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**Language and Identity amongst Irish Migrants in London,  
Philadelphia and San Francisco, 1850-1920**

Bobbie Nolan

Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Edinburgh

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Bobbie Nolan

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Irish language in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Exploring the ways in which Irish speakers used and maintained their language in the diaspora between the years 1850 and 1920, this thesis argues that the language transformed from being a component of a private, personal identity to a public expression of an Irish diasporic identity. While the imperial context of London and the republican contexts of Philadelphia and San Francisco presented specific circumstances and opportunities for the use and maintenance of the Irish language, the sociolinguistic situation in Ireland directly impacted the language's development overseas.

The focus of this thesis is on the continued use of the Irish language as a vernacular in the period 1850-1880 and the structures which allowed this, however, this thesis also examines the impact of the Gaelic Revival movement on the language and its role in Irish cultural identity. It explores the ways in which different urban environments affected the survival of the language, as well as the genesis, development and outcomes of the revival. Using comparison, this thesis locates the Irish language in three cities which have previously been overlooked in the history of the Irish language abroad and identifies the transnational links between Ireland, London, Philadelphia and San Francisco. Examining these Irish communities over a seventy-year period and incorporating both the pre-revival and revival periods allows for the exploration of this minority language over time, addressing the changing role of the language within each city.

## **Lay Summary**

Little is known about the full extent of the Irish language's presence within Irish communities abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even though it is estimated that 20 per cent of the approximately 6,000,000 emigrants from Ireland in the post-Famine period consisted of Irish speakers. This thesis therefore investigates Irish speakers in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco between the years 1850 and 1920 and the ways in which they used and maintained their language following their emigration from Ireland.

These three cities were selected for comparison owing to the different environments present in each; London remained within the British Empire while Philadelphia and San Francisco were both in the republican United States though were very different cities. Each of these cities was home to a large Irish-born population after the year 1850 and provided varying opportunities for migrants which directly impacted the continuation of Irish speaking. In addition, the condition and status of the language in Ireland itself during this period is of note. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 2.5 million people spoke Irish in Ireland, dropping to approximately 1.5 million in 1851, and just over 680,000 in 1891; the reasons for this transition were central to the language's development overseas.

This thesis begins by presenting these factors in relation to Ireland before identifying and analysing them in each of London, Philadelphia and San Francisco. The focus is on the continued use of Irish as a spoken language in these three cities in the period 1850-1880 and the structures which facilitated this, highlighting regional variations as well as similarities. By comparing these cities, this thesis uncovers the Irish language

in three places which have previously been overlooked in the history of the language abroad and identifies the connections between Ireland, London, Philadelphia and San Francisco. This thesis also explores the impact of the Gaelic Revival, a movement which saw a renewed interest in the language and its role in the creation of an Irish national identity, and concludes with an investigation of this movement's origins and development between the years 1880 and 1920 and the changes in attitudes and practice which it heralded. The examination of these Irish communities over a period of 70 years allows for a better understanding of the development of this minority language over time and addresses the changing role of the language within each city. This thesis concludes that the period 1850-1920 witnessed the transformation of the Irish language from being part of a private, personal identity to being a public articulation of an Irish cultural and political identity.

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## Introduction

In March 1899, the *Irish World* newspaper in New York claimed that there were 40,000 Irish speakers in Philadelphia and 2,000 in Yonkers, New York, as well as 30,000 in Chicago the previous year, while historian David Doyle (1979) estimates that at this time there were in the region of 70,000 Irish speakers in New York and 30,000 in Boston.<sup>1</sup> Despite such claims and the fact that of the eight million people who left Ireland in the period between the Act of Union (1801) and the end of British rule (1921-22) for principally Britain and the United States, it has been estimated that between 20 and 25 per cent were Irish speakers, historians have been slow to explore the existence and the fate of the Irish language overseas.<sup>2</sup> For all its visibility in questions of nationality and Irish identity from the late nineteenth century onwards, the language itself has not received detailed attention from historians and the rapid shift in linguistic tradition from Irish to English in the space of less than a century has been treated as peripheral to the development of modern Ireland, despite being the majority language at the beginning of the century to being spoken by just 680,245 people out of a population of 4,704,750 in 1891.

This research is chiefly concerned with the story of the Irish language amongst the Irish abroad, investigating the language amongst migrants in the diaspora in the post-Famine period and their perceptions of the language, its role in shaping identity, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Irish World*, 4 March 1899; 13 May 1899; 29 October 1898; Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin (ed.), *Go Meiriceá Siar: Na Gaeil agus Meiriceá: Cnuasach Aistí* (Dublin, 1979), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> For emigration see Mary J. Hickman, 'Migration and Diaspora' in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 117-136. For estimations of the numbers of Irish speakers to the United States see David Noel Doyle, 'The Remaking of Irish America, 1845-80' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 725-763.

how diverse regional environments affected its decline or survival. It takes the cities of London, Philadelphia and San Francisco as its focus, each of which received considerable numbers of Irish migrants from the Famine period onwards and was home to large Irish populations between 1850 and 1920. Comparisons between specific communities in the Irish diaspora remain relatively rare, though they are valuable in their revealing of differences or universalising of experiences through showing patterns of commonality or variation. Through detailed comparative analysis, this thesis examines the structures and circumstances which helped to maintain the Irish language overseas in London, an imperial city, Philadelphia, a long-established city, and San Francisco, an instant city, and reveals much of the varying Irish migrant experiences not only between the United States and Britain, but also within the United States itself.

The historian Kerby A. Miller theorised that being monoglot Irish-speakers forced many Irish emigrants in the United States to experience emigration as exile rather than opportunity and so this thesis seeks to discover how these speakers and their contemporaries viewed the language and whether it did shape patterns of integration with the host societies.<sup>3</sup> The transformation of these attitudes is explored through the separation of this thesis into two temporal spans, 1850-1880 and 1880-1920. Nineteenth-century attitudes towards Irish in Ireland were growing increasingly negative, until the emergence of the Gaelic Revival from the 1880s resulted in the resurgence of the teaching and learning of the Irish language. The situation was echoed in the United States and Great Britain and this research therefore focuses upon the

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<sup>3</sup> Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York and Oxford, 1985), p. 304.

relationship between the Irish language in Ireland and the diaspora. The history of Irish is intimately bound up with the spread of English in Ireland, a result of a complex array of political, cultural, religious, educational, and sociolinguistic factors, and so this thesis explores if and how the issues surrounding the language in Ireland (in terms of falling numbers, negative attitudes and preference for English) followed migrants abroad and came to influence its development in the diaspora, and, similarly, explores the short- and long-term effects of the revival on the language in London, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

## Historiographies of the Irish Abroad

This thesis is located within the history of the Irish diaspora, focusing on those who left Ireland for numerous destinations across the globe following the Great Famine (1845-52) and until the establishment of the Irish state. This thesis investigates the Irish language in its social context, influenced by Aidan Doyle's statement that language history is part of history in general and does not exist in isolation from it.<sup>4</sup> By focusing on Irish speakers in three diverse regional environments it seeks to uncover the experiences of a hitherto under-studied migrant group and adheres to David Fitzpatrick's statement that emigration should not be depicted as a monolith and that there was no homogeneity of experience.<sup>5</sup> Emigration has long played a central role in the history of modern Ireland and in the shaping of its society, with the United States and Britain being the principal destinations, and the longevity of this emigration and its effects cannot be ignored, having been a feature of Irish life since as early as

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<sup>4</sup> Aidan Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language* (New York, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland VI*, pp. 606-652.

the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> However, mass movement to America during the Famine and the history of the Irish in America continue to dominate the popular imagination and have produced a vast and varied scholarship, beginning, in earnest, with Oscar Handlin's 1941 *Boston's Immigrants*.<sup>7</sup>

## The United States

Although there was never a standardised or uniform Irish-American society, historiography has tended to portray it this way and much of this scholarship has been dominated by images of the American urban north, with Kerby Miller's landmark 1985 monograph leading to a prevailing understanding of all Irish migrants as being involuntary exiles.<sup>8</sup> His interpretations have been widely challenged for being based on simplifications and generalisations but have also provoked a growth in literature in the past several decades, a development which provides a valuable framework for this research.<sup>9</sup> The two principal models that have endured, particularly in the popular imagination, are the images of the "hordes of ignorant Irish that swarmed into tenements or spilled out into shantytowns" in New York and Boston, and, conversely, the success stories, namely Irish involvement in, and control of, the political machine

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<sup>6</sup> Kevin Kenny, 'Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study', *The Journal of American History*, 90: 1 (2003), pp. 134-162; L.P. Curtis Jr., 'Ireland in 1914' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland VI*, pp. 145-188.

<sup>7</sup> Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1865: A Study in Acculturation* (Harvard, 1941). Other early examples include Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, 1956); Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900* (Minneapolis, 1958); Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the melting pot: the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge MA, 1963); Timothy J. Meagher (ed.), *From Paddy to Studs: Irish-American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880-1920* (New York, Connecticut and London, 1966); and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> For a critique of this monograph, see Donald Harmen Akenson, 'The Historiography of the Irish in America' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 99-127.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of this scholarship see Kevin Kenny, 'Twenty Years of Irish American Historiography,' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 28: 4 (2009), pp. 67-75.

from an early stage.<sup>10</sup> New York and Boston are held up as shining examples through their election of Irish Catholic mayors in 1880 and 1885 respectively and the eventual election of John F. Kennedy as president in 1960.<sup>11</sup> This eastern model, with emphasis on Irish control of the political machine, has been influential but is only a partial representation of nineteenth-century Irish America. In more recent years, comparative and transnational approaches have contributed much to the existing historiography by highlighting the similarities and differences within the Irish diaspora, most notably by Donald M. MacRaild, Malcolm Campbell and Kevin Kenny, within which the Irish language has begun to feature.<sup>12</sup>

The scale of academic work on both Philadelphia and San Francisco is minor when compared to that of the Irish in cities on the Atlantic seaboard, particularly New York and Boston: there exist no recent comprehensive overviews for either city and the Irish language has been almost entirely overlooked in both, while the bounds of historiographical debate for San Francisco remain particularly narrow. Each had similar Irish communities in terms of total numbers and as a proportion of the foreign-born population, though had considerably different urban environments. The cities' similarities and differences provide an illuminating comparison. The origins, growth and development, and populace of the city of Philadelphia since its founding in 1681

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<sup>10</sup> Mick Mulcrone, 'The Famine and Collective Memory: the role of the Irish-American Press in the Early Twentieth Century' in Arthur Gribben (ed.), *The Great Famine and The Irish Diaspora in America* (Amherst, 1999), pp. 219-238.

<sup>11</sup> Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (London, 2000), p. 219. See also Stephen P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the dilemmas of urban machine politics, 1840-1985* (London, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Donald M. MacRaild, 'Crossing Migrant Frontiers: Comparative Reflections on Irish Migrants in Britain and the United States during the Nineteenth Century' in Donald M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 40-70; Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison, Wis., 2007); Kevin Kenny, 'Irish emigrations in a comparative perspective' in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge and New York, 2017), pp. 405-422.

are well-documented within secondary literature, charting the city's industrial revolution and population boom from 1841 and its transformation into an industrial giant by the turn of the century.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Philadelphia has received considerably less attention than other American cities on the Atlantic seaboard, with historian Allen Davies noting in 1973 that the post-Revolutionary city of Benjamin Franklin has been curiously neglected by historians.<sup>14</sup> This statement still holds true, and a similar observation can also be made for the Irish in Philadelphia. Although their prominence in the city from the 1840s onwards is widely recognised in secondary literature on the city more generally, there exist few scholarly investigations focused solely on this group. Dennis Clark remains the leading historian on the subject, publishing on the subject from the 1970s through the 1990s, but his work *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (1973) remains the foremost general text on the experience of Irish immigrants in the city and the most frequently cited work.<sup>15</sup>

This lack of engagement can be partially explained by the fact that Philadelphia was characterised neither by rapid political success nor by abject poverty and instead fell somewhere in the middle.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that in more recent years a small selection

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth M. Geffen, 'Industrial Development and Social Crisis' and Nathaniel Burt and Wallace E. Davies, 'The Iron Age, 1876-1905' in Russell Weigley (ed.), *Philadelphia; A 300-Year History*, (New York, 1982), pp. 307-362, pp. 471-523. See also Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (eds), *The Peoples of Philadelphia: History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia, 1973); Joseph J. Kelly, 'Philadelphia' in Michael Glazier (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1999), pp. 768-774; Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> Allen F. Davis, 'Introduction' in Davis and Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, pp. 3-12.

<sup>15</sup> Dennis Clark, 'Militants of the 1860s: The Philadelphia Fenians', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 95: 1 (1971), pp. 98-108; *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973); 'Intrepid Men: Three Philadelphia Irish Leaders, 1880 to 1920' in Meagher, *From Paddy to Studs*, pp. 93-115; 'Irish women workers and American labor patterns: the Philadelphia story' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide, Vol. 4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 113-130.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Kenny lists the democratic political machine, the labour movement and the Catholic Church as the three most important institutions in Irish-America. Philadelphia's first Irish mayor, James H. J. Tate, was only elected in 1962. Kenny, *The American Irish*, p. 163. Kerby A. Miller and Bruce D.

of works have further elucidated certain aspects of and added new perspectives to the Irish experience, proposing that there was a greater range of experiences within the city than much of the available historiography suggests, the Irish language remains an under-studied subject.<sup>17</sup> This thesis therefore contributes to the historiography of the Irish language in Philadelphia which, at present, is restricted to the important contributions from Dennis Clark and Joseph Callahan (1994).<sup>18</sup> Even the revival has received relatively little elucidation, with the focus remaining on notable individuals, such as Michael Logan, creator of the bilingual journal *An Gaodhal*, in New York.

The scholarship on San Francisco is considerably less developed than for other United States urban areas. In his 1979 work *The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1889*, R.A. Burchell noted that scholarly coverage of San Francisco's Irish was scant, highlighting a range of notable secondary literature on the Irish in the United States in which San Francisco is almost entirely absent; this includes Carl Wittke (1956), George Potter (1960), and Lawrence McCaffrey (1976).<sup>19</sup> This paucity among general histories of the Irish in the United States has continued: Kevin Kenny (2000), although being far more inclusive, still focuses heavily upon the Irish experience in America's north-east, while J. J. Lee and Marion Casey's 2007 edited collection also concentrates upon this region, containing just a handful of references to San Francisco or to the west in

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Boling, 'The Pauper and the Politician: A Tale of Two Immigrants and the Construction of Irish-American Society' in Gribben, *The Great Famine and The Irish Diaspora in America*, pp. 196-218.

<sup>17</sup> Polly Beckham, 'A Little Cache of Green: The Savings Habits of Irish Immigrant Women in 1850 Philadelphia', *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 69: 2 (2002), pp. 230-265; Michael L. Mullan, 'Sport, Culture, and Nation among the Hibernians of Philadelphia: Irish American Civic Engagement and Cultural Nationalism, 1880-1920', *Journal of Urban History*, 39: 4 (2012), pp. 579-600.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis Clark, 'Muted Heritage: Gaelic in an American City', *Éire-Ireland*, 6: 1 (1971), pp. 3-7. Joseph Callahan, 'The Irish Language in Pennsylvania' in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), pp. 18-26.

<sup>19</sup> Wittke, *The Irish in America*; George Potter, *To the Golden Door: the Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston, 1960); McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America*.

general.<sup>20</sup> There are few works solely concerning the Californian and San Francisco Irish experience, despite their visibility within general histories of the west, and their focus is the economic and social mobility, quick political success, and Catholic vitality which is perceived to have characterised the Irish experience in San Francisco – namely Thomas F. Prendergast (1942), James Walsh (1978, 1980), R.A. Burchell (1979), Timothy Sarbaugh (1986), and Patrick J. Dowling (1988).<sup>21</sup> This narrow focus can be partly attributed to contemporary writing on the Irish in California, and San Francisco in particular, which is for the most part celebratory and self-congratulatory. John Francis Maguire’s tome *The Irish in America* (1868) and Rev Hugh Quigley’s work *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (1878) detail the successes of Irish migrants in the United States, the latter of which is effectively an index of Irish men’s achievement in California’s public life after 1849, while the *Monitor*, the Irish Catholic newspaper, frequently entertains readers with stories of California’s prominent Irish settlers, the “sturdy pioneers” like General Stephen Kearney, the first military governor of California, who was born in Ireland in 1794.<sup>22</sup> While these claims of good fortune are not entirely unfounded, this focus on the wealthy, the successful and the influential has led to a very narrow historiographical debate and the omission

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<sup>20</sup> Kenny, *The American Irish*; J. J. Lee and Marion Casey (eds), *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas F. Prendergast, *Forgotten Pioneers: Irish Leaders in Early California* (San Francisco, 1942); James P. Walsh (ed.), *The Irish in San Francisco 1850-1976* (San Francisco, 1978); ‘The Irish in the New America: Way Out West’ in David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards (eds), *America and Ireland 1776-1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection* (Westport, Connecticut, 1980), pp. 165-176; R.A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1880* (Manchester, 1979); Timothy Sarbaugh, ‘Exiles of Confidence: the Irish-American community of San Francisco, 1880 to 1920’ in Meagher, *From Paddy to Studs*, pp. 161-179; Patrick J. Dowling, *California: The Irish Dream* (San Francisco, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> John Francis Maguire M. P., *The Irish in America* (London, 1868); Rev. Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1878); *The Monitor*, 16 March 1901.

of the experiences of those who did not fit the mould, as well as the neglect of questions such as immigrant adjustment, identity and language.

The broadening of this picture has begun, however, through contributions by Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin and Lynn Lubamersky on San Francisco's Irish literature, music and dance, Malcolm Campbell's comparative study of the United States and Australia, and Daniel P. Walsh and Paul Darby on the process of Irish-American acculturation.<sup>23</sup> A particularly insightful contribution comes in the form of an Interpretive Report on the 2001-03 archaeological excavations carried out as part of upgrades to the West Approach to the San Francisco Bay Bridge, which includes research on the inhabitants, many of them Irish, of three San Francisco neighbourhoods – Tar Flat, the edges of Rincon Hill and the shore of Mission Bay. Its conclusions move the focus away from successful and powerful individuals and towards the lived experiences of 'ordinary' people in the city, including their residential, marriage, employment, and even dietary patterns.<sup>24</sup> Still, however, Walsh (1978) and Burchell (1979) remain the principal overviews of the Irish in San Francisco, with the Irish language the subject of just one scholarly investigation in the pre-cultural nationalist period and, thereafter, only

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<sup>23</sup> Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Old Age Pipers and New Age Punters: Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco, 1850-2000', Lynn Lubamersky, 'Women in Irish Dance in San Francisco, 1900-1935', Daniel P. Walsh, 'Maggie's Boarding House: Irish-American Assimilation in San Francisco, 1910-1930' in Donald Jordan and Timothy J. O'Keefe (eds), *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area: Essays on Good Fortune* (San Francisco, 2005), pp. 110-132, 133-148, 149-164. Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*. Paul Darby, 'Without the Aid of a Sporting Safety Net?: the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco (1888-c.1938)', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26: 1 (2009), pp. 63-83.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Praetzellis and Adrian Praetzellis (eds), *South of Market: Historical Archaeology of 3 San Francisco Neighbourhoods*. Four vols. The San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge West Approach Project prepared for the California Department of Transportation (San Francisco, 2009). See also Anne Yentsch, 'A Teapot, a House, or Both? The Material Possessions of Irish Women's California Assemblages', *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* (2011).

discussed in relation to the revivalist activities of Fr Peter C. Yorke – political activist, editor of the *Monitor*, and pivotal player in the city’s Gaelic revival.<sup>25</sup>

## Great Britain

When juxtaposed with the considerable volume of work from a wide range of writers on the Irish in the United States, the lack of investigation into the Irish in Britain is thrown into sharp relief. Influenced by J.A. Jackson’s 1963 monograph *The Irish in Britain* – the first significant attempt to investigate the Irish community in Britain and a valuable addition to the then-limited number of scholarly works – historiography has since remained centred on the conditions in which Irish immigrants lived in British cities and the extent to which they experienced prejudice in these new urban environments. There are few histories on the Irish in nineteenth-century London – a surprising absence considering the fact that London was the largest centre of Irish settlement in terms of total numbers in Britain during the period under consideration.<sup>26</sup> This lack of engagement can be explained in terms of three principal factors: the scale of Irish emigration to Britain, the composition of the migrant stream, and the perception of how migrants fared.

First, the scale of Irish emigration to Great Britain was small in relation to the total volume of Irish emigration during the period in question, in particular to that to the United States. In 1851, the beginning of the period in question, there were just over 727,000 Irish-born in Britain, compared to 962,000 in the United States. These figures

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<sup>25</sup> James P. Walsh, *Ethnic Militancy: An Irish Catholic Prototype* (San Francisco, 1972); James P. Walsh and Timothy Foley, ‘Father Peter C. Yorke: Irish-American Leader,’ *Studia Hibernica*, 14 (1974), pp. 90-103.

<sup>26</sup> By 1901, there were 60,022 Irish-born in London. See Steven Fielding, *Class and Identity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, 1993) p. 27.

grew apart as the nineteenth century progressed, for example, the year 1881 saw 781,000 Irish-born in Britain compared to 1,855,000 in the United States (see Figure 6).<sup>27</sup> The Irish never formed a significant percentage of the total population in Great Britain – not exceeding 3.5 per cent during the period under consideration (see Figure 8). The Irish in London consistently comprised a much smaller percentage of the city's total population than in other urban centres in both Great Britain and the United States and the effect of these low percentages is a perception that the Irish in London were a less 'significant' immigrant group; other urban centres where the proportional impact of the Irish was perceived to be higher than in London continue to provide the focal point for the study of the Irish diaspora. Secondly, the composition of the migrant stream from Ireland to Great Britain differed from that to the United States. The Irish who went to Britain were described by contemporaries as "the human flotsam that was cast on the shores of Britain by the great famine waves".<sup>28</sup> It is true that they were predominantly (but not exclusively) impoverished and "reluctant" immigrants and the "residue", in David Fitzpatrick's words, of those drawn towards more enticing countries.<sup>29</sup> They consisted mostly of Catholic smallholders, cottiers or labourers from the west and southwest of Ireland who followed well-trodden routes of emigration – travelling directly from Cork to Bristol, South Wales and London, or through Dublin for Liverpool.<sup>30</sup> Their backgrounds are particularly significant for the study of language as they largely came to London from places in Ireland where Irish continued

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<sup>27</sup> David Fitzpatrick highlights the fact that numbers travelling to Britain were under-recorded and so there is a need for caution when drawing inferences from the official emigration statistics. Fitzpatrick states that Irish emigrants from Connacht and Leinster eluded enumeration by taking the Dublin ferries and that police enumerators seem to have missed 1/7 of emigrants leaving Munster, 9/10 from Connacht, 2/5 from Ulster and 4/5 from Leinster. David Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland VI*, pp. 653-723.

<sup>28</sup> James Mullin and Patrick Maume, *The Story of a Toiler's Life* (Dublin, 2000), p. 205.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921', p. 656.

<sup>30</sup> Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 54.

to be spoken as a vernacular. They also arrived with few industrial skills into towns and cities where only a narrow range of options was open to them, resulting in a prevailing experience of urban hardship. This has rendered the Irish in Britain a somewhat less desirable subject than the success stories which dominate much of the historiography of the Irish in America. Lastly, not only has the scale and composition of Irish migration to Britain long influenced historians of migration, so too has the notion of the transience of these migrants and their fate in their new city. The Irish in nineteenth-century Britain have been viewed by historians as temporary residents whose ultimate destination was America, and similarly by contemporaries as a group whose residence in Britain was “only a step towards the accomplishment of that end”.<sup>31</sup> While it is true that Irish migration to Britain lacked the permanence of that to America (owing largely to proximity and the ability to travel the short distance) and that stepwise migration was characteristic of the Irish experience overall, Britain was only a temporary step for some. This notion of transience has led to the assumption that *all* Irish migrants in Britain were just temporary which, in turn, has led to a negligence of the experience of the Irish in Britain in its own right.

This thesis is located in the context of recent research on the Irish abroad that recognises that the experiences of Irish migration and settlement in Britain were more complex and varied than earlier studies have suggested. This awareness has caused an increase in both the pace and scale of research on the Irish abroad, beginning with

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<sup>31</sup> John Garwood, *The Million-peopled City: Or, One Half of the People of London Made Known to the Other Half* (London, 1853), p. 301; David Morris, “‘Gone to work to America’: Irish step-migration through South Wales in the 1860s and 1870s”, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 34: 3 (2016), pp. 297-313.

Patrick O’Sullivan’s multi-volume edited collection *The Irish World Wide* (1992).<sup>32</sup> As a result, the representation of the Irish as the outcasts of nineteenth-century Britain – an image “accepted uncritically as a permanent and universal feature of Irish life in the great Victorian cities”<sup>33</sup> – has begun to be challenged, notably by Liam Harte on the social realities and changing self-consciousness of Irish migrants, Bronwen Walter on gender and race, and Roger Swift and Sean Campbell on the complexities, variations and multi-generational element of Irish migration.<sup>34</sup> However, much continues to reiterate the established view and emphasise the role of impoverished Irish immigrants while paying less attention to others. This is true for the historiography of London; it has remained centred on the Irish community’s segregation based upon their poverty, ethnicity and religion, most notably in Lynn Hollen Lees’s valuable and frequently cited monograph and a number of collected works edited by Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley.<sup>35</sup> This can be partly explained by the nature, quantity and availability of source material; while contemporary accounts of the Irish in America were largely self-congratulatory, as discussed, contemporary debate on the Irish in Britain was primarily concerned with the challenge which the

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<sup>32</sup> This includes a valuable contribution by Roger Swift in which he identifies the directions which future scholarly engagement should take. Roger Swift, ‘The Historiography of the Irish in Nineteenth-century Britain’ in Patrick O’Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 52-81.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick O’Sullivan, ‘Introduction’ in Patrick O’Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Liam Harte, *The Literature of the Irish in Britain: Autobiography and Memoir, 1725-2001* (Basingstoke, 2009); Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London, 2001); ‘Whiteness and Diasporic Irishness: Nation, Gender and Class’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37: 9 (2011), pp. 1295-1312; ‘Personal lives: narrative accounts of Irish women in the diaspora’, *Irish Studies Review*, 21: 1 (2013), pp. 37-54; Roger Swift and Sean Campbell, ‘The Irish in Britain’ in Biagini and Daly, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, pp. 515-533.

<sup>35</sup> Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979); Jacqueline Turton, ‘Mayhew’s Irish: the Irish poor in mid nineteenth-century London’ in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 122-155; Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (1985); *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939* (London, 1989); *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999); *Irish Identities in Victorian Britain* (London and New York, 2011); Roger Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914: A Documentary History* (Cork, 2002).

Irish influx posed. The large numbers of commentaries that investigated urban poverty and highlighted the overrepresentation of Irish within the poorer classes have continued to inform historiography, but such a focus has resulted in the neglect of migrants' individual and collective social and cultural experiences such as language maintenance and manifestations of identity.<sup>36</sup> Although local studies of Irish urban settlement and demography have increasingly informed recent historiography, there still exist very few studies of the Irish in London, partly owing to the simple practical difficulties of researching a group dispersed across such a large city, meaning other urban centres continue to provide focal points for the study of the Irish in Britain.<sup>37</sup>

This thesis is principally concentrated on the lower classes owing to the high concentration of Irish speakers among this group, particularly in the period 1850-1880. Yet despite scholarly focus on the Irish poor in London, the Irish language in the city remains under-investigated. Little is known about its history or its speakers in Great Britain, more broadly, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and scholarly engagement, though not entirely absent, continues to be limited. With very few exceptions, most notably Máiréad Nic Craith and Janet Leyland (1997) on the Irish language in Britain and John Royds (1992) and Raphael Samuel (1989) on the role of the Irish language in the Catholic Church, historians have overlooked the survival of

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to the experiences of women, the middle class, the Irish Protestant communities, contributions to the labour movement, Irish nationalist activity, and the production of histories of the Irish experience at the local level. Roger Swift, 'Identifying the Irish in Victorian Britain: Recent Trends in Historiography', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 27: 2/3 (2009), pp. 134-151.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Mervyn Busted on Manchester, Carl Chinn on Birmingham, Terence McBride on Glasgow, and John Belchem on Liverpool. Mervyn Busted, 'Little Islands of Erin: Irish Settlement and Identity in Mid Nineteenth-century Manchester', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 18: 2-3 (1999), pp. 94-127; Carl Chinn, '“Sturdy Catholic Emigrants”: the Irish in Early Victorian Birmingham' in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Victorian Britain*, pp. 52-74; Terence McBride, 'Irishness in Glasgow, 1863-70', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 24: 1 (2006), pp. 1-21; 'The Secular and the Radical in Irish Associational Culture of Mid-Victorian Glasgow', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 28: 1 (2010), pp. 31-41; John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: A History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool, 2007).

the Irish language prior to and separate from the Gaelic Revival.<sup>38</sup> The revival itself has also received limited investigation and has traditionally been the preserve of literary scholars, while the principal overview remains Donnchadh Ó Súilleabháin (1989). Although recent studies on the various manifestations of cultural nationalism in London by Darragh Gannon (2010), Stephen Moore and Paul Darby (2011), and Richard Kirkland (2014) have begun to broaden the perspective, this work remains in its infancy, while the investigation of the language prior to the revival is still almost entirely absent.<sup>39</sup> This scarcity of scholarly research into the Irish language is not exclusive to London, nor to Philadelphia or San Francisco either. Despite the vast literature on the Irish in America, only a limited sense exists of the full magnitude of the language's presence within the many Irish communities across the United States and most researchers have limited themselves to the history of the language revival.

This trend originates in Ireland, where historians have been reluctant to examine the momentous linguistic change that occurred in the nineteenth century, as though “language changes were commonplace occurrences of proven insignificance”.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup> Máiréad Nic Craith and Janet Leyland, ‘The Irish Language in Britain: A case study of North West England’, *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 30: 3 (1997), pp. 171-185; John Royds, ‘The Dear Old Tongue in the Heart of Babylon: the Catholic Church and the Irish Language in South London, 1750-1914’, *Catholic Ancestor*, 4: 1 (1992), pp. 31-36; Raphael Samuel, ‘An Irish Religion’ in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Vol II: Minorities and Outsiders* (London and New York, 1989), pp. 94-120.

<sup>39</sup> Donnchadh Ó Súilleabháin, *Conradh na Gaeilge i Londain, 1894-1917* (Dublin, 1989); John Hutchinson and Alan O’Day, ‘The Gaelic Revival in London, 1900-22: limits of ethnic identity’ in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in Victorian Britain*, pp. 254-276. Recent works: John Hutchinson, ‘Diaspora Dilemmas and Shifting Allegiances: The Irish in London between Nationalism, Catholicism and Labourism’ (1900-22) *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10: 1 (2010), pp. 107-125; Darragh Gannon, ‘Celticism in Exile: the London Gaelic League, 1917-1921’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30 (2010), pp. 82-101; Stephen Moore and Paul Darby, ‘Gaelic Games, Irish Nationalist Politics and the Irish Diaspora in London, 1895–1915’, *Sport in History*, 31: 3 (2011), pp. 257-282; Richard Kirkland, ‘Creating Irish London: Modes of Performative Irishness in London, 1870-1890’, *Nordic Irish Studies*, 13: 2 (2014), pp. 137-154.

<sup>40</sup> Seán de Fréine, *The Great Silence: the study of a relationship between language and nationality* (Dublin, 1965), pp. 3-4.

replacement of Irish by English is an emotional issue; it has created a number of myths in the popular imagination, some of which filtered into academic discourse.<sup>41</sup> The language's perceived shared trajectory with the fate of Ireland and its people from the late nineteenth century onwards has led to its role prior to and outside of the revival being overlooked.<sup>42</sup> Although more research has been carried out on the history of the Irish language since Seán de Fréine's statement, particularly in very recent years from Nicholas Wolf (2014) and Aidan Doyle (2015), this discussion remains in its early stages, with Wolf noting as recently as 2014 that de Fréine's framework continues to underpin current historiography and that little has changed since Daniel Corkery's 1954 work *The Fortunes of the Irish Language*, which was the first academic attempt to give an overview of the language.<sup>43</sup> Studies of the Irish language continue to focus on cultural conflict and loss: reviewing when and for what reasons Irish declined, the literary history and manuscript tradition of the language, and the evolution of Irish-language revivalism and the ideological and symbolic role of the language within early twentieth-century nationalist debate.<sup>44</sup> The causes of language decline in Ireland have been the subject of considerable commentary, with Maureen Wall's 1969 account continuing to be the most frequently referenced source and particularly valuable for its reassessment of many historiographical tropes of the previous half-century, while contributions from Brian Ó Cuív (1969, 1989) and various authors in the Geography Publications County Histories provide further valuable and current overviews of the

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<sup>41</sup> Aidan Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language: from the Norman Invasion to Independence* (New York, 2015), p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost, *The Irish Language in Ireland: From Goídel to Globalisation* (London and New York, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island: State, Religion, Community, and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland, 1770-1870* (Madison, Wis., 2014), p. 13; Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, 'Scéal Grinn? Jokes, Puns, and the Shaping of Bilingualism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Journal of British Studies*, 48: 1 (2009), pp. 51-75; Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 17.

language in some, though not all, counties in Ireland.<sup>45</sup> However, the effects of language decline, including the impact and lived experience of language change in nineteenth-century Ireland, the relationship between language change and the economic and social transformation of Ireland in this period, and what it was like to be caught in the midst of it, remain obscure and have only recently been considered. Owing to the Gaelic Revival's creation of a written record and revivalist narrative, the large amounts of scholarly work focused on the language's role within the cultural nationalist and independence movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have overshadowed any accounts of Irish-speaking *unrelated* to the language's decline and subsequent revival.<sup>46</sup> Even within this dominant narrative, the

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<sup>45</sup> Maureen Wall, 'The Decline of the Irish Language' in Brian Ó Cuív (ed.), *A View of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 81-90; Brian Ó Cuív, 'Irish language and literature, 1845-1921' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland*, VI, pp. 385-435; Vincent Morley, 'The Irish Language' in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), pp. 320-342.

County Histories: Mairín Nic Eoin, 'Irish language and literature in county Kilkenny in the nineteenth century' in William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Kilkenny: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 465-480; Cornelius G. Buttmer, 'Gaelic Literature and Contemporary Life in Cork 1700-1840' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttmer (eds.), *Cork: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 585-654; Diarmaid Ó Doibhlin, 'Tyrone's Gaelic Literary Legacy' in Charles Dillon and Henry A. Jefferies (eds.), *Tyrone: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 403-432; Pádraig Ó Baoighill, 'The Irish Language in Tyrone' in *Tyrone: History and Society*, pp. 665-698; Máire Ní Chiosáin, 'The Irish Language in Co. Clare in the Early Twentieth Century: A Census-based Perspective' in Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 503-520; Breandán Ó Madagáin, 'The Irish Tradition in Limerick' in Liam Irwin and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (eds), *Limerick: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 357-380; Lesa Ní Mhunghaile, 'The Irish Language and Gaelic Literary Heritage of County Longford in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries' in Martin Morris and Fergus O'Farrell (eds.), *Longford: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2010), pp. 283-295.

Other examples of this increased output and continued framework include Máiréad Nic Craith, *Malartú Teanga: An Ghaeilge i gCorcaigh sa Naoú hAois Déag* (Bremen, 1994); Tony Crowley, *The Politics of Language in Ireland, 1366-1922: A Sourcebook* (London, 2000); Mac Giolla Chríost, *The Irish Language in Ireland*; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Language, Ideology and National Identity' in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 42-58; Caoilfhionn Nic Phóidín and Seán Ó Cearnaigh (eds), *A New View of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 2008); Barry McCrea, *Languages of the Night: Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe* (Newhaven, 2015); and Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*.

<sup>46</sup> Examples include Breandán Ó Conaire (ed.), *Douglas Hyde: Language, Lore and Lyrics* (Dublin, 1986); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987); Janet Egleson Dunleavy and Gareth W. Dunleavy (eds),

Gaelic League is given privilege, obscuring the foundational achievements of predecessor revivalist societies, such as the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (1876) and the Gaelic Union (1880), to be discussed in Chapter One.<sup>47</sup> Despite the volume of work available on this period, however, the effects of the language's revival on Irish-speaking communities remain obscure.

This thesis elaborates on recent work by Niall Ó Ciosáin and Nicholas Wolf which seeks to examine language use (separate from the issue of language shift) and the effects of language decline and attitudes in practice by expanding their approach to include the diaspora.<sup>48</sup> This research explores language contact and bilingualism in practice and the ways in which Irish and English were used simultaneously by individuals or groups. It focuses on Irish as a public language in order to gain a better understanding of where, when, how and with whom Irish speakers interacted and how legal and cultural structures facilitated or prevented these conversations from taking place. Using this approach, Wolf concludes that culture and language can be separated and that the experiences of, and consequences for, Irish-speaking communities of the period, outside of the considerations of decline, can be recognised.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the

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*Douglas Hyde: a Maker of Modern Ireland* (Oxford, 1991); Máirtín Ó Murchú, *Cumann Buan-Choimeáda na Gaeilge: tús an athréimnithe* (Dublin, 2001); Betsey Taylor Fitzsimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin, 2004); and Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society 1893-1910* (Syracuse, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Brian Ó Conchubhair, 'The Culture War: The Gaelic League and Irish Ireland' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Vol. IV: 1880 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 196-220.

<sup>48</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Gaelic Culture and Language Shift' in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Guide to Recent Research* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 136-152; *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Dublin, 2010); 'Varieties of Literacy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Gender, Religion, and Language' in Rebecca Anne Barr, Sarah-Anne Buckley, Muireann Ó Cinnéide (eds), *Literacy, Language and Reading in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Liverpool, 2019), pp. 15-27; Wolf, 'Scéal Grinn?'; Wolf, 'History and Linguistics: The Irish Language as a Case Study in an Interdisciplinary Approach to Culture' in Nils Langer, Steffan Davies, and William Vandebusshe (eds), *Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography. Studies in Historical Linguistics 9* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 49-66; *An Irish-Speaking Island*.

<sup>49</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 14-16.

relationship between the Catholic Church and the Irish language remains something of an ‘untold story’, in Ó Ciosáin’s words, despite the fact that religion was fundamental to the worldview of Irish speakers and that the Catholic churches were, in fact, crucial in determining the speed and character of the language shift.<sup>50</sup> Wolf’s recent work has paved the way for uncovering the ways in which the Catholic Church accommodated Irish speakers at the local level, and his findings can be traced to the Irish diaspora.<sup>51</sup> This thesis thus extends this combined approach by focusing on the ‘ordinary’ people’s outlook, the daily social conditions of language change, and the role of the Catholic Church in the selected urban case studies.

The limited scholarly engagement with the effects of linguistic decline in Ireland has had a direct influence on engagement with the language in the diaspora. It has created an assumption that it was insignificant and that because many Irish migrants *could* speak English, they did so exclusively. As a result, the Irish have long been classified as an English-speaking migrant group: Joshua Fishman (1966) excludes Irish altogether from his list of immigrant languages in the United States while Miller supports the traditional view that English was the language of progress and opportunity, stating that even though the Famine emigration had a “decidedly Gaelic character” and that between one-quarter and one-third of all Famine emigrants were

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<sup>50</sup> Ó Ciosáin, ‘Gaelic Culture and Language Shift’, pp. 147-148. See also Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, ‘The Catholic Church and religious culture in nineteenth-century Mayo’ in Gerard Moran and Nollaig Ó Muraíle (eds), *Mayo: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 319-342; -- ‘Languages and Identities’ in Biagini and Daly, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, pp. 53-67.

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, ‘The Irish-Speaking Clergy in the Nineteenth-Century: Education, Trends, and Timing’, *New Hibernia Review*, 12: 4 (2008), pp. 62-83; Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*.

Irish-speaking (equating to half a million people), most Irish emigrants quickly assimilated to American norms in speech, as well as diet and dress.<sup>52</sup>

With the notable exception of Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin's valuable edited collection *Go Meiriceá Siar* (1979), the Irish language in the United States received little or no scholarly investigation until more recent decades, with the subject benefitting (to some extent) from the growth in scholarly interest in the geographical, economic, and social origins of migrants, the social composition of migrant streams, and in the definition of 'diaspora'.<sup>53</sup> This burgeoning historiography is centred upon two themes, the first being the repudiation of the commonly held view that Irish immigrants were a solely English-speaking group by providing evidence of the continuation of Irish-speaking in specific regions or individual communities in the United States, with Thomas Ihde's notable collected work (1994) providing valuable contributions and revealing pockets of Irish-speakers throughout the United States.<sup>54</sup> Second is the role which Irish played in the formation of an Irish-American identity and the increased prominence which organisations such as the Philo-Celtic clubs (the first of them founded in Boston in 1873), the New York Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (1878) and

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<sup>52</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Language Loyalty in the United States: the Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (The Hague, 1966); Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, p. 297, 508.

<sup>53</sup> Ó hAnnracháin, *Go Meiriceá Siar*. In comparison, the Welsh language in America has received far more scholarly attention owing to the existence of a greater number of Welsh speakers and much richer evidence of language use, even though Welsh immigrants were fewer in total numbers. See Esther Whitfield, 'Mordecai & Haman: The Drama of Welsh America' in Marc Shell (ed.), *American Babel: Literatures of the United States from Abnaki to Zuni* (Cambridge MA and London, 2002), pp. 93-116; Gethin Matthews, 'Miners, Methodists and Minstrels: The Welsh in the Americas and their Legacy' in Michael Newton (ed.), *Celts in the Americas* (Sydney, NS, 2013), pp. 94-116.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994). Individual contributions include Kenneth E. Nilsen, 'Irish in Nineteenth Century New York' in Ofelia García and Joshua A. Fishman (eds), *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York City* (Berlin and New York, 1997); pp. 53-69; 'Thinking of Monday: The Irish Speakers of Portland, Maine,' *Éire/Ireland*, 25: 1 (1990), pp. 6-19; William J. Mahon, *Thomas Griffin (1829-96) of Corca Dhuibhne and the Irish community of Lawrence, Massachusetts* (Aberystwyth, 2007).

the Gaelic League (1898) afforded to the language from the 1870s onwards, most notably Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin (1990) and Úna Ní Bhroiméil (2003).<sup>55</sup> Echoing the historiographical situation regarding the Irish language in Ireland, so many researchers have remained dedicated to the history of the Gaelic League and the language revival in the United States that the Irish language has become very visible in questions of nationality, yet the study of it as something other than a cultural marker has been almost entirely overlooked, with the exceptions of Ó hAnnracháin, Ihde and essays by Jeffrey Kallen on language decline in America and Karen Corrigan on language shift in Ireland and attitudes towards the language in both Ireland and America.<sup>56</sup> In terms of a similar historiography for the language in Britain, as of yet, Máiréad Nic Craith and Janet Leyland (1997) remain the one notable exception.<sup>57</sup>

We know little about what happened to Irish-speakers once they arrived on British or American shores – the extent to which they used Irish, their attitudes towards it, their willingness to use and transmit the language, and their reasons for doing so, and the processes which facilitated this. The scholarship that addresses these questions is, at present, confined to Nicholas Wolf and his ongoing project *Irish Speakers & the Empire City*, which aims to identify and record the household information of New York City residents born in Ireland who claimed Irish as their mother tongue on the

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<sup>55</sup> Úna Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America, 1870–1915: The Gaelic Revival* (Dublin, 2003); Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin, *Mícheál Ó Lócháin agus An Gaodhal* (Dublin, 1990).

<sup>56</sup> Ó hAnnracháin, *Go Meiriceá Siar*; Ihde, *The Irish Language in the United States*; Jeffrey L. Kallen, 'Language and Ethnic Identity: The Irish Language in the United States' in Liam Mac Mathúna and David Singleton (eds), *Language Across Cultures* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 101-112; Karen Corrigan, 'I gcuntas Dé mún Béarla do na leanbhain: Eisimirce agus an Ghaeilge sa naoú aois deag' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 143-161.

<sup>57</sup> Máiréad Nic Craith and Janet Leyland, 'The Irish Language in Britain: a case study of North West England', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 10, 3 (1997), pp. 171-185.

1910 census, and a recent contribution from Thomas Ihde (2013).<sup>58</sup> While New York City has been the subject of the majority of investigations into the language, none of London, Philadelphia or San Francisco have and their inclusion will provide an important addition to realising the full extent of the language's presence in the United States and Great Britain, as well as demonstrating the impact of different urban environments on language shift and contemporary attitudes.

