacSwiney's correspondences O'Hegarty believed that "ever since Maynooth" every nationalist movement worth pursuing had been ruined by the clergy in Ireland. Therefore in order to explain this assertion it is necessary to detail the historical background to the Catholic Church's role in Irish society, before returning to the implications of O'Hegarty's views in his correspondences with MacSwiney.

²¹ L.H. Lees, *Exiles in Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London*, (Manchester, 1979), p.164.

²² L.H. Lees, *Exiles in Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London*, (Manchester, 1979), p.164.

A well respected commentator on Ireland, Sean O’Faolain, believed the conservative nature of the clergy began most conspicuously in 1795 with the creation of the Maynooth Seminary, wherein, well-to-do Catholic families mainly from tenant farmer stock could begin to send their sons to train for the priesthood without having to leave Ireland.²³ This was significant as previous generations of prospective clergymen had been forced to train on the continent as a result of the penal laws. O’Faolain contended that the establishment of the Maynooth Seminary in Ireland was to prove enormously influential on the Catholic Clergy’s attitude toward nineteenth century Irish nationalism and consequently impacted upon O’Hegarty’s contention that ‘ever since Maynooth’ the Church’s political influence had proved debilitating to separatist movements and the goal of Irish independence. The seminary at Maynooth was conceived and set up from British government funding and for its continued financial support accepted the British government’s visits and inspections as the norm from 1795. Regarding this arrangement O’Faolain pertinently commented, ‘in 1799 the entire board of bishops...agreed to subject all Catholic bishops to the visa of that foreign government, which is surely the apex of lay control?’²⁴

The impact of revolutionary Europe during this period was also described by O’Faolain as exerting a powerful influence on the clerical mindset in Ireland:

In 1795, the year of Maynooth’s foundation, there were a great many French refugee professors and teachers to whom any haven, the most frugal pension, would have been welcome....That is: ‘in politics, through their hatred of the revolutionary spirit, in their devotion to the old monarchical absolutism, they filled the mind of most Irish priests, all through O’Connell’s great fight against Britain, with the traditional Gallican belief that all things, even many privileges of the church, must lie in servile subjection to the throne.’²⁵

²³ Most keenly expressed in his book entitled, *The Irish*, (London, 1947).

²⁴ Sean O’Faolain, *The Irish* (London, 1947), p.111

²⁵ Sean O’Faolain, *The Irish* (London 1947), pp.94-5.

Given the spirit of revolutionary fervour that had gripped Europe during this period the Catholic Church's fears of subversive secret societies such as Fenianism was an understandable one. O'Hegarty was to set the backdrop to the rise of Fenianism in A

History of Ireland under the Union:

...the starvation, and the failure of the insurrection of 1848, halted resurgent Ireland and threw it back. It strengthened the conservative tendencies in politics, inherent in the church, and led it rather to discourage bold national politics and to view the future evolution of Ireland as necessarily conditioned by whatever could be accomplished by an acceptance of English domination and English civilisation. This tendency was reinforced by consideration of the growing Irish Catholic populations in Great Britain and in the United States, and on the possible importance, in the ever growing-in-importance English-speaking world, of a Catholic Irish people at the heart of the British empire with a large number of representatives in the British Empire.²⁶

Fenianism was viewed by the clergy (erroneously in O'Hegarty's view) as an enemy of the people whose philosophy, if taken to its logical conclusion, would lead to another failed rebellion and the slaughter of many Irish citizens at the hands of England's professional soldiers. This view was exacerbated by the seeming dismissal of the clergy's edicts and pulpit denouncements of membership of the organisation. The clergy's official line on secret societies such as the IRB described their members as anti-religious and their perpetuation was condemned in a number of Papal decrees culminating in the 1864 Syllabus of Errors.²⁷ Through the pages of the weekly paper, The Irish People, which ran from 1863 to 1865 the Fenian line was calculated to stir up the sort of nationalist sentiment that had

²⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.400.

²⁷ Donal McCartney 'The Church and the Fenians' in Mark Harmon (Ed.), *Fenians and Fenianism* (Dublin, 1968), p.13.

fuelled the armed rebellion of 1798. O'Hegarty described the purpose of the Fenian weekly paper as:

The Irish People if it had not a motto, had a principle and a policy. Its principle was the restoration of Irish independence, by the separation of Ireland from England, and its policy was Force, not Force of opinion only but Force of opinion and physical Force.²⁸

The clergy's revulsion toward the use of physical force was tied into the Fenian's negative philosophy regarding the clergy's involvement in political matters. The responsibility of launching the Fenian campaign in the pages of The Irish People was devolved to Charles J. Kickham a committed Fenian and also a devout Catholic.²⁹

From the tone and style of Kickham's writing it is evident that O'Hegarty was deeply influenced by this figure in his approach toward the issue of clerical involvement in politics. This claim can be verified through O'Hegarty's extensive use of quotations from Kickham in his A History of Ireland under the Union, particularly chapter XXXIV and from O'Hegarty's own articles on the subject in the advanced nationalist press as featured in the opening quotation to this chapter.

Kickham was careful to acknowledge on behalf of the Irish people that they were mindful and appreciative of the much needed guidance the clergy had provided in the past a fact that O'Hegarty readily accredited the clergy in singling out their role in the Great Famine as one of deep selflessness and humanitarianism. (See A History of Ireland under the Union chapter XXV.) Kickham's Catholicism reflected the tensions inherent in attacking the clergy in regard to their eminent position in Irish society. This view was maintained while at the same time the ecumenical services which the clergy provided were highly praised. It was

²⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.428.

²⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.438.

clear from Kickham's approach to the overall role of the clergy in Irish society that the Fenians were careful to limit their criticisms of the clergy to their influence in the political sphere. But in many respects this was the point the Fenians were making, that in matters regarding the religious sphere the Fenians held no jurisdiction while maintaining that the clergy held no jurisdiction in the political sphere. Moreover while Kickham, and later O'Hegarty, emphasised that the clergy had in the past proved admirable leaders of the people this was limited to the past rather than the present and they determined that the Irish people had since developed the political maturity necessary for self-government and no longer required moral guidance in the secular sphere. Kickham took up this theme in the following article:

The Irish priest assumes authority over his flock which the clergy of other Catholic countries never dream of assuming, yet this is not to be wondered at. The history of Ireland explains it. The fiendish tyranny of England ground our people down to the condition of ignorant slaves. In this state of compulsory ignorance and serfdom the people naturally looked for guidance to the only educated class that cared for or sympathised with them. But times are changed. The people are now comparatively educated, and demand the right possessed by the people of other Catholic countries of acting according to the dictates of their own judgement in all worldly concerns.³⁰

O'Hegarty suggested that it was essential for Fenians to adopt a sometimes venomous stance on the issue of the clergy's political incursions as the enormous resources they held at their disposal were pitted against Fenianism which was still very much a minority movement, in the confessional, in the press, in the homes, and in the pulpit.³¹

To demonstrate this venomous tone O'Hegarty in A History of Ireland under the Union provided the following example of Kickham's anti-clerical arguments:

³⁰ Donal McCartney 'The Church and the Fenians' in Mark Harmon (Ed.), *Fenians and Fenianism* (Dublin, 1968), p.17.

³¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.442.

We saw from the first that ecclesiastical authority in temporal affairs should be shivered to atoms before we could advance a single step towards the liberation of our suffering country. Yet shallow fools and designing knaves wonder, or affect to wonder, why we “attack the priests.” We never uttered a word against the priests as ministers of religion. But we challenged, and we do challenge, their right to dictate to the people in politics.³²

As well as the clergy's hatred of the Fenian physical force doctrine the Fenians incurred the wrath of the hierarchy in Ireland in challenging the clergy's organisation of social activities within local parishes as this was a position they formally monopolised. During the nineteenth century and despite the mandatory swearing of the secret oath in order to become a Fenian member, Fenianism organised social gatherings such as sports events and ‘picnics’ and supplemented these social activities with openly held military drills. These events attracted the young men of the parishes a factor which increased the social standing of the Fenians in the public eye. This feature added another reason for the clergy's condemnation of the Fenian influence in Irish society as it provided a rival source of personal fulfilment and stirred up the social unrest normally associated with Irish nationalist feeling and sentiment. R.V. Comerford has observed:

...most of those who exercised ‘social control’ during the decades after the Famine – clergymen, landlords, magistrates, policemen – discouraged organised popular sport in the interests of peace and public order....Fenianism, then, appealed most strongly to sections of the population that were ready for an organisation that would provide members with a sense of personal fulfilment through identifying with a group of their peers in autonomous social activities. So it flourished in Dublin and in many of the towns and villages of Leinster and Munster, among young men who very often were already in contact with one another through their employment but had previously lacked any specific pretext for fraternisation in their free time....Fenianism had been converted to a social purpose for which it had not been intended. It was providing young men with a forum for fraternal association and communal self-expression, even to the detriment of its formal conspiratorial

³² *Irish People*, 21 May 1864 quoted in P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1968), p.441.

objective...In the mid nineteenth century any popular organisation among Irish Catholics whatever its initial or nominal purpose was likely to become a vehicle for nationalist feeling.³³

Comerford has thus described how Fenianism struck at the heart of those who held the right to impart the social and moral values of the majority of the Irish people:

The Catholic clergy were even more concerned with social control than were the landlords. The full intensity of clerical opposition to Fenianism in the 1860s can only be understood in terms of a struggle to maintain the dominance of the parish priest over certain areas of parochial life.³⁴

Despite the nineteenth century Fenian movements encroachment on the clergy's authority it was difficult for O'Hegarty to accept that even during their most popular period the Fenians remained a minority movement. Pertinently it was the clergy during particularly low points in the nationalist agitation who commanded the allegiance of mainstream nationalist politics a factor borne out in nationalist Ireland's adhesion to constitutionalism rather than the extra-parliamentary methods that Fenianism advocated in anticipation of using physical force. Indeed, it was due to the failure of Fenianism during this period that toward the end of the nineteenth century that many Fenians converted to the Parnellite model of constitutional nationalism. Near the beginning of this chapter O'Hegarty suggested in his letter to Terence MacSwiney that every separatist movement of note had been crushed by the clergy's unwarranted interference in political matters. Even though Parnell worked from within the English parliament O'Hegarty uncritically included him within the canon of separatist nationalism as did many Fenians at the time in their agreeing not to hinder his constitutional framework for obtaining Irish self-government. O'Hegarty argued given

³³ R.V. Comerford 'Patriotism as Pastime: the appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860's in *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 22 (1980-81), pp.239-250.

³⁴ R.V. Comerford, 'Patriotism as Pastime: the appeal of Fenianism in the mid 1860s in *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 22, (1980-81), pp.244-248.

Parnell's seeming alignment with the Fenians that if Home Rule had been achieved his agitation would have continued for increased separation from England in much the same way that O'Hegarty supported the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a bridge to full Irish independence. O'Hegarty stated of Parnell: 'But the simple truth is that he was an Irishman...and wanted to rise Ireland up and put her on a level with the Nations.'³⁵

The Catholic Church held an important political role during the Parnell era but in O'Hegarty's view was ultimately responsible for his downfall. This was further exacerbated as the reasons behind their anti-Parnell campaign was not based on any political objections to his position but was justified on the grounds that he had abnegated his right to lead the nationalist movement due to a highly publicised lack of moral rectitude in his personal life. For O'Hegarty, this intensified his view of the Catholic Church granting primacy to an irrelevant personal issue over the primary objective of Irish independence. The following paragraph describes the tactics utilised by the clergy in the crucial 1892 election which held serious repercussions for Parnell's political future. These tactics symbolized O'Hegarty's argument for the non-participation of the clergy in political affairs and for him represented the clergy's ability to misuse their powerful political influence in Irish society:

The climax came in 1892 at the general election, when the whole force of the Roman Catholic hierarchy was mobilised and used as an overwhelming campaign force in every parish in Ireland. At the Cork election, in July 1892, the Roman Catholic priesthood went to work in a business like manner to carry the "Pope's men," as they were called – viz., Mr. William O'Brien, M.P., and Mr. M. Healy, M.P., Mr. W. Redmond, M.P., and Mr. Hogan were the Parnellite candidates. The plan of campaign was simple, but effective, and consisted in declarations by the priests that it was a sin to stand by Mr. Parnell's teachings, and a "mortal sin of the deepest dye" to vote for Mr. Parnell's Independent party.³⁶

³⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.589

³⁶ *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, B3/599.

To affirm this ecclesiastical right to indulge freely in political affairs Canon O'Mahony declared:

In view of this further development of Parnellism, I wonder is there any one in this city who thinks that it was going too far to say it was a crime, a sin, a mortal sin of the deepest dye, to vote for them or to support them in any way? I am sure if any of you were to be so misguided as to vote for those, or even to fail in doing your utmost against them, you would look back upon your action or omission with sentiments of the deepest remorse hereafter. In the first place, we must hold responsible for this crime all those who signed the nomination papers of John Redmond last November, all those who canvassed for him, and all those who voted for him, for even there the evil character of this Parnellism was evident to any reflecting man. It had perpetuated deeds, which ought to make any man see its immoral nature. It had shown itself to be a bad tree that could only bring forth bad fruit. But whatever was the responsibility of those who, by their action last November, helped to perpetuate and give life to this infamous cause, still greater is the responsibility of the men who, with the knowledge of what Parnellism has done since, deliberately again resolved that they would publicly affix their names to the nomination papers, canvass them, and vote.³⁷

As a collector on all aspects and opinions of Irish history as his collection at the Spencer Library illustrates it is unsurprising that O'Hegarty collated these pamphlets which amply demonstrate the power of the arguments utilised by the clergy in the name of political morality. O'Hegarty's deep aversion to such tactics adopted by the clergy in politics and their initial support of Parnell which proved fickle as it was suddenly withdrawn causing the movement to split into pro and anti-Parnellites and creating the conditions for Redmond's (in O'Hegarty's view), pro-union leadership. In defence of the clergy however failure to provide moral guidance would have amounted to a dereliction of their spiritual duties especially as they could not have been seen to do nothing in the light of the Liberal leader W.E. Gladstone and his fellow non-conformists in England openly denouncing Parnell's personal conduct.

³⁷ *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, B3/599.

O'Hegarty believed the clergy's attitude toward Sinn Fein as merely a continuation of their nineteenth century policy toward separatist movements. The main tenets of the Sinn Fein policy consisted of civil disobedience and abstention from the constitutional process of Westminster as a more effective policy than applying the parliamentary tactics of the Irish Party. The clergy therefore disapproved of the Sinn Fein policy as it affronted their natural aversion to any action that defied the civil authority which in Ireland's case consisted of the English government.

In league with clerical disapproval of Sinn Fein was D.P. Moran the editor of the popular Catholic nationalist journal The Leader. Moran openly campaigned for the alignment of nationalism with Catholicism and encouraged the active involvement of the clergy in politics in contrast to O'Hegarty's disapproving of their participation as it alienated Irish Protestants from identifying with the prospect of Irish self-government. Moran dismissed the leader of Sinn Fein, Arthur Griffith, and his attempts to heal the cultural and political objections of unionists toward Irish independence with, what was an essential truth to him, that Ireland was a Catholic nation and when it gained its independence then Protestants would have to adapt accordingly to the new reality.

Moran advocated a Catholic centred cultural revivalism (as opposed to O'Hegarty's attempts to broaden the canon of Irish culture to include the Anglo-Irish tradition as described in Chapter III of this thesis) as the antidote to the degenerative Anglicisation of Ireland that he blamed much of Ireland's economic and cultural failings. Moran characterised the Irish Catholic Clergy as the natural leaders of a renewed and re-invigorated Catholic nation who would gradually eradicate every Anglicising impulse out of Ireland.

The Irish clergy supported Moran's withering attitude toward Sinn Fein as being comprised of 'tinpikemen' or, to quote another of Moran's derogatory terms, 'the Green Hungarian

band' due to Griffith's Hungarian policy disseminated in pamphlet form in 1904 as a means to render English authority in Ireland negligible. (This was later re-named the Sinn Fein policy in 1908.)

Before the 1916 Easter Rising the clergy, as a whole, were distinctly anti-Sinn Fein but this view was to change considerably as the tide of popular opinion deserted the Irish Party following the execution of the leaders of the Rising and the mistaken assumption that Sinn Fein were behind its planning and enactment. Given the rise in popularity of Sinn Fein the clergy embraced the organisation as a legitimate nationalist movement. The clergy's new position regarding Sinn Fein was outlined in a pamphlet disseminated in Dublin on September 5th, 1918 and was particularly insightful for the foreword written by Reverend Michael O'Flanagan:

This pamphlet, written by one of the most earnest and brilliant of the young priests of Connaught, deserves the serious consideration of all the Irish people. Sinn Fein has nothing to fear from free discussion, and as the writer shows, the servile slavish and futile policy of the "Domestic Party" stands no chance when contrasted with the manly, straightforward, fearless policy of Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein wants no unthinking mob to rush blindly to the polls. Sinn Fein deserves and expects the Irish people to use the brains God gave them and to give intelligent consideration to the case it submits. If there is yet left an honest Irishman or Irishwoman who believes with John Dillon that Sinn Fein has no policy, he or she ought to consider why England is so anxious to silence the exponents of Sinn Fein.³⁸

The views of the 'western priest' continued in this vein and culminated with a statement that implied that the clergy were a traditional supporter of Sinn Fein '...especially during election times, people are told by Irish party liars and hypocrites that the Church is opposed to Sinn Fein.'³⁹

³⁸ *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, pamphlet entitled 'Sinn Fein or Parliamentaryism' by a Western Priest, C2789.

³⁹ *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, pamphlet entitled 'Sinn Fein or Parliamentaryism' by a Western Priest, C2798.

This change of direction for O'Hegarty provided further evidence of the clergy's ability to align themselves with the popular tide of public opinion and that as a body they were unscrupulous in their desire to remain in favour with the current political climate. This was certainly the conclusion that Sean O'Faolain came to when he commented that the priest 'comes out from his cautious seclusion only when he finds the flood in full spate around him.'⁴⁰ That:

The key to the nature of the priest is that he is elusively twofold. His secret is that of all the arcane professions. It is impossible to isolate, in any one of his acts, his personal from his professional elements....Each one makes a sacrifice of his personal liberty, of the single-mindedness, or unity of his personality, in order to achieve the enlargement of power that comes with membership of a great powerful caste.⁴¹

Given O'Faolain's critique of the clergy it is possible to to extricate from O'Hegarty's own views a similar outlook regarding the capacity of the clergy to arrive at an unbiased, or, 'personal' rather than 'professional' opinion. Indeed it is explicit in O'Hegarty's correspondences with MacSwiney quoted earlier in this chapter through his cynical description of Ireland's merely functional use to Rome and of the priest's ability to invoke fear of damnation from his morally superior position.

As this undesirable trait dominated over the spiritual components inherent within O'Hegarty's nationalist framework the clergy were an unwelcome ambiguity that found its highest expression after the polarisation of Sinn Fein into two groups - pro and anti-Treatyites. (See Chapter VI for an explanation for the reasons behind the split in Sinn Fein.) In order to demonstrate that both pro and anti-Treatyites were aware of the importance of the clergy's moral backing of their respective positions an extract from a memorandum

⁴⁰ Sean O'Faolain, *The Irish* (London, 1947), p.116.

⁴¹ Sean O'Faolain, *The Irish* (London, 1947), p.109.

written by the 'republican' anti-Treatyite Liam Mellows to Eamonn de Valera is quoted below as it lists the failings of the Catholic Clergy and the divisive elements they brought to Irish nationalism from the separatist point of view:

Hierarchy only opposed conscription when forced to do so by attitude of people. Against IRA during terror. Bishop Cohalan's excommunication decree of December 1920. Hierarchy's abandonment of principle, justice and honour by support of Treaty. Danger to Catholicism in Ireland from their bad example – their exaltation of deceit and hypocrisy, their attempt to turn the noble aspect of Irish struggle and bring it to their level of putrid politics, their admission that religion is something to be preached about from the pulpits on Sundays but never put into practice in the affairs of the nation, their desertion of Ulster, etc.⁴²

O'Hegarty refused to use the clergy's backing of the pro-treatyite position as an argument to support his views in favour of the Treaty. For O'Hegarty the fact remained that the official support given by the clergy to the pro-Treatyite position did not bolster or in any way represent the separatist arguments (as opposed to the conservative beliefs of the clergy) he used to support the ratification of the Treaty.

The following emotional appeal of a priest in 1922 who took the anti-Treatyite position during the civil war was disseminated in pamphlet form and contained explicit references designed to draw on the moral authority of his position compelled as he was by his faith to decide upon the rightful course for the Irish people in order that they might adhere to their dutiful and moral obligations:

In this dreadful hour I appeal to you, as an Irish Priest, to do your duty to your country, and support the men who are defending the liberties and the rights, the honour and the dignity of the Irish nation. I tell you, as a Priest, that your duty is to assist by your co-operation and your prayers the soldiers who are fighting in defence

⁴² Liam Mellows to/from Mr. Eamonn de Valera and others regarding the general situation dated 26/8/22. Taken from a collection of correspondences this letter was marked private but was in O'Hegarty's possession. *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, C2799.

of the republic, which was begotten of the blood of the men of 1916, which was afterwards established by Irish law, and which now at England's bidding is being threatened by the so-called Government of Michael Collins.

I appeal to you in the name of Pearse and MacSwiney and Barry and all their comrade martyrs, not to help in the further committal of this generation to the disgraceful Treaty-Pact with England. This generation has no moral power to surrender even for a time, the inviolable rights of the Irish Nation. The men and women of to-day are bound to hand down these rights to their children and receive them. The future will curse those of you who are trying to consummate this infamous crime.

I will not give my name. My name matters not. I am only one of the goodly numbers of Ireland's young "rebel" Priests.⁴³

While O'Hegarty could never marry his civic nationalism to Pearse's sacrificial and Catholic inspired interpretation of Ireland's right to independence the reference made above in relation to MacSwiney's death on hunger strike in 1919 would have proved a particularly pertinent one as it illustrated the attempted monopolisation of the clergy in what was a politically inspired act of sacrifice. Yet as Tom Garvin has commented, in the social climate of the time, Catholicism was a badge of respectability for many separatists in the light of the nationalist ideology's failure to become an acceptable norm across all traditions on the island of Ireland:

...it was difficult for a Catholic to be fully respectable but it was possible for a Catholic to be spiritual; Patrick Pearse and Terence MacSwiney, with their exaggerated postures of self-sacrifice, were being respectable in a way possible only for Catholics.⁴⁴

MacSwiney believed that nationalism was a spiritual force as the following note addressed to him from Bulmer Hobson testified to, 'There are so few people who see that nationality is

⁴³ Published in pamphlet form, dated 3/7/22, contained in the *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University, C2599.

⁴⁴ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.47.

really a spiritual thing.’⁴⁵ Likewise for O’Hegarty the form of spiritualism that he identified with and would consistently argue that other separatists such as MacSwiney took their inspiration from was not married to any particular religious creed as the priest quoted in the above pamphlet had emotively argued. Instead separatism was grounded in the civic spirit of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen whose central ideas had been incorporated into the IRB led Dungannon Clubs, of Belfast, London and Dublin. These principles were extolled through nationalism in the form of the separatist tradition and transcended the idea that the Irish nation was a fractiously divided one based upon religious denominations.

O’Hegarty’s article which was quoted from at the beginning of this chapter stated that to align the cause of Irish nationalism with Catholicism was an erroneous one. Yet it would have greatly comforted Terence MacSwiney, that, unlike his sister Mary MacSwiney, who emulated her brother Terence’s hunger strike and was excommunicated from the church for her protest against the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, that he retained the majority of clerical support for his action.. The centrality of Catholicism to Terence MacSwiney can be construed from the following observation made by Tom Garvin: ‘O’Hegarty and Michael Collin’s joined the IRB, MacSwiney refused to join, like the young Eamon de Valera, as he respected the Catholic Church’s prohibition on membership of secret, oath sworn societies.’⁴⁶

Yet despite maintaining his position on the clergy in political matters O’Hegarty could not deny that the clergy were the backbone upon which nationalism relied during its lean periods. Indeed, despite their assertion for the division of church and politics Fenians were

⁴⁵ Bulmer Hobson to Terence MacSwiney, 7/11/1910, *Terence MacSwiney Papers*. This was written to encourage MacSwiney to contribute further to the IRB paper *Irish Freedom* University College Dublin, P48b/381.

⁴⁶ Tom Garvin, in his Introduction to the reprint of P.S. O’Hegarty’s *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1998), Introduction.

not above accepting the help of the clergy whenever there were sympathetic voices to be heard amongst the ranks of the clergy. The most prominent example of how the clergy and Fenianism could act in concert and to the benefit of each other were the several high profile funerals of ex-Fenians such as O'Donovan Rossa and the anniversary celebrations of distinguished Irish nationalist activists. Regarding Parnell too it must be stated that what O'Hegarty did not address in his criticisms of the clergy was that one of the main reasons for a Protestant landlord becoming a leader of the nationalist movement was because of the Catholic clergy's recommendation of Parnell to their community. They may have helped bring about his downfall but they were essential in creating the climate into which he aspired and was accepted into the leadership role. Evidently what O'Hegarty never really got to grips with was that just because the clergy were conservative in their nature this did not mean that they were pro-British in their outlook and as the pamphlet quoted from above illustrated not all priests followed the Hierarchy's orders. Indeed many of the clergy were more than capable of following their own individual consciences on matters of political importance. Yet from a practical perspective the issue for O'Hegarty was that separatism contained a distinct policy whereby in planning the overthrow of the established authority of the British government through physical force methods and the necessary membership of a secret society of its adherents the clergy's implacable opposition proved counter-productive. In the final letter of O'Hegarty and MacSwiney's correspondence on the nature of the clergy in politics O'Hegarty proposed the following remedy presumably to be implemented after independence (O'Hegarty did not believe at this point that Irish independence was achievable during his lifetime) in preventing the clergy's unwarranted influence in political matters:

What is my remedy, you ask? There are two. First and preferably but I think unrealistically during our lifetime, the nationalisation of Church government; i.e., the power of appointments, Bishops etc; giving preferments; and so on, not to be vested in foreigners what ever, but, say, the primate of all Ireland, or a “Council of the Irish Church.” Let the Pope be head of the Church and let him dictate in doctrinal matters but let the Irish Church manage its affairs. Keep all clergymen strictly out of all secular movements, Gaelic League as well as everything else...quite recognise your point that the priests are of the people our own flesh and blood.⁴⁷

Notably however this was only expressed in a private correspondence with MacSwiney and not expressed in the separatist press and therefore it could be said that O’Hegarty displayed a typical Fenian attitude toward the clergy in his unwillingness to tackle their position of power directly.

The reticence of Fenianism to tackle the power of the clergy goes some way to explaining Sinn Fein’s dilemma regarding the politicised clergy also. Its leader, Arthur Griffith, was not above courting clerical favour if the opportunity arose but ultimately Sinn Fein was not noted for its deference to the Catholic clergy. Following the 1918 election and Sinn Fein’s rise to political power it was necessary to assure the clergy that Sinn Fein were not looking to implement the recommendations to combat the power of the politicised clergy that O’Hegarty was suggesting in the above letter to MacSwiney. O’Hegarty’s recommendations were idealistic and as with Thomas Davis and the Young Irelander of the 1840’s, who had moderately questioned the power of the Catholic Church it would have taken a massive cultural shift in Ireland to remove the Catholic Clergy’s deeply embedded roots in Irish society.

Ultimately therefore O’Hegarty’s proposed solution to prevent the continuing influence of the ‘priest in politics’ would have proved too radical for the Irish people to accept. In outlining his views on the clergy, O’Hegarty’s views were set against a very experienced

⁴⁷P.S. O’Hegarty to Terence MacSwiney, *Terence MacSwiney Papers*, University College Dublin, P48c/297.

organisation, who, as a united body, proved too powerful for the Fenian movement to attempt to set political boundaries to their role as representatives of the majority of the Irish population.

In comparison therefore to other European countries who experienced anti-clerical movements and particularly when measured against their French republican ancestors Fenian anti-clericalism proved relatively weak. It may have openly attacked the Catholic Clergy for its intervention in political matters but dating from its formation in the 1860s it also desperately wanted to negotiate a way forward so that the church and the separatist values of Fenianism could co-exist. Fenians were not looking to confront the church head on hence their carefulness to include their recognition of the church's productive and humanistic side in Irish society. So too, as O'Hegarty pointed out, two highly effective writers in the Fenian movement Thomas Clark Luby and John O'Leary were both Protestants⁴⁸ but it was deemed a prudent move not to provoke the clergy further by expressing Fenian discontent through Protestant penmanship. 'Whenever priests or bishops had to be taken to task...it was left to Kickham; O'Leary and Luby were both Protestants, and all the articles in the paper dealing with priests in politics were Kickham's.'⁴⁹

O'Hegarty maintained that 'the Fenians were not, in any sense, educating the people they were telling them; they believed that the people were sound enough and national enough provided they were properly led.'⁵⁰ For O'Hegarty this leadership was by necessity separatist and answered only to the call of nationalism as the highest good and therefore as the clergy were ultimately answerable to Rome this leadership was not to be found in the clergy.

⁴⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.435

⁴⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.435

⁵⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.432.

In the twentieth century O'Hegarty went further than Kickham in proposing a radical restructuring of the Catholic Clergy in Ireland yet this may be explainable by the fact that by O'Hegarty's era even though the church was still a very powerful organisation which formed a major part of social and political life in Ireland there was not any one figure such as Cardinal Cullen during the nineteenth century who dominated the political and social landscape. Indeed from the 1880s as the political Irish nationalist movement undertook a more respectable constitutional line under Parnell's Land League agitation and Fenianism was reduced to toeing the constitutionalist line through the 'New Departure', separatists such as Kickham who had endured the wrath of the clergy during the 1860s paradoxically became heroic figures to be venerated for their dedication to the cause of Irish independence. Although as Oliver MacDonagh has pointed out this invariably involved a sufficient passing of time in order for the clergy to safely elevate these figures to the canon of nationalist sainthood.⁵¹ It might be construed as paradoxical therefore for O'Hegarty in A History of Ireland under the Union⁵² to have praised the sterling work of clerical figures such as Archbishop Croke of Cashel one of the founding members of the Gaelic Athletic Association. Archbishop Croke proved a seminal figure in the promotion of Irish sports such as hurley and gaelic football over English sports which were deemed 'not racy of the soil'.⁵³ In his praising of such clerical figures O'Hegarty was, no less, admitting that they were engrained in the political sphere as well as in Irish society in that during such politically sensitive times the choices you made regarding which sport to play, or in choosing to learn the Irish language, were no less than political actions.

⁵¹ Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ambiguity in Nationalism: The Case of Ireland', in Ciaran Brady (Ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*, (Dublin, 1994), p.117.

⁵² P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.610.

⁵³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.612.

For O'Hegarty the inhabitants of the 'Underground Nation' had rid themselves of one official politicised institution, the Anglican Church in 1869 and O'Hegarty definitely did not wish to see this institution replaced by another. It was left to de Valera in the 1930s to officially afford the Catholic Church a special position in Irish society. Like O'Connell, de Valera mastered the relationship between the political and the clerical. The involvement of the clergy in the political side of Irish nationalism had been evolving for a long time from the nineteenth century reaching its highpoint as a recent scholar has suggested during the latter decades where there was a:

development and formulation of an informal yet deep seated accord between Irish Nationalist politicians and Roman Catholic high clergy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the respective roles each were to have in the emerging self-governing states of Ireland.⁵⁴

Amongst the Catholic population the clergy became deeply embedded in the political as well as the social fabric of Catholic life. The clergy understandably were loath to give up this position and it was in the interests of self-preservation that they allied themselves with the prominent nationalist movements of their day as between them they reflected the majority of Irish Catholic opinion. As Antonio Gramsci has noted in addressing the historical motivation behind the clergy's ability to change political allegiances in concert with the political climate:

Religion, or a particular church, maintains its community of faithful (within the limits imposed by the necessities of general historical development) in so far as it nourishes its faith permanently and in an organised fashion, indefatigably repeating its apologetics, struggling at all times and always with the same kind of arguments and maintaining a hierarchy of intellectuals who give to the faith, in appearance at least, the dignity of thought. Whenever the continuity of relations between the Church and the faithful has been violently interrupted, for political reasons, as

⁵⁴ John Fulton, *The Tragedy of Belief* (Oxford, 1991), p.3.

happened during the French revolution, the losses suffered by the Church have been incalculable...⁵⁵

It would seem that the French Revolution ultimately inflicted a double impact on Ireland, influencing both the father of modern nationalism, the revolutionary-minded Wolfe Tone, and the stalwart of conservatism, the Catholic Clergy. It can be inferred that these conflicting influences sought for supremacy in Ireland from the nineteenth century as O'Hegarty asserted and that nationalism and clericalism had fought out an historical duel even when it would appear their interests were intertwined: 'O'Connell beat them on the veto question, Young Ireland fought them, so did Fenianism, and so did Parnellism.'⁵⁶

The Catholic Clergy were not looking to create a free Ireland in the sense that the Fenians and O'Hegarty were. The latter saw Ireland becoming an independent Irish nation free from English interference forming its own government and conducting its affairs, politically and economically on its own terms. For the clergy and its grounding in constitutional principles the complete separation of Ireland from England was not envisaged at least not in the timeframe that separatists were working toward although a more short term agenda did become the view of a few radical clergymen who were willing to defy their superiors. This important factor was to provide succour and relax the fears of many radical nationalists who also held devoutly to their faith. In defence of their pro-separatist position and their attitude toward the use of physical force arguments were put forward that the Hierarchy were misinformed and the support of dissident republican priests put forward as proof of this.

It would be erroneous to depict the clergy as consisting of a united body opposed to secret societies or unsympathetic toward the separatist cause. Cardinal Cullen for instance felt it an

⁵⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* translated and edited by Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (London, 1971), p.340.

⁵⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Ulster: a Brief Statement of Fact* (Dublin, 1918), p.25.

important manoeuvre to curb the enthusiasms of individual clerics such as Father Lavelle and Archbishop McHale for their open support of the separatist cause and their strongly opinionated anti-English sentiment. Yet Cullen, like O'Hegarty, also believed that a line should be drawn between the temporal and spiritual spheres. Cullen did not favour the involvement of the clergy in political matters but given their power in Irish society the clergy could in many respects choose where to draw the line between the temporal and the secular. Cullen determined in a pastoral letter that it was appropriate: "[To]...inculcate obedience to whom obedience is due, and whilst ready to give to Caesar the things which are his, determined to give only to God the things which belong to God."⁵⁷

On the whole, however, O'Hegarty maintained that the clergy's stance was conservative, and that it '...looked forward only to a modest place for Ireland in the English sun.'⁵⁸

O'Hegarty's anti-clericalism encompassed a broad remit and in widening the issue of his particular strand of Irish nationalism it went to the heart of his profound belief in civic nationalism. It is unsurprising therefore that the scholar Tom Garvin made specific reference to O'Hegarty when he commented how: 'In the minds of some Sinn Feiners, such as P.S. O'Hegarty, liberalism and individualism fought a battle with inherited deference to clerical authority.'⁵⁹ This focus upon liberalism and individualism were features implicit in O'Hegarty's thought across all of his nationalistic views as was his assertion that the Irish people were politically mature enough to deal with the divisions that seemed to prevent the nationalist ideal amongst all of the population. In helping to rejuvenate the IRB O'Hegarty took up a new Fenian line regarding the intimacy of the clergy with the Irish political

⁵⁷ Pastoral letter of his Grace the most Rev Dr. Cullen Archbishop, etc., Primate of all Ireland...on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception', in 1855. Pamphlet contained in the P.S. O'Hegarty Collection, Kenneth Spencer Library, Kansas University.

⁵⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.442.

⁵⁹ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.24.

situation. The emotional tone of his articles revealed the fervency of his belief and re-emphasised the importance that the Fenians of the 1860s placed on the matter.

For O'Hegarty the fusion of IRB principles with the romantic revival of Irish nationalism marked an exciting opportunity for capturing the imagination of those such as unionists who were opposed to Irish self-government. His strongly held views on the interference of the clergy in the political sphere must be seen as a rejection of Catholic particularism and its association with the nationalist project as these traits were unrepresentative of the civic pluralism to which separatists of his ilk subscribed.

O'Hegarty inherited the tradition of Fenian 'anti priest in politics' as he believed it a policy based upon the betterment of the Irish nation as a whole rather than any enmity toward the Catholic Church. He was not looking to alter the influence of the clergy upon Ireland's Catholics any more than he would wish to attack or interfere in the private sphere of the Protestant people and their clerical representatives. O'Hegarty however was taking to task an organisation that had successfully entered the public sphere of national life in Ireland was entrenched in Irish society and remained so until the cultural shift required in order to alter their primary position occurred during the 1960s. O'Hegarty too was not suggesting that the clergy's impact in Ireland was wholly negative. He acknowledged their special relationship in A History of Ireland under the Union when he remarked that generally the clergy: '...has been of the people, from the people, and in the main with the people.'⁶⁰ Nevertheless given O'Hegarty's firm advocacy of civic nationality and his deep dislike of perceptions of the 'Underground Nation' as exclusively consisting of the Catholic population, thus alienating much of the Protestant tradition in Ireland, he saw the clergy as an obstacle to the liberalism and pluralism he wished to see developing within Ireland.

⁶⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.400.

CHAPTER II

THE GAELIC LEAGUE

This chapter will examine the Irish separatist P.S. O'Hegarty's endorsement of the Irish language and the Gaelic League in the early part of the twentieth century. O'Hegarty was to become an executive member of Sinn Fein, the IRB Supreme Council and elected member of Ard Choiseide.¹ His aspiration was to consolidate the Irish language in the struggle for Irish independence; he believed that in order for Ireland not to lose its individual identity as a nation the language could not be set aside as periphery to the cause of Irish nationalism. The purpose of this chapter on O'Hegarty's involvement and promotion of the educational properties of the Gaelic League is to highlight O'Hegarty's deep belief in the centrality of language in the formation of the nation's sense of distinctiveness. O'Hegarty ardently supported the Irish language movement he was to write: '...and from 1903 to the present time I have been closely connected with every Irish movement of what I might call the language revival current...'²

¹ This was an elected group within the Gaelic League that developed strategies for promoting the Irish language. Ard Choiseide translates as 'Executive Council.'

² P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.28. O'Hegarty was educated at the Christian Brothers School at North Monastery, Cork. A principal feature of a Christian Brother's education was the theme of Irish self-reliance, which was best served through promotion of the nation's national language and culture. Later, as a civil servant based in London and as a member of this newly educated Catholic middle

The chapter is structured firstly through an examination of O'Hegarty's views of the language movements throughout the nineteenth century with particular emphasis on his criticisms of Daniel O'Connell's lack of commitment to the development of the Irish language before turning to O'Hegarty's own generation and the legacy of the Gaelic League to the plural nationalism O'Hegarty so strongly advocated before examining the politicisation of the movement and whether O'Hegarty's pluralistic view of Irish separatism was capable of inducing a shared sense of Irish identity across unionist and nationalist cultures in Ireland.

The Gaelic League was an attempt by Irish nationalists to re-discover the indigenous cultural heritage they felt was best reflected in the Irish language still spoken in Ireland but mainly confined to the north and south west of the island. The Gaelic League was to become the most significant organisation in raising public consciousness in Ireland toward a Gaelic cultural heritage.³

Yet the Fenian tradition to which O'Hegarty claimed heritage dating from 1858 was notable for its distinct lack of involvement in promoting cultural nationalism although some leading figures dabbled in Hiberno societies and reading clubs. Above all, however Fenianism was a military organisation and channelled its energies into one distinct aim - the overthrow of the British Government in Ireland. R.V Comerford has observed that principally:

There was...no Fenian policy on language, other than an implicit assumption that English was and would remain the language of power and politics in Ireland. The movement's newspaper, the *Irish People* (Dublin 1863-6) had displayed very little explicit interest in any aspect of cultural nationalism, although the editor, John O'Leary, was later to claim credit for service to that cause by his ruthless exclusion of reams of bad patriotic verse submitted by readers.⁴

class, O'Hegarty was at the vanguard of the Gaelic League movement and became an emphatically strong supporter of the Irish language as a tool for furthering Ireland's de-Anglicisation.

³ *Encyclopaedia of Irish History and Culture*, Vol.1, (London, 2004), p.268

⁴ R.V Comerford, *Ireland: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2003), p.140.

In line with the Fenian position with which a tenuous alliance named the 'New Departure' had emerged, Parnell's movement too was not marked for its promotion of Irish culture or language, 'Again, in the highly important agrarian and nationalist mobilisations achieved by Parnell from 1879 onwards, there was no identification of the Irish language as an essential of nationality.'⁵

Indeed, in many respects, it was left to the twentieth century and O'Hegarty's generation of Irish nationalists to take up the linguistic drive toward cultivating a sense of indigenous Irish culture. Therefore as well as the physical force tradition of Fenianism O'Hegarty as a twentieth century Fenian was very much influenced by the romantic literary revival of the early twentieth century.

Despite the Fenian lack of interest in the promotion of Irish cultural nationalism O'Hegarty was to undertake the task of re-invigorating the Irish cultural heritage mainly through the promotion of the Irish language as an artery through which the Fenian doctrine could be disseminated. Indeed this line of action may be construed as O'Hegarty contradicting the original Fenian line here demonstrated by James Stephens founder of the IRB who scornfully wrote of the 'young men...pushing about in drawing room society...creating an Irish national literature, schools of Irish art and things of that sort.'⁶

While certainly not an aficionado of drawing room society⁷ O'Hegarty viewed the cultural education of the Irish people as a pre-requisite for the achievement of Irish independence. In this respect, O'Hegarty argued that the building up of cultural nationalism was a natural objective for Fenians in the battle for national independence. O'Hegarty in utilising the

⁵ R.V Comerford, *Ireland: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2003), p.140.

⁶ D.G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London, 1982), p.177.

⁷ See for example O'Hegarty's comment on Thomas Moore as a poet of the English 'drawing room' variety in Chapter III of this thesis.

breadth of Fenianism as he saw it saw Sinn Fein, under Arthur Griffith's presidency, as another vehicle through which the committed Fenian could work for independence, politically and economically. Sinn Fein was a vessel through which practical policies dealing with social and economic arguments for Irish self-reliance were expounded which importantly O'Hegarty contrasted with the Irish Party's lack of economic discussion and their dependency on the whims of the Westminster model of constitutionalist politics. So too the Gaelic League preached Irish self-reliance as it was the movement through which the Irish language was dispersed and brought to the Irish people as a core principle of Irishness. Because of its early successes in this enterprise and because of O'Hegarty's emphasis on cultural rejuvenation the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein represented the foremost public entities that were capable of uplifting the nation culturally and economically. (Unsurprisingly the Fenians or IRB were unable to expound their views in a widespread public campaign due to their conspiratorial nature and their ultimate aim of overthrowing the British government.)

The twin track directives of Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League inspired O'Hegarty's following article in The Republic dated February 28, 1907, which emphasised his analysis of the modern Fenian approach:

The present attempt is the most self-conscious and comprehensive of any. The revival of today may be taken as a confederacy of movements all forming an organic whole, yet bound together very loosely, originating independently, and to a large extent acting independently. But they have all a common driving force, and a common goal, the assertion of the Irish nation, each is striving for that assertion in its own particular portion of the national life, and, collectively, they tend to the assertion *in toto* of the nation.

Many years later in 1939, O'Hegarty was to elaborate on this feature of the separatist programme in the decade before 1916 in a review of Edward Lysaght's Irish Life in the

Seventeenth Century: after Cromwell, in which O'Hegarty emphasised the intellectual stimulation through which Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League's principles operated. The Gaelic League had been much more than a policy for the promotion of a language in decay for O'Hegarty as it held the key to the entire separatist ethos, 'The sword of light is of course, the Irish language and the culture to which it is the key...'⁸

Given O'Hegarty's faith in the language as an essential weapon in the separatist armoury and his faith in the intellectual framework of the Sinn Fein movement he confidently asserted in 1907 that:

The Sinn Fein man supports and works not only for his own particular section of the movement, the political side, but for every section – every movement which aims at the realisation of any portion of the national life by action within Ireland has his support, and he welds them all together...hence the Sinn Fein policy is Fenianism in practice – on the lines of passive resistance, the clogging of the machine of British government, the building up of the intellect of the nation, as well as its muscle. Hence the Sinn Fein Fenian who heads this article.⁹

O'Hegarty believed that the Irish language was the foundation upon which the 'Underground Nation' (O'Hegarty's term to describe Irish Ireland's emergence out of 'bondage'), could lead the way in the dispossessed reclaiming their national identity. For O'Hegarty the historical legacy and current rejuvenation of the Irish language represented resistance to the peaceful but effective penetration of English culture and tradition into Ireland's cultural heritage. This is not to say that O'Hegarty bore any animosity toward the English language or English culture, rather, he felt that the Irish language and culture were unfairly depicted as an inferior and redundant medium in the rapidly modernising world.

⁸ *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1939.

⁹ *The Republic*, 1907.

The language therefore represented the source of the Irish people's defiance and cultural continuation in the light of Ireland's growing social and economic Anglicisation dating most noticeably from the 1801 Act of Union. The language embodied the form of self-reliance through which Irish culture had maintained itself and this rather than distaste or animosity toward England enervated his enthusiasm toward the language revival.

In addition, O'Hegarty sought to apply the principle of the Irish language as a forge of potential cultural unity between the competing cultural traditions on the island. In the same manner as Wolfe Tone leader of the United Irishmen movement in the late eighteenth century, O'Hegarty was attempting to unite 'Catholic Protestant and Dissenter' under a non-discriminatory Irish government free from its colonial standing within the British Empire. O'Hegarty saw the Irish language as representing Ireland's claim to nationhood a line of argument frequently utilised at the beginning of the twentieth century by other European peoples aspiring to achieve recognition of their rights to national independence. Yet crucial to the aims of O'Hegarty's language revival argument as a means to unite all traditions in Ireland was the question as to whether, given Ireland's unique situation, his civic nationalism held a real possibility of success where others such as the Young Irelander movement of the 1840s had failed? This chapter will demonstrate that while his intentions were honourable he was unable to dissolve the real fears of the Protestant minority who stressed their British nationality as the protectorate of their tradition and identity on the island of Ireland. That contrary to his pluralistic notions of an Irish society free from sectarian animosity O'Hegarty further alienated those who did not wish to facilitate a replacement of Anglicisation with the nationalist interpretation of the Irish language and culture as the core identity of Ireland.

For O'Hegarty the most important spiritual ally in the survival of the 'Underground Nation' was the Irish language. He was at one with Douglas Hyde's aims of reviving the language as a living tongue viewing it as necessary in creating a culturally unique Irish nation distinct from England.

O'Hegarty conceded the enormous task set before those, who, previous to Hyde, attempted to protect the language from obscurity and therefore from 'becoming a relic of antiquity.'¹⁰

The provenance of such attempts to rediscover the Irish language emanated from 'learned and cultural societies',¹¹ which, as O'Hegarty illustrates, included the

Gaelic Society of 1806, the Ibero-Celtic society of 1821, the Irish Archaeological Society, the Celtic Society, and the Ossianic Society, of the forties to the sixties-studied the language, produced a large number of texts, prose and poetry, edited, translated, and annotated. Remarkable native scholars, of whom the chief were Eugene O'Curry and John O'Donovan, appeared. *The Annals of Ireland*, written in the seventeenth century, embodying older records, were edited and translated, and a respectable body of scholarly work was done on the language...¹²

The connection between these clubs and societies despite their separate existences and chronological disparity was a love of the indigenous language and culture motivated by a genuine desire to see it studied as a legitimated scholarly pursuit. As O'Hegarty has emphasised a major feature of this scholarly interest was the prevalence of the Protestant Ascendancy who were the most conspicuous group involved in the nineteenth century's engagement with the Irish language and culture. The importance of this social group to the study and translation of Irish writing was encapsulated by O'Hegarty in his assertion that as

¹⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.615

¹¹ For corroboration of O'Hegarty's views of these societies see Padraig O'Riagain, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction: Ireland 1893-1993* (New York, 1997), p.8

¹² P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.614

they 'were of the garrison section... [They found] in that an outlet for patriotism to which they shrank from giving political expression.'¹³

Political differences aside O'Hegarty saluted their service to the language, which was undoubtedly essential to its survival into the twentieth century. As a civic nationalist holding, no animosity toward any social group in Ireland O'Hegarty acknowledged the debt owed despite the tendency for these groups to be unmoved toward the widespread dissemination of the language. Moreover, he observed how:

They were of both Irish and Ascendancy origin, and the scholars amongst them, even those of pure Irish blood, took only a scholarly and an antiquarian interest in the language, they did not envisage its revival as a spoken tongue. They were patriotic, intelligent, and unselfish bodies, but they were aloof, and towards the end of the century, the scholars' aloof interest in the Irish language was reinforced and completed by a new movement, a movement of the people, springing up spontaneously and taking instant root.¹⁴

While scholarly interest was to create some measure of hope for the 'Underground Nation' and its cultural existence it drew strength from more visceral movements who were intent on combining the language with an Irish patriotism: 'they wanted to revive it as a spoken language, to have it taught in the schools, and in one way or another a certain amount of lip service was paid to the language by public men even in the political stress.'¹⁵ Yet the problem as O'Hegarty identified it remained as they too consisted of 'individual efforts, they were not associated, and they were not organised nor directed.'¹⁶

In A History of Ireland under the Union, O'Hegarty contrasted the Protestant Ascendancy's enthusiastic if somewhat aloof attitude toward the language with Daniel O'Connell and his

¹³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), pp.614-615.

¹⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.615.

¹⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.615.

¹⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.615. Modern research too reflects these views. See R.V. Comerford's *Ireland: inventing the nation* (London, 2003).

complete neglect of the language during his constitutional agitation for the eradication of the discriminatory penal laws and later the repeal of the Act of Union. The contrast is interesting as it encompasses O'Hegarty's belief that those who were seen by many on the nationalist side as enemies of the people, i.e. the Protestant Ascendancy, were perhaps more unconsciously Irish in their outlook than they cared to admit and that nationalist movements if its leaders were unaware of the usefulness of the cultural argument could damage the organic wholeness of nationalism he referred to in his articles on Fenianism above. As a consequence it was partly through O'Connell's neglect of the language that O'Hegarty reasoned that the nineteenth century proved the most effective era in England's suppression of Ireland politically, economically and culturally. In this regard, O'Hegarty iterated the impact of the nineteenth century as further distancing the Irish people from their language and their heritage with O'Connell firmly in a position to influence and reverse the process blatantly neglecting to do so. O'Hegarty's view of O'Connell therefore, in this chapter, will serve as a useful contrast to the good work of the Gaelic League and in how the spiritual aspects of O'Hegarty's framework of nationalism existed as the centre point of his programme for reviving the Irish language. Therefore, it is appropriate to trace the centrality of O'Connell in A History of Ireland under the Union on this issue as it reinforces the primacy of the Gaelic League's remit for O'Hegarty and its work in attaching a key note of reputability and mass interest in the language. O'Hegarty believed all the factors involved in the re-capturing of this spiritual past, pre-nineteenth century, were in need of embracing as it was essential that the language revival succeeded in undoing the exclusive notion that nationalism was interchangeable with the ethnic claims of the indigenous Irish population.

During the nineteenth century, the Irish language had increasingly become equated with economic backwardness and lower social status. As the scholar Patrick Maume has

illustrated the situation in the nineteenth century had emerged from the Protestant ascendancy's unwillingness to concede democratic rights to the Catholic majority in Ireland as this would have placed their ascendancy under threat and rendered them a political and economic minority existing within a predominantly Catholic country. As a result, when such rights were eventually wrested from the British government through O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation agitation it was too late to merge the demand for more rights into the political system:

...despite protests from defenders of Protestant ascendancy, British governments tried to secure Catholic loyalty by developing and co-opting Catholic lay and clerical elites, whose status rose with the increasing power and prestige of the church leadership and the growth of a class of provincial traders and large farmers supporting Catholic professionals drawn from their own families and gaining local patronage as they challenged the landlord's dominance of institutions such as the board of guardians. The high point of this policy can be seen as the alliance in the eighteen-thirties between O'Connell and the Melbourne government, and the first Gladstone government, which seemed for a few years after 1868 to have made liberalism the political vehicle of Irish Catholic and Presbyterian identities and grievances against the old regime, as it harnessed national feeling in Wales and Scotland through deploying central power for reformism against particularistic Tory aristocracies. Liberalism dominated the Irish parliamentary scene, even establishing a base in Tory-dominated Ulster. Catholic representation in the higher levels not regained until the first decade of the twentieth century; competitive examinations allowed surplus children of the Catholic middle class, trained by the growing Catholic public schools, to compete for civil service jobs in Ireland and the Empire.¹⁷

The policy of increasing Anglicisation in Ireland persisted alongside the efforts of the Young Irelanders in the 1840s to invigorate interest and impute respectability toward the Irish language among the readers of its paper the Nation. O'Hegarty was puzzled at how the nineteenth century, following the Young Irelanders positive depiction of the language was marked by an almost total neglect among patriotic periodicals and journals of articles

¹⁷ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation* (Dublin, 1999), p.3

referring to and promoting the Irish language.¹⁸ Quoting from the Irish literary journal, the Shamrock, 10 June, 1871, O'Hegarty referred to the customary approach adopted toward the language issue when intermittently the topic was admitted printed space:

...we very much doubt that the Irish tongue will ever again attain its former importance as a living language. Nor is it desirable that it should be revived for ordinary purposes of communication, seeing that the world has advanced beyond its vocabulary, and it is not adequate to the civilisation of the day. These are not to be counted as defects, for, up to the point at which the Irish ceased to be a Nation, the language is as perfect as any of its contemporaries. But when the national life became contaminated in Ireland and the civilization of the country was checked, the language like a sensitive barometer, ceased to indicate any further rise.

O'Hegarty's separatist narrative depicted a downtrodden people culturally re-arming and emerging out from underground and reclaiming their past dignity and heritage the following passage represented the magnitude of combating Ireland's growing Anglicisation. In this context Anglicisation represented the force in the political, linguistic and social spheres that had created the conditions whereby English cultural hegemony in Ireland had been achieved, if not, as O'Hegarty believed, fully secured. As previously stated the process of Anglicisation began with the forcing underground of the Irish nation and necessarily, along with their subterranean existence, followed their indigenous language. Subsequently O'Hegarty's separatist narrative most definitively laid out in A History of Ireland under the Union is one of hope for the Irish people intent on re-claiming their unique character despite enduring the humiliating despair of cultural deprivation:

At the end of the seventeenth century the Irish language had gone underground with the Irish people, and during the whole of the eighteenth century both remained underground, fighting to get out. During the eighteenth century, the English language, and everything which a language brings with it, was placed for the first time in a dominating position in Ireland. For the first time a complete framework of

¹⁸ *Irish Book Lover*, June, 1945.

government, governing and ordering the whole of Ireland without question, and using nothing but the English language in everything, the actual government itself, the law, trade, public business of all kinds, public institutions, was set up and maintained in Ireland. In that century English became the language of government, of life, of intercourse, and Irish survived only underground. If the Irish were to hold their own in that new world of the Bearla (i.e. the English language) which they found clamped down on their old world, they had to make themselves proficient in English.¹⁹

What is readily apparent in O'Hegarty's treatment of O'Connell over the language issue is the contrast affirmed by O'Hegarty of his admiration for O'Connell as the political 'liberator' of the Catholic people with his disconsolate view of O'Connell's indifference toward the cultural implications of implanting the national language as a core feature of Irish nationalism. Indeed, as a young man and because of the Penal laws, O'Connell had been sent to the continent in order to train as a barrister. His return was marked by his determination to redress the grievances and inequalities to which his Catholic co-religionists were subject to in Ireland under the British government. As O'Hegarty protested this period was one of an intensification of the English language and culture in Ireland as much as it was for the furthestmost reaches of the British Empire. Furthermore, O'Hegarty highlighted that for any influential leader or movement during the mid-eighteenth century to revive the language under the relentless pressures of Anglicisation was as remote a possibility as O'Connell ever achieving repeal of the union solely through the methods stipulated by the parliamentary process. In O'Hegarty's view O'Connell never thoroughly grasped the centrality of the language to the national spirit of the people and consequently O'Hegarty was to characterise the leader of catholic Ireland in a negative way, underscoring the

¹⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.613.

following desultory observation, ‘O’Connell...was a native speaker of Irish, but one without any reasoned conscious of nationality.’²⁰

O’Hegarty in identifying and elevating to a prominent position the natural spirit he saw existing in the ‘Underground Nation’ portrayed O’Connell as possessing an essentially English and utilitarian outlook that stemmed from his lack of Irish spiritual consciousness. This was undoubtedly the case in O’Connell’s general social and political philosophy, but in O’Hegarty’s view, in relation to the colonial experience of Ireland and the spiritual context of Irish nationalism, it was a misplaced philosophy to apply.

Despite O’Connell’s strict adherence to pacifism and his staunch rejection of physical force which was a cornerstone of the Fenian ideology this was not considered O’Connell’s main failing for O’Hegarty. Although he did consider it a serious flaw in the development of the ‘Underground Nation and its legitimate right to use physical force in the implacable opposition of Ireland’s enemy to renounce its immoral usurpation of its people. Despite this, it was O’Connell’s distinct lack of understanding and support for the Irish language that was to form the main cause of O’Hegarty’s chagrin. This view derived from O’Hegarty’s belief in the importance of the nation’s language in retaining its individual cultural identity, indeed as representing the cornerstone of nationhood.

In addition to this major failing for O’Hegarty was the fact that O’Connell was fully capable of speaking to the enormous crowds that gathered together for his ‘monster meetings’ in the Irish language but refrained from doing so. Apart from his gesturing, a few token words in the Irish language in order to confuse Dublin Castle’s security presence O’Connell believed that to encourage the use of the Irish language among the Irish people was irresponsible as it was ill equipped for the modern world and could not hope to compete with the English

²⁰ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.613.

language. For O'Connell to revive the English language would have marked a retrogressive step in the Irish campaign geared as it was towards appealing toward the English constitutional enlightenment. in opposition to this view O'Hegarty specified how the Irish language had become unfairly associated with backwardness and had declined in usage from the English governments determined Anglicisation policy which in Ireland had proved most effective through peaceful penetration dating from the of the 1801 Act of Union. Yet O'Connell, the great champion of nationalist Ireland, refused to bolster its endurance and utility. O'Hegarty likened this to a criminal act, stressed the language, and as its corollary cultural preservation, as the bulwarks against the Irish people's assimilation into a parody of English culture. Following the 1829 Emancipation Act O'Hegarty felt that this presented the ideal opportunity for O'Connell to promote the Irish language as he was at the height of his power²¹ and could have incorporated the Irish language as a means of inspiring the Irish people. O'Connell was in a position to help undo the years of linguistic and cultural suppression but neglected to fulfil a role that O'Hegarty felt languished underneath an agenda that sought the material betterment of Catholics at the expense of Protestants and over the potentially unifying cultural neutrality of the Irish language. In his ability to successfully play at the Anglicised model of politics O'Connell had mastered the Westminster political arena (an arena O'Hegarty greatly disliked) but had underestimated the potential of the home-grown cultural sphere. O'Hegarty was fully aware of O'Connell's statement that all he ever really wanted was the union of England and Ireland to be recognised as an equal partnership with the restoration of equality and opportunity for all its citizens - but this contravened the Irish nation's rightful claim to independence. Incontrovertibly, O'Connell was pursuing a dichotomous policy that seemed fully at home

²¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.137.

with promoting Anglicisation while elsewhere in Ireland he attacked mostly everything which was derivative of English influence, a strategy which very cleverly allowed him to play to the nationalist crowds while permitting a modicum of trust to develop between himself and the Liberal English government who provided his main bargaining chip in the English parliament as it could be construed that his encouragement of the Irish people to speak in the English language was a linguistic and cultural pledge of allegiance to the union. This negative view of O'Connell must be tempered however by O'Hegarty's deep admiration for the political side to O'Connell's work leading up to the abolishment of the penal laws in 1829. O'Hegarty considered it a political masterstroke in bringing the 'Underground Nation' to political consciousness even if this achievement failed to address and draw upon the cultural strengths of the people. In a review of Sean O'Faolain's biography of O'Connell entitled The King of the Beggars, O'Hegarty made allowances for O'Connell's cultural shortcomings so that his political genius could be recognised as part of the separatist canon:

In the past O'Connell has been criticised mostly because he was not a Gaelic leaguer or a separatist. But he was sufficient to his time, and he had to work with the materials of his time. He was a political realist, doing a specific job, and blind and deaf to everything else. His work was done in 1829...O'Connell's real achievement was that he made his people stand up on their feet, with their heads up, and face their oppressors. He put courage and hope into them. He fought the ascendancy, and beat them, in their own courts and Corporations. He made his successors possible. Surrounded by weaklings and incompetents – he could not really work with equals – he spent himself in their service. And if he was dead to spiritual values, contemptuous of tradition, blind to the Irish language and what it meant, that is only to say that he was a utilitarian political realist...it was necessary to do it in his way as a preliminary to the evolution in the Irish consciousness of the spiritual and intellectual concepts which came in with the Young Irelanders and never afterwards quite left us. Men have to stand up and face the sun before they can move into the light. It was O'Connell who made us stand up.²²

²² *Dublin Magazine*, October - December, 1938.

In his A History of Ireland under the Union O'Hegarty elaborated on these important points in the separatist cause to free the Irish nation and there is a lot of admiration present for O'Connell in his own time doing what he could for Ireland, which ultimately for O'Hegarty, ensured that O'Connell through his doing good work for Ireland passed the test of Irish patriotism.

Yet in order to balance O'Hegarty's separatist interpretation of O'Connell it must be stated that for O'Connell the English language was the language that ushered in the new themes of democracy and liberty as universal devices for ensuring equality among all peoples. Consequently O'Connell's agitation can be seen as seeking to enlighten the British government to its political follies and social mistreatment of Ireland and to redress the balance of power in Ireland toward the catholic majority. As a dedicated Fenian O'Hegarty could never have accepted the implications of O'Connell's reasoning as it partly excused the English government from the crimes that had maintained Ireland as a colony held in captivity under a corrupted union. Implicitly for O'Hegarty, O'Connell had no intention of affecting a total break with England or of building an intellectual framework upon which the Irish people could rediscover their culture via the Irish language. O'Connell desired his co-religionists be granted the same democratic opportunities under the rule of British law as their protestant counterparts in what he correctly identified as an increasingly cosmopolitan world through which Imperialism exported the English language as the language of modernity and progress. It was not unusual therefore to understand why O'Connell wanted Ireland to be thought of as an Imperial ally and share in England's commercial prosperity. He did not link this view of progress to any re-discovery of the Irish language or the *kulterkampf* O'Hegarty saw as entwined in the cultural progress of the Irish people. Given

the nature of O'Connell's dismissal of the Irish language, O'Hegarty understandably saw in Thomas Davis, founder of the Young Irelanders, an Irish cultural champion. Davis, through his promotion of the Irish language and patriotic poems and ballads laid the foundation for the future Gaelic League's successes. Essentially Davis had created a romantic and transcendent notion of Irish nationalism complete with a call for the indigenous language to be considered a vital passageway into the distant past where he postulated that the divisions in Ireland did not pre-date recent history. Comerford has related how:

In 1842, a romantic version of nationality of a kind flourishing on the continent began to be promulgated in Ireland in a newly founded weekly, the *Nation*. Their chief ideologue was Thomas Davis who had imbibed an essentialist concept of nationhood, and that concept owed much to German theorists for whom language was the nation's soul. Indeed, the inhabitation was not only spiritual but had a physical basis: 'the language which grows up with a people is conformed to their organs'. Language, like other features of the nation, was a manifestation of race: 'how unnatural – how corrupting – 'tis for us, three fourths of whom are of Celtic blood, to speak a medley of Teutonic dialects.' The deduction that 'a people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its barriers more than its territories' was in logic the prelude to an all-out campaign to make the revival of Irish the first item on the nationalist agenda.²³

Davis's project consisted of the following:

...to impose another language on such a people is to send their history adrift among the accidents of translation – 'tis to tear their identity from all places – 'tis to substitute arbitrary signs or picturesque and suggestive names – 'tis to cut off the entail of feeling, and separate the people from their forefathers by a deep gulf – 'tis to corrupt their very organs, and abridge their power of expression.'²⁴

Building on Davis's notions regarding the Irish language and its need for revival the Gaelic League aimed at capitalising on recent British educational reforms, which had created a newly educated class of Catholics eager to get in touch with Ireland's past heritage. For

²³ *Nation*, April 1, 1843 quoted in R.V. Comerford, *Ireland: Inventing the nation* (London, 2003), p.138

²⁴ Thomas Davis 'Our National Language', in the *Nation*, 1 April 1843, quoted in the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing volume II*, (Seamus Deane (Ed), (Derry, 1991).

O'Hegarty, the Gaelic League marked the culmination of his cultural and spiritual belief in Irish nationhood and the requirement of bringing this to the attention of the Irish people. The Gaelic League was to meet with considerable success in the period leading up to the placing of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute book in 1912. O'Hegarty believed its provenance and linguistic mission was a revelation and one where 'Ireland turned once more to her own culture and her own past, alive to her separateness, her distinctiveness, alive also to her danger'.²⁵

The Irish language was the bulwark for maintaining the linear and unbroken separatist resistance he believed had existed through the 'Underground Nation' from pre-union Ireland despite O'Connell's dismissal of the language's importance: 'the defences of a nation against annihilation are two, physical and spiritual.'²⁶ As related above for O'Hegarty the historical survival of the Irish language was the key to understanding the project of Irish nationalism as the following passage once again taken from O'Hegarty's review of Sean O'Faolain's book The King of the Beggars will illuminate. Within the following passage O'Hegarty demonstrated his voluminous knowledge of Irish history and the role of the language in the survival of the 'Underground Nation', that of a people submitted to the humiliation of conquest and yet refusing to acknowledge or accept subjugation as a fact of their existence. Essentially O'Hegarty criticised O'Faolain for his lack of understanding of how the language performed this critical function:

He is in revolt against and irritated with, Mr. Corkery's extremes, and therefore he is unduly bellicose against the Gael. He exaggerates the wretchedness of the Irish in the eighteenth century, and misunderstands the Irish aristocratic temper and civilisation as a tyrannical one, which it was not – we are still an aristocratic people, not a democratic one, and we shall remain so. He does not understand at all that, were it

²⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Féin: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.1.

²⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Féin: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.1.

not for the Irish language in the century after 1691, there might be no Irish people at all. In the darkness of this period the people reformed themselves behind the rampart of Irish, and re-conquest. And his general view of the soul of a nation is strangely materialistic. He does not seem to have considered the conception of it as a thing of itself, apart from odd materialistic manifestations of it in political matters. Nor was there ever any chance of this country becoming like Scotland or Wales. They bowed the head. We never did. There is such a thing as an unconquerable will. We had it and they had it not.²⁷

This didactic approach to the concept of spiritual nationality underscored O'Hegarty's approach to the language issue as a central aspect of his cultural examination of Irish nationalism and identity. In a series of articles containing an overview of William Rooney's short career and political thought on the goal of Irish independence in Irish Freedom, O'Hegarty quoted approvingly Rooney's repudiation of the term 'advanced nationalist' from being applied to contemporary separatists such as himself and recognised in Rooney the necessary Davisite approach to invigorate the Gaelic Revival. O'Hegarty commented:

From a grand national standpoint there is nothing "advanced" in this spirit. It could not look for less and remain national; it only deserves its name by the assertion that the active operation of all essentially Irish energies and influence is above nationality.²⁸

O'Hegarty applauded the following objectives for the rejuvenation of the language's fortunes as set out by Rooney:

...we must have an evening Irish class in every village and town, Irish speaking or otherwise where, as well as calling into service the seanchaidhe, the scribe shall again become an institution to set down and prepare for the permanency of print, the stories, histories, songs and ballads that are even yet been produced in every part of Gaelic Ireland.²⁹

²⁷ *Dublin Magazine*, October - December, 1938

²⁸ *Irish Freedom*, December 1910.

²⁹ *Irish Freedom*, January, 1911.

As with O'Hegarty, Rooney placed special emphasis on the language revival. During his short life he was at the centre of 'building up a literary and political movement' in Dublin originally, then throughout Ireland.

The spark that generated O'Hegarty's interest in the Gaelic League, as with many other future language enthusiasts was 'The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland', the title of a lecture given by Douglas Hyde in 1892. Hyde drew attention to the fact that the language had been reduced to a few remote areas in the West of Ireland, or, alternatively referred to as the Gaeltacht, and, save for a few scholars intent on preserving it as a specialised interest and antiquity remained virtually absent elsewhere. Hyde, in assessing the present condition of the language necessitated the following activities as a remedy to the decline:

In order to de-anglicise ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language. We must bring pressure upon our politicians not to snuff it out by their tacit discouragement merely because they do not happen to understand it. We must arouse some spark of patriotic inspiration among the peasantry who still use the language and put an end to the shameful state of feeling - a thousand-tongued reproach to our leaders and statesmen - which make young men and women blush and hang their heads when overheard speaking their own language.³⁰

The scholar Dominic Daly, in his study of the 'Young Douglas Hyde' confirms the urgency to which Hyde attributed to furthering the language revival:

In a letter to Horace Reynolds, Hyde was to underwrite the challenge that was faced by the Gaelic League: 'My aim was to save the Irish language from death it was dying then as fast as ever it could die and that ambition did not lend itself to English writing except for propagandist purposes...'³¹

³⁰ Extracted from Dr. Douglas Hyde's Presidential address to the Dublin Society, November, 1892. See Dominic Daly, *The Young Douglas Hyde: the Dawn of the Irish Revolution and Renaissance 1874-1893* (Dublin, 1974), p.xvii.

³¹ Dominic Daly, *The Young Douglas Hyde: the Dawn of the Irish Revolution and Renaissance 1874-1893* (Dublin, 1974), p.xvii. Also *Dublin Magazine*, vol. 3, 1938, p.29.

O'Hegarty agreed with Hyde's aim of reviving the language as a living tongue viewing it as necessary in creating a culturally unique Irish nation, distinct from England. In this regard O'Hegarty was to welcome the provenance of the Gaelic League as re-asserting Davis's emphasis on language (although it must be stated that O'Hegarty overstated Davis's commitment to the Irish language as one that would eventually challenge the English language as the national tongue) with the same regard as he welcomed the Sinn Fein policy as new methods to further the basic tenets of Irish nationalism in the twentieth century. O'Hegarty was to see in Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League a cultural and economic resurgence that would provide the motivation for the de-Anglicisation of Ireland and the achievement of independence. O'Hegarty was convinced that in order to ensure that the work of the Act of Union to completely assimilate Ireland would not be completed in the twentieth century that the Gaelic League project needed to be pursued with an energy and patriotism which embraced all traditions in Ireland. In the same vein he was to welcome the provenance of the Gaelic League with the same enthusiasm that he welcomed the publishing of the United Irishman (Arthur Griffith's first newspaper carrying the separatist Sinn Fein philosophy), as new methods to further the basic tenets of Fenianism in the twentieth century. The policies outlined by both these movements would fulfil the purpose of healing the deep rift that had opened up between the Irish people and their ancestral national identity. Crucially the two movements:

...brought with them for the first time the possibility of a comprehensive movement for the recovery of everything lost, for an attack upon the dominant civilization at every point of contact....And the twentieth century, brought the movement itself in the Sinn Fein movement.³²

³² P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.7.

For O’Hegarty, with the advent of the Gaelic League and the enthusiasm in which it was met the sentiments contained in the above quotation could have become a reality if the spiritual patriotism he desired to see in his fellow countrymen had been shared with the same value and commitment exemplified by the writer and educator, P.W. Joyce. In 1914 O’Hegarty was to write an appreciation of P.W. Joyce evaluating his contribution to the Irish language as a vital one not least in his writing of key school texts which introduced many Irish children to the Irish language. O’Hegarty acknowledged his and many other language enthusiasts, debt to Joyce as an influential figure for the preservation of the language. Consequently P.W. Joyce was granted high praise and while not:

one of the big archaeological, or literary, or political names, (such as Ferguson, Mitchel or O’Donovan) but all his life he gave his leisure time to Irish affairs, and all his life he was a hard worker....His “Origin and History of Irish Names of Places” – a fascinating and stimulating book to place in the hands of a young man - and his various books on music and folk song would have been quite enough work for a nominal lifetime; but added to that were a whole host of books, Irish grammar, Anglo Irish dialect...³³

Clearly O’Hegarty’s admiration stems from Joyce’s application to the preservation of the Irish language and in his aptitude to work tirelessly toward promoting it. Indeed, in reference to the extrapolation of the language as an essentiality of culture and identity, O’Hegarty goes so far as to say ‘if everybody said that for Ireland, as Dr. Joyce said his, the “Irish question” would settle itself very speedily.’³⁴

In sum like Douglas Hyde and the poet W.B. Yeats, (see next chapter), P.W. Joyce passed the patriotic test of doing good work for Ireland. They were to embody the spirit of nationalism in their sterling work as each in their own way served the nation to the best of

³³ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1914

³⁴ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1914.

their ability. It was a leitmotif that O'Hegarty was to apply throughout his life praising those who were tireless in helping to achieve Ireland's freedom. A measure of O'Hegarty's commitment to this cause was emphasised in an article from the Irish Times written to mark the anniversary of his birth:

A constant theme in Irish Freedom and elsewhere was the Irish language. He believed that not even full political freedom could sustain an independent Irish nation, so close to England, without the bulwark of its own language. He called for 'language bigots, for aggressive language propagandists, for people who are quite truculent and unreasonable, to go out and speak the language....Learn the language, make your children learn it, stand up for it always; the Irish nation depends on it. He did as he had urged. He learned Irish, his wife learned Irish, they raised an Irish speaking family, spending their summers for many years in the Donegal Gaeltacht. Had they not, made that unreasonable effort, our generation might never have seen Cre na Cille in print.

He was the best read of the political nationalists, and his judgement in literary matters was remarkable. He was perhaps the first critic to recognise that Padraic O'Conaire was laying the foundations of a modern literature in Irish.³⁵

It was clear in O'Hegarty's mind what neglecting the Irish language revival would mean. He was to write on the essentiality of the Irish language to uphold the 'Underground Nation' against the English language and culture from overwhelming the Irish nation:

If we do not revive and develop Irish, we must inevitably be assimilated by one of these two communities, or by the combined power which they must eventually form, and in that case our name and tradition and history will vanish out of human ken, and our national individuality will be lost. There is no disputing that, and no use in refusing to look it in the face.

There is no case known to history where a nation retained its individuality, its separateness, once its language had been lost, and there are innumerable cases where a composite nation has adopted the language of one of its components, and, with it, the culture and traditions of that one component, to the exclusion of the others.³⁶

³⁵ Cian O'Hegarty, *Irish Times* article – Centenary Tribute published in *Irish Times*, 4 January, 1980.

³⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.176-7.

O'Hegarty emphasised that the Irish people were in need of recapturing the spiritual past and to:

Place it in relation to the antecedent history of Ireland, above all to show it in its true light as an attempt, inspired by the language revival, to place Ireland in touch with the historic Irish nation which went down in the seventeenth century under the Penal laws and was forced, when it emerged in the nineteenth, to reconstitute itself on the framework which had been provided for the artificial state...³⁷

Until the Gaelic League's creation, the Irish language had lacked a central cultural base from which to work at seeking to permeate the whole of Ireland. It was to become the most dynamic movement in the years following Parnell's demise and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Similarly, the Gaelic League was to engender a renaissance of what constituted an Irish citizen and what made the nation distinctly different from the Anglicising influence of England. Its functions: 'went beyond the objectives of earlier organisations. Its goals were the revival of Irish in areas where it had ceased to be spoken and the creation of a new modern literature in Irish, rather than just simply trying to preserve the language.'³⁸ Established in 1893, the Gaelic League emerged as the stronghold of core principles that O'Hegarty believed were necessary for the Irish nation to reclaim its important contribution to the highest standards of the European cultural tradition. For O'Hegarty the Gaelic League became the real 'vacuum filler' that nationalist Ireland turned to in the period after the fall of Parnell. It was another weapon in the armoury of nationalist Ireland looking to build upon the Fenian tradition of resistance. O'Hegarty as a modern day Fenian did not consider the period after the disastrous Fenian rising of 1867 as an era where conspiratorial nationalism and physical force was at its lowest ebb. Indeed O'Hegarty saw the IRB as tactically playing

³⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Féin: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.3.

³⁸ Padraig O'Riagain, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction: Ireland 1893-1993* (New York, 1997), p.8

the waiting game and that the energy and personnel of the movement remained unbowed rather than demoralised. O'Connell and Parnell, the latter whom O'Hegarty praised for his underlying separatism, supported the constitutional process as the way forward for nationalist Ireland but constitutionalism meant an acceptance of English authority in Ireland and to a Fenian mind such as O'Hegarty's this only served to dilute Ireland's rightful claim to separate nationhood. It has been commented on that what mattered most to the separatists of O'Hegarty's generation 'were ideals more than politics'³⁹ and this can be asserted in O'Hegarty's commitment to the work of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic League's main role for O'Hegarty was to inculcate a positive notion of cultural revivalism, which parried the ethnic divisions in Ireland as insurmountable. Also, it discerned a viable method for achieving a self-confident nation with the necessary cultural self-reliance and distinctiveness in opposition to the Irish party's Anglicised policy of sending elected MPs to the alien parliament of Westminster. The Gaelic League represented a model and a method for many cultural nationalists including O'Hegarty that would bolster the separatist argument in concert with the Sinn Fein movement. The Gaelic League and Sinn Fein represented in O'Hegarty's view the superior alternative to the attendance of greatly outnumbered Irish MPs at Westminster. O'Hegarty deemed the political programme of Sinn Fein and the positive Irish cultural image embodied in the Gaelic League as the way forward in gaining the separatist objectives of freedom from English political and cultural hegemony. This belief in the language as the cornerstone of Ireland's nationalist identity was married to the Sinn Fein policy which looked to the creation of an Irish nation independent of English economic control thus enhancing O'Hegarty's belief in the cultural

³⁹ See Tom Garvin's chapter 'The Mind of Republicanism after 1922', in *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987.)

and economic self-reliance that featured heavily in the arguments put forward by Thomas Davis and John Mitchel. O'Hegarty placed a great deal of emphasis on this cultural aspect of separatism as in the prevailing circumstances of the early twentieth century the likelihood of celebrating a Fenian military victory over England was extremely remote.

For O'Hegarty the embodiment of the Gaelic League's cultural pluralism was represented in its first President Dr. Douglas Hyde in whom O'Hegarty saw combined the spiritual and intellectual concepts that he recognised as essential to the creation of the nationalist citizen.

The Gaelic League's impact under Hyde was described as follows by an individual whom O'Hegarty greatly admired for his creative independence of thought, W.P. Ryan.⁴⁰

O'Hegarty edited an Irish language journal, entitled t-Eireannch in 1913 after his good friend, former editor and fellow columnist in the United Irishman and New Ireland,⁴¹ W.P.

Ryan, left to argue the case for the socialist movement. Both had been members of the London branch of the Gaelic League and after initial disagreements with Ryan regarding the membership of priests on the Ard-Choisde (O'Hegarty was against the measure, Ryan was for it) O'Hegarty was eventually elected onto the Ard-Choisde himself in 1908. This was to become another pillar in O'Hegarty's remit to embody the spirit of the language and to promote its cultural centrality to the nation he wished to see emerging in a free Irish state.

Ryan was to affirm O'Hegarty's belief in the utility of the Gaelic League:

It began and encouraged a general examination of conscience: every institution in the land was shown how it had sinned against itself and the soul and vitality of the nation by its neglect of the national language. Political leaders, on the whole, heard the plainest truths, mainly on the subject of the distinction between politics and nationality and on the flowery phrase-making they had substituted for serious thinking.⁴²

⁴⁰ W.P. Ryan, *The Pope's Green Island*, (Dublin, 1912), p.55. Ryan gave his reasons for joining the Gaelic League as a means to fulfilling his spiritual and cultural needs.

⁴¹ *Dublin Magazine* July-September 1943, p.41.

⁴² W.P. Ryan, *The Pope's Green Island* (Dublin, 1912), p.51.

For O'Hegarty, Hyde became the inspiration for a generation deluded by political misgivings and distrust having put their faith in the Parnellite movement only to see it internally destroyed and emerge as a pale imitation under John Redmond's leadership. (This was a theme that W.B. Yeats also took up in order to generate enthusiasm for cultural rejuvenation. See the next chapter for the relevance of his contribution to O'Hegarty's view of doing good nationalist work for Ireland.) O'Hegarty was in no doubt when he asserted that 'He [Hyde] was to the language movement what Parnell was to the Home Rule movement, in that he was the cement which held the language movement together.'⁴³ Ultimately, the Gaelic League marked a new and positive departure in the cultural and literary sense with Hyde at the helm and one that O'Hegarty felt was a vital addition to the nationalist canon.

O'Hegarty as a resident in London and secretary of the Dungannon Club accentuated the importance of the Gaelic League as a welcome measure of home from home. In an article entitled 'Faile Padraig in London' he enthusiastically wrote of the League's success and impact among the Irish émigrés residing in the English capital through its annual festival. O'Hegarty was deeply imbued with a sense of cultural awareness that found an outlet in the London branch of the Gaelic League complemented through staged events designed to provide solace to the homesick:

It is more or less a truism that any kind of an Irish concert will fill London on St Patrick's night, but to the Irish-Irelanders the annual festival of the Gaelic League is *the* event, and to it the Gaels come in their hundreds. Not for the sake of having a night, or killing time, or through mere custom, but because of the Ireland-hunger that lies at the heart of much of our gaiety. And that fact, which I have no doubt the

⁴³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.616.

league recognises, should be its main guide in the organising of the festival. Few, save those, who have experienced it, can realise the dull, dreary, monotonous existence of the exile.⁴⁴

The Gaelic League's public commitment to a non-political stance under Hyde and his refusal to allow the League to become entwined in the Home Rule for Ireland debate allowed for an open policy of cultural awareness to be pursued despite Dublin Castle's belief that its membership consisted of a hotbed of advanced nationalists. Unlike the conspiratorial and esoteric IRB, the League could openly promote public events such as the one referred to above. As a result, its membership benefited substantially as it trebled its membership in 1905, from 600 branches in 1903. The Gaelic League was to form an important component in the idea of nationalism and reflected a wider patriotism experienced throughout Europe at this time and which approved the elevation of distinct cultural nations as politically independent states. The Gaelic League was therefore a force in asserting this argument especially in its capacity to attract such widespread support. As O'Hegarty declared in a passage displaying a belief in the possibility of the Gaelic League not just for cultural renewal but cultural unification among the different traditions on the island of Ireland:

The Gaelic League was all-embracing in the matter of its appeal and its membership. Into it went gentle and simple, old and young, Catholic and Protestant, Fenian and Home Ruler and Unionist, all sorts and all conditions of men and women, drawn to its re-discovery of the essentials of nationhood and held by that re-discovery. The League had no political principles and no political affiliations and it was very careful never to cross in the smallest particular the political border, but its effects on its members was undoubtedly political, in no narrow or party sense.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *United Irishman*, March 31, 1906.

⁴⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.619.

O'Hegarty was very much at the centre of the movements he believed were attempting to strengthen the bonds between Irishmen at a time when these movements really did look like they could combat what was seen among Irish Irelanders as the ineffectiveness of the constitutional Irish Party and the cultural apathy that had also marked the years preceding the formation of the Gaelic League.

For O'Hegarty the cosmopolitanism of the English capital allowed for a wider perspective on Irish life to develop and as a member of Irish cultural clubs such as the Dungannon Clubs and the Gaelic League would have experienced an accelerated pace of change to the cultural and political changes that were also occurring in Ireland simultaneously at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁶ The following notes are contained in the MacSwiney Papers at University College Dublin Special Archives Department, and are addressed to 'Terence's daughter'⁴⁷ which provide an insight into the context in which O'Hegarty moved to London and the position of authority in which he was held in the English capital especially through the umbrella organisation of Cumann na Gaedheal which acted as the link between Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League and Fenian inspired organisations such as the Dungannon Clubs. In gaining the chairmanship of Cumann na Gaedheal it can be surmised that O'Hegarty was central in the movements described above which in 1905 amalgamated under the leadership of Cumann na Gaedheal. O'Hegarty described the period as one of new beginnings: 'In 1902, when I was 22, I left for London ...it was a time when Ireland was being broken up and new moulds made, when the Gaelic League ferment was at last beginning to work properly.'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ L.H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979), p.214.

⁴⁷ Probably written in preparation for his book *Terence MacSwiney: a short memoir* Dublin, 1920.

⁴⁸ 'Recollections of Terence MacSwiney by P.S.' [O'Hegarty] a lifelong friend University College Dublin, P48c/105.

O'Hegarty's involvement in the literary revival continued during his visits back to Cork where he: attended meetings of the Celtic Literary Society which Liam de Roiste had started in Cork...I was then chairman of the London branch of Cumann na Gaedheal...' ⁴⁹

In analysing Irish political dissidents in London, Tom Garvin has postulated the following observation:

The central Post Office at Mount Pleasant in London seems to have housed many Irish national radicals, particularly perhaps those from the Cork area, like P.S. O'Hegarty. Many of the young men who revitalised the IRB, the Gaelic Athletic Association...and the all-important Gaelic League were civil servants, and they felt more free to engage in this quasi-subversive form of activity after the advent of the Liberal government of 1906. ⁵⁰

Garvin has cited the following British government report on the impact of the Gaelic League in London amongst émigrés:

Eleanor Hull was struck by the extraordinary appeal which the League had for young Irishmen and women living in London at the turn of the century. It was taken up typically by those in clerical jobs who had emigrated from small-town and rural Ireland. She was also impressed by the 'enthusiasm and earnestness' with which they had taken up the language and lore of rural Ireland. ⁵¹

O'Hegarty, exemplifying the spirit of self-regeneration and the language revival for Ireland must claim a place in the successful prosecution of the League's objective to broaden its base of support inside and outside of Ireland. While there occurred serious disagreements among members of the Gaelic League over its objectives (for instance Pearse's later view of the League in 1913 as being a spent force and that now it must provide the personnel for the Easter Rising of 1916), and even the form of dialect that the language should be taught. Yet

⁴⁹ 'Recollections of Terence MacSwiney by P.S.' [O'Hegarty] a lifelong friend University College Dublin, P48c/105.

⁵⁰ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.29.

⁵¹ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland*, (Oxford, 1987), pp.87-88.

there did emerge a collective patriotism that O'Hegarty was very much a part of as he possessed and held a life long fascination for Irish culture and the methods by which it could it best be utilised as a unifying principle and as a means to assert Ireland as a distinct cultural nation.

O'Hegarty undoubtedly believed that the Gaelic League could unite the divergent identities that were manifest in Ireland. He saw these identities as belonging to one integrating factor, that they all inhabited Ireland and that their differences could be subsumed under this vibrant dynamic if it were given time to ferment. O'Hegarty's strong friendship with Robert Lynd an Ulster protestant who 'discovered his nationalism and Gallicism while living in London'⁵² was an example of this. O'Hegarty spoke of Lynd that: "He was typical of the best side of Sinn Fein, which derived through Griffith, from Thomas Davis."⁵³ Lynd's schoolmaster had advised him to flee Ireland in what was already a stifling environment. O'Hegarty was to leave Ireland under similar circumstances mainly to secure good employment but like Griffith's move to South Africa, this enabled a deeper understanding of Ireland's place in the world to develop. Griffith however was not to apply this to the role of the artist in society or the role of language for the perpetuation of Irish culture in the same way as O'Hegarty. Lynd and O'Hegarty were to meet in 1905 when the Dungannon Club in London was at the 'height of its power.' Interestingly while the two could not accept each other's position regarding physical force O'Hegarty was for it if necessary, Lynd was implacably opposed under any circumstances but remained cohorts in supporting the Gaelic League (and the Abbey Theatre). This gives credibility to the view that Ireland at the turn of the century could accommodate those with opposing views and discover common ground in

⁵² Roy Foster, *Mr. Paddy and Mr. Punch* (London, 1995), p.300.

⁵³ *Dublin Magazine*, January-March, 1950, p.44.

their Irishness. The following quote from F.S. Lyons seems to back up this assertion, 'Superficially, it seemed, as the nineteenth century ended, that a new era was opening, an era of constructive thinking and doing in which men and women of different cultures might join in friendly collaboration.'⁵⁴

This was supported by specific cases of influential Orangemen in the North East who subscribed to the notion of the Irish language as fomenting common ground between different traditions on the island. In some respects, O'Hegarty was justified in talking of the enthusiasm of many Protestants toward the Gaelic revival.

As Garvin has affirmed: 'the Irish language had quite an appeal to certain Protestants who saw in it a way of claiming an Irish identity without having to pay the heavy price of giving up their religion and conforming to the Catholic faith of most Irish people.'⁵⁵

There was further evidence of the optimism in which the language was greeted among nationalists in a letter from Patrick McCartan to Joseph McGarrity (Clan Na Gael) dated 25 November 1905:

...there was a meeting of the independent Orangemen last night and they have taken a long stride in the right direction...in my opinion with the Gaelic League, like semi-literary, semi political and patriotic (not perhaps all you or I would like) Dungannon clubs and the independent Orange movement the task to join orange and green will not after a short time be very difficult.⁵⁶

What remained pertinent throughout O'Hegarty's involvement in the Gaelic League and indeed all the separatist organisations to which he belonged was a distinct optimism in the

⁵⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland* (Oxford, 1979), p.22

⁵⁵ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.80

⁵⁶ Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford, 2002), p.110

convictions he carried as being prevalent throughout members of the league and eventually among all the traditions on the island. This could be seen in his friendships with Lynd and Bulmer Hobson the two individuals both from the north east and protestant in religion, to whom he dedicated A History of Ireland under the Union. Indeed, it was the idea of promoting a shared heritage among the different religious factions that appealed so strongly to O'Hegarty. The revival had emphasised that the language needed to be awakened and revived but this had its troubling side also. What O'Hegarty objected to was that the Gaelic League was open to abuse from those promoting a racial and catholic superiority at the expense of the other cultures on the island. Cultural nationalists such as D.P. Moran through the pages of The Leader were to create this climate of suspicion and distrust. Moran who will also feature in the next chapter as an opponent of O'Hegarty regarding the Anglo-Irish Literary revival was to represent in O'Hegarty's opinion the worst elements of this cultural exclusivity. The type that became synonymous with the Gaelic League and the cultural revival in general:

What was to give Irish nationalism that edge of insuperable permanence was, as F.S.L. Lyons and D.G. Boyce have pointed out, the Gaelic revival. Ironically aided by British reforms, which promised all the fruits of Anglicisation only to threaten the Irish identity, Irish nationalism enveloped a cultural dimension that at times in the writings of D.P. Moran verged close to racism and to an increasing intolerance of Anglo/Irish reconciliation.⁵⁷

The Gaelic League represented the theoretical basis for creating a shared cultural experience between nationalists and unionists but as the likelihood of Home Rule for Ireland loomed ahead the existing enmity between unionist and nationalists increased until the Gaelic League openly declared its political partiality:

⁵⁷ Andrew Gailey, in D.G. Boyce (ed) *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (London 1988), p.48-9.

Unlike the GAA, the Gaelic League was not from the beginning a sign of division between nationalist and unionist. As proselytising missionaries, as scholars, and as revivalists, Protestants had been strongly associated with the Irish language throughout the century. This long-standing interest was continued under the auspices of the Gaelic League. Indeed, the new movements spearheaded by the Gaelic League attracted many unionists because of its critique of the old political nationalism of the hurlers and its refreshing ethos of local co-operation and self-improvement. Not until 1915 did the Gaelic League declare itself to be in the nationalist political camp, whereupon Hyde resigned as president of the organisation because, although a nationalist himself, he was committed to the political neutrality of the League. Soon the language would be synonymous with Sinn Féin nationalism.⁵⁸

There was, despite O'Hegarty's optimistic view, a negative side to the Gaelic League's remit. The above passage represented his complaints that the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin turned their back on the original idealism that led to their creation in later years and relinquished their moral obligations to build up the Irish nation. They moved from the goal of creating an environment in which civic virtues were transcended in putting the separatist agenda forward and in the fulfilling of short term concerns that as O'Hegarty described to MacSwiney as so often 'deploy[ing] pettiness and jealousies'⁵⁹ as determining the way forward.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, not all Irish separatists were to share O'Hegarty's liberal and pluralistic notions of the Gaelic League as a forum through which culture could unite different factions. O'Hegarty always viewed the influence of the IRB as a positive force in Irish nationalist society but there was a side to militant nationalism he could not control:

...in effect, the extremists confiscated the language....By doing so they identified the language with a particular political ideology and thereby ensured that anyone who did not share that ideology or who was not willing pay at least lip-service to it would

⁵⁸ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.142.

⁵⁹ *Terence MacSwiney Papers*, University College Dublin, P48C.

boycott them....Essentially, the Irish language was valued not for itself but as a symbol of national distinctiveness.⁶⁰

This chapter has conveyed that the demise of the Gaelic League into political factionalism bore no resemblance to O'Hegarty's idea of what the cultural revival stood for. However, it is difficult to deny that the purpose of the Gaelic League, that of de-Anglicising Ireland, fitted neatly into the separatist's agenda in general terms. Garvin's criticisms of the Gaelic Revival are noticeable too in O'Hegarty's writings as he defended the IRB infiltration of the Gaelic League, which as related above became the reason for Hyde's eventual resignation in 1915 when the League was taken over by the separatists. O'Hegarty defended the IRB's actions with the following:

...some men were selected for representative positions in the Gaelic League for political rather than language reasons. That only shows that the general body of the league have a clearer conception of its mission and its relation to national development...and that they recognise that a strong nationalist, who is more of a nationalist than a simple Gaelic Leaguer is a fitter man to run things...than a lukewarm one.⁶¹

In relation to this opinion expressed by O'Hegarty, he would have witnessed the less than enthusiastic response to the Gaelic League by the Irish Party, and he did not wish to see the take over of the Gaelic League by moderate Irish Party men as occurred with the Irish Volunteers.⁶²

⁶⁰ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), pp.98-102.

⁶¹ *The Republic*, April 4, 1907.

⁶² The Irish Party defended their position in relation to the Gaelic League in the following pamphlet: "The Irish Party. What it has done for Ireland... "The fostering and revival of the Irish language has always been an object of solicitude to the Irish party...and, generally, they have given constant and valuable support to every legitimate movement for the preservation of the Irish language and of the literary and historical remains of Celtic Ireland."

O'Hegarty did not contribute to the disintegration of the Gaelic League into a political faction. O'Hegarty remained a supporter of the original principles behind the Gaelic League that of building a bridge between the nationalist and unionist traditions in Ireland. Yet the ideals established by civic nationalists such as O'Hegarty were subverted and matters were taken out of the liberal and pluralistic camp as O'Faolain related:

...the general idea of the 'Gaelic nation' is implicit in the title of Mr. P.S. O'Hegarty's interesting book *'The Indestructible Nation'* which, note, was originally given as a series of lectures to the London Gaelic League 'in (I quote the author's own words) the first and best decade of Sinn Féin, in 1911-1913.'

There one can see the idea of a Revival shake hands with the idea of Revolution. As we know, the Gaelic League was shattered by that hand-shake. The first president and founder, Dr. Douglas Hyde, now President of Ireland, resigned from it in 1915 when the militant separatists inside the League...insisted on making independence one of its avowed objects. From that day onwards politics infected Gaelic; and the idea of the 'Gael' and the 'Gaelic Nation' infected politics.⁶³

The deep intellectual framework O'Hegarty sought to establish among his fellow cultural nationalists was met with a shallow response. There were those, who, in extremis, sought to impose the Gaelic vision of Ireland rather than establish it as a connective line of potential unity. Indeed the prevalence of the Irish language in movements such as the Young Irelanders to the Gaelic League was to fortify O'Hegarty's claim that it was the cornerstone of national identity. In this, he sought to create a sense of national unity and idealistic though he was it was a genuine attempt to forge an Ireland where sectarian differences could be overcome. Through the Irish language and literature there was a sense of giving back to Ireland its heroic past where unity of race was emphasised and in one sense this did permit new interpretations of what it meant to be Irish to grow. The impact of the English language in Ireland growing evermore from the nineteenth century could not be diminished no matter

⁶³ Sean O'Faolain, *The Bell*, December, 1944, vol. 9, no.3.

the intention or exuberance of enthusiasts such as O'Hegarty. Ultimately, the English language remained the language of commerce and socialisation in the twentieth century. Despite the separatist belief in breaking the mould of English dominance, the cultural nationalist enterprise failed to live up to, the ideals espoused by the Gaelic League and indeed O'Hegarty's interpretation suffered. His pluralistic notion of how Irish society could unite comes through and he persistently strove to extract from all these Irish nationalist movements a measure of unity of purpose and a sense of shared history and future among the traditions on the island of Ireland between Catholic, Protestant and dissenter. In this regard he did possess an intellectual and liberal intention. Yet in attempting to build bridges between the traditions, he cannot escape the fact that the language he used to describe the 'Underground Nation' and his talk of the Irish people emerging from the bonds of cultural oppression were in their own way divisive. The people he saw as emerging from these bonds were no less the Catholic nation in the same mould as O'Connell championed the democratic majority in the nineteenth century. The dispossessed were emerging at the expense of those who now filled the role of possessors. O'Hegarty tried to circumvent this by claiming that it was the English Government who were the guilty party. Yet the Protestants of Ulster for instance would definitely question this interpretation of Irish history and the right of the underground nation's culture via the language to dominate Ireland. Ultimately to produce a unitary form of culture O'Hegarty needed to communicate in a language acceptable to all the traditions and in that he was faced with an irresolvable dilemma.

Despite the repercussions of the political aspects of the Gaelic League O'Hegarty's involvement was driven from his culturally inclusive philosophy. Indeed, his cultural nationalism transcended the borders of Ireland onto a greater world stage whereby Ireland

was conceived, as the centre of studying the Celtic notion of identity that O'Hegarty believed was implicit in the foundations of the Gaelic League. The following extract from a letter to Ernest Blythe, written in 1949, attests to this belief while also revealing the enthusiasm O'Hegarty still felt for the enterprise decades following the League's most successful period:

I do agree that we are right to foster cultural nationalism; this country ought to be the world centre of Celtic and allied studies. In 1922, Edmund Curtis made a proposal for that to Trinity, for a large comprehensive Celtic Faculty, which attracts Celtic scholars in Scandinavia and Germany. But they were cold. There are so many things we might yet do!⁶⁴

Matters of cultural importance to which O'Hegarty drew his attention toward were not confined to a build up of the Irish nation based solely on the Irish language. A lifelong friend of O'Hegarty, Ernest Blythe, a director of the Abbey Theatre (1935-40) managing director 1941-67 and again a director from 1967-1972,⁶⁵ was to concur with the new patriotism embodied in the Gaelic League as vital to the life blood of the nation. Linking the Gaelic League initiative with the prospects for establishing a national theatre Blythe wrote: 'The idea of a national theatre owed much of the support it received to the enthusiasm for cultural activity along distinctively Irish lines and to the new glow of patriotic feeling which had been evoked by the work of the Gaelic League.'⁶⁶

The controversies surrounding the idea of a national theatre form the basis for the next chapter.