## Identity

This thesis will explore the ways in which a diasporic sense of 'Irishness' was constructed and displayed by Irish migrants over a period of seventy years. The concept of 'identity' is nuanced and varied: it is defined by Stuart Hall (1996) as a recognition of a common origin or shared characteristics with another person, group, or ideal, and a process of articulation; by John Edwards (2009) as an individual's own subjective sense of self as well as personal classification 'markers' that appear as important (both to oneself and to others) and that delineate group membership; and by David Evans (2013) as "the idea, sense and perception of self or self-concept".<sup>59</sup> Its ambiguity and fluidity make identity difficult to define in precise terms, however, its basic principle is similarity; it signifies the 'sameness' of an individual to others.<sup>60</sup> It is drawn from geographic and positional location, meaning the place to which an

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<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.nyuirish.net/irishlanguagehistory/>. Thomas Ihde, 'Emancipation through Exile: Irish speakers in the Americas' in Newton, *Celts in the Americas*, pp. 56-75.

<sup>59</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: who needs 'identity'?' in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), pp. 1-17; John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 16; David Evans, 'The Identities of Language' in David Evans (ed.), *Language and Identity: Discourse in the World* (London and New York, 2015), p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity*, p. 19.

individual belongs and their place relative to other group identities.<sup>61</sup> Identity provides a way to interpret, understand and narrate one's place in the world, rather than being born of natural characteristics. Although it appears to be 'natural' and pre-existing, it is a social construct that is assigned to people by others outside the group or created through active self-ascription.<sup>62</sup> For the lower class Irish migrants who form the focus of this thesis, their identity was usually passive, ascribed by others, and was influenced by local and transnational circumstances and stemmed from the impact of simply being surrounded by similar people in a new country. A negative attribution of 'Irishness' was assigned to the majority of Irish migrants, particularly in the early decades of this study as exemplified by the Irish in London, whereas self-identification became more important for the growing Irish middle classes who found themselves in a position where they could rediscover their identity and the social groups to which they belonged.<sup>63</sup> This manifested itself in engagement with associational culture, politics and cultural nationalism, particularly from the 1870s onwards.

Both Edwards and Evans argue that language is inseparable from identity; it is a self-concept reflected and created by language.<sup>64</sup> Language is more than a simple means of communication and can be considered a 'marker' of identity at both the individual and group level; it can reveal speakers' memberships in particular speech communities, social classes, and ethnic and national groups.<sup>65</sup> Edwards' distinction between language as an instrumental tool and language as "an emblem of groupness, a symbol,

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<sup>61</sup> Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London, 2000), p. 14; Anna de Fina, 'Group identity, narrative and self-representations' in Anna de Fina, Deborah Schiffrin and Michael Bamberg (eds), *Discourse and Identity* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 351-375.

<sup>62</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity*, p. 23.

<sup>63</sup> Marije van Hattum, 'Queensland for Ever & Augus un ballybug go braugh': the Expression of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Irish Emigrant Letters' in Evans, *Language and Identity*, pp. 105-122.

<sup>64</sup> Evans, 'Introduction' in *Language and Identity*, pp. 3-14.

<sup>65</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity*, pp. 20-21.

a psychosocial rallying-point” is central to this thesis.<sup>66</sup> While the years 1850-1880 witness the use of Irish as a means of communication in Ireland and abroad, to an extent, the subsequent decades witness its changing role: it became an identity resource and a symbol of a cultivated Irish national identity. This national identity was constructed as part of a project – political independence – and the Irish language became increasingly central to the independence movement throughout the course of the years covered by this thesis. Iarfhlaith Watson argues that identity is not just about the ‘us’, it also is about the ‘them’ who are not included, and against whom the ‘us’ is compared; this is supported by Edwards’ observation that nationalist self-definition and identity maintenance is often built upon the denigration of the ‘other’ and Hall’s statement that identities are constructed through, not outside, difference.<sup>67</sup> This is easily identifiable in Ireland’s case: the revival of the Irish language in Ireland and, by extension, in the diaspora, went hand-in-hand with the construction of an Irish identity, distinct from and in contrast with notions of Englishness or Britishness. Over time, the existence of a national identity then became central to the justification for reviving the Irish language in Ireland.<sup>68</sup> In the diaspora, the cultural and symbolic capital associated with a native language became significant from the 1880s onwards, particularly in the United States where the Irish language and Gaelic Revival activities ultimately garnered respect and standing for the American Irish.

The role of Irish in the revival has been the subject of considerable scholarship, as discussed, but its role in the development of an Irish migrant identity in London,

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<sup>66</sup> Edwards, *Language and Identity*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>67</sup> Iarfhlaith Watson, ‘The Irish Language and Identity’ in Nic Pháidín and Ó Cearnaigh, *A New View of the Irish Language*, pp. 66-75; Edwards, *Language and Identity*, p. 10; Hall, ‘Who needs ‘identity?’’ p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Watson, ‘The Irish Language and Identity’, p. 66, 74.

Philadelphia and San Francisco prior to this has yet to be explored. This thesis explores what role the language played in the lives of native speakers and less well-off migrants between the years 1850 and 1880, before Irish came to be employed as an emblem of Irishness in the rediscovery and construction of an Irish national identity, and the years 1880-1920, the revival period. This thesis therefore explores the changing role the Irish language played in the diasporic sense of identity throughout the period in question (1850-1920) and the effect this had on migrant experiences in the selected cities.

## Methodology and Limitations

Researching historical language shift in the Irish and diasporic contexts comes with a number of limitations which have influenced the direction of this thesis, the first of which is the fact that nineteenth-century census figures for the Irish language cannot be taken as accurate. The 1851 census of Ireland was the first to include a question about language, meaning comparable records relating to the preceding period do not exist. Records for 1750-1850 are provided by barony rather than nation-wide and are estimated rather than actual figures, though these figures do provide a valid measure of the minimum level of Irish-speaking amongst new generations.<sup>69</sup> In the absence of contemporary statistics, the actual numbers who spoke Irish before 1851 can only be estimates: Aidan Doyle (2015) suggests that approximately half of the population of 5 million was Irish-speaking in 1800; Vincent Morley (2016) estimates this to be slightly higher at 60 per cent of the population in the same year, and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (2017) estimates three million by 1845, out of a population of 8.5 million, while all emphasise the increasing bilingual nature of society and the fact that fewer people were

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<sup>69</sup> Corrigan, 'I gcuntas Dé mún Béalra do na leanbhain', p. 148.

using Irish on a day-to-day basis.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the relegation to a footnote of the language question in the 1851, 1861 and 1871 censuses meant that both respondents and enumerators alike may have missed it, and historians understand the figures from these years to have been underestimated. Responses then became more reliable from 1881 when the question was included in the body of the form.<sup>71</sup> While the 1891 census is a valuable comparison for the previous decades, the figures after this once again become skewed as a result of the Gaelic Revival; the establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893 changed the climate of opinion in relation to Irish-speaking and the numbers claiming knowledge of Irish increased, particularly amongst young people, when knowledge may in fact have been confined to basic words and phrases. By the 1911 census, respondents had the background of twenty years of being encouraged to learn and speak Irish.<sup>72</sup> Even bearing this in mind, the census still gives a valid indication of the minimum level of Irish-speaking amongst those born in the several decades prior to 1851 and still alive in 1911.<sup>73</sup> In Britain, no such statistics exist for the period in question and in the United States it was not until 1910 that census-takers began to record the mother tongue of anyone born outside of the United States, as well as that of any foreign-born parent of those recorded in the census.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 129; Morley, 'The Irish Language', p. 335; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Languages and Identities' in Biagini and Daly, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, pp. 53-67.

<sup>71</sup> Karen Corrigan, 'The Ideology of Nationalism and its Impact on Accounts of Language Shift in Nineteenth Century Ireland', *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 28: 2 (2003), pp. 201-229.

<sup>72</sup> Garret FitzGerald, 'Estimates for Baronies of Minimum Level of Irish-Speaking Amongst Successive Decennial Cohorts, 1771-1781 to 1861-1871', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 84C (1984), pp. 117-155.

<sup>73</sup> Garret FitzGerald, 'Irish-Speaking in the Pre-Famine Period: A Study Based on the 1911 Census Data for People Born before 1851 and Still Alive in 1911', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 103C: 5 (2003), pp. 191-283.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, *Irish Speakers and the Empire City* <http://www.nyuirish.net/irishlanguagehistory/>

The second limitation concerns source material in and relating to the Irish language. During the nineteenth century and prior to the revival, Irish was primarily an oral language with relatively little in terms of written expressions of the language, with the exception of the manuscript tradition. Printing in Irish was restricted to the serialisation of *Easy Lessons or Self-Instruction in Irish* in the *Dublin Nation* between 1858 and 1862 (and its separate publication in 1863) and the *Tuam News and Western Advertiser*'s 'Gaelic Department' in the 1870s.<sup>75</sup> The further back one goes, the scarcer sources relating to Irish become and the more difficult they are to interpret.<sup>76</sup> The documents relating to the pre-revival period which survive do so by chance and often present an incomplete picture of the facts. Wolf notes that languages spoken by lower-class or marginalised communities are especially prone to invisibility owing to the nature of the historical record (which is often created by the middle and upper classes), while research into non-elites is typically carried out by others than the subjects themselves.<sup>77</sup> Both of these statements are true for the Irish language in nineteenth-century Ireland, which by this period was spoken predominantly by the lower classes owing to a host of historical and socio-economic reasons, and where much research conducted into the language was indeed carried out by elites: first by antiquarians in the middle of the century and then revivalists in the closing decades. Instead of coming from Irish speakers themselves, most of our information regarding nineteenth-century Irish speakers as well as Irish-speaking migrants comes from external observers, such as officials and administrators in Ireland and the host countries, many of whom showed prejudices to emigrants and the great majority of whom were male, or from English-

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<sup>75</sup> Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921: Ideology and Innovation* (Penn. State University, Pennsylvania, 1994), pp. 5-7. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 37.

<sup>76</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 6.

speaking visitors to Ireland or inhabitants of English-speaking parts of Ireland. Their statements therefore must be treated with caution.<sup>78</sup> By the turn of the century, the language had come to be strongly associated with the emerging nationalist ethos in Ireland, and in Britain and the United States as well.<sup>79</sup> The Gaelic League, peopled largely by civil servants, created a written record through pamphlets, newspapers, and membership lists, and also fostered and encouraged a modern Gaelic literature – including periodicals, textbooks, plays, poetry, collections of short stories, prose, and novels, and folktales both new and old, in Irish or as translations. While this renders the period easier to study from a practical point of view, this literature is top-down, owing to the predominantly urban and middle-class composition of the League, and was chiefly concerned with the role of the language in Ireland’s nationalist movement.<sup>80</sup> All of this means that there are simply very few records outside of the manuscript tradition created by the members of the Irish-speaking community themselves, either in Ireland or the diaspora.

A final and central challenge is identifying who exactly Irish speakers were. In a bilingual context, there is a difficulty in defining a speaker of a language and there is a difference between the activities of language activists involved in language promotion and language preservation, and those who were dominant or bilingual native speakers. Thomas Ihde defines nineteenth- and twentieth-century bilingual speakers as those who used Irish at home for relationships, domestic tasks, and religious practices, as well as at work (e.g. fishing and farming), but used English at

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<sup>78</sup> Gerard Moran, ‘‘Farewell to Kilkelly, Ireland’’: Emigration from Post-Famine Ireland’ in Moran and Ó Muraíle, *Mayo: History and Society*, pp. 393-413; Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>79</sup> Corrigan, ‘The Ideology of Nationalism’, p. 213.

<sup>80</sup> McMahan, *Grand Opportunity*, pp. 108-112.

school, in shops, and with strangers. But even these terms do not have distinct definitions and varying degrees of both Irish and English fluency must also be taken into account.<sup>81</sup> The same can be said for literacy, which Niall Ó Ciosáin (2019) scrutinises in detail. The achievement of literacy in English in nineteenth-century Ireland is often directly linked with the absence of literacy in Irish, as those who were able to read in English could not read the elaborate Irish of the manuscript tradition, but this binary formulation misunderstands the nature of literacy; the skill was transferable and simply relied on the provision of reading material. Literacy meant reading *and* writing, and differed between individuals, meaning there was no straightforward binary of literate/illiterate.<sup>82</sup> This complicates the picture; the available evidence (such as census data and language organisation reports) encourages the categorisation of people into ‘English-speaking’ or ‘Irish-speaking’. Doyle notes that it was more complex than a binary choice between language A and language B and that in the context of a largely bilingual Irish society, it was more about choosing the appropriate language for a specific task.<sup>83</sup> In reference to the Irish language movement in America, Ihde notes that while members of the language revival and preservation organisations of the time included native speakers and fluent learners, the reader of contemporary accounts usually must infer the distinctions between native speakers and language learners – the same can be said for each of the selected case studies.<sup>84</sup> In Britain and the United States there is a scarcity – sometimes a total absence – of direct evidence of the continued use of Irish. Additionally, this existing data tends to relate

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<sup>81</sup> Ihde, ‘Emancipation through Exile’, p. 57. In 1925 a special census of the Gaeltacht, conducted by Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, classified an Irish-speaker as a person possessing an ordinary conversational knowledge of Irish. See Ní Chiosáin, ‘The Irish Language in Co. Clare’, p. 508.

<sup>82</sup> Ó Ciosáin, ‘Varieties of Literacy’, pp. 24-25.

<sup>83</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> Ihde, ‘Emancipation through Exile’, p. 70.

to individual Irish speakers, rather than on whole immigrant communities of Irish speakers, making it a challenge to draw wider conclusions about the use of Irish in each city. However, while the archival record may not be perfectly suited to answering questions of how the Irish language functioned in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a broad methodology consisting of the close reading of a combination of quantitative and qualitative public and private sources has allowed the investigation of the Irish language in each of London, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

## Sources

Owing to these limitations, this thesis utilises a wide range of source material, primarily local and national newspapers, contemporary social and ethnographic commentaries, emigrant autobiographies, memoirs and correspondence, and the questionnaire returns from Ireland's National Folklore Collection. These are supplemented by archival material from Irish cultural clubs and nationalist organisations in the United States and Britain. The combination of these public and private sources has allowed the exploration of the Irish language abroad, and owing to unequal quantities and categories of evidence, each case study has benefitted to a greater extent from different sources – for example, London from social commentaries, Philadelphia from the Catholic press, and San Francisco from histories of California.

Newspapers, however, proved the most widely applicable and the most commonly utilised source in this thesis, acting as useful mirrors into the key debates and social views and expectations present in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Bearing in mind concerns that newspapers can be biased and merely a representation of the editors' opinions rather than those of the

general milieu, they remain a major source for political, economic and social history and for information on everyday life and a social barometer and chronicle of contemporary opinions, aspirations and debates, and continue to be successfully utilised in literature on the Irish diaspora.<sup>85</sup> Although newspapers do not frequently feature direct evidence of Irish speaking, they provide insights into contemporary attitudes towards the Irish and their language. The difference between the mainstream, religious and ethnic press became apparent during the course of this research: because mainstream newspapers have broad target audiences and tend to focus less upon the daily lives of specific communities and more upon major occasions in the political, religious, sporting and cultural life of cities and states, an oral and private language spoken by small numbers, such as Irish, becomes almost invisible. The ethnic Irish press is used most frequently in studies of the Irish in America, particularly the *Irish World* and *Irish American*, both published in New York; however, neither Philadelphia nor San Francisco published an Irish newspaper until the closing decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> In the absence of this, the religious press proved valuable owing to the predominance of the Irish in the American Catholic Church; Philadelphia's *Catholic Standard and Times* (1895-current) and the San Francisco *Monitor* (1858-1920) were essentially Irish newspapers. In London, the absence of an Irish publication

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<sup>85</sup> Stephen Vella, 'Newspapers' in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts From Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century History* (London, 2009), pp. 192-208.

<sup>86</sup> Philadelphia saw the birth of several Irish-American newspapers during the revival. These were the *Philadelphia Hibernian* (1893-97), the *Freeman and Irish American Review* (1889-91), the *Irish American News* (1892-93), and the *Irish-American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate* (1898-1904). In San Francisco it was the *Leader* (1902-).

at any point during this study was met by other source material – namely a broad selection of local newspapers and social commentaries.<sup>87</sup>

Like newspapers, contemporary social and ethnographic commentaries seldom yield direct evidence of Irish speaking in the diaspora, but they do reveal contemporary perceptions of immigrant groups, how these opinions formed and developed, and their effects. The value of these commentaries is particularly apparent in the case of London, where the numerous investigations into the living conditions of London's poor inadvertently became valuable sources for evidence of Irish-speaking in the city, the most notable of which are Thomas Beames (1852), William G. Todd (1856), Henry Mayhew (1856, 1861-64), Hugh Heinrick (1872) and Charles Booth (1889-1902), as well as a memoir by Rev Edward Price (1856) and the correspondence of clergy members.<sup>88</sup> The most prominent of commentaries on the Irish in America is John Francis Maguire (1868), as well as Rev Hugh Quigley (1878) for San Francisco.<sup>89</sup> The external perspective provided by newspapers and, to an extent, commentaries, is supplemented by emigrant autobiographies and correspondence as well as the National

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<sup>87</sup> These local London newspapers include, but are by no means restricted to, the *Marylebone Mercury* (1857-1945), *Islington Gazette* (1856-1912), *West London Observer* (1855-1957), *London Daily News* (1846-1912), *Pall Mall Gazette* (1865-1923), *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (1801-72), and the *Morning Chronicle* (1801-65). Other Philadelphia publications are the *Evening Telegraph* (1864-1918), *Philadelphia Bulletin* (1870-1978), *Philadelphia Inquirer* (1829-current), and the *Catholic Weekly Instructor* (1849-56). San Francisco publications include the *Daily Examiner* (1865-current), *Daily Alta California* (1850-91), *San Francisco Bulletin* (1855-1924), and *San Francisco Chronicle* (1865-current).

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Beames, *The Rookeries of London: Past, Present, and Prospective* (London, 1852); William G. Todd, 'The Irish in England', *Dublin Review* 41, 82 (December 1856), pp. 470-521; Henry Mayhew, *The Great World of London* (London, 1856); *London Labour and the London Poor: the condition and earnings of those that will work, cannot work, and will not work*. 4 volumes (London, 1861-64); Hugh Heinrick, *A Survey of the Irish in England* (1872), introduction and edited by Alan O'Day (London, 1990); Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. 17 Volumes (1889-1903); Rev Edward Price, *Sick Calls From the Diary of a Missionary Priest* (London, 1856); Letters to Archbishop Wiseman quoted in K. G. T. McDonnell, 'Roman Catholics in London 1850-1865' in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 429-443.

<sup>89</sup> John Francis Maguire, M. P., *The Irish in America* (London, 1868); Rev Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1878).

Folklore Collection questionnaire returns. Biographies by Michael MacGowan, Hugh Dorian and James Mullin and emigrant letters provide insights into the individual and personal experience of migration, settlement and language shift, while the questionnaires circulated by the National Folklore Collection ‘The Great Famine of 1845-1852’ (1945) and ‘Irish emigration to America’ (1955), consisting of almost five thousand pages of information (in both English and Irish) recorded from oral sources, contain invaluable and authentic memories from men and women alive during the period 1850-1920 and reveal much about attitudes towards the Irish language, as well as towards migration.<sup>90</sup> Combined, this collection of source material has allowed the formulation of a picture of the Irish language in the diaspora between 1850 and 1920, and the set of circumstances which allowed its maintenance and led to its decline.

## Thesis Structure

This thesis takes a geographical approach, exploring the Irish language in each case study individually, owing to the nature of source material. As a full data-set is not available for any one city, a thematic approach has proved less effective. By separating this thesis into two temporal spans, 1850-1880 and 1880-1920, both the pre-revival and the Gaelic Revival periods have been incorporated. This separation allows the focus to remain upon the pre-revival period, which has been largely neglected to date, when the Irish language continued to be spoken as a vernacular but which witnessed significant language shift, while also reflecting the significant change in attitudes

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<sup>90</sup> Michael MacGowan, *The Hard Road to Klondike*, translated from the Irish by Valentin Iremonger (London, 1962); Hugh Dorian, Breandán Mac Suibhne and David Dickson, *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Donegal* (Dublin, 2000); James Mullin, *The Story of a Toiler's Life* (Dublin, 1921); The Irish Emigrant Database: <http://ied.dippam.ac.uk/>; National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin.

towards the language and the nature of Irish speaking as a result of the cultural nationalist movement. This thesis spans a particularly turbulent period in the history of the Irish language, as well as one which witnessed unprecedented and sustained emigration; the year 1850 provides a useful starting point as it marks the end of the Famine, an event that represented a crucial point in the social and linguistic history of Ireland as deaths and emigration led to the greatest numerical loss among the sections of the population which spoke Irish, and it marked the beginning of substantial and sustained outward migration. This thesis concludes with 1920 when the nature of emigration began to change, slowing somewhat and becoming more centred on Great Britain than North America, and when the language took on a new, state-supported role following the establishment of the two Irish states in 1921-22.

A full account of the Irish language in the diaspora must take account of the decline of Irish in nineteenth-century Ireland, as well as migrant origins, and so this thesis opens with a detailed background of the status of and attitudes towards Irish in Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as outlining the scale and composition of emigration during this period. Chapters two, three and four then investigate the Irish language in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco in the period 1850-1880, first exploring the histories of each city and placing the Irish community within their local and international contexts before focusing on the evidence for and the position of the Irish language, bilingualism in practice and the ways in which Irish and English were used simultaneously by individuals or groups. During the period in question, London was a global political, financial and trade hub, capital of the then-powerful British Empire, and one of the most densely populated cities in the world, while among American cities Philadelphia was second only to New York City in terms

of population for much of the nineteenth century, and San Francisco was an instant city, appearing almost overnight as a result of the Gold Rush that began in 1848. These cities provide three contrasting environments for the Irish, who arrived in each in their droves, proving valuable in revealing universal Irish migrant experiences as well as regional differences, and demonstrating the spheres in which encounters between Irish and English occurred. The Catholic Church was a unifying force for Irish migrants throughout the diaspora, and its role in the maintenance of Irish in Ireland and overseas proved central to this research. The final chapter comprises a synopsis of the genesis, development and impact of the Gaelic revival in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco together, where the movement followed similar, though not identical, trajectories, and provides an important comparison to the preceding three decades. Together these chapters explore the various influences on the maintenance and perception of the Irish language, and its role in Irish identity, in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## **Chapter One: Setting the Scene: Ireland, Emigration, and the Irish Language, 1850-1920**

Irish society after the Famine underwent massive change, with the continuous decline of the population, which fell by about two million between 1845 and 1851 alone, and the rapid decline of the Irish language and shift in linguistic tradition to English being amongst the most notable features.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will provide an overview of Irish society between 1850 and 1920, and detail the fall and rise of the Irish language in Ireland during the period, detailing the reasons for the decline and the Gaelic revival, and what this meant for Ireland's nineteenth-century emigrants.

By 1914, the population of Ireland was half of what it had been in 1845: a result of excess mortality during the Famine, heavy and sustained emigration, late marriage, and a low birth-rate.<sup>2</sup> The extent of the devastation during and after the Famine is not the focus of this thesis, but its effect on all aspects of Irish life must be noted as it was a catalyst for many of the issues to be investigated here. It was still within living memory when the Irish Folklore Commission (now National Folklore Collection) circulated two questionnaires in 1945 and 1955 on the Great Famine and Emigration to America, respectively, when multiple respondents recount first- and second-hand experiences of deaths, mass emigration, and depopulated villages and townlands – like some areas in Co. Donegal where the “present population does not even represent half that which it

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<sup>1</sup> L. M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972), p. 134. See Figure 1. For language shift see Nicholas M. Wolf, ‘History and Linguistics: The Irish Language as a Case Study in an Interdisciplinary Approach to Culture’ in Nils Langer, Steffan Davies and Wim Vandenbussche (eds), *Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Oxford 2012), pp. 49-66. See Figures 3 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> L. P. Curtis Jr., ‘Ireland in 1914’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 145-188.

was at the time of the Famine”, or in Bodyke, Co. Clare, where the population of 1,250 in 1945 had been greater than 7,000 in 1844.<sup>3</sup> The effect of the Famine on the linguistic tradition was also significant. It is estimated that at the beginning of the nineteenth century up to sixty per cent of the population spoke the language, dropping to 1,524,286 in 1851 (23.26 per cent of the total population), 949,932 in 1881 (18.4 per cent), and just 664,387 in 1891 (14.5 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to emigration, population depletion, and language shift, the other distinctive features of the post-Famine period were the gradual transfer between 1870 and 1909 of ownership of land from landlords to tenants, as well as an increase in the average size of holdings, a swing from tillage to pasture, a decline in the number of agricultural labourers, a change in class structure, and the commercialisation of farming.<sup>5</sup> The entire period 1850-1920 saw the gradual encroachment by urban culture on the countryside and the expansion and influence of the literate and articulate middle-classes, within which Catholics were well-represented.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the period 1850-70 witnessed the so-called ‘devotional revolution’. Irish Catholics in the pre-Famine period had only a limited participation in the formal observances of their church and,

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<sup>3</sup> National Folklore Collection [hereafter NFC], MS1074, Hugh Dorrian (75), Bridgetown, Co. Donegal. Compiler: Irish Folklore Commission, 1945; NFC MS1068, Joseph O’Doherty, Bodyke N.S., Co. Clare. Compiler: Irish Folklore Commission, 1945.

<sup>4</sup> Diarmuid Ó Muirthe (ed.), *The English Language in Ireland* (Dublin, 1977), p. 80, and Garret FitzGerald, ‘Estimates for Baronies of Minimum Level of Irish-Speaking Amongst Successive Decennial Cohorts, 1771-1781 to 1861-1871’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 84C (1984), pp. 117-155. See Figure 3.

<sup>5</sup> Caitriona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester and New York, 2007), pp. 4-5. Largely as a result of the Lands Acts of 1870, 1881. 1885 and 1903. See Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland*, p. 154.

<sup>6</sup> Curtis, ‘Ireland in 1914’, p. 149. The following examples demonstrate the expansion of a Catholic middle class: in 1871 Catholics comprised 79% of publicans and hotelkeepers, 83% of shopkeepers, 88% of butchers, 89% of fishmongers, 82% of bakers, 78% of farmers, 70% of policemen, 61% of schoolteachers, and, lastly, 50% of civil servants. See W. E. Vaughan, ‘Ireland c.1870’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland V: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1801-70* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 726-798.

instead, they were devoted to a form of popular Catholicism which was deeply attached to the rites of passage, particularly baptisms and extreme unction, and which had a strong communal and festive element, as well as magical.<sup>7</sup> Pre-Famine Catholicism was centred on prayers in the home and pilgrimages to holy wells or sites whereas in the second half of the nineteenth century, Irish Catholics had transformed into practicing Catholics. This period saw the achievement of almost universal mass attendance, regular communion and confession, and a new popularity of the rosary, as well as the extension and improvement of church buildings.<sup>8</sup>

## Emigration from Ireland

The nature and composition of post-Famine emigration is significant for the study of the Irish language overseas. During the post-Famine period (defined by Kevin Kenny (2017) as the years between 1856 and 1921) some 3.5 million people emigrated from Ireland to the United States and one million to Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> Although emigration had long been a feature of Irish society by this period, the scale and composition changed drastically from the mid-century onwards: pre-Famine emigrants came predominantly from the mostly English-speaking and less Catholic-dominated regions of Ulster and Leinster, but they came in far greater numbers from the Catholic, and often Irish-

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<sup>7</sup> McBride calculates Sunday mass attendance in 1834 to be 43%. Attendance was weakest in the west, where Irish was more widely spoken. Ian McBride, 'Religion' in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), pp. 292-319. Confessions were also frequently neglected; there are no statistics for confessions (like there are for mass attendance), but indications from clergy correspondence suggest that this was frequently neglected by Irish Catholics in the decades before the Famine. Sean J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland* (Dublin, 1982), p. 90. For popular Catholicism see Sean Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dundalk, 1985), pp. 49-51.

<sup>8</sup> For pre-Famine Catholicism see Sheridan Gilley, 'Catholicism in Ireland' in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 99-112. For post-Famine changes, see McBride, 'Religion', p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Kenny, 'Irish Emigrations in a Comparative Perspective' in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 405-422.

speaking, provinces of Connacht and Munster thereafter (see Figure 2).<sup>10</sup> Kenny estimates that in the post-Famine era, approximately 51 per cent of emigrants came from Munster and Connacht.<sup>11</sup> In 1914, the counties with the highest rates of emigration were Mayo (with 10.1 people in 100 emigrating), Longford (8.9), Galway (8.6), Kerry (8.4), Leitrim (8.3), Clare (7.3), Cavan (7.2), Sligo (6.9), Louth (6.3), and Roscommon (6.3).<sup>12</sup> This alteration in emigrant origins is significant for this study as these areas correspond to those areas with the highest rates of nineteenth-century Irish-speaking, of which Cork, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Clare consistently had the highest numbers throughout the period. Jeffrey Kallen estimates that in the year 1851, 22.2 per cent of emigrants from Counties Cork, Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Donegal, Kilkenny, Waterford and Antrim were Irish speaking, while W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick estimate that in the period 1851-55 27.1 per cent of Irish emigrants in America were Irish-speaking, and in 1891-1900 this was 24.4 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1801-70' in Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland V*, pp. 562-622.

<sup>11</sup> Kenny, 'Irish Emigrations in a Comparative Perspective', p. 412.

<sup>12</sup> Curtis, 'Ireland in 1914', p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey L. Kallen, 'Irish as an American Ethnic Language' in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), pp. 27-40; W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 261-353.

Year	Population	Decade	Emigration
1851	6,552,385	1851-60	1,163,418
1861	5,798,967	1861-70	849,836
1871	5,412,377	1871-80	623,933
1881	5,174,836	1881-90	770,706
1891	4,704,750	1891-1900	433,526
1901	4,458,775	1901-10	346,024
1911	4,390,219		

Figure 1: Population and emigration of Ireland, 1851-1911<sup>14</sup>

	Ulster	Munster	Leinster	Connacht
1871	201,240	304,105	149,838	113,676
1881	240,110	181,370	110,619	86,551
1891	216,524	252,080	138,282	161,219
1901	86,455	177,236	49,552	117,750
<b>4-decade total</b>	<b>744,329</b>	<b>914,791</b>	<b>448,291</b>	<b>479,196</b>

Figure 2: Post-Famine emigration by province<sup>15</sup>

Also of importance is the composition of these migrant groups: throughout the period in question, emigrants came mostly from rural districts, were overwhelmingly young and single, and there was an almost equal gender breakdown – achieved through the

<sup>14</sup> Table from Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>15</sup> Census of Ireland, 1881-1911. Emigration returns 1911-20. Source: Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 29.

migration of single men and women, rather than of families.<sup>16</sup> By 1860, one-third of all Irish emigrants were aged 20-24 and this continued to be the case for two in five from the mid-1880s onwards.<sup>17</sup> This trend then continued into the twentieth century: in 1914, 86.6 per cent of all emigrants were between the ages of fifteen and 35 (while just 7.4 per cent were aged fifteen or under and 6 per cent were over the age of 35). In terms of occupation, the majority of these emigrants were classified as unskilled labourers (for men) and servants (for women). This was the case in the mid nineteenth century and even still in 1914, when 72.8 per cent of men were classified as agricultural labourers and 77.2 per cent of women as servants.<sup>18</sup> Emigrant origins varied according to destination, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, but it was the case for much of the nineteenth century that owing to their rural origins, Irish emigrants arrived overseas without transferrable skills, regular work experience, or knowledge of urban life.<sup>19</sup> This played a central role in the migrant experience in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

The great majority who emigrated from Ireland in the period 1850-1920 did so by their own resources, largely through ‘American money’ (remittances) and prepaid tickets, although assisted emigration did also exist to a degree in the form of state and private assistance.<sup>20</sup> One of the most important factors in determining a migrant’s destination

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<sup>16</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1801-70’, pp. 573-574.

<sup>17</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1801-70’, p. 575. David Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 606-652.

<sup>18</sup> Curtis, ‘Ireland in 1914’, pp. 147-148.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’, pp. 613-614.

<sup>20</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’, p. 617, 622. In the nineteenth century, 500,000 were assisted by official bodies to emigrate from Ireland, with 67,000 being aided by the Poor Law. Canada was the prime destination for emigrants assisted from workhouses. Poor Law assisted emigration has been largely overlooked. See Gerard Moran, ‘“Shovelling out the paupers”: the Irish Poor Law and assisted emigration during the Great Famine’ in Ciarán Reilly (ed.), *The Famine Irish: Emigration and the Great Hunger* (Dublin, 2016), pp. 22-40. During the Famine, some landlords provided assisted emigration in the hope of curtailing subdivision and promoting the consolidation of holdings, however, this had

was the location of emigrants already known to them and others from their home community, and the networks of friendship, marriage, residence and employment that had been created by earlier Irish migrants and their descendants. These networks were a powerful attraction to potential migrants in Ireland and the resulting chain migration reinforced existing patterns of settlement in the diaspora.<sup>21</sup> There was a well-established pattern of migration to America: one or two members of a large nuclear family would remain in Ireland and have large families, while the others would either emigrate or stay celibate. The children of those in Ireland would then have a large number of aunts and uncles or older siblings to whom they could emigrate, and the most recent arrival would join those who had already established themselves.<sup>22</sup> This is well-supported by the National Folklore Collection questionnaire returns: one respondent from Waterford writes that “the majority from my locality emigrated at the instance of some benefactor in America” and that “I have seen a whole family of 9 - 4 boys and five girls - emigrate one after the other to the States”.<sup>23</sup> A Sarah Doherty from Malin, Co. Donegal, went to America in 1892, aged twenty, and received passage from an aunt who was already there, as did “everyone who went away at that time”.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, a Nora Murphy from Lissarulla, Co. Galway went to Indianapolis sometime before 1900, having being “sent for” by her mother’s cousin. Murphy’s brother had emigrated before her, and her sister did so afterwards.<sup>25</sup> The O’Malley family of

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mostly abated by the early 1850s. Additionally, some philanthropic individuals provided passage, such as Vere Henry Lewis Foster who, at his own expense, aided the emigration of 1,250 girls from Counties Louth and Clare between 1849 and 1857. Of the five million emigrants who left Ireland between 1801 and 1870, only one in twenty received state or private assistance. See Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1801-70’, pp. 591-599.

<sup>21</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’, p. 609.

<sup>22</sup> David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana, Ill, 1990), pp. 26-28.

<sup>23</sup> NFC MS1407, Seán O’Keefe, Co. Waterford. Collector: J. O’Keefe, 1955.

<sup>24</sup> NFC MS1411, Sarah Doherty (83), Beagh, Malin, Co. Donegal. Collector: Conall C. Ó Beirn, 1955.

<sup>25</sup> NFC MS1409, Nora Murphy, Lissarulla, Claregalway, Co. Galway. Collector: Ciarán Bairéad, 1955.

Geesala, Co. Mayo, provides a typical example of chain migration spanning several generations: the respondent, Ketty Toole (née O'Malley), aged 99 at the time of writing, writes that her aunt, Sally O'Malley, migrated to America before the Famine. Ketty's sister, Mary O'Malley, migrated c.1865, aged 21, having received passage from this aunt. Mary subsequently provided passage for her sister, another Sally, in 1866, and in 1878 sent passage for their brother, Tom O'Malley, who worked in the Pennsylvania coal mines and eventually retired to Philadelphia, aged 65. Ketty was also provided with a passage by Mary though she decided to stay in Ireland, but her eldest daughter went to America sometime in the early twentieth century. Additionally, Ketty's father and uncle, Michael and John O'Malley, had already migrated to America in 1847 or 1848 in order to send money home during the height of the Famine, and Ketty's cousin, Sheamus O'Malley, migrated to Canada in 1875 and travelled to Pennsylvania to stay with relations already settled there.<sup>26</sup> These examples are an illustrative sample and many more could be given; they not only demonstrate the extent to which emigration permeated Irish society, but also the importance of chain migration and social networks, connections that proved to be central to the maintenance of the Irish language overseas.

Because the investigation of the fate of the language in each of London, Philadelphia and San Francisco must take notice of the situation in Ireland and because this thesis traces the relationship between the Irish language overseas and in Ireland, the following account of the position of the language in Ireland and the factors contributing to its decline provides an important foundation for the rest of this thesis.

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<sup>26</sup> NFC MS1410, Ketty Toole (99), Doolough, Geesala, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

## The Irish Language: A Nineteenth-Century View

Researching historical language shift in the Irish context comes with a number of limitations, as discussed in detail in the introduction, namely varying levels of fluency, unreliable census figures, little presence in print, and the revival's overshadowing of the experiences that came before. It is still possible, however, to outline the condition of the Irish language in Ireland during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the second half of the nineteenth century, there were few Irish-speaking communities in Ireland in which English-language ability had been acquired but in which full proficiency varied.<sup>27</sup> Figure 3 demonstrates this shift in linguistic practice.

Census	Total pop.	<i>Irish only</i>		<i>Total Irish speakers</i>	
		Number	% of pop.	Number	% of pop.
<b>1841</b>	8,175,124	/	/	/	/
<b>1851</b>	6,552,365	319,602	4.9	1,524,286	23.3
<b>1861</b>	5,798,564	163,275	2.8	1,105,536	19.1
<b>1871</b>	5,412,377	103,562	1.9	817,875	15.1
<b>1881</b>	5,174,836	64,167	1.2	949,932	18.2
<b>1891</b>	4,704,750	38,121	0.8	680,174	14.5
<b>1901</b>	4,458,775	20,953	0.5	641,142	14.4

Figure 3: Irish speaking in Ireland, 1841-1901<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, 'Scéal Grinn? Jokes, Puns, and the Shaping of Bilingualism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', *Journal of British Studies*, 48: 1 (2009), pp. 51-75.

<sup>28</sup> Reg Hindley, *The Death of the Irish Language: A Qualified Obituary* (London and New York, 1990), p. 19.

English spread from the east to the west of Ireland, and from the top to the bottom of society, and in the mid-century Irish remained the vernacular along much of the western and southern seaboard.<sup>29</sup> This trajectory is demonstrated by the varying rate of Irish speaking from province to province in 1851: in Leinster it was 3.5 per cent of the population and Ulster 6.8 per cent (though this includes Donegal which was 28 per cent in this year), while in Munster it was 43.9 per cent and Connaught 50.8 per cent.<sup>30</sup> Even within these provinces with high rates of Irish-speaking, however, a marked decline from the Famine period onwards is apparent. For example, Co. Clare was almost 60 per cent Irish-speaking in 1851, with the baronies of Moyarta, the Burren and Corcomroe over 80 per cent but, by 1901, this rate had dropped to 38.7 per cent in the county and varied between 50 and 79 per cent in the Burren and Corcomroe, while Moyarta was down to between 25 and 49 per cent.<sup>31</sup> In 1925, Canon Denis O’Dea noted that the language on Co. Clare’s seaboard continued to decline because “as the old people are dying out many precious links are being severed”.<sup>32</sup>

A similar story comes from Co. Mayo, a predominantly Irish-speaking county on the eve of the Famine, where in 1851 there were 180,078 Irish speakers recorded (comprising 65.6 per cent of the population), with almost fifty thousand of these being monoglots. By 1891, this had reduced to 110,365 (50.5 per cent of the population) but

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<sup>29</sup> Vincent Morley, ‘The Irish Language’ in Richard Bourke and Ian McBride (eds), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), pp. 320-342.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, ‘Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 385-435.

<sup>31</sup> Máire Ní Chiosáin, ‘The Irish Language in Co. Clare in the Early Twentieth Century: A Census-based Perspective’ in Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 503-520.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Ní Chiosáin ‘The Irish Language in Co. Clare’, p. 503.

only 4,234 monoglots.<sup>33</sup> Breandán Ó Madagáin's investigation of Irish in Co. Limerick reveals that although the county was 82 per cent Irish-speaking up to 1801, English spread rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth-century, especially in the city, and had replaced Irish as the primary language within a century.<sup>34</sup> The 1851 census recorded 77,982 Irish-speakers in Limerick (37.37 per cent of the population), 6,800 of which were monoglots. By 1891, however, this was 13.1 per cent, with only fifteen monoglots recorded for the entire county, all of which were recorded in the same area, Glenquin in the south-west. In the city, monoglots fell from 313 in 1851 to just two in 1891.<sup>35</sup> This picture is complicated slightly by internal migration: when Irish-speaking rural dwellers moved to the cities, they brought their language with them, while Irish was often still necessary for urban shopkeepers in dealing with their customers. For example, Galway town in 1851 was 61.4 per cent Irish-speaking and was still 47.5 per cent in 1891.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Catholic Church and Religious Culture in Nineteenth-century Mayo' in Gerard Moran and Nollaig Ó Muraíle (eds), *Mayo: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 319-342.

<sup>34</sup> Breandán Ó Madagáin, 'The Irish Tradition in Limerick' in Liam Irwin and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (eds), *Limerick: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2009), pp. 357-380.

<sup>35</sup> Ó Madagáin 'The Irish Tradition in Limerick', pp. 372-375.

<sup>36</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 386.

County	1851	1871	1891	1901	1911
Clare	59.78	39.31	37.7	38.7	35.2
Cork	52.56	33.53	31	29.8	23.8
Donegal	28.71	28.92	33.4	34.9	35.2
Galway	69.36.	57.01	47.5	56.5	54.1
Kerry	61.49	41.69	41.4	43.2	38
Limerick	37.37	15.14	13.8	11.4	10.4
Sligo	38.3	23.02	21.7	20.9	20.1
Waterford	62.59	45.38	46.9	48.8	38.4

Figure 4: Counties with highest rates of Irish-speaking as % of total population, 1851-1911<sup>37</sup>

Of the 680,245 recorded as Irish speakers in 1891, only 38,121 were monoglots and in 1911, the number of Irish-only speakers had reduced again to 16,873 out of an Irish-speaking population of 582,446.<sup>38</sup> Garret FitzGerald's 1984 work on establishing minimum Irish-speaking levels among new generations of Irish people between 1771 and 1871 continues to be a significant contribution to scholarship: outlining how inter-generational transmission, or lack thereof, was largely responsible for the shift from Irish to English. In 1851, although 23.3 per cent of the general population could speak Irish, just 4.9 per cent of the population knew *only* Irish and only 12.7 per cent of those aged ten or younger knew the language at all. This trend continued and in the 1891

<sup>37</sup> Information compiled from Ó Cúiv, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 431.

<sup>38</sup> Ó Cúiv, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', pp. 386-390.

census, just 3.5 per cent of those aged ten or younger were Irish speakers.<sup>39</sup> Inter-generational transmission happened predominantly in the west of Ireland, in places where Irish speaking was, on average, over 80 per cent. FitzGerald's work shows that there was a close correlation between areas where Irish survived amongst the new generation up to the 1880s and areas where the proportion of Irish-speakers recorded as monoglots was significant in 1851.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Irish as a primary language survived in the twentieth century in those areas that had a high proportion of monoglots in 1891.<sup>41</sup>

While the approximate numbers of people speaking Irish, English or both can be estimated, the lived experience of language shift is more difficult to clarify. There was a period of transition where Irish and English co-existed and which manifested itself in different ways in daily life and caused various accommodations to be made. Liam Ó Danachair, a teacher from Co. Limerick, recalls his grandmother's home where he lived as a child between 1873 and 1884 and where Irish and English co-existed. The household consisted of his grandmother and his aunt, 'Aintín Norrey', who always spoke Irish, and his uncle who understood Irish but spoke English. Ó Danachair's mother and aunt spoke to the uncle in Irish and he would reply in English. Aintín Norrey could not speak English, while Ó Danachair's grandmother spoke Irish far better than she spoke English.<sup>42</sup> He also recalls in the early 1900s a number of older people in west Limerick whose first language was still Irish, however, "usually these

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<sup>39</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 386; Morley, 'The Irish Language', pp. 335-336.

<sup>40</sup> FitzGerald, 'Estimates for Baronies', pp. 117-155. See also Garret FitzGerald, 'Irish-Speaking in the Pre-Famine Period: A Study Based on the 1911 Census Data for People Born before 1851 and Still Alive in 1911', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 103C: 5 (2003), pp. 191-283.

<sup>41</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 390.