⁶⁴ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, P24/1341, dated 20 September.

⁶⁵ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, P24/1341, dated 20 September.

⁶⁶ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, P24/1265, letter to Mrs. O'Malley, April 1968.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO-IRISH TRADITION

While the previous chapter examined O'Hegarty's promotion of the Gaelic League and highlighted the dilemma he was placed in regarding the promotion of an Irish cultural identity there was to be another aspect to questions of Irish cultural affiliation that were to engross Irish nationalists. As discussed O'Hegarty strove to try and create an all-inclusive, pluralistic Ireland rich in Gaelic tradition. However literary criticism for a separatist of the early twentieth century tended toward the promotion of Irish literature as produced in the Gaelic League, this being adjudged of more cultural value over Anglicised literature. In early twentieth century Ireland the notion of separating the political from the literary during the Anglo-Irish literary revival of the 1890s and early 20th century was to prove an arduous task for the Fenian and Executive Council member of Sinn Fein, P.S. O'Hegarty, as the categorisation of Anglicised literature took on a distinctly political design.

Given the distinction fastened to the Gaelic League and the Irish language in Ireland, literature was frequently categorised into that deemed culturally beneficial to Ireland's claim to independence (the Gaelic League and the Irish language) and literature believed to be damaging toward the accomplishment of that aim. For many Gaelic Leaguers and Irish Irelanders Anglo-Irish literature, despite its claims of Irish heritage, did not represent Irish Ireland and failed to build on the separatist tradition.

Ireland from the turn of the twentieth century was vexed by issues of culture and identity and, in attempting to affirm a distinct characteristic for defining the Irish people, cultural nationalists centred upon the work and membership of the Gaelic League as a defining principle. In order to examine O’Hegarty’s views on the Anglo-Irish tradition and how he included this tradition as a fundamental component of Irish culture and therefore demonstrate his liberal nationalist agenda, the following issues are discussed in this chapter. Firstly, the chapter sets out to clarify the traditional nationalist view ascribed to the Anglo-Irish literary tradition and why it was regarded by many cultural nationalists of O’Hegarty’s era as controversial and unworthy of inclusion in the canon of Irish literature. This is examined through the reaction of cultural nationalists to the Irish National Theatre begun in 1897 (and later renamed the Abbey Theatre in 1904) and the controversy surrounding the plays associated with the Anglo-Irish literary tradition. A detailed examination of O’Hegarty’s views will follow through his series of articles in the separatist newspaper Irish Freedom written in reaction to the views of his fellow cultural nationalists. Then the chapter will examine O’Hegarty’s views of the most vigorous defender of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition, W.B. Yeats, before concluding with an analysis of O’Hegarty’s views on the literature produced in the culturally conservative environment of independent Ireland.

The identification of literature with nationalism was illustrated in 1897 when O’Hegarty made his literary debut in the Shan van Vocht¹ a monthly magazine edited by Alice L. Milligan mainly devoted to cultural matters but also containing material relating to separatist principles. O’Hegarty’s first printed article was an attempt to trace the provenance of the name ‘Sinn Fein’, an appellation he attributed to Douglas Hyde’s translation of the Irish poem “waiting for help” in which the following line features: “it is time for every fool

¹ Shan van Vocht, March, 1897. (This was a monthly journal.)

to recognise that there is only one watchword which is worth anything – Ourselves Alone”.

For O’Hegarty the Shan van Vocht was a pioneer paper in Ireland.²

O’Hegarty provided a sterling defence of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition in Ireland³ this being the term historically and now widely used within ‘Irish Ireland’ circles to describe literature written in the English language claiming an Irish outlook. This was in contrast to many of his fellow nationalists, moderates and extremists alike irritated by the claims of the Anglo-Irish tradition that they were producing Irish literature. It is necessary at this stage to explain why the term Anglo-Irish during this period was a contentious one. R.V. Comerford has noted how it became a contested concept:

In 1846, Denis F. McCarthy used it in the introduction to The Poets and Dramatists of Ireland to refer to Swift, Burke, Goldsmith and Sterne, all of whom he was about to claim for Ireland, while acknowledging that they were generally included in the English literary pantheon. Anglo-Irish was adopted by D.P Moran of the Leader, in 1900, to denote all ‘literature concerning Ireland written in English’, in a context in which this implied downgrading, literature in Gaelic being the one true kind of Irish literature in his ‘Irish Ireland’ perspective....Boyd in his Ireland’s Literary Renaissance (1916) uses ‘Anglo-Irish’ and ‘Irish’ interchangeably, always taking the former to be confined to that work in English which has an essentially Irish character.⁴

As related in the quotation above D.P. Moran was sternly critical of the new Anglo-Irish literature that was being produced alongside the Gaelic Revival. Moran concluded that literature written in the English language especially one claiming a thematic Irish sensibility was of an inferior bent to literature written in the Irish language. It was only the latter form that could justifiably claim Irish heritage and permit the true ‘Gael’ to express the inner nature of Ireland. On a different note of criticism which was aimed more specifically at the

² *An Saogal Gaedhealach*, February 15, 1919.

³ See below for further extracts from his series of articles in the monthly Irish Republican Brotherhood journal *Irish Freedom*, February to May, 1912.

⁴ R.V. Comerford, *Inventing the Nation: Ireland* (London, 2003), pp.166-7. Comerford states that in some cases there was overlapping membership between Anglo-Irish writers and the Gaelic League.

Irish themes utilised by the literary revival, Arthur Griffith, founder and leader of the Sinn Fein movement and editor of the United Irishman (and later) Sinn Fein newspapers, supported the idea that literature should be subordinate to the cause of nationalism.⁵ Griffith believed that the Anglo-Irish literary revival if it were claiming a distinctly Irish content should seek to present Ireland's struggle for political emancipation in a positive light which his reviews of plays reflected. Griffith consequently became engaged in disagreements with representatives of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition. Griffith was eager to portray Ireland as the victim of England's political and economic suppression but stressed that Ireland was not broken and was fighting to regain her rightful position as an independent nation in partnership with his Sinn Fein movement. For Griffith, Sinn Fein represented the social and economic side of the Irish revival in Ireland whose purpose was to force England to take one hand out of Ireland's pocket and the other from her throat.⁶ Given that the social background and ancestry of the new theatre played such a significant part in the realm of art and literature the following question must be addressed: how did such controversies surrounding the literary productions performed in the Anglo-Irish Theatre emerge and how did O'Hegarty tackle these assumptions and attempt to alter his fellow cultural nationalists minds toward a more inclusive definition of what counted as Irish literature ?

It was widely believed among cultural nationalists that the Anglo-Irish were open to an Albion centred view rather than a Hibernian outlook, i.e., that they were supportive of the Anglo-Irish political connection despite W.B. Yeats's protestations that the plays produced at the Abbey Theatre were purely cultural and not subject to political interpretation. Moreover, Yeats added, the artist was not responsible for any political interpretation's of

⁵ Richard Davis, *Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1974), p.13.

⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.30

their work even if allegories and symbolic meanings in the plays were drawn in nationalist circles.

Given the political turmoil following the fall of Parnell it is not surprising that a theatre established by aristocrats - specialising both in epic Celtic myths and de-mythologizing portrayals of the peasant in Irish society - were charged with damaging political sensibilities in cultural nationalists' circles.

Suspensions were aroused among cultural nationalists as to where the political loyalties of Anglo-Irish artists such as W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge lay. J.C Beckett has remarked that nineteenth century Protestant scholars such as Samuel Ferguson had unleashed a force they could not control, one that ultimately led to the downfall of their own tradition.⁷

R.V. Comerford has offered the following explanation:

For all its success at home and abroad, the right of the new literature to represent itself as Irish was not universally conceded. Indeed, three mutually incompatible definitions of Irish literature have been in use, and their advocates frequently in contention. 'Irish' literature in the most comprehensive definition could mean literature written by an Irish person, whether in Irish or English, or, defined in the narrowest term, it might connote only work in the Irish language. An intermediate position applied the term to all work written in Irish, and to writing in English that could be deemed to be Irish in character or inspiration. Closely linked to the contention about these different definitions was the disputed meaning and use of the term 'Anglo-Irish' as applied to literature.⁸

It is possible to place O'Hegarty in the third category outlined above as he was a cultural nationalist who, unlike many of his nationalist contemporaries, held a deep appreciation of the contribution of Anglo-Irish literature to Irish society. Rather than criticising the social background of the Anglo-Irish O'Hegarty's liberal and pluralistic approach to social and

⁷ J.C. Beckett, *The Anglo-Irish Tradition* (London, 1976), p.103

⁸ R.V. Comerford, *Inventing the Nation: Ireland* (London 2003), p.167

cultural questions sought to accommodate all classes and creeds under an inclusive and united banner of Irish literature.⁹

O'Hegarty was a liberal voice during the arguments that ensued between the artists and the cultural nationalists and he became exasperated with the trenchant and inflexible positions the two sides adopted especially within cultural nationalist circles. For O'Hegarty the cultural movement which he represented had adopted a particularly illiberal stance that he felt lay at odds with the civic nationalism he associated with the separatist tradition. O'Hegarty with some prescience identified that the emerging controversies between nationalists and the Anglo-Irish writers were to have important repercussions in Irish society and the future direction any form of free Ireland might take. (See below.) For O'Hegarty, in the field of art and literature, there were important questions of civic liberalism at stake that permeated all aspects of national life not least in the potentiality of ethnic antagonisms re-emerging between unionists and nationalists.

In attacking, the artistic licence that the Anglo Irish literary revival believed central to creative literature cultural nationalists were attempting to steer the Irish imagination into a much narrower categorisation of what constituted Irish nationality.¹⁰ O'Hegarty believed this view as promoting the rigidity and conservatism that later characterised the Irish Free State after Independence was won in 1921. The principle of civic nationalism if it is to flourish affirms that all cultures in the nation state must be unafraid to freely express their identity and in the case of Ireland this meant for O'Hegarty, that no cultural perspective could be deemed as more 'Irish' than another.¹¹ O'Hegarty, as an advocate of civic

⁹ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

¹⁰ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

¹¹ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

nationalism, can be described as requiring that the following criteria be met for its successful implementation as defined by Michael Ignatieff:

Civic nationalism maintains that the nation should be composed of all those – regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, language, or ethnicity – who subscribe to the nation’s political creed. This nationalism is called civic because it envisages the nation as a community of equal rights bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a ‘shared set of political practices and values.’¹²

Therefore the idea of civic nationalism for O’Hegarty must include the prominent position of the artist in society no matter the historical antagonisms attributed to their cultural or social background by cultural nationalists. While Griffith too championed a civic nationalism over an ethnic form his actions during the Abbey Theatre controversies were incompatible with O’Hegarty’s advanced liberal and pluralistic idea of the freedoms the national artist must enjoy as a fundamental right to free expression. It would be wrong to imply that Griffith did not believe in an Ireland of tolerance and equality but in disavowing the right of the artists to become an intricate part of the nation through expressing their personal vision of Irish life, Griffith, for O’Hegarty, was denying the fundamental civic liberty of free speech. Moreover the artists must be free to choose their subject matter and in casting their ‘creative imagination’ must not be bound by the cultural nationalists who sought to impose parameters within which the artist must work. This featured especially in the artists, depiction of the Irish nation and its people.

For O’Hegarty, the implications of Griffith’s views when applied to the notion of artistic freedom held ominous connotations regarding censorship particularly when considering the nature of art and censorship in any future Ireland that had achieved emancipation. But as Tom Garvin has described the ‘Victorian’ prurience of the Irish Catholic majority did not

¹² Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: journeys into the new nationalism* (London, 1993), pp.2-3.

originate after the creation of the Free State as much of it was in existence previous to this with book-burnings and a backlash against English popular culture in general: 'The ideological foundations of the censorship system of independent Ireland was well laid, and by a wide variety of political forces: clergy, clericalists, neo-Fenians, and Gaeilgeoiri all supported it for slightly different reasons.'¹³

In Griffith there was a sophisticated appreciation of art as his reviews of plays indicated. But what O'Hegarty was objecting to can be depicted in the following example of Griffith's idea of Irish literature:

When the Irish National Literary Theatre ceases to be national it will also cease to be artistic, for nationality is the breadth of art. The artist, who, condemning his nation and his age, has wrought for the world and for all time – who was he and where is his grave? The world and time have forgotten him, as he forgot his share of the world and his share of time....If the Irish Theatre ceases to reflect Irish life and embody Irish aspiration, the world will wag its head away from it.¹⁴

In addition, Griffith made the following comments on W.B Yeats, one of the founders of the Anglo-Irish Literary revival:

As to his country, Mr. Yeats claimed on Monday night that he had served it, and the claim is just. He served it unselfishly in the past. He has ceased to serve it now – to our regret. It is not the nation that has changed toward Mr. Yeats – it is Mr. Yeats who has changed toward the nation.¹⁵

For Griffith, 'national drama meant moulding public sentiment against British rule.'¹⁶

Alternatively the main thrust of the advanced nationalist press for which O'Hegarty was to write, particularly Irish Freedom (which ran from 1910-1914 before it was suppressed as it

¹³ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.102. Garvin also states that 'even the IRB paper, *Irish Freedom*, sympathised with the general hostility to the English media and that O'Hegarty was not enamoured of the corrupting of the Irish soul he saw as perpetrated by English culture, p.106.

¹⁴ *United Irishman*, 17 October, 1903. Reprinted in Brian Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1997), p.286.

¹⁵ Reprinted in Brian Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1997), p.288.

¹⁶ Brian Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1997), p.288.

was deemed seditious during the War effort) featured the Fenian physical force tradition as the true spiritual cornerstone of Irish nationhood.¹⁷

O'Hegarty, who not only regularly contributed to but sometimes edited Irish Freedom in its founding editor Bulmer Hobson's absence, was a central figure in the basis of this claim even if the remit of physical force had fallen greatly out of favour after the debacle of the 1867 Fenian rising and the majority of remaining Fenians finding more of a political home in the constitutional programme of Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Land League and Irish Parliamentary Party of the 1880s. Fenians found themselves once more in a minority after the fall of Parnell and the Irish Party regrouped in 1900 under its new leader John Redmond.

Due to English legislation in Ireland, which had stemmed from the agrarian agitation of the previous century many of the grievances which had formed the source of the physical force idea had been placated most specifically under Conservative Government policy which culminated in the Wyndham Act of 1903. Ireland therefore at the turn of the twentieth century was not inclined to listen to conspiratorial nationalists such as the IRB who through their policy of physical force threatened the modicum of stability that was now more representative of Ireland.

The theme struck in the pages of Irish Freedom personified O'Hegarty's Fenian beliefs in the early twentieth century but historically the Fenianism of the 1860s was not notable for its promotion of Irish culture through its newspaper the Irish People. The Fenianism movement of the 1860s was strictly a military secret society and despite its recreational aspects did not extend its remit into cultural activities.

¹⁷ O'Hegarty formed a triumvirate with Bulmer Hobson and Terence MacSwiney, mounting a campaign to convince doubting republican audiences to reassess the benefits of the new theatre. See Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford, 2002) p.198.

In contrast, Irish Freedom busied itself in cultural matters and through the dissemination of new ideas; it proved a liberally advanced publication for its time. It was a platform through which O'Hegarty's broad and pluralistic separatism was vocalised and therefore permitted his questioning of many of the engrained attitudes of early twentieth century Ireland.

Irish Freedom had emerged through the publication and eventual amalgamation of Bulmer Hobson and W.P Ryan's papers, The Peasant and Nation, later renamed Irish Freedom and featuring IRB principles adapted to the twentieth century. Irish Freedom proved an important channel through which an alternative voice to Arthur Griffith could be aired and while a seemingly united front had been created under Cumann na Gaedheal in 1907 between the more moderate elements of Sinn Fein like John Sweetman, Cumann na Gaedheal remained a front for the IRB and therefore tended to be more radical in its outlook and separatist policy. The Dungannon Clubs too of which O'Hegarty was secretary in London and from which Irish Freedom emerged supported and represented Republican principles and the IRB perspective.

Through only the 'pence contributed by its members' this 'loose confederation of [Dungannon] clubs', as Bulmer Hobson described them,¹⁸ the IRB enjoyed a relative amount of autonomy from Griffith even though that meant the limiting of Irish Independence to a shared common parliament with England under equal terms was accepted on the condition that it would only be seen as a first step on the road to complete independence. Ben Levitas in his recent publication Theatre of Nation commented that:

...in the case of the Clubs and the 'Peasant', however, one of the properties they used to keep Griffith at bay was a more open cultural mind – and this would continue to have positive implications for the Abbey....The Dungannon clubs,

¹⁸ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), p.21.



though overtly republican, had a consistently more liberal approach to the arts as a matter of practical necessity...¹⁹

Therefore it was important as Adrian Frazier has noted below, for O'Hegarty and Hobson to maintain an autonomous existence from Griffith's position in cultural matters given the following summary of many of O'Hegarty's contemporary cultural nationalists:

The Irish cultural nationalists did not call for a secular, rational state where any human might find a home. Rather, they aimed to recover an imagined, historical nation-state of their own, lost through conquest, just as entitled to pride as the British state. But if the future Irish state were to be in language Gaelic, in religion Catholic, and in ancestry peasant, the passports to the new Ireland of its prominent writers would be cancelled. All were either Protestants or landlords, except for Joyce. Yeats, Moore, Augusta Gregory, George Russell, and Edward Martyn saw that home rule was inevitable. When that day came, they might be seen as aliens, a criminal class of bloodsuckers from the earlier regime. So they first had to invent an Ireland in which they could be at home. Writing in the wake of the land war, as power and wealth were changing hands, they had to imagine a heroic pagan Ireland, or even an extra-Christian folk Ireland; they had to document it as a history, and they had to do it fast.²⁰

In the need for generating a workable compromise and establishing unity Griffith was entrusted with the responsibility of achieving widespread support for separatist ideals by the IRB Supreme Council but O'Hegarty, himself a member of the Council from 1908-1914, where he was exiled to Shrewsbury and later Welshpool for refusing to sign the British Civil Services required oath of allegiance to the British Monarch during the Great War believed Griffith's attitude stood in the way of exciting new cultural projects that could broaden Ireland's cultural standing in Europe. The Anglo-Irish Theatre was a new and vibrant artistic milieu that O'Hegarty believed was pushing the boundaries of Ireland's

¹⁹ Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford, 2002), pp.139-40. As a relatively small grouping within the Sinn Féin remit, the Fenian tradition as exemplified through the Dungannon clubs and their paper *Irish Freedom* was in keeping with the main philosophy of Sinn Féin up to 1917, when the entire agenda regretfully changed for O'Hegarty. See chapter VI for O'Hegarty's view that the achievement of nothing less than a 'Republic' during the Treaty negotiations became a conundrum which Sinn Féin could not solve.

²⁰ Adrian Frazier, 'The Power of the Moment: Ireland's Literary Revivals', in *Bullain* vol. VI, no.1, p.12.

artistic temperament. Therefore he urged that the Anglo-Irish literary revival did assert Ireland's cultural heritage. O'Hegarty believed that cultural nationalists, including Griffith (see below), were not fully appreciative of the challenges that were being set by writers such as W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge. These challenges were set by the Anglo-Irish literary tradition and called into question the civic and pluralistic notions that for O'Hegarty were the main tenets of the separatist tradition to which he identified with.

The Anglo-Irish Theatre began in 1899 following on from the Irish Literary Society in 1893.²¹ Its opening plays were Yeats' the 'Countess Cathleen' and Edward Martyn's the 'Heather Field'. The Anglo-Irish Theatre's *raison d'être* was described thus by Lady Gregory, founding member of the Irish national literary society with Edward Martyn and W.B. Yeats:

We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by the passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed.²²

Initially there were auspicious omens for a workable relationship between the advanced nationalists and the Irish National Literary Theatre to be built upon. Yeats' play 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' was particularly warmly received by cultural nationalists for its lyrical skill and for its portrayal of the Irish as a brave and gallant race ready to make the necessary sacrifices in the fight for Irish independence.

²¹ Quoted in Lennox Robinson, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre* (London, 1951), p.3.

²² Lennox Robinson, *Ireland's Abbey Theatre* (London, 1951), p.4.

The play was to portray the element of Irish nationalism that refused to give in to English rule even unto death. It was to lead Yeats later, in his play entitled 'Easter 1916' to question whether that 'play of mine sent out certain men the English shot.'

Even Griffith who did not share the same commitment to physical force as a spiritual necessity of building nationhood as O'Hegarty could not help be moved by Yeats's imaginative aspirations. Indeed the symbolic nobility of the play seemed to set the aims of the national theatre as separatist in tone from its inception. It was also dedicated to William Rooney, the death of whom hit Griffith very hard.²³

Cultural nationalists recognized in the Irish National Literary Theatre a new and powerful propaganda forum led by the genius of W.B. Yeats that held the potential for disseminating a positive image for Irish independence. Cultural nationalists were enthusiastic in using the theatre as a method to convince the English government that there was a distinct high culture in Ireland that could rival England's. It was a forum through which much of the snobbery of English high culture could be challenged in its assumed supremacy. Paradoxically, it was also a medium whereby the more cheapened Irish entertainment believed to be exported from England could be set in its place as worthless devices to amuse the masses. Ultimately there existed a distinctive cultural alternative in Ireland capable of producing plays of the highest quality.

Moreover, the 'propaganda play' as it was termed could prove inspirational in convincing the majority of the population to support Sinn Fein and turn away from the Irish Party's methods of political agitation at Westminster. Or, as O'Hegarty would see it, divert the eyes of the population away from England and back toward Ireland as the centre of Ireland's political and cultural interests.

²³ Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford, 2002), p.37.

Yet the aims of cultural nationalists were not the motivational factors behind the new theatre as described by Lady Gregory above. The latter were seeking to disqualify prejudice whether its founders were broadly sympathetic or not toward Irish nationalism. Given this 'objective' position as defined by the theatre's directors, Griffith was to interpret their position in a subjective way claiming plays should be scrutinised in case they could be interpreted as damaging to the nationalist campaign for Irish independence. Griffith's interpretation of subsequent plays such as the 'Countess Kathleen', Yeats next production in the 'Aisling' mould²⁴ was that they were immoral and repugnant manifestations of the Irish character and therefore damaging in their portrayal of the Irish nation. For Griffith it was important to impress upon the English nation that the Irish people were not of the type portrayed in this play. Griffith felt it would only deepen a prejudice that the majority of the English population arguably believed to be a strong reason for not granting Ireland independence.

Griffith's repugnance increased with J.M. Synge's play 'In the Shadow of the Glen' produced in 1904 in which Synge's depiction of Irish peasant life caused Griffith to object to the brand of 'realism' that Synge was offering in portrayal of Ireland to the outside world. Griffith, who envisioned a bourgeois Ireland built up with protective tariffs believed that plays such as Synge's were damaging to the prospect of an industrial centred and middle class Ireland and therefore he considered them 'thematically repellent.'²⁵ Griffith was a particularly significant figure in the audience as:

He came to show himself in favour of what Cardinal Michael Logue had said no Catholics should see: a play that presented the Irish as a people eager to sell their souls for gold, that said souls came at different prices, and that illustrated as features

²⁴ R.V. Comerford, *Ireland: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2003), p.156-158.

²⁵ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), p.xv-xvi.

of Irish life some peasants who stole, some who committed sacrilege, and one woman hell-bent on fornication.²⁶

While Sinn Fein were not a mass movement as yet nationalists of Griffith's standing were still a vitally important element in the audience. As Adrian Frazier reports: 'nationalists made up the largest part of the crowd, not only officially apolitical nationalists like Douglas Hyde, the Gaelic League's president, but political ones too, like Arthur Griffith, editor of the *United Irishman* and future President of Sinn Fein.'²⁷

For Griffith therefore, it was imperative to steer the poetic drama of the Anglo-Irish Theatre toward cultural nationalist approval in an attempt to educate the Irish people into the advanced 'nationalist' way of thinking. This involved the artist portraying the Irish people as ready to govern themselves and not as an irresponsible race unappreciative and unworthy of good self-government. That is, as a morally upright nation innocent of the foibles he thought synonymous with the influence he saw creeping into the English masses, way of life. On one level his seeking to influence the artist was understandable as he did not wish the highly influential Abbey Theatre to portray a colonial people with a colonial mentality.

It was against this seeming impasse between the Anglo-Irish literary revival dramatists and the cultural nationalists that O'Hegarty's attempt at finding a way forward was premised. Synge's 'The Playboy of the Western World' had provoked a particularly damning response in the cultural nationalist press and it was in response to this and the backbiting which ensued between the opposing sides which proved the catalyst for a reaction from O'Hegarty. He wanted to step away from the backbiting and feuding which occurred in the pages of

²⁶ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), p.2.

²⁷ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), p.2.

Sinn Féin's United Irishman and the theatre journal Samheirn, after their enraged reactions to 'In the Shadow of the Glen' and its criticisms some nine years ago.²⁸

In the pages of Irish Freedom, February, 1912, O'Hegarty began a series of articles entitled 'Art and the Nation' that were to cause a stir among the fairly liberal readership of Irish Freedom. The impact was such that the paper felt compelled to print a leader entitled 'Our Contributors and Ourselves' which emphasised that the articles were the work of O'Hegarty alone and did not represent the collective views of the paper:

Some of our friends have written to us rather wrathfully on the supposition that the articles of our contributor P.S. O'Heigearthaigh, on the "Playboy," and the art question generally, represent the views of this paper. In this as in other things however, Padraic represents, and claims to represent himself alone. Indeed he made that clear in the articles themselves. The "Playboy" is a question upon which there is difference of opinion among nationalists. Many good nationalists hold the same views substantially as Padraic does on the art question, and we printed his article as giving one side of the question, the other side of which had already been given in our columns. But we are not officially responsible for either view. We believe in freedom of opinion on all Irish matters.

A separatist contemporary of O'Hegarty's and fellow enthusiast of the theatre, Ernest Blythe, writing in hindsight on the Anglo-Irish literary Revival believed that: 'the sharp and sometimes unfair criticism of the theatre which came from those who dubbed themselves Irish-Irelanders must be understood as faultfinding in a passing family quarrel.'²⁹ But for O'Hegarty the arguments between cultural nationalists and the Abbey dramatists stretched far beyond whether the 'Playboy of the Western World' was an acceptable one in theme and content. Indeed it became a test case for what was a much broader issue that needed to be

²⁸ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912. Similarly an article written by 'F.A.' in the *Republic*, February 14, 1907, felt that Synge had handled the controversies with dignity but that Yeats was at the heart of stirring up the nationalists motives. That: Mr. 'Yeats was rather pleased by the storm he has brewed. It affords an opportunity for parallels irresistible to the literary mind; and the fact that Moliere and Ibsen provoked the anger of their audiences is felt to link Mr. Synge to the great masters and rank the Abbey Theatre amongst the immortal temples of dramatic art.

²⁹ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, University College Dublin, P24.

addressed with some urgency. The litmus test was the need for respecting other's opinions and views and not seeking to condemn other perspectives in order to achieve cultural hegemony. At stake was the permitted toleration of liberal art and literature in Irish society. Despite the controversial opinions offered by O'Hegarty in his articles, he was urgently appealing to the nation to support and respect its artistic talent.

As an intellectual Irish citizen O'Hegarty was profoundly affected by the intensity of the ongoing debate between the cultural nationalists and the artists of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition not least as it was causing a severe breach in relations between the two and dividing opinion in Irish society. The arguments he was to formulate were not designed to attack either the artists, or the cultural nationalists', respective positions.

The hostile reception of the audience after the first showing of the 'Playboy of the Western World' was in reaction to the cultural nationalists, interpretation of the Irish people being depicted as fundamentally immoral in character. O'Hegarty's articles were more immediately prompted by the Abbey Theatre's recent production of 'The Playboy of the Western World' during the company's recent tour of America. The organising of disruptions had been commonplace in its production in Ireland and here too in America audience disruption had been used as a tactic for demonstrating disapproval to the play's theme and content. For O'Hegarty the play was to have 'raised once more in many minds that old question which lies at the root of all the Playboy trouble of the function of art, its relation to life, to the imagination, and to the nation generally.'³⁰

The series of articles were a balanced and pluralistic response on the subject of 'art and the nation' during this period. O'Hegarty was not intimidated by political and cultural

³⁰ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

heavyweights who wielded highly respected opinions such as Arthur Griffith³¹ and W.B. Yeats, and he stated that both these individuals had succumbed to using highly emotive thought and language.³² In respect of the erudite criticisms of plays among cultural nationalists, Griffith and D.P. Moran (who represented a more ethnical idea of cultural nationalism based on the Catholics people as the only real people who could claim Irish citizenship), were aware of what constituted a good or bad example of dramatic theatre in their sophisticated commentaries. However, for O'Hegarty their conservative ideas of how these themes should be portrayed were in danger of setting an irreversible precedent that could prove damaging to the long term of Irish culture.

The conflict between the Abbey and the cultural nationalists at this stage had already begun to inflict damage on both sides and the arguments increasingly consisted of slights and bitter reproaches rather than healthy or rigorous debate. The intrinsic qualities of the plays were being unfairly sacrificed. W.B. Yeats as principle spokesman for the Abbey Theatre in defending its choice of productions and who accompanied his frustration at cultural nationalists with severe rebukes became increasingly called upon to defend the plays of J. M. Synge that were being produced at the Abbey. In this respect O'Hegarty argued in the same vein as Yeats that a play should be determined good or bad wholly on its merits or detractive elements. Of foremost importance also, O'Hegarty reminded cultural nationalists, was to remember that the Irish theatre was indeed just that, an Irish one, and should be advertised and lauded for that very reason as a matter of cultural pride.³³

For O'Hegarty then, the issue contained much more than the choice of production of plays and the right to allow or deny their expression on the Irish stage. Whether or not an

³¹ For an example of how O'Hegarty was to stand up to Griffith see Chapter IV and the controversies surrounding the launch of Griffith's daily paper *Sinn Féin*.

³² *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

³³ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1912.

audience left the Abbey Theatre with damaged sensibilities or not, the artist must be allowed to express his view of the world as he saw it.³⁴ Implicit throughout O'Hegarty's articles was the opportunity to widen the cultural horizons of the average reader and to ensure that the maxim that Irish Freedom sought to impart to its readers, that, as an essentially dissident publication, it was willing to permit a wide variety of opinions to be freely expressed. O'Hegarty asserted that the current controversy should represent a fair hearing for the artist in Irish society in the present and in the future:

Whatever expressions one may give to the pros., and cons., of the "Playboy" controversy, that controversy ultimately carries with it the pros., and cons., not alone of dramatic art, but of all art, and it is an essential to the nation which we are striving for that the artist shall get at least fair play as it is that our children shall get an Irish education.

For O'Hegarty the Abbey productions represented the progressive state of the Irish cultural nation and one that should not be truncated or halted by cultural nationalists lack of appreciation of the talent on show at the Abbey Theatre. In line with his idea of helping rejuvenate the Irish nation, O'Hegarty asserted the merits of the Abbey Theatre, especially when taken as a whole, as a body of work, right across its broad sweep and interpretation of Irish life. It produced:

Irish national work, good work and conscientious work, when taken as a whole and sincere expressions of literature of Irishmen who are attempting the artist's business of expressing himself, and his views on life, on morality, on love, on religion, on anything and everything, when taken severally according to the various writers.³⁵

For O'Hegarty, if the literary revival was to fulfil its potential then it was essential to generate debate over the issues involved, rather than to stifle free speech, or dismiss the

³⁴ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1912.

³⁵ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

artists, plays or restrict the artists, material to a set criteria decided upon by the conventional standards of cultural nationalists:

...it maybe that the majority of the supporters of this paper, that is to say, the majority of nationalists, believe in cramping and crippling any attempt on the part of the artist to chose his materials outside certain recognised and accepted types...³⁶

Such a view reflected Yeats's assertion that the artist must be given free reign to ensure that the creative process was allowed to work to its maximum potential. Previously Yeats had argued in Samhein in response to Griffith's criticisms over his literary play the 'Countess Cathleen' that:

...if some external necessity had forced me to write nothing but drama with an obvious patriotic intention, instead of letting my work shape itself under the causal impulses of dreams and daily thoughts, I would have lost, in short time, the power to write movingly upon any theme.³⁷

In O'Hegarty's view Yeats was making a very important point and in defending Yeats O'Hegarty stated categorically that he (O'Hegarty) was a loyal nationalist of impeccable pedigree who none the less found himself in a minority of cultural nationalists. Moreover one who was 'not less intelligent, not less patriotic, with not less capacity for judgement, and with a not less honourable record of work done for the nation whose attitude these articles and notes do not represent.'³⁸

The theme of the artist's right to intellectual freedom was continued in the second of his articles entitled 'The General Question', in which, the idea of Ireland's captivity under English colonial rule was related to the rights inherent to every individual within the nation.

³⁶ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

³⁷ *Samhein* 1903, quoted in the *Irish Literary Supplement*, Fall, 1990.

³⁸ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1912.

O'Hegarty remarked that 'any conception of nationality which begins by denying freedom of expression to its freest and best souls, its artists, is bound to fall shorter of perfectibility than a more liberal conception.'³⁹

Inherent within O'Hegarty's concept of nationalism was the liberalisation of the nation's artists with the alternative amounting to a degradation of the capacity of the nation to engage in a mature reflection on its position on the world stage, as a producer of great art and literature. This was compatible with O'Hegarty's concept of the nation at one with, and comfortable with, its culture and identity. Moreover, O'Hegarty saw the arguments between the nationalists and the artists as ignoring the mutual benefits that a harmonious relationship could bring to the objectives outlined above. O'Hegarty was to challenge the prejudices of his fellow cultural nationalists and advance a conflation of the two sides, nationalist and artist, as working together for the general good or as referred to in the previous chapter, the 'cultural uplift' of the Irish nation. He considered both as vital elements for the intellectual advancement of the Irish nation.

These articles form an important insight into O'Hegarty's advanced liberal and pluralistic views on the Anglo-Irish literary revival as a test case for the Ireland he wished to encourage and see developing. The power behind the articles is based on their broad-minded logical reasoning which is used to refute the more narrow minded views expounded by cultural nationalists and, as will be demonstrated, the reaction to these views from the Anglo Irish camp (most explicitly through W.B. Yeats). O'Hegarty's refused to become embroiled in the heated and reactionary side of the debate. He saw it as an argument, which while both sides claimed to be standing up for Ireland and securing its future as a respectable nation

³⁹ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1912.

state was actually damaging the nation through its lack of tolerance and shortsighted appraisal of the cultural development of the nation.

Regarding his criticisms of the Anglo Irish camp O'Hegarty emphasised that the artist was obliged to use whatever materials to which they were drawn. However, he was to criticise Yeats (see below for his criticism of Yeats as a businessman) for his knee-jerk reaction in disapproving and discouraging of plays he deemed were written with a political or nationalist agenda. For O'Hegarty this was tantamount to the same stifling of creativity to which Yeats had accused the cultural nationalists. Yeats could not advocate the freedom of the artist to choose whatever material he or she chose as essential to the creative process while at the same time restricting the choice of material, in this case from the political realm, as this too stifled the creative impulse. O'Hegarty dealt with this issue in the following way:

The artists, on the other hand, have barred what they term the propagandist play, meaning by that a play which deals with Irish international politics and has an Irish bias. Now that is as erroneous as the barring of the nationalists. It is the artist's business to express that portion of Ireland's soul as well as the other portions, and it is quite as legitimate material for the artist...let us have done with the theory that because a play propagates something political it is bad art; it will only be bad art if the workmanship is bad. The right of the artist to choose his material out of political life is as sacred as any other right, and he ought to fight for it instead of fighting against it.⁴⁰

The above quotation is an important one therefore in understanding the cultural pluralism O'Hegarty advocated. It contains his thought regarding the nature of the role of the artist in society. For O'Hegarty, nationalists who desired the Irish Theatre to conform to their own interpretation of the Irish ethnic character were paving the way toward the everyday practices of arbitrary censorship. This then, despite O'Hegarty's general affiliation with the

⁴⁰ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1912.

work of cultural nationalists, was the issue at hand and an issue worth defending above the political point-scoring of nationalists and the Anglo- Irish contingency. O'Hegarty believed that the policy of cultural nationalists would hinder free expression and if these views were to become commonplace they could even lead to the artist becoming an ostracised figure in the community. O'Hegarty was in no doubt that this would encumber the quality and breadth of the plays produced as the artist instead of concentrating on the excellence of his work would be continually mindful of the overall effect the social and political implications the plays were having upon the audience, that is, if they made it through the process of censorship onto the stage. This, in effect, was the driving force behind O'Hegarty's comment concerning the distinction between good and bad workmanship whereby plays could be judged solely on their nationalist imagery and propagandist value rather than their dramatic or imaginative effect. The issues regarding the defence of the Anglo-Irish literary revival from D.P. Moran were more fundamental in tone than issues of propaganda. Moran conspicuously and continually chided Griffith for denying that the Sinn Fein movement actually stood for creating a fundamentally Catholics orientated and middle class Ireland. For O'Hegarty Moran's vision was an abhorrent prospect. Moran's criticisms of Sinn Fein denied that this movement really stood for the inclusive ideology they proclaimed as inherited from Thomas Davis's and the Young Irelanders, transcendent vision of a pluralist Irish society. In Moran's view, after centuries of oppression the time was ripe for the Catholics majority of Ireland to assert their numerical superiority and wrest the final vestiges of power from the ascendant minority. A major part of his crusade was aimed at 'shoneenism' or 'West Britonism', and this formed his anti-Anglo-Irish stance particularly regarding the Anglo-Irish literary revival. Moran's conviction that any form of literature

claiming Irish heritage but not written in the Irish language, was, by definition, of inferior worth. This was a degenerate view in the eyes of O'Hegarty.

Moran was to prove rigid in matters he did not consider as contributory to his notion of 'Irish Irelandism' as he held to an 'exclusive' definition of nationalism when compared to pluralist conceptions such as those held by O'Hegarty and other key nationalists such as Douglas Hyde. As Donal McCartney has expressed:

...for Moran the Abbey was the 'Peegen Mikes', and he poured scorn on the young men in cloaks with long hair and pale faces who 'hear lake water lapping even when stirring their punch'. Yeats' 'Celtic Note', said Moran, was one of the most glaring frauds that the credulous Irish people ever swallowed....It seemed that Yeats by his very success was enchanting people faery-like away from what to Moran was the real world of Gaelic literature. It was Moran's thesis that literature in English by Irishmen, however much it might be influenced by Gaelic themes, could never be other than English literature. The Anglo-Irish literature which Hyde welcomed as a half-way house was to Moran's way of thinking too often a terminus – the destination to be aimed at by aspiring young literary men under Yeats's influence.⁴¹

An example of Moran's rejection of what O'Hegarty considered the literary revival as capable of 'doing good work for Ireland' consisted in Moran's questioning of Yeats's background and the motives behind the Anglo-Irish literary revival. Moran commented:

...a number of writers then arose, headed by Mr. W.B. Yeats, who, for the purposes they set themselves to accomplish, lacked any attribute of genius but perseverance...a muddled land which mistook politics for nationality, and English literature for Irish...was offered the services of a few mystics...⁴²

As he did with Yeats (see below) O'Hegarty was to write an obituary notice for D.P. Moran in Dublin Magazine (1936) in which he was critical toward Moran's pedigree as a journalist. In this article O'Hegarty stated that Moran's form of thinking had peaked in

⁴¹ Donal McCartney, 'Hyde, D.P. Moran, and Irish Ireland' in F.X. Martin, (Ed), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* (London, 1967), p.50.

⁴² Yeats Annual, No. 12 That accusing eye : Yeats and his Irish readers, Warwick Gould and Edna Longley, (Eds), p.50.

1905.⁴³ This was the time that O'Hegarty believed Ireland was still in ferment and open to new ideas that ran contrary to sectarian notions of hegemony of which Moran was noted. Naturally, at this time, given his faith in the Sinn Fein creed O'Hegarty believed that the Sinn Fein programme was the way forward, not least, as it attempted to provide a space for all the traditions on the island rather than offering a narrow focus on Catholic power. For O'Hegarty, Moran's views were not progressive doctrines that looked to further the nationalist cause in a constructive way. Admittedly though, Moran's paper The Leader had commanded a wide audience competing successfully with Griffith's United Irishman, as a powerful voice of Irish Ireland opinion. O'Hegarty saw Moran's failing as emanating from his negative ideology toward other nationalist movements and vented through his editorials entitled 'Moran's Collar'. It has been stated that 'generally speaking the demise of Moran and the success of alternative forms of separatism were hybrid natures in contrast to Moran's purist conception'.⁴⁴

It was Moran's insistence on Catholics as the singular example of the true Gael that piqued O'Hegarty and ran through O'Hegarty's literary criticisms as a false claim in relation to the art and literature question.

In an article entitled 'The Pale and the Gael' Moran blamed the Young Irelanders for the demise of the Gaelic language in Ireland. He stated categorically that: 'the worst thing they did...was that they brought into life a mongrel thing which they called Irish literature in the English language.'⁴⁵ Yet for O'Hegarty it seemed beyond Moran's ken to realize that by cultivating art in its broadest sense this could prove to be a useful component in working for

⁴³ *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1937.

⁴⁴ *Yeats Annual, No. 12 That accusing eye: Yeats and his Irish readers*, Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (Eds), p.69.

⁴⁵ *Yeats Annual, No. 12 That accusing eye: Yeats and his Irish readers*, Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (Eds), p.50.

the Irish nationalist cause. Literature in the English language had provided an outlet for disseminating the ideas of Ireland's claim to nationhood and could continue to do so. The following view espoused by Ben Levitas depicts how the Anglo-Irish Theatre managed to survive the hostility aimed at it by the cultural nationalists:

...the existence of anti-clerical republicanism, of class based concerns of the left, and of liberal Catholics opinion, would continue to protect even the most ascendancy of dramas from being conclusively categorised according to Moran's notion of the battle of two civilizations.⁴⁶

O'Hegarty, as a Fenian in the twentieth century and armed with his intellectual framework of liberalism and pluralism, was able to incorporate the notion that both views were false and much like his attempt to bridge the divide between the dramatists and Griffith's criticisms believed that a conflation of the different elements was the best route forward. This was a view that permeated all his journalistic writings as he saw each movement as working in its own way for the good of Ireland. Consequently O'Hegarty could not have slurred the English race in the tone of Moran's 'West Britonism', and he, as an emigrant like Moran, would also have been stung by the Victorian view of the emigrated Irishman in the cities of England. However the Anglo-Irish revival did not represent this side of England, it was an Irish development and its successes would be credited as Irish as a result. Given O'Hegarty's view he felt a need to defend Yeats from attack from his critics. Moran in his attacks on the Abbey Theatre had made frequent references to Yeats claiming that he represented the worst excesses of betraying the Gael and representing the Pale's growing encroachment on Irish culture. For Moran, Yeats's poetic abilities lacked, along with every other Anglo-Irish writer an earthiness and realism that characterised truly Irish poets. These criticisms abounded even if the power of the Protestant ascendancy in real terms had been

⁴⁶ Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford, 2002), p.32.

receding from the time of O'Connell and the granting of Catholics Emancipation in 1829 and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869. In O'Hegarty's view, for all his varied motives, Yeats was an Irish cultural poet who was producing the greatest artistry of the period and who most definitely possessed an Irish earthiness and realism in his poetry. This praise however is not to say that O'Hegarty did not ever criticise Yeats for his actions. Yeats's genius was not reason enough to excuse him permanently for all his actions and decisions during his tenure as the leading light in the Abbey Theatre. O'Hegarty like other nationalists was particularly suspicious of the role Annie Horniman was playing in the Abbey Theatre as its owner and patron with Yeats as her main benefactor. Horniman was insistent that the Abbey Theatre resolutely stuck to an anti-nationalist agenda, and O'Hegarty saw Yeats during this period as reneging his roots and ideology for financial motivations rather than the strict pursuit of great art. (This was a debatable point as it was necessary to keep the rich patron on side for the survival of the Abbey Theatre.)⁴⁷

On a more practical level the accessibility of the Irish theatre to the masses was a serious matter for O'Hegarty who felt that Yeats tended to bow under pressure from Horniman to conform to her vision of the Abbey. In creating a 'class' based Abbey Theatre the danger was that Yeats would once again become charged with not representing the Irish people as a whole but merely representing a narrow percentage who could afford to see the plays at the Abbey Theatre. However from a financial perspective and in defence of Yeats, Horniman was the sole patron and Yeats as the centrepiece of the Abbey had to juggle with reflecting the Irish political situation while maintaining her dictum of 'no politics.'⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), p.24.

⁴⁸ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), p.77.

O'Hegarty's criticisms of Yeats though were deserved to a point. The Irish National Theatre society's tour of London was an ideal arena to show off the Irish genius for playwrighting. O'Hegarty, a resident in London was perfectly placed to review the proceedings. Writing in the United Irishman again under the pseudonym 'Sarsfield' on the 16 December 1905, he deeply criticised the exclusivity of the English tour in not making provisions for the ordinary people of London to see the vivid products of the Irish imagination. Frazier states how it was interesting to note how 'Sarsfield' – a self-appointed journalistic tribune of the people – rose up to face down the English patron and her poet. "The Abbey street theatre in London" article picked Horniman's letter to pieces in the columns of the United Irishman.⁴⁹ Despite such minor criticisms O'Hegarty's appreciation of great literature was too broad to discount Anglo-Irish literature from inclusion in the Irish literary canon. Yeats particularly was singled out as of quintessentially Irish stock. Rather than basing himself in London as previous literati had he had sought to establish a centre of literary excellence in Ireland. In The Anglo-Irish Theatrical Imagination Thomas Kilroy has commented:

The Anglo-Irish playwrights before Yeats had turned to London and English society. The Anglo-Irish playwrights of Yeats' theatrical movement, like Synge, turned to Ireland for their material, and their new Theatre was, of course, located in Dublin. Yet all belong to the one culture, and this is at least as important as their differing choice of theatrical location and subject matter. The fact that they are separated by a choice of subject matter simply points to the fact that one group inhabited an imperial theatre, the other a theatre which was initially part of that movement towards national self expression yet which sought to cast off that same imperialism.⁵⁰

For O'Hegarty, in deciding upon Ireland as their base, the revivalists were patriotic and worthy of high praise. He was to comment in his obituary of Yeats in Dublin Magazine in 1939: 'he conceived, launched, and sustained the national dramatic movement, which,

⁴⁹ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes* (London, 1990), pp.170-171.

⁵⁰ Thomas Kilroy, *The Anglo-Irish Theatrical Imagination* (New York, 1997), p.68.

fortunately is still with us, which has meant, and means, so much to us, and which has brought to Ireland a world reputation'.⁵¹ O'Hegarty described also the first occasion he had seen Mr. Yeats's name. It was:

...in connection with the '98 Centenary Celebrations, 41 years ago. He was then President of the Ninety-eight Commemoration Association of Great Britain, a delegate to various conventions and meetings here during the centenary period, and a speaker at various public meetings.⁵²

Yeats chaired the first dinner of the 1798 Centennial Association of Great Britain and France as President of the Executive for Great Britain and France⁵³ and had addressed political meetings at Phoenix Park and Stephen's Green in March and August 1898.⁵⁴ While Yeats later became disillusioned with the separatist ideal⁵⁵ his literary impact on O'Hegarty remained unbroken. In the following personal anecdote O'Hegarty related how Yeats's poetry coloured and influenced his appreciation of Anglo-Irish literature in 1903:

...there were still horse trams, and one was just passing me. On top I saw a familiar black soft hat, and just then the wearer caught sight of me and shouted "Hegarty, I'm coming down." It was Seamus Connolly, with a book in his hand, risking his limbs by jumping off between stopping places. He was all excited. Listen, said he, just listen, and he put his back to the railings and read out to me
 One that is ever kind said yesterday
 Your well beloved's hair has threads of grey
 And little shadows come about her eyes

⁵¹ *Dublin Magazine* July-September, 1939. O'Hegarty continued that the '98 centennial celebrations had mobilised enormous hopes among nationalists. Moreover, as the celebrations tailed off during the autumn, expectations of political crisis rose...In November 1898 it was possible even for moderate nationalists such as William Redmond to assume that history would repeat itself and that 1898 would see a French invasion of Ireland.'

⁵² *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1939.

⁵³ *Yeats Annual, No. 12 That accusing eye: Yeats and his Irish readers*, Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (Eds), p.xvii.

⁵⁴ *Yeats Annual, No. 12 That accusing eye: Yeats and his Irish readers*, Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (Eds), p.65.

⁵⁵ Yeats became less enthusiastic toward the Fenian notion of a military strike if the time was ripe, but as O'Hegarty argued, this was not to say that he was not involved in the struggle throughout Ireland's search for independence.

We felt that Yeats and Russell were Ireland in an intimate sense in which Shaw and Moore were not.⁵⁶

O'Hegarty, as with other cultural nationalists, was mesmerised by the message of romantic nationalism that was allegorically implied in Yeats's play 'Cathleen ni Houlihan.' O'Hegarty related how it would be difficult for 'Ireland in the coming times' to appreciate its impact on the fight for independence. O'Hegarty drew particular attention to how it was a 'sort of sacrament' from which 'the spirit of Ireland spoke to us, and we listened....It is a play of the captivity.'

This can be contrasted with O'Hegarty's appreciation of Thomas Moore, whom he described as a poet of the captivity in A History of Ireland under the Union. O'Hegarty described Thomas Moore's poetical past heritage as:

Coming out from underground in the Nineteenth Century, Ireland became articulate in literature in Thomas Moore, her first national expression in English. Moore was a poet of his time, and therefore a poet of the captivity...to be patriotic he had to go to the past, and to be nationalist he had to go to the East. But he was first and last, in spite of drawing rooms, an Irishman, and a patriotic Irishman, who served Ireland as best he could with his own particular gifts, and who was accepted by the Ireland of his day as her Tom Moore, her national poet, her loved poet.⁵⁷

O'Hegarty believed that Yeats '...was always on the national side' and in seeking to build up the spiritual aspects of the Irish nation he passed the test of patriotism and provided a vital element in advanced nationalist thought.

⁵⁶ *Dublin Magazine* July-September, 1939.

⁵⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.627.

Mary M. Macken, writing in the year of Yeats' death also agreed with O'Hegarty's assertion, 'That Yeats' ambition from the beginning was to be a national poet is evident to all who know the story of his life and writings.'⁵⁸

O'Hegarty was convinced that Yeats had embarked on a long term project in which all the traditions in Ireland could and would appreciate eventually:

Revolutions are not made in a week, or a year, or ten years. Nor are they made by rude or unlettered mobs. There has to be spiritual preparation, spiritual sustenance, spiritual background. Mr. Yeats in a memorable poem claimed to be "one with Davis, Mangan and Ferguson", and his work was one with theirs.... Even poems which were not national poems at all became national and had their revolutionary influence, because the whole man and his whole poetry were national in the broad sense, and his poetry was fulfilling one of the best tasks of poetry, it was speaking out of the people and to the people, filling them with pride and determination...revolutions are not made in a week, or a year or ten years. Nor are they made by rude and unlettered mobs...⁵⁹

Yeats's provision of doing good work for Ireland and of aggrandising her standing in the world became an essential test of Yeats' patriotism for O'Hegarty. But one not confined to accepting the nationalist ideology as the only true path to patriotic endeavour. This can be seen in his appreciation of the poet and novelist Emily Lawless. In a review of her life's work O'Hegarty writing under the pseudonym 'Sarsfield' stated:

In these books she never gets into sympathy with the people and she is always unconsciously perhaps, analysing them with a jaundiced mind, seeing in them no virtues, nothing save weaknesses and faults....But when she goes into poetry the barrier between her imagination and Ireland, which is evident in all her prose, is broken and she has given us things which in their own line are unsurpassed by any poet we have.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Mary M. Macken, 'John O'Leary, W B Yeats, and the Contemporary Club', in *Studies*, 28 March, 1939, p.136.

⁵⁹ *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1939.

⁶⁰ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1912.

O'Hegarty was responsive to all traditions on the island and it did not matter if the poet or writer in question was of Anglo-Irish stock such as Emily Lawless. What remained paramount for O'Hegarty was that a positive contribution was being made by the artist and that the poets and writers of Ireland were helping to build the literary standing of Ireland in the world. As the above quote suggests O'Hegarty highlights how those such as Emily Lawless were perfectly capable of finding a voice that connected with all of Ireland and in these endeavours, the Anglo-Irish writers were furthering Ireland's claim to independence through their contribution to the existing intellectual tradition in Ireland.

To discount good Irish literature as un-Irish therefore was tantamount to heresy for O'Hegarty and this view was affirmed in his immediate denunciation of Daniel Corkery's Synge and Anglo Irish Literature (1931) on its publication, as a work which no less revived during the 1930s the rigidly nationalistic and sectarian view of Anglo-Irish literature which had marked the beginning of the 20th century. Corkery's publication had even gone as far as dismissing the Anglo-Irish writers' contribution to the European literary tradition as a negligible one. Corkery's view during the 1930s and 1940s was to prove a highly influential one as it seemed to establish this opus as a hindrance to the national development that had failed to emerge post-independence.

In O'Hegarty's broad and pluralistic appreciation of literature Corkery's conclusions about the exclusivity of Irish literature as being consistent only within a 'Catholics and rural focus'⁶¹ was to provoke a strong reactionary condemnation. O'Hegarty wrote in forceful terms that: 'The theory is wrong headed and damnable. It is carrying bigotry and intolerance into literature...it is prejudiced and, in the real sense, ignorant.'⁶²

⁶¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, Centenary Tribute, article published in the Irish Times, 4 January, 1980.

⁶² P.S. O'Hegarty, Centenary Tribute article published in the Irish Times, 4 January, 1980.

In a similar vein, O'Hegarty meted out the same treatment to Aodh de Blacam's Corkeryite A First Book of Irish literature in which he stated, "This business of trying to cramp literature within arbitrary limits, at first getting a theory and then cutting up facts to fit it, is merely a part of the fanatical narrowness which is poisoning social and international relations all over the world."⁶³

After the achievement of Irish independence in 1921, O'Hegarty, who had retired from political agitation became a regular columnist in The Bell and Dublin Magazine, two of the most culturally advanced journals of their day. The Bell in particular, which was edited by Sean O'Faolain, the noted libertarian critic of independent Ireland was distinguished for its informative and topical outlook.

Both publications despite the Free State, later the 'Irish Republic's, strict commitment against immoral literature were willing to openly criticise the strict censorship that reigned supreme in Ireland until the lifting of the Censorship Act in 1967. (There was also a Censorship of Films Act in 1923.) These Acts seemed to form the natural culmination of O'Hegarty's warnings proffered in pre-independent Ireland in his series of articles entitled, and referred to earlier in this chapter, 'Art and the Nation.'

As the scholar Terence Brown has conveyed in his chapter entitled 'Introduction to the provincialism and censorship that dominated post-independent Ireland': 'Literary activity in the Irish Free State and in the Republic of Ireland (established in 1949) was affected by the deep social conservatism that marked the newly independent state and by the narrowly defined nationalism that was its ideological support.'⁶⁴

⁶³ *Dublin Magazine*, January/-March, 1935.

⁶⁴ Terence Brown, 'Introduction to the provincialism and censorship that dominated post-independent Ireland' in Seamus Deane (Ed) *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol.11, p.89.

A prime example of the conservatism and ‘narrowly defined nationalism’ that the Free State became noted for was the negative reaction evoked by Sean O’Casey’s⁶⁵ play, ‘The Plough and the Stars’, which opened at the Abbey Theatre in 1926. O’Casey had dared to cast doubt on the singular vision of how independence was won and the unquestionable patriotism embodied in the Easter Rising and the sacrifice of the men of 1916. O’Casey’s characters displayed differing reactions to Pearce’s stirring graveside oration at O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral in 1915. Not all the characters were affected by the sterling patriotism which it was meant to suggest. Indeed the reaction of the audience at the Abbey Theatre to O’Casey’s play prompted the following response from Yeats:

You have disgraced yourselves again. Is this to be an ever-recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius? Synge first and then O’Casey. Dublin has once more rocked the cradle of genius. From such a scene in this theatre went forth the fame of Synge. Equally the fame of O’Casey is born here tonight. This is his apotheosis.⁶⁶

O’Hegarty too, like Yeats, greatly admired O’Casey’s work. Taken on merit as a contributor to the Irish literary canon O’Hegarty considered O’Casey a remarkable playwright who deserved to be judged solely on artistic grounds. This was the argument he used in defending Yeats’s (later) plays and Synge’s. Indeed O’Hegarty in his defence of such plays seemed to be highly respectful of those which were prolific in their ability to question the assumptions of audiences. The lack of appreciation of this trait from other cultural nationalists for O’Hegarty displayed an ignorance that permeated Ireland when it came to great literature. Plays that were reviled without question or reason other than prejudice was exactly the situation that O’Hegarty most dreaded as his articles written in Irish Freedom in

⁶⁵ Quoted in *Lady Gregory’s Journals*, April 15, 1923: O’Casey said of the Abbey: “All the thought in Ireland for years past has come through the Abbey. You have no idea what an education it has been to the country.”

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 12 February, 1926.

1911 demonstrated. It seemed there was no improvement in tolerance to great works of art. Irish independence had not brought with it the broad minded and intellectual audiences O'Hegarty wished to see in the Abbey Theatre. O'Hegarty's overview of O'Casey's three major plays to date written in 1927, is worth quoting at length as it was to contain a deep understanding of O'Casey's objectives for writing plays and the Ireland he wished to convey to the audience:

Sean O'Casey, in his plays, is dealing not so much with men and women as with his epoch. He had been known for a great many years as a man in the Irish Movement, to use a vague but well-understood term; but as a dramatist he came only after Ireland had known three terrible and changing things - the Insurrection in 1916, the Black-and-Tan War, and the Civil War. And he attempts to show the reactions which these three things had upon the common people of the City of Dublin, the heart and centre of the whole business....

Mr O'Casey brought in the people who wanted to see plays, who were in the habit of going for that purpose to what is miscalled the commercial theatre, and who did not particularly want Irish plays....There is no reason why he should not go on, and give us in the end, judging by his beginning, a very considerable addition to the world's dramatic literature.⁶⁷

At the beginning of this review of O'Casey's work O'Hegarty considered Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw 'Irishmen both', as the first to liberate drama from its 'rigid rules of construction', that it need not be propagandist or 'fixed and immutable in its form....It can be a discussion, a tract, a morality, anything; it can just tell a story.'⁶⁸ O'Hegarty's far-reaching ability to consider the artist as an important medium through which any number of meanings could be interpreted, or even as a social critic representing the position that no artist should feel compelled to delimit their work toward representing an ideal, in this case, of the acceptable Catholics and nationalistic norms of independent Ireland was an

⁶⁷ Reprinted in Ronald Ayling, *Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements*, (1969), pp.60-67.

⁶⁸ Reprinted in Ronald Ayling, *Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements*, (1969), pp.60-67.

especially rare and intellectual position to adopt. This ability to appreciate art in its objective form was commented upon by Cian O’Hegarty in a centenary tribute to his grandfather P.S.:

His great virtue was the originality and self-reliance of his judgement. Nobody had ever taught him what he should think about literature; he came fresh to what he read, judged it in relation to his own rich experience of life, and because he had a shrewd eye and broad sympathies, his judgements have stood the test of time.⁶⁹

Perhaps the nadir of the literary controversy for O’Hegarty was the attitude adopted toward James Joyce’s masterwork Ulysses. O’Hegarty was to hail Joyce’s work an instant masterpiece in defiance of the literary authorities in Ireland’s denouncement of it as immoral literature. It must have been particularly galling for a lover of great literature and avid collector of books such as O’Hegarty to witness how Joyce, due to the controversial content of Ulysses felt unable to attend a literary conference in Dublin for fear of assassination.

O’Hegarty was willing to take a brave stand during the 1930s in holding copies of the book in his capacity as a bookseller. O’Hegarty’s friendly correspondences with Quentin Keynes the American publisher during the 1930s were vividly indicative of O’Hegarty’s passion for the free dissemination of literature with O’Hegarty providing Keynes with copies of Ulysses. (It was banned in America until the 1950s.)⁷⁰

O’Hegarty could never conform to the narrow views of his fellow cultural nationalists and dismiss literature that did not kowtow to the Irish cultural ‘type’ as un-Irish. O’Hegarty was iconoclastic in refusing to accept nationalist orthodoxies.

⁶⁹ Centenary Tribute to P.S. O’Hegarty, by Cian O’Hegarty, published in the *Irish Times*, 4 January, 1980.

⁷⁰ There is a letter addressed to O’Hegarty from Keynes thanking him for the copies of *Ulysses* O’Hegarty supplied. This letter is contained in the uncatalogued section of the *P.S. O’Hegarty Collection* at the Spencer Library, Kansas University.

As a testimony to this in an obituary of O'Hegarty in The Irish Book Lover, July, 1956, for which O'Hegarty was a frequent contributor 'Colm' was moved to write:

His first and greatest passion was books about Ireland, and books by Irish authors, both in Gaelic and in English. No man I ever met knew so much, and his orderly trained mind could sort out the facts and marshal them in a lucid and interesting way. He read French easily and spoke it with fair fluency, so it was natural he should collect illustrated editions of French classics, Shakespeare's early editions interested him, and he had many Spenser rarities also.

The English language had provided an outlet for some of the most accomplished Irish writers who in turn had helped put Ireland on the literary map. O'Hegarty's deep appreciation of literature as a positive force transcended the puritanical attitude of many of his contemporaries and those who believed only writing in Irish was acceptable and that Anglo-Irish writers must conform to Ireland's nationalist aspirations as delineated by them. In this respect he was ahead of his time. It would be fitting to quote his epithet in Irish Freedom 1914: 'it takes all sorts to make a nation, the literary sort as well as the political sort...' ⁷¹

It remained a shame that O'Hegarty did not live to see the lifting of the Literature Censorship Act in 1967, but O'Hegarty would have considered it more of a cultural travesty that it was enacted in the first place. He was to write:

It is not the fact that those Irishmen who have written English literature have written stuff which is distinct, with qualities which English literature as a whole has not got? While Englishmen who have lived here have imbibed something which changed and strengthened them. There is an Irish soil, and Irish climate, and an Irish atmosphere, which are a potent moulder, not alone of men's bodies, but of their minds. ⁷²

⁷¹ *Irish Freedom*, February, 1914.

⁷² *Dublin Magazine*, January-March, 1932.

As with the role of the Catholics Church in Irish politics O'Hegarty sought a separation of the two spheres, in this case, of the political from the artistic. O'Hegarty was to envisage a situation where the Gaelic League and the Abbey Theatre could work together and form a modern Irish literary tradition. What marked O'Hegarty's views as liberal and pluralistic and ahead of their time was his interest in the artists, work as measured by artistic standards rather than the political connotations ascribed to the Anglo-Irish literary revival by many of his fellow cultural nationalists.

Ultimately O'Hegarty was a brave individual who was genuinely dedicated to his vision of a pluralist Ireland.

CHAPTER IV

THE VICTORY OF SINN FEIN

Sinn Fein, in its pre-1916 days, was a simple, straight-forward, and essentially moral movement. It was a movement composed, in the main, of people with high ideals, who worked very hard in it and neither received nor expected anything in return. It was ascetic and clean, and its personnel corresponded to its ideals. Its material was good, and its influence was all good....When it swept the country, it swept into itself a great deal of bad material, drunkards and crooks and morally unsuitable people of all sorts. These people percolated it, and affected even though they did not control it. They had a bad effect upon it, and through it upon the people as a whole: and, that lowering of its morale was contributed also by the failure of the civil side of the movement to exercise control over the military side. The Victory of Sinn Fein: how it won it and how it used it (Dublin, 1924), p.54.

The above quotation from the Victory of Sinn Fein, O'Hegarty's eyewitness account of the rise of the Sinn Fein movement from the 1916 Easter Rising to the end of the Irish Civil War in 1922, summarises O'Hegarty's belief that Sinn Fein experienced two defining epochs during its two decades of existence. This chapter is therefore structured into, how, in O'Hegarty's view, the period between 1902 and 1916 was the most productive for Sinn Fein as the policies of self reliance and cultural and economic regeneration for Ireland were put to the Irish people with an energy and patriotism that confirmed the movement as separatist in principle. This period is examined through O'Hegarty's reading of the Sinn Fein movement up until the Easter Rising with examples demonstrating why he felt this way.

The second epoch O'Hegarty identifies with the Sinn Fein movement will form the majority of this chapter and focusing on an event which challenges the above view of O'Hegarty in his disagreement with Arthur Griffith over the possibility of Sinn Fein becoming a more mainstream movement in joining with William O'Brien's All for Ireland movement. It will also deal with the 1918 election victory of Sinn Fein, where it was transformed from a broadly based movement, into adopting firstly the characteristics of a political party despite the setting up of an Irish parliament (an Dail) in opposition to the Westminster parliament; and secondly an autonomous military wing which became the active force in opposition to the British military authorities in the war of independence. This second part of the chapter includes reference to O'Hegarty's knowledge and disagreement with the need for a Rising as well as his younger brother Sean, who did not take place in the Rising (as he was meant to) but was to become a fierce military commander of the West Cork Brigade during the Anglo/Irish War, and is included here to highlight how the mix of constitutionalism and physical force following the 1916 Easter Rising and the 1917 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis which elected de Valera as the new Sinn Fein president, proved incapable, in O'Hegarty's view, of securing a lid on the use of violent methods after the Rising.

From its beginnings in 1902, the Sinn Fein movement reflected the constitutional policy for gaining Irish independence of its founder and president Arthur Griffith. Yet it appealed to O'Hegarty's Fenian principles as its stated aim was the securing of Irish independence. Therefore Sinn Fein also represented the separatist objectives of the IRB or Fenian tradition, as O'Hegarty believed that at the heart of every separatist movement the spirit of the IRB laid at its core. Writing in the pages of the IRB sponsored paper The Republic in 1907, O'Hegarty declared that 'Sinn Fein took its place in the separatist

canon as part of an unbroken line of separatist continuity dating from 1798 to the present...' and in relation to the IRB, the GAA and the Gaelic League in which the separatist spirit was perpetuated, that: '...The Sinn Fein party is that portion of the movement which inherits the spirit of the men of '98, '48 and 67.'¹ O'Hegarty contended that the Sinn Fein movement during Arthur Griffith's presidency until 1917 developed a 'revolutionary aim sought through an evolutionary method'. The revolutionary aim was to foster the separation of Ireland from England, and the evolutionary aspect enshrined in Griffith's 'Hungarian policy', later re-named the 'Sinn Fein policy'. The policy advocated a system of peaceful non-co-operation with the British Government, whereby the Irish people through withdrawing their compliance would disable the British authority's ability to run the country effectively. The Sinn Fein policy aimed at rendering the country ungovernable in the traditional way it had been since the 1801 Act of Union. It also advocated abstentionism (see below), which Sinn Fein on being elected as the major party in 1918 put into practice. This involved the setting up of a de facto Irish government 'an Dail' to which the elected Sinn Fein candidates ministers attended as an 'underground' authority thus depriving Westminster of the majority of Irish MPs and its legitimate authority.

O'Hegarty believed the issue of abstention offered the Irish people a stark choice as the policy refused to recognise the legitimacy of the British Government to rule in Ireland through its pledging not to send any of Sinn Fein's elected members to the House of Commons. It was not debate at Westminster that would settle the Irish question but action taken by the Irish people themselves. Writing in An Saoghal Gaedhealach, one month prior to the Irish elections, in 1918, through which Sinn Fein won its historic victory,

¹ *The Republic*, March 7, 1907.

O'Hegarty emphasised how the Irish people had a stark choice of opting for the old parliamentary methods of the now discredited Irish party who had increasingly become isolated following their policies on conscription and 1916, or the radical Sinn Fein movement who stood for 'ourselves alone' which looked to the Irish nation itself, its language and culture and which the future of the spiritual Irish nation depended. It was whether:

...she will continue to recognise English authority in Ireland by continuing to send representatives to the Parliament under whose authority England governs Ireland, or whether she will withdraw her representatives from that Parliament and take her stand upon her own right to govern herself; whether she will herself lay down her freedom or allow England to delimit them. But the real question at issue goes much deeper than that, and at bottom it is a question of tradition, of whose tradition Ireland is to follow, the old Irish tradition, or the Anglo-Irish tradition.

The Irish parliamentary party, with its dependence upon England, represents the Anglo-Irish tradition, while Sinn Fein with its dependence upon Ireland, represents the old Irish tradition. The one is strongly influenced by the Irish language, Ireland's link with her historic past, the other is purely English speaking and English thinking.²

Another feature of the Sinn Fein policy that appealed to O'Hegarty was its stress on the de-Anglicisation of Ireland through the teaching of Irish history, literature, and its unique language, music and art, as described in Chapter Two. In this respect, Sinn Fein stood for and made a positive contribution to Irish culture. This facet of Sinn Fein, as discussed in previous chapters, had their limitations, but in O'Hegarty's view, they contributed to the constructive programme of establishing Ireland's separation from England. The support of Irish Ireland's cultural wing was a significant contribution to O'Hegarty's view of Sinn Fein as a movement consisting of all the traditions and cultures in Ireland rather than a

² *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, November 30, 1918.

political party representing the narrower interests of social class, political affiliation or religious creed.

Sinn Fein during its first epoch covered a broad remit for the rejuvenation of Ireland while asserting Ireland's claim as a nation. In advocating Griffith's '1782' dual monarchy policy, it achieved a workable compromise and a united nationalist/separatist front, attracting both moderate and extremist nationalists alike into its ranks. It was highly successful in this enterprise as a majority of clubs and societies who professed to share the basic principles of achieving Irish independence agreed to unite in 1907 under the umbrella organisation, Cumann na Gaedheal. O'Hegarty as a physical force separatist represented the more extremist elements within this alliance but, nonetheless, welcomed Sinn Fein's broad alliance, which permitted all shades of nationalist opinion a forum for free debate and counsel.

O'Hegarty believed that the Sinn Fein members, who had been involved in the movement from its inception, possessed a real understanding of the guiding principles of the movement: the core principles being, self-reliance and the resurgence of Ireland's culture and economy. The original members were also committed to advancing Ireland's national independence by cultivating a fraternal spirit among all Irish men. The following passage written by O'Hegarty firmly asserted this view in a tone, construed as O'Hegarty distancing himself and Griffith from the 'new' Sinn Fein he saw emerging, post 1917:

I had better say, first, why I regard myself as a contemporary whose opinion it is worthwhile setting down – why I think that that opinion will be of interest to that unborn generation to whom this book is dedicated. I belong to that small minority of people who founded the modern separatist movement, and fostered it, and educated it, and slaved for it, and beggared themselves for it.... The Sinn Fein movement was essentially a constructive, educational, intellectual movement. Its philosophy was the philosophy of Thomas Davis. Its sustaining force was love for Ireland and desire to

serve her. Its ideals were pure, and its workers were utterly unselfish and utterly unpaid.³

Major components of this alliance were the Dungannon Clubs of which O'Hegarty was secretary in London. Even though the clubs, which ran from 1905 until the outbreak of the Great War and were also located in Dublin, and Belfast, were IRB funded, and members such as O'Hegarty were pro-physical force, they still attracted a wide membership, most notably Robert Lynd the celebrated essayist who was pro Irish independence but repulsed by the use of physical force in order to realise this aim. The reason why moderates and extremists alike could work together and campaign for Irish independence was that the three most prominent IRB members, Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott, Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCulloch and P.S.O'Hegarty, while physical force men, were cognisant that the prospect of a military victory over the British was an unrealistic prospect at the present time. Furthermore, the Dungannon Clubs agreed to accept on principle Griffith's 1782 constitution as a morally justifiable alternative to parliamentarianism or physical force for asserting Ireland's independence. This being illustrated in the recording of the minutes of the Dungannon Clubs first meeting in Belfast, taken by Bulmer Hobson (and written down in his notebook), specifying the clubs' object as synonymous with the core of the Sinn Fein programme, i.e. 'to restore the constitution of 1782.' Additionally, the Dungannon Clubs promoted the Irish language and culture and encouraged Irish industry in the same language as Griffith. Another common theme that bound the different elements within the Dungannon Clubs was

³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.163.

stipulated in its creed: 'That the membership of the club be open to Irishmen of every creed or class as we believe that the interests of every creed, class or party are involved.'⁴

Recognising that the IRB policy of physical force was not the will of the majority of the Irish people and in the interests of maintaining a united front, the IRB agreed to put physical force on hold until the opportunity arose where it would prove the decisive policy to adopt. Richard P. Davis in his biography of Arthur Griffith captured this view of physical force in his terming of this period as the years of 'non-violent Sinn Fein'⁵ as opposed to the later militarisation of the movement, following the 1916 Easter Rising.

However, the IRB having reorganised under the influence of Hobson, McCulloch and O'Hegarty, in 1907, still maintained that at some point in the future, physical force would be needed to oust the English Government from Ireland. In this respect it might appear a paradoxical situation for O'Hegarty's liberal pluralist nationalism to co-exist alongside his support for the use of physical force as a required weapon in the hands of nationalists, even when legitimised through the will of the Irish people. O'Hegarty's identification with physical force seems to sit uneasily with his pluralist nationalism as the latter is normally associated with the support of constitutionalism as the legitimising principle, and most effective method, for engendering political change within the existing political system. However, a major cause for the rejuvenation of the IRB and the creation of Sinn Fein, in the first decade of the twentieth century, had been in response to the continued impotency of the Irish Party's campaign as a permanent minority within the British two party system. For O'Hegarty, the Fenian movement had long recognised that it was futile to campaign for the enactment of Irish nationalist demands, despite these demands falling

⁴ *Bulmer Hobson Papers*, National Library of Ireland, 13/162-1371.

⁵ Richard P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith* (Anvil Books, 1974), p.4.

far short of Irish national independence, as this undermined the legitimacy of the political system and the foundation upon which its authority in Ireland derived. The legitimacy behind the use of physical force therefore, originated from the flawed and ineffective deployment of strictly constitutional means.

Given the scorn upon which parliamentarianism was held amongst separatist circles, the alternative policy of invoking a united and determined physical force effort against the English forces in Ireland was postulated as an effective means of ensuring that the focus of attention was drawn toward Ireland rather than the debating chamber of Westminster.

For the IRB, the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798 had demonstrated the spiritual effect that an uprising in the name of the Irish people could engender, in that, the notion of physical force entered the canon of nationalist means of resistance to colonial rule. Subsequent uprisings in 1803, 1848, 1867 and 1916 were carried out by fringe elements in the nationalist movement and physical force, even when carried out by a small secretive cabal within the IRB in the name of the people and with little chance of success, was held as a means of awakening the Irish people from their parliamentarian slumber, and believed to be saving 'Ireland's soul'.⁶ In supporting physical force whether as a gesture or as an uprising on a national scale (which for O'Hegarty was the preferred manifestation of the right to use physical force), the moral high ground was retained by the nationalist rebels through their right to revolt against the enforced captivity of their nation. The moral aspect was very important to O'Hegarty's definition of the right to use physical force and in maintaining its relevancy to the gaining of Irish independence. As he related in A History of Ireland under the Union and in a series of articles for the Republic

⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.453.

in 1907, the central doctrine to which the policy of physical force was founded emanated from the agrarian radical, James Fintan Lalor's 'moral insurrection.'⁷

O'Hegarty's backing of Sinn Fein was recognition of a long term commitment to gaining Ireland's independence without giving up on the IRB principle of physical force to which he was strongly committed. He could also take faith in the fact that the leader of Sinn Fein, Arthur Griffith was not anti-physical force in principle,⁸ seeing the Irish Volunteers in 1913 as invoking the disciplined physical and mental toughness of the nation's citizens who were proud to make the necessary sacrifices for their country.

As a committed Fenian, physical force was central to O'Hegarty's world view despite its impracticability at the present time:

...and while in conversation Parliamentarians generally admitted that the Parliamentary policy was a compromise and indefensible as such, they vigorously defended it on the ground that it was the only alternative to insurrection, which was impracticable: and Separatists, while maintaining that insurrection was the natural and inevitable culmination of any national policy, and that all plans and preparations should have it in view as the ultimate plan, yet could not well contest the argument that in the then state of the country insurrection was impracticable.⁹

For O'Hegarty the constitutionalism of Sinn Fein was a radically different policy to that of the 'compromising', 'indefensible' policy of the Irish Party. The Irish Party was corrupting the Irish nation into believing their best interests lay at Westminster rather than in their own government in Ireland. The Irish Party therefore was indirectly responsible for the cultural and economic damage that the historic Irish nation had endured.

In attending parliamentary sessions at Westminster the Irish Party downgraded the Irish people to a mere secondary political concern of the British Government. Furthermore

⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), pp.360-6.

⁸ Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p.83.

⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.17.

parliamentarianism engrained the colonial mentality increasing Ireland's reliance on England and ran contrary to Irish self-sufficiency as preached by Sinn Fein. Moreover in the House of Commons the Irish Party were in a permanent minority compared with the English Whig and Unionist parties. Even when the Irish Party briefly held the balance of power as in 1912, they were subject to the vagaries of the Liberal Party who, despite their reputation as being favourable toward Irish Home Rule, did not elevate Home Rule above their particular party interests. Therefore, O'Hegarty concluded, from its infancy 'parliamentarianism was dishonourable, as well as being ineffective'¹⁰

O'Hegarty associated ineffectiveness with the Irish Party and that only the 'Sinn Fein policy', would ensure that the Anglicised conception of Ireland as being a constitutional part of the United Kingdom, as stipulated under the 1801 Act of Union, would become an unlawful assumption. In effect, that Sinn Fein's 'idealism' would remain unsullied by the seductions of status and power which O'Hegarty believed to feature as a major motivation for Irish Party MPs in justifying and retaining their presence at Westminster.

O'Hegarty could further justify his support of Sinn Fein on the fact that the IRB as a whole, were willing to lend their support to Griffith and his Dual Monarchy policy:

...the IRB never quarrelled with Griffith, but always worked with him and recognised him for what he was, the greatest separatist force in the country. As a matter of fact, *Nationality*, which was established during the war and edited by Griffith, was financed by the IRB.¹¹

Denis McCullough, the veteran IRB man amongst the new generation and co-founder of the Dungannon clubs with Bulmer Hobson, agreed with O'Hegarty's conviction that the IRB held Griffith in high regard:

¹⁰ *An Saogal Gaedhealach*, November 3, 1918.

¹¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.134.

...the IRB had the utmost confidence in Griffith and his strong nationalism, his courage and his integrity. He was a member of the organisation, shared our sentiments, and...regarded himself as travelling the same road only suggesting that “passive resistance” to British rule offered better chances of success than an armed rising...no question of incompatibility between Griffith’s Hungarian Policy and the frank Republicanism of the IRB ever existed...the IRB trusted in Griffith’s bona-fides [sic] as a separatist, and any difference could only have arisen, if there was any difference, over some personal or temporary issue....the IRB in my time was not wedded or pledged to action in arms only. It was prepared to back and support any man or movement that had separation from England as its final objective. I think it could be truly said that that was Griffith’s final objective.¹²

O’Hegarty, then a member of the IRB Supreme Council before his deportation in 1914, contributed to the United Irishman, the Sinn Fein weekly, edited by Griffith. Similarly his articles in The Republic from 1907, funded by the IRB, frequently contained litanies denoting how Sinn Fein’s credentials were steeped in the separatist tradition. A series of these articles entitled ‘Fenianism in practice: An Irish Ireland philosophy’ (quoted in previous chapters), demonstrated how Fenianism underpinned Sinn Fein guidelines. The importance of these articles was emphasised by Hobson in his memoir Ireland: Yesterday and Tomorrow, as they helped establish a bridgehead between exponents of the Fenian ‘physical force’ tradition and the moderates of Griffith’s camp: ‘P.S. O’Hegarty wrote a series of articles called “Fenianism in Practice” which was a definite and important contribution to the philosophy of the Sinn Fein movement.’¹³ O’Hegarty justified the partnership between Fenianism and Sinn Fein by emphasising their common goal of Irish independence.¹⁴

It was crucial for O’Hegarty to emphasise the working relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRB and the IRB’s policy toward physical force in the period following the Easter

¹² Sheridan Gilley, in D.G. Boyce, (Ed), *The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923* (London, 1988), p.39.

¹³ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland: Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Belfast, 1968), p.37.

¹⁴ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.90.

Rising in 1916 to show that the support of physical force in principle did not mean that it should be adopted as the main policy as demonstrated through the Anglo-Irish War.¹⁵ Similarly, the distinctions he made between the Irish Party and Sinn Fein were significant in the pre-1916 period and following the rapid growth of Sinn Fein during 1917 and the Sinn Fein election victory in 1918, when Sinn Fein began to imitate and take on many of the characteristics associated with the Irish Party.¹⁶

The British Government's decision to execute the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising acted as the stimulus for the change, which occurred in Sinn Fein policy. This reaction and the mistaken assumption of the British Government and presses to attribute the Rising as the work of Sinn Fein resulted in nationalist Ireland adopting an empathy with the Sinn Fein movement.¹⁷ O'Hegarty stressed how the Rising was part of a deliberate policy, organised and arranged by a secret cabal within the IRB Supreme Council and had been decided upon from 1914.¹⁸ The swelling of support for Sinn Fein that stemmed from the English Government's military reaction to it as a movement directing much of the civil unrest and potential for violence that this period marked was further increased during Sinn Fein's 1917 Ard Fheis. As the scholar Charles Townsend asserts 1917 marked a watershed in Sinn Fein's history as it was to successfully establish itself into a coherent political movement, with its military and constitutional sides for the first time working together.¹⁹ Both events however held ominous consequences for O'Hegarty's view of the Sinn Fein movement. For O'Hegarty these events resulted in a rupture of the Sinn Fein ethos, whose original policies were lost amid its expanding membership and the equally growing

¹⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1919), p.54.

¹⁶ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation* (Dublin, 1999), p.179.

¹⁷ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation* (Dublin, 1999), p.179.

¹⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.15.

¹⁹ Charles Townsend, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), p.89.

militarism that followed the 1916 Rising and the Ard Fheis meeting which resulted in the electing of a new Sinn Fein President, Eamonn de Valera.²⁰ O'Hegarty believed that from this point onwards there was a lessening of Sinn Fein's moral rectitude as its standing as a movement rather than a party, answerable to the entire population of Ireland, became sidelined as the concerns of Sinn Fein's politicised members grew.²¹ This for O'Hegarty ensured that Sinn Fein transformed into a politically dogmatic and narrowly focused unit as it acquired the status of a mass movement.²²

O'Hegarty described how the Sinn Fein election victory of 1918 was met with amazement by himself, Griffith and the other early members of Sinn Fein:

To those of us who had been in Sinn Fein from the beginning, it was difficult to realise that the election of 1918 was not a dream. It went beyond the wildest dreams even the most sanguine of us had ever had. We knew what we were up against, and we had no illusions as to the magnitude of the task we had set our hands to...But that in our lifetime we would see the whole of Ireland committed – even the businessmen and the strong farmers and the clerics – committed to the policy of Sinn Fein on a separatist basis was never seriously entertained by anybody. [I know that there are some now that will tell you that they always expected it, but I know also that they are liars: *they did not*]. Griffith, I know, never expected it.²³

O'Hegarty considered the bulk of the 'new Sinn Feiners' who flooded into the movement during this period as morally deficient in political principles and character, in as much as he considered them political opportunists and therefore very far removed from the original principled Sinn Fein members who formed its membership during its first decade of existence.²⁴

²⁰ This was in place of Griffith who withdrew his nomination. See *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.20.

²¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p.54.

²² Sinn Fein capitalised on the abolishment of the property vote for the full democratic franchise winning a majority of seats in the General Election of 1918.

²³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.30.

²⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p.28-29.

To O'Hegarty's chagrin, the new Sinn Feiners were individuals hungry for power and patronage who had discovered that their political survival depended on their affiliation and alignment with Sinn Fein. This was despite a less than knowledgeable grounding in Sinn Fein principles. For O'Hegarty, Sinn Fein had never stood for the popularising motifs of short term goals. The long term goal of establishing the 'republic' was to become devoid of its true meaning for O'Hegarty and replaced by a more populist short term version which was effectively marketed by Sinn Fein's new members. In so much as the adherence to principle was concerned, Sinn Fein had become more akin to a political party willing to adapt its principles and manifesto to suit the turning tide of popular opinion.²⁵ This was the reasoning behind O'Hegarty's following important observation after the 1918 election when Sinn Fein was at the height of its powers and standing amongst the majority of the Irish people:

Father O'Flanagan made at the time a remark, in an after victory speech, which deserves to be recorded, it was so wise and profound and so utterly lost in the emotional enthusiasm of the time. "The people," said he, "have voted Sinn Fein, What we have to do now is to explain to them what Sinn Fein is."²⁶

Retrospectively, in The Victory of Sinn Fein, O'Hegarty lamented that this valuable advice went unheeded, and concluded that: 'It was what we did not do'.²⁷

Gathering his thoughts of the period 1916-1919 and the future implications for the Sinn Fein movement O'Hegarty published a tract entitled Sinn Fein: An Illumination (1919).

While it was not an embittered and disillusioned verdict of the new Sinn Fein, a view that predominated in the Victory of Sinn Fein,²⁸ it featured major criticisms of Sinn Fein and

²⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p.29.

²⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), pp.31-32.

²⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), pp.31-32.

²⁸ This book outlined P.S. O'Hegarty's mainly negative critique of the years following 1916 to the Treaty split.

the significant changes in personnel and principles it was undergoing. Highly didactic in tone, Sinn Fein: An Illumination stressed the original position of Sinn Fein in the light of its greatly increased popularity. Moreover, it was written to inform Sinn Fein's new membership that they were now responsible to all the people of Ireland and must act at all times with this in mind, due to the electoral mandate they had been given in place of the Irish Party. Throughout, O'Hegarty stressed that Sinn Fein had always stood for the 'evolutionary pathway' of abstentionism and the moral force of a nation's people to, in the new rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points, self-determination, rather than the growing militaristic and revolutionary ideal which had taken control of Sinn Fein. Consequently, Sinn Fein: An Illumination, was an intellectual appeal to rediscover the original broadmindedness of Sinn Fein in the light of its increasingly narrow and belligerent programme. However, this proved a vain attempt, hence the later disillusionment typical of, and intrinsic to, the tone of The Victory of Sinn Fein, his eponymous polemic written in 1924.

Despite the didactic tone of Sinn Fein: An Illumination, this should not detract from the argument as equipping the reader with the means to understand the period and the process of change that was so critical to Sinn Fein's fortunes. At the time of writing Sinn Fein: An Illumination, O'Hegarty still believed that Sinn Fein was not beyond salvation and could be steered back toward its original mandate that of a peaceful movement capable of gradually taking over political power in Ireland based upon its policies of abstentionism and non-cooperation with the British Government and its colonial hegemony in Ireland.

For O'Hegarty, in witnessing the shedding of the '1782' idea and Sinn Fein's adoption of the characteristics associated with political parties, amounted to a slur on the name of

Sinn Fein. In a review of Sinn Fein: An Illumination, that described O'Hegarty as 'A Candid Friend of Sinn Fein', 'E.A.B' commented:

When a movement attains the dimensions of a nationwide ideal, it usually does so at the cost of the original purity of the ideas of its originators. Sinn Fein has been no exception to this inevitable process of accretion and dilution, corresponding to the varying beliefs and purposes of the ever-increasing volume of its adherents. It is, therefore most fortunate that, at the moment of Sinn Fein triumph, a volume should be published for the sole purpose of clearly establishing the identity of Sinn Fein. We have all watched the growth of the Sinn Fein legend, whereby an essentially unmilitary organisation received the credit for the armed revolt of 1916. We have also heard the innumerable theories of policy and government which have come to be accepted as the Sinn Fein political programme, according as they appealed to the various classes of Irishmen who have accepted the Sinn Fein idea. Mr. O'Hegarty's task is to bring order into this chaos of ideas.

It is the most valuable service of this volume that it clearly establishes the existence of Sinn Fein as a national movement, rather than a political organisation.

This was a major development in the fortunes of Sinn Fein as former parliamentarians in a desperate move to recapture their political careers now pledged themselves to Sinn Fein. Some discussion therefore concerning the evolutionary path that O'Hegarty underwent from his writing of Sinn Fein: An Illumination to The Victory of Sinn Fein is perhaps, apt at this stage as it charts the intellectual development O'Hegarty underwent from before the outbreak of the Anglo/Irish War to the period following the Irish Civil War and the surrender of the 'republican' anti-Treatyites. As described Sinn Fein: An Illumination was O'Hegarty's call for a period of reflection on what the Sinn Fein policy had achieved in terms of electoral success and it shared with The Victory of Sinn Fein a need to get back to the basic ideas which separatism stood for and were contained in the Sinn Fein policy. Implicitly, if there were to be modification of the original Sinn Fein programme then it

was to frame 'a public policy which should preserve principles and yet be a workable alternative to the Parliamentary policy.'²⁹

It marks Sinn Fein's transition from minority status to its sudden thrust into the political limelight as the representatives of the will of the majority of the Irish people. O'Hegarty elaborated that a nationalist movement could only be judged on its effectiveness, hence his view of the Irish Party, but equally the principle applied to Sinn Fein.³⁰

In contrast, the new Sinn Feiners possessed no real knowledge of Sinn Fein and therefore had no right to alter its original aspirations and aims. It was the beginning of Sinn Fein shamefully sacrificing its long history of morality for short-term political gains.

For O'Hegarty not only was it a pollution of Sinn Fein but a pollution of separatist nationalism. Sinn Fein was now involved with 'electioneering' and a re-writing of its objectives. A new variety of theories claiming to outline the real purpose of Sinn Fein was propounded by its new members who for O'Hegarty contained 'no tradition and no philosophy and no experience. They have no conception of the hard work it all involved. They knew nothing of the movement until it had become the popular movement, until everybody supported it, even the Pulpit and the Press.'³¹

A distrust of the political process had been commonplace throughout O'Hegarty's reading of the Parliamentary Party and their role in Irish society. What was to occur after 1917 in Sinn Fein mirrored the Parliamentary Party's history in that:

...placemen from Home Rule days and youngsters without influence before 1916 combined to seek benefits for themselves according to the old attractive *quid pro*

²⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty: *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.18.

³⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty: *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.18.

³¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.165.

quo – the chance to win local influence in exchange for vague declarations of fidelity to the ‘national cause.’³²

Consequently, much of the patronage and thirst for power that O’Hegarty saw as typical of Westminster was merely replicated within Ireland and contradicted his belief of Sinn Fein as a movement unmoved by material gains. O’Hegarty’s reading of Sinn Fein’s nationalist project was that it was a spiritual force rather than a material concern.³³ However, what O’Hegarty neglected to comment on was that once Sinn Fein had won majority support, electioneering became necessary in order to gain what was essentially a political goal, the independence of Ireland. It was vital to recruit and retain new members to capitalise on the Parliamentary Party’s lack of support in the country. This was accomplished on the issues that the Irish Party were thought to have failed on, the Easter Rising, partition and conscription as well as their failure to secure a measure of Home Rule. Regarding conscription, although fought against by the Irish Party it benefited Sinn Fein as their propaganda highlighted the Irish Party’s previous support of Irish recruitment. In reaction to the events occurring post 1916, O’Hegarty believed that Griffith had given in too easily to the new Sinn Feiners’ demands for a new constitution attuned to reflect its revolutionary ethos. Reflecting on this observation, several decades later in A History of Ireland under the Union, O’Hegarty concluded:

Most of the old leaders would have been content to go on with the old constitution, a constitution which was an ideal instrument for the purpose for which it had been framed, and which now had a unique opportunity of putting into practice the Sinn Fein policy in the only way it could be effectively put into practice, with the support of the Irish people behind it....But the new Sinn Feiners would have none of it...³⁴

³² David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-192: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998), p.283.

³³ *Republic*, March, 1907.

³⁴ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.715.

Once again, the change in the Sinn Fein constitution was to have serious repercussions for the movement. As O'Hegarty relates:

This change was a significant and far-reaching one. The old Sinn Fein aim was "the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland," and between it and "an Independent Irish Republic" there was no difference...the purpose of the Sinn Fein Movement, up to 1917, had been to concentrate on independence, and, apart from that, not to commit the movement in advance to anything which was a question for internal discussion...in the meantime Sinn Fein would not seek support from any person, by taking a stand, however popular, upon a matter which was a matter for internal settlement.³⁵

For O'Hegarty, Griffith embodied the cause of Sinn Fein. He frequently spoke of Griffith in the following light, as 'the biggest man we have...and on the constructive side the movement would be nowhere without him'.³⁶

Yet in the current revolutionary climate post 1916 figures such as O'Hegarty and Griffith, partly because they were not 'out' in 1916, were viewed as unreflective of the new revolutionary breed. There remained a respectful and deferential attitude toward the older generation, but it became a facade as the new revolutionary 'Sinn Feiners' steered the movement further from the founding members' original objectives.

O'Hegarty was deeply concerned with the erosion of Griffith's standing within the Sinn Fein movement. Griffith was removed from the leadership and replaced by de Valera. Consequently, O'Hegarty concluded, along with the departure of Griffith's constructive leadership, the principles and discipline characteristic of early Sinn Fein also receded into the background.

³⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union*, (London, 1952), p.715-716.

³⁶ Sean O'Luining, quoting P.S. O'Hegarty in F.X. Martin, (Ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising* (Methuen Co. Ltd., 1967), p.59.

Griffith's presidential leadership and his characteristic 'cool-headedness', therefore, became one of the first casualties in the clamour to capitalise on the glamour of being associated with the 1916 Easter Rising. Diarmuid Lynch, T.D for South East Cork and a future deputy speaker in the Dail, supported O'Hegarty's assertion that Griffith no longer commanded the civil wing of Sinn Fein. This for O'Hegarty marked the demise of the strategic force that Sinn Fein looked to for guidance and direction. Lynch remarked how the IRB moved against Griffith in favour of de Valera as the new President of Sinn Fein in 1917:

The attempted whittling down of the Easter Week position was strenuously opposed in the Executive by Collins, Count Plunkett and others. It was the real reason why we of the IRB organised opposition to the election of Griffith as President of Sinn Fein...³⁷

O'Hegarty stressed that in the revolutionary climate, Griffith's authority and the views of Sinn Feiners, who had not been 'officially' out in 1916, were cast aside. 'He [Griffith] is no longer the sole – or even the chief – spokesman for the movement, and the fact that many of his most important coadjutors differ from him radically on vital questions, cannot and should not be concealed.'³⁸

But as O'Hegarty contended later in A History of Ireland under the Union, and The Victory of Sinn Fein, these differences were not concealed, instead the old Sinn Fein ideas were dismissed and quickly replaced by the doctrinaire and inelastic concept of the 'Republic', or as E.A.B., euphemistically commented, Sinn Fein was subject to 'the unconscious modifications of its friends.'

³⁷ Florrie O'Donoghue to Diarmuid Lynch, University College Dublin, *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, 31/409.

³⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin, 1919), p.12.

This led to the most disturbing change in Sinn Féin during this period, its growing militarisation, which claimed legitimacy from the Easter Rising and the separatist tradition.

The events surrounding the lead up to the Easter Rising are interesting to note as O'Hegarty had prior knowledge of the IRB's plans to stage such a Rising. He was informed by Sean McDermott, a fellow IRB member, who travelled to Welshpool in 1915, specifically to enlighten O'Hegarty on current events and to seek his opinion. O'Hegarty had been relocated by British post office officials during the Great War, firstly to Shrewsbury, before his transfer to Welshpool. Florrie O'Donoghue has proposed the following explanation as to why O'Hegarty's transfer was deemed a necessary security measure by these officials:

In August 1914, when he was post-master at Cobh, he was transferred to England on survey work. He took it as an ordinary transfer, but it is probable that the authorities moved him from Cobh because of his known opinions and associations with the Volunteer movement. He was one of the first public officials against which such action was taken; late as in the case of his brother Sean, who refused to accept a transfer to England was dismissed from the service.³⁹

O'Hegarty was a member of the IRB Supreme Council at this time but like Bulmer Hoson his fellow physical force advocate, not cognisant of the intricate plans for a Rising devised by the self-appointed inner circle within the Supreme Council. O'Hegarty relates how Sean MacDermott broke the news of a Rising to him in The Victory of Sinn Féin:

In May, 1915, Sean Mac Dermot called to see me at Welshpool, and gave me a full account of the position. He told me they were preparing an insurrection that they had established at the beginning a military council to work out plans, that at the first

³⁹ FS. O'Hegarty to Florrie O'Donoghue, University College Dublin, *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, MS31/336.

meeting of that Council Joe Plunkett produced complete plans for a Dublin insurrection, on which it appeared he had been working for years, and that these had been adopted practically in their entirety. He told me the plan, and it was identical, even to the names of the buildings occupied, with what actually happened. He told me also that they were negotiating for German assistance, but would go on in any case, and that they contemplated a Dublin insurrection only, an insurrection which would make its protest, in the name of the Historic Irish Nation, against the Redmond slavishness, and would re-assert Ireland's claim to Independence...⁴⁰

MacDermott's visit was closely followed by a visit from his brother Sean. P.S. O'Hegarty described what transpired many decades later in a letter to McDarmuid Lynch:

He came to see me in May 1915 in Welshpool [he] preferred to give me a full account of everything since I left in August 1914, and he never mentioned that he was sent by the council to do that – at least Mrs. Clarke in a letter to the Sunday Independent last year says he was. But I have discovered in the course of years, that while what he told me was true as far as it went it was not the whole truth and that he said it in such a way as to mislead me. If Mrs. Clarke is right he told me one whopper of a lie. When he detailed the plans, they were all Dublin, and just as they were carried out...he said, quite definitely, "We are not going to trash the country." She says the plans intended the country from the beginning, which I find it difficult to accept.⁴¹

It would seem from these visits that the IRB had deemed it prudent to inform O'Hegarty about the plans for the Rising and not Bulmer Hobson, who only became aware of its conception from an overheard conversation. The following statement from Eoin McNeil to Diarmuid Lynch confirmed this:

That Bulmer Hobson at the I.V. Executive meeting held on Spy Wednesday (i.e. Wednesday of Holy Week) overheard a conversation, which pertained to certain operations of a warlike character: that Hobson reported this to MacNeil (accompanied by Hobson) called on Pearse at St. Enda's and put to him a direct question as to whether an insurrection was planned; that Pearse answered in the

⁴⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.16.