<sup>42</sup> Liam Ó Danachair, 'Memories Of My Youth', *Béalóideas*, 17: 1/2 (1947), pp. 58-72.

veterans of a lost cause found no audience, as the middle aged and younger people no longer understood them”, demonstrating language shift.<sup>43</sup> A similar example comes from Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, in 1911, where Conchubhar and Síle Ó Ceadagáin (aged 68 and 62) only spoke Irish but their grandchildren Helena and Ciarán (both aged seven) spoke only English. Their parents presumably had both languages but elected to speak to their children in English.<sup>44</sup>

In his 2014 work, Nicholas Wolf investigates this shift in practice and incidences of language contact, meaning situations in which speakers of one language are exposed to, and perhaps learn, a different language. Courtrooms were well-known to Irish speakers, as witnesses, complainants, or defendants, as well as jurors and occasionally attorneys, while Irish could be heard in classrooms and at public gatherings, in marketplaces and during religious activities.<sup>45</sup> Even the existence and prevalence of macaronic songs, where two languages are freely mixed within a composition, in the nineteenth century is testament to the extent of language contact and bilingualism.<sup>46</sup> This had consequences on all sides: the question was forced of how non-English speakers could function in English-speaking courts, and the legal system had to make accommodations at the local level for interpreters and the costs associated with them, to bridge the gap between Irish-speaking participants and the formal English-speaking legal system.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the increase in bilingual congregations resulted in the

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<sup>43</sup> Ó Danachair, ‘Memories Of My Youth’, p. 62.

<sup>44</sup> Máire Ní Chiosáin, ‘Language Shift in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26/27 (2006/2007), pp. 370-384.

<sup>45</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island: State, Religion, Community, and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland, 1770-1870* (Madison Wis., 2014), p. 270.

<sup>46</sup> Diarmaid Ó Muirthe, *An tAmhrán Macarónach* (Dublin, 1980); Aidan Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language* (New York, 2015), p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 149-154. This provision continued into the later nineteenth century: the 1871 census lists seven anonymous interpreters in Munster, and one in each of Connacht, Ulster and Leinster. See Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 158.

accommodation of Irish in one fashion or another by the Catholic Church, usually at the local level and on a case-by-case basis. Preaching, instruction and confessions were provided in Irish at the discretion of individual priests, while in some places, mass would be provided in both languages, one after the other, or on alternate Sundays (though many chose to rely on English in order to target the younger cohort, particularly as the proportion of Irish-speakers in a given congregation was ever-shrinking).<sup>48</sup>

The replacement of an indigenous language with another, outside one, is usually a consequence of the combination of internal factors, which are generally psychological, and external ones, which are the result of economic, political, historical and socio-cultural factors.<sup>49</sup> For what Karen Corrigan (1992) describes as ‘unstable’ bilingual societies, where one language is or becomes more powerful than the other, this shift is a result of language contact situations brought about by migration or by colonisation, the reluctance to transmit a language perceived as ‘backward’ and having low status or marginal utilitarian value, the forces of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation and, finally, the oppression by governmental policies of the majority group.<sup>50</sup> These categories can be applied to the Irish context – particularly language contact situations and reluctance to transmit the language. Joshua Fishman’s model for language shift can also be used to describe language shift in the Irish context. In his  $B \rightarrow A = B$  model for colonisation, where  $B$  is the language of the coloniser and  $A$  of the indigenous population, the economic, technical and cultural superiority associated with

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<sup>48</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 233-235.

<sup>49</sup> Karen Corrigan, ‘I gcuntas Dé mún Béarla do na leanbhain: Eisimirce agus an Ghaeilge sa naoú aois deag’ in Patrick O’Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 143-161.

<sup>50</sup> Corrigan, ‘I gcuntas Dé mún Béarla do na leanbhain’, pp. 146-147.

*B* attracts *A*-speakers who seek advancement, until, eventually, the indigenous language becomes associated with the disadvantaged. In this model, the indigenous language is entirely inundated by the intrusive one, which was not entirely the case in Ireland, but the significant impact of English and the association of Irish with the disadvantaged are both apparent. Similarly, in Fishman's *B* → *A* = *A* model for migrants, where *A* is the majority language and *B* is the immigrant's language, *B* is lost in order for the migrant to gain technical, professional, educational and other benefits, while *A* sometimes gains status for the migrant within the minority language community; both of these circumstances can be identified in the Irish context.<sup>51</sup>

Beginning with Henry II's arrival in Ireland in 1171, English spread both geographically and socially throughout Ireland until, by the nineteenth century, it had come to intrude upon all of the Irish language's domains.<sup>52</sup> The political, economic and religious pressures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries damaged Irish at the top of the social scale and weakened its position among the entire population. At this time, the emergence of the Protestant Ascendancy and the development of a new Catholic middle-class, for whom English was the language of choice, power and advancement owing to its use within the government, courts of law, authorities, civil service and upper levels of commercial life, cemented the language's association with the lower classes and the illiterate.<sup>53</sup> Following the Act of Union in 1800, the new state became central to and accelerated language shift; as the role of the state expanded,

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<sup>51</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Clevedon, 1989), p. 187.

<sup>52</sup> Only Dublin and south Wexford were English-speaking before the sixteenth century. This came to include eastern and northern Ulster by the second quarter of the seventeenth century. See Morley, 'The Irish Language', pp. 323-327.

<sup>53</sup> Maureen Wall, 'The Decline of the Irish Language' in Brian Ó Cuív (ed.), *A View of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 81-90.

becoming literate in English was seen, by some, as an enabling skill on the path to progress and civility. The Union afforded opportunities through the medium of English, shifting the weight of cultural prestige to English and making Irish increasingly peripheral.<sup>54</sup> The National School system (established in 1831) has received particular attention for causing the decline of Irish, owing to its instruction solely through the medium of English, even in areas where few or no people spoke the language. Author Michael MacGowan from Donegal in the 1870s claimed that he “hadn’t a word of English no more than anyone else in my family and I couldn’t answer the master when he asked me what was my name” and that “the master hadn’t a word of Irish”.<sup>55</sup> However, these schools have been mythologised and, in fact, an Irish-speaking culture had already begun to learn to read and write in English in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hedge schools.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, in the National schools the educational needs of non-English speakers were addressed and policies modified at the local level to suit needs on the ground; for example, Irish was used as a teaching tool for English letters and words.<sup>57</sup> Daniel O’Connell’s use of English as the language for political mobilisation (despite his formative years being spent in an Irish-speaking household) has also been disproportionately blamed for language shift, and while it is true that he did see the benefit of English in matters of business and politics, as well as in print media, the use of English in Irish politics predated O’Connell’s lobbies for Catholic Emancipation (1829) and Repeal of the Union (1830-

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<sup>54</sup> Nancy C. Dorian, *Language Death: the Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> Michael MacGowan, *The Hard Road to Klondike*, translated from the Irish by Valentin Iremonger (London, 1962), p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Michael J. Griffin, ‘“Our Native Tongue Most Shamefully Rejected”: Education, Print Culture and English Literature in Eighteenth Century Ennis’ in Lynch and Nugent, *Clare: History and Society*, pp. 157-174.

<sup>57</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 144.

48). English was the dominant language of all Irish nationalist popular political propaganda from the United Irishmen (1798) onwards.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike the national schools and O'Connell, however, the role of the Catholic Church has not received enough precedence in the debate surrounding language decline, with the exception of recent work by Ó Ciosáin and Wolf. The relationship between the Irish language and the Catholic Church was important and proved to be particularly so in the diasporic context, and for this reason will be discussed in some detail here. The Church in Ireland did not have any centralised policy or support for the Irish language: Church affairs in Ireland were officially carried out in English, such as public prayers, sermons, instructions, notices, inscriptions, and church documents, except where Latin would be the normal language,<sup>59</sup> while Catholic priests were not educated in the Irish language.<sup>60</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin (2013) has pointed to the church's lack of support for Irish-language printing as being central to nineteenth-century literacy levels, as well as to language shift. Institutional support from churches and the religious nature of print culture was crucial for sustaining print culture in other minority languages such as in Welsh, as well as Breton and Scottish Gaelic, during the period. This then extended beyond the religious realm and encouraged a secular printing culture. Welsh publishing, in particular, was thriving: in 1896 there were up to 10,000 Welsh-language

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<sup>58</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1996), p. 136. These nationalist movements include O'Connell, the Young Irelanders (their newspaper, *The Nation*, was in English), Fenians, and the Home Rule movement. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Language, Ideology and National Identity' in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 42-58.

<sup>59</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', pp. 391-392.

<sup>60</sup> By the eighteenth century, English was already the language of Catholic higher education and the seminary established in Maynooth, Co. Kildare, in 1795 also went with the tide of English. Wolf also argues that these clerical colleges were a breeding ground for a middle-class, anglicised cultural outlook disseminated throughout Ireland by their graduates. Nicholas M. Wolf, 'The Irish-Speaking Clergy in the Nineteenth-Century: Education, Trends, and Timing', *New Hibernia Review*, 12: 4 (2008), pp. 62-83.

titles in print (compared to Ireland's 150 in Irish) and a flourishing periodical press with dozens of Welsh newspapers and periodicals, compared to just one in Irish.<sup>61</sup> Despite a rich manuscript tradition dating back to the sixth century, printing came late to Irish, though it was not entirely absent: the first book in Irish, a Protestant catechism commissioned by Queen Elizabeth, was printed in Dublin in 1571. However, widespread publishing was delayed by the aforementioned political and social constraints on the Irish-speaking population and, by the nineteenth century, there was an increasingly literate readership in Ireland but a wide gulf had opened up between spoken Irish and the Gaelic written tradition, while popular literacy generally meant literacy in English – coming from a familiarity with the norms of English, spreading through chapbooks and ballad-sheets.<sup>62</sup> This, however, did not mean that literacy was exclusively in English, nor that Irish-speakers were by definition illiterate.<sup>63</sup> The absence of a concerted publishing effort in Irish by the Catholic Church meant that no standard was established and a wide variety of printed forms persisted between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and negatively affected the development of a

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<sup>61</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'The Print Cultures of the Celtic Languages, 1700-1900', *Cultural and Social History*, 10: 3 (2013), pp. 347-367. Religious printing in Irish was not entirely absent but it was by no means extensive. Irish-language religious tracts experienced something of a rebound in the 1770s and 1780s, continuing into the 1840s. See Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 181-189. In the post-Famine period, however, the majority of Irish-language religious publications came from Protestants: most notably a collection of sermons, translated from English, published in 1847, a revised version of the New Testament in Munster Irish published in 1858, and a new edition of the Book of Common Prayer, in Irish and English, published in 1861. See Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 393. Various Protestant denominations also utilised Irish-speaking priests in order to educate, and convert, Irish Catholics, originating with the 'Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of Their Own Language' established in 1818 by members of the Anglican Church in Ireland. See Roger Blaney, *Presbyterians and the Irish Language* (Belfast, 1996), p. 83. Ireland's one periodical was called *An Fíor Eiríonnach* and ran for seven issues in the 1860s. See Ó Ciosáin, 'Print Cultures', pp. 349-351.

<sup>62</sup> Liam Mac Mathúna, 'From Manuscripts to Street Signs via *Séadna*: the Gaelic League and the Changing Role of Literacy in Irish, 1875-1915' in Betsy Taylor Fitzsimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 49-62.

<sup>63</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Gaelic Culture and Language Shift' in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Guide to Recent Research* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 136-152.

secular print culture.<sup>64</sup> While readers in other languages, such as Welsh, had reading material, there was none in Ireland despite the fact that a significant proportion of the population still spoke Irish as their vernacular in the post-Famine period.<sup>65</sup> However, the absence of a centralised Catholic Church policy on language or the lack of a print culture does not rule out the accommodation of Irish in other ways at the local, parish level by individual priests. The increasing bilingual nature of congregations meant that the clergy either had to reach out to their parishioners in the languages they spoke, or risk stalling the religious reforms desired in many corners of the church. This challenge was often met on a case-by-case basis, as previously discussed, and priests provided regular preaching, instruction and confessions in Irish into the 1870s at least. Wolf notes that confessing in the language most comfortably spoken was desired by Irish Catholics and that it was the easiest sacramental obligation for the clergy to accommodate, as any bilingual priest could adequately hear confession and provide absolution to members of both linguistic communities.<sup>66</sup> Grace Neville, in her investigation of the archives of the National Folklore Collection, also notes the preference for Irish in prayer among those who could speak both Irish and English.<sup>67</sup> The preference for and use of Irish at the local level for pragmatic and pastoral purposes can be seen in the diaspora, particularly in the context of confession.

The impact of later nineteenth-century emigration on language shift is also of particular significance: while the Famine undermined the vitality of Irish through the death of its speakers, the post-Famine period did the same through emigration. It also inadvertently

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<sup>64</sup> Ó Ciosáin, 'Print Cultures', p. 362.

<sup>65</sup> Ó Ciosáin, 'Print Cultures', pp. 357-359.

<sup>66</sup> Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 234-235.

<sup>67</sup> Grace Neville, 'God's Own Language? Attitudes to Irish, Then and Now', *Études Irlandaises*, 26: 2 (2001), pp. 81-96.

confirmed the relationship between the Irish language and poverty as there existed a correlation between those districts which were impoverished, those which were still Irish-speaking after 1850, and those which saw the greatest flow of out-migration.<sup>68</sup> By the later nineteenth century, a culture of emigration was well established in Ireland, where “there was hardly a house...which had not some relative in America”.<sup>69</sup> This sustained and heavy emigration created a climate in which competence in English was seen as essential to survival and prosperity, while Irish was, in David Fitzpatrick’s words, “an incubus rather than an asset in the countries of Irish settlement”.<sup>70</sup> English gained status for the migrant within the minority language community and the perceived inevitability of migration to predominantly English-speaking countries for younger generations caused their parents to encourage them to learn English so that they would be able to find employment and succeed in their new country.<sup>71</sup> A result of this was that those who were bilingual no longer saw the need to transmit the language to the next generation, after all, “every youngster was a potential emigrant”.<sup>72</sup> Fitzpatrick notes that women, in particular, increasingly were educated in English in preparation for emigration and entering domestic service overseas.<sup>73</sup>

This preference for English was further encouraged by the large amount of information available in the nineteenth century on emigration and the various destinations. James Hack Tuke, an English Quaker and philanthropist known for his charitable work in

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<sup>68</sup> Wall, ‘The Decline of the Irish Language’, p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> NFC MS1408, James Sinnott (79), Duncormick, Co. Wexford. Collector: James G. Delaney, 1955.

<sup>70</sup> Corrigan, ‘I gcuntas Dé mún Béarla do na leanbhain’, p. 144; Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1801-70’, p. 578.

<sup>71</sup> Corrigan, ‘I gcuntas Dé mún Béarla do na leanbhain’, p. 145.

<sup>72</sup> NFC MS1407, Seán Ó Dúbhda, Ballynagall, Dingle, Co. Kerry. Collector: Seán Ó Dúbhda, 1955.

<sup>73</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’, pp. 615-616.

Ireland, provided assisted emigration during the Great Famine and the 1880s.<sup>74</sup> His latter committee (popularly known as ‘Mr Tuke’s fund’) was mainly confined to Irish-speaking areas but his guidelines stipulated, amongst other things, that at least one family member had to be able to speak English.<sup>75</sup> More importantly, however, the primary source of practical guidance was the correspondence of emigrants themselves, and this usually encouraged potential migrants to speak English. Some migrants directly encouraged those at home to learn English: Seán Ó Dúbhda, a respondent to the NFC questionnaire on emigration to America, recalled his father’s statement that:

Nearly every letter that came from America at that time urged and exhorted the parents to try and teach English to the children. ‘I gcuntas Dé múin Béarla do na leanbháin, is ná bídis dall ar nós na n-asal a teacht anseo amach’. That was some of the talk in the letters.<sup>76</sup>

Letters written in Irish are highly unusual though, while examples of direct encouragement on the part of Irish migrants to learn English are relatively rare. In fact, the principal way in which emigrant letters played a role in the spread of the English language was that they were invariably written in English, owing to the nature of nineteenth-century literacy. This gave those both at home and overseas a greater desire to learn English in order to maintain communication, to such an extent that Fitzpatrick

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<sup>74</sup> David Murphy, ‘Tuke, James Hack’ in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> Gerard Moran, ‘From Galway to North America: state-aided emigration from County Galway in the 1880s’ in Gerard Moran and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *Galway: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 487-519.

<sup>76</sup> NFC MS1407, Seán Ó Dúbhda, Ballynagall, Dingle, Co. Kerry. Collector: Seán Ó Dúbhda, 1955. Translation: “For God’s sake teach the children English and don’t be blind like the asses [fools] who have come out here”, from Karen Corrigan, ‘I gcuntas Dé múin Béarla do na leanbhain: Eisimirce agus an Ghaeilge sa naoú aois deag’ in Patrick O’Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 143-161.

claims that the Irish educational system was transformed into a training ground for emigration – in 1889, specimen letters inscribed by children in national schools were to someone in the United States, Canada or Australia asking for a ticket.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the publication of emigrant manuals, such as Rev John O’Hanlon’s *The Irish Emigrant’s Guide for the United States* (1851), and information for potential emigrants printed in newspapers only in English indirectly encouraged proficiency in that language.

### Attitudes towards Irish

All of the factors discussed throughout this chapter – from economics and politics, to the National Schools, Catholic Church and emigration – make sense in terms of the acquisition of English, but they do not necessarily explain the simultaneous abandonment of Irish. And so, one very important consideration for this thesis is that of contemporary attitudes towards the Irish language. The learning of a foreign language is an active choice and difficult, and the use of an acquired language to the exclusion of one’s native tongue is harder still, as indicated by the prevalence of varying levels of bilingualism in Ireland during the nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup> The ‘utility argument’, where English was seen to be essential for employment and progress, has been under-scrutinised, and Niall Ó Ciosáin argues that while economics can explain the acquisition of English, they cannot explain the concurrent rapid loss of Irish.<sup>79</sup> The projecting of negative attitudes to subsequent generations, by restricting the use of the

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<sup>77</sup> The proportion of emigrants able to read and write seems to have risen from three-fifths in the 1870s to nine-tenths by the 1900s. Fitzpatrick, ‘Emigration, 1871-1921’, pp. 615-616.

<sup>78</sup> Seán de Fréine, *The Great Silence: the Study of a Relationship between Language and Nationality* (Dublin, 1965), p. 136.

<sup>79</sup> Ó Ciosáin, ‘Gaelic Culture and Language Shift’, p. 141.

‘inferior’ language and curtailing the domains in which it is spoken until there becomes little motivation for its perpetuation, can be observed in the case of Irish in Ireland as well as the diaspora.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, there were few Irish-speaking communities in which the use of English also had not become commonplace. Ireland was a bilingual or diglossic society, whereby two different languages are used for specific purposes and coexist by occupying separate domains and each having their own functions. Normally where diglossia exists, a low-status language is preserved through its confirmed place in domestic and private settings.<sup>80</sup> In Ireland though, English eventually came to occupy both high and low domains in most, though not all, regions.<sup>81</sup> Much of the impetus to choose not to transmit Irish came from the speakers themselves. There was a demand for English on the part of Irish-speakers, particularly the younger generation. Hugh Dorian, in his memoir of growing up in nineteenth-century Donegal, recalls that in the Irish-speaking community of Fánaid in Co. Donegal, a Church Education Society School was established in the 1830s (a national school did not reach the area until the 1850s) and, although the new schoolmaster “spoke nothing but English of the hardest coin and soundest metal”, its advantages and attractions, which included a new method of instruction and a better building than the previous hedge school premises, caused most young people of the surrounding neighbourhood to flock to the new opening, despite the penny-a-week fee. This school

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<sup>80</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 95; Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity*, p. 181.

<sup>81</sup> Wolf, ‘Scéal Grinn?’, pp. 63-74.

saw rapid progress in the learning of English, which was, according to the author, only learned by the young.<sup>82</sup>

The neglect of Irish was, in Corrigan's words, "rooted in the Irish psyche", which had come to perceive the acquisition of English as a requirement of social and economic advancement in an expanding, urbanised world, while Irish came to be associated with backwardness; a reminder of a poor and less civilised way of life.<sup>83</sup> This low status was recognised by contemporaries such as the Irish nationalist leader John Devoy who recollected that during the 1860s Irish-speaking harvestmen from Connacht en route to England "were very reluctant to talk Irish, except among themselves", which Devoy put down to the fact that "the idea had already become widespread that Irish was a badge of inferiority".<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Hugh Dorian, a bilingual and English-literate teacher born in Co. Donegal in 1834, who taught monolingual Irish-speaking children through the medium of English, questioned whether it was because the Irish kept their native language alive that they were called "ignorant", and compared them to the Germans and the French who were not derided for using their own language on native soil.<sup>85</sup> This is illustrated by William Henry Curran's 1882 observation of Irish speakers, stating that "you are more ashamed of knowing your own language than of not knowing any other".<sup>86</sup> This apparent shame extended to the aforementioned census

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<sup>82</sup> Hugh Dorian, Breandán Mac Suibhne and David Dickson, *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Donegal* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 192-194.

<sup>83</sup> Corrigan, 'I gcuntas Dé muintir Béarla do na leanbhain', p. 155; Máirtín Ó Murchú, 'Aspects of the societal status of Modern Irish' in Martin J. Ball and James Fife (eds), *The Celtic Languages* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 471-490.

<sup>84</sup> John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (Shannon, 1969), p. 263.

<sup>85</sup> Dorian, *The Outer Edge of Ulster*, p. 85.

<sup>86</sup> William Henry Curran, *The Life of John Philpott Curran*, ed. R. Shelton Mackenzie, (Chicago 1882), p. 523, quoted in Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 115.

returns which were not only inaccurately enumerated but were also intentionally understated:

[Returns] do not include the entire number of people who speak Irish, since it is well known that many persons, for want of education in the vernacular, and of due appreciation of its value, do not admit their knowledge of the language, and that many more who know it were never questioned on the subject at the census taking.<sup>87</sup>

This reluctance to admit knowledge of Irish and the desire of many parents to ensure that their children were English-speaking even predated the Famine; in Co. Clare, a desire to learn English was observed in 1808 in a survey carried out for the Dublin Society:

There are very few, except in remote situations, that do not at least understand a little English, but from an apprehension of not speaking correctly they frequently pretend not to understand it ... Almost all the better kind of people speak Irish to the country people, but scarcely one of their sons is able to hold a conversation in this language ... The children of almost all those who can speak scarcely any thing but Irish, are proud of being spoken to in English, and answering in the same, even though you may question them in Irish ... No Irish is spoken in any of the schools, and the peasantry are anxious to send their children to them for the purpose of learning English ... Very little pure Irish is spoken in this county, the

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<sup>87</sup> E. G. Ravenstein, 'On the Celtic Languages in the British Isles: A Statistical Survey', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 42: 3 (1879), pp. 579-643.

present language being a jargon of Irish and English; therefore the sooner it is forgotten, the better.<sup>88</sup>

In 1857 John Windele, a Cork-born antiquarian and collector, observes that the knowledge of Irish had been “branded with the stamp of vulgarity”.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Ó Danachair (1947) recalls his grandmother and her peers who, when together, “would deplore the case of one old lady whose daughter-in-law always locked her into her room when visitors came, lest she scandalise them with a torrent of Irish, heedless whether they understood her or not,” and would discuss “the clever girl who became a National Teacher, and despised her husband because he knew no English, and whose son was never allowed to speak to his father”.<sup>90</sup> Ó Danachair names all the aforementioned reasons for the decline in Irish – the new schools, the pro-English clergy, the influence of the landlords, agents and political leaders, and the use of English in the law courts, at gatherings and public meetings, and in sermons and religious functions – but also “the growing public feeling that Irish was a dying language, a mark of degraded people who were not ‘decent’.” All of this combined produced a generation “who from youth were pledged to speak no Irish”.<sup>91</sup> This dismissal of the Irish language was observed by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL, founded in 1876), which stated in 1877 that its aims were not

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<sup>88</sup> Hely Dutton, *Statistical survey of the county of Clare: with observations on the means of improvement; drawn up for the consideration, and by the direction of the Dublin society* (Dublin, 1808), pp. 302-303.

<sup>89</sup> Windele also notes a growing interest in the study of Irish and states that the revival of Irish as a “learned language for the purpose of historical research, and as a medium of instruction and intercourse, has become a necessity” and that “the advantages of its cultivation, at least as a literary language, are becoming recognised”. However, this is a very early observation. John Windele, ‘Present Extent of the Irish Language’, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1: 5 (1857), p. 243-245.

<sup>90</sup> Ó Danachair, ‘Memories of my youth’, p. 61.

<sup>91</sup> Ó Danachair, ‘Memories of my youth’, p. 59.

only to run classes, publish works from which to learn the language, and make provision for teaching Irish in schools, but also to:

create such a tone of public feeling as will utterly banish the ignorant and unpatriotic notion (of foreign origin) that our native tongue is one which no Irishman of the present day should care to learn, or be willing to speak.<sup>92</sup>

In response to this, one ‘Hibernicus’ wrote a letter to the editor of the *Nation*, citing one of the reasons for the disuse of Irish in their home county of Cork to be “the indifference, or worse than indifference, of the peasantry themselves.” The current elderly population:

spoke Irish familiarly thirty years ago; but they actually seem to have a rascally ambition to get rid of it. They never speak it to their children; and the growing generation are taught nothing but English at the anti-national schools.<sup>93</sup>

Similar sentiments continued to be expressed into the closing decades of the nineteenth century and were still recognised by the time of the 1955 questionnaire on emigration to America. A contributor to the *Munster Express* in 1894 noted that “it is, indeed, a very regrettable state of things, and which, I know, exists in Irish-speaking districts, that many parents will not allow their children to speak the language, although themselves know no other”.<sup>94</sup> A Donegal-based respondent to the 1955 Emigration to America questionnaire noted that “it was all Irish they spoke in these times in the Parish

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<sup>92</sup> *The Nation*, 17 February 1877.

<sup>93</sup> *The Nation*, 24 February 1877.

<sup>94</sup> *Munster Express*, 1 December 1894.

of Glenties and in a few parishes around” and that “they thought it a great detriment and that was why they were so anxious to pick up some English”.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, from the mid nineteenth-century, Irish was increasingly perceived by observers, such as Windele, as an antiquarian treasure, rather than a living language. Its status began to shift from being a living language among the general population to that of a symbolic code to be collected, studied and treated as a subject of antiquarian interest by a growing body of well-to-do scholars. This must have had an effect on how native speakers viewed their vernacular.<sup>96</sup>

Ravenstein stated in 1879 that one could “foresee the time when the language will be extinct”, but the following decade saw the beginnings of a movement, which later became known as the Gaelic Revival, which heralded a shift in attitudes towards the Irish language in Ireland and abroad and which arrested this move towards ‘extinction’.<sup>97</sup>

### The Gaelic Revival in Ireland, c.1880-1920

From the 1880s, the Irish language became more visible, was celebrated, and eventually came to the forefront as a key aspect to Ireland’s independence movement in the twentieth century. Nationalists’ adoption of Irish as a symbol of national identity marked an important turning point in the history of the language and because it created a cultural realm very different to that of the native speakers, it is treated separately

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<sup>95</sup> NFC MS1411, James McCauley (76), Letterbarrow, Co. Donegal. Collector: Seán Ó hEochaidh, 1955.

<sup>96</sup> Mairín Nic Eoin, ‘Irish language and literature in county Kilkenny in the nineteenth century’ in William Nolan and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Kilkenny: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 465-480.

<sup>97</sup> Ravenstein, ‘On the Celtic Languages in the British Isles’, p. 588.

here. The differences in attitudes towards the language, outlooks and aims, speakers and participants and source material make the Revival a project in itself and so only an overview of its genesis and development can be provided here, with a focus on its effect on the Irish language in Ireland.

Following the successes of the Land War, a growing self-confidence in Ireland led to a new kind of nationalism which manifested itself in non-political activity, and the question of nationality was very much present in the public discourse.<sup>98</sup> Brian Ó Conchubhair (2018) uses the term ‘Irish-Ireland’ to describe this: the cultural, literary, social and sporting movements that achieved popular political, cultural, and literary successes from the mid-1870s into the twentieth century.<sup>99</sup> The Gaelic Revival is located within this discourse, as well as being influenced by intellectual, social, and literary trends in the wider modern world. It was an expression of cultural nationalism – a movement which can be defined as one whose primary aim is the formation of a national community, through the promotion of a national language, literature and the arts, educational activities and, in Ireland’s case, economic self-sufficiency. Although such movements may not explicitly aim to create a political community, and instead seek to create a distinctive moral one, it can be difficult to separate cultural and political nationalisms as many cultural nationalists view independent statehood as essential for the defence of the identity of the nation.<sup>100</sup> In Ireland, cultural nationalism had been a continuous presence since the mid eighteenth-century though remained small-scale and overshadowed by established political nationalist movements whose primary aim

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<sup>98</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 163.

<sup>99</sup> Brian Ó Conchubhair, ‘The Culture War: The Gaelic League and Irish Ireland’ in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Vol. IV: 1880 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 196-220.

<sup>100</sup> John Hutchinson, ‘Cultural Nationalism’ in John Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 76-97.

was Irish self-government.<sup>101</sup> These ideas crystallised in the 1870s and further again in the 1890s, when the Gaelic Revival – itself an umbrella term which encompassed a number of movements, namely the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Literary Theatre, and even Sinn Féin – began in earnest.<sup>102</sup> Until the turn of the century, it was a movement of small groups of secular revivalists and religious reformists, until it was adopted by a new collection of modernist intellectuals and a young Catholic intelligentsia and ultimately became a significant political force which was the vehicle for a successful independence movement between 1918 and 1921.<sup>103</sup>

Of these various movements, it was the Gaelic League, established in 1893, which brought the Irish language to the fore. Its establishment was a culmination, over many decades, of a growing interest in the language: antiquarian societies such as the Archaeological Society, the Celtic Society, and the Ossianic Society were founded in 1840, 1845 and 1853, respectively, in order to collect, study and translate Irish manuscripts, and in 1865 the government provided the Royal Irish Academy (founded in 1785) with financial support for Irish Studies, though the cultivation of Irish as a vernacular cultivated no major response. The first major attempt to stage a revival came with the foundation of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL) in Dublin in 1876.<sup>104</sup> Its principal objective was to promote the Irish language

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<sup>101</sup> John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: the Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987), p. 250. In the period 1869-1900, Home Rule, led by Charles Stewart Parnell, was the principal movement. See Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 151.

<sup>102</sup> Betsey Taylor Fitzsimon and James H. Murphy, 'Introduction' in Betsey Taylor Fitzsimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised*, (Dublin, 2004), pp. 13-18.

<sup>103</sup> Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 151.

<sup>104</sup> For the Archaeological and Celtic Societies see Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 133, and P. J. Mathews, *Revival: the Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Co-operative Movement* (Cork, 2003), p. 23. For the Ossianic Society see Donnchadh Ó Súilleabháin, *Athbheochan na Gaeilge: cnuasach aistí* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 4-5. For the RIA and SPIL see Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', pp. 396-398.

as a vernacular, to be achieved through the education system, and to publish popular learning texts and promote literature in Irish.<sup>105</sup> Unlike its predecessors, SPIL had the support of people representing a broad spectrum of society, not just academics and antiquarians, and the public response was enthusiastic. It succeeded in forming classes, publishing textbooks and, most significantly, introducing Irish to secondary schools in 1878.<sup>106</sup> This society suffered a split, leading to the formation of the Gaelic Union in 1880, which founded the bilingual journal *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* (the *Gaelic Journal*) in 1882, with David Comyn, a co-founder of SPIL, as editor.<sup>107</sup> Although Irish had had some presence in print during the nineteenth century, it came in the form of scribal activity and was narrow in range, largely ecclesiastical and unoriginal. With the exception of the aforementioned serialisation of *Easy Lessons* (and its separate publication in 1863) and the *Tuam News and Western Advertiser*'s 'Gaelic Department' in the 1870s, Irish was almost invisible in written form up to the mid-1870s.<sup>108</sup> The *Gaelic Journal*'s foundation was, therefore, a turning point as it signalled the first printing dedicated to native language and literature that was even partly written in Irish and, in the words of Aidan Doyle, it "rescued Irish from the druidic mists in which it had been shrouded before".<sup>109</sup> The Gaelic Union's emphasis on the vernacular

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<sup>105</sup> Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin, *Language from Below: The Irish Language, Ideology and Power in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland* (Oxford, 2006), p. 135. It was established by Professor Brian Ó Luanaigh (O'Looney), Father John Nolan, and Daithí Ó Coimín (David Comyn), none of whom were native Irish speakers. See Máirtín Ó Murchú, *Cumann Buan-Choimeádta na Gaeilge: tús an athréimnithe* (Dublin, 2001), p. 8, and for a detailed analysis of this organisation.

<sup>106</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 165; Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 400.

<sup>107</sup> Ó Murchú, *Cumann Buan-Choimeádta na Gaeilge*, p. 79, 96.

<sup>108</sup> Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921: Ideology and Innovation* (Penn. State University, Pennsylvania, 1994), pp. 5-7. John McGlynn, a teacher in St Jarlath's College, the diocesan college in Tuam, became editor of the Irish-language column in the *Tuam News*. Eugene O'Growney published in this column and became editor of the *Gaelic Journal* in 1891. See Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society 1893-1910* (Syracuse, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 169.

rather than preservation had a profound influence on those who later set up the Gaelic League, including Douglas Hyde, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.<sup>110</sup>

Cultural nationalism was by no means restricted to language and literature and the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884 should be seen in the context of the revival and of 'Irish-Ireland'. It was formed by Michael Cusack, an Irish-speaking civil servant, in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, with the aim of reviving the native games of hurling and football in Ireland.<sup>111</sup> It sought the preservation and growth of a national identity in Ireland, rather than a colonial identity, through sports and athletics.<sup>112</sup> The Irish language was a central aspect of the GAA's cultural programme and there was close cooperation between the language movement and the sports from its early days. Michael Cusack had been a member of SPIL, while in the 1890s, the Gaelic League encouraged its members to join the GAA and likewise, the GAA identified the importance of the Irish language to Irish nationality.<sup>113</sup> Sport was socially significant for the Gaelic League as it provided a social outlet for members of the league to speak Irish outside of the classroom. Similarly, GAA language policies frequently complemented those of the Gaelic League: it placed Irish at a visible and public level nationally, and sought the printing and publication of its rule books in Irish, and signing of minutes and official documents in Irish.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ó Croidheáin, *Language from Below*, p. 137.

<sup>111</sup> Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 158.

<sup>112</sup> Úna Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America, 1870–1915: The Gaelic Revival* (Dublin, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> Cathal Billings, 'Speaking Irish with hurley sticks: Gaelic sports, the Irish language and national identity in revival Ireland', *Sport in History*, 37: 1 (2017), pp. 25-50.

<sup>114</sup> The GAA's most significant motion in terms of the Irish language was at the GAA Congress in 1912, where it was agreed that all deliberations at congress would be made in Irish. This displayed a commitment to using Irish and required proficiency in Irish from all delegates, but the policy was

A number of developments in the 1890s represented the crystallisation of cultural nationalism into a coherent movement: in 1892 Eugene O’Growney, a supporter of the Irish language and writer of *Simple Lessons in Irish*, was appointed to the Chair of Irish in Maynooth, a post which had been vacant since 1876.<sup>115</sup> In the same year Douglas Hyde presented his inaugural address as president of the National Literary Society, entitled ‘The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland’. This led to the formation of the Gaelic League in July 1893, with Hyde as president and Eoin MacNeill as secretary, for “the sole purposes of keeping the Irish language spoken in Ireland”.<sup>116</sup> Hyde and MacNeill hoped to appeal to Irish people at home and abroad of all political and religious persuasions through a sense of Ireland’s unique cultural heritage (as distinct from England or Great Britain) and sought to maintain and develop native culture without explicitly calling for Home Rule or independence. The Gaelic League was officially non-political and non-denominational, which was key to its success.<sup>117</sup> It formed the nucleus of a popular movement that sponsored Irish classes and cultural events, encouraged Irish industries, and sought to alleviate social stagnation; it also successfully pressed for bilingual education in the National School system and campaigned for a compulsory Irish-language requirement for matriculation in the new National University of Ireland.<sup>118</sup> The League made St Patrick’s Day a national holiday in 1903, persuaded the authorities to make it a requirement for the Post Office to accept post addressed in Irish in 1905, and initiated the creation of a proliferation of

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discontinued in 1917 owing to the impossibility of conducting congress solely in Irish. See Billings ‘Speaking Irish with hurley sticks’, pp. 27-30.

<sup>115</sup> Ó Cuív ‘Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921’, p. 393.

<sup>116</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 2; Tomás Ó hAilín, ‘Irish Revival Movements’ in Ó Cuív, *A View of the Irish Language*, pp. 91-100.

<sup>118</sup> Ó hAilín, ‘Irish Revival Movements’, p. 100.

periodicals in Irish or carrying regular Irish columns from the late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>119</sup> The League took over the *Gaelic Journal* in 1894 and produced its own bilingual periodical, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, in 1899, which published articles, poems and stories in Irish, and encouraged new writers in Irish, while the period also witnessed the birth of a new, modern Irish literature.<sup>120</sup> The first instalment of Peadar Ua Laoghaire's *Séadna* (the first major literary work of the revival) appeared in the *Gaelic Journal* in November 1894 and first appeared in book form in 1904.<sup>121</sup> By 1915, the Gaelic League had issued three hundred books and publications in and about Irish including primers, textbooks, dictionaries, poetry, novels, short stories, plays, and journals.<sup>122</sup> This progress alone demonstrates the stark contrast to the pre-revival period, when Irish had very little presence in print outwith the manuscript tradition.

Separate to the Gaelic League's efforts but under the 'Irish-Ireland' umbrella was the Irish Literary Revival, which owed much to W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, George Russell (AE), Lady Gregory and the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899, and which proposed a genuine Irish literature in the English language.<sup>123</sup> While Douglas Hyde saw the restoration of the language as the only hope for Ireland's cultural salvation, Yeats felt that this salvation could be achieved even if the language disappeared, and these distinctions provoked a debate on whether or not an Irish

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<sup>119</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', pp. 407-409.

<sup>120</sup> Other publications include *Fáinne an Lae* (1898-1900, 1918-19), *An tEirópach* (1899-1900), *Banba* (1901-06), *An Lóchrann* (1907-13, 1916-20), *An Connachtach* (1907-08), *Irisleabhar Muighe Nuadhat* (1907-), *Glór na Ly* (1911-12), *An Crann* (1916-21), *An Stoc* (1917-20), as well as the *New Ireland Review* (1894-1911), the *United Irishman* (1899-1906), the *Leader* (1900-), and *Sinn Féin* (1906-14). Authors include Peadar Ua Laoghaire, Pádraic Ó Conaire, Patrick Pearse, Tadhg Ó Murchadha, and Tomás Ó Criomhthain. See Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', pp. 419-422.

<sup>121</sup> Mac Mathúna, 'From Manuscripts to Street Signs via *Séadna*', p. 54.

<sup>122</sup> Mac Mathúna, 'From Manuscripts to Street Signs via *Séadna*', p. 61.

<sup>123</sup> Kevin B. Nowlan, 'The Gaelic League and Other National Movements' in Seán Ó Tuama (ed.), *The Gaelic League Idea* (Dublin, 1972), pp. 41-51.

literature in English could be truly national, and represented competition for what should constitute ‘authentic’ Irishness and for ‘the’ emblem of Irish national identity.<sup>124</sup> The Literary Revival was Anglo-Irish, largely Ascendancy in composition, and more elitist, and although it initially overlapped with the League’s objectives, by the early twentieth century the two groups were alienated from one another. Because the literary revival was an English-language movement, the focus here will be on the Gaelic League, for which the Irish language was its cornerstone.<sup>125</sup>

Gaelic League activities consisted of Irish language classes, as well as history lectures, debates, dancing, music, and local and national festivals. Timothy McMahon (2008) provides a detailed analysis of the League’s composition, key players, controversies, various activities, and successes and failures, which cannot all be discussed in detail here, but the issue of membership deserves mention. The questions of who joined the revival and for what reasons are surprisingly difficult to answer as specific information regarding membership is scattered and recorded unsystematically. However, the general trend of growth and decline in the number of branches and members can be established: from just 230 registered members in Dublin, 75 in Cork, and thirty in Galway in 1894, the Gaelic League had grown to 83 branches in 1898, fifteen of which were in the United States, eight in Great Britain and one in Paris. This increased to 600 branches in 1904 with 50,000 members, 900 in 1905 with 100,000 members, and 964 in 1906, before falling to 671 in 1908. With McMahon’s conservative estimate of fifty to seventy members per branch, the peak year of 1906 saw between 48,200 and 67,480

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<sup>124</sup> Mathews, *Revival*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>125</sup> Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 217-218.

Gaelic League members in Ireland.<sup>126</sup> Before the turn of the century and the League's growth in popularity and membership, the revival constituted a small minority of enthusiasts, attracting idealistic young men and women, but by the early 1900s it was a major national and international movement.<sup>127</sup> That said, it must still be noted that numbers were relatively small – in 1906, Patrick Pearse, in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, estimated that the League's workforce, excluding volunteers, was just 120 individuals.<sup>128</sup>

Membership was fluid and varied. McMahon's sample of Gaelic League officers from the 1903-04 and 1913-14 executive committees concludes that they were overwhelmingly male (99 per cent in 1903-4 and 88 per cent in 1913-14), aged between late-twenties and seventy, were generally professionals and clergymen, employers and managers, or skilled artisans and clerical workers, and one-third came from native Irish speaking backgrounds. General members, based on McMahon's sample of the Belfast, Cork and Dublin branches – admittedly an urban focus – were predominantly young, with 37 per cent of a sample of 570 individuals being under the age of 24, but not exclusively so: 26 per cent were over the age of forty. General members were 85 per cent male, but it must be noted that the number of women increased as the organisation grew and that women were agreed to be the most reliable and regular of attendees. The attraction of the Gaelic League for women was threefold: it provided recreation, it encouraged women's participation and afforded them full rights (much more so than Irish society more generally), and provided an outlet for professionally educated

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<sup>126</sup> Ó Súilleabháin, *Athbheochan na Gaeilge*, pp. 8-13; Ó Conchubhair, 'The Gaelic League and Irish Ireland', p. 202; McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, pp. 86-89.

<sup>127</sup> Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, p. 166.

<sup>128</sup> Ó Súilleabháin, *Athbheochan na Gaeilge*, pp. 12-13.

women.<sup>129</sup> All of this suggests that in large urban areas the Gaelic League comprised almost exclusively middle-class men and women, though this diversified after 1900 and the League reportedly witnessed growing class diversity.<sup>130</sup>

The most important constituency was the Irish-speaking population on the western and southern seaboard: with the exception of large urban centres, the highest concentrations of branches were in the counties of Cork, Kerry, Donegal, Clare, Galway and Mayo. On the surface this looks promising but most of these branches were not, in fact, founded by local people and instead were the result of a combination of visits by enthusiasts from larger communities and the official efforts of travelling League employees (*timiri*) who campaigned on behalf of the language and established branches throughout the country. This meant that branches in Irish-speaking areas often declined soon after their foundation, and relied on outsiders to reinvigorate them. In these areas, revivalists were met with two stumbling blocks. First, they were greeted with the apathy and indifference towards the Irish language previously discussed in this chapter, where parents wanted their children to speak English to overcome the ingrained social stigma that Irish speakers were poor and backwards, and to prepare them for emigration and work abroad, upon which the parents depended financially. This is supported by the fact that the places with the highest concentrations of League branches, outside of large metropolitan areas, also had the highest rates of emigration: in 1901 Connacht and Munster accounted for 70 per cent of the country's emigrants. Secondly, the reliance of the League on branch formation in commercial centres where residents were more likely to be English-speaking meant that they were failing to

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<sup>129</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, pp. 95-99.

<sup>130</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, pp. 108-112.

engage with the rural farmers and labourers who spoke Irish on a daily basis.<sup>131</sup> There was also the issue of the difference between *cainnt na ndaoine* – the contemporary, colloquial spoken language – and the classical, inaccessible Irish of the seventeenth century which sometimes appeared in print.<sup>132</sup> For the rural poor, who comprised the majority of native speakers, the ‘revival’ of an urban and middle-class interest in the language was an unexpected and disconcerting development and ‘bought Irish’ became a term for the stilted speech of Irish students.<sup>133</sup> This suggests that there existed a divide between native speakers and those who learned Irish through League classes, and a lack of continuity between the two groups, but it must be noted that League membership was not only learners; many native Irish speakers took part in League activities. For example, the *múinteoirí taistil* (travelling teachers) who taught literacy to native speakers belonged to a different social class than the founders of the League: they were usually from Irish-speaking or bilingual districts, not from wealthy families, were young, and worked for modest pay.<sup>134</sup> Despite the League’s popularity among the new Catholic intelligentsia, and the fact that it filled, to a degree, the vacuum left by the fall of Parnell and the dampening of Irish hopes of political autonomy after the year 1900, and acted as a major socialising influence on the young, it ultimately failed to enlist in large numbers the native-speaking population of the west and south.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, pp. 119-23.