⁴¹ P.S. O'Hegarty to Diarmuid Lynch, 27/10/50. Lynch's reply to O'Hegarty affirmed that Mrs. Clarke was incorrect and Sean did not lie about the plans regarding the Rising. Lynch confirmed this by asserting that what Sean had disclosed to P.S. was all that he would have known up to that date and that O'Hegarty as his brother stated was still a member of the Supreme Council in 1915 despite his exile from the South of England. *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS 31/409.

affirmative, that MacNeil then said to Pearse he would do his utmost, short of informing the British Government, to stop it; that, accordingly (he MacNeil) during the small hours of Good Friday morning took steps to call off the Easter manoeuvres ordered by Pearse in his (Pearse's) capacity of Director of Organisation.⁴²

There are several possible reasons for O'Hegarty being informed of the IRB position rather than Hobson, perhaps because it was thought that O'Hegarty would be more enthusiastic toward a demonstration of physical force despite both O'Hegarty and Hobson's belief that a Rising should only occur with the full backing of the people and with a good chance of success and thus, keeping in line with the revised IRB constitution. As O'Hegarty related he was the recognised leader of the South of England separatists. It may have come as a surprise to the IRB Supreme Council who would have known O'Hegarty very well over the six years that he had been within their circle to discover that he was implacably opposed to a Rising. They would not have informed him otherwise, but as with Hobson's position, O'Hegarty maintained that a Rising must have sufficient chance of success. He should be included therefore in the following evaluation with Bulmer Hobson and Eoin MacNeil:

Rational men such as Eoin MacNeil and Bulmer Hobson had, of course, been saying this to the visionaries for years past. Pearse and his comrades, with visionary shrewdness, had perceived that only a bloody demonstration, however ill-conducted, could win over national support for the separatist ideal. But having attracted this support, even the visionaries (if any were still living) could have seen little sense in repeating the military errors of the rising.⁴³

O'Hegarty's opposition to the Rising led to speculation that as a result he was thrown out of the IRB by Collins for a couple of years. This refers to a letter from Florrie

⁴² Statement of Eoin MacNeil to Diarmuid Lynch August 15, 1936, *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS 31/409 .

⁴³ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1922: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Dublin, 1998), p.212.

O'Donoghue written on October 7th, 1962, to 'SOM'. This referred to Sean O'Hegarty's belief that Collins' statement to O'Hegarty that the IRA in the south would not be able to hold out for much longer during the guerrilla war was made for P.S.'s benefit and that after the rising P.S. was kept out of the IRB by Collins for two years. Before he 'took him into his own circle.' This Sean says, was in retaliation for P.S. having left Collins out of the IRB because Collins was drinking. Sean does not appear to appreciate that there might be another reason - when Sean McDermott visited P.S. in England in May 1915, he found that P.S. was opposed to a Rising. After that P.S. was dropped from the Supreme Council but has never admitted it himself.⁴⁴

After the impact of 1916 Sinn Fein became increasingly associated with rebellion and a sanctioning of violent opposition to British rule in Ireland. For O'Hegarty this was to irrevocably damage all the good work that had previously gone in to the movement. Yet, as O'Hegarty argued, the point of the proclamation of 1916 was not steeped in the rigid form of a 'Republic', rather it was "a universal desire for political freedom and not for any particular or doctrinaire form of that freedom, a freedom of actuality rather than one of forms."⁴⁵

On this interpretation the Rising was in line with Sinn Fein's original aims. Therefore O'Hegarty could assert the following and include himself as an adherent of physical force:

Whether Ireland of the coming times gives the insurrection praise or blame, it will place the responsibility for it where it is due, on the IRB. It was due to it, to the teaching and the planning of the young men who controlled it from 1909, and who

⁴⁴ *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31/248.

⁴⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.773.

wrote *Irish Freedom* (1911-1914), that a physical force separatist wind blew again in Ireland.⁴⁶

The Rising had proved to be the grand gesture in the separatist tradition for O'Hegarty and the need for self sacrifice in the name of a larger ideal, had been fulfilled. Therefore the guerrilla tactics of the Anglo-Irish war need not have occurred. While O'Hegarty recognised the Tan war as ultimately a defensive war, no justification for the ensuing Irish Civil War could emanate from the stand of 1916 as argued by many of the Irregulars.

O'Hegarty's view was that the Easter Rising had not written a 'blank cheque' which only permitted negotiation on the premise of an Irish Republic 'now virtually established' as delineated in the IRB Constitution. O'Hegarty agreed that what the Rising stood for was admirable but it could not be read as a strict policy of the goals of separatism in the way that, for instance, Cathal Brugha was to justify his violent opposition to the Treaty of 1921.

Following the Rising, O'Hegarty maintained that the Anglo-Irish War was regrettably drifted into and not the purposeful intention of Michael Collins or Richard Mulcahy. The autonomy of the Operation Commanders in areas where there was an almost if not total lack of central control seems to corroborate this view. David Fitzpatrick writing of this period agreed with O'Hegarty's analysis of the origins of the Anglo-Irish war, of how:

P.S. O'Hegarty's striking summary is a fairer analysis of the origins of the revolution than those which stress the foresight and manipulative skill of Collins, Mulcahy and the headquarters staff. In the drift towards guerrilla warfare, headquarters followed helplessly some distance behind its more adventurous provincial followers, unable either to catch up or stop the drift.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.17.

⁴⁷ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Dublin, 1998), p.178.

This 'drift' replaced the centralised control, which Griffith had exercised with the civil side of the movement firmly in charge. In place of this former structure, regional power blocks formed with territory divided among guerrilla leaders. This change prompted O'Hegarty's lamentation that 'the gun-man' and 'gun-law' were now perceived as the most effective method for exerting pressure on the British Government. A theme that Liam de Roiste T.D. for Cork City commented on during 1917:

...the military side of the movement is now actively and aggressively working to dominate the civil side and to take control and direction of civil as well as military affairs....Every man who is not a Volunteer or in the good graces of the chiefs of the Volunteers is to be pushed aside from responsible positions in Sinn Fein.⁴⁸

The compromise agreed under Cumann na Gaedheal in 1905 between the physical force separatists and the 1782 constitutionalists had been emphatically broken. The IRB whose membership greatly increased from the rejuvenation of Sinn Fein and its infiltration of the Volunteers led to a marked increase in numbers of revolutionary and militaristically minded men and women. Within the IRB itself, the revolutionary programme had replaced the previous trust in the compromise between moderates and extremists.

In response, O'Hegarty emphasised the original compromise that permitted Sinn Fein to function without recourse to violence and the new wave of militaristic thinking:

The Sinn Fein movement, as such did not contemplate an appeal to arms, believing that its policy, with the majority of Ireland behind it, would be irresistible on a passive resistance basis. It was really composed of two sections - one, led by Mr. Griffith, wished to base the movement definitely on the Constitution of 1782 and the Renunciation Act of 1783, and the other composed of the Separatists was for independence pure and simple. As a compromise, the object of the movement was defined as "the re-establishment of the Independence of Ireland," which satisfied the Separatists, with an addendum committing it, as a minimum, to the "King, Lords and

⁴⁸ K.E. Girvin, unpublished thesis '*The Life and Times of Sean O'Hegarty*' (M.A. thesis, National University of Ireland, Cork, 2003), p.47.

Commons” solution, which satisfied the others. Both sections were agreed as to the general lines of policy.⁴⁹

Intrinsic to O’Hegarty’s view of this period, was that Sinn Fein no longer represented a movement designed to stir up the emotions using propagandist methods. The people supported them and they were now a democratically elected movement responsible to all of the people of Ireland.⁵⁰

There was a growing despair as the civil side lost control and the violence escalated. Consequently, in The Victory of Sinn Fein, O’Hegarty described Sinn Fein’s military wing as ‘Frankenstein’s monster’.⁵¹ The aftermath of the Easter Rising had generated a new form of revolutionary support for Sinn Fein, which had led to its erroneous identification with the ‘republican’ ideology and the Anglo-Irish guerrilla war.

Post 1916, Sinn Fein was increasingly identified in Ireland as the uncompromising exponents of the ‘republican’ tradition. Its standing among former parliamentary supporters (i.e. the bulk of nationalist Ireland who had become disillusioned with the party’s inert reliance on the Liberal Party’s granting of Home Rule) increased as it refused to send its MPs to Westminster and set up the Dail in defiance of the British Government’s imposing of martial law. This followed the mass arrest of known and suspected Sinn Feiners following the 1916 Rising, and ‘under martial law, Ireland was governed, not like a country which was quiescent and trustful, attached to the British

⁴⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *Sinn Fein: An Illumination* (Dublin 1919), p.25.

⁵⁰ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (1952), p.755. For instance, O’Hegarty deplored Sinn Fein’s implementation of the Belfast Boycott as a policy that subverted the Sinn Fein ideal of promoting fraternity among all Irishmen. (See Chapter VI of this thesis, ‘Partition’.)

⁵¹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.169.

connection, as press and public men would imply, as the British pretended to believe, but like a country in revolt'.⁵²

Venting his concerns over the growing militarisation of Sinn Féin, O'Hegarty addressed two of the most influential personalities in the military wing with whom he was on intimate terms, 'in 1917 my first time home since 1914 I told Collins and my brother we should silence the gun now as we no longer needed them – unless there was an essentiality. They laughed at me.'⁵³

In the following passage an example of O'Hegarty's revulsion toward the insinuation of the gun as a major part of the Sinn Féin ethos is revealed. In response to a forthcoming IRB military operation (the details are not disclosed), O'Hegarty visited Griffith, who it would seem from O'Hegarty's recollection had resigned himself to the inevitability of growing militarism and violence:

Griffith was not fond of me. He never knew when I might do or say something, which would place the movement in a different light from that in which he viewed it. But we were always friendly, and on one occasion when I wrote to him from England during my deportation, he surprised me by writing me a letter very appreciative of my services to the cause. In the years of the war I saw very little of him, but one of the few conversations I did have with him threw, to me, a lot of light on his outlook at the time. In May, 1920, I had to go to Cork, and was asked by Terry MacSwiney to leave a few days after I had arrived. He would not at first tell me why; but as I refused to budge, he told me of a certain proposal which was probably being put into operation in a few days, and for which I would probably be picked up if I were in the city when it happened. The proposal seemed to me then to be fiendish and indefensible and inadvisable from any point of view, and it still seems to me so. He said to me that they were only awaiting sanction from Headquarters, and I felt easier, saying to him that they would never sanction that. However, in a couple of days the messenger arrived back with sanction. I returned to Dublin at once and went to Griffith.

I told him what the proposal was, that it had been sanctioned, gave him my opinion of it, and added that I assumed he knew nothing of it. He said to me that he had not been consulted, that the Dail Cabinet had not, as far as he knew, been consulted, that

⁵² P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.712.

⁵³ Ernest Blythe to P.S. O'Hegarty, 20/9/1949. *Ernest Blythe Papers*, University College Dublin, P24/1341/4.

he agreed with me about it, and that he would see Brugha and stop it, which he did. I said to him then: "I don't know what the relations between the Dail cabinet are and the Volunteers, but you are acting-president of Dail and the country will hold you responsible for what happens. You ought to see that nothing of this sort is sanctioned by anybody without the Dail Cabinet being first consulted. If you don't control the volunteers, they will bring us all down in red ruin."⁵⁴

O'Hegarty admitted that he along with many of the Sinn Fein old guard were partly responsible for creating the militaristic atmosphere in Ireland during this period "We ourselves in our own blindness and folly were responsible for that Frankenstein. We taught our young people to rely on the gun and to disregard everything else!"⁵⁵

Consequently, the violence associated with the Anglo-Irish war developed into an acceptable part of normal life as there was no clear leadership from the Dail.⁵⁶ However as a recent scholar has suggested, the 'de facto' Irish government which on being suppressed and forced underground by the British government on 10 September 1919⁵⁷ was not in a strong position to exert restraint or control.

It left the majority of the population who while standing firm and supporting the Irish militia were nonetheless relieved by the truce but similarly there were those who had grown accustomed to the wielding of power a factor which bred a liking for the anarchy of war. O'Hegarty was implying that the civil war was borne out of the psychological impact that the gun had on Irish society in the hands of armed, uncontrollable and violent men during the Anglo-Irish war; that as 'the war went on the more fatal its effects.'⁵⁸

P.S. O'Hegarty's brother Sean's experiences as Commandant of the West Cork IRA, provide an insight into the violence and freedom from the Dail's authority that O'Hegarty

⁵⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.46.

⁵⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.169.

⁵⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p.167.

⁵⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.734.

⁵⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.167.

despaired of in the physical force side of Sinn Fein. Violence was tacitly accepted during this period and given an ambiguous reception by the traditional authorities in Ireland. However it was an ambiguity that could trace its origins in the Fenian tradition despite P.S.'s belief that violence should not have played a further part after 1916. O'Hegarty related how the national press 'sat on the fence' and 'such Churchmen as condemned the shootings mixed their ethics with politics and made the case worse.'⁵⁹

While P.S. fought for Irish independence on a variety of levels his younger brother Sean, fought at the forefront of the guerrilla war against the British forces. Peter Hart's book The IRA and its Enemies has described Sean as fiercely territorial who on succeeding Terence MacSwiney as Operation Commander (O/C) earned a fearsome reputation in IRB circles⁶⁰

Furthermore:

[Sean] O'Hegarty had run his own IRB campaign against the police and against the wishes of MacCurtain and many others in Sinn Fein and the volunteers. Where MacSwiney saw self-sacrifice and the maintenance of honour at the heart of the struggle, O'Hegarty saw guns and bombs, and enemy targets. The events of August removed a militarily ineffective leader, turned him into a national symbol of resistance, and replaced him with a ruthless operator.⁶¹

However, it would be erroneous to assume that Sean O'Hegarty represented the new breed of Sinn Feiner. He was an 'arch-Fenian' like his brother P.S. who was involved in Sinn Fein from its inception, taught children Irish history, was a Gaelic Leaguer and yet contrary to his brother's reasoning completely justified the use of guerrilla tactics. The following description of Sean by Florrie O'Donoghue could equally apply to P.S.:

⁵⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.55.

⁶⁰ Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies* (Oxford, 1998), p.240.

⁶¹ Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies* (Oxford, 1998), p.85.

...Amongst the truest and most loyal hearted and the best of the patriots who had striven through long years of servitude to bring this nation to freedom...he inherited the Fenian tradition and lived his life in its tradition. He was someone who helped build 'the foundations on which rested the great national effort of the 1920's. '...laid the foundations of one of the greatest national movements Ireland has known...' ⁶²

Sean O'Hegarty, however, was to interpret the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a sell-out contrived by the British and Irish politicians. His later adoption of 'defensive neutrality' was purely out of a fear for the potential of civil war to develop. After the Truce was called in 1921, Sean and his IRB brigade rejected the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a sell out of the republican idea they had been fighting to obtain:

At a meeting of the District Board of Cork City held on Dec 12. I was instructed to send you the following:- "That the Boards representing the organisation men in Cork City calls for the rejection of the Treaty proposals being submitted to An Dail Eireann as being utterly at variance with the principles of the IRB and treason to the Republic established in 1916. ⁶³

This was from the Supreme Council of the IRB to the Cork District and County Centre and the correspondence continued with, "That we consider the statement issued to T.D.'s on the question of the treaty proposals was utterly opposed to the spirit of the constitution of the IRB." ⁶⁴

Sean was undoubtedly his own man, a highly respected leader of armed men who occupied a position of power, but one who was willing to give the Treaty a chance. As previously stated, Sean later adopted a position of 'defensive neutrality' as with his brother P.S. his first concern was for the future of Ireland. He defended his position

⁶² *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31.

⁶³ Copy of note from Sean O'Hegarty to Cork District Chairman 13/12/21, *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31/334.

⁶⁴ This forms part of a note from Sean O'Hegarty addressed to the Cork District Chairman. *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31/334, 22/11/22.

admirably in a letter to Bishop Cohalan in the Cork Examiner November, 28, 1923 stating:

In June 1922, I resigned from the IRA, when there broke out a contest which, in my judgment, could lead only to ruin – moral, economic, and political. In his lordship's opinion, I should have thrown my morsel of bitterness into this unnatural and unholy struggle on one side or the other.

As Florrie O'Donoghue observed:

In the period of divided counsels on the Treaty issue, he [Sean O'Hegarty] worked hard to preserve army unity and to avert the civil war. In this effort he was the only army officer, not a member of Dail Eireann, who was ever privileged to address the assembly on the issues, which then divided the Army and the country. His appeal led to the negotiations.⁶⁵

Taken together the military side of the movement was not an area in which men like O'Hegarty and Griffith could exercise any control. It was unrealistic of O'Hegarty to believe that the movement could remain 'pure and simple' and free from the individuals whom he regarded as undesirable. Sinn Fein had stood for higher ideals than the political bargaining at Westminster that the Irish Party represented, hence Sinn Fein's policy of abstentionism from Westminster. This one issue was to remain constant and compatible with his Fenian principles. Abstentionism which was to be implemented by the newly elected Sinn Fein government, An Dail, through the peaceful non-cooperation of Sinn Fein held councils, non-payment of taxes and the setting up of independent courts

⁶⁵ *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31/334. This resulted in the pact between de Valera and Michael Collins, which was aborted soon after its conception. This forms part of a typescript lecture of Sean O'Hegarty's life by Florrie O'Donoghue.

appointed by the Sinn Fein government looked to achieving 'The rendering powerless of English Government' which was for O'Hegarty 'the real Sinn Fein policy...'⁶⁶

Despite the magnificent gesture and sign of commitment to the entire nation for O'Hegarty that abstentionism represented, the characteristics of the Irish Party were adopted and deployed by Sinn Fein, much to O'Hegarty's disillusionment, in the pursuit of winning power.

It must be stated however that while O'Hegarty painted a homogenous picture of Sinn Fein during its 'first and best decade' and of abstentionism as a perennial and unalterable principle of its programme this ignores the fact that there did exist political dissension between its physical force and moderate membership. In 1910 when Sinn Fein was at its lowest ebb, there was a feeling among the moderates of Sinn Fein, Griffith especially, that a compromise regarding the Sinn Fein abstentionist policy might be needed to ensure Sinn Fein's survival. Previous to this schism in Sinn Fein policy, in 1909, O'Hegarty had openly defied Arthur Griffith's proposal to amalgamate the Sinn Fein daily paper, due to its dwindling fortunes, with William O'Brien's All for Ireland League, nationalist paper.⁶⁷ O'Hegarty implacably opposed O'Brien's movement and his belief in the effectiveness of parliamentarianism as unrepresentative of Sinn Fein principles in its backing of the All

⁶⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.33. Advocates of parliamentarianism notably Joseph Devlin of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, were to disagree with O'Hegarty's belief that the Sinn Fein policy of abstentionism was the best one for Ireland. Devlin stated: "...abstention [meant] handing over the representation and the administration of Ireland to the Ulster unionists and the old Ascendancy Party; it means the breaking off of the union between the British and Irish democracies, which it was the glory of Parnell and Davitt to bring about, and the estrangement of the sympathy with Ireland's claim amongst all sections of the British people, which was evoked by the policy of Mr. Redmond and the Irish party since the outbreak of the war, and it means the throwing away of the weapon which Parnell forged and which all admit to be the most powerful and efficient ever designed for its purpose....It is policy of futility, of political lunacy". *P.S. O'Hegarty Collection*, Spencer Library, Kansas University, pamphlet entitled 'Mr. Devlin on the value of parliamentary representation', Belfast, October 13, 1918, Pamphlet, B4824.

⁶⁷ William O'Brien was a long standing parliamentarian and associate of Tim Healy who opposed the Redmonites in the Irish party. Griffith's Sinn Fein daily paper was a short lived enterprise and ran from 23 August, 1909, to 21 January, 1910, see V. E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the advanced nationalist press* (New York, 1985), pp.44-5.

for Ireland League, who were opposed to the Sinn Fein policy appealed to a much broader base than Sinn Fein in seeking support and not abstentionists. O'Hegarty effectively caused a split in the movement as in conjunction with Hobson; he prevented Griffith from aligning the Sinn Fein movement with William O'Brien's All for Ireland League. Consequently, the split between the physical force separatists and the moderates in Sinn Fein led to the distinctly more militant separatist paper Irish Freedom being established as an alternative voice to the moderate majority of Sinn Fein who were contemplating removing the policy of abstentionism from what O'Hegarty's considered to be the pillar of the Sinn Fein programme.

The new generation of volunteers and IRB men such as Bulmer Hobson and O'Hegarty which had emerged as reformers from 1907 had infused the movement with a new impetus and purpose, a recognised strategy of the Fenian movement designed to keep the movement alive during times of quietude.

The men of 1916, too, had embarked on rejuvenating the movement, seeking to capitalise on England's misfortune as Ireland's opportunity and subsequent physical force adherents took up the challenge in the form of guerrilla warfare as a legitimate pursuit in line with the Fenian tradition. Indeed, in 1916, it was Tom Clarke who had helped initiate the Rising and his separatist credentials stretched further back than O'Hegarty's. This demonstrated how old and young separatists did not always hold opposed views. Similarly it was deep within the Fenian tradition, as O'Hegarty demonstrated in his aversion to the Irish Party's policy, to hold a deep distrust of politicians too, and this provides one explanation why the military wing of Sinn Fein felt it better to keep its distance from the Dail.

P.S. O'Hegarty was undoubtedly an idealist but in his hatred of the physical force methods used by the new generation of Sinn Feiners in the name of the republic, he saw the chance to implement the Sinn Fein policy in full, wasted. O'Hegarty therefore, could not justify the means by which Irish freedom was obtained.

This explains his conclusion on 1916 that it: '...proved a double edged sword.' After its impact it was possible to have gotten the Ireland they dreamed of but 'we lost it when we took up the gun again...wasted the real Sinn Fein movement.'⁶⁸

In The Victory of Sinn Fein, O'Hegarty was intent on providing explanations as to why Sinn Fein disintegrated into factions over the Treaty. For this, it was necessary to blame the mentality of violence that festered during the Anglo-Irish war, and contributed toward and fostered the conditions for the later Irish Civil War. Later in A History of Ireland under the Union, he was more apologetic toward this period.

To understand the acceptable face of physical force for O'Hegarty it is necessary to return to the Peter Hart quote above which described how Terence MacSwiney viewed the concept of physical force. It was steeped in the nobility of the cause which in turn must be reflected in its implementation. For O'Hegarty that was why 1916 was acceptable but the violence that followed it unpalatable. To quote MacSwiney in the early decade of Sinn Fein: 'One day the consciousness of the country will be electrified with a great deed or a great sacrifice and the multitude will break from lethargy or prejudice.'⁶⁹ O'Hegarty was writing The Victory of Sinn Fein in the knowledge that he would be severely criticised for his views and wrote the following in his preface to this work:

⁶⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp.161-173.

⁶⁹ *Irish Freedom*, March, 1911, Terence MacSwiney's series of articles were entitled: 'Principles of Freedom.'

What this book is, then, is a book recording the impressions which the whole thing has made upon a contemporary who has worked hard for Ireland, whose hobby has always been the study of history, and who has thereby been accustomed to estimate forces and tendencies and to attempt to relate Irish happenings to the general principles behind them...The book will be deeply, and perhaps deservedly, unpopular. I have had to say things about the Movement, both before the Truce and after the Truce, which will not be relished. I have had to write hard things about some of my friends directly, and even harder things about others by implication. But what I have written I have written because I believe it to be the truth, and because the Cause we all – those who shot Mick Collins and those who shot – Cathal Brugha alike – stand for ultimately can be helped only by truth and honesty.⁷⁰

Yet despite O'Hegarty's propinquity to the time, and perhaps because of it, The Victory of Sinn Fein was a powerful insight into the minds and events of a turbulent period in Ireland's history. It is also notable in bringing to the fore the feelings of the ordinary people toward violence and the Treaty, which form the basis of O'Hegarty's argument against the Anglo-Irish war and later the Irish Civil War.

Reacting to the sentiments expressed in The Victory of Sinn Fein, Richard Mulcahy was to be quite scathing about the majority of opinions and conclusions that O'Hegarty comes to during the crucial years of the period. Mulcahy had held several posts in the underground Dail government, including the position of Chief of Staff for the Irish Volunteers from March 1918. Later he became a pro-Treatyite like O'Hegarty and was instrumental in crushing the anti-Treatyite campaign in his capacity as Minister of Defence. His views are therefore pertinent as they depict the complicated relationship that existed even among pro-Treatyites and how to evaluate the Anglo-Irish War. In a letter to the Most Reverend, Dr. Fogarty, dated 12 January 1925, Mulcahy stated that he had been in discussion with O'Hegarty regarding his serious disagreements over the content of The Victory of Sinn Fein. Mulcahy continued that he considered it too soon to look back and

⁷⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, Preface to *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.v-vi.

objectively evaluate a time of confusion and disappointment in any real capacity. The

Victory of Sinn Fein, he contended:

...painted a picture that suggests that “the greatest achievement of any Irish generation” was brought about by “a military terrorism in which a civilian government existed merely as a machine for registering military decrees and under which every argument, save the gun, was eliminated. In a situation in which the political machine became a tool in the hands of the military side of the movement so that in the end the whole thing was moulded by men who were incapable of regarding democratic government seriously only in so far as it could be manipulated or forced to do what the military mind wanted.”⁷¹

Mulcahy was resolute in his opinion that O’Hegarty’s view could prove a dangerous one, which could result in harmful repercussions for the Irish state in the future. (It has been argued that it was applied in the North through the military strategy of the IRA and is still apparent in some capacity to this day.) Mulcahy continued: ‘The fact is that his painting of the situation is entirely wrong, and the inferences that ordinary people would draw from his painting, if anything, more wrong.’⁷²

Mulcahy disagreed with O’Hegarty’s assertion that the Dail did not fully support the military activities used by the Irish forces and that O’Hegarty’s statement with regard to Griffith’s views on military operations was not representative of his true feelings on the matter:

Griffith’s attitude to the military mind was utterly misleading. I was, personally, in the most close contact with Griffith and there was a very great sympathy and understanding between the two of us – and O’Hegarty’s whole representation of Griffith’s last days are utterly absurd and untrue.

⁷¹ *Richard Mulcahy Papers*, University College Dublin, UCD/AD/P7.

⁷² *Richard Mulcahy Papers*, University College Dublin, UCD/AD/P7.

Mulcahy in his severest criticism of the views put forward in The Victory of Sinn Fein

noted O'Hegarty's comment, that after 1916 not a single shot should have been fired:

...it [was] worth mentioning too that O'Hegarty who considere[d] that not a shot should have been fired after 1916 was of the opinion in February or March, 1919, when we called off the reception for de Valera at Mount St. Bridge after his escape from Lincoln, and the release of the other prisoners there, because of a proclamation issued and action intended by the British military forces in Dublin. O'Hegarty considered our calling off the reception was "the biggest blow that Ireland had ever received since O'Connell called off his Clontarf meeting and was, in fact, a much bigger blow than that."⁷³

This view of Mulcahy's was made in reference to the following article written in 1919, in which O'Hegarty stated:

Analogy has been drawn between the Sinn Fein executive's decision to obey the proclamation and O'Connell's similar decision 75 years ago. The cases are, in fact, absolutely identical. Precisely the same military preparations were made in each case, and in each case the origin of the crisis lay in what was tantamount to a challenge to the authority of the British government or what was taken up as a challenge. The Sinn Fein case, in fact, was in reality a challenge whereas O'Connell's was not, and he could withdraw from the position with much greater show of dignity than we could. We all know the effect, which his back down had on the country and on his movement. His prestige and his moral authority was so seriously impaired that thenceforward he ceased to be a force of any consequence in Ireland.⁷⁴

O'Hegarty reasoned that to go ahead with the meeting despite the British proclamation would have constituted a moral insurrection in the name of the people. O'Hegarty saw Sinn Fein's backing down as a severe 'set-back' for these reasons and was troubled over the consequences of not facing up to the challenge issued by the British Government. That it would appear to the Irish people that Sinn Fein despite its compunction for action was ultimately guilty of O'Connell's foibles and that popular support would dwindle for

⁷³ *Richard Mulcahy Papers*, University College Dublin, UCD/AD/P7.

⁷⁴ *An Saogheal Gaedhealach*, August, 1919.

Sinn Fein in the same way it did for O'Connell, "The recent proceedings, to a rank and filer, look like groping in the dark. If so, an end must be put to it, or the movement will grope to its destruction."

Similarly, as the bluff of utilising force that O'Connell used to threaten the British government in previous 'monster meetings' had been challenged and confronted by the British; they were able to develop a policy designed to purge O'Connell of this threat and ultimately his standing among the people. O'Hegarty feared the same would happen to Sinn Fein, but as the War of Independence intensified, the IRB constantly pushed at the boundaries of limitations in the conflict and disallowed a coherent policy of containment to be developed by the British government. O'Hegarty's fears then, were not realised but in drawing this historical parallel he was obviously aware of how 'in the art of following up England excels' and that 'after Clontarf the government had taken the measure of O'Connell'. From this inference, O'Hegarty surmised: 'They will at present be engaged in estimating ours. Let us take care that they be mistaken. Let us not make the mistake of taking it for an isolated instance. It is the first moral victory they have won in Ireland.'⁷⁵

O'Hegarty believed that through Sinn Fein's capitulation the British had stolen a moral march on the separatist movement and that this could be interpreted as Sinn Fein recognising the illegality of the meeting and therefore recognising the legitimacy of the British Government. To stand up to the proclamation would have meant non-recognition of what O'Hegarty considered a spurious authority. For O'Hegarty it was still a moral fight steeped in passive resistance but there were times when that morality must come from force to emphasise Ireland's right to independence.

⁷⁵ *An Saogheal Gaedhealach*, August, 1919.

Therefore, in the sense of how Mulcahy saw O'Hegarty's comments in The Victory of Sinn Fein as hypocritical he is not entirely right. For O'Hegarty 'the gun' in the hands of a guerrilla fighter did not carry the same moral weight as a popular rising. For O'Hegarty there was a moral difference between the two actions.

O'Hegarty realised that to go ahead with the reception in defiance of the British proclamation would have amounted to an open defiance of the government and that violence, possibly on a grand scale would have ensued. However, in his view this would have been justified on a morally secure basis it was a chance for Sinn Fein to redeem itself. It was the opportunity for a direct confrontation where the volunteer's could take on the enemy as soldiers of the Irish nation. This was the real purpose of physical force, as a disciplined weapon directed from the Dail.

O'Hegarty as a committed Fenian only saw the positive and noble aspects of the Fenian tradition and therefore could not attribute the violent guerrilla years of Sinn Fein to the implementation of the Fenian programme.

For O'Hegarty the three years following 1916 in which Sinn Fein was remodeled as a revolutionary movement proved an unparalleled disaster. That ultimately:

Sinn Fein did not keep its physical force element in its proper place, but allowed it to dictate policy and to crowd out the civil side. Before 1916, we had too little physical force, and after 1916 we had far too much.

The uses of arms, and the right to insurrect, were maintained as a matter of principle, but rather as a means of arousing the nation's soul than as a policy. I remember discussions on it at Supreme Council meetings long before 1916, when we were trying to shape things towards some definite goal. And it was agreed then that it was our duty to make a forlorn hope insurrection if the time came when such desperate measures were necessary in order to recall the nation to self-respect and decency. That was the physical force philosophy prior to 1916, and it was sound.

After 1916, there should not have been a shot fired in Ireland, nor a gun bought. They were totally unnecessary. We had the Sinn Fein policy, the men who made it, the enthusiasm and the support of the people. Without firing a shot we could have

forced from England anything that we have forced from her by the gun policy, and more.⁷⁶

While these were admirable sentiments they too were unrealistic. Given O'Hegarty's commitment to Fenianism he could not draw a line between old and new, or acceptable and unacceptable Fenian policy toward physical force methods. Indeed to this view of the noble use of physical force and a natural uprising occurring amongst the Irish people as with the beginning of the tradition O'Hegarty attributed to the United Irishmen's Rising of 1798, must be added an important caveat. O'Hegarty ignored to a large extent that the 1798 rising disintegrated into sectarian warfare between Catholics and Protestants amid the massacres that were committed by both sides. Therefore it must be said O'Hegarty was quite selective in his attitude to the history of the use of physical force in Ireland.

As with the position of Terence MacSwiney regarding the use of physical force, described above, violence, if it were necessary, had to be not just effective but honourable for O'Hegarty. In this respect, Sean O'Hegarty adapted to the new situation of guerrilla warfare much better than P.S. as he was equally convinced in his conscience, that, in adopting the aggressive tactics he did, he was no less than implementing the Fenian code. Yet it remained for P.S., that what began with slogans championing 'the Irish Republic' marked the first appearance of the 'doctrinaire habit of mind which was to have so baleful an influence in 1922, when the fact of independence was crucified in the name of an unintelligent and unpatriotic doctrinaire complex.'⁷⁷

⁷⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.165-66.

⁷⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.716.

CHAPTER V

THE TREATY

Throughout his separatist career, O'Hegarty enunciated the ideal of an independent Ireland in which every Irish inhabitant could share a common notion of citizenship. This ideal formed the overriding theme behind his liberal and pluralistic reading of Irish nationalism. In seeking to implement these idealised notions, O'Hegarty worked tirelessly toward the creation of a united and independent Ireland bent upon re-building its historic national characteristics, shorn of the English colonial ties that had shaped Ireland's development from the Act of Union. As previous chapters have illustrated, these ideals suffered as they competed against rival political and cultural factions grappling over the future political and cultural direction of Ireland from the turn of the twentieth century. The Sinn Fein movement, as disclosed in Chapter IV, that O'Hegarty believed best represented the ideals he envisioned for the Irish nation, had lost its way in the rush to gain politically from its vote-maximising identification with the cabalistic inspired 1916 Easter Rising. Moreover, many of the problems O'Hegarty saw as developing from 1916 onwards remained to become caveats in what was, for O'Hegarty, the crowning glory of Irish separatism, the attainment of Irish independence as enshrined in the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty.

The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in London by an Irish delegation headed by Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, representing the provisional Irish government (an Dail), and the British Government, led by the Prime Minister Lloyd George, in 1921. The Treaty signified a major change in Anglo-Irish relations after the Prime Minister called a truce, which brought an end to the fighting in the Anglo-Irish War begun in 1919. The signing of the Treaty signified an end to the need for nationalist agitation to secure Irish independence from England that O'Hegarty traced as running continuous from the formation of the United Irishmen, through to O'Connell and the Young Irelanders, the Fenian movement during the nineteenth century and finally Sinn Fein in the twentieth. The Sinn Fein movement therefore stood over the crowning glory of Irish nationalism's greatest achievement in not just wringing concessions from the English Government but securing Irish independence where Ireland took its rightful place among the nations of the world. These optimistic views of the Treaty, as espoused by O'Hegarty, which claimed to have brought to an end the colonial grievances that had characterised Anglo-Irish relations since the 1801 Act of Union, were not unanimously held among prominent and rank and file Sinn Feiner's. Critics stressed that the annexation of Ireland as an extension of the United Kingdom's territorial jurisdiction, had not been sufficiently severed in order for the 'Republic', discussed in the previous chapter, to be fully realised. The terms of the Treaty, therefore, were to create a rift in the Sinn Fein movement that culminated in the 1921-22 Irish Civil War fought between the pro and anti-Treatyite factions. The Civil War has largely been implicated in paralysing the cultural and political revolution that Irish nationalists, such as O'Hegarty, believed would develop following the expulsion of the English Imperialist presence in Ireland. The Treaty therefore, despite it heralded as a breakthrough in Anglo-Irish relations by pro-Treatyites, was very much a contested

document, which, as the anti-Treatyites confirmed, was not seen as epitomising the culmination of Irish nationalist agitation. Indeed, the emancipation of the Irish people was deemed by the anti-Treatyite forces as consisting of far more than what the Treaty conceded to Ireland, that is, that the Treaty did not satisfy the conditions upon which a significant contingent of Sinn Féiners considered the establishment of a free Irish nation state rested upon. In contrast to this, pro-Treatyites, such as O'Hegarty, especially given the hardships endured by the Irish people throughout the Anglo-Irish guerrilla war, was optimistic of the benefits that permeated the terms negotiated and stipulated in the clauses of the Treaty. Not only did it offer renewed hope for a lasting settlement between England and Ireland, which recognised Ireland's ancient right to nationhood, but also it established and permitted the grounding upon which Ireland could begin to shape its own political and cultural destiny.

This chapter is structured so as to incorporate analysis of the three overriding factors that deprived O'Hegarty the possibility of the Irish nation putting into place the elements essential to implementing his separatist philosophy and therefore acceptable to his liberal civic nationalism. Consequently, these final chapters describe the setbacks the new Irish State encountered, including the 1922-1923 Irish Civil War, that arose from the split in Sinn Féin into pro and anti-Treatyites over the terms agreed for a settlement between the English and Irish governments; secondly, the secession of the six counties of Ulster which opted to remain a part of the United Kingdom, dealt with separately in the next chapter; and thirdly the conservative nature of the Free State government in its institutional and social programme, while acknowledging O'Hegarty's view put forward in The Victory of Sinn Féin that it was essential for the pro-Treatyite government, in the face of anarchy, to enforce and consolidate the rule of law following the onset of Civil War. Indeed, O'Hegarty praised Ireland's first national government, Cumann na Gaedheal, for this achievement in A History

of Ireland under the Union, but, as will be related in the final section of this chapter, the conservative nature of the Irish government dominated over establishing the principles that lay behind O'Hegarty's culturally-based Ireland. Given that, so much of O'Hegarty's original idealism was in retreat given the partition of Ireland and the failure of the new southern state to uphold the ideals of a culturally distinct Ireland, this chapter will examine whether O'Hegarty could maintain his defence of the opportunities the Treaty gave to Ireland to shape its own destiny. This amounted to a freeing of the anglicising influence of English government in the Irish Free State, in short, to build on the early work of Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League as the desired cultural direction into which the Free State could be directed.

O'Hegarty viewed the actions of the anti-Treatyites, in particular de Valera, as having turned a disagreement between pro- and anti-Treatyites, over the inclusion of an oath of allegiance to the British Crown contained in the Treaty, into a needless and bloody civil war. To illustrate this point, to introduce O'Hegarty's propinquity to events as they unfolded, and to introduce de Valera as the force through which this disagreement became a point of irreconcilable difference for O'Hegarty, the following 'Note to Epilogue', from A History of Ireland under the Union is reproduced:

In 1922, for about a fortnight at the end of January and beginning of February, I met at lunch at the Wicklow hotel, nearly every day, Sean O'Muirthile and Diarmuid O'Hegarty and, sometimes, Michael Collins. Harry Boland was usually lunching there at the same time, and if he finished first he sometimes came over and sat with us.

He always struck the same note. Isn't it a pity now that we aren't all together, and why can't we get together again, and after all there isn't much between us, and so on. O'Muirthile said to me that he always went on like that, and that it didn't mean anything save that he was trying to take a "rise" out of us. But one day, when he was in full career, watching us out of the corner of his eye, I interrupted him, and the following conversation took place.

"Look here, Harry, you're always going on about why aren't we all together, and there's only a little bit between us, and so on. Now, what is there between us? Let us get it out"

"You know well what it is between us?"

"I don't. So far as I'm concerned there's nothing between us. I am the same as I was six months ago and if you think there's something better I don't. Whatever is between us is on your side. Out with it."

"Well there's the oath."

"The oath, yes well. What else?"

"There's nothing else, nothing but the Oath."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, there are other things, small things, but they could all be got over. The Oath cannot."

"Well, don't you know that Mick has been advised by his legal people that the oath is not mandatory and that he does not intend to have an Oath in the Constitution."

"Yes, we've heard that, but can we get confirmation of it?"

"What do you mean by confirmation?"

"Can we have an undertaking from Collins?"

"I don't know, but we can find out."

It was agreed that O'Muirthile would see Collins and that we would meet Boland again on the next day. We did so.

"Well, Harry," said O'Muirthile, "I am authorised by Collins to give you an undertaking, for de Valera, that if he and his crowd will stop their coddling and come in as a constitutional party and help us to get the best out of the Treaty, there'll be no oath in the Constitution, and he'll stand or fall by that."

"And I'm a witness to that undertaking," said I, "If ever you want one."

For a brief space Boland looked as if he could not believe his ears. Then he got up, his whole face shining, his person just a mass of animation.

"Cheers, boys," said he, "I'm going to de Valera. We'll all be together again, in an hour's time."

We were not of course. de Valera refused to accept the undertaking, as tendered. He asked for it in writing, and to be made public at once, which, of course, he knew to be impossible, in the circumstances.¹

For O'Hegarty, the anti-Treatyites were a spurious movement specifically set up to wreck the opportunity offered by the Treaty to capitalise on Ireland's new won freedom. In sum therefore, the anti-Treatyites had abandoned the spirit of Sinn Fein and the purpose of separatism and, in casting aside the reasons behind the provenance of these movements, had

¹ P.S O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), pp.786-787.

nullified the right of the Irish people to determine their own democratic future.² O'Hegarty stressed that: 'had Dail Eireann rejected the Treaty it would not have reflected Irish opinion, any more than did Foster's Parliament when it passed the Union in 1800....'³ Members of the Dail who had voted against the Treaty were defying the democratic wishes of the Irish people and were responsible for creating the anarchy and bloodshed of the Irish Civil War.

O'Hegarty justified his acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in the same language and on the same separatist principles that characterised his original support of the Sinn Fein movement. He wholeheartedly believed that Sinn Fein, and, indeed, the IRB, were committed to doing the best they could for Irish independence as representatives of the Irish people without their embarking upon a dispute with the potential for damaging the Irish nation itself through inflicting further disagreement among the nation's elected representatives.⁴

In his defence of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, O'Hegarty described his position as that of an 'unassociated separatist'⁵ seeking to avoid the 'road to ruin' that the anti-Treatyites seemed determined to embark upon. This theme formed the basis for his editorship of The Separatist a national, political weekly, bearing Wolfe Tone's aphorism asserting the aims of the United Irishmen, "To break the connection with England...."⁶ as its motto. O'Hegarty's arguments not only defended the Treaty but also attacked the 'republican', or, anti-Treatyite,

² Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence 1916-1922', in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, October, 2003, Vol.8, no.3, p.543. Kissane has suggested 'Although the press response probably exaggerated and amplified the positive response to the treaty, it became immediately apparent that support outside the Sinn Fein Dail greatly exceeded that within.'

³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p.93.

⁴ The best source in capturing O'Hegarty's thoughts on Sinn Fein were the series of articles he wrote in *The Republic*, during 1907 entitled: 'Fenianism in Practice: An Irish Ireland philosophy', a major source for determining O'Hegarty's political thought, and alluded to throughout this thesis. The newspaper library located at the Belfast Central Library has an almost comprehensive collection of separatist journals and newspapers dating from this period.

⁵ *The Separatist*, March, 1922.

⁶ 'Vincent Veritias', in *The Separatist*, March, 1922.

perspective for their interpretation of themselves as steadfastly upholding the separatist position. In addition, The Separatist attacked ‘republicans’ allegations of betrayal aimed at supporters of the Treaty, whom, they claimed, had prevented the attainment of the Irish Republic, as set down by Patrick Pearse, in his reading of the 1916 proclamation on the day of the Easter Rising.

O’Hegarty was singular in arguing from this perspective, and claimed a greater moral weight in his arguments for acceptance of the Treaty than those who were arguing against it. The chapter will examine why O’Hegarty thought that his opponents were mistaken by focusing upon two of the main protagonists; the President of Sinn Fein before his resignation in 1921, Eamon de Valera, and the women’s separatist organisation, Cumann na mBhan, who made up a significant part of the Sinn Fein movement. As some of the extreme exchanges between pro- and anti-Treatyite, supporters were provoked from these sources this chapter focuses on the main objections to the Treaty from the ‘republican’ perspective. For O’Hegarty, both de Valera and the women of the Sinn Fein movement were to form the heart of the ‘pseudo-republicans’, ‘irregulars’, or, ‘anti-democratic’⁷ forces the terms of derision that O’Hegarty used in The Separatist newspaper to describe his opponents.

The embracing of the term republican by these groups proved preposterous for O’Hegarty who was withering in his comments regarding their adoption of the republican name:

The ratification of the treaty by Dail Eireann was followed by the formation by Mr de Valera and his friends, of themselves into a party, which eventually called itself the Republican Party. Its original quarrel with the majority was not on the Republic, but on document number 2; but as document number 2 was discovered to be incapable of maintaining or extending a party, it was dropped, and the republic substituted. Mr. de Valera, however, remained faithful to document no. 2, and has at various times declared that he stands by it – but nobody else does. The particular lie upon which the new party was founded, and upon which it still stands, is the lie that

⁷ *The Separatist*, May, 1922.

its members, or rather its founders – the fifty seven deputies who voted against the treaty – were noble heroes who never agreed to any modification of the demand for independence; who never knew, in the period between the truce and the treaty, that there was any question of such a modification; and who never faltered in their determination to, as the cant has it, “maintain the existing Republic.”⁸

There were genuinely held concerns over the terms offered in the Anglo-Irish Treaty among the ‘republican’ camp. They consisted of the following: that the provisional government was merely the continuation of the British presence in Ireland albeit in another guise and that it was only under the coercive measures applied by Lloyd George and voiced to the plenipotentiaries that had led to the signing of the Treaty and the compromising of the separatist ‘idealism’ of the ‘Republic’.

Bill Kissane has put forward the following explanation in response to the concerns expressed by ‘republicans’, that

...the Anglo Irish treaty signed on 6 December 1921 gave 26 counties of Ireland a generous measure of practical freedom but denied the new state the symbolic apparel that might have made it legitimate in the eyes of most republicans...that it was the first time Irish nationalists had assented to inclusion in the British Empire.⁹

It is desirable to point out that O’Hegarty’s separatist arguments in defence of the Treaty do not conform exactly to Jeffrey Prager’s recent ‘Republican moralism vs. Nationalist pragmatism’¹⁰ explanation for the causes of the split over the Treaty in Sinn Fein. Prager’s simplified notion for the reasons behind Sinn Fein’s separation into pro and anti Treatyites does not do justice to the actual complexity of the respected positions adopted by individuals on both sides, as Bill Kissane has argued:

⁸ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.98.

⁹ Bill Kissane, ‘The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence, 1916-1922’, in *Journal of Political Ideologies* October 2003, Vol.8, no.3, p.337.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Prager, *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Cambridge, 1989), p.146.

Although the treaty settlement redefined post-revolutionary Sinn Fein into pro-and anti-treaty camps, the simplicity of the prefixes only serves to undermine the anomalous and contradictory relations both groups had with the settlement. The complex process of bifurcation leading to civil war did not divide and simplify inherent ideological contradictions present within revolutionary Sinn Fein, as Jeffrey Prager has suggested in his study of post revolutionary democratic politics in Ireland. Instead, it remixed them, at least in the case of the supporters of the treaty, into smaller but still contradictory component parts of a diverse whole. Furthermore, the persistent application of the term 'republican' exclusively to those who opposed the free state regime serves to ignore the complex and diverse reality of treatyite politics before 1924 and obfuscates the reasoning behind the acceptance of the settlement by treatyite republicans.¹¹

In the following quotation, Kissane goes on to describe the problematic situation into which the Anglo-Irish Treaty was born:

After 1918 Sinn Fein's propaganda was directed more at the international than the domestic audience, and nearly all the documents suggesting the importance of the doctrine did reflect a general tension between its 'external' and 'internal' variants, but ultimately rested on particular arguments about the nature of Irish history. Since that history had always provided different models of independence, it was no surprise that the movement eventually found itself torn apart over questions of identity, progress, and democracy.¹²

The Treaty, in failing to satisfy many of the symbolic requirements of the 'republicans', provoked the following response from Austin Stack, a prominent anti-Treatyite, during the Treaty debates: 'I for one cannot accept from England full Canadian powers, three quarters Canadian powers, or half Canadian powers. I stand for what is Ireland's right, full independence and nothing short of it.'¹³

A feature of the republican argument was the characteristic use of separatist, IRB language against O'Hegarty's pro-Treatyite position, and in seeing themselves as the newly

¹¹ Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence, 1916-1922', in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, October, 2003, p.563.

¹² Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence, 1916-1922' in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, October, 2003, pp.327-346.

¹³ Nicholas Mansergh, *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork, 1977), p.99.

established minority and vanguard of the separatist movement complete with the authority for carrying out military operations against their opponents.¹⁴ Implicit within the idea of conspiratorial nationalism and the IRB as the ‘guide, the watcher’ (to use O’Hegarty’s phrase), was the ambiguous nature of the IRB Constitution of 1858, to which the republicans now heralded as supporting their cause. Leon O’Broin has stressed that the original Fenian programme was open to various interpretation:

...the individual solemnly swore to give allegiance to the ‘Irish Republic now virtually established’, to defend its independence and integrity, and, as before, to obey his superior officers in all things not contrary to the laws of morality...The ‘democratic republic’ has disappeared – the concern now is with a republic *simpliciter* – and gone also are the references to secrecy and to the affairs of ‘this secret society’. ‘Henceforth’, said Luby, ‘we denied that we were *technically* a secret body. We called ourselves a mere military organisation with, so to speak, a legionary oath like [what] all soldiers [take]. He does not say why the word democratic was dropped: like ‘secret’ it was perhaps in the circumstances of that time, a dirty word.’¹⁵

After the vote in the Dail and the narrow ratification of the Treaty over the anti-Treatyites, the latter still viewed their position as one of upholding an unassailable and moral tradition enshrined in the IRB constitution. This was despite their rejection of the democratic process in the Dail and the majority of the country voting in favour of the ratification of the Treaty.

The following review of The Victory of Sinn Fein taken from a journal supporting the ‘republican’ position highlighted the animosity directed at O’Hegarty where he was cast as a traitor, a trait that became characteristic of the bitterness of the civil war and its aftermath.

‘Fingan’ wrote that he was appalled at O’Hegarty’s defence of the Treaty and proclaimed

¹⁴ *The Freeman’s Journal*, March, 1923.