<sup>132</sup> O’Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival*, p. 45.

<sup>133</sup> Dorian, *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-century Donegal*, p. 54, note 150. Moving into the period after 1922, the vernacular continued to be different to the state-sponsored Irish that was studied, taught, and printed on signs and forms. See Barry McCrea, *Languages of the Night: Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe* (Newhaven, 2015), p. 9.

<sup>134</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 187.

<sup>135</sup> Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, pp. 279-292; McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 215.

It is difficult to establish the impact which the Gaelic League had in terms of language revival. The 1911 census revealed that the total number of Irish-speakers on the island had continued to decline since 1901 (from 641,142 in 1901 to 582,446 in 1911).<sup>136</sup> In several Irish-dominated counties the percentage decline in the number of Irish-speakers was more than double that for the general population, yet there were also more young people on the 1911 census with Irish.<sup>137</sup> Census figures, as discussed, continued to be unreliable owing to the under-reporting and reluctance to admit knowledge of Irish which was apparent throughout the nineteenth century censuses, with a new element of over-reporting from revivalists who were, in reality, more enthusiastic than they were fluent. Another complication is the nature of League participation. Activities such as lectures, debates, dancing, music, and festivals were intended to supplement language work, but they frequently became the normal mode of participation for most members who participated primarily for the social aspect, a trend that is echoed in the diaspora.<sup>138</sup> This led to a high turnover of members, owing to the indifference of average members (i.e. those who were not leaders or organisers) and waning interest once activities moved to classroom work. This meant that individuals experienced the revival in an unsystematic and fleeting way and, in practice, paying members outnumbered language students. For example, the Dublin Central Branch in 1900 had 600 members but 190 enrolled in language classes, while in Skerries, Co. Dublin, in 1901 there were 500 in attendance at the inaugural meeting but just 68 attended the twice-weekly language classes. On the other hand though, we cannot measure it exclusively by membership – significantly more people bought

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<sup>136</sup> Ó Cuív, 'Irish Language and Literature, 1845-1921', p. 431.

<sup>137</sup> FitzGerald, 'Irish-Speaking in the Pre-Famine Period', p. 193.

<sup>138</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 130.

Eugene O’Growney’s *Simple Lessons in Irish* series than paid League subscriptions, meaning many more people may have joined the League or been involved with the language than can be precisely calculated.<sup>139</sup> This demonstrates how census and membership figures alone cannot depict the changing attitudes and opinions of Irish people toward the language that the revival fostered – and this is what is significant for this project.

The Gaelic League was not the first organisation dedicated to the Irish language but its foundation marked a fundamental shift in attitudes towards the language. From the early 1880s onwards, there was a transformation from an elite, antiquarian-oriented revival to a visible and more accessible and public manifestation. The League fostered and encouraged a modern Gaelic literature – demonstrated by the sheer volume of new periodicals listed above (and the proliferation of advertisements for Gaelic League and GAA activities within these and other newspapers), as well as textbooks, plays, poetry, collections of short stories, prose, and novels, and folktales both new and old, in Irish or as translations. League activities went some way towards dismantling many of the state biases against the Irish language that were built into the education and legal systems, while the League itself was a major source of influence on Irish education policy. It was a modernising force for the language too – by setting out rules for playwriting in Irish, traditional music and dance, singing and storytelling at the *feiseanna* and *Oireachtas* (festivals), and establishing Gaelic colleges to maintain the standards of Irish among teachers and organisers, the League inadvertently served to standardise the language.<sup>140</sup> Irish-Ireland and the Gaelic Revival, more broadly,

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<sup>139</sup> McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*, p. 92.

<sup>140</sup> Mathews, *Revival*, pp. 25-28; Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 17.

increased the visibility of the Irish language through publications and various social and sporting events, while the Gaelic League itself, peopled largely by civil servants, created a written record through pamphlets, newspapers, and membership lists. By the early twentieth century, Irish had found its way into the public domain and the revival had successfully overseen the transition from:

An invisible, private, apologetic role for Irish to a highly visible, public manifestation of a cultural revival, proclaimed from the sides of carts, from the names of train stations, from street name plates and from the addresses on letter and packages.<sup>141</sup>

The League became an important focal point around which firm notions of Irish identity began to crystallise. It succeeded in creating an atmosphere conducive to the study and appreciation of the Irish language but failed to arrest the decline of vernacular Irish in Irish-speaking areas. Attitudes were altered and people actually *wanted* to learn the language: the revival movement brought a respectability to things that were essentially Irish, when people might have been ashamed before. The language gained a new reputation, as demonstrated by literary critic and writer Barry McCrea's family's experience: his great-grandmother's generation saw the abandoning of Irish for English as a symbol and means of progress and educational advancement, whereas his grandmother, within just one generation, saw Irish as a serious school subject, the official language of the Free State, a badge of education and key to securing employment in its bureaucracy. It was a high language, a badge of

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<sup>141</sup> Mac Mathúna, 'From Manuscripts to Street Signs via *Séadna*', p. 59.

officialdom, a sign of education, and a tongue of solemn national pronouncements, ceremonies and official certificates and prizes.<sup>142</sup>

The reason the revival is treated separately in this thesis is owing to the fact that from the late nineteenth century, it went hand-in-hand with the construction of an Irish identity in opposition to English culture, which was seen as imported, alien, imperialistic and detrimental to Irish initiative.<sup>143</sup> Language was seen as a uniting force which could renew a sense of identity and, by extension, national cohesion.<sup>144</sup> The period 1900-1922 saw the Irish language become attached to a particular political standpoint – extreme nationalism – which manifested itself in anti-British rhetoric. It came to be imbued with a separatist function largely because of its association with the emerging nationalist ethos and was manipulated socio-politically and came to function as an enduring icon of a distinctive de-Anglicised ethnic identity.<sup>145</sup> Even if this was not the original intention, it was the case by the second decade of the twentieth century when Eoin MacNeill replaced Hyde as president and six of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic were members of the Gaelic League.<sup>146</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has served to demonstrate that nineteenth-century language decline in Ireland was precipitated by a series of adverse historical events operating in tandem with internal pressures, while the subsequent revival went hand-in-hand with

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<sup>142</sup> McCrea, *Languages of the Night*, p. 9.

<sup>143</sup> Mathews, *Revival*, p. 21.

<sup>144</sup> Rev Martin Brennan, 'Language, Personality and the Nation' in Ó Cuív, *A View of the Irish Language*, pp. 70-80.

<sup>145</sup> Doyle, *A History of the Irish Language*, p. 209; Corrigan, 'The Ideology of Nationalism', p. 213.

<sup>146</sup> Ó Croidheáin, *Language from Below*, p. 154.

nationalism. The Famine proved crucial in the linguistic history of Ireland as it accelerated this process of decline through excess deaths and emigration, particularly among those sections of the population which spoke Irish. But Irish continued to be widely spoken in rural Ireland, particularly in Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, north Roscommon, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford until the end of the century. Emigration was intricately intertwined with the Irish language, as detailed, and although it cannot be denied that language shift was well underway by 1850, Irish-speakers did emigrate to North America and Britain during the period under consideration, to a multitude of destinations, like William Morrissey from Co. Waterford who left for Ohio in the 1860s with “no education, didn’t know the English language, and had no money when he landed in America”, or those who emigrated from Co. Donegal who “would not have a word of English”.<sup>147</sup> The experiences of individuals such as these will be pursued in the following three chapters, beginning with London.

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<sup>147</sup> NFC MS1407, Seán O’Keeffe, Co. Waterford. Collector: J. O’Keeffe, 1955. NFC MS1411, Annie McColgan (78), Pollan, Ballyliffin, Co. Donegal. Collector: Conall C. Ó Beirn, 1955.

Decade	Number
1820-30	54,338
1831-40	207,381
1841-50	780,719
1851-60	914,119
1861-70	435,778
1871-80	436,871
1881-90	655,482
1891-1900	388,416

Figure 5: Irish emigration to the United States, 1820-1900<sup>148</sup>

Year	Irish-born in the United States	Irish-born in Britain
1851	962,000	727,000
1861	1,611,000	806,000
1871	1,856,000	775,000
1881	1,855,000	781,000
1891	1,872,000	653,000
1901	1,615,000	632,000
1911	1,352,000	550,000

Figure 6: Irish-born in the United States and Britain, 1851-1911<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Roland Berthoff, *British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790-1050* (Cambridge, MA, 1953), p. 5

<sup>149</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, 'A Note on Nineteenth-Century Irish Emigration Statistics', *Population Studies*, 29 (1975), pp. 143-149.

## Chapter Two: A Primary Cultural Resource: the Irish Language in London, 1850-1880

Rev John Garwood, British author, clerical secretary to the London City Mission and editor of the *London City Mission Magazine*, wrote in 1853 that the “better class of poor emigrate from Ireland to America, and the worst class to London”, with London attracting only those “who can afford to emigrate nowhere else”, while *The Times* in 1850 described Irish migrants in English towns as “poor creatures, half-garbed in gray frieze and rags”.<sup>1</sup> Such sentiments were expressed frequently by observers throughout the period in question and were common in the popular imagination, with the National Folklore Collection’s questionnaire returns being indicative of these attitudes. Nineteenth-century emigration to Britain was not held in the same regard as was emigration to America and did not take a firm hold in the popular imagination, whereas America’s reputation was believed even by those who had never been there.<sup>2</sup> One Nora Murphy from Co. Galway even stated that few went to England because “they were too grand to go”,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that emigration to Britain was seen as something of a last resort, and supporting the theory discussed in the introduction that, to a great extent, Irish migrants to Britain were less well-off. These attitudes have formed the basis for twentieth-century and more recent historiographical engagement, but what this debate has neglected to include is the high proportion of Irish speakers amongst these lower classes, whose experiences are revealed by a collection of commentaries and

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<sup>1</sup> John Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City: Or, One half of the People of London Made Known to the Other Half* (London, 1853), pp. 300-302; *The Times*, 28 May 1850.

<sup>2</sup> Grace Neville, ‘Land of the Fair, Land of the Free? The Myth of America in Irish Folklore’ in Anthony Coulson (ed.), *Exiles and Migrants: Crossing Thresholds in European Culture and Society* (Brighton, 1997), pp. 57-71.

<sup>3</sup> National Folklore Collection MS1409, Nora Murphy, Lissarulla, Claregalway, Co. Galway. Collector: Ciarán Bairéad, 1955.

biographies left by social investigators and religious personnel and through interactions and contact with officialdom throughout the post-Famine period. The instances of language contact and various accommodations made by the legal and religious powers discussed in Chapter One can also be identified in the London context.

The combination of migrant backgrounds and the particular environment which London presented to Irish migrants helped to shape the language's survival there, and this chapter explores the role which the Irish language played in this city between the years 1850 and 1880.

### The Urban Context and Irish Inhabitants

The city of London in the post-Famine period was frequently described by contemporaries as “the largest and busiest human hive in the world”<sup>4</sup> and the “unrivalled national emporium and world-market”<sup>5</sup>: a global political, financial and trade hub and the capital of the then-powerful British Empire, with a population of 958,863 in 1801 and 6,586,000 by 1901.<sup>6</sup> According to Henry Mayhew, the social commentator who authored the *London Labour and London Poor* series between 1851 and 1864, London in 1856 contained “a quarter of a million more individuals than any one county in Great Britain” and was the most densely populated city in the world, thus making it a unique urban context in its contemporary setting.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Mayhew and John Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London* (Cambridge, 1862), pp. 3-18.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol. IX (1897), p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (New York, 2000), p. 411.

<sup>7</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, pp. 3-18.

London was also unusual in terms of the reasons behind its remarkable growth: particularly in comparison to Britain's industrial towns in the midlands and the north (which also grew significantly during the nineteenth century).<sup>8</sup> Unlike Liverpool or Manchester, for example, no one specific industry was central to London's economy and, instead, the city was home to large numbers of a range of artisans, small workshops, businesses and civic offices and the city's population growth was the result of natural increase and migration inflows, further accelerated by the city's appeal as the capital of the British Empire.<sup>9</sup> Economic historians Michael Ball and David Sunderland explain London's uniqueness in terms of its history as the centre of the Empire and as a throwback to a former mercantilist age, where its scale was generated by the consumption of the wealthy and the exploitation of the poor, while historian Stephen Inwood interprets nineteenth-century London as not purely a centre of consumption, but as an industrial city of a different kind, even though the full force of the Industrial Revolution was felt in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds. London was home to 373,000 manufacturing workers in 1851 (which was more than the whole population of Manchester at the time) and had a manufacturing economy which was based on small-scale workshops rather than on the large factory, while its manufacturing strength was instead in the finishing trades, in high-value goods for affluent customers.<sup>10</sup> However, despite slightly different interpretations, the absence of a leading industry and London's role as capital meant that it did not have the employment opportunities to match its population expansion and absorb the influx of

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Ball and David Sunderland, *An Economic History of London, 1800-1914* (London and New York, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ball and Sunderland, *Economic History of London*, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Inwood, *History of London*, pp. 444-476.

migrants, with which came poverty, overcrowding, and an ever-growing chasm between the wealthy and the poor.

It is this chasm which dominates the historiographical record, while contemporary commentators were continually concerned about the living conditions of the poor in nineteenth-century London. Slums, or 'rookeries', were feared – they were seen as breeding places of crime and disease, gaining their reputations not necessarily through known levels of criminality, but because they were concentrations of poverty and because their layout of courtyards, narrow alleys and culs-de-sac made them impenetrable and confusing to outsiders: rendering the people residing within them to be viewed as a race apart, living their lives in ways that strangers assumed to be criminal. The oldest and most notorious example of these rookeries was St. Giles, home to large numbers of Irish. In 1851, the district of St Giles (comprising the two parishes of St Giles in the Fields and St George, Bloomsbury) was home to an astonishing 54,214 inhabitants, according to the 1851 census, in an area of 245 acres, and in the same year, 20 per cent of St Giles's population was born in Ireland.<sup>11</sup> Dr George Buchanan, in a report for the District Board of Works (1858), noted that the area consisted of upwards of seventy streets, courts and alleys with no thoroughfare.<sup>12</sup> Another notorious site with a significant Irish-born population, Jennings' Buildings, contained 81 two-storey tenements grouped around five narrow courts, 1,500 people in accommodation meant for two hundred, and just 49 toilets and no supply of drinking water until 1866.<sup>13</sup> Jennings' Buildings were in close proximity to Kensington Palace

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<sup>11</sup> Dr George Buchanan, *St Giles in 1857: A Report to the District Board of Works* (1858), pp. 25-31.

<sup>12</sup> Buchanan, *St Giles in 1857*, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer Davis, 'From 'Rookeries' to 'Communities': Race, Poverty and Policing in London, 1850-1985', *History Workshop*, 27 (1989), pp. 66-85.

and in stark contrast to its affluent surroundings, illustrating London's description as a 'unique jewel-encrusted terror' where 'heaven and hell were found just a few streets away from each other'.<sup>14</sup> This contrast and London's inequalities absorbed the attention of a generation of social investigators, philanthropists, clergymen, royal commissions and parliamentary committees from the 1830s into the twentieth century. The following statement by Garwood (1853) was echoed by commentators and historians alike:

[London] contains within itself all that is gorgeous in wealth, *and all that is squalid in poverty*; all that is illustrious in knowledge, *and all that is debased in ignorance*; all that is beautiful in virtue, *and all that is revolting in crime*.<sup>15</sup>

Mayhew (1864) described London as a city of antithesis where "astounding riches and prodigious poverty" and the "brightest charity and the darkest crime" existed side by side",<sup>16</sup> while in the 1890s, social reformer Charles Booth stated that although London was the centre of the Imperial Government, the judiciary and finance, there was also much poverty, destitution, hunger, drunkenness, brutality, and crime.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Inwood (2000) states that nineteenth-century London "inspired amazement, pride, revulsion and fear in roughly equal measure", while Jerry White (2007) labels London 'a city of paradox'.<sup>18</sup> These examples illustrate the contrasts and the wide range of wealth, occupations, inhabitants, and experiences to be found in nineteenth-century

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<sup>14</sup> Ball and Sunderland, *Economic History of London*, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Preface, Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*.

<sup>16</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, pp. 18-35.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol. IX (1897), p. 180; Vol. I (1889), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Inwood, *History of London*, p. 494; Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2007), p. 3.

London, but it was the gulf between the wealthy and poor that preoccupied the minds of contemporaries. This prevailing image of inequality can largely be attributed to the nineteenth-century concern with poverty as a social issue. Poverty was truly ‘discovered’ in Britain at this time, a discovery that had its roots in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland, when social observers isolated a direct link between poverty and social problems such as crime, drunkenness, contagious disease, and the breakdown of law and order; meaning the primary concern was not necessarily the wellbeing of the subjects but instead the negative effect their numbers had on London’s cleanliness, public health, provision of relief, and environment.<sup>19</sup> In the nineteenth century, the influx of Irish Famine immigrants made these pre-existing issues more visible and brought these concerns to the fore; the debate that followed centred on attempts to address these social ills, as well as the beginning of change to the city’s built environment in an attempt to combat the vices associated with overcrowding.

The 1860s saw the first attempt at urban planning in working-class areas, with the introduction of regulations regarding the width and construction of new streets, the structure of walls, and the adequacy of air space, drainage and sewerage,<sup>20</sup> followed by the provision for the improvement or demolition of slums and the building of new dwellings.<sup>21</sup> Street improvements were concurrently being carried out by the Metropolitan Board of Works and the London City Council (its successor from 1889) and between 1876 and 1900, some 25 major slum clearances were carried out with

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph O’Carroll, ‘Contemporary Attitudes towards the Homeless Poor 1725-1775’ in David Dickson (ed.), *The Gorgeous Mask: Dublin 1700-1850* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 64-85.

<sup>20</sup> Through by-laws under the Local Government Act of 1858. See John Belchem, *Industrialisation and the Working Class: the English Experience, 1750-1900* (Aldershot, 1990), p. 160.

<sup>21</sup> The Torrens Act (1868), the Dwellings and the Artisans’ and Labourers’ Dwelling Improvement Act (1875), and the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1890). See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London, 2000), pp. 326-327.

39,000 people being evicted – 17,500 in the period 1878-81 alone.<sup>22</sup> Such improvements just put pressure on surrounding neighbourhoods, however, as suitable new housing was rarely provided: the aforementioned Jennings' Buildings were demolished in 1873 but the one thousand inhabitants simply moved to neighbouring areas.<sup>23</sup> As observed in 1856 by one public health officer, Dr Henry Letheby, "the spirit of improvement which has led to the destruction of the poor man's haunts, has had but little regard for the poor man's wants".<sup>24</sup> The demolition of housing to facilitate the building of the railways also helped to bring about the intensification of congestion in Central London. Although estimates vary, it is certain that tens of thousands were evicted and displaced as a result of railway demolitions: John Belchem puts this number at 37,000 between 1859 and 1867, Inwood estimates it to be 120,000 between 1840 and 1900, with one-third of these occurring in the 1860s, while H. J. Dyos estimates 80,000 in the period 1850-1900.<sup>25</sup> A consequence of this was not only the creation of new slum areas and the further overcrowding of existing ones, but also the migration of the middle-class to the suburbs.<sup>26</sup>

By the turn of the century, London was brighter, grander and more mobile (owing to movement to the suburbs and improved transport), yet overcrowding and poor living conditions continued.<sup>27</sup> The extreme cases of overcrowding described by commentators in the 1840s and 1850s – typified by St Giles – had certainly diminished

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<sup>22</sup> White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> Inwood, *History of London*, p. 578.

<sup>24</sup> Dr H. Letheby in the *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of London (1856-7)*, p. 8. Quoted in H.J. Dyos, 'Railways and Housing in Victorian London', *Journal of Transport History*, 2 (1955-56), pp. 90-100.

<sup>25</sup> Belchem, *Industrialisation and the Working Class*, p. 161; Inwood, *History of London*, p. 526; Dyos, 'Railways and Housing', p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> Dyos, 'Railways and Housing', p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 60-64.

by the 1880s, but the proportion of the population living in overcrowded conditions in the centre of the city had actually increased by the end of the century, owing to an insufficiency of housing. The 1891 census reveals that 19.7 per cent of the population lived in overcrowded conditions, which equated to more than two per room in tenements of fewer than five rooms. In central areas, 30 per cent and sometimes 40 per cent lived in these conditions.<sup>28</sup> This demonstrates that despite railway demolitions and street improvements, overcrowding and the way of life which accompanied it continued to exist into the twentieth century. It is predominantly within the context of the continuation of these conditions that the Irish are located in the post-Famine period.

<b>Year</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>As a % of total Irish-born in Britain</b>
<b>1841</b>	75,000	18
<b>1851</b>	108,548	14.9
<b>1861</b>	106,879	13.3
<b>1871</b>	91,171	11.8

*Figure 7: Irish-born settlers in London, 1841-71<sup>29</sup>*

Already by the period under consideration there was a strong Irish presence in London. These migrants can be grouped into three general categories: the middle class, artisans, and rural labourers with few or no industrial or occupational skills. London's proximity to Ireland made it a popular destination for Ireland's poorer migrants, particularly in the post-Famine years, owing to the affordability and convenience of travel and the lack of restrictions given Ireland's position within the United Kingdom.

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<sup>28</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian London* (Oxford, 1971), p. 219.

<sup>29</sup> Source: Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 41, 47.

This caused the migrant stream to Britain to be comprised predominantly of the impoverished and the ‘under-skilled’, and meant that these labourers made up the largest group of Irish migrants in London by a considerable number. These migrants were then greeted with challenging socio-economic conditions upon their arrival: their rural backgrounds rendered them economically vulnerable in the urban environment, less able to find employment in the city, and they often became the very poorest of London’s many poor.<sup>30</sup> Because London’s manufacturing strength was in the finishing trades, which required specific skills, the principal employment option open to nineteenth-century rural Irish migrants was labouring for men (such as in the wharves and docks of the Port of London) and domestic work for women.<sup>31</sup> The scarcity of steady work in the city for the unskilled, including the Irish, caused many to sink “into a condition of wretchedness it is appalling to contemplate”<sup>32</sup> and this occurred for the Irish in such numbers that there came to exist a direct association between them and the ‘prodigious poverty’ of which Mayhew wrote in 1864, by both contemporaries and historians alike. This was limited, though not exclusive, to the period 1850-1880, as the subsequent years saw the expansion of an Irish middle class. A result of this susceptibility to poverty was that following their arrival, the Irish did not have the resources to disperse throughout the city and remained within close proximity to each other; they did not integrate and were described by contemporaries as living in ‘complete isolation’.<sup>33</sup> It must be re-emphasised that this was not the experience for the Irish community in London, or in Great Britain, in its entirety. There were also

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<sup>30</sup> White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> Inwood, *History of London*, p. 415, 473-474.

<sup>32</sup> John Denvir, *The Irish in Britain, from the Earliest Times to the Fall and Death of Parnell*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London, 1894), p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> W. G. Todd, ‘The Irish in England’, *The Dublin Review*, 41: 82 (1856), pp. 470-521.

some skilled workers (e.g. shoemakers) and members of the middle class in London; the city was chosen for its professional and educational opportunities. For example, W. B. Yeats's family emigrated in the 1870s to further Jack B. Yeats's painting career.<sup>34</sup> However, the fact that those who experienced the 'complete isolation' were disproportionately recent migrants from parts of Ireland in which rates of Irish-speaking remained high renders the investigation of this group a necessity for this thesis.

The majority of London's Irish community hailed from the province of Munster; a fact recognised by contemporaries and supported by census returns from 1851-71. John Garwood in 1853 claimed that "the great mass of Irish in London are from Munster, and especially from the large counties of Cork and Kerry",<sup>35</sup> while Henry Mayhew also stated that "the great immigration into London is from Cork".<sup>36</sup> Jerome Farrell's investigation of the 1851 census returns reveals that in Marylebone, 52 per cent of a sample of one hundred Irish-born were from the counties of Cork and Limerick. In South Westminster, 40 per cent were from Cork and Limerick and 52 per cent from Cork, Limerick and Kerry, while in Paddington, 28 per cent were from Limerick, 19 per cent from Cork, and 6 per cent from Kerry – meaning 53 per cent of the sample came from these three counties.<sup>37</sup> Farrell thus concludes that there was a predominance of people from Cork and Limerick in West London in the early 1850s and this is supported by Lynn Hollen Lees's 1979 investigation of a sample of Irish-born from

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<sup>34</sup> Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979), pp. 52-53.

<sup>35</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 304.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Jerome Farrell, 'The Irish in Hammersmith and Fulham in 1851', *The Local Historian*, 29: 2 (1999), pp. 66-75.

the 1861 census: she found that two thirds were from western Munster, and of the 857 Irish-born in London workhouses in 1871, 70 per cent came from western Munster.<sup>38</sup> These findings are particularly significant for this investigation as not only was Munster the province with the highest rate of post-Famine emigration but also recorded high percentages of Irish speaking throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, as discussed in Chapter One.<sup>39</sup> See Table 4 for a breakdown of the counties with the highest rates of Irish-speaking between 1850 and 1911; these counties had correspondingly high rates of emigration.

Additionally, in a 1981 study of the census enumerations of the Irish-born residents of London in 1851 and Philadelphia in 1850, John Modell and Lynn Hollen Lees establish that London was home to a significant number of Irish-born families and residents under the age of fifteen and over the age of forty. This can be partly attributed to the ease of travelling to Britain, compared with the United States, which would have been more of a concern to families than to individuals. Modell and Lees conclude that those families who left Ireland from the 1840s onwards were more likely to choose London over Philadelphia (or the United States more generally).<sup>40</sup> The concentration of older people in the migrant stream to London is also of note, as Irish speaking, particularly Irish-dominant speaking, was more widespread amongst the older age groups in Ireland. Garret FitzGerald's work on establishing Irish-speaking levels among new generations of Irish people (1984) and on the level of Irish-speaking amongst those

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<sup>38</sup> Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> 914,791 individuals emigrated from Munster between 1871 and 1901. See MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> John Modell and Lynn H. Lees, 'The Irish Countryman Urbanised: A Comparative Perspective on the Famine Migration' in Theodore Hershberg (ed.), *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century; Essays Toward an Interdisciplinary History of the City* (New York and Oxford, 1981), pp. 351-367.

aged sixty or over in the 1911 census (2003) both demonstrate that Irish speaking – including Irish and English and Irish-only – was becoming increasingly confined to older people as the century went on. In the 1911 census, 13.3 per cent of the population of Ireland spoke Irish but of those aged over sixty, this figure was 26.7 per cent and in the counties of Munster, this figure was 47.3 per cent (of over sixties).<sup>41</sup> Though specific to the opening years of this study, Modell and Lees nonetheless provide an illuminating insight into the demographic features of Irish migrants in London. The significance of these findings for this study is the inference that Irish-speakers travelled to London – based on regional backgrounds, levels of Irish speaking, rates of emigration and typical migration routes, and age profile. Their geographical backgrounds – coming overwhelmingly from rural areas – is particularly important as they migrated to a city for which they were ill-prepared. As a result, some, perhaps many, are likely to have joined London’s labouring class and so, despite the overrepresentation of investigations into Irish poverty within existing historiography, as discussed in the introduction, this study continues to focus on this group, though approaching from a different perspective and seeking different conclusions. In the absence of any official enumeration of the Irish-speaking communities, it is amongst the lower-class Irish in London that evidence of Irish-speaking can be located. Despite the growth from the 1870s of an Irish middle class in London, including teachers and civil servants, the lower classes continued to be the most visible owing to the

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<sup>41</sup> While the monoglot percentage is small, at 1.3% for Ireland, this cannot take into account Irish-dominant speakers or levels of English fluency. Garret FitzGerald, ‘Estimates for baronies of minimum level of Irish speakers amongst successive decennial cohorts, 1771-1781 to 1861-1871’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 84C (1984), pp. 117-155; ‘Irish-Speaking in the Pre-Famine Period: A Study Based on the 1911 Census Data for People Born before 1851 and Still Alive in 1911’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 103C: 5 (2003), pp. 191-283.

likelihood of middle class assimilation with their British counterparts. The Irish middle class were also less statistically visible and were far removed from the Gaelic culture which was still much more visible in London's Irish working-class communities during the period under consideration.<sup>42</sup>

## Reception and Prejudice

From the influx of the first Famine immigrants, the poverty of the newly-arrived Irish was observed and quickly came to be perceived as a problem and a burden to London: according to the *Morning Chronicle* (1850) "they come over in boatfuls, without a penny in their pockets... They rarely pay for their own lodging and go to the unions for shelter and for food".<sup>43</sup> A concern regarding the responsibility for these immigrants was frequently expressed in social commentaries and the press alike. Already by December 1851, *Lloyd's Illustrated News* reported that in the parish of St. Andrew Holborn "the workhouse was already crammed with Irish",<sup>44</sup> and in 1858 the *Marylebone Mercury* claimed that "of the paupers, at present receiving relief, both in and out of the Workhouse, in the parish of St Marylebone, nearly 85 per cent, are Irish".<sup>45</sup> The Irish influx rapidly came to be seen as "a wholesale pauper swamping system" which needed to be stayed or at the very least controlled.<sup>46</sup> Poor relief in Britain allowed the provision of relief to people who had the status of being 'settled' in a parish (usually obtained through birth in the parish); if one claimed relief outside

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Kirkland, 'Creating Irish London: Modes of Performative Irishness in London, 1870-1890', *Nordic Irish Studies*, 13: 2 (2014), pp. 137-154.

<sup>43</sup> *Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and the Poor*, 25 January 1850. Labour and the Poor, The Metropolitan Districts, Letter XXIX.

<sup>44</sup> *Lloyd's Illustrated News*, 7 December 1851.

<sup>45</sup> *Marylebone Mercury*, 30 October 1858.

<sup>46</sup> *The Times*, 1 October 1850.

one's settlement, that person could be forced to return to their parish of settlement. Unions could therefore remove Irish migrants back to Ireland, and they did so. In 1847, the Poor Law Removal Act facilitated the expulsion of destitute Irish immigrants by simplifying the legal proceedings – meaning Irish paupers could be deported on the same day as they claimed relief. Concerns about numbers and reports of Irish paupers being sent back to Ireland continued to feature in the press up to the 1880s, at least.<sup>47</sup> It also becomes apparent that concerns were often particularly with the moral issues of poverty and overcrowding: slums did not have “a good character, either from a sanitary or moral point of view”<sup>48</sup> and were viewed as places whose inhabitants lay there “in sin, in pain, in filth”.<sup>49</sup>

Irish migrants typically resided in areas with an existing Irish population and which served as reception points for newcomers, resulting in the formation of Irish enclaves which, owing to the majority of Irish migrants' impoverished backgrounds, were often in “the poorest, the most squalid, the most neglected, and the most destitute corners of our cities”.<sup>50</sup> Although unlikely to be a universal experience, these areas were widely viewed by contemporaries as being “infested by a like ragged, wretched, and reckless population”.<sup>51</sup> The *Times* noted in 1853 that “in the great towns of England there is always a separate quarter called ‘Little Ireland’, which is the chosen kingdom of poverty, famine, and death”.<sup>52</sup> In London's case, this primarily consisted of the areas along the River Thames of Southwark, Whitechapel, St Giles and the East End: the

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<sup>47</sup> In 1847 alone, 15,000 were sent back to Ireland from Liverpool. See Hirota Hidetaka, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 170-171; *The Standard*, 30 June 1883.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol. I (1889), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> *Islington Gazette*, 22 August 1857.

<sup>50</sup> Todd, ‘The Irish in England’, p. 472.

<sup>51</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, p. 355.

<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, 25 July 1853.

oldest and largest districts of Irish settlement in the city.<sup>53</sup> The original settlement was a result of the availability of unskilled labour in the shipyards and industries on the Thames, and then grew owing to economic, social and cultural considerations – particularly family ties and chain migration. Such areas in London, although not exclusively Irish, quickly became infamous and synonymous with this group. These areas, in Ó Tuathaigh’s words, displayed:

the full spectrum of social evils: appalling over-crowding, little or no sanitation, open sewers and cesspools, unhealthy diet, inadequate clothing, vagrancy, disease, alcoholism and general squalor; a high quota of unemployed paupers, or of underemployed casual labourers; and a high incidence of casual violence (very often provoked by drink).<sup>54</sup>

The Irish were perceived to be “quite insensible to the comforts and requirements of civilised life”<sup>55</sup> and to have “a marvellous power of lowering the standard of comfort and cleanliness in any court, street, or colony in which they appear”.<sup>56</sup> The conditions in which they lived were the subject of many investigations, resulting in the provision of countless illustrative insights into these areas throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, including inhabitants’ customs and linguistic practices. Thomas Beames (a clergyman who investigated living conditions within inner-city London), writing in 1850, describes Irish slums as “haunts of destitution”, with St Giles “like an honeycomb, perforated by a number of courts and

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen Moore and Paul Darby, ‘Gaelic Games, Irish Nationalist Politics and the Irish Diaspora in London, 1895–1915’, *Sport in History*, 31: 3 (2011), pp. 257-282.

<sup>54</sup> M.A.G. Ó Tuathaigh, ‘The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Problems of Integration’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5: 31 (1981), pp. 149-173.

<sup>55</sup> *London City Press*, 5 March 1864.

<sup>56</sup> John Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861* (London, 1861), p. 147.

blind alleys, *culs de sac*, without any outlet other than the entrance”, hosting “squalid children, haggard men...women without shoes or stockings”,<sup>57</sup> and St. George’s-in-the-Borough as “where the refuse of Ireland vegetate”.<sup>58</sup> In 1857, the *West London Observer* describes the properties on William Street, in Fulham Fields, West Kensington, as being unsanitary, for which the agent “could obtain no other tenants but the lowest order of Irish, who were very dirty and destructive”.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, an 1859 account in *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper* describes a row of houses in Poplar which were deemed unfit for human habitation, the inhabitants of which were “poor Irish, amongst whom great destitution existed”.<sup>60</sup> John Hollingshead writes in 1861 that in London, “the lowest order of Irish, when they get an opportunity, will take a room and sub-let it to as many families as the floor will hold”,<sup>61</sup> while in 1875 a Margaret Perriera wrote to the *Morning Post* on the subject of ‘the Irish Poor in London’, describing how she visited “some of the worst courts and alleys, and witnessed misery which must be seen to be realised”.<sup>62</sup> Continuing into the 1890s, a report by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a London evening newspaper and early promoter of investigative journalism, in 1891 detailed evictions in Leather Lane, Holborn (an area coined the “Irish barracks”), where “upwards of fifty families have lived in single rooms of this abominable rookery”; while in 1897 Edward Walford described the parish of St Giles as being “the synonym of filth and squalor” in the city and that there were “streets which demand to be swept away in the interest of health and cleanliness,”

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Beames, *The Rookeries of London: Past, Present and Prospective* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1850), p. 4, pp. 25-30.

<sup>58</sup> Beames, *The Rookeries of London*, p. 133.

<sup>59</sup> *West London Observer*, 3 January 1857.

<sup>60</sup> *Lloyd’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 18 December 1859.

<sup>61</sup> Hollingshead, *Ragged London*, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> *Morning Post*, 14 December 1875.

despite the fact that the original infamous Rookery no longer existed (as it was demolished to make way for New Oxford Street).<sup>63</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the demolition of slums without the provision of new homes simply meant that the inhabitants relocated and although the Irish were no longer exclusively confined to ghettos and Irishtowns, they were still over-represented in the overcrowded centre of London.<sup>64</sup>

Contemporary concerns with these areas were often with the moral issues of poverty and overcrowding: slums did not have “a good character, either from a sanitary or moral point of view”,<sup>65</sup> and Irish areas were also seen as “nurseries” of crime in the city.<sup>66</sup> The overrepresentation of Irish men and women in the courtrooms and prisons of Britain and of Irish Catholic children in statistics for juvenile crime led contemporaries to view *all* Irish immigrants as inclined to crime and vagrancy.<sup>67</sup> Mayhew noted in his 1862 investigation *The Criminal Prisons of London* the fact that “the greater number of the professional thieves of London belong to what is called the Irish-Cockney tribe”, that there were many “little Hibernian juvenile offender[s]” in Tothill Fields boys’ prison, and that “a very large proportion of the juvenile prisoners

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<sup>63</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 December 1891. Edward Walford, *Old and New London: a Narrative of its History, its People, and its Places*. Vol. III (London, 1897), pp. 202-206.

<sup>64</sup> David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921’ in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI, Ireland Under the Union II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 653-723. This relocation also posed a burden to the Poor Law Unions. A deputation to the President of the Poor Law Board in 1860 outlined how improvements in the city had driven a large portion of the London poor into the densely populated parishes in the immediate neighbourhood and instead of the parishes these people were from having to bear the burden of their poverty, this fell to the parish of their arrival. For example, St George’s Southwark had to bear the burden of the newly imported poor from the City of London. *West London Observer*, 17 March 1860. In Kensal New Town, Rev Francis J. Kirk observed that “crowds of people, dislodged by the removal of their old houses in different parts of London, migrated to the new quarters at Kensal. Every room was occupied as fast as the houses were erected” in the 1850s. Rev Francis J. Kirk, *Reminiscences of an Oblate of St. Charles* (London, 1905), pp. 32-33.

<sup>65</sup> Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol. I (1889), p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 7 December 1850.

<sup>67</sup> MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain*, pp. 151-152.

are the children of Irish parents”.<sup>68</sup> In the Proceedings of the Old Bailey (London’s Central Criminal Court) and within the press, accounts frequently appear of court cases involving Irish perpetrators (and victims) – usually concerning petty crime, thievery, drunkenness and brawling. The Irish were seen as “continually creating disturbances, assaulting the police”, and were “the terror of the neighbourhood”.<sup>69</sup> Irish labourers were frequently charged with assault, such as a Stephen Crawley for biting off his countryman’s nose; a Timothy Burns, the reported “king” of an Irish colony at Kensington, for assaulting a police constable; and a John McCarthy also for assaulting a police officer.<sup>70</sup> The Proceedings of the Old Bailey also provide evidence of the workings of more subtle social prejudice – Irish accents were rendered phonetically as a way of ridiculing the evidence recorded, particularly in the eighteenth century, while nineteenth-century witness accounts frequently note the presence of Irish people in areas where violence has occurred, even if the perpetrators themselves are not confirmed to be Irish: a witness to an 1862 assault, Michael Roberts, describes how “there was a regular Irish row going on in the court” in Whitechapel,<sup>71</sup> while a police sergeant, William Bewley, who attended a murder in Manchester Square in 1850, stated that “I heard a noise in Gray’s buildings, which is inhabited by the lower order of Irish – there are a great many fights there”,<sup>72</sup> and another police sergeant, John Woods, attended an assault in White Street, Borough, in 1872 where there was a court called St George’s Square which was “occupied mostly by the lower class of Irish”.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, pp. 402-403.

<sup>69</sup> *West London Observer*, 27 November 1858.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Crawley: *Morning Chronicle*, 28 April 1853; Timothy Burns: *West London Observer*, 23 May 1857; John McCarthy: *Morning Chronicle*, 25 October 1858.

<sup>71</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 18 August 1862, trial of Mary M’Carthy (t18620818-897).

<sup>72</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 21 October 1850, trial of Nathaniel Eden Bushell (t18501021-1831).

<sup>73</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 28 October 1872, trial of Johanna Wright (t18721028-765).

For nineteenth-century observers, there was a straightforward explanation for this apparent Irish propensity for crime: simply being that “the Irish constitute the poorest portion of our people”.<sup>74</sup> The lack of employment opportunities for the unskilled Irish combined with the nature of life in the slums, where children were “left to gambol the streets and courts without parental control” and were seen to grow up “untrained to habits of daily work”,<sup>75</sup> created a cycle where, for some, stepwise migration or upward social mobility were unattainable. However, this was not the case for all of the Irish in London: many worked in the casual trades and were seasonally-paid, or just poorly-paid, meaning they suffered seasonal or long-term unemployment and became dependent upon relief from the local Poor Law Board, but prevailing prejudices against the Irish poor meant that *all* members of this group came to be viewed by external observers as criminals and members of the ‘dangerous classes’.<sup>76</sup>

The Irish were therefore alienated from the time of their arrival, based on their poverty and class, which was then further exacerbated by their religion. Catholicism was viewed as “a compound of impiety, obscenity, and tyranny, the cunning work of ages, to enslave mankind, mentally and bodily, and to confer illimitable and irresponsible power on its priesthood”.<sup>77</sup> As a result, large sections of the British public were suspicious of this religion, its practitioners, and, more importantly, the power of the priest.<sup>78</sup> Because a high enough proportion of Irish Catholics defined their identity through their faith, for many observers ‘Irish’ became synonymous with ‘Catholic’, and vice versa; thus causing a direct connection to be drawn by contemporaries

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<sup>74</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, p. 403.

<sup>75</sup> Mayhew and Binney, *The Criminal Prisons of London*, p. 403.

<sup>76</sup> Davis, ‘From ‘Rookeries’ to ‘Communities’’, p. 73.

<sup>77</sup> *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 7 December 1850.

<sup>78</sup> Ó Tuathaigh, ‘The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, p. 168.

between this religion and the lifestyles and very nature of its practitioners.<sup>79</sup> Irish areas were seen to have “all the features of an Irish Roman Catholic locality...women half naked, filthy in person...men, with the aspect of thugs...streets alive with troops of wild, neglected, barefooted, and thievish looking children...dilapidated, foul, cheerless dwellings”.<sup>80</sup> However, when Victorians claimed a connection between Catholicism, crime, and social vices, they only had the lower-class Irish Catholics in mind; never extending this view to the existing small numbers of English Catholics.<sup>81</sup> It was, therefore, a “prejudice of race, not of religion”.<sup>82</sup> Descriptions of the immigrant Irish took on a distinctly racial element from the 1840s, while popular theories about race and national character were increasingly used to ‘prove’ that the Irish were naturally inferior.<sup>83</sup> Bronwen Walter (2000) notes that because the Irish in Britain had been represented as racially inferior since at least the twelfth century, the racialisation of the Irish is so ingrained in British culture as to be barely recognisable for what it is, and that the failure to recognise anti-Irish attitudes as racist is owing to the preoccupation with skin colour in many late twentieth-century Western societies.<sup>84</sup> The sentiments expressed within the press, particularly *Punch*, and ‘No Irish Need Apply’ advertisements became familiar tropes which continued into the 1880s, at least, being revived during episodes of violence or distress.<sup>85</sup> These sentiments were not necessarily restricted to the working class: Irish immigrant James Mullin, in his 1921

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<sup>79</sup> Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol. II (1889), p. 243.

<sup>80</sup> *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 7 December 1850.

<sup>81</sup> J. M. Feheney, ‘Delinquency among Irish Catholic Children in Victorian London’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 23: 92 (1983), pp. 319-329.

<sup>82</sup> Todd, ‘The Irish in England’, p. 473.

<sup>83</sup> Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison and London, 2004), pp. 4-6.

<sup>84</sup> Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London, 2000), p. 82.

<sup>85</sup> Illustrative sample of ‘No Irish Need Apply’: *The Times*, 6 September 1852; 13 October 1855; 24 January 1856; *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 14 January 1869; 9 June 1870; 22 June 1870; *West London Observer*, 6 July 1861; 22 July 1865; *Morning Post*, 1 October 1881.

autobiography, claims that while working as a locum doctor in London, he was rejected on the basis of being an Irishman and a Catholic; spurred by the “wave of racial and religious prejudice sweeping over England” in the wake of the 1882 Phoenix Park murders.<sup>86</sup>

The Irish therefore arrived into an environment where stereotypes of race, religion and class abounded and the enduring stereotype of the violent Irish ‘Paddy’ was prevalent – encapsulated by the *Islington Gazette* in 1862:

It is not bigotry, but bare truth, to say that Irish Papists are the greatest nuisances from which this country suffers. They spoil the look of all our large towns; they corrupt, by wholesale, the comparatively wholesome English poor; they systematically and obstinately break the public peace... For all this they give us absolutely nothing in compensation.<sup>87</sup>

These attitudes marked the Irish in Britain as outcasts and negatively impacted their likelihood to integrate. Despite the Act of Union (1801), a large majority of the Irish in London came to exist in a sub-culture of poverty and isolation and continued to be viewed as “truly ‘aliens’ in race, in religion, and in feeling, from the great mass of the British nation”.<sup>88</sup>

Dealing with discrimination, a lack of acceptance, social deprivation, difficult socio-economic conditions, and the psychological challenge of emigration from a rural to urban area resulted in a disorienting life for many.<sup>89</sup> In such a hostile environment, it

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<sup>86</sup> James Mullin, *The Story of a Toiler's Life* (Dublin, 1921), p. 157.

<sup>87</sup> *Islington Gazette*, 18 October 1862.

<sup>88</sup> Todd, ‘The Irish in England’, p. 470.

<sup>89</sup> Moore and Darby, ‘The Irish Diaspora in London’, p. 260.

would not be surprising for an individual to play down their nationality and attempt to integrate with the host society, as did James Mullin who was “reckoned amongst the ‘good’, for I tried to assimilate myself to those I mixed with”.<sup>90</sup> Yet he was the exception and, for the most part, the working-class Irish “remain[ed] distinct from the English”<sup>91</sup> and continued to preserve their Irishness through settlement patterns, marriage choices, political and social networks, religious participation, and involvement in Irish affairs, and did not appear to express a desire to integrate with their host society. This extended to hostilities on the part of the Irish towards their host society, likely compounded by the contemporary political climate.<sup>92</sup> Garwood noted in the 1850s that “the appearance of a Protestant among them [the Irish] immediately excites their anger. If they could secretly murder him they would not hesitate to do so”,<sup>93</sup> while Samuel Garratt (the Vicar of St Margaret’s Ipswich, 1867-1895, who was posted in Trinity Church in St Giles in the Field from 1850) held discussion meetings for the local Irish Catholics and in 1856 recorded that the Irish threw stones and dust at him on more than one occasion when speaking out in the open.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Booth observed that the inhabitants of a premises in Shelton Street “were Irish Roman Catholics and not very friendly to English or Protestants” and that other Irish were “unwilling to open their doors to a Protestant missionary, and ready to insult and abuse any others in the house who were willing to speak to him”.<sup>95</sup> This was in contrast to Rev Edward Price’s observation that “their welcome was most cordial; such as a

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<sup>90</sup> Mullin, *The Story of a Toiler’s Life*, p. 158.

<sup>91</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 314.

<sup>92</sup> The period under consideration witnessed the Famine and perceived insufficient government response to it, the Fenian movement, the land acts, and the Home Rule movement; all major events which strained the already fraught relationship between Ireland and Britain.

<sup>93</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 270.

<sup>94</sup> Evelyn R. Garratt, *Life and Personal Recollections of Samuel Garratt* (London, 1908), pp. 39-40.

<sup>95</sup> Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol II. (1889), pp. 49-57.

Catholic priest ever receives from the Irish poor”.<sup>96</sup> The Irish community’s lack of desire to integrate, their proximity to home, the mobility of the Irish labour force, and their refusal to accept the permanency of their situation led many of the Irish to have an unusually ambivalent attitude to their host society, which continued to set them apart.<sup>97</sup>

This analysis of the reception of the Irish in London and the extent of prejudice expressed against them has highlighted the complexity of the British-Irish relationship – where the Irish were not treated as equal members within the United Kingdom – and the effect it had on Irish immigrants in London (not to mention other cities). Anti-Irish sentiment played a direct role in the willingness, or lack thereof, on the part of the Irish to integrate with their host society, while any efforts to gain acceptance, not to mention integration, were met with equally strong opposition. The Irish were set apart both physically and psychologically from their arrival in London and this separation played an important role in the continuation of home traditions and customs.

### The Irish Language in London, 1850-1880

The composition of London’s Irish migrant communities in the post-Famine period is significant as these years saw an increase in the number of families and elderly migrating from Ireland, in addition to greater levels of permanent migration.<sup>98</sup> The migration of entire families and their settlement in Irish-dominated areas allowed the maintenance of home traditions, such as religious practice and language, while the higher rates of Irish-speaking amongst Ireland’s older population make it more likely

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<sup>96</sup> Rev Edward Price, *Sick Calls from the Diary of a Missionary Priest* (London, 1856), p. 79.

<sup>97</sup> Ó Tuathaigh, ‘The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, p. 159.

<sup>98</sup> White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 133.

that the language was brought to London. As detailed in Chapter One, the location of previous emigrants and the networks of friendship, marriage, residence and employment that had been created by earlier Irish migrants and their descendants was one of the most important factors in determining a migrant's destination. This was true for the Irish in London, who were characterised by close-knit and localised communities.<sup>99</sup> This created situations where entire rooms or lodging houses were occupied by Irish migrants, and often were owned by Irish migrants too; familiar faces and accents, general ease of social intercourse, and familiar landmarks all helped in creating a sense of cohesion among the Irish migrant community.<sup>100</sup> The cultural security enabled by these environments provided suitable conditions for language maintenance by reducing external influences – through enclosed systems, a limited geographical range, and a high density of Irish people from similar backgrounds, even from the same province, as demonstrated by Farrell (1999) and Lees (1979). The impact of residential patterns on language maintenance is supported by linguist Robert W. Schrauf who states that one of the most important factors in retaining a mother tongue into a third generation is settlement in geographically bounded ethnic communities, and concludes that the more an ethnic group maintains a tight-knit, centralised pattern of settlement, the more likely it is that the mother tongue will be maintained, as co-residence in a language community simply increases the frequency of the opportunity to use and reinforce the mother tongue.<sup>101</sup> However, the extent of Irish-English bilingualism by the period in question and, within this, levels of fluency

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<sup>99</sup> Sheridan Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Mission to the Irish in London 1840-1860', *Recusant History*, 10: 3 (1969-70), pp. 123-145.

<sup>100</sup> M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Britain', p. 158.

<sup>101</sup> Robert W. Schrauf, 'Mother Tongue Maintenance among North American Ethnic Groups', *Cross-Cultural Research*, 33: 2 (1999), pp. 179-188.

in either English or Irish, render the extent of this preservation difficult to assess. That said, McDonnell (1969) proposes that the large numbers of Irish-speakers in certain parts of London in the 1850s suggests that these areas became havens for Irish-speakers – those who had followed their relations and their friends.<sup>102</sup> This was certainly the case in other destinations, such as towns in the mining region of Pennsylvania (to be discussed in Chapter Three), and considering this, combined with the strength of chain migration discussed in Chapter One, it is reasonable to conclude that some Irish speakers went to specific areas in London to reside with fellow speakers who could provide an easier transition from Ireland to London.

The visibility of Irish in London is obscured by the prevalence of bilingualism by the mid nineteenth century, and this, combined with the utility argument (where the transition from Irish to English was seen as beneficial from a practical point of view) has led to the assumption that *all* Irish migrants chose to speak English, leading, in turn, to a dearth of investigations into the contexts in which Irish did continue to be spoken. Considering contemporary rates of bilingualism in Ireland, and levels of fluency in each of English and Irish, it is certainly true that a significant proportion of Irish migrants in London were proficient in English by this time, if not monolingual English speakers. The presence of bilingualism is supported by contemporary sources: for example, John Garwood (of the London City Mission) states that “Irish is the language which this class ordinarily speak among themselves, and which they know much better than English”.<sup>103</sup> In Ireland, as discussed, English had long been established as the dominant language in most public domains and institutions, such as

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<sup>102</sup> K. G. T. McDonnell, ‘Roman Catholics in London 1850-1865’ in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 429-443.

<sup>103</sup> Referring to Irish Catholics. Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 306.

the schools and Church, and by the mid nineteenth-century it was becoming increasingly dominant in the private domain too. It is reasonable to assume that this trend continued in London, where a transition occurred from Irish to English first in the public sphere and then the private. This is supported by studies on the Irish language in other diasporic communities, for example, Joseph Callahan (1994) concludes that the Irish language in Pennsylvania retired below the surface of society, owing to an absence of institutional support, becoming a private language used informally among friends and family and within some Irish neighbourhoods.<sup>104</sup> Mayhew observed the number of Irish speakers he encountered during his investigations between 1851 and 1864, particularly recently-arrived women from Co. Cork.<sup>105</sup> This supports the theory that Irish prevailed for longer within the home. At the time, Irish men were usually employed in manual labour (e.g. on the docks) where they were in daily contact with the rest of London's working class, with whom they presumably spoke for a significant portion of the day, while women's daily interactions were more likely to take place within the Irish-dominated social sphere, providing them with an environment more conducive to allowing the continuation of Irish as a vernacular. The result of this tendency, however, is that instances of Irish speaking infrequently make it into the historical record. This is compounded by the difficulty in identifying 'Irish London' as a distinct entity: a coherent, self-assigned 'Irish' identity only began to emerge in the final decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Joseph Callahan, 'The Irish Language in Pennsylvania' in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), pp. 18-26.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Jacqueline Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: the Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-century London' in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 122-155.

<sup>106</sup> Kirkland, 'Creating Irish London', pp. 140-141.

Additionally, the limitations detailed in the introduction of studying the linguistic tradition of an oral, minority language must again be noted; considering the social background of a large proportion of the Irish in London and contemporary literacy levels, few Irish-speakers would have been in a position to record their experiences nor engage in a formal manner with their native language.<sup>107</sup> As a result, there exists no source material dedicated to the discussion of the condition of the Irish language at the time, nor are there many insights from native speakers themselves. The subject has thus been approached from a multitude of angles and a range of materials has been consulted; most notably newspapers and commentaries, records of court proceedings, and Catholic Church records.

The numerous investigations into the living conditions of London's poor which have been discussed are notable sources for evidence of Irish-speaking in the city. Mayhew, as mentioned, encountered Irish-speakers during his investigations, while Cardinal Manning reported that Irish immigrants spoke Irish habitually in some London districts during the 1850s and Beames, writing in 1850, noted that Irish was "the vernacular language of the inhabitants" of a Rookery near St Giles and Spitalfields.<sup>108</sup> As the purpose of these social commentaries was to highlight and address poor living conditions, rather than the vernacular of inhabitants, such linguistic observations were made in passing and not further elucidated, but they do reveal the existence of pockets of Irish speakers in London. The regularity of these encounters suggests that the presence of Irish speakers in London was not necessarily a surprise, but supports the

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<sup>107</sup> This was discussed in the *London Daily News*, 1 September 1893: the Irish "have not many half-crowns to spend on books and are not in the way of hearing about new publications".

<sup>108</sup> Máiréad Nic Craith and Janet Leyland, 'The Irish Language in Britain: A case study of North West England', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 30: 3 (1997), pp. 171-185; Beames, *The Rookeries of London*, p. 110.

theory, to an extent, that the language was more prevalent within the private sphere as these encounters took place in the home or neighbourhood. These encounters often relate to individuals rather than groups, meaning their experiences were likely the exception.

Similarly, the frequent appearances of Irish men and women in the courtrooms of Britain are valuable regarding evidence of Irish language usage. Among the Old Bailey records and court proceedings reported in the press, references to the use of Irish in both daily lives and in the courtrooms of London are to be found, once again hinting at the bilingual nature of the Irish population and their continued use of Irish in certain situations, while also echoing the contemporary situation in the legal system in Ireland. A man sentenced to death for murder in 1851, a Patrick Lyons, requested “that he might be attended by a clergyman familiar with the Irish language” prior to his execution; in 1853, a Francis Mead was charged with killing Mary Mead and a witness to the assault stated that the defendant “said something in his own language, Irish” during the incident; and in the same year, James Thatcher, a witness to a brawl between Irish and Italian immigrants, stated that he “heard one man speak in Irish” but then speak in English to another.<sup>109</sup> These examples demonstrate migrants’ ability to speak Irish but also to understand and speak English to a sufficient degree to take part in court proceedings. Such incidents are infrequent but evidence of monolingual Irish-speakers, or at least those who had insufficient functional competence to testify effectively in English, is rarer still: one Nance Nelligan was a witness to an assault in 1852 and was recorded in proceedings as only being able to speak Irish, and so was

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<sup>109</sup> *Morning Advertiser*, 21 April 1851; *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 13 June 1853, trial of Francis Mead (t18530613 -724); 28 November 1863, trial of Francesco Dioli (t18531128-59).

examined through an interpreter.<sup>110</sup> No further details of this case, or any case, are provided – such as who the interpreter was, where the interpreter was from (in addition to the defendants and witnesses), or what systems were in place for such situations – but it reveals that Irish-dominant speakers were certainly to be found in London and, as was the situation in Ireland, attempts were made (to varying degrees of success) to facilitate them within the legal system. This example demonstrates that Irish continued to be spoken on a day-to-day basis by some, but it was only when its speakers came into contact with officialdom that any record of the language is made. Without her interaction with the authorities, Nance Nelligan’s linguistic habits may never have been revealed and her case raises the question of how many other Irish speakers there were in London who simply never encountered the authorities.

The theory that Irish had a confirmed place in domestic and private settings is further supported by religious practice – a realm which is particularly illuminating in regards to the linguistic practices of the Irish in London and which will be discussed in detail here. Raphael Samuel argues that the Irish language was brought to Great Britain with the influx of Irish Catholics and it is true that contemporary observers frequently note the significance of Irish to religious practice.<sup>111</sup> Rev Edward Price, in his 1856 memoir, recorded a visit in 1849 to an Irishwoman in Pheasant’s Court, Gray’s Inn Lane, who was dying from cholera:

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<sup>110</sup> *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, 5 April 1852, trial of Francis Sullivan, Cornelius Ronan, John Sullivan, Michel Harding, Matthew Canty, Mary Donovan, Mary Canty and Honora Sullivan (t18520405-424).

<sup>111</sup> Raphael Samuel, ‘An Irish Religion’ in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Vol II: Minorities and Outsiders* (London and New York, 1989), pp. 94-120.

She said something in Irish. How was I to act? How was I to hear her confession? I spoke to her; but she knew not one word of English. I solved the difficulty by calling in an interpreter, a woman.<sup>112</sup>

Not only does this reveal the presence of a monolingual speaker but also that of local bilingual speakers who could provide assistance, as well as the particular relationship between religious worship and the Irish language. As discussed in Chapter One, confessing in the language most comfortably spoken was desired by Irish Catholics in Ireland and these needs were usually met by individual priests. Similar observations can be made for London: one can read many accounts of Irish-speaking priests ministering in their own native tongue and of the Church sending Irish priests to many of the newly-founded missions. This recognition was not just restricted to the Famine and immediate post-Famine years, and the many references to the extent of Irish-speaking suggest that the language was not unusual to London's clergy and commentators in the later nineteenth century. William G. Todd observed in 1856 that a large proportion of the Irish in London learned their religion through Irish and that it was "the tongue in which they both think and pray".<sup>113</sup> In 1853, at Commercial Road Parish (Stepney), one-third of the Catholics there spoke almost exclusively the Irish language and although there were already Irish-speaking priests present in the parish, another was deemed necessary.<sup>114</sup> In the same year, Father Toomy of the same parish heard "four-fifths of his penitents in the Irish language",<sup>115</sup> while a new Catholic

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<sup>112</sup> Price, *Sick Calls from the Diary of a Missionary Priest*, p. 243.

<sup>113</sup> Todd, 'The Irish in England', p. 504.

<sup>114</sup> Letter to Archbishop Wiseman, 09/12/1853, Westminster Diocesan Archives, R/74. Quoted in McDonnell, 'Roman Catholics in London', p. 434.

<sup>115</sup> Letter to Archbishop Wiseman, 05/12/1853, Westminster Diocesan Archives, R/74. Quoted in McDonnell, 'Roman Catholics in London', p. 435.

cemetery, St. Mary's, opened at Kensal Green in 1858 and catered for the funerals of the poorer classes, a large number of whom "were those of emigrants from the west of Ireland, all speaking the Irish language". Rev Francis Kirk, then Chaplain of the cemetery, continues "it was curious to hear the mourners chattering among themselves...In most parts of Ireland the native tongue is not often heard; it seemed the stranger to hear so much of it in London".<sup>116</sup> Similar reports continue into the 1860s: St Mary's Moorfields in 1860 advertised a course of sermons during Lent where "each Sunday morning, at half past eight, there will be plain and practical discourses in the Irish language" and in 1867 local Catholics from Dockhead Parish Bermondsey sent a petition to Bishop Thomas Grant (the first bishop of Southwark) following the departure of Richard Power, an Irish-speaking assistant priest, claiming that since Power's removal "they have not one who can hear and understand them".<sup>117</sup>

The Catholic Church was certainly aware of the linguistic practices of its Irish members and of the need for Irish-speaking priests in order to reach all of its congregation. Bishop Grant in 1854 told the Vatican that he wished "more priests would learn Irish for the Irish coming to England are not well instructed," however, this concern was primarily based on the retention of members.<sup>118</sup> This concern with 'leakage' was apparent throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. The arrival of large numbers of Irish Catholics from the mid-century changed the dynamic of Catholicism in Great Britain and put a strain on the Catholic Church's existing infrastructure. Prior to the Irish arrival, the Catholic Church in Britain was comprised

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<sup>116</sup> Kirk, *Reminiscences*, p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> *London City Press*, 3 March 1860; John Royds, 'The Dear Old Tongue in the Heart of Babylon: the Catholic Church and the Irish Language in South London, 1750-1914', *Catholic Ancestor*, 4: 1 (1992), pp. 31-36.

<sup>118</sup> Royds, 'The Catholic Church and the Irish Language in South London', p. 32.

mostly of the gentry, was rural, and had small congregations, while the chapels in London had already been outgrown.<sup>119</sup> The recently-arrived Irish, on the other hand, were a pious working-class group crowded into the cities, numbering in the tens of thousands. Their actual number is difficult to establish, however, K. G. T. McDonnell estimates the number of Catholics in London to be 70-75,000 at the time of the 1851 religious census, a large proportion of whom were Irish-born, and of whom only 28,069 were recorded as regular churchgoers. Similarly, there were an estimated nine thousand Irish in Whitechapel in 1851, yet only 2,150 Catholics (again, most of whom were Irish-born) were recorded at mass in this year.<sup>120</sup> The ‘devotional revolution’ in Ireland saw almost universal mass attendance and greater participation in formal church observances in the second half of the nineteenth century, as previously discussed, and so these figures suggest that individuals and whole families were being lost from the Catholic Church upon arrival in London. The need for new methods for the mission to the Irish was recognised by Nicholas Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster (1850-65), whose priority was the provision of more churches and chapels in London in order to reach the neglected poor.<sup>121</sup> In addition to poor infrastructure, it is possible that the small number of Irish-speaking priests could have been a contributing factor to why Irish migrants ceased to frequent church.<sup>122</sup> The Church recognised that if their members could practice in the language in which they had learned their religion, they could expect higher rates of retention, in addition to

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<sup>119</sup> Gilley, ‘The Roman Catholic Mission’, pp. 123-124.

<sup>120</sup> McDonnell, ‘Roman Catholics in London’, p. 431.

<sup>121</sup> Sheridan Gilley, ‘Catholic Faith of the Irish Slums, London 1840-70’ in H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*. Vol. 2 (London and Boston, 1973), pp. 837-853. In 1850, there were 35 churches and chapels at which mass was advertised. In 1866, this had risen to 60. The number of diocesan priests grew from 63 in 1850 to 86 in 1866, and regulars from 13 to 89 in the same years. See McDonnell, ‘Roman Catholics in London’, pp. 432-433, 442.

<sup>122</sup> McDonnell, ‘Roman Catholics in London’, p. 435.

better financial returns. One Rev. John Kyne, at an 1853 meeting regarding the education of Roman Catholics amongst the poorer classes (in response to the success of the Ragged School Union),<sup>123</sup> was noted to have “increased the fervour of his appeal to the Irish present, by a few touches of the Irish language, which met with a warm response, evidently showing he knew the way to approach the hearts, as well as the pockets, of those with whom he had to deal”.<sup>124</sup>

This recognition of the importance of the Irish language extended to proselytising work carried out by various Protestant missionaries in London and the language was recognised as a conversion tool by numerous contemporary observers. This was not restricted to Britain nor to the post-Famine period: in the 1830s, the Anglican Irish Society of London established a short-lived Irish chapel at West Street, St Giles, under the auspices of Rev Henry Beamish, who ministered in the Irish language.<sup>125</sup> The Irish Society (full name the Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of Their Own Language) was founded in Dublin in 1818 by the Anglican Church in Ireland; it produced and distributed works in Irish (including bibles, catechisms, prayer-books, readers, grammars, dictionaries) and provided teachers and readers to instruct the many persons who were illiterate in Irish.<sup>126</sup> It was not the first evangelical organisation concerned with scriptural education in Irish – it

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<sup>123</sup> The Ragged School Union was founded in 1844 with Lord Shaftesbury as President. These schools provided free education to the most destitute of children and were Anglican and evangelically-controlled. The Catholic Ragged School was established in 1849: it borrowed the Ragged School Union’s model and adapted it with success to meet their own needs. See J. Matthew Feheny, ‘The London Catholic Ragged School: An Experiment in Education for Irish Destitute Children’, *Archivium Hibernicum*, 39 (1984), pp. 32-44.

<sup>124</sup> *Morning Advertiser*, 24 August 1853.

<sup>125</sup> Church Missionary Society, *Missionary Register for M DCCC XXXII* (London, 1832), p. 206.

<sup>126</sup> The foundation of this Society was likely influenced by the 1815 observation by Christian Anderson, the Baptist minister from Scotland, that few Irish speakers could read and write in Irish and how little printed material was available. Anderson had been instrumental in setting up the Gaelic School Society in 1810 to remedy a similar problem in Gaelic-speaking Scotland. Roger Blaney, *Presbyterians and the Irish Language* (Belfast, 1996), pp. 82-84.

was preceded by the London Hibernian Society (established in 1806) and the Baptist Irish Society (established in 1814) – but it was, however, the most important expression of this policy in Ireland.<sup>127</sup> This Irish chapel in St Giles was the “first and only one ever established, the services of which are regularly appropriated to the spiritual instruction of those who speak the native tongue of Ireland”<sup>128</sup> and it caused a reported one hundred Roman Catholics “to embrace the Protestant faith” in the space of seventeen months.<sup>129</sup>

This recognition continued in the post-Famine period: Garwood (1853) frequently highlights the perceived benefits to Protestant missionaries’ competency in Irish, writing that those most suited for imparting religious instruction were “persons who understand the Irish character, the Irish controversy, and even the Irish language”.<sup>130</sup> Missionaries from Ireland were also deemed preferable as, owing to hostilities on the part of the Irish towards their host, they tended to be more trusting of their countrymen, “especially if they can speak the Irish language”.<sup>131</sup> There appeared to be some, perhaps superficial, level of success: in 1852 the Rev Dr Armstrong was reported to conduct “a service, every Wednesday evening, in the Irish tongue, for the benefit of these poor converts, which is numerously attended”,<sup>132</sup> while Garwood comments on

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<sup>127</sup> Pádraig de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular: the Irish Society and its Teachers, 1818-1827* (Dublin, 2009), p. 3. The London Hibernian Society adopted the practice of teaching Irish in its schools, but only to pupils who had already learned to read English, and the Baptist Irish Society taught the inhabitants of Irish-speaking districts in Ireland through their own language, using Thaddeus Connellan’s *Irish English Primer* (Dublin, 1815). See de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular*, pp. 7-19. The Irish Society, in comparison, taught its scholars to read the Irish language and specifically sought out Irish-speaking people. Church Missionary Society, *Missionary Register for M DCCC XXXII* (London, 1832), p. 335.

<sup>128</sup> Church Missionary Society, *Missionary Register for M DCCC XXXII* (London, 1832), p. 206.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph D’Arcy Sirr, *A Memoir of the Honourable...Power le Poer Trench, last Archbishop of Tuam* (Dublin, 1845), pp. 569-570; de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular*, p. 38, note 2.

<sup>130</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 298.

<sup>131</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 315.

<sup>132</sup> *Morning Advertiser*, 2 March 1852.

the necessity of Irish-language skills for those Roman Catholic clergymen tasked with retrieving members of their flock who had been converted to Protestantism. He discusses one missionary who had been sent from Ireland to “counteract the success of the work of conversion which was going on” and notes that “his knowledge of the Irish language, it was considered, would give him an advantage, where God’s Word had begun to be preached in Irish, and where Irish-speaking missionaries were diligently at work”.<sup>133</sup>

The Church of England vicar, Samuel Garratt, provides similar such examples in his 1908 biography. In 1850 he was posted to Trinity Church in St Giles in the Field where much of his work involved Irish Catholics “with which St Giles abounded”.<sup>134</sup> Here, in an attempt to make conversions from Catholicism, Garratt held discussion meetings, inquirers’ classes, and sermons for local Catholics and attempted to “make some use of the fondness of the Irish for their own language”.<sup>135</sup> He even “endeavoured to learn enough of the Irish language to be able to read some portions of the liturgy in church, with an English sermon”, for which he asked permission from Bishop Blomfield (Bishop of London from 1828-56). Garratt records that although the bishop could not officially allow liturgy in Irish owing to the Act of Uniformity (which enforced the use of the English Book of Common Prayer), Garratt did unofficially pursue this policy between 1850 and 1857. He writes that the result of Irish services was difficult to measure but that the Irish appreciated “the respect shown to their language, and it opened their hearts, even if it was...useless so far as their minds were concerned”.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City*, p. 293.

<sup>134</sup> Garratt, *Life and Personal Recollections*, p. 39.

<sup>135</sup> Garratt, *Life and Personal Recollections*, p. 232.

<sup>136</sup> Garratt, *Life and Personal Recollections*, pp. 232-233.

The use of Irish for the purpose of proselytisation was not restricted to London: similar reports appear for other British cities with large Irish-born populations, such as Manchester and Liverpool, while in Ireland itself the use of Irish for this purpose was extensive.<sup>137</sup> Religion had a further relationship with the language, as detailed by linguist Robert W. Schrauf, whereby the practice of native religious forms helped to retain and transmit a mother tongue. Religious ideology and religious practice (or ritual) from the homeland can be closely associated with the mother tongue while the celebration of religious ritual re-enacts again and again the context in which the language is associated. Schrauf notes that anecdotal reports of bilinguals in America suggest that no matter how long an immigrant has lived in the country of adoption, he or she will continue to pray interiorly in the mother tongue, and he suggests that the maintenance of religious beliefs and rituals and maintenance of the mother tongue are interdependent.<sup>138</sup>

It has been demonstrated that Irish played a role in religious practice and customs in London and was important to the Irish people. It was deemed essential to both the retention and conversion of members, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, yet the Catholic Church did not officially utilise or endorse it. In 1879 when the statistician E. G. Ravenstein completed his survey of the Celtic languages in the British Isles, there were (according to his calculations) an estimated 50,000 Irish speakers in all of Great Britain, but no Church services at all conducted through the medium of Irish.<sup>139</sup> In

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<sup>137</sup> Blaney, *Presbyterians and the Irish Language*; de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular*.

<sup>138</sup> Schrauf, 'Mother Tongue Maintenance', pp. 179-188.

<sup>139</sup> His calculations for Ireland were based on the census returns and for elsewhere on circulars he sent to registrars of births, clergymen, schoolmasters, and others, and correspondence with men who had an interest in the language(s). E. G. Ravenstein, 'On the Celtic Languages in the British Isles: A Statistical Survey', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 42: 3 (1879), pp. 579-643.

contrast, sermons in other languages such as Scottish Gaelic and Welsh were advertised in the contemporary press, while Charles Booth (1902) notes the fact that the Italian Catholic Church held sermons in the native tongue but makes no such mention for the Irish.<sup>140</sup> The Catholic Church discouraged the assimilation of Irish migrants into the working-class culture of the native majority, something which was partly inspired by the concern regarding losing practitioners to Protestantism. The Irish language had the potential to insulate against Protestantism; however, as in Ireland, this did not lead to any official endorsement of it. This lack of central support from the principal unifying force for Irish migrants in London in the immediate post-Famine decades was undoubtedly significant in terms of language maintenance.

It is clear that Irish continued to be used in certain, private circumstances. Why, then, was there a reluctance to use Irish more openly? The restriction of Irish to the home and to religious practice can largely be explained by contemporary attitudes towards the Irish community and, by extension, their language, combined with the increasing prevalence of bilingualism throughout the period in question.

As discussed in Chapter One, attitudes towards the Irish language in Ireland were negative in the nineteenth century, until the outlook began to change from the 1880s onwards. Although language decline was already underway by the period in question, the unprecedented rates of emigration to primarily English-speaking countries as a result of the Great Famine created the view that proficiency in English was a

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<sup>140</sup> A sermon in Scottish Gaelic in the Albion Presbyterian Church, Moorgate Street, was advertised in the *London City Press*, 23 October 1869 and 25 June 1870 and was then reported upon, 2 July 1870. There appear further newspaper accounts relating to the continued use of Scottish Gaelic in London into the twentieth century. E.g. *London Daily News*, 24 April 1857; 9 July 1900. For Welsh see Emrys Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London, 1500-2000* (Cardiff, 2001), p. 126; Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Vol III, Religious Influences (1902), p. 246.

requirement for social and economic advancement. Irish, on the other hand, came to be perceived as having little utilitarian value and as being backward: a reminder of the poor and less civilised way of life of pre-Famine Ireland.<sup>141</sup> In Britain, the association of Irish with the less-civilised way of life is demonstrated by the report of an Irish-American bishop's visit to Bermondsey in 1836. The bishop, Dr John England of Charleston, was reported to have used Irish at the end of a sermon to reprobate the attendees' "propensity to drunkenness and quarrelling", because "many people in the congregation were unable to understand English". Dr England's report also states that "the Irish language is indirectly associated with backwardness and bad behaviour".<sup>142</sup> Contemporary accounts make reference to the reluctance of Irish speakers to admit their knowledge of the language, while census returns in Ireland also understated the numbers of Irish speakers because of its lack of prestige; according to Ravenstein: "it is well known that many persons, for want of education in the vernacular, and of due appreciation of its value, do not admit their knowledge of the language".<sup>143</sup> In addition, debates within the Irish and British press supported the so-called utility argument, viewing Irish as a 'dead' language with value only in terms of antiquarianism. Its use as a means of communication was seen as "really but the smallest portion of the value which attaches to Irish as a language", while its true importance was its value as "the most ancient of the Indo-European family of languages".<sup>144</sup> Similarly, in 1882, the

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<sup>141</sup> Karen Corrigan, 'I gcuntas Dé múin Béarla do na leanbháin': eisimirce agus an Ghaeilge sa naoú aois déag' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish in the New Communities* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 143-161.

<sup>142</sup> Royds, 'The Catholic Church and the Irish Language in South London', p. 31. Bishop John England of Charleston was born in Co. Cork in 1786 and was educated at St Patrick's Carlow. He arrived in Charleston in December 1820. R. Frank Saunders Jr. and George A. Rogers, 'Bishop John England of Charleston: Catholic Spokesman and Southern Intellectual, 1820-1842', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 13: 2 (1993), pp. 301-322.

<sup>143</sup> Ravenstein, 'On the Celtic Languages in the British Isles', p. 581.

<sup>144</sup> *Cork Examiner*, 28 November 1859.

London *Times* featured an article on the beginnings of the language revival movement; opining that had there been “purely Irish thoughts for which Irish was the sole vehicle, the language would never have become obsolete”, and that “bribing teachers and school children to learn a language which can teach them nothing, and by which they can teach nothing,” was destined for failure, also stating that:

It is a pity that admirers of its very real antiquarian riches should waste on the vain effort to force back upon their countrymen a piece of furniture they had already turned out of doors.<sup>145</sup>

The view that learning or speaking Irish was “of no possible benefit” was frequently expressed and the consensus within the British press was that Irish was of interest “to the antiquarian and philologist...but the proposal to make it once more a living tongue was unpractical and unreal”.<sup>146</sup> It must be noted that this view came overwhelmingly from the British majority, rather than Irish speakers themselves, however, the previous discussion on attitudes towards the language in Ireland demonstrates that this view was shared by some native speakers too. While it is difficult to establish exactly how negative each citizen’s or migrant’s attitude to Irish may actually have been, the above views suggest that negative attitudes were present and were readily voiced – an atmosphere which undoubtedly impacted a native speaker’s inclination to use their language in the public sphere and which affected the transmission of the language across generations. The reluctance to admit knowledge of Irish originated in Ireland but followed migrants to London, where the disdain and contempt that the Irish experienced extended to their language abilities to the extent that Todd cited the Irish

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<sup>145</sup> *The Times*, 4 October 1882.

<sup>146</sup> *The Times*, 19 February 1906; *London Daily News*, 28 May 1900.

language as being one of the reasons the Irish community was viewed as ignorant in Victorian Britain: “English is to them a foreign language, and while they are speaking it, they are really translating Irish idioms into Saxon forms of speech”. As a result, the Irish did not always understand English expressions or questions, thus giving them “an appearance of being ignorant of things which they ought to know, and which they do know in their native language”.<sup>147</sup>

The correlation between poverty in Ireland, Irish-speaking and those who migrated to London had a negative outcome. In the early decades of this investigation, language was yet another element in London’s hostile environment with the potential to set the Irish apart and make them a target for discrimination – in addition to their religion, their social standing, their perceived criminality, and their political allegiance. Given the negative view towards Irish, it is not surprising that English came to be used in the public sphere by those who had the ability, while Irish retreated into the privacy of the home. By the closing decade of the nineteenth century, things had changed, and it was sociolinguistic dynamics and the breakdown of intergenerational transmission in *Ireland* that caused the lack of Irish-speaking in London, rather than a reluctance amongst immigrants to use it. Those who only arrived in the 1890s were less likely than their predecessors to be Irish speakers at all, while the language was not transmitted to subsequent generations in London either – in 1850 Rev Francis Kirk commented that although he encountered Irish-speaking emigrants during his time as Chaplain for St Mary’s cemetery at Kensal Green (1858-c.1866), he noted that “the present generation of their children...are quite ignorant of their parents’ ancient

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<sup>147</sup> Todd, ‘The Irish in England’, p. 504.

language”.<sup>148</sup> This change is demonstrated by the difference between Beames and Booth’s investigative commentaries in the 1850s and the 1890s respectively; while Beames notes that Irish was the vernacular of lodging houses in London, Booth, although dealing extensively with the Irish community, makes no reference to their use of the language.

The Irish in Great Britain generally and London in particular were viewed as fundamentally different from their British hosts and one of the effects of this prejudice was a level of shame surrounding their native language and a reluctance to use it, especially in the period 1850-1880. As a result, during this period, the Irish language was not an outward marker of Irish identity. In fact, displays of ‘Irishness’ only began to be visible from the 1880s – through the growth of Irish language classes among the burgeoning middle-class, as well as the phenomenon of the Irish cockney comedian, itinerant Irish musician, and middle class parlour concerts.<sup>149</sup> Prior to this, it does not appear that Irish migrants in London attempted to actively cultivate an Irish identity and, instead, were focused on adjusting to the often unfamiliar and intimidating surroundings of the nineteenth-century London metropolis.

## Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter confirms that Irish speakers migrated to London and that they continued to use their native language after their arrival, despite the assumption within existing historiography that they either arrived as an English-speaking group or purposely dropped their language in order to attain quicker

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<sup>148</sup> Kirk, *Reminiscences*, p. 36.

<sup>149</sup> Kirkland, ‘Creating Irish London’, p. 149.

integration. It has been demonstrated that this interpretation is not entirely plausible and that the relationship between the Irish language and integration is, in fact, more complex. Irish remained a primary cultural resource for many migrants in London: by playing an important role in religious practice though ultimately coming to retreat below the surface of society. The analysis provided in this chapter of the position which the Irish community occupied in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century London and their negative reception by the host society aims to explain why the Irish remained isolated throughout the period in question and how the environment affected their attitudes towards their native language and their sense of identity. The Irish became the scapegoat for all contemporary social ills in London: something that served to further isolate this group and create the ethnic clustering which facilitated the continuation of home traditions and provided the ideal conditions for language preservation. However, the prevalence of bilingualism by the period in question suggests that Irish continued to be used in certain circumstances, such as within the home, the local community and religious practice, but that English came to be the language of choice within the public sphere, such as in the case of securing employment. The association of the Irish language with backwardness in Ireland accompanied migrants to London and, when one also considers the hostilities aimed at the Irish upon their arrival, it is not surprising that native Irish speakers were reluctant to display their language and betray their 'backwardness' in the public sphere, and attract further negative attention from their host society.

Contemporary literacy levels and the social background of many of those with Irish as a vernacular render it difficult to assess exactly how each speaker viewed the language and the role it played in their individual sense of identity, as languages spoken by

lower-class or marginalised communities are prone to invisibility owing to the nature of the historical record, meaning few records exist. The proximity of London to Ireland and the possibility of regular returns perhaps reduced the psychological pressure to maintain a distinctive identity in London, while adjusting to the social, economic and psychological difficulties that met the Irish upon arrival likely took precedence over the preservation of an ostracised vernacular. As a result, in the period 1850-80, the Irish language was not held up as a badge of Irish immigrant identity but was an important aspect in the day-to-day lives of a number of Irish migrants in London. The prevalence and extent of Irish-speaking in London prior to the Gaelic Revival has been under-investigated and is of considerable significance for our understanding of the ethnic Irish immigrant experience in London specifically and in Great Britain overall.

<b>Year</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	<b><i>Britain</i></b>
<b>1841</b>	3.9	17.33	11.58	2.24
<b>1851</b>	4.6	22.29	13.08	3.49
<b>1861</b>	3.81	18.91	11.31	3.48
<b>1871</b>	2.8	15.56	8.59	2.97
<b>1881</b>	2.12	12.85	7.45	2.63
<b>1891</b>	1.58	9.12	4.59	1.98
<b>1901</b>	1.33	6.67	3.69	1.71
<b>1911</b>	1.14	4.64	2.64	1.35
<b>1921</b>	1.16	3.9	2.36	1.22

*Figure 8: Irish-born population of British towns as a % of local population, 1841-1921<sup>150</sup>*

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<sup>150</sup> Table compiled from David Fitzpatrick, 'A peculiar tramping people: the Irish in Britain, 1801-70' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, V: Ireland Under the Union I, 1801-70* (Oxford, 1989), p. 657; and 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921' p. 692.

## Chapter Three: Between Two Worlds: the Irish and the Irish

### Language in Philadelphia, 1850-1880

Following the initial reading of the statistician E. G. Ravenstein's celebrated paper 'On the Celtic Languages in the British Isles; a Statistical Survey' to the Statistical Society in London in 1879, a summary of this paper appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* some three months later, from an unknown author, closing with a note on the Celtic languages in North America:

We have no statistics of the Celtic element in North America, though it is well known to be considerable, but so far as concerns the Irish portion of it, there would be no great error in supposing that the Irish language loses ground among the emigrants much faster than among those left behind in Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

This is of particular significance because historiography has long assumed that the Irish arrived as an English-speaking group even though, statistically, Irish speaking likely accompanied migrants to the United States. This observation not only confirms a contemporary awareness and recognition of this fact, but also suggests that those who arrived to the United States with Irish were quicker to lose it than were their counterparts in Ireland. The fact that Ravenstein's report on the linguistic situation in Britain and Ireland was published in one of Philadelphia's mainstream newspapers is of note as its findings were presumably deemed newsworthy to its audience. Despite this, further evidence of the Irish language in the city is difficult to locate. While

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<sup>1</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 July 1879.

London's urban environment was conducive to the survival of Irish, to a degree, Philadelphia's was less so. This chapter will thus explore the reasons for the relative obscurity of the language in the American city between the years 1850 and 1880, incorporating a comparison with the Welsh in Pennsylvania, beginning with the particular urban context met by Irish migrants upon their arrival.

## The Urban Context and Irish Inhabitants

Established in 1681 by William Penn, by the mid-1700s Philadelphia had already developed into a cosmopolitan city, described by historian Theodore Thayer as the cultural centre of colonial America. In 1825 Philadelphia had become America's first major industrial city and, by the period under consideration, it had transformed into the second largest and second most important city in the United States and was also home to the second largest Irish population, after New York.<sup>2</sup> It was deemed a "large, wealthy, enterprising community" in John Hill Burton's 1851 manual for emigrants, and was unique among American cities for its geographical spread, and remained the third most populous city in the United States between 1890 and 1960.<sup>3</sup>

Philadelphia had been receiving Irish immigrants in relatively small numbers since the seventeenth century but it was the Famine and post-Famine years which saw the emergence of the Irish as the largest immigrant group in the city. In 1850 the Irish numbered 72,312 people, which was 18 per cent of the city's total population and

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore Thayer, 'Town into City, 1746-1765' and Edgar P. Richardson, 'The Athens of America, 1800-1825' in Russell F. Weigley (ed.), *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History* (New York and London, 1982), pp. 68-108, 208-57.

<sup>3</sup> John Hill Burton, *The Emigrant's Manual: Australia, New Zealand, America, and South Africa: With A Preliminary Dissertation* (Edinburgh, 1851), p. 103. Allen F. Davis, 'Introduction' in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (eds), *The Peoples of Philadelphia: History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 3-12.

almost 60 per cent of the foreign-born population, and numbered 96,698 by 1870 (see Figure 9).<sup>4</sup> Between 1850 and 1910, the Irish remained the largest foreign-born group in the city and the population stabilised at approximately 100,000 people, though they held a declining share of the foreign-born population. In 1880 the Irish numbered 99,975 and comprised half of the foreign-born population, and in 1900 numbered 98,000 but were one-third of the foreign-born population; this was a result of new immigration from Russia, Eastern Europe and Italy at the turn of the century, rather than a significant reduction in Irish immigration.<sup>5</sup> This period also saw increased internal migration, most notably of the African American population, which decreased the Irish community's share of the total population.<sup>6</sup> The majority of Irish migrants came from rural backgrounds, as was the case with Irish migrants in London, but they adjusted to Philadelphia's industrial and urban life, becoming skilled tradesmen, mechanics, and machinists or working in mills, factories and domestic service, with some achieving middle-class status and wealth. Their experience was very different to their counterparts' in London, largely owing to two principal opportunities that were not to be found in other cities on the east coast of the United States or in Great Britain: first, the chance to work in a variety of occupations as the city became the premier

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth M. Geffen, 'Industrial development and Social Crisis, 1841-1854', in Weigley, *Philadelphia*, pp. 307-362; Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1973), p. 3, 29. In comparison, New York (Brooklyn and Manhattan combined) in 1870 had 275,984 Irish-born, and New York City's population was approximately 25% Irish. See Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (London, 2000), pp. 105-106.

<sup>5</sup> Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age', p. 488; Alan N. Burnstein, 'Immigrants and Residential Mobility: the Irish and Germans in Philadelphia, 1850-1880' in Theodore Hershberg (ed.), *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century; Essays Toward an Interdisciplinary History of the City* (New York and Oxford, 1981), pp. 174-203. The Russian-born population increased from just 94 in 1870 to 90,696 in 1910. John F. Sutherland, 'Housing the Poor in the City of Homes: Philadelphia at the Turn of the Century' in Davis and Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, pp. 175-202. The Italian population increased from 300 in 1870 to 18,000 in 1900, and 77,000 in 1910. Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age', p. 490.

<sup>6</sup> The African-American population climbed from 31,699 in 1870 to 84,459 in 1910. Sutherland, 'Housing the Poor', p. 179.

industrial city in the nation, and second, the chance to live in their own home as the city's ample land area and row-houses created neighbourhoods of home-owners.<sup>7</sup>

First, industry in Philadelphia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provides a very different picture to London during the same period. The combination of Philadelphia's size and early industrialisation and its strength as a centre for manufacturing, enabled the provision of greater opportunities for immigrants, the absence of which in London, as discussed in Chapter Two, meant that the city did not have the employment opportunities to match its population expansion and absorb the influx of migrants.<sup>8</sup> The years 1840-70 were the 'take-off' period for Philadelphia economically and industrially, with peak Irish immigration occurring during a period when the city was coming to terms with the industrial revolution.<sup>9</sup> By the mid-1870s, iron and steel, the railways, and coal had become central to Philadelphia's economy and are described by historians Nathaniel Burt and Wallace E. Davies as "the tripod on which the city's nineteenth-century industrial reputation and a large share of its prosperity rested".<sup>10</sup> Despite this emphasis on iron, steel and coal, however, it was the textile industry that ranked first among the city's enterprises: by 1904, 19 per cent of the city's 7,100 manufacturers were textile plants and they employed 35 per cent of the city's 229,000 workers.<sup>11</sup> These activities required skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, meaning there were more employment opportunities for newly-

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph J. Kelly, 'Philadelphia' in Michael Glazier (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Irish in America* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1999), pp. 768-774.