¹⁵ Leon O’Broin, ‘Revolutionary Nationalism in Ireland: the IRB, 1858-1924’, in T.W. Moody, (Ed.), *Nationality and the Pursuit of Independence, papers read before the [12th] Irish Conference of Historians*, (Belfast, 1978), Vol. XI, p.100.

that O'Hegarty had 'entered the select band, the P.S.'s and the A.E.'s and Y.O.'s and Gwynne's and Figgiss's who rival each other in traducing the fame of Ireland.'¹⁶

Furthermore in a phrase that would have incensed O'Hegarty in his intention i.e. at belittling his life's work in Sinn Fein, 'Fingan' dismissed The Victory of Sinn Fein as a book written to 'please the Imperial Enemy.'¹⁷

Before the Civil War, in an article written in 1920, O'Hegarty had appealed for 'honesty and clarity' among the Dail members when voting for or against the terms offered in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. O'Hegarty emphasised that a vote to reject the Treaty based on the premise that the 'republic' was an attainable objective was to commit a dishonest action and therefore brought the separatist position into disrepute. He emphasised that now was the time for Sinn Fein through the Dail to exhibit the convictions allied with a resolute and strong government and to set aside the rhetoric of the past four years:

There were two courses open to it. The first was to say, "We cannot decide this as a Party question; we have to do our best for the people as a whole. The people trusted us, and we are their servants...Let us, then, take the responsibility which is properly ours; let us ratify this treaty and let us use it in order to enable ourselves at some future date, or our successors, to take the final step of separation."...the second way was to say, "This Dail is a war Dail and not a peace Dail...it does not really represent the best of Sinn Fein. The people as a whole are entitled to be heard. We will go to them and say: we are offered this, which is less than independence, but which is more than anybody ten years ago deemed possible of achievement. We ask you to pronounce upon It." ...It was Sinn Fein's test and it failed the test. It adopted neither of the statesmanlike and sensible courses, which were open to it, and it blundered terribly by considering the whole question from a narrow party and personal point of view.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Sean Mcentee Papers*, (University College Dublin), P67/86.

¹⁷ *Sean Mcentee Papers*, (University College Dublin), P67/86.

¹⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.94.

Here, in continuation of the ‘moral cowardice’¹⁹ that O’Hegarty attributed to the decadent years of Sinn Fein, members of the Dail, when faced with the reality of the Treaty, claimed they had never compromised over their commitment to the republican ideal:

The personal bitterness displayed in the Dail debate, the personal attacks made, the attempt to load the responsibility for the situation on this or that group or individual, we condemn wholeheartedly. They were all responsible....They are all faced now with the wreck of the movement which they led up to six months ago, and upon them all is the responsibility of mending that wreck.²⁰

In an optimistic article written before the civil war, O’Hegarty appealed for ‘honesty and clarity’ among members of the Dail:

What the leaders on both sides have to do now is to take stock. We have to begin by recognising that the separatist movement, as a whole, has suffered a check. As against this treaty, the nation, as a whole, would not now fight for a Republic. It would prefer a Republic, but it would not fight for it, as it thinks that the Treaty gives it something which it can stand on and breathe awhile, pending a fresh effort. But be that as it may, we are back again where we were years ago, a Separatist minority, this time under an Irish government instead of under an English government, which makes the position somewhat more difficult....We have to work so that [the future] shall be with us again....And let no man say that the Republic is dead. Its life is neither in Dail Eireann nor in the IRA, but in the spirit and the will of the Irish people. And these, ultimately, we are always sure of.²¹

The important consideration for O’Hegarty was that akin to Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith,²² he believed the Anglo-Irish Treaty was the best result Ireland could have hoped for given the strength of the British Empire and the failure of Sinn Fein to gain a hearing at the International Peace Conference in 1919.²³ This marked a new era in the right to self determination for small nations as defined in the American President, Woodrow Wilson’s

¹⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.89.

²⁰ *New Ireland*, 14 January, 1922.

²¹ *New Ireland*, January 14th, 1922.

²² Both Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins’s legacies to Ireland are described in O’Hegarty’s *The Victory of Sinn Fein* and *A History of Ireland under the Union*. See Appendix in this thesis also.

²³ *Old Ireland*, March 10, 1920.

'Fourteen Points' but as Sinn Fein were denied a hearing at the Peace Conference the dream of attaining the republic now lay defunct. One of the main purposes of Sinn Fein in the run up to the Peace Conference had been to apply the force of world opinion on the British Government.

It was obvious, after the turning down of Ireland by the Versailles Peace Conference and the United States of America, that independence was not feasible. It could not be won by physical force to balance England's physical force, because we had not, nor could we possibly develop enough physical force to balance England's physical force. It could not be won by diplomacy and international intrigue, because the only Great power which might be expected to support Ireland had definitely turned Ireland down and would do nothing to force England to agree to independence; and because none of the smaller powers who might have liked to support us dare do it, with England stronger than ever she had been....We had no longer an international hearing which could be of any use to us, outside of England itself. If independence was to come, it could only come by agreement with England. If England lacked the will to that agreement, we could not force her to agree - and no other nation was likely to.²⁴

As the Irish contingent had failed to influence the Peace Conference in Ireland's favour, England was now free to settle the question internally and on their own terms and those opposed to the Treaty in Sinn Fein who still believed that the republic was attainable were ideologues unable to deal with the realities that this failure to gain a hearing at the Peace Conference represented. O'Hegarty commented: 'Mr. de Valera knew that, as his every action showed...Cathal Brugha knew that - as his acceptance of "external association"...showed.'²⁵

O'Hegarty also related how Griffith was fully aware of this reality and in a rare criticism complained that, like de Valera, made no move to ensure that the Irish people were aware that the Republic was beyond the scope of Sinn Fein:

²⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.92.

²⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.92.

Griffith knew it, and de Valera knew it, and why the one made no attempt to soften the violence and the intemperateness of “Republican” propaganda, to prepare the people for that settlement short of a Republic, which he knew, must be the most favourable outcome we could expect.²⁶

However, Griffith was honest in that he admitted to himself that the Republic was unattainable. Griffith did not display the strain of dogmatic idealism that O’Hegarty associated with the faction who rejected the Treaty after its democratic sanctioning by the Dail and the Irish people. In O’Hegarty’s mind, the republicans either ignored the recent circumstances in which the possibility of attaining the Republic was dead or indulged in pitiable hypocrisy. For O’Hegarty the first policy was conducted by die-hard republicans, and the second by de Valera and the Dail deputies who refused to accept responsibility for anything less than the Republic, through their insistence on the settlement proposal that de Valera put forward of ‘external association’ with the British Empire as an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. (For explanations of this see Appendix II, which describes the conversation that took place between O’Hegarty, and Arthur Griffith regarding de Valera’s idea, which Michael Collins dubbed ‘document no.2’.)

As far as O’Hegarty was concerned, the Treaty had marked a revolution in Anglo-Irish affairs as it had established Ireland’s right to be no longer considered a British colony. Furthermore, the Treaty’s ambiguous tone would help establish, in the words of Michael Collins, ‘the freedom to achieve freedom’. As Collins stated:

Britain knows well that she can keep world opinion without conceding a Republic. She believes now, as she believed in July last, that she cannot afford to concede it. That it would break up the Commonwealth – that it would destroy her security and prestige if she were to acquiesce in a forcible breaking away, which would show her

²⁶ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.757.

so-called Empire to be so intolerable, or herself so feeble as to be unable to prevent it. But she will acquiesce in the ultimate separation of the units, we amongst them, by evolution, which will not expose her and not endanger her.²⁷

Republican idealism had reached its peak when public anger erupted over the execution of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising and there was widespread sympathy among nationalists for the aims of the rebellion. O'Hegarty was acutely aware of the powerful symbolic meaning of martyrdom in the separatist tradition. The hagiography of United Irishmen such as Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet in the nationalist tradition now included the men of the 1916 Easter Rising. So too, on the death of O'Hegarty's schoolfellow and friend Terence MacSwiney, during his imprisonment in Mountjoy jail, while on hunger strike, the canon of nationalist martyrs was extended further with O'Hegarty, for instance, in A History of Ireland under the Union describing MacSwiney's death as a 'judicial murder' which drew world-attention to the plight of Ireland.²⁸ These views became the justification for the anti-Treatyites terming themselves 'republicans', the carriers of the uncompromising Fenian spirit that sought to gain full independence for Ireland that they were the living representatives of the men who had died for Ireland in the name of the 'republic'. Yet O'Hegarty saw himself as an unequivocal and dedicated separatist. It was immensely important for him to get this across in his defence of the Treaty that there was no compromise in accepting the Treaty and to attack his opponents for daring to suggest otherwise. He was emphatic in denying that the Fenian philosophy dictated an inflexible attitude toward the 'republican' ideal and that separatists could never have dismissed the opportunities that the Treaty represented to build an Ireland on the principles of Sinn Féin.

²⁷ Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence, 1916-1922', in *Journal of Political Ideologies* October 2003, Vol.8, no.3, p.338.

²⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.743.

O'Hegarty emphasised how the Treaty meant a substantial loosening of Ireland's colonial ties to England, and furthermore, the Fenian philosophy was not a doctrinaire one and would never have prosecuted a war on its fellow Irish people.

O'Hegarty's demonisation of de Valera began, when it emerged that de Valera had been engaged in these secret negotiations over a possible settlement to the Anglo-Irish war and an agreement over the future of Irish independence. While this was a commendable act for O'Hegarty, especially given his dismay over the prosecution of the Anglo-Irish War and the guerrilla tactics deployed, the correspondence that passed between de Valera and Lloyd George, over a period of three months, confirmed that further negotiations toward establishing a 'republic' was unfeasible ground upon which official discussions could begin. At this point de Valera had accepted that the establishment of a republic was out of the question. In A History of Ireland under the Union, O'Hegarty disclosed that: 'The Republic itself was a fine objective. But it was plainly unobtainable'.²⁹

In the whole of the correspondence the Irish republic was only mentioned by de Valera to assure Lloyd George that we were not asking England to recognise it, as a preliminary, either formally or informally; while when the first British terms were published the *Irish Bulletin* attacked them, not because they did not concede Ireland independence, but because while offering Dominion status they did not really give it.³⁰

O'Hegarty added:

The most average intelligence had only to devote five minutes' thought to the circumstances of the Truce, and the de Valera – Lloyd George correspondence, to see that the negotiations would be on the implicit basis of "No Republic," and that de Valera was merely trying to save face.³¹

²⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.730.

³⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.190.

³¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.98.

Negotiations on the status of a future Irish parliament were always going to be a strenuous and difficult affair and as the later conflict over the inclusion of the oath of allegiance to the English monarch in the Treaty proved, the primacy of terminology proved decisive. Naturally, the basis for any possible settlement between the two parties needed to be made clear. In this respect Lloyd George had made two items clear to de Valera, that he was 'Not recognising either the Republic or the Dail, that he was not proposing to recognise Ireland as a sovereign power, and that he was not prepared to tamper with the six-county Parliament without its own consent.'³²

In consenting to send the Irish delegates to the London Conference to negotiate with the British Government (beginning on 11/10/21), de Valera was confirming that the aim 'was one for reconciling Irish self government with the British system.'³³

For O'Hegarty it was an obvious observation to make at this time that the British Government were never going to open negotiations on the possibility of granting Ireland complete freedom from the British Commonwealth, and that de Valera was certainly aware of this but after the signing of the Treaty refused to admit to being aware of this. This formed one reason for O'Hegarty's bitterness after the Treaty, that de Valera maintained a posture which he claimed could not be compromised and subsequently tore Sinn Fein apart over the definition of 'Dominion Status' as a poor relation of 'External Association'.

For O'Hegarty, de Valera's responsibilities added to the confusion surrounding the public and private instructions issued to the plenipotentiaries who were to negotiate on behalf of the Dail with the English government to agree to a settlement over Ireland's independent

³² P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.747.

³³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.747.

status.³⁴ However, it was clear to the Dail and to the plenipotentiaries that their scope for negotiation was limited as they were attached:

[to] negotiate and conclude on behalf of Ireland, with the representatives of His Majesty George V, a treaty or treaties of settlement, association, and accommodation between Ireland and the Commonwealth of Nations known as the British Commonwealth.³⁵

While for O'Hegarty, the plenipotentiaries had successfully concluded this remit, but they had returned to Ireland not as heroes but as traitors strengthening O'Hegarty's resentment and bitterness toward the moral hypocrisy of the Dail during the 'Great Talk.'³⁶ Those who claimed that to reject the Treaty was to remain true to the republican ideal were denigrating the real purpose of Sinn Fein as a movement formed to generate enthusiasm for and if possible instigate the best settlement they possibly could for Irish independence. A recent scholar in concurrence with O'Hegarty's evaluation of this period was also shocked that as the country plunged further into chaos at the hands of the braggadocio and power exercised by the Volunteers, the Dail became more 'preoccupied with Oaths and formulae'.³⁷

O'Hegarty believed that this was the product of de Valera's rejection of the Treaty. The terms upon which the Treaty agreement was reached did not conform to his exact requirements and therefore his personal pride had been affronted. Principally, that de Valera was guilty of putting his vanity before the concerns and welfare of the Irish people. Quoting de Valera in The Separatist as proclaiming: "We know the people of Ireland do not want to forswear the independence they have declared," O'Hegarty, questioned the reasoning behind de Valera's thinking:

³⁴ Robert Barton, who has been described as de Valera's 'placeman' in the negotiations also complained of de Valera's vacillating position during this period. See John Bowman, *De Valera* (Oxford, 1982), p.3.

³⁵ P.S.O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.751.

³⁶ P.S.O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), chapter XVI and here, appendix I.

³⁷ T.P.Coogan, *Michael Collins*, (London, 1990), p.308.

If this has any practical meaning, as apart from a propagandist meaning, it means that Mr. de Valera knows that the people of Ireland do not want the Treaty. Very well. How does he know? There is only one way of finding out whether they do or that they don't...the only support Mr. De Valera has against the will of the people is the tyranny of the Anti-Treaty army, and that, therefore, he supports that against democracy.³⁸

The ultimate act of betrayal that O'Hegarty charged de Valera with was that he carried a band of armed men with him working to hinder the opportunities the Treaty gave to the new Irish state. This, for O'Hegarty, shed any separatist credentials de Valera had displayed prior to the Treaty negotiations. de Valera through his ill-timed introduction of 'external association' as a way out of the self termed 'strait-jacket of the Republic' transformed internal squabbling surrounding mere 'words and a figurehead' into the Civil War.

O'Hegarty didn't deny that the oath of allegiance was an unpleasant facet of the Treaty for separatists to swallow but it was not worth splitting Sinn Fein into two rival factions, i.e. pro and anti-Treatyite and setting the conditions for the prosecution of the Irish Civil War.

O'Hegarty acknowledged that:

The oath is objectionable. It is the real crux. But it is objectionable only because it implies association with the British Empire. In itself, it is harmless, and as its primary allegiance is to the Irish Free State, it is as weak an oath as could be devised. But it was obvious from the beginning of the negotiations that an oath of allegiance or association would be an end to them. And this is an oath of association far more than it is an oath of allegiance.'³⁹

In O'Hegarty's view, in one stroke de Valera had maimed the newly created Irish state's chances of a smooth transition of power and degraded the sterling work begun by the

³⁸ *The Separatist*, May 20th, 1922.

³⁹ *New Ireland*, December 17th, 1921. de Valera's alternative oath put forward '*before the Treaty*', [O'Hegarty's italics], read: "I,....., do swear to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of Ireland and the Treaty of Association of Ireland with the British Commonwealth of Nations, and to recognise the King of Great Britain as Head of the Associated States." *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.218.

plenipotentiaries in London in securing the favourable measures obtained in the Treaty. He felt that under the circumstances the plenipotentiaries had gotten the best deal they possibly could for Ireland:

The treaty set up in Ireland an independent Irish state, with full control over Ireland's territory and resources and international relations, subject to certain verbal limitations of no practical consequence, these limitations being, none of them, things which were unfair or unreasonable in the circumstances. Lloyd George's government went, in the matter of the treaty, to the utmost limit of concession and, whatever their motives, they paid magnificent deference to the susceptibilities of a people naturally touchy in what might seem to impinge on their full freedom in every respect. Lloyd George himself was never forgiven by the Conservatives for his part in the treaty, and it was one of the main causes of his political eclipse. That a nation which had just won the greatest war in history should sit down and accept at its face value Ireland's bluff, and give in fact everything which was asked while colouring it sufficiently to deceive themselves that something was being withheld, deserves and ought to get generous and unrestrained appreciation from Ireland.⁴⁰

For O'Hegarty, given his standing and position of authority de Valera's actions amounted to a treasonous abuse of his power. It was Griffith's character rather than de Valera's that O'Hegarty perceived as a truer reflection of the collective conscience of the Irish people:

Here was power, intellect, and determination, and above all and behind all a sturdy commonsense, a commonness in the sense that you felt at once that here was that rare thing, a man of the people, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, understanding them with all their national instinct and national sureness, their decency, and their absence of side, and yet the most powerful and steadfast intellect in Ireland.⁴¹

Consequently, after de Valera's resignation and withdrawal from the Dail after being defeated on the Treaty vote (an action O'Hegarty saw as denying any other possibility of settling differences) the decay of the Irish state set in for O'Hegarty. He condemned de

⁴⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.773.

⁴¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.129.

Valera for his private and public face regarding the renewed acts of violence that began to be committed by the anti-Treatyite forces.⁴²

The provenance of the civil war therefore had begun with the working of “Mr. De Valera’s poison gas” in which:

He had let the bitterness loose. He had let the guns loose. He placed his whole moral force at the disposal of the men who were working to prevent a plebiscite, to prevent any sort of a vote on the treaty, and who were prepared to go any lengths against it. He was never afterwards able to call his dogs, the dogs of war, back after loosing them.⁴³

In addition ‘the only support Mr. De Valera has against the will of the people is the tyranny of the Anti-Treaty army, and that, therefore, he supports that against democracy’.⁴⁴

This was the crucial argument for O’Hegarty, for while de Valera publicly disassociated himself from the violence of the ‘republicans’ he was the catalyst for their actions and in private supported their aims of overthrowing the Free State government. Once again, O’Hegarty referred to the duplicity he saw as predominant in de Valera’s actions. He attributed de Valera with displaying the characteristics of the political opportunist and one who had turned “verbal dialectics into a bitter and searing split.” de Valera had managed to gain support for his tenuous position among hard-line republicans by developing the following method:

...external association..., which was explained to Cathal Brugha, who had recovered from his wounds, received in the Insurrection, to have his normal fanaticism strengthened to the point where he was prepared to split on the difference in the most theoretical fraction of a hair’s breadth, and in another way to Griffith.⁴⁵

⁴² *The Separatist*, May 20th, 1922.

⁴³ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.82.

⁴⁴ *The Separatist*, May 20th, 1922.

⁴⁵ P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.717.

In addition to de Valera's pivotal role in creating the split, O'Hegarty focused upon the women of the Sinn Fein movement, Cumann Na mBhan as prominent in raising the temperature in the Dail and in their recourse to militant language as a reaction to the terms of the Treaty.

Firstly, however, it is worth reflecting upon O'Hegarty's views on women in politics in general in order to contextualise his views on their actions from the beginnings of the Anglo/Irish War through to the Irish Civil War.

O'Hegarty's idea of civic nationalism signalled that men and women were equal citizens under the rule of law and this prevented his being discriminatory toward women in a political sense as his article entitled 'The Emancipation of Women' in Irish Freedom in 1912, written in support of the suffragette movement and characteristically liberal for its time substantiated:

I do not know whether any reader of *Freedom* thinks that women ought not to be emancipated, but if so I should like to know why. I have never yet met an anti-Suffragist who could find a cogent reason for his position, or who did not make me feel that he was reflecting on his mother or on his wife. A general expression of an opinion of the woman's place is the home – with the implication that she ought to be employed in darning socks and washing dishes while the man smokes a pipe and talks about politics and art – is not a reason for refusing women emancipation. It is just a hereditary prejudice. Modern civilization is based upon the subjection of women; economic and personal subjection, and out of that subjection have come the worst of the social evils which threaten civilization....The demand for emancipation, symbolised at present is the demand for the suffrage, is the demand for an intellectual awakening, of a moral and physical revolt – a demand which men ought to welcome instead of deprecating.⁴⁶

The official Sinn Fein views on the emancipation of women in society and their role in politics did contain a message of equality among the sexes but O'Hegarty's advanced liberalist view, related above, and far exceeded the following Sinn Fein position:

⁴⁶ *Irish Freedom*, September, 1912.

Sinn Fein was not actively anti-feminist; in fact, it was a fond tenet recently among nationalist women that in the nationalist movement women were treated with an equal seriousness and 'a greater courtesy' than the men. The Gaelic League was the first nationalist society to accept women as members on the same terms as men; and in Sinn Fein, women were elected frequently to the executive. Nonetheless, support for women's rights, which at this time centred on getting the vote, was never one of Sinn Fein's priorities.⁴⁷

O'Hegarty described the women of Sinn Fein as responding irrationally and irresponsibly and as representing the worst elements of Republican dogmatism. O'Hegarty's comments contrasted with the traditionally romanticised view of women in Irish history in their untiring support for Irish nationalism and their depiction as the inspiration for men's patriotism. During the nineteenth century, 'Speranza' (the nationalist pseudonym of Oscar Wilde's mother) for example, had been a strong supporter of John Mitchel's radical policy and movement away from the constitutional policy of the Irish Confederation.⁴⁸ Speranza wrote. "We are constantly hearing that 'women have no business with politics, this we deny...active patriotism is a duty bearing equally upon man and woman..."⁴⁹

However, after the Easter Rising and the execution of its leaders the women of the movement became more distrustful of the constitutional side of Sinn Fein (as with all its new personnel for O'Hegarty) and campaigned on the 'Republican' framework that characterised Sinn Fein during these years. For O'Hegarty however the bulk of the women of the Sinn Fein movement acted as a group supporting each other's dogmatic position rather than as representatives of Sinn Fein. This was combined with a hysteria and

⁴⁷ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* (London, 1983), p.72. O'Hegarty too, acknowledged Sinn Fein's respect for women in its political organisation: Women in politics were no new thing in Ireland. In Sinn Fein itself they had always worked side by side with the men, and in the early Sinn Fein days there had been a woman's organisation -Inginidhe na Eireann- founded by Maud Gonne, which had been active and useful. But its work had been social and constructive...' P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.56.

⁴⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.142.

⁴⁹ Brigitte Anton, 'Women of the Nation' in *History Ireland*, Volume 1, Autumn, 1993, p.93.

emotional intensity that followed de Valera's accusation that those who supported the Treaty were 'traitors' not only to the Irish Republic but to 'him.' O'Hegarty cited the following meeting with Cumann na mBhan member, Mary Comerford, as an example of the capriciousness he believed he witnessed and came to despise in Sinn Fein during this period:

On the morning of the publication of the news of the signature of the treaty, I met Mary Comerford, one of the most prominent of Cumann na mBhan workers. "Have you seen the paper?" said she. "Yes." "Do you believe it?" "Of course I believe it; I told you weeks ago that something of this sort was coming." She stopped for a moment, shrugged her shoulders, and then turned away. "Ah well, all for the best. No more war." In the afternoon, Mr. De Valera's pronouncement came out, and Miss Comerford promptly embraced it. Left to herself, she would have given the treaty a trial. So would nearly all those who, as things turned out, rallied to Mr. De Valera's hypocritical cry that he "had been betrayed."⁵⁰

The women of Sinn Fein had traditionally held the following position during the Anglo-Irish War '...each company of the IRA had a branch of Cumann na mBhan attached to it...in other words, Cumann na mBhan's main function was to service the needs of the local volunteers.'⁵¹ The following passage cited from The Victory of Sinn Fein however depicted a more sinister view of their position:

As the war lengthened, it became more brutal, more savage, more hysterical, and more unrelievedly black. But its worst effect was on the women. They were the first to be thrown off their base, and as the war lengthened, they steadily deteriorated. They took to their hearts every catch-cry, every narrowness, and every bitterness, and steadily eliminated from themselves every womanly feeling. It organised itself on a "military" basis, got itself uniforms, called itself "Commandant" and "Captain," threw overboard construction and devoted itself to destruction. War, and the things which war breeds - intolerance, swagger, hardness, unwomanliness - captured the women, turned them into unlovely, destructive-minded, arid begetters of violence, both physical violence and mental violence.⁵²

⁵⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.73.

⁵¹ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* (London, 1983), p.72.

⁵² P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp.56-58.

O'Hegarty's views need not be taken in isolation although the accusations singling out the attitudes and actions of the Sinn Fein women were rare. His fellow separatist in the pre and post revolutionary period of the twentieth century Batt O'Connor,⁵³ took a similar view drawing attention to the romanticised role of the martyr in the irregular's ideology. O'Connor emphasised how the talk of the women consisted of constant references to relatives who died for Ireland, relatives who would be distraught at the compromise and betrayal engendered by those who signed and ratified the treaty.⁵⁴ While this was an understandable attitude for many of the Sinn Fein women to hold given the loss of their husbands and brothers in the name of the separatist cause, O'Connor lamentably noted the following observation:

I regret to have to write this about our own brave good women and girls that gave so much help in our dark trying days of the terror but they completely lost their heads when the president came out and condemned the treaty they at once formed an idea that Collins was a traitor or else the President would not take the stand he did and now when it has been proved that brave Collins got all that was possible for Ireland they (the women) feel the humiliation of their position and the hasty judgement they formed.⁵⁵

In his condemnation of the women of the Sinn Fein movement O'Hegarty did not extend his criticisms to all of Sinn Fein's women members. O'Hegarty made an exception of the women for whom he believed did not display hypocritical tendencies in their republican beliefs in relation to the Treaty vote. O'Hegarty held some sympathy for Mrs Tom Clarke in

⁵³ Batt O'Connor was a pro-Treatyite like O'Hegarty. O'Connor also knew Michael Collins well acting as his driver during the War of Independence and admired his character for similar reasons to O'Hegarty. See University College Dublin, Special Archives Department for Batt O'Connor's letters. See Appendix III for O'Hegarty's sketch of Michael Collins's character and *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, Chapter XXVI.

⁵⁴ Jason Knirck, 'Afterimage of the revolution: Kevin O'Higgins and the Irish revolution – 1', in *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Fall-Winter, 2003. Kevin O'Higgins associated women's political activity with republicanism and remained deeply suspicious of both throughout his time in government.

⁵⁵ Batt O'Connor Papers (University College Dublin), P68.

adopting her anti-Treatyite position, as he believed her convictions had not wavered over her commitment to the 'republican' ideals she held from the beginning of her separatist career. He commented: 'Mrs. Clarke was one of the very few deputies who never had, and never pretended to have, any illusions as to what the Truce meant, and her vote against the Treaty was because she disliked it, and not because of Mr. De Valera's "betrayal" pose.'⁵⁶

The notion of betraying the cause of Irish nationalism in republican ideology held serious repercussions particularly from the beginning of the Anglo-Irish War, where traitors were shot for their duplicity. Therefore, de Valera's accusation aimed at the plenipotentiaries of betraying the 'republic' was unforgivable for O'Hegarty.

Mary MacSwiney, for whom O'Hegarty devoted a chapter in The Victory of Sinn Fein, took up the idea of the Irish delegation in London and the ensuing pro-Treatyite supporters as committing the ultimate betrayal to the Republican ideology with the greatest of fervour. This chapter, quoted from below, formed the most vociferous of O'Hegarty's railing against the women of the Sinn Fein movement. Even in A History of Ireland under the Union where he displayed a more temperate view of the reasons for the Anglo-Irish war and the Civil War, he maintained two charges against his opponents. He charged de Valera with beginning the split in Sinn Fein and charged Mary MacSwiney's virulent speech launched during the Treaty debates as crucial.⁵⁷

At the time of writing The Victory of Sinn Fein however O'Hegarty was to mimic this form of virulent language. This description of Mary MacSwiney as a sea green incorruptible was apt as O'Hegarty believed that she was fully aware of her hypocritical stance, that she knew full well that the republic was unattainable from the time of de Valera's secret meetings

⁵⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (London, 1924), p.103-104.

⁵⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.779.

with Lloyd George and yet she created a wave of resentment over this issue among the Sinn Féin women, when the fact of the ‘republic’ had never been attainable:

...of all the impostures with which the Party is made up, perhaps the most shameless and loathsome (after that of de Valera) is that which Miss Mary MacSwiney has so persistently and sedulously foisted on the country – the imposture of herself as a “Sea-green Incorruptible.”⁵⁸

O’Hegarty described how Mary MacSwiney was aware how:

...before the plenipotentiaries were appointed, that the Republic had been thrown overboard; she knew, when she was going to the session of the Dail which appointed the plenipotentiaries, that she was going to agree to the appointment of plenipotentiaries who would not discuss a Republic.⁵⁹

O’Hegarty in quoting fully their meeting in The Victory of Sinn Féin was emphasising the irrational side to Mary MacSwiney’s character from which he attributed some of the blame for the occurrence of the civil war in Ireland. On Mary MacSwiney’s return from America, where she was campaigning for Sinn Féin, O’Hegarty related how she came to see him and the discussion that ensued:

“Well, Mary, you see I was right.” (It was then the beginning of September, 1921, and I did not conceive that anybody could possibly then have any doubts about what was happening).

“No, I don’t admit that, yet.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I’ve been to see de Valera, and I asked him was he compromising, and he assures me that he stands where he always stood.”

“Very well, Mary. Now, leave de Valera out of it and use your own intelligence. de Valera spent a week with Lloyd George, in private conclave. Nobody knows what they discussed. But do you think they discussed a Republic?”

“Well, no; I don’t.”

“Then what the devil do you mean by pretending that I was not right?”

⁵⁸ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.106.

⁵⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.106.

“I know we won’t get a Republic, but I think we might get some semi-independent connexion with England which we could accept.”⁶⁰

Her claim that she was a: ‘better Republican than Mick Collins or than any of the Republicans who were shot by her fellow pseudo-Republicans in the civil war’, was nothing short of shameful and dishonourable for O’Hegarty. Her comment directed at Griffith and Collins that ‘You are worse than Castlereagh’, and, ‘that those deputies who had broken their oath by conspiring to overthrow the republic had forfeited their right to sit in Dail Eireann and that the faithful republican deputies, assembling together, would have the constitutional right to act as the second Dail.’⁶¹

For O’Hegarty, Griffith and Collins were individuals of conviction and commitment who had argued and pressed for acceptance of the Anglo-Irish treaty for the good of all of Ireland and certainly not for any personal gain. Moreover Mary MacSwiney included in her canon of faithful ‘republicans’ her late brother Terence MacSwiney, a close friend of O’Hegarty, who had died on hunger strike in 1919. Mary MacSwiney claimed that acceptance of the treaty was a disgrace on the memory of her brother. Yet O’Hegarty was convinced that Terence would have accepted the Treaty on the same reasoning as he had. In A History of Ireland under the Union, he described how in:

1906, the liberals had been returned to power, and in 1907 they introduced a Bill for the setting up of an Irish council bill which should co-ordinate and control eight of the most important government boards in Ireland....many people thought that this measure should be allowed to pass - amongst them were P.H. Pearse and Terence MacSwiney, who were both of the opinion that since it gave Ireland control of education it ought not be actively opposed.⁶²

⁶⁰ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.107.

⁶¹ Mary MacSwiney, September 1922, quoted in Dorothy Macadell, *The Irish Republic* (London, 1968), p.711.

⁶² P.S. O’Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.656.

O'Hegarty believed this was a trait present only in the new breed of Sinn Feiner or the hypocrite who claimed they had never believed they would be accepting anything less than a republic. These people were beyond comprehending the momentous achievement the Treaty represented for those who had beggared and slaved for Irish independence. The women of Sinn Fein in casting aside restraint at this time intensified the disunity and distrust that now pre-dominated the Sinn Fein movement. O'Hegarty was genuinely appalled by the hard line republican attitude of the women and chastised their support of continuing the gun policy of Sinn Fein. These women were no longer belligerent or fighting out of necessity in the defence of their country against the English invader yet their experiences as war mongers and commandants stayed with them to the detriment of Ireland. O'Hegarty was critical of the fact that they assumed like de Valera that they knew the true mind of the Irish nation even after the Irish people had democratically voted in favour of the Treaty.

For O'Hegarty the presence of the inflexible doctrinaire mind exhibited in the women of the Sinn Fein movement was an unforgivable trait. Much of his disillusionment was turned toward the irrationality of the period and as with de Valera, O'Hegarty singled out the women as the villains through whom he could vent his anger, hence the language he used in The Victory of Sinn Fein was sometimes shocking and offensive. For O'Hegarty de Valera and the women of Sinn Fein were cognisant that their words and deeds were injurious toward Ireland's future but refused to face up to their responsibilities.

No longer could it be demonstrated for O'Hegarty that:

our deep rooted belief that there was something in us finer than, more spiritual than, anything in any other people, was sheer illusion, and that we were really an uncivilised people with savage instincts. O'Hegarty commented how: the "Island of

Saints and Scholars” is burst like Humpty Dumpty, and we do not quite know yet what we are going to get in its place.⁶³

It was the lack of vision at the time of the Treaty displayed by those on the anti-Treatyite side that frustrated O’Hegarty. They had short-sightedly focused on a form of words that O’Hegarty saw as nominal. The major reason for accepting the Treaty for O’Hegarty could be summarised in the following assertion written in 1922, ‘Douglas Hyde spoke of “de-anglicising Ireland.” Well we have seen it: We have seen England and her civilization swinging out of Ireland.’⁶⁴

For O’Hegarty, in his separatist arguments in favour of the Treaty, the Fenian spirit remained but they needed to be placed in a new context to reflect the very real prospect of Ireland achieving independence. In the light of such an incredible achievement the IRB, like Sinn Fein, were no longer motivated by propaganda and conspiracy: instead, their objective was to permit the Treaty the chance to move toward full self-government for Ireland. For O’Hegarty, it was incredulous to think that those who rejected the Treaty had failed to see the magnitude of their generation’s accomplishment. Moreover, the goal had been reached democratically and the people including the ‘Underground Nation’ had voted for the Treaty. This vote had taken into account the unnecessary use of violence and therefore the militaristic aims of the republicans were not implemented in the name of those people. O’Hegarty emphasised the significance of this and was correct in identifying the mood of the country as tired of war and eager to accept the benefits of the Treaty.⁶⁵ On a more practical note too, it was disclosed to O’Hegarty by Michael Collins that the IRB

⁶³ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.126.

⁶⁴ *The Separatist*, March, 1922.

⁶⁵ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.93.

were incapable of continuing the guerrilla war against the English forces. O'Hegarty, years later reflecting on this period, in a letter to Florrie O'Donoghue remarked on:

Notes on certain things, which had not been written down, and of which, I imagine, nobody but myself has now any cognisance. On the Saturday week after the Treaty was signed, MC [Michael Collins] summoned a meeting of the IRB circle...of which I was a member...he regarded his first duty...to the IRB and cared nothing for any other opinion. He said that in June 1921, the total number of men in Active Service Units all over Ireland...was 1617...and they could not hope to operate much longer...dealing with his own appointment as a plenipotentiary, he said: - "I did not want to go over. I told de Valera that I was not the person to go, that he would get a better settlement if he left me at home as a sort of dark horse...and he would be able to say, at a crisis, we cannot accept that. Collins and the IRB would not accept it." Collins wanted to play the IRB as a last card. But the charge which has been so freely made that the Treaty was forced on the Dail by the IRB is without foundation. It was not the IRB, but the others, who tried to force things from the beginning. Immediately the Treaty was signed, Brugha and Mellowes got a car from Tony Woods of Donnybrook, driven by his son, with which they visited every Volunteer (or IRA) - I always think of them as Volunteers the IRA sort of stinking in my ears) Corps in Ireland, exhorting and pledging them to maintain the existing Republic. And in Cork, Brugha asked my brother, [Sean], then Commandant of No.1 Cork Brigade, to kidnap the Cork pro-Treaty deputies just before the final vote, so that their votes could not be recorded.⁶⁶

For O'Hegarty the Treaty marked more than any home rule bill ever could have as it carried within it a far wider achievement as it 'planted the seeds which the sturdy root, blossomed, and destroyed the British Empire of history.'⁶⁷ That 'the oath and the other things were put in the Treaty, not because they have or were meant to have any practical relation to Irish government, but because it was necessary to put in the Treaty certain things to save England's face.'⁶⁸

While O'Hegarty desired to see the cultural nationalism of the Gaelic League and the economic policies of Sinn Fein take root in the Irish Free State he recognised that the Irish

⁶⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty to Florrie O'Donoghue, *Florrie O'Donoghue Papers*, University College Dublin, MS31/333(1).

⁶⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London 1952), p.750.

⁶⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.101.

Government's policies were dictated by the need to establish the rule of law and secure the safety of its citizens during the Civil War. The opportunities the Treaty offered for invoking the vision of the Gaelic League of which O'Hegarty was an avid aficionado; of uniting the island's traditions and in creating a pluralistic environment in which the Irish character and culture could thrive were admittedly denied their fullest expression. However, O'Hegarty was disillusioned with the 'republican' actions and not with the Cumann na Gaedheal government. As he commented in 1919, 'my bent was naturally towards political revolution rather than social revolution.'⁶⁹

However, the idea of civic virtue existing in the Free State was not entirely lost for O'Hegarty and its gradual build up in Irish society was augmented by the rise of a young professional middle class who were keen to consolidate, administer and wield the new independent powers of the Irish Free State. As Tom Garvin has commented:

the Sinn Fein leadership drew many of its members from this kind of well-educated and idealistic lower middle-class whose opportunities for political leadership was severely limited under the old Redmondite, parliamentary dispensation. The revolution which most of them sought was a national not a social revolution.⁷⁰

Yet O'Hegarty displayed no bitterness toward the conservative political and social framework, which took as its institutional structure in shaping the Free State the previous British regime. It emerged that:

The new southern Irish state bore all the familiar landmarks of the old British Ireland: parliamentary institutions, the common law, a settled system of landholding, a trade union movement that, in its bargaining and moderate style, was brother to trade unions across the water.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *An Saogal Gaedhealach*, February 15, 1919.

⁷⁰ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), p.71.

⁷¹ D.G Boyce, *The Revolution in Ireland*, Introduction, (Basingstoke, 1988), p.19.

Roy Foster, in commenting on this aspect of the Free State's lack of revolutionary vision after the Irish Civil War, emphasised: 'In this arena, exalted leaders first fought out a brutal duel over a form of words, and then constructed a new state around preoccupations that resolutely ignored even the vague social and economic desiderata once outlined for Pearse's republic.'⁷²

Yet there were many differing interpretations of what the revolution in Ireland would consist of. There were those within the Irish Free State Government, such as Richard Mulcahy and Ernest Blythe, who were, like O'Hegarty, for 'Gaelicising' Ireland. Similarly there were those, such as Kevin O'Higgins, who, Patrick Maume has described as belonging to the recently formed 'Catholic Clongowian elite'⁷³ from the turn of the century who were for continuing within the boundaries of the previous British model of government as it offered the best method for social advancement. Consequently, as Bill Kissane has recently argued:

...from the very outset there existed within Treatyite Sinn Fein two divergent and competing interpretations of the treaty settlement: firstly, a progressive nationalist-republican interpretation which expected, once the free state was established, the continuation of the revolution towards the realisation of an isolated Gaelic republic; and secondly, a conservative-consolidationist interpretation which hoped to develop the treaty and the free state to full autonomy by constitutional means.⁷⁴

In contrast to his many critics who depicted him as a 'counter-revolutionist' O'Hegarty praised Kevin O'Higgins for his managerial style of government and the ability to take the harsh decisions that were needed to restore peace to Ireland. Moreover, O'Hegarty attributed the gradual build-up of civic virtue within the Free State as attributable to O'Higgins's

⁷² Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p.515.

⁷³ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation*, (Dublin, 1999), Introduction.

⁷⁴ Bill Kissane, 'The Doctrine of Self Determination and the Irish move to Independence, 1916-1922', in *Journal of Political Ideologies* October 2003, p.327.

policies in that freedom re-emerged as paramount over the violence that had suppressed it.⁷⁵

The following depiction of O'Higgins by a recent scholar complies with O'Hegarty's notion that civic virtue in Ireland owed a lot to O'Higgins contribution during this early period:

Certainly, O'Higgins's focus on self-determination and self-government was part of the Sinn Fein tradition, and to describe him as a counter-revolutionary masks the deep changes that he sought to make in Irish political culture, falsely disconnect him from the Irish revolution that brought him to power. O'Higgins's own vision of the revolution centred on self-determination, which he saw as its greatest fruit. For O'Higgins Irish self-government would have to be accompanied by a change in the Irish political mentality whereby the Irish people would assume responsibility for their own affairs and accept that the Dail was the proper place to settle those affairs. Britain could no longer be blamed for all of Ireland's problems, nor could every violation of law be seen as heroic and politicised. Ireland, according to O'Higgins, needed to develop a sense of civic virtue, understanding the fact that rights and responsibilities flowed both ways between state and people. This was the heart of Kevin O'Higgins's revolution.⁷⁶

In both The Victory of Sinn Fein and A History of Ireland under the Union, O'Hegarty praised the securing of civil society and the re-establishment of law and order in Ireland that rid Ireland of the violence that had become associated with political disagreement in recent years and for allowing the peaceful transition between the two main parties, handing over of power that characterised representative democracy.

The focus of O'Hegarty's disillusionment was reserved for those who expected that their particular interpretation of social revolution would be implemented immediately after an Irish Government assumed power:

Everywhere people started to form associations "to safeguard our interests"; everywhere groups and individuals began to push; nowhere was there any consideration for the country, any disposition to give the new government a chance to survey the situation. I suppose it was natural. I suppose that, as government has

⁷⁵ *The Separatist*, April, 1922.

⁷⁶ John Knirck, 'Afterimage of the revolution: Kevin O'Higgins and the Irish revolution – 1', in *Eire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies*, Fall-Winter, 2003.

been for generations a thing apart from the people in Ireland – an enemy, a thing which had the machinery for finding money from somewhere – it was too much to expect that people would now recognise that this was *their* government, no longer an alien government, and that it could only find money out of *their* own pockets. I suppose that it was natural, seeing that for more than a century there has been no talk in Ireland of anything but the people's rights, that now they should forget that people have any duties. But it was none the less bitter to see in all Ireland no trace of that decency, selflessness, and idealism, in which the movement had been conceived and for many years carried on.⁷⁷

O'Hegarty in his 'Dedicatory Preface' in A History of Ireland under the Union addressed to Bulmer Hobson and Robert Lynd wrote of how the Treaty had ultimately proved a success. Not least in overcoming the divisions of civil war and had marked the beginning of a free Ireland that took on its own individual political, social and cultural characteristics. So too, O'Hegarty argued, the Treaty had also ushered in the beginning of the end of the British Empire and that free peoples everywhere had benefited from the Irish example that the separatist movement had set:

Ireland is no longer in captivity. What was still a dream in 1904 has become a reality. Arthur O'Shaughnessy held that "three, with a new song's measure, can trample an Empire down." Griffith did it with a couple of pamphlets, for the Treaty of 1921 was the beginning of the end of the British Empire. *It* has found not alone another name but another nature.⁷⁸

Ultimately, O'Hegarty was not willing to sacrifice the democratic will of the Irish people over what he saw as the minor issue of 'mere words and a figurehead.' He was unwilling to work against what he saw as the best possible outcome of the historic enmity that had existed between England and Ireland, as contained in the Treaty, given the prevailing circumstances. In adhering to this belief, O'Hegarty was resolute and it serves as testimony

⁷⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), p.178.

⁷⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, 'Dedicatory Preface', *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952),.

to an individual for whom the right of the Irish people to control their own political and cultural destiny was of paramount importance.

Written in 1924, The Victory of Sinn Fein was largely a work designed to reveal exactly where Sinn Fein had erred in fostering the conditions, which led to the bitter Irish Civil War. However, amid these scathing commentaries there lies also an optimism based upon the recognition that the Treaty marked a triumph of the Irish nationalist spirit in overcoming overwhelmingly adversarial odds, and consequently that: ‘there [was] no gesture in history quite so magnificent, quite so proud and nothing that has happened can take away from it.’⁷⁹

O’Hegarty was one of the first separatists to attempt to break the general conspiracy of silence in Ireland about this crucial period in which the independent Irish Free State emerged. The controversial and honest natures of these views are further confirmed by the reaction and commentary they elicited from his fellow pro-Treatyite Richard Mulcahy and quoted from in the previous chapter.⁸⁰ In writing The Victory of Sinn Fein O’Hegarty was questioning what had gone wrong with the idealism and the pact of unity that had formed the original purpose and vision behind the Sinn Fein movement. Yet in attempting this re-evaluation, the arguments O’Hegarty formulated in defence of the Treaty and to refute the positions adopted by his opponents merely indicated the depth of his disillusionment. The Victory of Sinn Fein therefore failed to acknowledge the real concerns of the republican position over Ireland’s ‘Dominion Status’ and that this was unable to satisfy a large part of those members of Sinn Fein who felt that acceptance of the Treaty amounted to a betrayal of the historic Irish right to nationhood.

⁷⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.34.

⁸⁰ Richard Mulcahy believed that it was much too soon to offer commentary on Ireland’s recent turbulent history especially concerning the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War.

CHAPTER VI

THE ULSTER QUESTION

...territory is often described as the body of the national organism and the language as its soul. In the ideology of almost every nation, therefore, its historical territory is looked upon almost as a living personality which cannot be partitioned without destroying it altogether.

Frederick Hertz, 'Nationality in History and Politics', in John Bowman, De Valera and the Ulster Question, (London, 1944), pp.150-1.

During the Treaty debates, one night, at the close of the day's proceedings I walked back with Michael Collins and Sean O'Muirthile and Joseph McGrath to where, each night, he and his friends compared notes about the day's debate and considered whether anything could be done to convince waverers. After a while everybody departed save myself and O'Muirthile and Collins. I passed the remark: "It's an astonishing thing to me that in the attack on the Treaty practically nothing is said about Partition which is the one real blot on it." O'Muirthile looked up in surprise, and said: "Before they signed, Griffith and Collins got a personal undertaking from Smith and Churchill that if Ulster opted out they would get only four counties and that *they* would make a four-county government possible." I looked up at Collins, and he grinned and said: "That's right."

There was no reason why this should have been invented for my benefit, I had declared for the Treaty on the morning of its announcement, and I had never wavered. Nor was I criticising the Treaty, but wondering why the opposition neglected what seemed to me their most telling point.

P.S. O'Hegarty, A History of Ireland under the Union (London, 1952), 'Notes on Foregoing Chapter, The Boundary Commission', p.754.

As has been argued throughout this thesis O'Hegarty was deeply influenced by Fenian principles and offered separatist-based solutions to the problem of establishing an Irish cultural tradition in which Protestant, Catholic and dissenter could find a common heritage.

Yet the very language through which O'Hegarty defended the right of the 'Underground Nation' to fight for Irish independence, its language and culture proved problematic for moderate nationalists and most particularly for the purposes of this chapter, Ulster Unionists to identify with. The cultural bonds O'Hegarty forwarded as containing the potential for unifying all the traditions on the island were refuted by Ulster Unionists, who, as their collective name suggests, believed their cultural bonds and political security had already been established under the constitution of the United Kingdom, and that the idea of an original shared culture that existed previous to the 1801 Act of Union with Irish nationalists, was dismissed with the same irritation as the separatist programme of reversing the Anglicised culture of Ireland. Yet despite the inherent problems of fostering a cultural homogeneity in Ireland, it is important to remember that O'Hegarty was an individual who exemplified civic virtues over an ethnic idea of nationalism that he believed flourished at the heart of the separatist tradition he represented. His message of unity under the rule of law in which all citizens were of equal value to the nation was a liberal and pluralistic idea that he sought to instil in all of Ireland's citizens. It is useful at this juncture to provide a formal definition of O'Hegarty's civic nationalism in tackling the most fundamental test of this principle, i.e. the accommodation of an Ulster Unionist population, mainly Protestant in religious belief, who opted to remain a part of the United Kingdom rather than become a minority under a majority nationalist government. This chapter therefore concentrates on Ulster Unionist resistance to O'Hegarty's vision of Ireland after the formation of the U.V.F., in 1912, (see below) where the north east became the foremost resilience to any form of Irish Home Rule or government, no matter how moderate in powers.

The problem O'Hegarty's faced was how to imbue a civic form of national identity in Ireland between Irish nationalists and the Unionist population of the north east who formed a majority in the province of Ulster but were a minority group across Ireland.

The following definition of civic nationalism complies with O'Hegarty's vision of a shared sense of Irishness (as opposed to Anglicisation) that existed prior to the Act of Union in 1801. For O'Hegarty the notion of what it meant to be an Irish citizen stretched across all religious and ethnic boundaries in Ireland; a description of ethnic nationalism by a recent scholar depicts the form of nationalism he wanted to avoid:

...group identity composed of commitments to the nation's political creed. Race, religion, gender, language, and ethnicity are not relevant in defining a citizen's rights and inclusion within the polity. Shared beliefs in the country's principles and values embedded in the rule of law is the organising basis for political order, and citizens are understood to be equal and rights-bearing individuals. Ethnic nationalism, in contrast, maintains that individual rights and participation within the polity as inherited – based on ethnic or racial or religious ties.¹

Given these interpretations of civic and ethnic nationalism, this chapter questions whether O'Hegarty's idealised conception of the Separatist tradition as a model capable of stimulating civic nationalism and therefore for offering solutions to the ethnic antagonisms that had dominated Irish politics from the 1801 Act of Union, or, contrary to this aim, did it act as a major obstacle? This chapter will also measure how far O'Hegarty's separatist principles could accept the partition of Ireland and whether his deep commitment to the Fenian philosophy was unable to address the Ulster Unionist's concerns over their minority status in an Irish parliament; and that ultimately unionists were estranged from his notion of a cultural unity existing between nationalists and unionists. In order to carry out these objectives the chapter will be set out in the following way. Firstly, it begins by setting out

¹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), p.7.