<sup>8</sup> Davis, 'Introduction', p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis J. Clark, 'The Philadelphia Irish: Persistent Presence' in Davis and Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, pp. 135-154. The years between 1841 and 1854 are described as a watershed by Elizabeth M. Geffen, witnessing the physical and demographic expansion of the city, the influx of a new wave of immigrants, the unequal distribution of wealth, and the rising expectations of the masses. Geffen, 'Industrial development and Social Crisis', pp. 360-362.

<sup>10</sup> Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age', p. 474.

<sup>11</sup> Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age', p. 481.

arrived immigrants regardless of skill level, and also provided the opportunity for upward mobility within the workforce.

Secondly, the simple matter of geography provided an important opportunity. The available literature reiterates the sentiment that the availability of land led to its affordability – resulting in the outward spread of the city and the construction of a greater number of homes which were dispersed throughout the city.<sup>12</sup> The city's westward expansion was facilitated by the building of bridges across the Schuylkill River in 1866, 1874, 1875 and 1876, while the rapid extension of the street railways was also indispensable to the pattern of dispersed housing.<sup>13</sup> Since Philadelphia grew rapidly in the first half of the nineteenth century, and from relatively small beginnings, by the 1860s there was no large stock of old housing already in existence to absorb incoming impoverished immigrants and to then restrict them to this situation as a result of their poverty – like St. Giles in London. Instead, it was the case that Philadelphians of all incomes had to reside in relatively new buildings, and the steady territorial expansion of the city made residential improvement a practical possibility for workers' families. Historians John F. Sutherland and Dorothy Gondos Beers note the particular importance of building and loan societies; the first such association in the United States was founded in Philadelphia in 1831 and they later spread throughout the country, though remaining a Philadelphia institution (where there were four hundred in 1874). They allowed thousands of middle-income workers to purchase small houses, which, in Sutherland's words, fostered an optimistic view that people of humble means could

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<sup>12</sup> Sutherland, 'Housing the Poor', p. 175.

<sup>13</sup> By 1864 129 miles of track had been laid and 212 miles by 1893, carrying over 66 million passengers. Dorothy Gondos Beers, 'The Centennial City, 1865-1876' in Weigley, *Philadelphia*, pp. 417-470.

benefit from the institutions of free enterprise and private property.<sup>14</sup> By the 1880s, a large amount of housing had been built – leading to the city’s reputation as the “city of homes”.<sup>15</sup>

Philadelphia’s outward appearance compared favourably with other large cities – being described in 1866 as ‘a beautiful city’ – but there was a side that many did not see.<sup>16</sup> Already by the mid-century there were houses which had been vacated by the affluent and had since deteriorated into boarding-houses.<sup>17</sup> Behind houses were back-alley slums, invisible from the street and obscured from views of passers-by. In contrast to London, where investigations into living conditions were frequent and revealing in regards to the daily lives of inhabitants, few people ventured beyond the facades of Philadelphia’s rows of brick houses to confront the poor living conditions in these hidden alleys. Consequently, little publicity was given to the increasing slum conditions in the 1850s and 1860s, though it did not go entirely unnoticed.<sup>18</sup> The *Philadelphia Bulletin* in April 1856 reported on New York’s tenant houses, describing them as an “appalling picture of filth, crime”, and warned that, owing to an increase in cost of land, “the time is not far off when they will soon become a matter of necessity” in Philadelphia.<sup>19</sup> This increase in slum conditions was a result of population growth caused by the industrial revolution and a lag between this growth and urban

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<sup>14</sup> Sutherland, ‘Housing the Poor’, pp. 177-178; Gondos Beers, ‘The Centennial City’, p. 421.

<sup>15</sup> Burt and Davies, ‘The Iron Age’, p. 474, 494; Gondos Beers, ‘The Centennial City’, pp. 421-422, uses the example of occupants per dwelling in the year 1880 to demonstrate this: there were 5.7 occupants per dwelling in Philadelphia compared to 16.36 in New York, 8.25 in Boston and 8.24 in Chicago. However, the nature of high-rise tenement buildings in these cities is not directly comparable to the single family terraced houses more common in Philadelphia.

<sup>16</sup> Jeannie Brown, Philadelphia, U.S.A., to Samuel Brown, 15/08/1866. PRONI T.2675/3; CMSIED 9007158

<sup>17</sup> Geffen, ‘Industrial development and Social Crisis’, p. 315.

<sup>18</sup> Sutherland, ‘Housing the Poor’, pp. 178-179.

<sup>19</sup> *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 9 April 1856.

development.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the century, this had not changed and it was into these areas that recently arrived immigrants came to live. Sutherland records that in 1895 there were 171 small alleys and courts in the Fifth Ward alone and 88 in the Fourth.<sup>21</sup> In a 1913 lecture, George W. Norris, president of the Philadelphia Housing Commission, describes the poor living conditions in the city and highlights both the fact that it was not only “in great cities like London and New York, where enormous land values lead to horrible congestion, and people are packed into dark and crowded tenements, that bad housing conditions exist,” but also that there was a disparity between the city’s reputation as a ‘city of homes’ and the reality for many.<sup>22</sup> Although containing 250,000 houses, Philadelphia also had an estimated twenty thousand people living in alley dwellings, half of which had no street frontage or daylight, in overcrowded and poorly ventilated rooms.<sup>23</sup>

What was the significance of Philadelphia’s industrialisation and abundance of homes for its inhabitants, Irish or otherwise? The city’s size and spread meant that it had the capacity to absorb the influx of immigrants from the 1840s and the new immigration at the turn of the century, bringing about lower levels of overcrowding and squalor than in other urban centres. The working class in Philadelphia followed employment opportunities, moving home in order to be within walking distance of their place of work, while also changing jobs frequently. This mobility combined with the dispersed nature of homes, as well as workplaces, caused, for the Irish, the absence of segregated

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<sup>20</sup> This population increase was a result of direct immigration and overland migrants. The city’s population increased from 93,665 in 1840 to 121,376 in 1850. Geffen, ‘Industrial development and Social Crisis’, p. 309.

<sup>21</sup> Sutherland, ‘Housing the Poor’, p. 184. The complexity of Philadelphia’s housing situation is demonstrated by the fact that these slums were frequently owned by migrants themselves. See Sutherland, ‘Housing the Poor’, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup> George W. Norris, ‘The Housing Problem in Philadelphia’ (Philadelphia, 1913), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Norris, ‘The Housing Problem in Philadelphia’, p. 10.

enclaves or ghettos which were prevalent elsewhere. It also affected the notion and formation of community in the city: while eighteenth-century Philadelphia was characterised by neighbourhood street-life, the nineteenth-century city was more akin to a collection of separate villages than one consolidated metropolis. Stuart Blumin, in his work on residential mobility, suggests that because there was too much movement within Philadelphia's neighbourhoods for individuals to create significant numbers of enduring personal relationships which could be related to a specific locality within the city, these neighbourhoods could not have become communities. To reach this conclusion, Blumin selected a sample of males from the city directories of 1820, 1830, 1840 and 1850 (along with their listed addresses and occupations) and traced these names (numbering almost five thousand) through each of the next ten annual directories. Just one-third of these names could be traced and Blumin estimates that on average, in the period before the Civil War, only one in four or five adult males remained in a given neighbourhood for as long as ten years.<sup>24</sup> No similar study is available for subsequent decades, unfortunately, though Blumin's conclusions can provide a basis for the study of the Irish in the city. The importance of community ties for the Irish in London has been demonstrated but Philadelphians instead took to clubs and associations – the urban parish church, the lodge, the benefit association, the social and athletic club, the political club, and the fire company.<sup>25</sup> This, combined with mobility, resulted in the absence of the social links and continuity which characterised many Irish communities in London and provided an environment in which the Irish language could survive, even for a time. Given the importance of chain migration,

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<sup>24</sup> Stuart M. Blumin, 'Residential Mobility within the Nineteenth-Century City' in Davis and Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, pp. 37-52.

<sup>25</sup> Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in three periods of its growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 61.

exploration of the home country is essential for understanding the forms of cultural, communal and political life that were established in a new environment.<sup>26</sup> As was the case in London, migrant origins were central to the use and survival of the Irish language in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia's Irish migrants came predominantly, though not exclusively, from Ulster, directly from Ireland or indirectly through other American ports. Their composition differed significantly to their counterparts in London, who came overwhelmingly from Munster, as discussed, and were often impoverished. Much of the movement from Ireland to Philadelphia was a result of chain migration, with family members joining the generations of Irish already in the city, and the appeal of the thriving textile industry in Philadelphia which drew migrants with weaving skills from the north-east of Ireland.<sup>27</sup> Those from a textile-working background could find work more quickly upon arrival in Philadelphia, thus avoiding much of the negative attention that the Irish in London received, a consequence of their lack of industrial skills and perceived reliance on the state. A passenger trade between Derry (the port for counties Donegal, Derry and Tyrone) and Philadelphia grew out of commercial links: flax seed was imported for the linen industry and ships returned to the United States with migrants on board. The records of one shipping firm, J. & J. Cooke, which operated from Derry between 1847 and 1867, lists 21,800 passengers who left in this period for various destinations in the United States and Canada.<sup>28</sup> Donegal was a large

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<sup>26</sup> William J. Mahon, *Thomas Griffin (1829-96) of Corca Dhuibhne and the Irish community of Lawrence, Massachusetts* (Aberystwyth, 2007), preface.

<sup>27</sup> Deirdre M. Mageean, 'From Irish countryside to American city: the settlement and mobility of Ulster migrants in Philadelphia' in Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (eds), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A social history of migration* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 42-61.

<sup>28</sup> Mageean, 'From Irish countryside to American city', pp. 44-45.

contributor to these numbers, comprising 40 per cent in 1850, coming primarily from affluent farming areas but also Irish-speaking regions in the north-west, such as Gortahork and Fanad (also Fannett or Fánaid).<sup>29</sup>

In addition to differing origins, the age demographic of Irish migrants in Philadelphia was also at odds with that of London. In a 1981 study of the census enumerations of the Irish-born residents of London in 1851 and Philadelphia in 1850, John Modell and Lynn Hollen Lees establish that while London was home to a greater number of Irish-born families and residents under the age of fifteen and over the age of forty, Philadelphia contained more Irish-born residents between the ages of fifteen and thirty. This can be partly attributed to the difficulty and expense of reaching America – something which was more of a concern to families than to individuals. Those families who left Ireland from the 1840s onwards were more likely to choose somewhere relatively close, like London, over somewhere difficult and costly to travel to, like Philadelphia.<sup>30</sup> Considerations such as these resulted in a greater proportion of young, single people migrating to the latter. Though specific to the opening years of this study, this nonetheless provides an illuminating comparison for two of the three case studies in this thesis.

### *Residential Patterns*

Upon their arrival in Philadelphia, the Irish did not typically remain in the areas that served as reception points for newcomers, as they did in London. Instead, they

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<sup>29</sup> Brian Mitchell, *Irish Passenger Lists 1847-1871, Lists of Passengers Sailing from Londonderry to America on Ships of the J. & J. Cooke Line and the McCorkell Line* (Baltimore, 1988), n.p.

<sup>30</sup> John Modell and Lynn H. Lees, 'The Irish Countryman Urbanised: A Comparative Perspective on the Famine Migration' in Hershberg, *Philadelphia*, pp. 351-367.

dispersed and were present to some extent in all inhabited areas of the city, resulting in the lack of the enclaves which were prevalent elsewhere. Consequently, it has been noted that the suspicions and hostilities that Irish ghettos generated in other urban centres, including in the north east of the United States such as New York and Boston, were reduced in Philadelphia, likely having a positive effect on relationships with the host society and other ethnic communities.<sup>31</sup> That said, the Irish were still concentrated in certain areas such as Kensington, north of the city centre, and Southwark to the south (both named after districts in London), and southwest of the central district.<sup>32</sup> In the six wards of Southwark in 1850, the Irish comprised between eight and 34.4 per cent of the total population.<sup>33</sup> In 1860, although there was no ward in the city that was more than 28 per cent Irish-born, seventeen of the city's 24 wards held Irish-born populations of between ten and 28 per cent, and does not include second-generation Irish. This demonstrates both the residential dispersal of the Irish throughout the city and their significant numbers, both of which are further demonstrated by the building of thirteen Catholic Churches in the traditionally Quaker city between 1850 and 1870, nine of which were outside the areas of heaviest Irish concentration.<sup>34</sup> Dennis Clark states that the areas in which the Irish resided were "the least desirable at the edge of the city", such as Moyamensing and Grays Ferry (south Philadelphia, between the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers).<sup>35</sup> By 1880, the Irish continued to reside all over the city but there was an enlarged concentration to the southwest of the central district.

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<sup>31</sup> Gondos Beers, 'The Centennial City', p. 422.

<sup>32</sup> Michael L. Mullan, 'Sport, Culture, and Nation among the Hibernians of Philadelphia: Irish American Civic Engagement and Cultural Nationalism, 1880–1920', *Journal of Urban History*, 39: 4 (2012), pp. 579-600; Alan N. Burnstein, 'Immigrants and Residential Mobility: the Irish and Germans in Philadelphia, 1850-1880', in Hershberg, *Philadelphia*, pp. 174-203.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Laurie, 'Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark: the 1840s' in Davis and Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia*, pp. 71-88.

<sup>34</sup> Clark, 'The Philadelphia Irish', p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, 'The Philadelphia Irish', pp. 136-137.

Interestingly, however, it differed from the type of ethnic enclave seen in London. Peak Irish immigration to Philadelphia occurred in 1851, but the concentration did not form until decades later, meaning it was not the first area of settlement for recently arrived Irish immigrants.<sup>36</sup> It was instead home to a segment of the existing Irish population who relocated as a large area of inexpensive housing became available, and who were, according to historian Alan M. Burnstein, relatively older, more skilled and more literate.<sup>37</sup>

### *Employment*

Irish men were principally employed as metalworkers and labourers in brickyards, textile factories, the docks, and the railways, while women worked in textile factories or as servants and boarding house operators, expanding to nursing, teaching and sales from the 1890s.<sup>38</sup> Rural Ireland is generally perceived to have provided little in the way of industrial experience or skill, which forced Irish immigrants in America to assume positions at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy.<sup>39</sup> In Philadelphia this was not necessarily the case and the difference to other American cities on the Atlantic coast was twofold: first, there were many who arrived from the north-east of Ireland with skills in the textile industry, as mentioned, and who comprised a large Protestant component, and secondly, there was the chance for the Irish to enter semi-skilled or

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<sup>36</sup> Burnstein, 'Immigrants and Residential Mobility', p. 186.

<sup>37</sup> Burnstein, 'Immigrants and Residential Mobility', p. 187.

<sup>38</sup> Kelly, 'Philadelphia', p. 771. In 1878, Irish women workers even shut down the carpet mills in Philadelphia for six months in a strike against a 10 per cent wage-cut. Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London, 2000), p. 52.

<sup>39</sup> Bruce Laurie, Theodore Hershberg and George Alter, 'Immigrants and Industry: the Philadelphia Experience, 1850-1880' in Hershberg, *Philadelphia*, pp. 93-119.

skilled work, owing to the diversification of labour from the mid-century.<sup>40</sup> Between 1850 and 1880, male Irish immigrants representing all economic sectors made major advances in attaining occupational stability, while upward mobility remained steady; there is, unfortunately, no such information for women.<sup>41</sup> Establishing the role of women is challenging owing to the nature of source material; their experiences have, for the most part, escaped into anonymity. However, Clark, quoting Kleinberg (1988), states that there was a significantly higher proportion of women in the labour force in Philadelphia by 1880 than in other cities. This figure was a remarkable 43.3 per cent compared to 16 per cent nationally.<sup>42</sup> This does not specify whether these women were married or unmarried, however, but in other areas in Pennsylvania the number of *married* Irish women working outside the home was low: in Scranton just 2 per cent of married Irish women did so.<sup>43</sup> The effect of women's working practices on the maintenance of the Irish language in Philadelphia will be explored further on.

### *Reception*

As discussed in the introduction, the Irish in Philadelphia were characterised neither by extreme poverty nor by their involvement in politics – Philadelphia's first Irish mayor, James H. J. Tate, was only elected in 1962.<sup>44</sup> Since the Irish fell between these two worlds, they are a relatively difficult group to identify and assess. For all we know

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<sup>40</sup> Clark, 'The Philadelphia Irish', pp. 138-139. For Protestant component see David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1871-1921' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland Under the Union, II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 606-652.

<sup>41</sup> Polly Beckham, 'A Little Cache of Green: The Savings Habits of Irish Immigrant Women in 1850 Philadelphia', *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 69: 2 (2002), pp. 230-265.

<sup>42</sup> Dennis Clark, 'Irish Women Workers and American Labor Patterns: The Philadelphia Story' in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide, Vol. 4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 113-130.

<sup>43</sup> John E. Bodnar, 'Socialization and Adaptation: Immigrant Families in Scranton, 1880-1890', *Pennsylvania History*, 43 (1976), pp. 147-162.

<sup>44</sup> Kenny, *The American Irish*, p. 163.

of population statistics, emigrant backgrounds, employment trends and residential patterns, it remains difficult to establish what the Irish ‘experience’ was in Philadelphia and how the Irish were perceived by others at the time. The Famine generation’s arrival coincided with a period of rapid physical expansion and industrialisation in the city, the scale and variety of which had the capacity to absorb, house and advance the immigrant Irish, causing their dispersal throughout the city. The stereotypes which abounded in London and the appearance of Irish people in social commentaries had the effect of making the Irish much more visible, but the same cannot be said for their counterparts in Philadelphia. In fact, at times, some mainstream newspapers’ coverage does not reveal the existence of an Irish community, or communities, at all. Because they were neither impoverished nor at the forefront of political movements, as discussed in the introduction, they did not receive particular attention from their contemporaries (either positive or negative) which makes it particularly challenging to evaluate contemporary attitudes towards the group and to gain insights into their day-to-day lives.

In the 1840s, the population of Philadelphia increased by 29.5 per cent from 93,665 in 1840 to 121,376 in 1850, while disembarkations at Philadelphia’s port quintupled from 3,016 in 1840 to 15,511 in 1849 and 19,211 in 1853, bringing unprecedented numbers of Irish Catholics.<sup>45</sup> Religious animosities erupted in May and July 1844 in the form of the Philadelphia nativist riots, a result of years of rising anti-Catholic sentiment at the growing population of Irish Catholic immigrants, particularly from native-born Protestants and with the Native American Party (established in 1843, also known as

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<sup>45</sup> Geffen, ‘Industrial Development and Social Crisis’, p. 309.

the American Republican Party) playing a central role.<sup>46</sup> These instances of mob violence resulted in dozens of injuries and deaths, the destruction of property (largely Irish Catholic homes), and a significant military presence, and they dominated contemporary discourse.<sup>47</sup> The particular hostility sponsored by the Native American Party reportedly gradually died down in the city after its national convention was held in Philadelphia on July 4, 1845.<sup>48</sup> By 1850, antagonists had settled into “a wary truce of mutual suspicion” that continued for decades, but anti-Irish sentiment had become much less pronounced.<sup>49</sup> During the period in question in this thesis, 1850-1920, with the exception of a concentration of ‘No Irish Need Apply’ advertisements in the immediate post-Famine period, over-representation in criminal statistics in early decades, and criticism of the Fenian movement in the 1860s, the Irish in Philadelphia escaped the treatment which their counterparts in London received, where sustained anti-Irish attitudes marked the Irish in Britain as outcasts and excluded them from many aspects of London society.<sup>50</sup>

The history of segregation and racist violence as well as the city’s proximity to the slave-holding South and the presence of a large African-American population was central to Philadelphia’s history. Considering the complexity of this subject, it is

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<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth M. Geffen, ‘Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840s and 1850s’, *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 36: 4 (1969), pp. 381-410.

<sup>47</sup> Geffen, ‘Violence in Philadelphia’, pp. 401-403. Anne Morgan, ‘The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: Republican Catholicism and Irish Catholic Apologetics’, *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 86: 1 (2019), pp. 86-102.

<sup>48</sup> Geffen, ‘Violence in Philadelphia’, p. 405.

<sup>49</sup> Beckham, ‘A Little Cache of Green’, p. 233.

<sup>50</sup> Examples of NINA: “Wanted – a first-rate American or German WOMAN for cook; also one who can be Child Nurse and Chambermaid. Apply at 127 Arch St. No Irish person need apply”, *Public Ledger*, 22 February 1850; “Wanted Immediately – A GIRL, to do the work of a small family. No Irish need apply, at No.85 Arch Street”, *Public Ledger*, 2 June 1850. In terms of criticism of the Fenian movement, the Molly Maguires are described as “villains” and “disgraceful to the State” and their actions are questioned: are they “actually contributing to the freedom of the Irish people”. *Evening Telegraph*, 26 March 1867.

discussed here primarily in relation to this community's relationship with the Irish population. In 1780, Pennsylvania became the first state to legislate the gradual emancipation of its slaves and Philadelphia became pre-eminent in the abolition movement – 24 of the anti-slavery conventions held in the United States between 1794 and 1828 were held in Philadelphia.<sup>51</sup> The city became a centre for the black population: in 1790 the population was almost 2,500, in 1840 it was over 19,000, in 1890 it was 40,000, and in 1900, 62,000.<sup>52</sup> By the 1840s, African Americans were residentially concentrated into just four wards in Moyamensing and Southwark. In the period 1830-50 they were held responsible for about one-third of serious crimes, despite constituting less than one-fourteenth of the population, and were the target of considerable violence and antagonism in the city. The first major attack occurred in 1829, and in 1842 a white mob from Southwark, chiefly Irish, attacked a procession of the Moyamensing Black Temperance Society and the following day Irish labourers in coal yards on the Schuylkill River attacked members of the black population, while in 1849, the general disorder surrounding an election turned into a riot against the African-American population.<sup>53</sup> The effect of the presence of this ethnic group for the Irish in Philadelphia was the direction of antagonisms away from themselves and towards another group. When compared to the Irish in London, who were frequently on the receiving end of racial antagonisms and hostile views within the contemporary press and commentaries, the Irish in Philadelphia were not and, in fact, were more likely to be the perpetrators.<sup>54</sup> While the Irish in London were viewed as being at the

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<sup>51</sup> Geffen, 'Violence in Philadelphia', p. 384.

<sup>52</sup> Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age', p. 491.

<sup>53</sup> Geffen, 'Violence in Philadelphia', pp. 385-388.

<sup>54</sup> A visitor to the city in 1868 commented on the presence of the Chinese and black populations and their respective enclaves, but makes no such mention of the Irish. 'An Account of a Visit to Philadelphia', 29/07/1868. PRONI T1866/22; CMSIED 9411128.

bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, their counterparts in Philadelphia arrived into a society in which colour was important in determining social position and so this position on the social ladder was reserved primarily for the African-American population in the city (but to a markedly worse degree than the Irish experienced in London), while the Irish avoided a certain amount of animosity and negative stereotyping, allowing them to participate more equally.

For the early decades of this study, 1850-1880, most of what the available contemporary material presents is one-sided and very much the Irish public image – one of relative prosperity and of involvement in the associational world, including elite clubs, literary societies, and friendly societies.<sup>55</sup> It is the relative success of the Irish in Philadelphia and the city's good reputation that are represented, in particular within migrant correspondence, family papers, the National Folklore Collection, the contemporary press, and even fiction writing. For example, *The Freeman and Irish-American Review* stated in 1890 that “the Irish-Americans of Philadelphia own proportionately more real estate than any other section of the community...by thrift and industry”;<sup>56</sup> James Buchanan, an Irish migrant, wrote to his brother in 1882 that he owned three houses in Philadelphia;<sup>57</sup> while the Curtis family, an extended family network with members living in Philadelphia and in Belfast and Mountmellick, Ireland, exemplify the migrant success story with one member, Hugh Lamb, becoming Bishop of Philadelphia in 1935, forty years after his uncle, Edward Lamb, migrated to

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<sup>55</sup> J. Matthew Gallman, *Receiving Erin's Children: Philadelphia, Liverpool, and the Irish Famine Migration, 1845-1855* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> *The Freeman and Irish-American Review*, 8 February 1890.

<sup>57</sup> James Buchanan, Philadelphia, to Robert Buchanan, New York, 08/12/1882. PRONI D1473; CMSIED 9705032a.

the United States in 1880 unable to read or write.<sup>58</sup> In a similar vein, a number of responses to the National Folklore Commission's 1955 questionnaire 'Emigration to America' recollect family members, friends or neighbours from throughout Ireland who migrated to Philadelphia in the post-Famine period, many of whom achieved success. One Paddy O'Doherty from Stonefield, Co. Mayo, married in Philadelphia, established a shop, "got very prosperous and educated his family very well," and his son became a priest for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia: Father Paddy O'Doherty (sometimes spelled O'Dougherty). Though no dates are provided for these individuals, Father O'Doherty visited Ireland in the 1920s, suggesting that his parents emigrated in the later nineteenth-century.<sup>59</sup> Another Doherty family from Ballina, Co. Mayo, had several members migrate in the second half of the nineteenth century including Honor Doherty, an aunt of the respondent. She travelled with her five children to Philadelphia following her husband's death, where she "got on well" and her youngest son, Michael, was ordained a priest.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Micheál Mac Phaidín, a respondent from Co. Donegal to the 1945 Questionnaire on the Irish Famine, recalled that "the more spirited of the young people evicted found their way to the USA and arose to eminence in business and commercial circles in New York and Philadelphia", while another respondent from Donegal, Domhnall Mac Fhionntaigh, recalled twenty families from the area who emigrated, "many of these went to Philadelphia and settled down there

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Dunne, b.1892, the daughter of migrants Margaret Curtis and Bernard Dunne, was reportedly a founding member of the Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania Foundation, established in Philadelphia in 1914, though this could not be verified. Curtis Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, MSS 72.

<sup>59</sup> National Folklore Collection [hereafter NFC] MS1410, Charles Doherty (71), Cornboy, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>60</sup> NFC MS1410, Jack Doherty (91), Glenamoy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

and some of them did very well”.<sup>61</sup> Brian Friel’s 1965 play *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* is itself evidence of the reputation Philadelphia had, particularly in Donegal. Although anecdotal, the NFC returns nonetheless contain much of value and demonstrate how Philadelphia was generally recollected as a place where migrants could achieve great success. The press deserves particular scrutiny in this regard as it reinforces this idea by giving prominence to successful individuals and, in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highlighting activities and entertainments in relation to national organisations such as the Philo-Celtic Clubs, the Clan na Gael and the GAA.<sup>62</sup>

The press tended to focus upon major occasions in the political, religious, sporting and cultural life of the city and state, rather than on specific communities, and rarely provides insights into the Irish community’s day-to-day lives, particularly those of the lower classes as these events were generally the outcome of middle-class ventures. As discussed, it is among the lower classes where the Irish language is more likely to be located. For some mainstream publications such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Evening Telegraph*, it was only when Irish issues dominated the world stage that they featured at all: for example, the Fenian activities and trials in the late 1860s, and the first National Convention of the Fenians which was held in Philadelphia in 1863.<sup>63</sup> This can be partly put down to the fact that Philadelphia did not have an ethnic Irish newspaper akin to the *Irish World* or *Irish American* in New York until the 1880s.

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<sup>61</sup> This is in reference to the Famine period, 1845-52. NFC MS1074, Micheál Mac Phaidín, T.D., Co. Donegal. Compiled by Irish Folklore Commission, 1945. NFC MS1074, Domhnall Mac Fhionntaigh (65), Tamhnach Gorm, Co. Donegal. Collector: A. Ó Dochartaigh, 1945.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. John McCullough (1832-85) who was born in Derry and migrated to Philadelphia where he taught himself to read, and eventually became a well-known actor. Marita Krivda Poxon, *Images of America: Irish Philadelphia* (Charleston, 2012), p. 40. Another example is Miss Kathleen O’Neill, “the great Irish vocalist”, advertisements for whose performances appear frequently, e.g. the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 November 1864.

<sup>63</sup> For the first National Convention see Dennis Clark, ‘Militants of the 1860s: The Philadelphia Fenians’, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 95: 1 (1971), pp. 98-108.

Although the Irish-American press did not attain the strength and position of general circulation newspapers, it is still an important source of information for the Irish population, in terms of biographical, social, commercial, educational and religious information, and its absence is notable in Philadelphia. Instead, the religious press served this purpose in the city and the *Catholic Herald* (1833-67), the *Catholic Weekly Instructor* (1849-56) and the *Catholic Standard and Times* (1866-) carried steady Irish coverage. The latter of these was “the authorised journal of the Diocese” and was often completely dominated by Irish affairs throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, this was predominantly news from or concerning Ireland, including emigration, Catholic education in Ireland, the Irish Church, news from each county reprinted from local Irish newspapers (such as the *Dublin Nation*), and political concerns including the Fenians, the landlord system and the Home Rule debate.<sup>64</sup> Local Catholic news was restricted to ordinations and deaths of priests, news about notable members of the Catholic community in Philadelphia, and, towards the end of the nineteenth century, coverage of events like the Ancient Order of Hibernians annual ball and the Hibernian Society annual dinner, and advertisements for ‘Irish Games’, reflecting the growing interest in and visibility of the cultural revival, to be discussed in Chapter Five. Despite the fact that other mainstream newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Item* and the *Public Ledger* had Irish connections – the *Item* was founded in 1847 by an Irishman and the *Public Ledger* had an Irish editor for a number of years

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<sup>64</sup> Despite claiming to be “a journal which would be kept free from all political or other prejudices, and would correctly represent the Catholic interests of the Diocese of Philadelphia”, it accuses the Irish landlord system of “murdering the few remaining victims who may have escaped the terrors of the last 4 years of famine” and states that landlords “will never cease their career of eviction till they make Ireland a howling wilderness and a barren waste”. *Catholic Standard and Times*, 27 January 1866.

(Israel Sheppard from Co. Tipperary)<sup>65</sup> – news of the Irish people in Philadelphia is surprisingly scarce. Similarly, histories of philanthropic organisations such as the Society of the Friendly Sons of St Patrick, established in Philadelphia in 1771 to aid newly arrived Irish migrants, and the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants, established in 1790, give few insights into the people the society aimed to assist, instead focusing on membership lists, subscriptions and annual dinners.<sup>66</sup>

The result of all of this is a very one-sided picture of the Irish in Philadelphia and accounts that provide a contrasting view are even less frequent, such as the following 1867 letter from a Matthew Brooks to his sister in Urney, Co. Tyrone:

A great maney [*sic*] came here this summer that would be glad to get back if the [*sic*] had the means...It is very hard to make a living in philadelphia [*sic*] at present it is impossible for a stranger to get in to a boarding house now without paying his board in advance neither can a family get in to the smalest [*sic*] [?] in the city without paying the rent in advance I heard of several young men that came here this season and could get no employment for several weeks.<sup>67</sup>

This demonstrates that there was a greater range of experiences than sources suggest, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, and that the difficulties and realities which

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<sup>65</sup> Dennis Clark, 'News from the Home Country: Irish Newspapers in Philadelphia 1820-1970', presented by Dennis Clark at the 1976 Ancient Order of Hibernians Convention, St Louis, MO. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Dennis Clark Papers MSS 37.

<sup>66</sup> These two societies merged in 1792, becoming the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland before reverting to being named The Friendly Sons of St Patrick in 1892. John H. Campbell, *A History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland, March 17, 1771-March 17, 1892* (Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 62-63; Thomas A. Daly, *The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick* (Philadelphia, 1920).

<sup>67</sup> Matthew Brooks, Philadelphia to [Rebecca Clark, Urney?], 27/12/1867. PRONI T 2700/5; CMSIED 9403171.

accompanied emigration (and were evident in London) were also to be found in Philadelphia. This is indirectly revealed through crime and poor relief statistics, particularly from the 1850s and 1860s, within which the Irish are prevalent. In 1855, of 38,657 arrests made in the city, 21,830 of those arrested were from Ireland, with the next largest group being 10,470 from America, specified as being ‘white’, so not including the African-American population.<sup>68</sup> In 1856, two-thirds of the insane in Philadelphia’s state hospital reportedly were Irish-born, while in February 1861 of a total foreign-born number of 3,880, the Irish were the largest group to receive poor relief in the previous month by a large margin – numbering 2,744, while the next largest group was the German community, numbering just 808.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the immediate post-Famine period also saw the appearance of ‘No Irish Need Apply’ advertisements in the *Public Ledger*, which had the highest circulation in the 1850s, a response to the arrival of the Irish in unprecedented large numbers, a reflection of existing religious animosities, and a clear indicator of resistance to their presence.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, through frequent advertisements in the *Public Ledger*, *Philadelphia Bulletin*, *Catholic Herald* and *Catholic Weekly Instructor* for ship packets to Philadelphia, savings banks and funds, methods of sending remittances to Ireland, and Bank of Ireland bank drafts, a sense is created of the sheer numbers of Irish migrants in the city in the post-Famine years, while the confusion and dislocation of this post-Famine migration is revealed through the numerous ‘information wanted’ features in

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<sup>68</sup> *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 1 February 1856.

<sup>69</sup> For insane asylum statistics see Kelly, ‘Philadelphia’, p. 771; for poor relief statistics see *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 February 1861.

<sup>70</sup> The following is an illustrative sample: “Wanted – a first-rate American or German WOMAN for cook; also one who can be Child Nurse and Chambermaid. Apply at 127 Arch St. No Irish person need apply”, *Public Ledger*, 22 February 1850. “Wanted Immediately – A GIRL, to do the work of a small family. No Irish need apply, at No.85 Arch Street”, *Public Ledger*, 2 June 1850.

newspapers which continue into the 1860s, frequently regarding Irish people, like “Mary, Bridget, Lucy and Patrick Burns, children of Michael and Ellen Burns, from near Kildare, Ireland...who were left in Philadelphia by their father about ten years ago”.<sup>71</sup> Moving into the later nineteenth century, this sense of dislocation and anti-Irish prejudice is replaced by reports on the activities of the Philo-Celtic Clubs, the Gaelic League and the GAA, as well as the ‘Irish Question’ in Ireland, with this transition happening either within the same publications, such as the *Public Ledger* and *Bulletin*, as well as the Catholic press, or through the appearance of new Irish-American publications; *The Hibernian*, *The Irish-American Review* and *Celtic Literary Advocate*, and *The Freeman and Irish-American Review*.

### The Irish Language, 1850-c.1880

In spite of our understanding of the numbers, residential patterns, job opportunities, and public activities of the Irish in Philadelphia, the Irish language remains obscure. It is almost invisible within contemporary sources despite being present in the city and so the following section will discuss the ways in which evidence for both the presence and use of Irish can be uncovered from limited source material, and will investigate how the combination of the city’s physical environment and the type of Irish migrant who lived there impacted the survival of the language.

There are two principal limitations to consider in regards to the language in Philadelphia. First, the demographic make-up of the Irish in Philadelphia is of significance; while some migrants certainly came from Irish-speaking areas in Ireland,

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<sup>71</sup> *Public Ledger*, 1 February 1865.

to be discussed, the majority came from the north-east where rates of Irish speaking were comparatively low. The ages of these migrants is also of note; the majority of Irish migrants to Philadelphia were likely to be young and single while, in Ireland, Irish speakers were more commonly found amongst the aging population, as evidenced in Chapter One. The relative youth of Philadelphia's Irish population could suggest that fewer speakers of Irish migrated there than to London, while the potentially smaller number of family units – where Irish speakers would have had people with whom to speak their language and subsequent generations to whom to pass it on – also affected language maintenance. Secondly, considering the relative difficulty in establishing an overall picture of the Irish in Philadelphia, it becomes even more challenging to locate evidence of Irish-speaking within this group, especially when one takes into account the elusive nature of source material relating to the language more generally, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, and the prevalence of bilingualism by this period. Despite this, however, the limited evidence does allow an exploration of the language in the city.

In the funeral obsequies for Bishop John Neumann, fourth bishop of Philadelphia, who died in 1860, Bishop Francis P. Kenrick writes that Neumann was “a master of all the dialects of nearly every nation of modern Europe” and that he learned many languages in order to understand the members of his diocese:

Even the Irish language, so difficult to be mastered by even the sharpest mind, he learned for no other purpose to be able to commune with another

portion of the members of his diocese, who could not converse fluently in the language of this country.<sup>72</sup>

In an 1884 biography, Johann Berger also writes about Neumann learning Irish in order to hear confessions, “as there were many of that nationality unable to make their confession in English, and even Irish priests were not familiar with their native tongue”,<sup>73</sup> while in an 1898 obituary the *Philadelphia Inquirer* included the fact that “at twenty-five he knew Gaelic, Hebrew, Latin, Bohemian, French, English and Italian”.<sup>74</sup> This would suggest that a significant enough number of Neumann’s congregation spoke Irish that his knowledge of the language was a necessity in order to cater to them. However, beyond the oft-repeated example of Neumann and a small number of other cases, evidence of Irish speakers in Philadelphia, prior to the Revival period, is rare, even though the *Irish World* estimated this number to be 40,000 in 1899 (when the impact of the Gaelic Revival and the tendency of language enthusiasts to over-state such figures must be taken into account).<sup>75</sup> While instances of Irish speaking were uncovered in London within religious practice and conversions, social investigations and commentaries, and interactions with officialdom, the same cannot be said for Philadelphia, where evidence cannot be so easily categorised by context. Evidence from Ireland provides sporadic anecdotal evidence of Irish speakers migrating to the city, while evidence from Philadelphia itself reveals little.

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<sup>72</sup> *Funeral Obsequies of Bishop John Neumann* (Philadelphia, 1860).

<sup>73</sup> Johann Berger, *Life of John N. Neumann: of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer: fourth bishop of Philadelphia*. From the German of John A. Berger; by Eugene Grimm (New York, 1884), p. 340.

<sup>74</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 October 1898.

<sup>75</sup> *Irish World*, 4 March 1899, in Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin (ed.), *Go Meiriceá Siar: Na Gaeil agus Meiriceá: Cnuasach Aistí* (Dublin, 1979), p. 10.

The National Folklore Collection's 1955 questionnaire on emigration to America has already been utilised to demonstrate the migration of individuals from Ireland to Philadelphia and their achievement of varying levels of prosperity. It must be reiterated that these returns are used with a degree of caution as they are not always first-hand experiences of emigration; however, they suggest at the existence of small pockets of Irish speakers in the city: one respondent tells the story of two brothers from Co. Limerick, the O'Neills, with whom they were acquainted. The respondent recalled that one of the brothers, Daniel O'Neill, lived in "the Irish quarter" of Philadelphia in the 1890s, where "if you were blindfolded and brought through that quarter you'd think you were in Ireland" and where some "talk in Gaelic".<sup>76</sup> Although corresponding evidence does not exist in Philadelphia, this does not mean the language was not spoken – it simply means that it did not make it onto the historical record.

### *The Catholic Church*

The fact that Bishop Neumann learned Irish suggests that the Catholic Church was a sphere in which the Irish language was utilised and more visible, as was the case in London. It has already been discussed how, in Ireland, although the Catholic Church had no official policy on the use of Irish, the increase in bilingual congregations meant that the challenge of administering to these congregations was met on a case-by-case basis and that Irish was accommodated in one fashion or another at the parish level by individual priests.<sup>77</sup> The evidence available for London suggests that this practice was continued overseas, while Neumann's mastery of Irish, in particular, has been utilised

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<sup>76</sup> NFC MS1408, Richard Delaney (80), Wexford. Collector: James G. Delaney, 1955.

<sup>77</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island: State, Religion, Community, and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland, 1770-1870* (Madison Wis., 2014), p. 225.

by historians like Dennis Clark, Lynn McGowan, and Joseph Callahan to demonstrate the presence of Irish speakers in Philadelphia.<sup>78</sup> However, this example is largely anecdotal and is difficult to support with further evidence. More details of where and how he learned Irish, for example, are difficult to establish. Clark claims that Neumann went to one Matthias O’Conway for lessons in Irish, however, this detail could not be confirmed in the work cited by Clark.<sup>79</sup> Matthias James O’Conway, or Maitias Ó Conmhai, has received very little scholarly attention and is described by his sole biographer, Lawrence F. Flick, as a philologist, lexicographer, and interpreter of languages, and a “pioneer in the field of Celtic research”.<sup>80</sup> Born in Galway in 1766 to a native Irish-speaking family, he emigrated from Ireland in 1783, moving first to Grenada in the Caribbean before taking up residence in Philadelphia in April 1784 and settling there permanently in 1797-98. He spoke English, French, Spanish, Latin, Italian, and Portuguese and earned a living from translating documents and acting as state interpreter for Pennsylvania from 1802. He also taught these languages and worked for several decades on creating an English-Irish dictionary, as well as an English-Spanish dictionary and a comparative philological study whose goal was to situate Irish among the languages of Europe and the Middle East. None of these were ever published, however.<sup>81</sup> O’Conway died in 1842 and so it is possible that Neumann

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<sup>78</sup> Dennis Clark, ‘Muted heritage: Gaelic in an American city’, *Éire-Ireland*, 6: 1 (1971), pp. 3-7; Lynn McGowan, ‘The Irish Language in America’, in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), pp. 3-8; and Callahan, ‘The Irish Language in Pennsylvania’, p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> Clark references Michael J. Curley, *Venerable John Neumann, C.S.S.R.: fourth bishop of Philadelphia* (Washington, 1952), p. 459, note 94, in Clark, ‘Muted heritage’, pp. 4-5, however, this note does not mention Neumann and O’Conway.

<sup>80</sup> Lawrence F. Flick, ‘Matthias James O’Conway, philologist, lexicographer and interpreter of languages’, *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, 10: 3 (1899), pp. 257-299.

<sup>81</sup> David Barnwell, ‘O’Conway, Matthias James’ in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 317-319.

and he crossed paths, though there is no evidence of this acquaintance in Flick's biography.

The concern with 'leakage' that was apparent throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century on the part of the Catholic Church in London appears to have been a less significant issue in the United States and Irish was not viewed as a useful instrument in the retention of members. Despite the fact that two of the three Archbishops between Neumann and Dougherty were Irish – Patrick John Ryan (1884-1911) and Edmond Francis Prendergast (1911-18) – no evidence was found of their speaking or ministering in Irish.<sup>82</sup> This is further demonstrated by Bishop Neumann's attitude towards the Irish and their native language in the 1850s in comparison to that towards other immigrant Catholic groups. His efforts to supply German priests for recently arrived German Catholics were prompted by the realisation that their spiritual needs had to be supplied in their mother tongue, especially during the period of transition upon arrival in the United States, but no such argument appears to have been made for Irish immigrants.<sup>83</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that his learning of Irish to hear confession was, in part, symbolic, while the bilingualism of the majority of Irish migrants meant that there was not the same need for Irish-speaking priests, whereas there were considerably more German-only congregations. This difference between the Germans and Irish is further demonstrated in an 1895 history of the Catholic

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<sup>82</sup> Ryan was born in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, in 1831. He went to the local Christian Brothers School, then attended a private school in Dublin before attending St. Patrick's College, Carlow. He emigrated to the United States in 1852. No mention of his linguistic background could be found. John Howard Brown (ed.), *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*. Vol. 10 (Boston, 1904), p. 221. Prendergast was born in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, in 1843 and went to the United States in 1859. He was educated and ordained at the College of St Charles Borromeo, Philadelphia. Similarly, no evidence of his linguistic background was located, however, both his and Ryan's upbringings suggest that English was their vernacular. Brown, *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*. Vol. 8 (Boston, 1904), p. 419.

<sup>83</sup> Curley, *Venerable John Neumann*, p. 95, p. 440, note 67. Berger, *Life of John N. Neumann*, p. 267.

churches and institutions in Philadelphia, in which author Daniel H. Mahony describes the growth of the Catholic Church in the city, particularly from the 1840s. Mahony never once refers to the linguistic habits of the Irish in the city but describes how the English-speaking congregations were not sufficient for the city's German-speaking Catholics, while in reference to "Catholics speaking a foreign tongue" in 1868, he names just Germans and United Greeks. In his history of the Catholic Church, the Irish are seemingly included in the English-speaking congregation in the city.<sup>84</sup> It is true that there were no dedicated 'Irish Catholic Churches' in Philadelphia akin to the German ones and, instead, there were just Irish-dominated ones.

A final demonstration of this inclusion of the Irish within the English-speaking Catholics of the city is the absence of any reports of Irish-language masses or sermons throughout the pre-Revival period – compared to a number of examples in London, such as St Mary's Moorfields which in 1860 advertised a course of Irish-language sermons during Lent.<sup>85</sup> Just one example was located in Philadelphia: a special mass on the death of Daniel O'Connell, carried out at St Phillip's Church in Southwark in 1847, in which the funeral discourse was reported to have been delivered in Irish by a Rev M. F. Jennings of Galway.<sup>86</sup> Even on special occasions, such as St Patrick's Day, sermons in Irish were not given (or, at the very least, advertised) until the revival period, even when someone with knowledge of Irish such as Bishop Neumann was present.<sup>87</sup> At the jubilee of the Diocese of Wilmington in Delaware, in 1869, the

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel H. Mahony, *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions in Philadelphia: A Parish Register and Book of Reference* (Philadelphia, 1895), p. 122.

<sup>85</sup> *London City Press*, 3 March 1860.

<sup>86</sup> J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*. II (Philadelphia, 1884), p. 1392.

<sup>87</sup> For example, the *Catholic Weekly Instructor*, 1 April 1854. Report on St Patrick's Day 1854, Neumann's presence was noted.

*Catholic Standard and Times* reports that, as part of this celebration, sermons were delivered by Revs Daniel O'Connor of the Cathedral, Philadelphia, and Mathew O'Brien, also Philadelphia. The newspaper also reported that "Rev. Mathew O'Brien heard the confessions of many of the old people in the Irish language".<sup>88</sup> Although this happened in Wilmington, it must be noted that this was only thirty miles from Philadelphia and there is no evidence to suggest a larger concentration of Irish speakers there than in Philadelphia, while the fact that O'Brien was based in Philadelphia is of note. Further biographical details for Fr Mathew O'Brien could not be sourced. No similar instances could be sourced in Philadelphia itself, largely owing to the fact that confession was ordinarily a private, routine activity and therefore would not make it into the press and because the jubilee was a special occasion. It does suggest, however, at the very least, that priests were present in Philadelphia who had the ability to administer in Irish. The reference to hearing confession only from "old people" is of particular significance – as discussed, in the earlier years of this study a high proportion of Irish migrants in Philadelphia were between the ages of fifteen and thirty, but by the period in question, Irish was more common amongst the aged population (largely owing to sociolinguistic factors in Ireland). The fact that fewer migrants over the age of thirty travelled to Philadelphia – the group amongst which Irish-speaking would more likely to be located – helps to explain why evidence of Irish-speaking is difficult to uncover in Philadelphia. There simply were not that many of them prior to the Revival movement. Younger migrants were statistically more likely to be English-dominant and, therefore, their needs – be they spiritual or occupational – were already being met through the medium of English. Even though the Irish in Philadelphia

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<sup>88</sup> *Catholic Standard and Times*, 13 November 1869.

perhaps demonstrated a range of linguistic abilities, they were sufficiently catered to by English-language institutions that the Irish language rarely became visible. Additionally, it can be argued that the Irish speakers in Wilmington were functional in English owing to their period of residence in the United States but simply chose Irish in the context of the confessional, taking advantage of the special occasion which the jubilee entailed. In an investigation of the Irish community in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in the post-Famine period, William J. Mahon notes that following the death of one Fr. O'Donnell, who had continued to preach in Irish until his death in 1861, sermons in Irish came to be regarded as rare and newsworthy events thereafter.<sup>89</sup> The same observation can be made for communities such as that in Wilmington.

Other references to instances of Irish speaking are located within a wide range of sources and circumstances, and are usually unsystematic and anecdotal. For example, George Morgan, in a 1926 history of Philadelphia, reports that in the nineteenth century Irish was spoken among workers at Port Richmond (immediately adjacent to the Irish-dominated area of Kensington) by those whose job it was to take coal off the barges that came from upstate Pennsylvania mining regions, though he does not specify a date.<sup>90</sup> Historian Dennis Clark's grandfather, an Irish speaker who emigrated to Philadelphia from Co. Roscommon in the 1880s, would recount how he and a group of friends would gather at political meetings and discuss private matters in Irish in a crowded situation, demonstrating the bilingualism of not just an individual but a group of people, and the use of Irish in a specific circumstance, though the context and effect

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<sup>89</sup> Mahon, *The Irish Community of Lawrence, Massachusetts*, p. 123.

<sup>90</sup> George Morgan, *The City of Firsts: being a complete history of the city of Philadelphia from its founding, in 1682, to the present time* (Philadelphia, 1926), p. 246.

of the Gaelic Revival must be noted here, given the time period.<sup>91</sup> It is within the contemporary press that these references appear most frequently, though this was still very rare, and the majority of these are in the context of the language's relationship with cultural nationalism and the language movement – primarily the public activities of the Philo-Celtic Society in the 1880s – to be discussed in Chapter Five. Prior to this, however, this mostly comes in the form of reports of migrants arriving into American ports with little or no English (often being reprints from New York publications), brief features on the language such as a report on the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States which includes a short passage in Irish on the origins of the word 'Fenian',<sup>92</sup> descriptions of the condition of Irish in Ireland, or mentions of individuals in Philadelphia with the ability to speak Irish, like Kathleen Huppman (reportedly over 90 years of age) who "possesses the accomplishment – now rare – of being able to speak the Irish language".<sup>93</sup> Descriptions of the language in Ireland are revealing in terms of contemporary attitudes towards Irish as a whole: the language is often viewed with a degree of condescension and amusement, and its value seen as antiquarian – as a relic of the past and no longer a living language. An 1868 report states that "the Irish language is gradually ceasing to be needed" in Ireland, quoting census results from Ireland in 1851 and 1861 to demonstrate its decline,<sup>94</sup> while an 1884 account of a visit by Secretary James Blaine (Republican politician, representative for Maine, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate, and twice Secretary of State) to Brooklyn is deemed noteworthy for its interaction between Blaine and Michael Logan of the

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<sup>91</sup> Clark, 'Muted Heritage', p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 13 December 1861. See Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin, *Fíníní Mheiriceá agus an Ghaeilge* (Dublin, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> *The Daily Morning Call*, 26 September 1892.

<sup>94</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 July 1868.

Philo-Celtic Society.<sup>95</sup> Logan reportedly chose to address Blaine in Irish, to which Blaine “looked amused” and said he “suppose[d] that it is the language that some of my ancestors were used to speak” and afterwards stated that he would “cherish this not only because of its political significance, but also because it is a very interesting philological contribution”.<sup>96</sup>

In terms of notable individuals, the *Inquirer* featured a profile of one Edward O’Brien, described as a Pennsylvanian Dutch Irish businessman, who came to Pennsylvania aged six. He spoke English with an Irish brogue, spoke Dutch perfectly and “also speaks the Irish language”, though no further details are included.<sup>97</sup> The fact that such stories, as well as that of Kathleen Huppman, were deemed newsworthy suggests that they were the exception, while O’Brien’s case does not suggest that Irish was his primary language and, considering the date of the report (1893), it is plausible that, once again, this inclusion was related to the Revival movement. Notable individuals are also discussed by Clark, in particular those who made efforts to maintain and cultivate a Gaelic scholarship in Philadelphia, prior to the Gaelic Revival, such as the aforementioned Matthias O’Conway and John O’Mahony. A native of Mitchelstown Co. Cork, O’Mahony emigrated to New York in 1853 following the failed Young Ireland rebellion in 1848. He founded the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States in 1859, and was its head, but was also an accomplished Gaelic scholar. He and Michael Doheny, a fellow Young Ireland exile, wrote the ‘Gaelic Department’ column in the *Irish-American* until September 1871 but his most ambitious and notable scholarly

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<sup>95</sup> Hugh Craig, *The Biography and Public Services of Hon James G. Blaine: Giving a Full Account of Twenty Years in the National Capital* (New York, 1884); Gail Hamilton, *Biography of James G. Blaine* (Norwich, Conn., 1895).

<sup>96</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 October 1884.

<sup>97</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 June 1893.

work was his translation of Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, published in 1857.<sup>98</sup> In the introduction to the 1857 edition, O'Mahony and O'Conway thank one James Slevin of Philadelphia for the use of his library.<sup>99</sup> Predictably, there is more evidence for these scholarly pursuits than for the continuation of Irish as a vernacular: an international essay competition for composition in Gaelic appeared in the *Catholic Standard and Times* as early as March 1869, as did an advertisement in the *Public Ledger* for a local Celtic Society's annual meeting, headed by a Dr William Carroll (a Presbyterian from Co. Donegal and Executive Board Chairman of the Fenian Brotherhood from 1875). This later became the Philo-Celtic Society, established in 1881.<sup>100</sup>

Evidence concerning the attitudes towards the language in Philadelphia on the part of external observers are scarce; however, an intriguing insight comes from historian Friederike Baer-Wallis in her work on the German community in Philadelphia in the period 1800-1820 and their relationship with their native tongue. This reveals a similar situation to Irish in Ireland, where more and more young people could not understand their parents' and grandparents' language. In 1803, the president of the German Society of Pennsylvania (which was dedicated to the preservation of German culture), Peter Muhlenberg, submitted a proposal to introduce English into church services in the congregations of St Michael's and Zion in Philadelphia. The argument in support of English was simply that growing numbers of congregants no longer spoke German.

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<sup>98</sup> Maureen Murphy and James Quinn, 'O'Mahony, John' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Not much information is available on James Slevin. Campbell records that Slevin was a native of Ireland and worked in the dry-goods business in Philadelphia. He was prominent in Catholic circles and possessed a valuable library. He relocated to New York City and died there in 1851. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and of the Hibernian Society*, p. 521.

<sup>100</sup> Clark, 'Muted Heritage', p. 5. For Carroll see Dennis Clark, 'Militants of the 1860s: The Philadelphia Fenians', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 95: 1 (1971), p. 107.

Muhlenberg's proposal was resisted and opposition was organised by the pastors of the two affected congregations: the two groups became known as the English party and the German party.<sup>101</sup> This petition resulted in a decade-long controversy, the foundation of an English-speaking congregation, St John's Church, in 1806, and charges of conspiracy against a number of German-Americans in 1816. This is a fascinating story but it is the participants' views on language that are central to this discussion: to members of the German Party, Germans who embraced English were seen as traitors to their people – they called them “Irish-Germans” and “Irishmen”. Irishman was understood to mean “a kind of man who knowing German, is unwilling to talk it; who is ashamed of his own language, and is unacquainted with any other”, in the words of Moses Levy, a defence attorney, during the trial of Frederick Eberle, one of the 59 individuals tried on charges of conspiracy and rioting for beating proponents of English as the second language for preaching.<sup>102</sup> This is an intriguing insight and telling of a degree of familiarity with Irish speakers at the time and their own attitudes towards Irish.

As has been demonstrated by these examples, evidence for the cultural encounters present in London, such as court proceedings requiring interpreters or priests attending Irish speakers in their homes, are absent in Philadelphia, while the lack of a secular Irish periodical means that the daily lives of the Irish community in the city or their language are not afforded much coverage. Overall, evidence of Irish speaking in Philadelphia is elusive – something which is thrown into sharp relief when compared

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<sup>101</sup> Friederike Baer-Wallis, ‘They “Speak Irish but Should Speak German”’: Language and Citizenship in Philadelphia's German Community, 1800-1820’, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 128: 1 (2004), pp. 5-33.

<sup>102</sup> Baer-Wallis, ‘They Speak Irish but Should Speak German’, p. 26.

with evidence available from other regions within Pennsylvania, particularly in the context of religious practice and interactions with the authorities.

### Irish-Speaking Communities in Pennsylvania: A Regional Comparison

In 1845, writer Israel Daniel Rupp, in one of his histories of Pennsylvania, mentions Irish-speaking in Schuylkill and Carbon Counties (adjacent counties, approximately ninety miles north-west of Philadelphia). He does not detail these migrants' origins but does include an Irish version of the Lord's Prayer, from Archbishop William Daniel of Tuam's edition of the Bible, printed in 1602.

Of late years, many Irish have emigrated into Schuylkill and Carbon counties, and are principally found in the coal regions. The greater proportion of them are Catholics, and have priests officiating in the Irish language, which is spoken by many of the labouring classes.<sup>103</sup>

In the same area in 1879, in a letter to Archbishop James Wood of Philadelphia regarding the formation of a new parish in Schuylkill County, Reverend Martin Walsh writes that on Christmas Day he heard 28 confessions in Irish and two in English, and then two days later heard 54 more confessions in Irish.<sup>104</sup> In a similar case, Bishop Neumann's biographer, Johann Berger (1884), recounts the story of an "old Irishwoman" who had "vainly sought for one to hear her confession in her own language; but again and again she was dismissed with the discouraging information

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<sup>103</sup> Israel Daniel Rupp, *History of Northampton, Lehigh, Monroe, Carbon, and Schuylkill Counties: containing a brief history of the first settlers, topography of the first settlers, notices of leafing events, incidents, and interesting facts in the early history of these counties* (Harrisburg, PA, 1845), p. 18.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Rev Martin Walsh, Lost Creek, Schuylkill County, to Archbishop James Wood, 29 December 1879. Catholic Historical Research Centre.

that the priest did not understand Irish”, until “Divine Providence led the good old woman to Bishop Neumann”.<sup>105</sup> This tale is repeated by Michael Curley in his 1952 biography of Neumann, locating it in Trevorton – a town in Northumberland County, adjacent to Schuylkill County – in 1857.<sup>106</sup> It is interesting that although Neumann was based in Philadelphia and likely learned his Irish there, we have no such accounts for the city itself. Similar to those in Wilmington, the advanced age of this Irish speaker is emphasised, while the symbolism of confessing in Irish must be taken into consideration.

Chapter Two detailed the instances of Irish speaking recorded in the Proceedings of the Old Bailey and similar occurrences can be located in Pennsylvania, most notably the towns of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. In 1898, the *Scranton Tribune* featured two separate reports of court cases where Irish interpreters were needed, illustrating not just bilingualism but also the nature of nineteenth-century language shift, which often happened within the space of a generation. As is the case with London’s reports on court cases, few extra details are provided. The first case called for an interpreter for a witness, Michael McLane, “a native of Ireland” who “can not speak anything but Gaelic” and whose son, Michael McLane Jr., acted as his interpreter.<sup>107</sup> The second saw the presence of two interpreters for a Mrs Malia, the plaintiff, who was reported to not have “anything but Gaelic”; one of the two was the official interpreter, a Patrick Henry, and the second was a testimony translator, Mr Moran.<sup>108</sup> Not only does this

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<sup>105</sup> Berger, *Life of John N. Neumann*, p. 340.

<sup>106</sup> Curley, *Venerable John Neumann*, p. 263. He also states that Neumann had “already studied enough Gaelic to hear their confessions”, suggesting that Neumann learned his Irish in Philadelphia, where he was bishop from 1852, or elsewhere prior to 1857.

<sup>107</sup> *Scranton Tribune*, 19 September 1898.

<sup>108</sup> *Scranton Tribune*, 3 February 1898.

latter case feature an individual who appears to have been an Irish speaker, or at least did not have sufficient proficiency in English to take part in court proceedings, but also official interpreters. This demonstrates that there was, at the very least, a system in place to facilitate people within the legal system who were not fluent in English, and suggests that there was both a demand for and supply of Irish interpreters such as they. Similarly, in the vicinity of the neighbouring area of Wilkes-Barre, Joseph Callahan (1994) states that in the Irish communities, Irish was the language of the courts.<sup>109</sup>

Staying with court cases, the Molly Maguires deserve mention at this juncture. The Molly Maguires were “an oath-bound secret society imported from Ireland” who were held responsible for a series of assaults and killings in the coal fields of Pennsylvania in the 1860s and 1870s, including the assassination of sixteen men (mostly mine officials), for which twenty Irishmen were convicted and sentenced to be hanged.<sup>110</sup> The Molly Maguires themselves left no evidence of their existence and so almost everything that is known about them was written by hostile contemporary observers. Kenny suggests that they may not have existed in terms of the gigantic conspiracy depicted by contemporaries – but as a pattern of violence engaged in by Irishmen under specific historical conditions, they did exist.<sup>111</sup> The reason they are mentioned here is for the large numbers of native Irish speakers located within their ranks. The evidence for this comes from accounts of the trials and subsequent executions of alleged perpetrators of violence: the *New York Sun* reported that the day after the execution of Alexander Campbell a wake was held in Lansford, Carbon County, at which women

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<sup>109</sup> Callahan, ‘The Irish Language in Pennsylvania’, p. 22.

<sup>110</sup> Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York and Oxford, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, pp. 5-7.

were reported to be keening (mourning) in Irish.<sup>112</sup> Campbell had been convicted of being an accessory to the murder of John P. Jones, a Welsh mine superintendent from Lansford who had angered the Molly Maguires by allegedly blacklisting a local Irish gang member, Hugh McGehan.<sup>113</sup> At Campbell's trial, one of the witnesses was a sixty year old woman whose testimony was translated to English by a bilingual interpreter, John McGinley.<sup>114</sup> An informer, Daniel Kelly, was an Irish-speaker and claimed that the assassins of Alexander Rea "all speak Irish" too.<sup>115</sup> Lastly, James Roarity, another executed Molly Maguire, was bilingual but his wife reportedly could only speak Irish.<sup>116</sup> These various court cases may not reveal the actual structures or practices which allowed the continuation of Irish, but they demonstrate that some structures were in place to cater to Irish-speakers, and that Irish speakers were certainly present.

Campbell's trial also raises the important question of emigrant origins – Campbell, Kelly and the Roaritys all came from the same region in west Donegal, near the Rosses, while Kenny calculates that four in five of American Molly Maguires were born in, or bore a surname most common in, north-central and north-western Ireland, while one-third were born in, or bore a surname most common in, Donegal.<sup>117</sup> In the immediate post-Famine period, as discussed in Chapter One, the west of Ireland and Donegal had much lower rates of emigration than the rest of Ireland, while the rates of Irish-speaking were much higher. The Rosses, whence Campbell, Kelly and Roarity hailed,

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<sup>112</sup> *New York Sun*, 23 June 1877. Quoted in Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 37.

<sup>113</sup> David Morris, "'Gone to work to America': Irish step-migration through south Wales in the 1860s and 1870s", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 34: 3 (2016), pp. 297-313.

<sup>114</sup> *Shenandoah Herald*, 29 December 1876. Quoted in Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 38.

<sup>115</sup> Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, 'Synopsis for Mr Gowen. September 1, 1876', including a statement of Manus Cull, aka Daniel Kelly, in Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 25.

was an area where 60 per cent or more of young people were Irish-speaking between 1831 and 1871.<sup>118</sup> Considering the lower rates of emigration from Donegal between the 1850s and 1870s, Kenny suggests that the Irish-speaking among them who made their way to Pennsylvania stand out as anomalous in the American context.<sup>119</sup> Whether or not the Molly Maguires were the exception is difficult to determine, but their presence confirms, at the very least, that Irish speakers emigrated to Pennsylvania, while also raising the question of why this kind of visibility is not present for the language in Philadelphia.

The discrepancy both in evidence and visibility is further reinforced by the National Folklore Collection questionnaire returns, in which there are several references to Irish-speaking communities in various regions in Pennsylvania, but next to none in Philadelphia itself. These returns illustrate the importance of localised, chain migration in the maintenance of the Irish language. Jack Doherty (aged 91) from Ballina, Co. Mayo, recounts his family's experience in Pennsylvania's anthracite coal mining region; the following family tree provides an enlightening example of chain migration and the transmission of Irish. Jack Doherty's grand-uncle, Patrick Doherty, emigrated to America c.1840-50 where he worked as a miner in Holmesville, Schuylkill County. Patrick's eldest son, also Patrick, married a Mayo woman, Bridget Henry; he "loved his native Ireland, and his Irish language, and it was their home language in Holmesville, and the grandchildren grew up fluent Irish speakers".<sup>120</sup> One of these

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<sup>118</sup> Garret FitzGerald, 'Estimates for Baronies of Minimum Level of Irish-Speaking Amongst Successive Decennial Cohorts, 1771-1781 to 1861-1871', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 84C (1984), pp. 117-155.

<sup>119</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 38.

<sup>120</sup> NFC MS1410, Jack Doherty (91), Glenamoy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955. For Holmesville see Adolf W. Schalck and D. C. Henning (eds), *History of Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania ... including a genealogical and biographical record of many families and persons in the county* (Pennsylvania, 1907), pp. 196-197.

grandchildren, Dennis Joseph Dougherty, became Archbishop of Philadelphia in 1918, demonstrating an example of intergenerational occupational and social mobility. In an account from an official journal presented to him in 1940 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood, it is stated that:

Even as a boy he spoke the Gaelic Tongue. In later years ... the Gaelic entitled him to be known as ‘An Sagarth O’Doherty’ ... as they waited for his coming to ‘Confess’ them in their native tongue.<sup>121</sup>

This family is discussed by another respondent, Mrs Mary Doherty (née Henry) from Ballina, Co. Mayo, whose cousin was Bridget Henry, and supports Jack Doherty’s account of the family’s continued use of Irish. Bridget emigrated to America aged nineteen, sometime between 1850 and 1855, where she married Patrick Dougherty (son of Patrick Doherty Senior) in 1857. Mary Doherty, the respondent, voices the following observation made by her nephew, Fr Dennis Joseph Dougherty:

Bridget Henry and her husband Patrick Dougherty were native Irish speakers, and Irish was their home language ... the neighbours visited them frequently in Ashland and always conversed in Irish.<sup>122</sup>

Mary Doherty recalls that Fr Dennis Joseph Dougherty visited Ashland where:

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<sup>121</sup> This information was gathered for an article on his death in 1951. NFC MS1410, Jack Doherty (91), Glenamoy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>122</sup> NFC MS1410, Mary Doherty (65), Bonnboy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955. Ashland was very near to Holmesville. See Schalck and Henning, *History of Schuylkill County*, pp. 196-197.

In St Joseph's Church he heard the confessions of the Irish exiles in Irish.

Many of those who emigrated at the time had only Irish, and they maintained their knowledge of their native tongue to the end.<sup>123</sup>

The symbolism of confession must be noted here and though no date is provided for this visit, it is likely that this occurred before he became Archbishop in 1918. The respondent also states that "all the exiles who settled in that small area seemed to hail from Erris, Co. Mayo, and they brought with them the traditions and customs of their homeland".<sup>124</sup> Erris is a barony in the extreme north-western corner of Co. Mayo which continued to be Irish-speaking well into the twentieth century, and whose isolation helped to account for the presence and continuation of many local traits within the barony. Many emigrants left the area from the 1850s onwards for the coalfields of Pennsylvania and this peaked in 1883 with a scheme for free passage to America.<sup>125</sup> Mary Doherty's observation is notable as it demonstrates the existence of localised chain migration from a specific location in Ireland to another specific one in Pennsylvania in the post-Famine period, as well as its importance in continuing traditions. It also highlights the apparent absence of such a connection for Philadelphia. Further examples include Pat McDonnell who left Stonefield (Cois Abhainn), Co. Mayo, for America in 1880. McDonnell was:

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<sup>123</sup> NFC MS1410, Mary Doherty (65), Bonnboy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>124</sup> NFC MS1410, Mary Doherty (65), Bonnboy, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>125</sup> When Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh conducted research into linguistic practices in 1936 into two regions (Faulmore and Dú Chaocháin, which comprised Kilgalligan, Carrateigue, Stonefield, and Cornboy), Irish was the everyday speech of old and young, where the majority of children acquired their first knowledge of English in school and many of the older people knew Irish only. Preface, Éamonn Mhac an Fhailigh, *The Irish of Erris, Co. Mayo* (Dublin, 1980). The townland of Kilgalligan was particularly isolated and was only connected by road to Co. Mayo in the 1960s. Séamas Ó Catháin and Patrick O'Flanagan, *The Living Landscape: Kilgalligan, Erris, Co. Mayo* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 6, 11.

A native Irish speaker and had not a word of English, and yet was able to get through. In America he had no difficulty with the language question, as he lived while there among Irish exiles who had [worked] in Pennsylvania and spoke Irish always among themselves.<sup>126</sup>

Mrs Ketty Toole (née O'Malley) from Geesala (a village also in the barony of Erris in Co. Mayo) recounts her family's experience of chain migration to America. Toole was aged 99 at the time of the questionnaire and so was born c.1865 – making her recollections particularly valuable. Her family's is a typical story of chain migration which merits description: her aunt emigrated to America prior to the Famine and in 1865 paid passage for Toole's sister, Mary, to emigrate too. The following year, 1866, another sister, Sally, received passage from Mary and then provided passage for their brother, Tom O'Malley, in 1878. He went to Pennsylvania and worked in the mines (the exact location is unspecified) and married an Irish woman, Margaret Finnegan, from Erris in Mayo, before retiring and purchasing a home in Philadelphia.<sup>127</sup> He visited Mayo in 1926 and, as recalled by Toole, upon his return, spoke the vernacular of this “intensely Irish speaking” area. Locals were surprised to hear a “Yankee” speaking Irish and Toole states that O'Malley “spoke Irish as fluently as the day he left for America, and never lost one word of his Irish”.

He said that he lived among a colony of Irish emigrants who settled in the neighbourhood of the coal mines, and that they visited one another, and

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<sup>126</sup> NFC MS1410, Charles Doherty (71), Cornboy, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>127</sup> Additionally, Toole's father, Michael, had emigrated to America at the height of the Famine along with his brother, John, but subsequently returned home, while Toole's daughter emigrated sometime in the early twentieth century.

maintained the old Irish customs and traditions ... He said that when the Irish emigrants met or visited one another their language was Irish.<sup>128</sup>

This account is particularly intriguing because Tom O'Malley seemingly managed to retain his native language for several decades in America. Another returned migrant, Hugh Scanlon from Stonefield, also in the barony of Erris, Co. Mayo, migrated to America in 1880 but returned to Ireland c.1900; he had also "retained his Irish perfectly".<sup>129</sup> A significant role was played by close-knit and localised communities in the maintenance and continuation of home traditions, as demonstrated in London. The prevalence of individuals from Erris, their geographic concentration, and their intermarriage (in the case of Tom O'Malley and Margaret Finnegan) likely facilitated the relocation and continuation of many local traits from Erris in Pennsylvania.

Such stories are easier to ascertain in Pennsylvania's mining towns, owing to the towns' size, but they become obscured in a large urban environment like Philadelphia. One of the principal factors behind the relative inconspicuousness of the Irish language in Philadelphia is migrant origins. Irish migrants in Philadelphia came from a range of geographic and economic backgrounds, some from the west as evidenced by the questionnaire returns, though with the most significant numbers coming from Ulster, especially the industrial north-east, as discussed. Given the fact that rates of Irish-speaking in Ulster, with the exception of Co. Donegal, were amongst the lowest in Ireland throughout the period 1850-1910, and consistently declining, it is likely that the Irish-speakers among the migrant stream to Philadelphia were the exception. To briefly illustrate this, Counties Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down and Fermanagh were

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<sup>128</sup> NFC MS1410, Ketty Toole (99), Doolough, Geesala, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

<sup>129</sup> NFC MS1410, Charles Doherty (71), Cornboy, Co. Mayo. Collector: Mícheál Mac Énrí, 1955.

no more than 2 per cent Irish speaking throughout this period, while Tyrone was 5 per cent, and Cavan and Monaghan around 7 per cent. Co. Donegal, on the other hand, was on average 30 per cent Irish speaking in 1851 and 35 per cent by 1911, including areas in west Donegal where upwards of 80 per cent spoke Irish as their first or only language and where English only became widespread in the 1890s.<sup>130</sup> This general trend is in contrast to London, where the bulk of Irish migrants came from counties with high rates of Irish speaking, as discussed in Chapter Two. This complicates the issue as it cannot be suggested that migrant backgrounds resulted in a total *absence* of the Irish language in Philadelphia; a greater number of factors were at play. The following section will therefore discuss the effects of Philadelphia's physical and social environments on language maintenance.

Kevin Kenny notes that the nineteenth-century Irish had a tendency to affiliate along parish, local, and regional lines, but the combination of Philadelphia's size and the dispersed nature of the Irish did not encourage this type of affiliation and contributed to a loss of community.<sup>131</sup> It did encourage associational culture, however, which later benefited the revival. Using the comparison of London, the effect of environment is apparent: although the initial Irish settlement patterns in both cities were similar, growing from the availability of unskilled labour in the shipyards and industries on the rivers, the Irish communities in each of the two cities developed very differently. In Philadelphia, the availability of homes combined with the mobility of the Irish (and the working class more generally) meant that they did not remain in their initial place of settlement or group together in specific areas to the same extent as their counterparts

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<sup>130</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 37.

<sup>131</sup> Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, p. 26.

in London, avoiding the long-standing enclaves that were prevalent there. Because London's Irish enclaves had restricted geographical ranges and many of the inhabitants operated within a small, enclosed system with people of similar backgrounds (often from the same province or even county), they created a degree of cultural security and provided suitable conditions for language preservation. The more an ethnic group maintains a tight-knit, centralised pattern of settlement, the more likely it is that the mother tongue will be maintained, as co-residence in a language community simply increases the frequency of the opportunity to use and reinforce the mother tongue.<sup>132</sup> In Philadelphia, in contrast, the Irish community was more mobile and was resident in varying degrees of density throughout the city: geographical persistence is a natural precondition for participation in community institutions, while the fact that the Irish seldom dominated an area meant that there were few compact Irish settlements wherein an ethnic tradition could be nurtured.<sup>133</sup> It has been demonstrated how important family and social links were for the continuation of the language in smaller communities in Pennsylvania, where little input from outside influences and little need to interact with others allowed the resistance of integration, or at the very least slowed the process. However, the dispersal of the Irish throughout Philadelphia meant that the same notion of community cannot have existed; in fact, many of the Irish became integrated into local social structures.<sup>134</sup> The suggestion that certain areas within London became havens for Irish-speakers who followed their relations and their

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<sup>132</sup> Robert W. Schrauf, 'Mother Tongue Maintenance among North American Ethnic Groups', *Cross-Cultural Research*, 33: 2 (1999), pp. 175-192.

<sup>133</sup> Dale B. Light Jr, 'The role of Irish-American organisations in assimilation and community formation' in P. J. Drudy (ed), *The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation and Impact* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 113-142.

<sup>134</sup> Light, 'The role of Irish-American organisations', p. 126.

friends cannot be made for Philadelphia, based on the evidence in hand.<sup>135</sup> Considering the relatively small number of Irish speakers who may have arrived in Philadelphia, they would have needed to reside together or in close proximity in order to continue to use the language, meaning the dispersal of the Irish community could easily have had a negative impact on language maintenance and, in turn, transmission.

An additional effect of this environment is the relative lack of enmity directed towards the Irish, as discussed. The absence of the Irish enclaves seen in London, where living conditions attracted negative attention and which were seen as breeding grounds of crime and immorality, feeding back into negative attitudes towards the Irish, resulted in less negative attention directed towards the Irish. It is possible that because there was a less fraught relationship between the Irish and the host society, the Irish became a much less cohesive community. This lack of tension during the period in question perhaps led the Irish in Philadelphia to feel less of a need to ‘band together’ in the face of adversity, and actively create a distinct Irish community and identity *against* something else.

### The Welsh in Pennsylvania: A Comparison

Moving beyond the difference between the Irish language in Philadelphia and in the mining region, a broader comparison is employed here to further illustrate the impact of environment on a minority language – focusing on Irish and Welsh. The similarities between the Welsh and Irish communities during the nineteenth century provide the justification for this comparison: both groups migrated from countries where

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<sup>135</sup> K. G. T. McDonnell, ‘Roman Catholics in London 1850-1865’ in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway (eds), *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 429-443.

bilingualism was increasing but significant numbers still spoke something other than English as a primary language, both experienced substantial emigration, and in the United States, both Irish and Welsh were minority languages in a predominantly English-speaking country.

Unlike Irish, however, robust Welsh-speaking enclaves were established in the United States which resisted the assimilative process, at least for a generation. The elements which made this possible – most notably the proportion of Welsh-speakers, their concentration and institutional support – were absent in the Irish case in Philadelphia. The proportion of Welsh speakers was higher than of Irish speakers in Ireland: in 1801, 95 per cent of the population spoke Welsh, with seven in ten being monoglots. In 1911 this was 44.6 per cent, of whom 8.7 per cent were monolingual Welsh. As was the case in Ireland, the actual numbers of Welsh speakers were rising – from 600,000 in 1801 to 977,366 in 1911 – but the proportion of the population was falling.<sup>136</sup> Emigration from Wales in the nineteenth century was less extensive than from Ireland, partly owing to the industrialisation of south Wales which enabled the surplus rural population to be absorbed internally, to a degree, and because the population was smaller. Upon emigration, the Welsh were more geographically, chronologically and occupationally concentrated than the Irish.<sup>137</sup> While Irish emigration was prolonged and far-reaching, Welsh emigration was concentrated in Pennsylvania in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Alan Conway estimates 90,000 Welsh emigrated to the

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<sup>136</sup> Geraint H. Jenkins, 'Introduction' in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 1-20.

<sup>137</sup> Jenkins, *Language and Community*, p. 11. Exact numbers of Welsh migrants in the United States are impossible to establish because their departures were not recorded in British ports and they were under-recorded in American ports, frequently being recorded as English. Gethin Matthews, 'Miners, Methodists and Minstrels: The Welsh in the Americas and their Legacy' in Michael Newton (ed.), *Celts in the Americas* (Sydney, NS, 2013), pp. 94-116.

United States between 1820 and 1950, compared to Ireland's several million.<sup>138</sup> In 1890, there were 100,000 Welsh-born living in the United States, with 37 per cent of these in the coal-mining regions of Pennsylvania.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, in 1900, 35,435 individuals, which constituted 38 per cent of the total recorded Welsh-born in America, were in Pennsylvania. Of these, 5,245 lived in Allegheny County, centred on Pittsburgh, and 16,286 resided in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, centred on Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.<sup>140</sup> These proportionately large concentrations allowed the visibility and prominence of Welsh culture and this was furthered by the privileged position in which the Welsh found themselves in the new American industrial communities. Their arrival with valuable industrial skills allowed them to occupy a favourable position in the occupational and, in turn, social hierarchy relative to the Irish, among other ethnic groups.<sup>141</sup> In most places where they settled, the Welsh earned recognition as a small but distinctive group, and a key element in this distinctiveness was the Welsh language.<sup>142</sup> In spite of the absence of official records of the numbers of Welsh speakers in America, there exists a range of qualitative sources and impressionistic evidence which suggests that for most of the nineteenth century the majority of the Welsh who emigrated there were Welsh speakers, and that

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<sup>138</sup> Morris, 'Irish step-migration through south Wales', p. 301; Alan Conway, *The Welsh in America: Letters from the Immigrants* (Cardiff, 1961), p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> William D. Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity in a Pennsylvanian Community' in Jenkins, *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 261-286.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Llewellyn Tyler, 'Occupational Mobility and Social Status: The Welsh Experience in Sharon, Pennsylvania, 1880-1930', *Pennsylvania History: a Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 83: 1 (2016), pp. 1-27.

<sup>141</sup> Industrialisation had occurred half a century before in Wales, meaning the skills which migrants from industrial south Wales brought commanded higher wages and privileged positions. The Welsh monopolised well-paid work while the Irish were restricted to the unskilled and low paid work, and favouritism was practiced – Welsh foremen were notorious for granting the best places in the mines to their friends and to miners of their own nationality, which, naturally, created tensions and led to violent reprisals. See William D. Jones, *Wales in America: Scranton and the Welsh, 1860-1920* (Scranton, PA, 1993), p. 35, and Morris, 'Irish step-migration through south Wales', pp. 299-302.

<sup>142</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', p. 261.

this language was used both in public and in private.<sup>143</sup> In the 1860s and 1870s, in particular, the towns of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre were home to considerable levels of Welsh-speaking, even taking into account bilingualism and varying levels of proficiency.

Welsh cultural activity (secular and religious) was practised through the medium of Welsh, at least initially, and the majority of contemporary descriptions of Welsh cultural life were written in Welsh. Unlike Irish, the language was most visible in the activities of the Welsh cultural institutions and societies which had been established in Scranton – the most important of these being the Welsh churches.<sup>144</sup> In 1877 there were no fewer than seven Welsh-language churches, the largest and most influential of which was the Welsh Baptist Church. There also existed a Welsh Philosophical Society (established in 1857), and a thriving Welsh-language press, all of which reflected the linguistic practices of the community. Of the numerous nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals, *Y Drych* (*The Mirror*) is noteworthy – it was first published in New York City in 1851 and moved to Utica in 1860, where it continued to be published for over a century and was pivotal to Welsh-American life.<sup>145</sup> Scranton was a major centre of the Welsh-American press, and a number of Welsh-language newspapers and periodicals were published there, including *Baner America*, which was established in 1868 and taken over by *Y Drych* in 1877, and whose very existence points to a sizeable readership there. Even though many may have had English too,

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<sup>143</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', p. 262, 266.

<sup>144</sup> Jones, *Wales in America*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>145</sup> Matthews, 'Miners, Methodists and Minstrels', pp. 105-109.

Welsh was the main medium of conversation and it pervaded all aspects of immigrant life.<sup>146</sup>

Despite the strength of the Welsh language in Pennsylvania in the 1860s and 1870s, however, it was not immune to language shift – the reasons for its decline provide an illuminating comparison for that of Irish. After 1880, no Welsh-language newspapers and periodicals were published in Scranton and any new publications were in English, while new English-language churches were established. In 1871, the congregation of the First Welsh Baptist Church separated and built their own church, one of the reasons for which was that the young people did not enjoy the Welsh language. A number of other secessions within the Congregationalist denomination followed, again owing to the fact that an increasing number of people did not speak Welsh. From the 1890s, English-language services became more common in order to combat declining attendances and retain congregations.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, the Philosophical Society switched to English in the mid-1890s, even changing its name to the Hyde Park Literary and Scientific Association, but it was closed in 1897 due to lack of funds, and the Eisteddfod, though still popular, was transformed into a primarily English-medium musical festival.<sup>148</sup> The second generation's attitude towards the Welsh language differed from that of the original immigrants, and as older Welsh speakers passed away, language maintenance was dependent on continuing fresh immigration from Wales – where the language was declining also. Welsh may have continued to be the main language of the home while English was becoming the dominant language in public life, but the lack of new Welsh-speaking immigrants and the existence of

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<sup>146</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', pp. 266-267; *Wales in America*; pp. 88-90.

<sup>147</sup> Jones, *Wales in America*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>148</sup> Jones, *Wales in America*, p. 114; 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', p. 271.

intermarriage (often with the Irish) meant that raising a family in an entirely 'Welsh' environment became less likely.<sup>149</sup> By the turn of the century, the Welsh language had come to be viewed less and less as a means of day-to-day verbal communication and more as an icon, whose importance lay in its status as an ethnic symbol rather than a living language.<sup>150</sup> A distinctively Welsh-American pattern of cultural activity emerged, ritualised in nature and focused on specific events and dates like St David's Day banquets and festivities and the Welsh Day, at which events banners with Welsh-language slogan were displayed but which were carried out in English.<sup>151</sup> This situation was echoed by the Irish language in the final years of the nineteenth century, to be discussed in Chapter Five.

Gethin Matthews concludes that the Welsh language and customs survived the longest in America in rural-agricultural communities, in a very clear pattern, and the places where it disappeared the quickest were settlements where the population was mobile and heterogeneous, with the Welsh forming a small minority. For example, the Welsh community in New York City in 1851 was numerically the largest in America, but the population was scattered with little cohesion or sense of ethnic identity and had just one Welsh-language chapel, whereas in some agricultural communities in the United States, Welsh continued to be spoken into the second and even third generations.<sup>152</sup> Encounters between the Welsh and other groups were more frequent and intimate in urban than rural areas, which perhaps caused a more rapid adoption of the common

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<sup>149</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', pp. 271-74. In his study on the Welsh in Sharon, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Robert Llewellyn Tyler states that many of the Welsh there had one Irish parent. Llewellyn Tyler, 'Occupational Mobility and Social Status', p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', p. 285.

<sup>151</sup> Jones, 'The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity', p. 275.

<sup>152</sup> Matthews, 'Miners, Methodists and Minstrels', pp. 102-103.

language.<sup>153</sup> It is possible to apply the same theory to the Irish language, though on a larger scale. The mobility and diversity of the Irish in Philadelphia combined with the greater number of encounters with other ethnic groups engendered a faster adoption of the lingua franca, accelerated further by the presence of Irish-English bilingualism by the period in question. As discussed, the role of women in preserving the language is important: outside of Philadelphia, the great majority of both Irish and Welsh women worked within the home, where the language became focused.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, the fact that a high percentage of Irish women worked *outside* the home in Philadelphia must have had an effect on the continuation of the language, as this home environment was compromised.<sup>155</sup> Though the two languages ultimately suffered the same fate, the circumstances specific to Welsh allowed it to flourish, even briefly, in the United States. The concentration of Welsh speakers, fewer cultural encounters, the thriving Welsh-language press and churches, and more favourable attitudes towards the community all combined to produce an environment more conducive to language maintenance. This comparison can be used to help explain the reasons behind the lack of visibility and decline of Irish in Philadelphia and in the United States more broadly.

## Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter confirms that Irish speakers migrated to Philadelphia and that they continued to use their native language after their arrival, though it quickly took on what Jeffrey Kallen describes as “a covert role in ethnic

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<sup>153</sup> Jones, ‘The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity’, p. 286.

<sup>154</sup> Bodnar, ‘Socialization and Adaptation’, p. 161.

<sup>155</sup> Clark, ‘Irish Women Workers and American Labor Patterns’, p. 121.

life”.<sup>156</sup> The prevalence of bilingualism by the period in question suggests that Irish continued to be used in certain circumstances, such as within the home and the local community and, to an extent, religious practice, but that English rapidly came to be the language of choice within the public sphere. The reasons for this are many and include the prevailing demographic and sociolinguistic backgrounds of the Irish in Philadelphia, pre-existing bilingualism and attitudes towards the Irish language, the environment which met migrants upon their arrival in Philadelphia, and the absence of institutional support or a foothold in formal culture. Without the churches, publications, and social outlets that the Welsh community had, the Irish language quickly retreated below the surface of society and came to be used primarily in informal, private settings. Considering the likelihood that fewer Irish-dominant speakers migrated to Philadelphia than to London, evidence of these individuals within the historical record is difficult to uncover. In addition, the dispersal of the Irish community throughout Philadelphia contrasted with their counterparts in London, where settlement patterns facilitated the maintenance of familial relationships and provided a cultural security which, in turn, provided suitable conditions for language preservation by reducing external influences – through enclosed systems, a limited geographical range, and a high density of Irish people from similar backgrounds. The effect of a smaller, more concentrated community could also be seen in the discussion on Irish speakers in towns in Carbon, Lackawanna, and Schuylkill counties in Pennsylvania’s mining region.

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<sup>156</sup> Jeffrey L. Kallen, ‘Irish as an American Ethnic Language’ in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), p. 38.

Unlike the Welsh language, during the period 1850-c.1880, the Irish language was not seen as an integral element to Irish nationality in Philadelphia.<sup>157</sup> The onset of the Gaelic Revival changed the situation entirely, much more significantly than in London, and the Irish language and culture became visible throughout the city after the establishment of the Philadelphia branch of the Philo-Celtic Society in 1881, and through the creation of a number of Irish newspapers, in particular *The Hibernian*, *The Irish-American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate*, *The Freeman and Irish-American Review* and the bilingual journal *An Gaodhal*, and the popularity of Clan na Gael events. Chapter Five assesses the deliberate and determined movement that ‘Irishness’ became in Philadelphia from the 1880s onwards, but first, the Irish experience on America’s west coast will be explored.

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<sup>157</sup> Llewellyn Tyler, ‘Occupational Mobility and Social Status’, pp. 6-7.

Year	Total population	Irish population	% of total
1850	408,081	71,787	17.6
1860	564,586	94,443	16.7
1870	656,808	94,730	14.4
1880	847,170	99,975	11.9
1890	1,046,964	/	/
1900	1,293,647	98,000	7.58
1915	1,684,000	/	/

Figure 9: Irish population of Philadelphia, 1850-1915<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Table compiled from Burnstein, 'Immigrants and Residential Mobility', p. 180; Burt and Davies, 'The Iron Age, 1876-1905', p. 488; Dennis Clark, 'Intrepid Men; Three Philadelphia Irish Leaders, 1880 to 1920' in Timothy J. Meagher (ed.), *From Paddy to Studs: Irish-American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880 to 1920* (New York, Connecticut and London, 1986), pp. 93-115; and Lloyd M. Abernethy, 'Progressivism, 1905-1919', in Weigley, *Philadelphia*, pp. 524-565.