O'Hegarty's historical reasons for the conflict existing between the Irish and anglicising forces particularly the historic importance of Ulster in this struggle. Then, the period in which O'Hegarty lived and the question of the treatment of Ulster will be examined up until the 1920 Government of Ireland Act was implemented which effectively created the separate province of Ulster. At this point the chapter sets out and determines O'Hegarty's views on the Irish Volunteers and the UVF who represented the public (as opposed to the secretive IRB), armed and militant wings of Irish nationalism and Ulster resistance and the role of the Irish Party and its leader John Redmond during the Great War whereby, the notion of partition became a viable option in attempts to solve the Ulster crisis.

O'Hegarty's journalistic writings in this chapter feature upon a nationalist group called the Ancient Order of Hibernians whose focal point of support was located in the north east of Ireland amongst the Ulster Unionist population's stronghold. Writing with passion and commitment O'Hegarty focused on their particular brand of Irish nationalism which O'Hegarty found to be abhorrent to his civic nationalism and guilty of propounding ethnic hatreds. These criticisms aimed at fellow nationalists are continued in this chapter through O'Hegarty's important comments concerning Sinn Fein and the 'crime of the Ulster Boycott' in which Sinn Fein boycotted firstly, Ulster Protestant owned Ulster firms and industries, and then all of Ireland's Protestant manufacturers. O'Hegarty argued convincingly this was a short-sighted and ill thought out policy that only served to further deepen hatreds that were already self-evident between the north and south of Ireland. These important issues are discussed further between O'Hegarty and Ernest Blythe, through their private correspondences written in 1949, which marked a sufficient period of time to reflect on their separatist careers during this era of high tension, a factor that adds considerable interest to the thoughts and reflections on the Ulster question contained in these letters.

The previous chapter demonstrated that O'Hegarty did not interpret separatism as doctrinal or dogmatic in its principles and was flexible enough to allow Ireland the chance to capitalise on her new won freedom through the Anglo-Irish Treaty. But the notion of partition completely subverted his beliefs about the essential unity of Ireland and was the ultimate test of his commitment to the Treaty. O'Hegarty believed that civic virtue lay at the heart of the spiritual Irish nation and this theme was advanced throughout O'Hegarty's historical references to Ireland, but had been severely disrupted by the Act of Union through which England adjudged that it would serve their best interests to appoint the 'Garrison nation', or the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, as their political allies. In O'Hegarty's view the creation of an official Church of Ireland, (disestablished under Gladstone in 1869), that represented a minority of the population was a politically inspired decision rather than one based upon religious principle.²

O'Hegarty maintained that the 'Underground Nation' through mass movements and nationalist agitation fought back to regain the illegal and immoral occupation of the Irish nation by the English nation. But through the pursuit of Catholic emancipation in 1829 and then for the Repeal of the Union in 1840, a gulf was created between the nationalist majority and the Protestant ascendancy. The constitutional nationalist demands throughout the nineteenth century were for the creation of a devolved Irish parliament, or as O'Hegarty and the Fenians maintained as the right of the Irish nation, complete independence from England. These demands for at least some form of national independence for Ireland contrasted with the majority of Protestants who wished to strengthen the union with England and maintain their privileged position and majority status within the United Kingdom, as the guardians of British policy in Ireland. As Patrick Buckland has stressed,

² P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.461.

Two prominent Irish nationalists of the twentieth century, Eamonn de Valera and Michael Collins were drawn to this notion of an independent pastoral Ireland, based on their own idealised childhood experiences and how their ‘independent’ Ireland would resemble this model. They envisaged a self-sufficient agriculturally-based economy in Ireland and challenged the view that the modern industrial British state was the measure by which a nation was deemed a success or a failure. This vision was not incongruent with the majority of the island’s existing rural based economy but it was insensitive to the modern industrial economy of the north east in which a substantial Protestant population lived and prospered on the British economic model. Indeed it was partly due to this rural vision of how Ireland would develop under Catholic majoritarian rule that fostered organised opposition to an Irish parliament among northern Protestants. It was an example of how Ulster Unionists feared their minority status in an independent Irish parliament would lead to their cultural and economic demise and leave them powerless to resist the imposition of this vision from becoming a primary objective of the majority. Ulster Unionist’s were fearful of the threat an Irish parliament presented to their established way of life.

Yet within Sinn Fein there were economic theories that seemed to address Ulster Unionists’ fears over the erosion of their way of life that any future Irish parliament presented. Separatist propaganda, most formidably espoused by Arthur Griffith, looked toward a modern thriving industrial economy not just in the north east but developed right across Ireland. However those nationalists who believed in the agricultural vision of Ireland and those of Griffith’s camp generally subscribed to the following view: that the English industrial model should not become a feature of any economic design adopted in an independent Ireland. Indeed Griffith argued once independence had been gained that Ireland should develop its industries on a specifically Irish model consisting of protective tariffs,

rather than emulating a 'Welshified harp strumming Birmingham manufacture.'⁶ Through journals and pamphleteering, disseminated among the Irish population, e.g. his Tracts for the Times,⁷ Griffith propagandised the economic degradation and over-taxation that England had historically subjected Ireland.. Yet again, this view was contrastable with Ulster Unionists' interpretation of how industry in Ireland had benefited substantially from Britain's economic policy in Ireland. As Buckland has demonstrated:

...whereas nationalists maintained that the union was ruining Ireland, Irish Unionists retorted that the British connection had assisted the economic and social development of all classes and creeds in Ireland, particularly by legislation on behalf of Catholics, by Land Acts and by social security measures. Agriculture flourished in the south and industry in the north-east, where Belfast had established itself as the world's major linen centre and Harland and Woelf were producing, by the nineteenth century, some of the largest ships in the world.⁸

As a separatist committed to Ireland's independence, O'Hegarty too, traced the provenance of Ireland's political, cultural and economic ills to British policy in Ireland. To take one example, his attitude toward the 1903 Wyndham Act proves illuminating. The Wyndham Act was generally considered a benign measure that removed centuries of grievances between tenant farmers and the ascendancy over the historical ownership of land, the hatred of 'absentee landlordism' and 'rack-rentism'. Indeed, the main source of nationalist strength during the nineteenth century had been drawn from this sector of the Irish population. Moreover the unfairness of the antiquated landlord/tenant relationship in Ireland was widely

⁶ V.E. Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p.79.

⁷ Arthur Griffith, *Tracts for the Times, No.4*. Griffith's pamphlet emphasised England's historical and contemporary over-taxation of Ireland and her use in feeding England for her wars. Also, the idea of England being more concerned for her economy than in ending the Great Famine, a view most famously espoused by John Mitchel.

⁸ Patrick Buckland, 'Irish Unionism in the New Ireland', in Boyce (Ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland 1879-1923*, (Basingstoke, 1988), p.72.

believed by nationalists to have prolonged the 'Great Famine' of 1845-1849 which still resonated deeply in the Irish nationalist consciousness.

The political and economic ascendancy of the English garrison in Ireland served to underlie this assertion for nationalists and justified nationalism's morally unassailable demands for self-government. The historical iniquities associated with unionism therefore far outweighed legislation such as the 1903 Wyndham Act which, while welcomed, particularly among the 'grazer' tenant farmers' who profited substantially from government loans, was viewed merely as a policy that sought to redress the historical wrong of the 'plantations'. The Unionist government under Salisbury who initiated and oversaw the implementation of this act, believed they were 'killing home rule with kindness', but for a majority of nationalists it represented an apology for the past, a debt that could only be fully re-paid with Irish independence.

O'Hegarty too blamed, (in Mitchelian-fashion), England and her 'garrison in Ireland' for the causes of the famine⁹ but he did not suggest, as other nationalists did, that land was the focal point of nationalism. Instead he concluded that any positive aspects attributed to the Wyndham Act were overshadowed by its underlying objective i.e. to draw attention away from Ireland's right to independence. By this, O'Hegarty divined that the English Government had granted these measures in order to divide the loyalties of those who benefited from the scheme. In bolstering the prosperity of tenant farmers the English Government increased this group's conservatism and lessened their judgement over the real issue, the goal of Irish independence. Thus, in moderating the tenant farmers idea of nationhood the English Government was advancing the indifferent attitude toward

⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union*, Chapter XXV. O'Hegarty blamed the inactivity of O'Connell and the Young Irelanders who led appeals to the British government for more help but refused to breach O'Connell's code outlawing physical force. In O'Hegarty's view the Famine represented a moral justification for physical force.

independence that O'Hegarty associated with the Irish Party and Home Rulers in general. O'Hegarty believed that matters such as land and economic prosperity were issues that would be better addressed under an Irish government. As much of O'Hegarty's propaganda was aimed at stirring up passionate debate within Ireland he concluded that to support the Wyndham Act was to take an anti-nationalist position. This was in contrast to O'Hegarty's view of Parnell whom he saw as manoeuvring the Land League from a sectional interest and developing it into a national movement.¹⁰

O'Hegarty believed that the goal of Irish independence was nobler than any individual gain or that it could be influenced by the interests of a particular class, in this case the tenant farmers, and therefore the belief that it was a magnanimous gesture on behalf of the English Government should be dismissed. Ultimately, O'Hegarty concluded that 'class warfare would play England's game'.¹¹ In an article addressing the rise of the Labour Party in Ireland but nonetheless tackling the theme of class warfare as a divisive element in Irish nationalism, O'Hegarty wrote:

I am not a believer in Capitalism. Neither am I a believer in Bolshevism, in international democracy, in the Red Flag, in the brotherhood of man, or in the Millennium. I believe in the organisation of society on a basis of Co-operation and profit-sharing: but I am not prepared to commit Sinn Fein to that even. Sinn Fein's business is to unite Ireland politically, not to disunite her by embarking upon a social policy which is nothing as yet but a couple of phrases and as regards its merits and demerits are canvassed. The one and only loyalty which we can demand from our people is loyalty to Ireland: once we stretch that to cover loyalty to any particular conception of social or economic construction we make ourselves at once a class and not a people.¹²

¹⁰ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.498.

¹¹ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, August 2, 1919.

¹² *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, August 2, 1919.

The objections to 'England's political games' which for O'Hegarty reflected the sum of English policy in Ireland, received their final verification in England's determination to maintain a foothold in Ireland's most industrial and most economically productive province, Ulster. For O'Hegarty it was a longstanding feature of British policy to foster division among Protestant and Catholic in Ireland to protect and support their economic interests. O'Hegarty determined that this policy had resulted in the creation of Ulster Unionism and the belief of the Protestant population in the province that maintaining the union with Great Britain was vital to securing their stake in Irish society. As a consequence Ulster Unionists objected to Home Rule not for religious reasons or an ethnical differentiation from nationalists, their objections, were in fact, the product of a 'false consciousness', i.e., an artificially induced tie that had been forged and perpetuated from the Act of Union by successive English governments. This contention formed the basis for O'Hegarty's article dealing with England's creation of the 'Ulster question' entitled 'England's last ditch in Ireland'. O'Hegarty declared that: 'Generation after generation England has given up something or seemed to give it up. But she has always forged new bonds.'¹³

The foundation upon which these new bonds were formed culminated in the 1920 Government of Ireland Act which stipulated the following:

the 1920 act, repealing that of 1914, established in the north full machinery for a local legislature on the Westminster model, devolved from but subordinate to the mother parliament, and applying to the defined area of the parliamentary counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, and the parliamentary boroughs Belfast and Londonderry.¹⁴

¹³ Editorial on the 'Ulster issue' in *The Irish World*, September 6, 1919.

¹⁴ David Harkness, *Northern Ireland Since 1920* (Dublin, 1983), p.4.

O'Hegarty believed that the reason for the implementation of partition was fundamentally political in origin, set as it was independent of any negotiated settlement between the English and Irish governments over the future of Ireland. For O'Hegarty, the enactment of the above legislation violated his nationalist principles as it established partition and destroyed the geographical integrity of the Irish nation:

One of the fundamental principles of intellectual nationalism in the nineteenth century had been the unity and oneness of Ireland. The Northern Irishmen, whose forefathers had been United Irishmen, almost to a man, were looked upon as being erring Irishmen, but as Irishmen. Sinn Fein had accepted that principle also, and all its early work and plans were based upon the oneness of Ireland. But now, when Sinn Fein represented the Irish majority, and swayed it more absolutely than it had been swayed since O'Connell had swayed it, it amazed those who had been working in it since the beginning by throwing overboard the fundamental principle of the union of all Irishmen, and declaring that the Ulster Irishman was a foreigner. It was no longer, clearly, a movement, but a political party. The policy of dividing Irishmen was always one of England's main reliances in holding Ireland, and right up to the end she pursued it. In all the preoccupation of the war, her statesmen and her makers of public opinion never forgot that in 1914 the Irish Parliamentary Party had accepted the principle of partition, and that in 1916 a Convention of the nationalists of Ulster had accepted it.¹⁵

O'Hegarty held English intercession in Ireland accountable for the perceived existence of two cultural and political traditions, nationalist and unionist. And that the latter, being the product of English invention was a doctrine falsely adhered to due to the fact that the English nation could claim no grounding or justification for their presence in Ireland other than the artificial imposition of its customs and laws on the historic Irish nation 'The progress of Anglicisation in the nineteenth century was really the progress of the artificial State. The history of Ireland in that century was really the history of its adoption of the Colonial Nationalist tradition.'¹⁶

¹⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (London, 1924), p.49.

¹⁶ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, November 30th, 1918.

Writing this in 1918, O'Hegarty turned to Ulster's traditional role of resisting the English invader and its determination to eventually expel the English presence in Ireland, a topic most specifically tackled in his account of England's invasion and occupation of Ireland, entitled The Indestructible Nation. O'Hegarty contrasted the assimilated peoples of previous invasions acceptance of Irish laws and customs and the federal structure of the Irish nation, with the English nation's attempt to impose its feudal system. The Irish were unsuited to this re-structuring of society and this formed part of the natural resistance of the Irish people in adopting the English cultural outlook. Later from the nineteenth century, the resistance of the Irish nation evolved into his 'Underground Nation' thesis as a holistic term for the separatist spirit he believed fuelled the nationalist cause. This formed the vanguard of a national people submerged, yet maintaining a sense of unity, thus providing the theoretical form to the ideal of an independent Irish nation.

Before the nineteenth century, Ulster represented the indestructible spirit of the Irish nation. The figure who embodied Ulster resistance was the 'defender' of Ulster, Hugh O'Neil who, in O'Hegarty's view, represented the tradition of the Ulster people as quintessentially Irish in outlook and therefore opposed to England's spurious claim to Ireland. Hence, to partition Ireland was to divide O'Neil's province from his country.¹⁷

Implicit therefore within O'Hegarty's separatist narrative, was the cultural heritage shared by the Ulster inhabitants with the rest of Ireland as defenders of Ireland's right to liberty and independence. But while O'Hegarty, in rebutting the partition idea, (first proposed in the nineteenth century but taken up with real purpose by Lloyd George in 1913), selected instances in history before the mass settling of the plantations and the infusion of English

¹⁷ See O'Hegarty's, *The Indestructible Nation* (Dublin, 1918), for his praise of O'Neil as a stalwart defender of the Irish nation against the incursions of Queen Elizabeth I during the sixteenth century.

culture in the nineteenth century, such arguments detailing the essential unity of Ireland failed to address the issues pertinent to the 'Ulster question' of his time.¹⁸ So too, in Ireland's more recent history, separatists commonly used the principles of unity behind the 1798 rebellion as a primary argument against the partitioning of Ireland. In contemplating the Ulster question in 1919, Earnan De Blaghd, himself an Ulster Protestant, wrote:

...the present almost unanimous adherence to Unionism on the part of the Protestants of Ulster does not date very far back. In 1798, when they received in battle their national baptism of blood and fire, at least half of them must have been on the side of Irish independence. Their relapse from the faith of freedom was, moreover, slow and gradual.¹⁹

Indeed, in their resolve to explain the Ulster Unionists 'relapse from the faith of freedom', separatists turned inward for explanations citing the dilution of Irish nationalism from the call for the repeal of the union to the measure of home rule as weakening the resolve of nationalists and unionists:

...the prime reason why the Protestant Irishmen did not remain true to Ireland was that Ireland as a whole began to abandon the essentials of nationality, and even the political ideals of nationality (witness the descent from Repeal to Home Rule and from Home Rule to partition).²⁰

Yet again such explanations failed to explain how during the twentieth century, unionists in their revulsion to the political implications of Home Rule employed the IRB's physical force idea as a legitimate means to defend one's nationality. This resulted in the Ulster Unionists Council's (formed in 1905) decision in January 1913, to form an armed militia,

¹⁸ O'Hegarty's identification of Hugh O'Neil with the tradition of Ulster resistance does not take account of the fact that O'Neil took care to identify his resistance to English power with the Catholic Church. This marked the beginning of the 'Catholic-separatist' myth, strengthened by Peter Lombard's treatise that portrayed O'Neil's rebellion as a war of religion. Moody has stated that it was, 'but only in part.' T.W. Moody, 'Irish History and Irish Mythology', in Ciaran Brady (Ed.), *Interpreting Irish History* (Blackrock, 1994), p.72.

¹⁹ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach* March 15, 1918.

²⁰ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach* March 15, 1918.

the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), who pledged to defend Ireland from attempts by nationalists and the English Government to enforce Home Rule upon Ulster.²¹ The resistance to Home Rule to which both northern and southern Protestants objected, now became centralised in the most densely populated Protestant province, Ulster.²²

Under Sir Edward Carson's,²³ leadership, opposition to Home Rule intensified with the signing of the Ulster Solemn Covenant which pledged to use: 'all means...necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule parliament in Ireland'.²⁴ The IRB, specifically under Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCulloch, intent on capitalising on the opportunity afforded by the arming of Ulster and their defiance of the British Government, set about creating a nationalist equivalent, which resulted in the formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913.²⁵ O'Hegarty related that the idea behind creating such a force had been discussed within the IRB Supreme Council for many years but now the 'Ulster Volunteer Force made it more difficult [for the English government] to suppress a southern force

²¹ The Orange lodge of County Tyrone had taken it upon its own initiative in 1911 to parade and drill. A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (London, 1967), p.69, has suggested that almost by accident the anti-home rule political leaders were made aware of an effective means of resisting home rule.

²² Southern Unionists who were scattered across Ireland were more susceptible to reprisals and had placed their faith in English constitutionalism. Patrick Buckland, 'Irish Unionism in the New Ireland', in D.G. Boyce (Ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland 1878-1923* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp.87-89.

²³ In the matter of believing Home Rule to be the first step in the dismemberment of the Empire, Carson was in agreement with Bonar Law who believed in 'things stronger than parliamentary majorities', and could 'imagine no length of resistance' the Unionists could go, in which the overwhelming majority of the British people would not support them. See D.G. Boyce, 'British conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.17, p.91. Also A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (London, 1967), p.81. 'Carson was not at any time the leader of the Southern Unionists. He was the leader of the Irish Unionist Party in the commons, but all its members, except for Carson and Campbell, came from northern constituencies.'

²⁴ A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (London, 1967), pp.62-66. 218,206 men signed the covenant. This ultimatum included the threat of using armed resistance against the Liberal Government for their placing of Home Rule on the statute book in 1912.

²⁵ Along with J.J. Ginger O'Connell, Hobson was second only to Eoin MacNeil in the hierarchy of the Irish Volunteers in Easter 1916. See Des Gunning, 'Bulmer Hobson, 'the most dangerous man in Ireland'', *History-Ireland*, Vol. 10, Spring, 2002.

which would be sponsored by unsuspecting people. And that was how Eoin MacNeil and Larry Kettle and other unsuspecting people started the Irish Volunteers.’²⁶

The IRB had not created the Irish Volunteers as a counterweight to any physical threat from the UVF, the Irish Volunteers were armed and prepared to assert Ireland’s right to independence rather than instigate a clash with the UVF. O’Hegarty described his experience as a member of the Irish Volunteers:

I was not able to get to the early drills at Cork which he attended, but I remember the first route march, when about 60 or 70 of us marched out from the Corn Market, while a crowd half amused, half ashamed of itself, watched us as we went, the first manifestation to Cork of the newest and sternest Ireland.²⁷

Separatists, O’Hegarty and Hobson among them, viewed the Ulster Volunteer Force, as a positive force in Ireland, especially in their militant defiance of England’s right to dictate policy in Ireland. For O’Hegarty the U.V.F. was exhibiting the right to resist the English Government in the name of liberty. The U.V.F.’s function for O’Hegarty, who elided over the reason for their arming, had brought to Ireland the vigour and manhood that lay behind the Fenian message of moral insurrection (as related in Chapter IV), on an organised and grand scale. But while the IRB resolved to implement an armed insurrection (see Chapter V), the U.V.F.’s threat to use force was treated by O’Hegarty and many of his fellow separatists as nothing more than a bluff on the part of the Ulster Unionists. The Irish Party too, most conspicuously, its leader John Redmond, viewed Ulster’s resistance as ‘a gigantic

²⁶ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp.14-15. Moreover this reaction toward the U.V.F., lay in contrast to the Liberal Government’s. Asquith, in consultation with George V, stated that he did not fear the ‘Ulster bluff’, but privately he was seriously alarmed at the potential for civil war to breakout in Ireland. A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis* (London, 1967), p.80.

²⁷ *Terence MacSwiney Papers* University College Dublin It features ‘Recollections of Terence MacSwiney’ by P.S. [O’Hegarty] signed from ‘a lifelong friend’, P4C/105.

game of bluff and blackmail'.²⁸ But this combined attitude of separatists and Irish party members ignored the strength of the Ulster Unionists' conviction to resist incorporation into an Irish parliament, even one that Griffith referred to contemptuously as 'if this is freedom, then the lexicographers have deceived us.'²⁹

Consequently, the Ulster Unionists planned for the setting up of:

...a provisional government, to take over the province of Ulster the moment a home rule act came into operation; they made plans for financial and economic administration; they raised, trained and equipped 100,000 men to guard the border and prevent internal disturbance.³⁰

However from the beginning of the Great War the remit of the U.V.F. and the Irish Volunteers were dramatically altered marking a major turning point in Anglo-Irish relations and the relationship between the Ulster Unionists and the nationalist majority. O'Hegarty concluded in The Victory of Sinn Fein', that before the Great War the:

Ulster majority had...no more love for England or the English than the Irish majority....Yet the spirit into which the Unionists supported Britain confirmed they '...had taken a side in which it believed, and it fought on that side; and when the casualty lists came and it suffered, it began to think itself different from the Irish majority.'³¹

O'Hegarty continued:

Figures [had]...been quoted to show that the other three provinces contributed as large a proportion of their population to the British armies as did Ulster...but these figures are beside the point. In the one case the contribution was made publicly and with general acclamation and approval; and in the other it was made secretly almost, and in the face of general apathy where there was not active disapproval. That it was the spirit, the viewpoint, which made the difference, and not the respective contributions of man-power.³²

²⁸ J.C. Beckett, *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (London, 1972), p.166.

²⁹ V.E Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced Nationalist Press* (New York, 1985), p.81.

³⁰ J.C. Beckett, *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (London, 1972), p.166.

³¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.50.

³² P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.50.

Regarding the political issues surrounding Ulster resistance O'Hegarty stressed that the Irish Party had made no concerted effort during this period, or previously since Redmond's leadership to convince or conciliate the mainly Protestant majority in the north east that they (the Irish Party), were representing the interests of all traditions in Ireland. The Irish Party in their focusing on discrediting their fellow Protestant Irishmen in the eyes of the British representatives and the British public had: '...made no serious effort to carry on any propaganda in the area which is the stronghold of unionism; nor did they even trouble to assert Ireland's claim to it, as they might have done, by periodic electoral contests'.³³

This too for O'Hegarty functioned as playing 'England's game' of fostering division in Ireland as through their actions the Irish Party were indirectly responsible for the furthering of bitterness and sectarian grievances (see below for O'Hegarty's opinion of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), under Joseph Devlin), in the province. O'Hegarty specified how just prior to the Great War the folly of the Irish Party's policy was laid bare: 'When Redmond in 1913 sat down at the conference and accepted partition...the conference broke down...not on partition, but on the area to be excluded' – he made partition inevitable.'³⁴

From as early as 1913 the Irish Party had accepted that Ulster was nationally beyond the pale and this proved for O'Hegarty that the debating of Irish independence at Westminster by the Irish Party strengthened England's determination to keep its grip on Ireland. Yet Redmond had no desire to see partition implemented in Ireland anymore than O'Hegarty and as Mansergh has stated the issue even at this early stage was not whether Ireland should

³³ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, March, 1915.

³⁴ *Ernest Blythe Papers* University College Dublin, P24/1341.

be partitioned but how it was to be implemented.³⁵ In considering the Irish Party's position later in 1914 and 1916 Mansergh emphasised that:

The negotiations were about the same problems and the same solutions – about the exclusion of six counties on a short term or a long term basis. Common to both was what had in effect been determined by 1914 – though Redmond to his cost had failed to understand this – namely that Ireland should be divided.³⁶

On balance, therefore, it was not really just of O'Hegarty to accuse Redmond of ineptitude and of folding over the question of partition, as his hands were tied and Ulster resistance seemed an insurmountable obstacle to try and overcome using nationalist arguments for self-government. Redmond therefore had opted for the best possible outcome given the narrow room for manoeuvre, and it has been well documented that Lloyd George, in order to get agreement for partition as a solution to the Irish question, said one thing to Redmond, the temporary exclusion of Ulster, and another to Carson, that the exclusion of Ulster was to be on a permanent basis. Yet to paraphrase Joseph Devlin (see below) who was based in the heartland of the six county areas earmarked for exclusion:

...the difference...between temporary and permanent exclusion was, politically as distinct from psychologically, minimal or even non-existent, since what the Ulster Unionists had obtained and enjoyed they would assuredly not have abandoned after a period of years.³⁷

Building on his framework that the Irish Party were partly responsible for partition, O'Hegarty believed Redmond's professions of loyalty to the British Empire and his pledge that Ireland would wholeheartedly support the 'British war', (as outlined in his speech at

³⁵ Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Government of Ireland Act', in Diana Mansergh, (Ed.), *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork, 1977), p.72.

³⁶ Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Government of Ireland Act', in Diana Mansergh, (Ed.), *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork, 1977), p.13.

³⁷ Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Government of Ireland Act' in Diana Mansergh, (Ed.), *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork, 1977), p.72.

Woodenbridge), suited his 'Hiberno-British' outlook, and bolstered England's assertion, that contrary to the separatist perspective, Ireland was loyally bound to the Empire.

In contrast O'Hegarty argued that this was England's war and the Irish people were under no obligation to ally themselves with Imperial concerns and furthermore, to do so countered the separatist maxim that Ireland must use England's difficulties to further the cause of Ireland's independence. Redmond, for his part, reasoned that if Ireland contributed to the war effort on the same basis that the Ulster Unionists embraced the call to arms, then Home Rule (now delayed until the end of the war) would be granted for this display of loyalty toward the Empire. But this display of loyalty too only confirmed for O'Hegarty that the Irish Party had accepted England's assertion that their presence in Ireland was justified. Furthermore, the English Government could now view themselves as intermediaries defending a minority of the Irish population from the potential excesses of Irish nationalist government.

In turning his attention toward the six counties of Northern Ireland that had been set aside by the English Government for special consideration, O'Hegarty viewed the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the powerful Catholic interest group led by Joseph Devlin that had grown out of the Irish Party, as reinforcing sectarian conflict in the province. In Irish Freedom, March, 1914, for instance, O'Hegarty described the AOH as 'pitiful degenerates', who exalted 'factionism' and 'sectarianism'. He criticised:

...the men who revived, strengthened and manipulated the AOH's as those at whose door lies the responsibility for Carsonism...and the only force of any material weight behind Carsonism is religious bigotry. The enemy of Ireland is not the Irish Unionist nor the Irish Protestant but the Englishman, who manipulates and uses both Protestant and Unionist and also Nationalist faction-fighter.³⁸

³⁸ The 'English providence' he referred to was the return to power of the Liberal Party, a party whose commitment to Home Rule from Gladstone's conversion in 1886 was considered by O'Hegarty as a deception.

O'Hegarty believed that Hibernianism should be confined '...to its proper function of a benefit society and [to] keep it out of national politics...Hibernianism has postponed Irish unity for at least another generation....' But given the political representation and security the AOH provided for Ulster Catholics O'Hegarty was unable to explain how this would be done. He was willing to acknowledge some of the fears of unionists of an Irish government but put this down to the presence of the AOH in Ulster rather than any other nationalist source such as the rhetoric of Sinn Fein. In 1919, O'Hegarty wrote:

That is not to say that there are not honest bigots, honest Unionists in Ulster. There actually are people who believe that an independent Ireland would expropriate them as ruthlessly as the native Irish were expropriated at the plantation: there actually are people who believe that the Catholics would cut their throats were it not for England: but these people are not found amongst the leaders, but amongst the rank and file. The leaders know better, and were it not for Nationalist unwisdom the rank and file would have known better long ere this. The present strength of the anti-Irish Ulster feeling would not have been possible were it not for the revival of the AOH.³⁹

O'Hegarty was aware that the AOH were responding to the feeling of isolation in the North east among Catholics and nationalists (the two overlapped almost completely as did Unionist with Protestant) in which they were the minority population amongst the Protestant majority during a period of high political tension. But O'Hegarty did not highlight the fact that the leader of the AOH, Joseph Devlin, was acting pragmatically in the heated and violent atmosphere of Ulster. He was seeking the best position for Catholics in, what appeared before the end of the Great War, a united Ireland complete with a Home Rule parliament. Instead, O'Hegarty concentrated on the AOH as a sectarian group whose

The two prior readings of the bill under Gladstone in 1886 and 1893 passed through the Houses of Parliament only to be thrown out by the House of Lords. O'Hegarty believed that the Liberals made so much of the Home Rule issue that they only served to inflame Ulster: 'If the Liberal Government had not heated up the debate in 1911 there would have been no trouble.'

³⁹ Article entitled 'Notes on Current Events' *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, February 15, 1919.

presence across Ireland, not just in the north east had impaired his notion of generating a civic nationalism and spirit in Ireland. It would appear, given O'Hegarty's strong denunciations of the AOH, that even if they had agreed to work with Sinn Fein and bolster their standing among Ulster's inhabitants that O'Hegarty would have been implacably opposed to such a union not least as this would have marked the further sacrifice of the Sinn Fein ideal to the politicisation of the separatist programme. He wrote that:

Two evils do not balance each other: on the contrary, they embitter and worsen each other. The antidote to Ulster Unionist bigotry is obviously nationalist tolerance, national broadmindedness. We are preaching a thing which is bigger than any sectional thing; and if it is to remain bigger it must be broad and tolerant. The ideal of a nation postulates agreement rather than coercion, postulates one national ideal to which all sections in the nation may give adherence without forfeiting any sectional ideal which they may hold.⁴⁰

O'Hegarty continued in this vein viewing the AOH as a discriminatory organisation that favoured Catholics over Protestants, thereby implanting a policy that weakened the pluralistic message he felt was implicit in the civic spirit of Irish nationalism. Consequently, the AOH were unrepresentative of the majority of nationalist Ireland's fraternal attitude toward their fellow Ulster-men.

During its first decade O'Hegarty saw Sinn Fein as the only antidote to altering the sectarian damage that the AOH had implanted in Ulster. But he recognised that the traits of intolerance and bigotry that he associated with the AOH became increasingly identified with Sinn Fein themselves after 1916, most specifically in the eyes of Ulster Unionists. In Chapter V it was illustrated that O'Hegarty held a mixed opinion of the 1916 Easter Rising and its 'double-edged sword' was confirmed for O'Hegarty in its impact on Ulster Unionists

⁴⁰ *An Saoghal Gaedhealach*, February 15, 1919.

who regarded it as an 'unjustifiable treachery.'⁴¹ For unionists it cemented the belief that Sinn Fein, who became synonymous with the planning of the Rising, and after the 1918 General Election represented the nationalist majority was intent on gaining Irish independence without compromise. The Rising confirmed for unionists that nationalists were willing to enforce their claim to independence through open rebellion at a time of great difficulty for the Empire, thus rendering obsolete the earlier more moderate claims of Sinn Fein. Given that the IRB and the Irish Volunteers had agreed that no action should be taken that would foster disunity within Ireland the events of 1916 represented a major setback in preventing the political secession of Ulster from the rest of Ireland.⁴²

The proclamation of 1916 which enshrined the republican ideal in the nationalist conscience stipulated that independence no longer meant Home Rule but total independence now represented through Sinn Fein and its more radical elements. Yet despite the extreme polarisation of unionists and separatists over the future of Ireland, O'Hegarty remained hopefully optimistic during this period that the original Sinn Fein message would eventually win through:

After that the only hope lay in Sinn Fein and the establishment of a condition of settlement of an all Ireland parliament containing local powers with the federal parliament behind it. Anything, even nominal, providing it had a parliament and representative structure, would have sufficed.⁴³

For the reason stated above, O'Hegarty put his faith in Griffith's dual monarchy policy which made special provision for unionists and their determination to retain their connection with the British Crown. Griffith, as leader of Sinn Fein pre-1917 was mindful of

⁴¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.50.

⁴² Reverend Francis Shaw, 'The Canon of Irish History - A Challenge', in *Studies*, vol.61, (1972), p.150.

⁴³ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, 20 September, 1949, University College Dublin, P24/1341.

the Ulster Unionists' desire to remain a part of Great Britain and their fears of persecution in a mainly Catholic state and of how they were determined not to 'take a blind leap into the dark'.⁴⁴

Griffith's attempts at countering Ulster Unionist fears consisted of an alternating parliament meeting every two years which would preside in both Belfast and Dublin. Griffith was also willing to offer Ulster Unionists an exaggerated proportion of seats in an all-Ireland parliament if they accepted Ireland's right to an independent legislative.

Yet these attempts at dispelling unionist fears over Irish self-government proved to be fruitless as the issue of minority status dominated every other aspect. The Ulster Volunteers had drilled and armed in 1913 to defend the cultural and economic ties with England they felt would be severely threatened by their absorption into a Dublin-based government. These concession measures that O'Hegarty, like Griffith, believed held a realistic chance of success merely emphasised that they misread the reasons that lay behind unionists fears. For O'Hegarty, in the current situation existing between unionists and nationalists, it was necessary to convince unionists that they would not be severing all ties to the country they believed better represented their cultural ethos. O'Hegarty was convinced that this would have proved sufficient to convince Unionists to accept an Irish parliament. Arthur Griffith too, was equally convinced, but perhaps this was where the problem lay, in the strength of their convictions they failed to see the equal convictions of Ulster Unionists to resist the nationalist majority's will and therefore any of the conciliatory measures offered by Sinn Féin.

⁴⁴ Patrick Buckland, 'Irish Unionism in the new Ireland', in Boyce (Ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland 1878-1923*, (1988), p.72.

O'Hegarty's argument in favour of deploying the dual monarchy policy over the slogans of the 'Republic' were based on the unionists' theme of loyalty to the British Crown and in preserving the union. (Whereby unionists believed it was necessary to oppose the present government, but in doing so they were not rescinding on their Lockean contract to the British Constitution and the British Monarchy.)

Despite Griffith's attempts to reach out to unionists', he could not deny that a fundamental trait on which the Sinn Fein programme was based denied the legitimacy of the Act of Union itself. The natural outcome of the Sinn Fein policy therefore was to relinquish all ties with England and any form of independence, no matter how minor, would result in the eventual severing of these ties. Patrick Maume has illustrated: 'The Act of Union which abolished that parliament was unconstitutional and any Irish politicians who had attended Westminster afterwards had been wrong tactically and legally.'⁴⁵

This characterisation of the Act of Union as unlawful irredentism on the part of England formed the essence of O'Hegarty's justification for supporting the Sinn Fein constitutional movement. He believed the dual monarchy policy represented a strategy through which the unionists could be placated but that de Valera, president of Sinn Fein from 1917 to his resignation in 1921:

...preferred rather to attempt to change the British constitution than to take up that Irish constitution which Grattan and Flood had framed, and the first volunteers had secured; which already possessed historical and international status, and which needed no alteration, for the things which brought the Irish parliament of 1782-1800 to the ground, were things which were not in the constitution at all...and if we were to retain some connexion with England – and everybody agreed that we must since we could not beat her militarily – here was the connexion which would have been

⁴⁵ Patrick Maume, 'The Ancient Constitution: Arthur Griffith and his intellectual legacy to Sinn Fein', in *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 10, (1995), p.45.

least irksome and most natural. There would have been no partition, and the oath would have been an oath to the King of Ireland.⁴⁶

In the previous chapter O'Hegarty criticised de Valera for his deception over the terms on which any form of negotiation with the British Government and, the then, Prime Minister, Lloyd George, could begin. Furthermore, that de Valera had been fully aware that the establishment of the 'republic', on which he based his later objections to the Treaty was definitely not a realistic submission for discussion and that any settlement regarding the constitutional position of Ireland must be formulated to incorporate Ireland within the British Empire. As O'Hegarty in A History of Ireland under the Union, made clear, the basis on which the Treaty negotiations were set also contributed to the Dail's failure to address the gravity of the 'Ulster question' and the institutionalisation of the partition of Ireland. Moreover, de Valera's actions, as President of Dail Eireann, had resulted in Sinn Fein's tacit acceptance of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, the implementation of which had effectively set up the exclusion of six counties of Ulster under its own separate government. Indeed O'Hegarty was bemused by the actions of the Sinn Fein leaders and believed it was their limited perception and capabilities of dealing with Ulster's intransigence that exacerbated tensions and it was through this lack of available leadership in nationalist Ireland that the English Government were able to capitalise most effectively in fomenting divisions between the Protestant majority in the north east and the rest of the island. O'Hegarty believed that as a representative of 'old school' Sinn Fein, he was pushed aside over the possible separate treatment of the Ulster, which, he believed, had been accepted as an inevitable outcome by the new leaders of Sinn Fein. It was while looking back on this

⁴⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.81.

period, in a candid letter to Ernest Blythe written in 1949, that O'Hegarty contemplated this possibility while re-addressing his role at the time as one who was manipulated into believing that much of the Sinn Fein leadership was reacting to events without any set agenda: 'Personally, I felt sure that, behind the bombast and slogans of 1918-22, there was in the leaders some realisation of the new situation, and I was sure they had it all planned out...I was used but at the same time pushed to one side...' ⁴⁷

This view lies in contrast to the earlier regard O'Hegarty was held in prior to the Easter Rising and marks the fundamental change in the fortunes of Sinn Fein over the prospect of holding power in a new state, even one shorn of the north east and therefore its integral territory. Although O'Hegarty was kept abreast of events, if not the details, he was not consulted over the possibilities for tackling the Ulster issue. O'Hegarty related how on the eve of the Treaty negotiations :

On the afternoon of the day in which the plenipotentiaries sailed, about 4.30pm, Gavin Duffy came to see me in the bookshop in a state of great indignation. He told me that they were crossing that evening that they had had no meeting amongst themselves, no meeting with de Valera, no meeting with the cabinet, that he did not know "how far we are going." I said to him that the only way to avoid partition which should be avoided at any cost was to convince Ulster that they could still be loyal to the King. ⁴⁸

For O'Hegarty Sinn Fein had lost its way, not in the sense that the Irish Party and Home Rule had imbued 'West Britonism', but in politicising nationalism, the most prominent example of which was the crime of the Ulster boycott. ⁴⁹

In order to evaluate O'Hegarty's view of this major event in Sinn Fein's policy toward the idea of Ulster resistance after it had come to power in the 1918 General Election, the

⁴⁷ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, 20 September, 1949, University College Dublin, P24/1341.

⁴⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.16.

⁴⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.49-53.

reasons behind the boycott's implementation must be explained. The use of the boycott as a weapon of Irish nationalism had been used since at least the nineteenth century as a means to pressurise the Irish ascendancy landlords in to lowering their rents. This was achieved by tenants and other members of the local community refusing to buy any of the produce produced by the landlord and therefore inducing financial pressures on the household as well as the isolation from the rest of the community that ensued. In the prevailing relationships between north and south during 1920, the introduction of the boycott was in order to replicate this form of intimidation and isolation. The Ulster Boycott was recommended by the Sinn Fein leaders and put to the members of the Dail as a policy which would persuade the unionists' leaders to re-employ the nationalist workers who had been expelled from their jobs and also to ensure the unionists were mindful of the economic pressure that could be brought to bear on them if they resisted a single Irish government. While the boycott seemed to have very powerful reasons for being implemented as a counter-move to unionist intransigence, there were wider implications that O'Hegarty had the foresight to recognise as producing a deepening ill-feeling between the unionist and nationalist populations of Ireland.

O'Hegarty's view of the implementation of the act of boycotting was contained amongst his papers, the following description of the act of 'boycotting' is W. E. Gladstone's, and is contained in the O'Hegarty collection at the Kenneth Spencer Library at Kansas University:

What is meant by boycotting? In the first place, it is combined intimidation. In the second place, it is combined intimidation made use of for the purpose of destroying the private liberties of choice by fear of ruin and starvation. In the third place, that being what 'boycotting' is in itself, we must look to this: that the creed of boycotting like every other creed, requires a sanction, and that the sanction of boycotting' – that

which stands in the rear of boycotting and by which alone boycotting can in the long run be made thoroughly effective – is the murder which is not to be denounced.⁵⁰

An article featured in the journal he edited during 1918-1919, An Saoghal Gaedhealach, warned that ‘Republican leaders should take care not to commit themselves to anything reactionary in the way of economic policy nor to lend countenance to any sort of politico-sectarian society such as the Hibernians.’

For O’Hegarty, the boycott violated all of these warnings and once again O’Hegarty saw de Valera as the focal point for his disillusionment with Sinn Fein. O’Hegarty had believed that the Treaty negotiations would help avoid partition but ‘he [de Valera] began to flounder with the vicious and ignorant Belfast boycott which I opposed...at the time.’⁵¹

O’Hegarty’s arguments against the boycott were important in that they highlighted the short-sighted and reactionary actions of many of his peers (including Griffith who to O’Hegarty’s amazement supported it),⁵² and their neglect of the boycott’s impact on the Ulster Unionist mentality. While the immediate aim of the boycott was to get northern Catholics back into work and try to show that the north was economically unviable, it was nothing short of a tragedy of Sinn Fein policy for O’Hegarty.

He described the boycott as making Protestant Home Rulers in the north ashamed of their principles, and turned apathetic Protestant unionists into bitter partisans. Furthermore, amongst Sinn Fein members blind to anything but the pursuit of power and the strong-arm tactics they believed were justified in the tense climate, O’Hegarty remarked: ‘When the Belfast boycott was introduced, for instance, attempts to discuss it were met with horror at a

⁵⁰ P.S. O’Hegarty Collection, Spencer Library, Kansas University, P45.

⁵¹ *Ernest Blythe Papers* University College Dublin P24 1341. O’Hegarty warranted that the boycott had constituted a chapter in the Victory of Sinn Fein, which depicted Sinn Fein more as a political, rather than a national movement.

⁵² P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.51.

Sinn Fein branch, and with the information that this was “an order from the Dail Eireann” and therefore not for discussion or question.’⁵³

Exhorting his opposition to the boycott O’Hegarty contemplated its overall effect:

It was the things which it produced that did the damage. It raised up in the south what never had been there, a hatred of the north, and a feeling that the north was as much an enemy of Ireland as was England.⁵⁴

A recent scholar has confirmed O’Hegarty’s view of the impact of the boycott in dividing Ireland’s two main religious communities:

Sometimes the Boycott led to violence. That the Boycott did damage to the northern economy there is no doubt....The Boycott also gave Michael Collins a powerful lever in his later negotiations with Sir James Craig, but as an instrument for securing Irish unity the Boycott was fatally flawed. Industries from which workers were expelled were only marginally affected and the boycott could not exert sufficient pressure to have workers reinstated.⁵⁵

Matters of Sinn Fein policy had previously been debated throughout the Sinn Fein organisation but now the inclusive and free-thinking environment that had originally drawn O’Hegarty to Sinn Fein had been crushed by the authoritarian Dail. In opposing the boycott O’Hegarty emphasised the negative aspects it engendered not just in the short term with the violence that ensued in the north east but in the long term also in creating another foundation for partition in dividing the north from the south. While for O’Hegarty the actions of the Irish Party, the sectarian basis of the AOH, the Easter Rising and the

⁵³ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.56.

⁵⁴ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.52.

⁵⁵ Jim McDermott, *Northern Divisions: The old IRA and the Belfast Pogroms 1920-22* (Beyond Pale Productions, 2001), Introduction.

‘swashbuckling stupidity of the new leaders of the nationalist majority’,⁵⁶ exacerbated the widening gulf between unionists and nationalists.

A major source for unravelling O’Hegarty’s thoughts on the existing conflict between unionists and nationalists is contained in the Ernest Blythe papers located at the Special Archives Department at UCD and is contained in a series of correspondences between the two former Sinn Feiners. Here, many years later, reflecting on this period in a letter to Ernest Blythe, O’Hegarty returned to the main causes of division in Ireland as artificially induced and established from the Act of Union as a focal point of England’s strategy for holding Ireland’s ‘Underground Nation’, ‘in bondage’. That after the idea of Home Rule was put forward by Gladstone in 1886 as a viable method for dealing with Ireland his political opponents of this solution focused on Ulster as the best chance for maintaining England’s hold on Ireland and for undermining the Liberal government. O’Hegarty surmised that:

England made partition...but [that it was] absurd to say that England must undo it...‘Chamberlain proposed “special treatment for Ulster” in 1886, as a personal move against Gladstone...’ and that it was, ‘Randolph Churchill’ who created the phrase ‘Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right...’⁵⁷

O’Hegarty continued that it was nothing but Chamberlain’s personal ambition that prompted the Ulster question and that the proposition had been rejected by Colonel Saunderson MP, leader of the Orangemen during this period. Furthermore in 1892 O’Hegarty related how the position of Ulster as a focus of special treatment was proposed by the:

⁵⁶ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.51.

⁵⁷ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, September 1949, University College Dublin P24/1341. This comment was probably prompted by the ill-fated Border campaigns of 1946-1952.

Dublin MP Cavan, who accepted it, but as a move in the conservative game against the liberals. When it would seem that the Home Rule Bill of 1912 was inevitably to go on the statute book, the conservatives went for partition, and the Ulster unionists accepted it, in order to save their faces. Partition has no real...justification, but what no political leader here has been willing to realize is that, once established it began to be something. It has an artificial foundation but it is a foundation.⁵⁸

O'Hegarty suggested that those who claimed unionism as their guiding principle were serving the interests of England and that partition was an English construct that unionists thought a preposterous notion, only finally accepting it as a last resort.

In A History of Ireland under the Union, O'Hegarty justified his views on the basis that unionists were hopeful of a compromise between themselves and nationalists following the truce in the Anglo-Irish War and negotiations began on the future of Ireland. O'Hegarty conceded the unionists reservations regarding an Irish Parliament but that overall they were mindful of their foremost cultural identity and Irish heritage over the prospect of partition:

To the bulk of the unionists it was also a complete surprise, but they for the most part accepted its portent with resignation, with the reflection that things could not be worse than they had been under the British these last years, and that after all the Sinn Feiners were their own countrymen. The general feeling was one of immense relief, immense gratitude, and immense hope.⁵⁹

In response, Ernest Blythe attributed very different reasons for the causes of partition. He disagreed with O'Hegarty that England had created within unionists a 'false consciousness' and that the will behind partition was the sole result of English politicking. (Although he did agree that the political machinations of Westminster and the interests of party politics held an indirect responsibility.) Blythe traced the emergence of the mass-based nationalist movements in the nineteenth century as buttressing a sense of two separate traditions in

⁵⁸ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, September 1949, University College Dublin, P24/1341.

⁵⁹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.755.

Ireland as, consisting as they did, of an overwhelming Catholic membership. This equation of nationalism with Catholicism became the catalyst for the idea of some form of special consideration being provided for Ulster.⁶⁰ Blythe's interpretation referred specifically to the movements directed by O'Connell and Parnell, who made no secret of their desire to see the balance of power between unionists and nationalists reversed. That in real terms, it was the fear of the minority i.e. the Protestants, of rescinding their privileged status to the Catholic majority that really created the conditions whereby partition as a viable solution to the positions adopted by nationalists and unionists was preferred by Ulster Unionists rather than the alternative of absorption into an Irish government. O'Connell and Parnell had neglected to address Protestant's concerns, or gain high level support from influential Protestants who were sympathetic to the nationalist cause. This engendered a climate of suspicion and distrust among the Protestants of Ireland. Mass-based nationalism was therefore fatally flawed as it failed to create a unified policy for Irish independence acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics. Blythe contended that this neglect weakened the nationalist arguments for independence as a bond which could stretch across all traditions on the island. Blythe stated that '...its neglect of the binding cement of nationalism was absolutely bound to result in maintaining and increasing politico-religious segregation'.⁶¹ In response to O'Hegarty's views, most specifically that 'England made partition' Blythe countered:

As long as our people swallow the propaganda catch-cry that "Britain made partition" so long will it be difficult to get them to accept any policy in regard to it other than the idiotic one at present being pursued...I should not expect any of our West British or pre-Gaelic League history writers to recognize this fact but I hoped that you, as a historian who was in and of Sinn Fein throughout, might both see and say it.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, 17 October, 1949, University College Dublin, P24/132.

⁶¹ *Ernest Blythe Papers*, 17 October, 1949, University College Dublin, P24/132.

⁶² *Ernest Blythe Papers*, 17 October, 1949, University College Dublin, P24/132.

Blythe contended that O'Hegarty's explanations for the partitioning of Ireland were insufficient in explaining Ulster's deep rooted intransigence to home rule and that ultimately, there was very little that Sinn Fein could have done to prevent partition. This countered O'Hegarty's view that the demise of the Sinn Fein movement post 1916 contributed substantially to the eventual partitioning of Ireland. O'Hegarty had been convinced that the sense of Irishness that existed prior to the Act of Union and was being rebuilt in the early twentieth century through the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein could have bridged the divide between unionist and nationalist.

Through these correspondences there was an obvious sense of shared history between O'Hegarty and Blythe which resulted in such a candid exchange of views. O'Hegarty would not have appreciated Blythe's reply that chastised him for not acknowledging that he was fully aware that the English Government were not the main force behind partition. O'Hegarty and Blythe were aiming for the same end, a united Ireland with a shared unitary culture existing between Protestant and Catholic, nationalist and unionist. Yet it was as if Blythe was stating that the two were no longer engaged in separatist propaganda and that they should drop the rhetoric accordingly. But more importantly, Blythe was admitting that separatism for all its commendable idealism had many flaws and chief among them was O'Hegarty's Manichean presumption that Ulster Unionists would regain their true Irishness over their 'falsely' inculcated sense of 'Britishness', and that partition would be dismissed or would be eventually seen as the unnatural break-up of Ireland by England.

In relating his views to Blythe, that England had created the partitionist mentality in Ireland, O'Hegarty avoided the deeper issues that characterised the conflict between unionists and nationalists. He could not countenance that there was any truth to Lloyd George's statement

of March 7, 1917, that the fundamental difference between the north east and the south's perspectives on culture and nationality, were that the former were: 'as alien in blood, in religious faith, in traditions, in outlook – as alien from the rest of Ireland in this respect as the inhabitants of Fife or Aberdeen'.⁶³

Yet Lloyd George's assertion laid bare the difficulty of England's abandoning the unionists to such a fate given their sacrifices for the Empire and their sense of Britishness during the Great War. Given the Ulster Unionists' commitment to protect the 'Empire' and their pledge to remain within its protective boundaries O'Hegarty's arguments against partition failed to see how the issue of identity ran far deeper into the unionist conscience than he was prepared to admit. In this respect partition was met with reluctance by unionists but only as their first preference that of Ireland remaining a part of the United Kingdom became an unfeasible demand. Therefore it was not merely a question of England seizing her opportunity to form new bonds as O'Hegarty argued. This was apparent in how English Conservatives and Ulster Unionists on matters concerning Ulster and the wider implications of Empire were sometimes in disagreement. For Conservative Party leaders such as Bonar Law, Ulster had its uses as a bargaining tool. Bonar Law based his Ulster policy on how similar crises could be resolved if they were to arise in other colonies. In his view the Ulster question could not to be given primacy over matters that could adversely affect the British Empire but this was not to say that his sympathies were not with the Ulster Unionist position and the belief that the Empire was effectively abandoning its people.

So too, Ulster Unionists were not simply at the mercy of English party politics and the politicians who claimed to have their best interests in mind. Indeed Ulster Unionists reacted

⁶³ House of Commons Debate, 22 December 1919, Vol. XCI, Col. 459, quoted in Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Government of Ireland Act' in Diana Mansergh, (Ed.), *Nationalism and Independence* (Cork, 1997), p.80.

with hostility towards various proposals put forward by their Conservative allies as a measured response to the Home Rule crisis. The extra-parliamentary methods Ulster Unionists employed in resistance to the 1912 Home Rule Bill, reflected their comprehension of how fickle England could be and that parliaments did not always come to the right decisions, or at least ones that were responsive to their demands. Culturally and politically Ulster Unionists could not accept Sinn Fein's nationalistic version of Ireland's historical right to independence, most notably as it reduced their cultural and economic contributions in Ireland to a by-product of English imperialism. While this was never the case for O'Hegarty who praised the Anglo-Irish contribution to literature and Ulster's past glories, he was still attempting to co-opt unionists into a parliament they did not believe in. For many nationalists, the historical legacy of unionism (dating from O'Connell's increasing identification of nationalism with Catholicism), was regarded as an imposition upon the indigenous Irish population who were forced to endure the systematic repression of their culture. O'Hegarty blamed the Irish Party leader John Redmond for throwing his hand in over Ulster and accepting partition as a *fait accompli*, citing this action as severely hindering Sinn Fein's chances of reversing the slide into the 'partitionist mentality'. But in reality all Sinn Fein had to offer was a dogmatic insistence on a 'republic' and Griffith's proposals which were not very much different from the failed assurances Redmond gave to northern unionists.

Ideally for O'Hegarty, an all-Ireland parliament would have displayed a mature respect toward its Protestant minority. He relied on the belief that an Irish government's first loyalty was to its citizens as a whole under the civic constitutional virtues he passionately believed in. O'Hegarty could have stated how in Southern Ireland, post-independence, the safeguards that southern unionists requested were put into place, but ultimately, even the relatively

small southern unionist population was subject to high levels of emigration and a feeling of isolation among the nationalist majority.

In the twentieth century the political machine of Sinn Fein and its cultural affiliates the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association became for unionists the equivalents of the Catholic majority's right to govern Ireland. Indeed, unionists in the north in justifying their right to resist looked southwards and proclaimed how they had narrowly avoided absorption into a Catholic confessional state. They could back up this assertion with the special status granted to the Catholic faith by de Valera in his re-writing of the Irish Constitution in 1937. O'Hegarty like de Valera had to accept that 'Ireland was Ireland without the North', and his resignation towards the establishment of partition in Ireland, was set as early as 1924, a year before the results of the boundary commission were made known. This was in direct contrast to his hopeful tone during a meeting he attended with Harry Boland (an anti-Treatyite) and Michael Collins where the latter was convinced that the boundary commission would transfer a major part of Northern Ireland to the South thus ending partition.⁶⁴

Despite the mistakes and false assumptions nationalists made in relation to the Ulster Unionist's determination to resist home rule or any other settlement which would transfer legislative powers to a Dublin government, O'Hegarty was unrelenting in his belief that it was the unwelcome invader i.e. England who had imposed its foreign culture on a section of the Irish people, in order to ensure the political binds between the two countries created in the Act of Union would not be totally severed. This was a false bind for O'Hegarty whose separatist concept of Irish nationality could never accept the 'two-nation' theory or entertain the deep sense of political and cultural difference that an overwhelming majority of Ulster

⁶⁴ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.754.

unionists felt from their nationalist counterparts. Partition was for O'Hegarty, as Smith contends in his Theories of Nationalism 'a negation' of the 'nation'.⁶⁵ It decimated a fundamental principle of Irish unity which Sinn Fein stood for in O'Hegarty's view but as with the bitterness and disillusionment that surrounded the Irish Civil War, it was difficult to accept but, a fact that he had to live with.

It was conceivable to conclude that the English Government was the power bloc by which Ulster Unionists managed to stay out of an Irish government, but they were not the driving force behind Ulster's determined resistance. As J.C. Beckett has contended: 'As far as the Protestants of Ulster were concerned, the issue was less a campaign for their rights as British citizens, than a 'revival of the seventeenth century struggle between Roman Catholics and Protestants for ascendancy in Ireland',⁶⁶ and, as Boyce has commented, that, therefore, the Ulstermen were determined to see this struggle through to a successful conclusion whether or not it suited the interests of the rest of the United Kingdom.⁶⁷ The resolve of Ulster Unionists was forged on an internalised resilience organised into 'a coherent and tightly knit group'.⁶⁸ Essentially Ulster Unionism possessed a unitary policy that overcame potential internal divisions such as class and were able to discard their military organisation, the U.V.F., and channel this discipline into the constitutional stronghold of Ulster. Sinn Fein, despite its plethora of inclusive rhetoric directed toward placating the fears of Ulster Unionists, asserting the unity of Protestants and Catholics under the common banner of Irish citizens, was, nonetheless, striking at the heart of a proud and

⁶⁵ A. D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971), p.223, quoted in, John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question* (Oxford, 1944), p.14.

⁶⁶ J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* (London, 1981), p.399.

⁶⁷ D.G. Boyce, 'British conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, March, 1970, p.97.

⁶⁸ D.G. Boyce, 'British conservative opinion, the Ulster question, and the partition of Ireland, 1912-21', *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 17, March, 1970, p.100.

fiercely separate tradition which had organised itself in order to oppose nationalist demands for self-government. Sinn Fein proved incapable of formulating a policy to convert or conciliate the Protestant majority in the north east.⁶⁹

O'Hegarty's attempts at conciliating unionist fears did not waver very much from standard Sinn Fein policy. Specifically, he looked to the forbears of civic nationalism, the seminal leaders of nationalism, John Mitchel and Thomas Davis for inspiration, who also stressed the essential unity of common citizenship shared between Protestant and Catholic, and to his contemporaries such as Robert Lynd and Bulmer Hobson, as representatives of the Protestant tradition with a positive nationalist outlook and who saw no contradiction existing between their religious and cultural background and the legitimate pursuit of gaining Irish national independence. Ultimately though, Lynd and Hobson, proved unreflective of the vast majority of Ulstermen and women in sentiment and cultural affiliation. At its most fundamental level, Ulster Unionism could not abide by the first principle of Sinn Fein, which amounted to a rejection of Anglicisation and its historical influence in Ireland. As a Sinn Feiner, O'Hegarty was not able to breach this fundamental problem existing between the Ulster Unionist concept of identity and Sinn Fein's separatist ideology. Despite O'Hegarty's liberal and pluralistic concept of the Irish nation, the paradox between the Ulster Unionism and Sinn Fein was written into their very concepts of nationhood. O'Hegarty's attempts at reconciliation were honourable but the transition from forming a part of a United Kingdom majority to becoming an Irish minority proved too much of a gamble for Ulster Unionists to take.

In 1911, O'Hegarty issued in the pages of Irish Freedom: 'a grave warning...to those who are at present solemnly assuring England that Ireland's most cherished dream is to 'take her

⁶⁹ Jonathon Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast, 1992), p.424.

proper place in that Empire which her sons have done so much to build.’⁷⁰ This warning was aimed specifically at the Irish Party on the eve of the third reading of the 1912 Home Rule Bill and the decidedly limited (for separatists) measures for granting Irish self-government contained therein. But the implications of the extract held far more reaching consequences for justifying the fears of Ulster Unionists. Namely, that all ties were to be eventually severed from the British Empire, a position which eventually occurred and which O’Hegarty attributed to the very nature of nationalist agitation with a separatist message. Whatever measure of freedom was granted Ireland by England, and then the restless spirit of Irish nationalism would continue onward until the bonds of Empire were broken and full freedom was won for the Irish nation.

O’Hegarty was unable to contemplate the real cultural and economic fears that were deeply engrained in Ulster Unionism, and could only counter that if Sinn Fein had stuck with Griffith’s Dual Monarchy policy, as one of compromise where allegiance was sworn to the constitutional monarch of both Ireland and Britain, then the necessary groundwork to bring the Unionists into an all-Ireland parliament would have been done. To quote once more from O’Hegarty in *Irish Freedom*, ‘it is not the form of government so much that matters as the spirit of it; and at present I don’t care what kind of government Ireland adopts when she gets her freedom so long as it is an Irish government.’⁷¹

Partition became the price of independence, the most definite slur on O’Hegarty’s view of Ireland as an integral and integrated nation, bound by a common history and unitary national outlook. O’Hegarty had to accept that a local majority in the north east were not convinced by the cultural, geographical and economic arguments stressed by Sinn Fein that would

⁷⁰ *Irish Freedom*, November, 1911.

⁷¹ *Irish Freedom*, October, 1911.

eventually form an Irish unifying principle, especially in a united self-governing Irish polity. Indeed for Ulster Unionists, Sinn Fein were less the new start O'Hegarty attributed to the movement, as remaining the latest manifestation of O'Connell's nineteenth century movement whose popular appeal was firmly equated with Catholicism.

Ulster Unionists did not relate to the nationalist concept of the organic state, as consisting of: 'those which have grown slowly and over a long period of time from some nuclear germinal or core area'.⁷² Subsequently, the promise of future safeguards for the minority written into the constitution was not enough to convince the Protestant people of the north east to relinquish their majority status and to quell their belief that a parochial Catholicism in a fully nationalist state would not become the dominating factor in Irish life.

O'Hegarty's view of pluralism as implicit within Irish nationalism marked the degree to which O'Hegarty placed his faith in the organic and spiritual principles of separatism. He was convinced that to be working for Irish independence was to be working for the good of Ireland and all its inhabitants. He believed this explanation was enough to expel any fears Ulster Unionists might harbour regarding Irish self-government. Unfortunately for O'Hegarty the reverse could be said for Ulster Unionists. In their view, the spirit of government they identified with was enshrined in the British constitutional process and therefore they determined that even partition and a devolved parliament linked to Westminster was better than any form of Irish government.

⁷² N.J.G. Pounds and S.S. Ball, 'Core areas in the development of the European State systems', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol.54, March, 1964, pp24-40; quoted in John Bowman, *de Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-73* (Oxford, 1982), p.12.

CONCLUSION

And before we can hope to inspire others with enthusiasm we must ourselves take up the movement wholly and intelligently and fearlessly. The young men who believe in the movement must take up the burthen of responsibility, and work, preach, and write, irrespective of the fact that they are young. Assertion of principle without active demonstration of it is harmful and Nationalism in Ireland of recent years has been to much a matter of academic belief. This is the last fight; if Sinn Fein fails there is no hope for the nation and its success or failure depends upon the earnestness and enthusiasm of those who believe in it. Work, anywhere and anyhow, so that it be earnest and honest and consistent, is the great weapon, and the making of men the great work. Let us bend our backs to it. The Republic, February 1, 1907.

Writing these words in 1907, O'Hegarty had already been involved with the separatist movement for nearly 10 years. During this period of writing, Sinn Fein was still enjoying its best and most productive phase and O'Hegarty held the optimistic view that the deep commitment and industrious attitude he brought to Sinn Fein would eventually win over the majority of Irishmen and women to the Sinn Fein programme. O'Hegarty always took the long view of the movement over the short-term gains or popular stances that Sinn Fein had taken in its newest member's reduction of the Sinn Fein philosophy to a few popular slogans, as described in Chapter Four. This ability to take the long view of events in Ireland was also equally pertinent in his attitude to cultural matters as contained in his desire to end the classification of Anglo-Irish literature as un-Irish and in his refusal to believe that 'high culture' was restricted to a minority, as his attacks on Annie Horniman's views of the selective target audience the Abbey Theatre should be attracting, testify to.

In his personal life too, O'Hegarty was no hypocrite. Ireland during the early part of the twentieth century and indeed to an extent today, despite O'Hegarty's attempts to change the current force of opinion in Irish society, was subject to discrimination along religious lines. O'Hegarty married Wilhelmina Dill Smith a Presbyterian woman, a choice of wife, he felt, which held serious repercussions for his relations with the top echelons of the Sinn Fein movement when it became known to them that some form of power was to be handed to the Irish people and in their 'rush to secure their valuable interests'. Years later, reflecting on this period, O'Hegarty wrote to Blythe that: 'I was a catholic agnostic who had never pretended to like the church, and who had married an ex-Protestant agnostic, and they were afraid to trust me for that reason.'¹ It was this sort of discriminatory thinking within Ireland, and which was prevalent within Sinn Fein following the events of the 1916 Easter Rising, that O'Hegarty was campaigning against and, indeed, formed the crux of the issue for O'Hegarty, as has been analysed throughout this thesis.

Sinn Fein, the IRB and the Gaelic League as the most active sections of the separatist movement did not retain their original philosophies or ideals as O'Hegarty saw them. When given the chance in 1918 to prove to the electorate exactly what they had originally stood for i.e., a new start along civic and pluralistic lines for the citizens of Ireland, the separatist leaders of Sinn Fein patently ignored or failed to recognise the original designs of what Sinn Fein actually stood for. Much of the old guard, including O'Hegarty and Griffith, who had been founding and active members of Sinn Fein had, by then, been ousted from their prominent positions, largely as a result of their not being active participants in the fighting of Easter week, an event which had been mistakenly associated with the Sinn Fein policy. Consequently, the inclusive and pluralistic message of O'Hegarty as defined by Sinn Fein's

¹ P.S. O'Hegarty to Ernest Blythe, *Ernest Blythe Papers*, University College Dublin, P24/1341.

earlier years was lost amid the malaise. Ultimately for O'Hegarty, Sinn Fein failed to deliver and the last fight for the Irish nation as a civic and pluralist society ended in civil war and partition.

O'Hegarty's adherence to his original separatist principles was to prove an unpopular stance amongst his newly acquired peers in Sinn Fein, but, as with his willingness to take on its leader Arthur Griffith in 1910, over maintaining the policy of abstention from Westminster, and over Griffith's threatened alignment of Sinn Fein with William O'Brien's All for Ireland League, O'Hegarty fought to the last over issues he felt were intrinsic to the reasons why he had become a separatist in the first instance. This side of O'Hegarty's character was pertinent in 1916 as unlike many of his separatist contemporaries he did not jump on the bandwagon of the revised meaning of 'republican' after 1916. Indeed the fact that he was a physical force man who made the important distinction between the grand battles of a popular uprising sanctioned by the Irish people and engrained in the revised IRB constitution, and the reason behind the inclusion of that amendment, were precisely so that an active minority were prevented from committing violent acts in the name of the Irish people. In this respect O'Hegarty like his friend, Terence MacSwiney, believed in the swift sword thrust combined with the 'sword of light',² or, the cultural build up of the nation, so that when independence was realised by the Irish people they would be better prepared for the responsibilities of self-government. So too, Roy Foster in his identification and recognition of the often neglected pluralistic elements of the Gaelic League could have

² *Dublin Magazine*, July-September, 1939.

included O'Hegarty as a sterling representative of the 'elements of pluralism and inclusivism present which have sometimes been underestimated.'³

O'Hegarty saw the entire separatist enterprise as forming the 'culmination of many things and men gone before'⁴ and not just a singular enterprise based upon the justification of violent means to achieve the end of Irish independence.

Amongst the multitude of historical literature that has been written about the more well known separatist figures of the early twentieth century such as Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith and Eamonn de Valera, O'Hegarty's published works prove invaluable sources in explaining the motivating factors behind these men's actions that were to shape a defining era in Anglo-Irish relations and lead up to the beginning of Irish independence and the responsibilities of self government. The appendices of this thesis include O'Hegarty's vivid and evocative portrayals of Griffith and Collins and while his historical treatment of de Valera was harsh and unforgiving in The Victory of Sinn Fein this must be understood in the light of O'Hegarty's emphasis on his contemporaries' individual characters. In Griffith and Collins O'Hegarty saw men of integrity and men of their word, in de Valera, O'Hegarty saw duplicity and a sanctimonious hijacking of the separatist tradition and consequently de Valera was subjected to the vilification he endured in the pages of The Victory of Sinn Fein. Moreover de Valera had claimed to be representing the martyrs of the separatist tradition such as Patrick Pearse and Terence MacSwiney, and while O'Hegarty was not in agreement with Pearse's role in the Easter Rising, he was very close friends with MacSwiney, and he believed de Valera and the rest of the republicans who followed his lead in declaring against

³ Roy Foster, 'History and the Irish question', in Ciaran Brady, (Ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*, (Blackrock, 1994), p.137.

⁴ Roy Foster, 'History and the Irish question', in Ciaran Brady, (Ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*, (Blackrock, 1994), p.137.

the Treaty and ultimately subverting the right of the Irish people to choose their own national destiny, were sullyng both these men's sacrifices for the separatist movement.

O'Hegarty's harshness toward de Valera can be contrasted with his portrayals of Cathal Brugha, and Mrs. Tom Clarke, both staunch anti-Treatyites whom O'Hegarty treats with respect for their positions purely because they were not hypocrites in contrast to his view of de Valera. It would seem for O'Hegarty, that it was okay not to support the Treaty if there were genuine concerns over its implications for Ireland, but these were to be settled during reasoned debate in the Dail, which, now that the truce had been called by the English Government in 1921, could function as an ordinary parliament where it was free to debate issues of state and the future of the nation.

Nationalism, taken at its core meaning, contained the Irish people's deeply embedded notions of tolerance and plurality, and did not stand motionless in time, for O'Hegarty. He justified his acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on separatist grounds that were not rigid in their understanding of what was best for Ireland, or the best way to achieve freedom for its people. What O'Hegarty was quick to realise was, that once the bonds of the British Empire had been loosened, then violence no longer needed to play a part in the nationalist campaign and the Irish people through the exercise of their own constitutional will could decide the pace by which they would break the bond with England and achieve their full independence. This was the long view of Irish nationalism that O'Hegarty took over the short term gains of the republican slogans and braggadocio which characterised the period from 1916 to 1922.

Unlike many of his contemporary separatists the will of the Irish people and the good of Ireland in general were always O'Hegarty's paramount concerns as his creation, and editorship of, the pro-Treatyite organ The Separatist testifies to. The fundamental purpose behind The Separatist was to assert the need for reasoned debate to take place over the

violence which had taken hold in recent years in Ireland. Given the climate of fear that had pervaded Ireland especially from the split in Sinn Fein into pro and anti-Treatyites, with either side featuring bands of armed men which eventually became armies, O'Hegarty was an individual who was willing to make a brave stand in his determination to put the good of the Irish nation above every other consideration.

O'Hegarty's willingness to put the nation first was also seen in his commitment to the toleration and veneration of good art, particularly literature. In describing their first meeting together, O'Hegarty spoke of his and Arthur Griffith's conversation as being dominated by books⁵ and, despite their disagreements over the direction in which to take Sinn Fein, and O'Hegarty's belief that Griffith was 'not fond of him' they undoubtedly shared in the belief of obtaining a united, free Ireland with its foundation set in an appreciation of Gaelic culture as their work and commitment in Sinn Fein amply demonstrates.⁶ Many years later, in an article for the Irish Times which featured a centenary tribute celebrating O'Hegarty's birth, Cian O'Heigartaigh was to write of P.S.:

His great virtue was the originality and self-reliance of his judgement. Nobody had ever taught him what he should think about literature; he came fresh to what he read, judged it in relation to his own rich experience of life, and because he had a shrewd eye and broad sympathies, his judgements have stood the test of time.⁷

P.S. O'Hegarty stood at the very heart of the inner circles of Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League and the IRB and therefore was privy to many private conversations and documents that provide original source material relevant to this period.

⁵ Brian Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Griffith College Publications, 1997), p.286.

⁶ See O'Hegarty's article in the Separatist entitled 'Arthur Griffith' and his chapter in *The Victory of Sinn Fein* entitled 'The Death of Griffith', which is contained in this thesis as Appendix II.

⁷ Cian O'Heigartaigh, *The Irish Times*, Tribute to P.S. O'Hegarty, Centenary Article, 1980.

O'Hegarty's intimate portrayals of these individuals during the tumultuous times that Ireland experienced in the first decades of the twentieth century have been described as more reliable than some of his separatist contemporaries' memoirs such as Ernie O'Malley, as the latter's reminiscences were written over two decades later while largely aiming for literary effect.⁸

O'Hegarty maintained 'in Ireland especially it is important that its political history should be understood'⁹, and this formed his compulsion to explain in A History of Ireland under the Union how the Irish people had triumphed over great adversity to become a nation free from the cultural and political 'bondage' imposed on them by the British Empire. In his depiction of the Irish people overcoming adversity O'Hegarty was an intellectual at the vanguard of a political movement that believed it offered a new start and could re-shape the political landscape in Ireland through a collective memory and shared sense of identity and thus enervate the decay upon which they believed the Irish Party had subjected Ireland to. However in many respects the question of a collective identity as featured in O'Hegarty's holistic idea of the Irish people has remained the problem in Northern Ireland today, as the popular consciousness of the Irish nation as a geographical unit has persisted in the south of Ireland and particularly amongst Northern Catholics.

Taking issue with this notion, the Cadogan Group (an eclectic mix of academics who have published responses to the developments in political initiatives put forward to help resolve the existing situation in Northern Ireland), have recently argued that it is nationalist ideology

⁸ Tom Garvin, 'Introduction to The Victory of Sinn Féin', in P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, (Dublin, 1998), p.xi.

⁹ 'Prefatory Note', P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952).

‘historically and today [that]...has...proved an obstacle to sensible cross border cooperation and a shared sense of Irishness, rather than the foremost promoter of such ends.’¹⁰

The Cadogan Group continue that the form of nationalist ideology as portrayed throughout O’Hegarty’s journalism and published works has proved a major drawback in the North and that the removal of Article 2 of Bunreacht na hEireann,¹¹ (the revised Irish Constitution of 1937), has done little to dispel this idealistic feature of nationalist ideology among the Irish Republican’s campaign which remains pinned to its basic premise. O’Hegarty would have approved of the sentiment behind Article 2 in the Irish constitution as it established the geographical unity of Ireland and its cherishing of all the different cultures and traditions inherent in its population as welcome citizens of Ireland. But if O’Hegarty thought that the partitioning of Ireland into North and South was the most disastrous outcome of the Anglo/Irish Treaty and the period following 1916 generally, Tom Garvin has still noted, that O’Hegarty was one of the first nationalists to vehemently oppose any attempt to coerce the inhabitants of Northern Ireland into a united Ireland and that he enunciated a doctrine of Northern consent long before it was profitable or popular.¹² O’Hegarty did not believe in 1922 or throughout his life that partition would remain a permanent feature of the island of Ireland and thought that some form of accommodation or recognition of mutual interest and advantage would eventually be recognised. But again as with his attitude toward the

¹⁰ Pamphlet entitled *Rough Trade, Negotiating a Northern Ireland Settlement*, The Cadogan Group, 1998, p.7.

¹¹ Article 2 of the 1937 Irish Constitution stated ‘It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage’.)

¹² Tom Garvin, ‘Introduction to The Victory of Sinn Fein’, P.S. O’Hegarty, in P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1998), p.x.

violence following 1916 he was not willing to compromise on the need for violence in order to justify the end goal of a united Ireland.

In stating this, O'Hegarty could not have known that Northern Ireland would emerge as the scene for intense sectarian hatreds and its overspill into bloodshed from 1969. It would be reasonable to argue that O'Hegarty would have been very much against the violence as he condemned the anti-Treatyites' justification for violence as betraying the Irish people's express wishes for peace and for their assuming the mantle of the guardians of a mythical republic. In taking their stance in 1921 it was the anti-Treatyites for O'Hegarty who had pushed matters into civil war and it was they who were violating the civil rights of the Irish people. O'Hegarty was alive to the danger of the narrowing of Irish nationalism to an ethnic and religious identification, for instance as D.P. Moran depicted it in his newspaper The Leader, during O'Hegarty's era, and that formed one reason why O'Hegarty was adamant in emphasising that nationalism was a liberal ideology that welcomed all Irishmen and women as equal citizens functioning under the rule of law. This he contrasted with the 700 years of English rule that Ireland had endured which, while claiming a liberal constitutional position, could never justifiably represent this ideal, as by their very colonial presence in Ireland, were denying the Irish people their historical right to nationhood and self-government. O'Hegarty wanted to right the misconceptions of why constitutionalism was flawed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under O'Connell, Parnell and the reconstituted Irish Party under Redmond. He felt a keen compulsion to do so and even against the latter he felt no real hatred, he just refused to accept that the Irish Party were the best that Ireland could offer in resistance to English rule in Ireland. This was a sentiment that O'Hegarty could justifiably widen to include the English nation whom he believed had kept Ireland in captivity for so long. Sinn Fein:

...had no hatreds. Although Griffith, and indeed all of us, wrote bitterly and scathingly about England and about the Parliamentary party, we had no hatred for either. We loved the Protestant as well as Catholic, nay better than, for Tone was the first of modern nationalists, and remains the chief; and Protestant names lie thick on the separatist roll of honour. The incredibly diabolical mental processes of the Irregular mind of the last two years would have been utterly alien to us.¹³

O'Hegarty was a democrat but the only form true democracy could take in Ireland was to discard Imperialism and oust the penetration of English culture as damaging to Irish culture. This would enable Irish democracy to take root. But, as outlined above O'Hegarty was incapable of bearing a grudge against the English people and as Roy Foster has stated O'Hegarty's time in London while strengthening his anti-clericalism, lessened his Anglophobia.¹⁴ O'Hegarty made the important distinction between the English people, to whom he bore no animosity, and the English Parliament, which he saw as an institution that generated the Imperial mindset among the Irish people and whose only real interest in Ireland was the maintenance of her selfish cultural and economic interests on the island. The advocating of this perspective became the source of much of O'Hegarty's journalist propaganda before the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Ultimately however O'Hegarty exhibited his deeply held liberal and pluralistic beliefs and praised England for the generosity of spirit she displayed following her victory in the Great War where her imperialistic powers were increased, and in setting the terms in the Treaty as opening the path to complete freedom.

The Treaty set up in Ireland an independent Irish state, with full control over Ireland's territory and resources and international relations, subject to certain verbal limitations of no practical consequence, these limitations being, none of them, things which were unfair or unreasonable in the circumstances. Lloyd George's government

¹³ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), p.163.

¹⁴ Roy Foster, *Mr. Paddy and Mr. Punch* (London, 1995), p.301.

went, in the matter of the treaty, to the utmost limits of concession and, whatever their motives, they paid magnificent deference to the susceptibilities of a people naturally touchy in what might seem to impinge on their full freedom in every respect. Lloyd George himself was never forgiven by the Conservatives for his part in the Treaty, and it was one of the main causes of his political eclipse. That a nation which had just won the greatest war in history should sit down and accept at its face value Ireland's bluff, and give in fact everything which was asked while colouring it sufficiently to deceive themselves that something was being withheld, deserves and ought to get generous and unrestrained appreciation from Ireland. It does not, of course, redress the long centuries' balance which is still heavily against her, but it was a good deed and a magnificent deed, and the writer has no doubt that St. Patrick, up aloft, has noted the deed and will see that it is given full weight.¹⁵

O'Hegarty saw the nationalism and separatist spirit that originally existed in the Sinn Fein movement as paving the way for other Nations. In The Separatist, March 4, 1922 he wrote:

India and Egypt have evolved national will and national consciousness, and leaders, and they are extremely unlikely to be held as long as we were. Egypt is clearly almost free, and India, in which the sit is admittedly "menacing," obviously cannot long be held against the awakening determination of her millions. All three, we shall help each other. The stronger one grows, the stronger we all grow, and the stronger we all grow, the weaker grows that empire which tried to swallow us. John Mitchel said that we should outlast it. So shall India and Egypt.

O'Hegarty was to expand on this idea in A History of Ireland under the Union claiming Ireland's heritage as the instigator for other colonial nations in their aspirations of freedom:

It did more. It broke up the British Empire, killed England's will to Empire. In one of his article Roger Casement wrote, "The Empire that began on an Island will perish on an Island." And so it did. For centuries Ireland withstood its fury, in the end out bluffed it. If to-day India, Burma, and Egypt are free nations, they owe it primarily to our example and our softening effectiveness, and secondarily Japan. We changed not only the name of the British Empire but its nature.¹⁶

This thesis has sought to examine the pluralistic and liberal thought of P.S. O'Hegarty and illuminate the separatist movements that provided an intellectual outlet for the expression of

¹⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.773.

¹⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952), p.774.

his ideals and aspirations for the Irish nation. Above all, O'Hegarty possessed an originality of mind that addressed and sought solutions to the problems of pre-independence Ireland over notions of identity and culture. While he was unable to resolve many of these problems he did ask the right questions, many of which were ignored as irrelevancies by his contemporaries or merely put aside as secondary concerns that an Irish government would solve once independence was gained by whatever means possible. He was to deeply dislike this attitude and for good reason, as the expectations that an Irish government would bring with it an instant solution to embedded problems was not realisable. O'Hegarty was a brave individual who was not afraid to stand back and criticise the Sinn Fein movement and the Irish nation for its faults both pre and post independent Ireland, who left behind many valuable published works and documentary sources and from 1902 onwards his personal knowledge of the men, and of the evolution, of the Separatist movement in all its phases¹⁷ which prove invaluable to our understanding of the evolution of Sinn Fein and the Ireland of his times.

¹⁷ P.S. O'Hegarty, 'Prefatory Note', *A History of Ireland under the Union* (London, 1952).

APPENDIX I

Chapter XVI

Extract from the 'Great Talk'

I set down here a conversation which I had with Griffith in April, 1922. I had to see him in connexion with Post Office business, and when that was finished, I put to him a question which I had been wanting an opportunity to put. [I had seen him only once since his release from prison, and then in a crowd.] I said to him, "How did 'external association' first arise?" "I'll tell you," said he. "The first I heard of 'external association' was when de Valera was pressing me to go over as a plenipotentiary. I went in to him one day, and found him with Cathal and Austin at his desk, all three sitting. I was standing. He told me he wanted me to go to London. I said to him, 'You are my chief, and if you tell me to go, I'll go. But I know, and you know, that I can't bring back the Republic.' Then he produced this external association idea - the first I ever heard of it - and after half an hour's persuasion, Cathal gave a reluctant consent to it. Stack said nothing, but sat there, sullen. I said nothing. Then the other two left, and left me alone with him. I said to him, 'look here Dev, what is the meaning of this external association idea? What are you getting at with it?' He replied by getting a pencil and paper and drawing a straight line thus - (Here Griffith got pencil and paper and drew the line AB) - 'That,' said he 'is me, in the straight jacket of the Republic. I must get out of it.' Then he drew another line, a curved line. (Here Griffith drew the curved line AC). 'That,' said he, 'is external association. The purpose of it is to bring Cathal along.'

Then he drew another straight line-(Here Griffith drew the line AD) - 'That,' said he, is where we'll eventually get to.' Then I was satisfied, and said no more about it."

I believe that statement of Griffith's, given in private and friendly conversation, to have been absolutely truthful, and to fit in with everything we know about Mr. De Valera. He never had any illusions about Ireland's chances of getting a Republic, and when he first nailed the Republican flag to his mast-head, he was only nailing a flag for political and bargaining purposes - he was not nailing a principal. The idea of compromise was ever present with him, and he was the first Irishman to suggest compromise, as he did in the journalistic interview in which he invited England to offer Ireland a Cuban Constitution. When he returned to Ireland in December, 1920, his first thought was to stop the war, the growing brutality of which, he perceived, made any arrangement difficult.

The Great Talk, at any rate, revealed nothing but bitterness and jealousy and small mindedness in the members Dail. They spoke, not on the subject at issue, but to posterity - thinking of their reputations, and not of their responsibilities nor of the consequences of their words or acts. Men and women, who had looked on and watched the Republic being thrown overboard, pretended they wanted to die for it when the irrevocable deed had been done. The whole debate was an exposure of the vanity and incompetence of Dail members, and of their political irresponsibility. The question at issue was a simple one and a clear one, yet numbers of Deputies changed their minds day after day, swayed by this or that. On the last day of all, one Deputy, at least, voted against the Treaty because the Freeman's Journal had attacked de Valera; while at least two others voted in its favour because of a bitter speech by Cathal Brugha against Collins. The Plenipotentiaries themselves furnished the crowning evidence of our utter absence of any sense of responsibility, in as much as one plenipotentiary, who did not like the Treaty after he had signed it, regarded himself as at

liberty to dishonour his signature and vote and act with the Anti-Treaty Party; while another, who honoured his signature in the letter, completely broke it in the spirit, and gave every encouragement, short of joining them, to those who worked for the rejection of the Treaty. The debate revealed the mass of the Deputies engulfed in moral cowardice and in rhetoric, desperately attempting to save their faces either by pretending to believe that they were voting for the “maintenance of the existing Republic” while they were really voting for Document No. 2, or by pretending to believe that they were voting for the future Republic, when they were really voting for the postponement of the Republican demand. The machine which Sinn Fein had become produced what political machines always produce - mediocrity and codology and political incapacity.

Taken from P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp. 86-89.

APPENDIX II

THE DEATH OF GRIFFITH

By the death of Arthur Griffith we lost not only the most constructive and steadfast political intelligence in Ireland, but the man upon whom for twenty and odd years had lain the whole burden of travail of this nation, and upon whom by rights it should have lain for at least another ten. Arthur Griffith was not alone the greatest Irishman of his time, but he was the greatest Irishman since Davis and Mitchel, and perhaps the most gifted all-round nationalist since Tone.

I had gone away to get a brief holiday, when this fatal news reached me. I could not believe it. Nobody who had known Griffith and worked with him could believe it. I felt as Gavan Duffy records the Young Irelanders felt when Davis died. Whoever else died, we felt sure that it would not be Griffith - Griffith with the iron will, the iron constitution, the importable nerve; Griffith whom we all thought certain to live to be one hundred and write the epitaphs of all of us; Griffith, upon whom we all leaned, all depended.

My mind went back twenty years, to the day I first saw Griffith, who was then editing the United Irishman, and who had just printed my first attempt at journalism. The United Irishman is almost forgotten now, but it did its work. It was the beginning of everything and of everybody; it was the foundation of everything which in the next twenty years came to mean anything in Ireland. It was a paper of which every line was read, and was readable, of every week, and nor perfunctorily, but with delight and avidity, a paper behind which was

the impress of a mastermind, plainly perceptible. It was the great trap set by the Irish national instinct to catch the young, and it did catch us. I remember a joke which Griffith got hold of some circular or other of some Castle political department, in which people were warned in general terms to avoid too much conversation with "the man in the street". He printed it. I don't remember the exact wording of it now, but I do remember the exact wording of his N.B. to it. This was it: "N.B. - The street more particularly referred to is Fownes Street." 17 Fownes Street was the office of the United Irishman.

It was there that I first saw him, and there that I perceived the greatness of the man. It was a very small office on one of the upper floors, with an even smaller anti-room. There was just room enough for a desk and a couple of chairs - one window, very dusty; walls very dusty; dust everywhere. But the visitors never saw those things at first. Sitting at the desk, on a chair which mostly was rickety, was a small man, modest in appearance and in demeanour, unobtrusive, not remarkable until he looked full at you, and then you forgot everything save that powerful head, those hard, steadfast, balancing eyes. Here was power, intellect, and determination, and above all and behind all a sturdy commonsense, a commonness in the sense that you felt at once that here was a rare thing, a man of the people, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, understanding them with all their national instinct and national sureness, their decency, and their absence side, and yet the most powerful and steadfast intellect in Ireland. Here was a man who was all brain, and all good. The desk, the floor, the window recess, the mantel piece, all full of files and papers - even the visitors chair had to be apologetically cleared; against the wall at his left hand, bound files of his own paper, and in the middle of all this print and dust and quiet, this one man. I don't think that impression has ever left my mind, and I don't think it will ever leave the mind of any one of those who saw him as I did. The room looked to be in hopeless confusion, but that

was only the appearance of it; he knew where everything was, and could lay his hands on anything when he wanted it.

At that time, the number of people who were consciously working for a separation was very small. The Gaelic League, itself the most separatist organisation that ever existed in Ireland, and seen as such only by Griffith and his friends, was scornful of the “Tinpikemen,” (Those who led Gaelic League majority against us in those days are now violent Irregulars). There was a handful in Dublin, smaller groups in some country centres, and a fairly large group in London. Griffith, in the United Irishman, gave them cohesion, and direction, and enthusiasm; gave them true national education; was himself the foundation and the force of everything. Without him there would have been no movement.

The present generation knows not Griffith, and probably never will know him, though without him it would have been nothing. He was unemotional and unrhetorical, and he never in his life made a rhetorical appeal or an emotional appeal. He did not go about waving Republican flags and cursing England; but when, in his quiet, even, and decisive voice he said, “Let England take her right hand from Ireland’s throat and her left hand out of Ireland’s pocket”, it was more effective and more understandable than any sword speech. And his pen was the most constructively-destructive pen that startled Ireland since Mitchel. Griffith has, in recent years, been spoken of as all sorts of things. He was really one thing - he was the Great Separatist, the most utterly separatist intellect that Ireland produced since Mitchel, who never wrote a line on any subject that was not a separatist line, and who never lost his grip upon reality. He was in his generation the supreme embodiment of his people.

Griffith supported Parnell. He supported Parnell because Parnell used the methods and means of his day - methods and means which were not essentially separatist - as a separatist and for separatist purposes; because Parnell, with his material and with his circumstances,

advanced the separatist cause. He recognised that Parnell used the methods and materials of his time as a separatist would use them, and he held it to be good separatist policy to do that. So it is. The separatist is not necessarily he who shouts and blows up, but he who constructs, who uses. And Parnell, despite his oath of allegiance, was a separatist, because all his leading and all his intellect and all his achievement were separatist.

Griffith took the material of his own day, too - and its methods - and he fashioned them into the most comprehensive and constructive separatist philosophy that any subject nation has evolved. And he persisted. And he won. He forced England to “take her right hand from Ireland’s throat and her left hand out of Ireland’s pocket”. He separated Ireland from England. He set out to do it, and persisted in it even when he could count his followers on his fingers and toes. He knew that Ireland would need him and need his policy. And when she needed him and if they were there. And in her service he spent himself.

In that final speech of his recommending the Treaty to Dail Eireann, Griffith referred to Thomas Davis as his master; and while it may be said of all Irish nationalists that they are influenced by Davis, it was particularly true of Griffith, in as much as he believed passionately, with Davis, in not alone the desirability but the practicability of a union of all Irishmen against the domination of England. He was convinced of the innate patriotism of the Protestant and Unionist class in Ireland, and was convinced that a way could be found to unite them with the Nationalists upon the broad issue. And he was steeped in the philosophy of Davis and in the teaching of Davis. In himself he was an example of that teaching, for he knew Ireland, her capacity and resources, her history, her literature, her possibilities, as Davis recommends that all Irishmen should know her; and he gave his days and his nights to Ireland with a single mindedness as a persistence which only conviction that was a passion could have sustained.

The tragedy of the death of Arthur Griffith is not the tragedy of work unfinished, not the tragedy of a failure. He was always concerned with getting things done rather than any particular concrete way of doing them, and in his efforts for Ireland he was concerned rather with achieving for Ireland freedom, than with achieving the triumph of any particular political formula or structure. When he said that "England must take one hand from off Ireland's throat and the other from out of her pocket". he said exactly, and in its exact proportions, what he was aiming at; and at any time of his life he would have regarded any solution which gained that as an acceptable one. What he wanted was freedom for Ireland to develop on her own lines, free from outside interference; and it was that freedom, and not any particular way of embodying it, that he was concerned with. He was one of the few Nationalists, for instance, who had any realization of the comparative value of economic freedom; and one of the things which he most consistently preached was that Ireland, by working unitedly on economic lines, could so develop her strength as to make it impossible for England to hold her. The tragedy of his death was not the tragedy of a failure, for he has succeeded in his object and in his policy: he had brought to Ireland a Treaty with England which made Ireland absolute mistress in her own house, with full economic and cultural freedom, and with practically full political freedom, and which, while it had to bow to circumstances in the matter of the Six Counties of Unionist Ulster, carried in itself the certainty of an eventual union of all Ireland. The tragedy in his death was this: that he who had loved Ireland so well and so passionately, who had been poor all his life for her sake, who had in the end raised her up, should have been struck down ere he enjoyed the glory of seeing her develop, of seeing all the things he loved to plan for her grow under his protecting hand. It is a lesser tragedy than that of any Irish national leader.

Griffith has been written of as a non-believer in physical force. That is not true. He was a physical man, and when I first knew him he was a member of the I.R.B., which he afterwards left, not on any point about physical force, but because after he had launched the Sinn Fein policy and established the Sinn Fein organisation he found the I.R.B. rule - that the Supreme Council has the right to dictate a policy to the members of the Brotherhood in public organizations - irksome. He was all his life a separatist and a physical force man of the old philosophic school, which held that physical force was permissible and necessary, that Ireland would eventually gain her independence only by means of it, but which held also that a Rising by a minority was unjustifiable, save as a demonstration, a blood-sacrifice - which the Rising of 1916 actually was. And the I.R.B never quarrelled with Griffith, but always worked with him and recognised him for what he was, the greatest separatist force in the country. As a matter of fact, Nationality, which was established during the war and edited by Griffith, was financed by the I.R.B.

It was a misfortune for Ireland that, when Sinn Fein was reconstructed in 1917, the direction of it was taken out of Griffith's hands. It could not have been done had he chosen to fight against it. But he had Davis's passion for unity, provided what he regarded as essentials were preserved, and he stood down rather than have even the semblance of a split, though his credit and his reputation in the country were always far greater than his modesty and diffidence would allow him to realise; he could have carried Sinn Fein, on anything vital, at any time against anybody. But, with the best intentions, he stood down, and the direction of the movement fell into the hands of men who had no philosophical nor trained nor thought-out conception of nationalism, of means or of ends, and who applied to every possible candidate for Dail two tests; (1) Was he ever in jail, or was he in the Rising, or was he in the Volunteers? (2) Was he likely to be independent minded? And if the answer to the first was

“NO” or to the second “YES” he was barred. So that Dail came to be manned almost wholly by people who, when their great test came, proved to have neither moral courage nor political intelligence.

And that loss, the loss in the supreme direction of affairs of his trained and Davisized mind, which had so fatal an effect on Dail, is the loss which Ireland felt most keenly. For Griffith was the only member of the Government (save Eoin MacNeill, who is too full of philosophical inertia to apply his national philosophy) who had any philosophy of nationalism to rely on, who was in touch with the whole stream of Irish nationalist philosophy. In that respect he might be likened to a grown up man amongst children.

Ave Griffith. Ave atque Vale!

Taken from P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp.127-135.

APPENDIX III

CHAPTER XXVI

MICHAEL COLLINS

When Mr. Edward Shortt projected his German Plot, Mick Collins was a man unknown save to a few. The Sinn Fein Executive of that day - it was before Dail Eireann - knew that it was going to be arrested, and decided to stand on its dignity and be arrested, after naming substitutes. One man who was not on the Executive but was on the list of "Plotters" decided not to be arrested. He waited in town until well on in the morning and then cycled home, to find a lorry standing outside his lodgings. From a halldoor on the opposite side of the street he watched them and then rode off to alarm another suspect, who, however, had been taken before he got there, and under whose roof the cyclist passed the remainder of the morning. It was Mick Collins. And it was the beginning of his emergence out of the ruck into the prominence which afterwards was his. The disappearance of the Sinn Fein Executive left in Sinn Fein and Volunteer circles one man in whose capable hands all the threads of the movement gradually became centred - as these things naturally will come to those who are capable and willing - and gradually but certainly Mick came to be the force and directing intelligence of the movement. And when the big guns were released finally, it made no difference. They had to admit Mick, for they could do nothing without him. He had made good. That is almost forgotten now, but to Mick Collins Ireland owed it that the movement

went on when Mr. Short's German Plot made a clean sweep of its leaders. He worked, then and always, like three men, late and early, and he made others work also.

But it was in the succeeding years, the years of the Terror, that he finally found himself that he did for Ireland that Herculean labour which places him amongst the greatest. When Arthur Griffith stated in Dail in January, 1922, that Collins had won the war, there was violent dissent. But, if any member of the Government or of the army or of Dail can be said to have "won the war" it was Collins. His was the brain that conceived the war policy and his the courage and determination and capacity that maintained it and that never faltered in it. When it was projected, the Volunteer Executive would not sanction it, and Dail Eireann would not touch it; but Mick Collins, and Dick McKee, and Sean Treacy organised it themselves, and put it into operation. And when it succeeded, then the wiseacres adopted it. But right through it Mick Collins was its eyes and its ears, its push and determination, its support, its corner stone. Everybody looked at him; everybody depended upon him. He represented to the people and to the British the embodied spirit of militant Irish nationalism, and he was that. It was not for nothing that the British got him on the brain, that they offered reward after reward for him, that in every house that they broke they shouted, "Where's Mick Collins? We know he sleeps here". They were constantly hot on his trail; several times they actually had him in their hands; but they never "got" him. If one wants to realise what he meant to the movement then, one has only to look back and think what one would have felt like if they had got him. The whole bottom would have gone out of things. When de Valera was got just before the Truce, we said to each other "Well, thank God it wasn't Mick".

Before Michael Collins there lay an unknown future. He had other things besides his courage, his quickness of decision, his push, his character. He had a passion for efficiency

which is rare in Ireland, and he had the rare power of attracting to him able men of all sorts who worked with and for him - often men who did not see eye to eye with him politically. His Department of Dial Eireann was noted as the only one which, during the Terror, ever answered letters; so much so, that the country people wrote to him about everything - and he always saw to it that they were attended to. He gave as much attention to little details as most men do to big things. And he was feeling his way towards a statesman's vision of Ireland. His record as organiser, as man of action, was a brilliant one, and his power of handling and vitalizing mediocrities was akin to that of Parnell.

But he was going farther than that. He was going from that to general speculation about Irish life, Irish character, Irish civilization - he was feeling his way to framing of that ideal of Ireland which in the coming years he would be working towards. He might have developed into the greatest and wisest statesman we ever had, for he was broadbased upon his love of the common people, the Irish peasantry, from whom he sprang, the people amongst whom he was brought up. On one of the last occasions on which I saw him, he tried to explain that; and obviously he found it difficult to put into words. "I stand" said he (as nearly as I can recollect) "for an Irish civilisation based on the people and embodying and maintaining the things, their habits, ways of thought, customs, that make them different - the sort of life I was brought up in. That is what I mean by Irish Ireland, and if Irish Ireland means anything else, I don't want it. Once, years ago, a crowd of us were going along the Shepherd's Bush Road when out of a lane came a chap with a donkey - just the sort of donkey and just the sort of cart that they have at home. He came out quite suddenly and abruptly, and we all stood and cheered him. Nobody who has not been an exile will understand me, but I stand for that." There were in his brain and in his energy and in the

whole Irishness of him - Mick Collins was one of the most Irish men that ever lived - unexplored possibilities, incalculable riches.

But all that is dust now and we have to remember him on his achievement. Let us remember him as the greatest soldier, the greatest man of action of the time of Terror; the sure prop and resource of this nation in the time of Terror; the man whose courage, resource, tireless energy, superhuman work, and push, enabled Ireland to outlast the British; and the man who, from the beginning to the end of this business, never said a bitter word.

Taken from P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924), pp.136-140.

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