## Chapter Four: The Western Experience: the Irish Language in San Francisco, 1850-1880

In 1878, the Rev Hugh Quigley wrote that without the Irish, “the mines [in California] would not be developed, the railroads would not be built, the newspapers would not be readable for dullness, and the churches would not be filled”.<sup>1</sup> Though Quigley’s account is, in the words of historian Malcolm Campbell, an “immense catalogue of Irish men’s achievement in California’s public life in the three decades after 1849” that provides “page upon page of effusive detail of Irish successes in the state”, it does reflect the contemporary and historiographical perception of the Irish in the west.<sup>2</sup> Presented in an overwhelmingly positive light, the Irish in San Francisco have been characterised by their economic and social mobility, quick political success, and Catholic vitality, as detailed in the introduction. These claims of good fortune are not entirely unfounded; the Irish in San Francisco had a significantly different – almost incomparable – experience to their counterparts in Philadelphia and London and from the city’s foundation it is true that there was Irish representation among the city’s high-status occupations.<sup>3</sup> There were Irish holders of major public office (preceding their

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<sup>1</sup> Rev Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco, 1878), p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland’s New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison, Wis., 2007), pp. 87-89.

<sup>3</sup> In 1852 San Francisco had ten Irish doctors. See James P. Walsh, ‘The Irish in the New America: Way Out West’ in David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards (eds), *America and Ireland 1776-1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection* (Westport, Conn., 1980), pp. 165-176. Another oft-referenced example of a successful Irishman is Jasper O’Farrell: a civil engineer born in Dublin in 1817 who created San Francisco’s Merchant Street. See Thomas F. Prendergast, *Forgotten Pioneers: Irish Leaders in Early California* (San Francisco, 1942), p. 67.

counterparts in the east by two generations), and there was a vibrant Catholic Church which became an important institutional affiliation for Irish Catholics.<sup>4</sup>

Quigley also described San Francisco's origins and growth as "magical", and it was these aspects which set it apart from both Philadelphia and London, as well as most other American cities.<sup>5</sup> Further distinguishing features were Irish immigrants' backgrounds and time of arrival and the presence of non-white immigrant populations, particularly the Chinese community, all of which, in combination, affected immigrant identity and the continuation of and attitudes towards the Irish language in the city. In London and Philadelphia (not to mention New York, Boston and other cities on America's east coast, as well as British cities), the Irish arrived into communities which, by the post-Famine period, had decades of history, long-established communities, and an elite capable of ascribing inferior position to new arrivals. Although the United States was officially non-sectarian, many customs such as education and ideology had been shaped by the Protestant experience, not to mention religious practice itself.<sup>6</sup> San Francisco, on the other hand, was a brand-new city: largely Catholic in custom (dating from the Spanish founding in 1776), had no tradition of deference, was relatively free from pre-existing anti-Irish prejudices, and valued ability and ambition above all other attributes. This combination of qualities provided the Irish with a considerably more liberating American experience and directly

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<sup>4</sup> Moses Richin, 'The Classic Ethnics' in James P. Walsh (ed.), *The Irish in San Francisco 1850-1976* (San Francisco, 1978), pp. 1-8. Frank McCoppin was elected Mayor of San Francisco in 1867 while New York and Boston's first Irish mayors were elected in 1880 and 1884, respectively. R. A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish 1848-1880* (Manchester, 1979); p. 7. Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> Quigley, *The Irish Race in California*, p. 253.

<sup>6</sup> Richin, 'The Classic Ethnics', p. 3.

affected the transmission and continued use of Irish, as this chapter will discuss in further detail.

## San Francisco: A Profile

The story of San Francisco's growth following the discovery of gold in January 1848 is well-documented among contemporary and modern sources. Founded in 1776 as the Spanish Mission Dolores,<sup>7</sup> in 1846 it was still a village (named Yerba Buena) of just two hundred traders and merchants mostly involved in the hide trade, and was home to 1,000 in early 1848.<sup>8</sup> By the end of 1849, despite the estimated 40,000 newcomers in this year, the city's population was no more than 25,000, as most had "hastened to the mines".<sup>9</sup> By 1854, however, it had become a city of 50,000 "whose name was known to the whole world and was on the lips of all men".<sup>10</sup> The concession of California and the Southwest to the United States after the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 coincided with the discovery of gold – creating, almost overnight, an instant state and an instant metropolis.<sup>11</sup> The presence of thousands of people (predominantly men in the early years) on their search for gold depended on the presence of merchants who were resident in the city, thus creating a permanent population and complex economy.<sup>12</sup> Although the Gold Rush itself was relatively short-lived, the abundance of gold in the years 1848-55 meant that capital was plentiful and it was the real estate and commodities markets of San Francisco which generated the great fortunes of the Gold

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<sup>7</sup> John P. Young, *San Francisco: A History of the Pacific Coast Metropolis*. Vol. 1 (Chicago, 1912), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Young, *San Francisco*. Vol. 1, p. 136. This was still an increase from 1,000 to 25,000 in two years.

<sup>10</sup> Young, *San Francisco*. Vol. 1, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup> Walsh, 'The Irish in the New America', p. 165. California was granted statehood in 1850.

<sup>12</sup> James E. Vance Jr., *Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley, 1964), pp. 9-10.

Rush, rather than the gold mines themselves.<sup>13</sup> The nature of the city began to change after 1855, when the gold yield fell and competition began to increase for what was an increasingly rare commodity.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, however, the city's population continued to increase, particularly as a result of the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, and the population reached 150,000 by 1870 and 235,000 by 1880, the Irish component of which will be discussed in the next section.<sup>15</sup>

Year	Number
1846	200
1848	1,000
1850	25,000
1854	50,000
1870	150,000
1880	235,000

*Figure 10: Population of San Francisco, 1846-80<sup>16</sup>*

The transformation from Yerba Buena to San Francisco was rapid and created significant changes in a short period of time, with San Francisco experiencing in just eight years what took Philadelphia 120 years.<sup>17</sup> San Francisco's sudden appearance

<sup>13</sup> Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco 1850-1900* (California, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel J. Meissner, 'California Clash: Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco, 1850-1870' in Donald Jordan and Timothy J. O'Keefe (eds), *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area: Essays on Good Fortune* (San Francisco, 2005), pp. 54-86.

<sup>15</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Information compiled from Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 3 (for the years 1846, 1848, 1870 and 1880), and Young, *San Francisco*. Vol. 1, p. 136 (for 1850 and 1854).

<sup>17</sup> James P. Walsh, 'The Irish in Early San Francisco' in Walsh, *The Irish in San Francisco*, pp. 9-25.

and rapid growth has been the focus of much historiography, to the exclusion of the many changes and fluctuations which occurred throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the early 1850s there was marked progress, with construction rates and property value increasing, but prices dropped sharply and property values reversed following the end of the Gold Rush c.1855.<sup>18</sup> By 1860, San Francisco ranked fifteenth in population among American cities but only 51<sup>st</sup> in manufacturing output; owing to scarce coal and iron resources, prohibitive interest rates, and lucrative jobs in mining, transportation and land speculation – all of which delayed industrialisation.<sup>19</sup> The arrival of large numbers of predominantly unskilled migrants from southern China led to competition for jobs and, in turn, labour surpluses and falling wages. Between the years 1848 and 1850, approximately eight hundred Chinese migrated to San Francisco and in 1852 alone, twenty thousand did so – the effects of which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.<sup>20</sup> To add to this, the Civil War years brought a large influx of people from the east,<sup>21</sup> as did the transcontinental railroad, resulting in increased levels of congestion and population density, much of which was concentrated in the South of Market area which housed mostly German, Irish and English immigrants, while Chinese immigrants were similarly confined to cramped living quarters in Chinatown. To further exacerbate this, the depression of the 1870s created a labour surplus which lasted, in varying degrees of intensity, from 1875 until 1906, when the earthquake and subsequent fire created a demand for labour to

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. flour decreased from \$800 to \$20 a barrel and housing sites that cost \$15 before the boom reached \$8,000 during its height and plummeted to \$100 a year later. See Andrew F. Rolle and Arthur C. Verge, *California: A History*. 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Hoboken, 2015), p. 133.

<sup>19</sup> Rolle and Verge, *California*, p. 139.

<sup>20</sup> Meissner, 'Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco', pp. 60-66.

<sup>21</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 7. 1860-1890 (San Francisco, 1890), p. 683.

rebuild the city.<sup>22</sup> The environment that greeted Irish migrants in San Francisco was, therefore, very different to that of Philadelphia, where they found entrenched communities, and to London, where they were greeted with saturated labour markets and debilitating prejudice. While it was not a case of ‘rags to riches’ for every Irish migrant in the city – as much of the available historiography posits – it was certainly a more tolerant and inclusive city for Irish immigrants and provided greater opportunity.

### The Irish Inhabitants of San Francisco

The Irish Famine migration occurred simultaneously with the discovery of gold in California – a fortuitous occurrence for some of the Irish migrants in America.<sup>23</sup> It created a demand for labour at a time when large numbers of unskilled Irish began to arrive in the country, some of whom moved westwards. Because the Gold Rush was individualist and non-mercantilist in nature – meaning anybody could participate – the Irish who made it to California in these early years were able to compete on a more equal basis than in other American or British cities, where power and status were handed down from generation to generation.<sup>24</sup> In San Francisco, it was an individual’s ability, ambition and circumstances that allowed their success – a contrast to the highly-structured Victorian world.<sup>25</sup> ‘Aptitude’ was identified by historian Hubert Howe Bancroft (1890) as “the esteemed and distinguishing trait” in San Francisco. He

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Douglass, ‘A Brief History of the South of Market’ in Mary Praetzellis and Adrian Praetzellis (eds), *South of Market: Historical Archaeology of 3 San Francisco Neighbourhoods*. Volume 1 (San Francisco, 2009), pp. 41-63.

<sup>23</sup> Richin, ‘The Classic Ethnics’, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Vance, *Geography and Urban Evolution*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>25</sup> Douglass, ‘A Brief History of the South of Market’, p. 51.

also highlighted the importance of the “levelling of rank” in the city, resulting in the absence of the extremes of wealth and of poverty witnessed in London:

The primary range of classes was not so varied as in the older countries; for the rich and powerful would not come to toil, and the very poor could not well gain the distant land.<sup>26</sup>

The fluid and open nature of San Francisco’s society meant a faster ascent and the path to respectability was easier without an established elite, helping to explain why the Irish shared representation among San Francisco’s high-status occupations from the very beginning; including ten doctors already by 1852. Compared to Philadelphia, which had a workforce three times larger than San Francisco’s by 1870, there was a greater number of Irish people in higher paid and more prestigious professions in San Francisco – for example, 27 Irish-born bankers and brokers to Philadelphia’s eighteen.<sup>27</sup> In London, despite the presence of some skilled workers and a small Irish middle class, the Irish did not share representation among high-status occupations and, instead, were predominantly rural labourers and small farmers with little or no industrial or occupational skills. Quigley (1878) describes, in detail, the range of occupations of the Irish in San Francisco: including politicians, merchants, legislators, miners, bankers, farmers, owners of real estate, commissioners and officers of the Fire Department, and police officers.<sup>28</sup> Typically, the areas of the first political emergence of the Irish in the West were traditional enclaves of Irish power in the east, for example the police and fire departments.<sup>29</sup> The Irish achieved political success from the outset

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<sup>26</sup> Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 6. 1848-1856, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> Walsh, ‘The Irish in the New America’, p. 166.

<sup>28</sup> Quigley, *The Irish Race in California*, pp. 275-278.

<sup>29</sup> Walsh, ‘The Irish in the New America’, p. 169.

too: in 1862, John Downey from Co. Roscommon became the first Irish governor of California and in 1867, San Francisco elected its first Irish-born mayor, Frank McCoppin.<sup>30</sup>

This access to equal competition was aided by the fact that many of the Irish in San Francisco also had the advantage of having had a period of residence in the United States prior to their arrival in San Francisco. Unlike London, where Irish families had not resided elsewhere in England for long periods of time and had made a purposeful journey directly from Ireland to London, there was little evidence of direct migration from Ireland to San Francisco: in 1852, only 5.1 per cent of San Francisco's Irish-born residents identified their previous place of residence as having been Ireland and, in the same year, 45 percent of the city's Irish had previously lived in the east (with 86 per cent of these coming from the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Louisiana), while another 45 per cent came from Australasia.<sup>31</sup> This Australasian element was specific to the Gold Rush, however, and ceased upon the discovery of gold in Victoria in the early 1850s; from this period, America's east coast became the most important point of origin for San Francisco's Irish migrants. To illustrate this, Burchell gives the example that 60 per cent of children in Irish families in San Francisco *not* born in California came from New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania in 1880. Burchell also notes that there is nothing to suggest that significantly greater direct migration from Ireland to San Francisco occurred in later years. The numbers arriving by land increased during the period in question: in the

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<sup>30</sup> Timothy Sarbaugh, 'Exiles of Confidence: The Irish-American Community of San Francisco, 1880 to 1920' in Timothy J. Meagher (ed.), *From Paddy to Studs: Irish-American Communities in the Turn of the Century Era, 1880 to 1920* (New York, Connecticut and London, 1986), pp. 161-179.

<sup>31</sup> Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, pp. 95-96; Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 34.

period 1855-69 less than one-quarter of all arrivals in San Francisco came overland, in 1870 this was 44 per cent, and by the 1880s, seven-eighths came overland via railway (with the exception of the Chinese).<sup>32</sup>

Little data exist on the home-county origins of the Irish-born population but these pre-California backgrounds are noteworthy in themselves – the Irish arrived on the west coast after a period of residence and acculturation in other urban centres and were, in the main, experienced New World settlers with valuable urban experience by the time they reached California. As an experienced urban ethnic minority, they were able to take advantage of the cosmopolitan ethos San Francisco offered, which was more fluid and flexible in its appreciation of newcomers from Ireland.<sup>33</sup> The combination of the city's power structures and transmigration is particularly important as it allowed the Irish who arrived in San Francisco's early years to establish themselves as a dominant force within the city from the outset, which then laid the foundation for those who arrived later. The pattern of Irish-American achievement set in San Francisco's early years did not cease as the city grew to become a major American metropolis. In addition to this combination of urban experience and the city's environment, the type of Irish migrant attracted to the west also played a role in the western experience.

The remoteness of California, particularly before 1869, meant that Irish migration, and migration in general, was highly selective in terms of who was able to make the journey. The fate of the infamous Donner Party in 1846 continued to serve as a warning for potential migrants for years, as did other similar accounts, and the difficulty of the

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<sup>32</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>33</sup> Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, p. 91.

overland journey in the early years is well-documented in primary source material.<sup>34</sup> Migrants had to contend with disease (such as cholera), hostile Native Americans and workplace accidents, not to mention difficult terrain. Many people disappeared without leaving any clues and relatives frequently placed ads in newspapers in attempts to seek information.<sup>35</sup> In the words of Rev William Gleeson in 1872, the journey was:

a matter of no ordinary moment ... three thousand miles by land through an inhospitable region, inhabited only by savage Indians, and still more savage animals, and yet unmarked by the emigrant train, or the dangers to be encountered in a tedious voyage by sea, being necessitated to round the Horn.<sup>36</sup>

Hubert Howe Bancroft (1890), historian of California, provides a similar description of the period 1848-1856:

Days and months pass away and no sign of human habitation appears ... from warm pleasant valleys to bleak and almost impassable mountains, and thence down into miasmatic swamps with miry stretches, and afterward sandy sinks and forbidding alkali wastes and salt flats baked and cracked

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<sup>34</sup> The Donner Party left for California from Springfield, Illinois, in 1846 with approximately 80 people. Bad luck, poor judgement and an alleged shortcut across a salt desert southwest of Salt Lake, Utah, ultimately led to the group being stranded in the snow in Sierra Nevada for four months. A group of fifteen, of whom seven survived, left the mountains in December 1846 to seek assistance and in February 1847 the remainder were rescued. Some of the pioneers resorted to cannibalism to survive. Only 45 of the original group survived. Rolle and Verge, *California*, pp. 94-96. Similarly, a group led by William Lewis Manly left Vermont in 1849 and in order to avoid the snows and a fate like that of the Donner Party, took a longer route into southern California. They became lost in Death Valley and not all survived. They reached Rancho San Francisco in Southern California (present-day Santa Clarita) a whole year after they set off, and were still 500 miles from the gold mines. Rolle and Verge, *California*, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> Patrick J. Blessing, *West Among Strangers: Irish Migration to California, 1850-1880* (PhD Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977), p. 238.

<sup>36</sup> Rev. William Gleeson, *History of the Catholic Church in California*. Vol. 1 (San Francisco, 1872), p. 178.

by the sun and stifling with heat and dust; through drenching rains and flooded lowlands, and across sweeping river currents – and all with occasional chilling blasts, suffocating simoons [*sic*], and constant fear of savages.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, it was the most adventurous and the most mobile Irish and those with the means who made it to San Francisco, many of whom had been seasoned in the east and the Midwest, and Australasia in the early years, and those “possessed of the nobler qualities, including courage, sagacity and energy”.<sup>38</sup>

In the words of Quigley (1878):

We have never known an Irishman who crossed the plains, who was not, if not rich, at least in the possession of all the necessaries of life. The reason for this may be found in the fact, that none but those who have ability to succeed anywhere, would have risked the severe trial of travelling two thousand five hundred miles over a dreary desert, in order to found a homestead under the smiling skies of California.<sup>39</sup>

Large numbers of Irish migrants successfully made the trip to San Francisco and already by 1852 there were 4,200 Irish-born in the city, with this number rising to 9,000 in 1860,<sup>40</sup> 25,735 in 1870, and 30,721 in 1880.<sup>41</sup> Burchell notes that, typically,

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<sup>37</sup> Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 6. 1848-1856, p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> Richin, ‘The Classic Ethnics’, p. 4. Quote: William L. Cole on the Irish in California. *California: Scenery, Climate, Productions and Inhabitants* (New York, 1871), p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Quigley, *The Irish Race in California*, p. 154.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Darby, ‘Without the Aid of a Sporting Safety Net?: the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco (1888-c.1938)’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26: 1 (2009), pp. 63-83; Meissner, ‘Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco’, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 3, 47.

Irish emigrants were predominantly young and single, with between one-third and two-fifths aged 20-24 in the second half of the nineteenth century, and there was almost equal emigration of the sexes. San Francisco differed as in the early years it attracted mostly young, single men, but the Irish in the city became older, on average, over the period while the male-female ratio became more equal, demonstrating the growing permanence of San Francisco's Irish population as well as an increase in families.<sup>42</sup> In 1880, the Irish-born comprised 13.1 per cent of the city's total population and when one considers second- and third-generation Irish, an estimated one-third of San Francisco's inhabitants in 1880 belonged to the Irish community. This was also 37 per cent of the city's white population and the largest of any group in San Francisco, meaning its history is a major part of the city's history as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

A major factor in the high rates of migration to the west coast was the level of information about California to which people had been exposed both in Ireland and on the east coast of the United States. Within the United States, the *Irish World* and *Irish American* carried columns on the activities of Irish people residing in California while Californian newspapers themselves frequently carried information for prospective migrants.<sup>44</sup> Even after the initial rush, emigrant manuals, letters, and efforts of railroad agents all served to keep interest high. By the 1870s information on California had filtered down to the lower levels of society and most of the Irish who departed for California, from the United States or elsewhere, had some knowledge of life in the

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<sup>42</sup> In 1852, 69.7% of the Irish-born were male, decreasing to 53.4% in 1860, 48.7% in 1870 and 48.2% in 1880. See Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Burchell estimates there were 43,000 second-generation Irish in the city in 1880. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> 'Facts for Emigrants to California', *Daily Alta California*, 1 March 1869.

state prior to their arrival.<sup>45</sup> Blessing also claims that Irish migrants to California displayed a higher level of literacy than their countrymen on the east, and that these literate members of the labouring class were more susceptible to the flood of printed inducements to move west than their countrymen who could not read.<sup>46</sup> This claim can be explained by contemporary literacy in Ireland, detailed in Chapter One, and the fact that information in print regarding California was almost exclusively available through English, be it emigrant manuals, newspapers, or correspondence. It stands to reason that Irish migrants who *could* read were more likely to be able to do so in English and, therefore, were more likely to understand the available literature on California. Additionally, given the considerable undertaking involved in travelling to California, it is reasonable to suggest that it was those who read about it were the ones who ultimately chose to go there.

Once these Irish migrants arrived in San Francisco, they initially settled around the Mission Bay area but dispersed all over the city as building works and infrastructure projects were completed. The vast majority of Irish San Franciscans did not stray from their traditional group social patterns and lived either in family groups or lodged with fellow Irish people.<sup>47</sup> Areas such as Telegraph Hill and St. Patrick's on Market Street had large Irish communities, but particularly at the beginning, they were not sufficiently concentrated in any one area to give it a ghetto quality, like those found in Boston and New York. Like Philadelphia, settlement in San Francisco was diffuse and by 1870 there was no ward where the Irish exceeded 28 per cent of the total ward population and it varied considerably: the seventh ward was the highest at 27.8 per

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<sup>45</sup> Blessing, *West Among Strangers*, pp. 221-227.

<sup>46</sup> Blessing, *West Among Strangers*, p. 205.

<sup>47</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 73.

cent (2,891 Irish-born) and the sixth the lowest at 6.9 per cent (648 Irish-born), averaging 17.2 per cent.<sup>48</sup> Bancroft lists the areas within San Francisco already dominated by ethnic groups in the 1850s – ‘Sydney Town’, a settlement of Australian ex-convicts, ‘Little Chile’, occupied by Hispano-Americans, Jackson Street’s predominantly French residents, Montgomery Street’s Germans, and Chinatown, but references no exclusively Irish areas.<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that there were no Irish areas, however; they just did not garner the levels of attention that their counterparts in London did, as discussed, despite comprising higher percentages of the total population. In fact, in London, the Irish population never exceeded 4.6 per cent of the city’s total population in the period 1841-1921, despite being numerically large, as demonstrated by Figures 8 and 9, and already by 1851, only St Giles in the Fields, St Olave’s Southwark and Whitechapel were comprised of more than ten per cent Irish residents.<sup>50</sup>

In the Interpretive Report on excavations carried out as part of upgrades to the West Approach to the San Francisco Bay Bridge, discussed in the introduction, several chapters discuss life in the three project area neighbourhoods – Tar Flat, the edges of Rincon Hill and the shore of Mission Bay. In this detailed work, archaeologist Mary Praetzellis identifies Tar Flat (in the Happy Valley area and Yerba Buena cove, where coal tar from the city’s gas works was dumped directly into the bay) as home to a number of long-term Irish residents from the latter half of the nineteenth century. An ironworks industry developed here from the late 1840s and Tar Flat became an acknowledged world leader of precious metals mining technology during the 1860s.

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<sup>48</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, pp. 46-47. See Figure 11.

<sup>49</sup> Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 6. 1848-1856, pp. 180-186.

<sup>50</sup> Lynn Hollen Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979), p. 58.

Although industry was dominant, a dense and diverse residential component developed; comprising Irish day labourers, the families of skilled craftsmen and shopkeepers, and those who catered to the workers' needs.<sup>51</sup> Baldwin Court is presented as an example and was home to many Irish, including William Thompson who lived at number 21 for thirty years, and the Murphy family from Belfast who arrived in San Francisco in 1860, via New York (where they had two of their six children), and lived at 11 Baldwin Court, also for thirty years.<sup>52</sup> This presents something of a contrast to Philadelphia, where Stuart Blumin estimates that on average, in the period before the Civil War, only one in four or five adult males remained in a given neighbourhood in the city for as long as ten years.<sup>53</sup> Praetzellis also notes that the properties in Tar Flat often housed large numbers and multiple nationalities: for example, William Cadigan, an Irish labourer, and his family shared a 730-square-foot house with a French family. Praetzellis concludes that Tar Flat consisted of mostly working-class Irish households, where residents tended to change occupations frequently and suffer from periods of unemployment, thus challenging the dominant historiography.<sup>54</sup>

Praetzellis also identifies a large number of Irish residents on the shore of Mission Bay – a neighbourhood of small working-class houses and industrial complexes which developed as the bay was filled in during the 1860s. By the 1880s this area was densely packed with a mix of skilled and semi-skilled households and workplaces. Here, Irish

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<sup>51</sup> Douglass, 'A Brief History of the South of Market', pp. 53-58.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Praetzellis, 'Life in the Neighbourhoods' in Praetzellis, *South of Market*, pp. 65-135.

<sup>53</sup> Stuart M. Blumin, 'Residential Mobility within the Nineteenth-Century City' in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (eds), *The Peoples of Philadelphia: History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 37-52.

<sup>54</sup> Praetzellis, 'Life in the Neighbourhoods', pp. 124-125.

people owned properties or lodged, frequently sharing with other families (of a range of nationalities) and taking in boarders. For example, the Moynihan family owned and lived in a duplex at 133 Perry Street from the mid-1860s to the 1880s and when Andrew Moynihan died c.1866, his wife Mary took in laundry and lodgers to support the family, usually housing over a dozen individuals, while another Irish family lived in the other half of their duplex. Occupations were wide-ranging, including washwomen, labourers, apprentices, barbers, blacksmiths, shipping clerks, and saloon-owners.<sup>55</sup> In Mission Bay, as in Tar Flat, the majority of heads of household were born in Ireland, but the occupations of the heads of households tended towards the professional and a greater number owned their properties than did in Tar Flat.<sup>56</sup>

By providing these detailed examples, the variation of the Irish experience is demonstrated, even within a small geographic area. There existed upward social mobility and the possession of material goods, particularly amongst those in Mission Bay, but also long-term unemployment and overcrowding in Tar Flat, and areas that were characterised by extremes of wealth and social standing – home to the rich, the comfortably middle-class, and the inordinately poor.<sup>57</sup> The city was by no means one of universal opportunity, and although the Irish were not disadvantaged above any other group<sup>58</sup> (as they perhaps were in London), they certainly did not all fit the popular historiographical image. This is further demonstrated by the fact that in the city's first decades, first-generation Irish constituted up to one-third of the inmates of the city's almshouse and one-quarter of those in the houses of correction, while Irish children

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<sup>55</sup> Praetzellis, 'Life in the Neighbourhoods', pp. 100-104.

<sup>56</sup> Praetzellis, 'Life in the Neighbourhoods', pp. 112-113.

<sup>57</sup> Annita Waghorn, 'On the Outside Looking In: Institutions and Community' in Praetzellis, 'Life in the Neighbourhoods', p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, p. 91.

made up half of the population of the city's orphanages.<sup>59</sup> Ingraham Kip's observation in 1853 that not everyone who came to San Francisco would make their fortune was as true for the Irish as for other groups:

Most of them have come as adventurers to that new home, and the result is yet to show whether any of their expectations are ever to be realised. Some are coming to retrieve broken fortunes, and, instead of reaping the golden harvest, how many will find a grave in the already overcrowded cemetery of San Francisco ... or else be glad, in a few months, to take passage home in some returning steamer.<sup>60</sup>

### Locating the Irish Language in San Francisco, 1850-c.1880

As has been demonstrated, San Francisco was culturally diverse and even within the Irish-born population diversity in class and regional backgrounds was to be found.<sup>61</sup> A result of this is the difficulty in locating Irish speakers: unlike London, where Irish migrants predominantly came from Ireland's western seaboard and were more likely to have Irish as their vernacular, the linguistic backgrounds of the Irish in San Francisco are obscured by their prior period of residence in the United States or Australasia. The United States census did not begin to ask about prior residency until 1940.<sup>62</sup> Material relating to the language from the period 1850-1880 is almost entirely

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<sup>59</sup> Timothy J. O'Keefe, 'Introduction' in Jordan and O'Keefe, *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area*, pp. 1-7.

<sup>60</sup> William Ingraham Kip, *The Early Days of My Episcopate* (New York, 1892), p. 71.

<sup>61</sup> Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, p. 96.

<sup>62</sup> David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana, Ill, 1990), p. 16.

absent and so the challenge is first finding evidence of Irish-speakers in the city, and then assessing the role it played in Irish migrant identity.

As with the previous two case studies, there is a notable difference in contemporary engagement with the language before and during the Gaelic Revival. Beforehand, engagement with, or even recognition of, the Irish language in San Francisco is scarce. Both historiography and contemporary material suggest that the Irish language simply did not reach the city. Instead, the Irish were viewed and treated as an English-speaking group from their arrival (in large numbers) from the late 1840s. The language does not feature in biographies or commentaries and is only occasionally alluded to in the press. Engagement with the Irish community tends to focus on their commercial and political successes, as discussed; portraying the public, outward image of these “enterprising emigrants”, and highlighting activities and entertainments in relation to nationalist and philanthropic organisations.<sup>63</sup> In the contemporary press, the infrequent references to the Irish language are restricted to two categories: discussions on the condition of Irish in Ireland, usually approached through an antiquarian lens, and sporadic anecdotal evidence of the language’s continued use elsewhere in the United States.

In discussing the decline of the language in Ireland, press coverage suggests that Irish was a redundant language, destined to disappear. Its value was seen to be antiquarian – a relic of the past. These articles were often, though not exclusively, reprints from Irish publications and so this perspective was directly influenced by that in Ireland, where the Irish language’s status had shifted towards being a subject to be collected and studied by scholars. The *Daily Alta California* in 1870 commented that:

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<sup>63</sup> *The Daily Examiner*, 6 July 1865.

It is the destiny of weaker languages and nationalities to be swallowed up by the stronger. The Welsh, Scotch, and Irish dialects of the Gaelic will soon die out, as many of the provincial dialects of England and France have already disappeared.<sup>64</sup>

The same publication stated in 1872 that “the old Irish language is dying out. Only one fourth of the Irish people can speak it now”,<sup>65</sup> while the *San Francisco Bulletin* stated in 1868 that in Ireland “the Irish language is gradually ceasing to be used”.<sup>66</sup> The *Monitor* reported in 1876 that, based on the 1870 Census of Ireland, “The lovers of the “ancient tongue” will regret to be told that those who speak it exclusively are fast dying out”.<sup>67</sup> Such attitudes are commonplace in the American and British press, as well as in Ireland. Irish was seen as a dying language and attention, or even recognition, was not given to those who did still speak it and, given the prevalence of bilingualism by this period, the experiences of those who may have been Irish-dominant have been obscured, and there was an assumption that anyone who migrated from Ireland already had a basic command of English and opted to use it. Contemporary commentators noted that the Irish shared the English language and common habits of thought with the other citizens of the state.<sup>68</sup>

Discussions on the condition of the language are relatively scarce, but stories of the continued use of Irish in San Francisco, or even the United States more broadly, are almost entirely absent from contemporary literature for the period between the Famine

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<sup>64</sup> *Daily Alta California*, 5 June 1870.

<sup>65</sup> *Daily Alta California*, 14 April 1872.

<sup>66</sup> *San Francisco Bulletin*, 22 August 1868. See Figure 3 for actual rates of Irish speaking in Ireland.

<sup>67</sup> *The Monitor*, 15 January 1876.

<sup>68</sup> Walsh, ‘The Irish in the New America’, p. 175.

and the Gaelic Revival. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, when reporting on the first Irish language class held in San Francisco in 1883, learned of a man who “could hardly speak or understand a word of English” when he first arrived in the city.<sup>69</sup> Although no further information on this individual is provided, meaning it cannot be established whether he was a recent migrant or had been resident in San Francisco for many years and had successfully retained the language, his presence is noteworthy in itself. Echoing a trend seen in both Ireland and London, as well as Pennsylvania, one of the areas in which the Irish language did raise its head above the parapet, though rarely, was in interactions with officialdom. The following example from New York was deemed of sufficient interest to the *San Francisco Bulletin*’s readership to be printed and was likely exaggerated for comedic effect. It recounted the appearance of a woman at the lower police court in New York City, who did not speak English and did not understand the interpreter’s attempts at German, French and Spanish.

The lingual accomplishments of the interpreter were now exhausted and he turned away in despair, when an Irishman present suddenly exclaimed, “Och, yer honor! It’s mesilf can spake with the leddy, sure”. Pat tried his hand, and succeeded to admiration. She spoke the unadulterated Irish language.<sup>70</sup>

In San Francisco itself, the *Bulletin* (1875) recounted the story of a Mary Hinchy, who appeared at the office of the Chief of Police to seek redress for an unspecified grievance.

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<sup>69</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 August 1883.

<sup>70</sup> *San Francisco Bulletin*, 23 July 1857.

She was labouring under a high state of excitement, and was unable to describe her troubles through the medium of the English language intelligibly. One of the officers present, an American from the South of Ireland, addressed the venerable visitor in the Irish language, and immediately her embarrassment was relieved and the floodgates of her woe were opened.

Hinchy came from Askeaton, Co. Limerick, circa 1865 and travelled to San Francisco with her daughter. She estimated that she was one hundred years old and was brought to the Old Lady's Home run by the Irish Sisters of Mercy.<sup>71</sup> A similar example comes from Oakland in 1879, when the *Bulletin* reports that "an Irish interpreter was called in the Police Court yesterday to interpret the sayings of an Irishman".<sup>72</sup> This latter example suggests at a degree of familiarity with the Irish language: there is no apparent confusion on the part of the court as to what language was being spoken and the brief report suggests that this situation was largely a matter of course. There also appears to have been a system in place to cater to such individuals, as there was in Ireland during the period, particularly as the report does not hint at any difficulty in acquiring an interpreter. The same element of familiarity was observed in the coal-mining regions of Pennsylvania, where two separate court cases in Scranton in 1898 required Irish interpreters: the first for a Michael McLane, whose son acted as his interpreter, and the second for a Mrs Malia, who had both an official interpreter and a testimony translator.<sup>73</sup> Although no further details in either Mary Hinchy's or the Oakland case are provided, and while these examples are themselves rare and likely reported on as

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<sup>71</sup> *San Francisco Bulletin*, 12 November 1875.

<sup>72</sup> *San Francisco Bulletin*, 28 August 1879.

<sup>73</sup> *Scranton Tribune*, 19 September 1898; 3 February 1898.

they were exceptional circumstances and appear in the context of human interest stories rather than commentaries on linguistic practices, they do reveal the fact that there were Irish migrants in California who continued to speak Irish and who did not have sufficient proficiency in English to take part in court proceedings. The Oakland case, in particular, suggests that, by the 1870s, there were some systems in place to cater to these people's needs, though no details could be located. These types of reports do not reveal much of these speakers' experiences, what they thought themselves and how they adjusted to life in a new city; however, some of these broader questions can be addressed using a case study by Daniel P. Walsh on his ancestors in San Francisco based on a series of interviews in 1970 and in 1998.<sup>74</sup>

Margaret Walsh ran a boarding house in San Francisco's Richmond District in the first half of the twentieth century, following her emigration aged seventeen to the United States from Tully, Co. Galway, in 1909, in search of better opportunities. This family provides a prime example of chain migration, particularly the localised chain migration from a specific location in Ireland to another specific one overseas which was crucial to language maintenance. Margaret's uncle, Martin Walsh, was already in San Francisco and paid for Margaret's ship and rail passage. Her older sister and their aunt also preceded her and met her upon arrival, while four of Margaret's brothers subsequently emigrated to San Francisco too, gaining employment through family members. Margaret worked in domestic service until her marriage to an American man, Joseph Beggs, in 1917 and the couple opened their boarding house soon

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<sup>74</sup> Information from interviews with Margaret Beggs and Patrick Walsh by James Walsh in 1970 and with C.T. Beggs (her son) by author (Daniel Walsh) in 1998. Daniel P. Walsh, 'Maggie's Boarding House: Irish-American Assimilation in San Francisco, 1910-1930' in Jordan and O'Keefe, *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area*, pp. 149-164.

afterwards in order to share their knowledge of American customs with Margaret's successively arriving relatives from Galway. All of Margaret's family had learned English in school but did not use it at home, meaning many of these arrivals were native Irish speakers, such as Margaret's brothers, Patrick and Michael, both of whom had spoken it in Tully for over twenty years and reportedly recorded their primary language upon arrival in San Francisco as 'Gaelic'. Though the study does not specify, this was likely recorded on the United States Census which in 1910 began recording the mother tongue of anyone born outside of the United States.<sup>75</sup>

Not only does this case-study reveal that native Irish speakers certainly travelled to San Francisco, even if only in small numbers, it provides a microcosmic example of immigrant movement and adjustment to a new environment. Part of the acculturation that Margaret facilitated involved discarding Irish as a principal language: although she grew up speaking both Irish and English, her time in the United States and her marriage to an American man caused a gradual reduction in her use of Irish until English became her primary language. When new boarders arrived to their house, circumstances such as procuring employment required them to speak English in the public sphere, and because Margaret's husband knew no Irish and because Margaret was out of practice, over time they came to converse in English within the home too.<sup>76</sup> This raises an important consideration – that of intermarriage. Linguist Robert W. Schrauf identifies marriage as one of the key structural factors accountable for patterns of language loss and retention in diasporic communities. At the individual level, the effect of marrying a person who does not speak one's mother tongue may shift the

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<sup>75</sup> Nicholas M. Wolf, *Irish Speakers & the Empire City*: <http://www.nyuirish.net/irishlanguagehistory/>

<sup>76</sup> Walsh, 'Maggie's Boarding House', p. 156.

expression of emotion and the vocabulary of domestic life to the second language, particularly when it is English, as it was generally the dominant language.<sup>77</sup> David M. Emmons, in his study of the Irish in Butte, Montana, between 1875 and 1925, affirms this theory, noting that intermarriage between ‘ethnics’ and natives is one of the most accurate indicators of immigrant assimilation, while marriage outside the ethnic and/or religious community was a visible sign of a breakdown of the structural integrity of the immigrant group.<sup>78</sup> In London, the isolation of the lower class Irish meant that levels of intermarriage were likely low, while it has been demonstrated how, for the Welsh in rural Pennsylvania, intermarriage restricted the possibility to raise a family in an entirely ‘Welsh’ environment. Marriage patterns amongst the Irish in San Francisco tended towards endogamy, meaning there were fewer marriages between Irish people and people of other migrant communities in San Francisco, even into the second generation.<sup>79</sup> This trend was not universal, however, and from the late nineteenth century at least 25 per cent of Irish-born women married outside the Irish community, and Margaret Walsh was one of these. Her boarding house allowed an easier transition from Ireland to America – providing friendly instruction in the ways of the new world and softening the transition from a rural to an urban community<sup>80</sup> – but also facilitated the gradual disuse of Irish as a primary language in both the public and private spheres, when originally it had continued to be spoken in the private, domestic domain.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert W. Schrauf, ‘Mother Tongue Maintenance among North American Ethnic Groups’, *Cross-Cultural Research*, 33: 2 (1999), pp. 175-192.

<sup>78</sup> Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, pp. 77-82.

<sup>79</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, pp. 79-81.

<sup>80</sup> Walsh, ‘Maggie’s Boarding House’, p. 161.

Although just one example centred on one family, the case of Maggie's boarding house reveals that Irish language was brought to San Francisco but the city did not provide a suitable environment in which the language could continue to be used, never mind transmitted. It can also be used to affirm Fishman's theory, where language contact situations caused one language to, over time, become the dominant language in both public and private settings, when originally each occupied separate domains and having their own functions.<sup>81</sup> The effect of language contact within the boarding house can be applied to other urban areas too, such as London and Philadelphia. Although we do not have the same direct evidence, it is plausible that language shift occurred in a similar manner in Irish communities beyond San Francisco.

Maggie's boarding house is a unique example based on family oral history but written evidence of Irish-speaking in San Francisco is elusive, particularly in the city's early decades (and even more so than the paucity on Philadelphia). In fact, there is an almost total absence of material from the 1850s to the 1880s, something which can be attributed to a combination of factors. Immigrants' backgrounds and their period of acculturation in the United States (or Australasia in the early years) were significant for the Irish in San Francisco and meant that the linguistic transition from Irish to English, demonstrated by Margaret Walsh, may already have occurred in another urban centre. The length of time an individual is away from their 'homeland' and the context in which they speak a language will affect their propensity to use that language; by the time these migrants completed the journey to San Francisco, if they had had Irish it is likely English had already become their primary language. The unique environment in

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<sup>81</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Clevedon, 1989), p. 181.

which Irish migrants found themselves in San Francisco also had a direct effect on the Irish language. The ability to participate has been discussed, while the impact of residential patterns on language maintenance is also of note; the more an ethnic group maintains a tight-knit, centralised pattern of settlement, the more likely it is that the mother tongue will be maintained, as co-residence in a language community simply increases the frequency of the opportunity to use and reinforce the mother tongue.<sup>82</sup> While this may have occurred in London, the fact that Irish settlement in San Francisco was relatively diffuse, as discussed, and that inter-marriage became more frequent, the likelihood of maintaining Irish was diminished.

The other crucial considerations are the lack of racism and the directing of anti-immigrant prejudice towards the Chinese population, as well as religious tolerance. While the Irish in London became the scapegoat for all contemporary social ills, something which served to further isolate this group, as discussed in Chapter Two, this role fell to the Chinese community in San Francisco. The ‘Chinese Question’ or ‘Chinese Problem’ featured frequently and prominently in contemporary newspapers, commentaries and biographies, particularly during the economic downturn of the 1870s when the completion of the transcontinental railroad brought an influx of workers which served to swell the labour pool and depress wages. San Francisco’s white workers placed the blame for this on the Chinese – a group who were a dependable labour force and willing to work at a low wage, and who became increasingly attractive to employers during the downturn.<sup>83</sup> San Francisco’s white labourers were seen to be “the first to experience the disastrous effects of this wide-

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<sup>82</sup> Schrauf, ‘Mother Tongue Maintenance’, pp. 179-188.

<sup>83</sup> Meissner, ‘Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco’, pp. 71-72.

spread introduction of Chinese labour”<sup>84</sup> and the Chinese population as a whole were mistrusted: “Truth never had anything to with a Chinaman and therefore none is to be got out of him”.<sup>85</sup>

The type of language used to describe the Chinese in San Francisco echoes that of the Irish in London. In the early 1860s, William Brewer describes the Chinese community as having “all the faults and vices of a heathen people”,<sup>86</sup> while Isabelle Saxon, in her memoirs of time spent in the city in the 1860s, describes their living conditions, comments which resemble the many contemporary insights into the conditions in which the Irish lived in London. Saxon states “the common class of Chinaman herd together in the dirty back alleys of the city, where the atmosphere reeks with impurity” and quotes an unnamed newspaper as describing Chinese-dominated areas as places:

Where may be seen at a single glance a sample of everything that was ever comprehended under the name of filth and squalor, stands a dingy, rickety row of low-frame tenements, begrimed with dirt and smoke, and forming a background in perfect harmony with the miscellaneous offal and garbage which the community of Chinese scavengers who inhabit the place have accumulated.<sup>87</sup>

These statements bear striking resemblances to Thomas Beames and Edward Walford’s descriptions of St Giles in London discussed in Chapter Two.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *The Monitor*, 1 August 1878.

<sup>85</sup> *The Examiner*, 8 March 1879.

<sup>86</sup> William H. Brewer, *Up and Down in California in 1860-1864*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Edited by Francis P. Farquhar (Berkeley, CA and London, 2003), pp. 251-252.

<sup>87</sup> Isabelle Saxon, *Five Years within the Golden Gate* (London, 1868), pp. 40-41.

<sup>88</sup> See pp. 95-96.

Not only did the Irish in San Francisco avoid the hostilities which their counterparts in London received, at the expense of the Chinese, they also were perpetrators of anti-Chinese sentiment, organising rallies, conventions, marches, boycotts and violence.<sup>89</sup> This culminated in the formation of the Workingmen's Party of California in 1877 by Dennis Kearney, a Cork native, labour leader and exclusionist, the slogan of whose party was "The Chinese Must Go".<sup>90</sup> Ultimately, the increase in competition between Chinese and Irish and other white labourers for steady, unskilled work resulted in racial antagonism and Irish leaders, such as Kearney, lobbied for legislation to discourage, restrict, or stop the flow of Chinese labourers and opportunities for them. The Chinese were legally ineligible for naturalisation from 1854 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited the immigration of Chinese labourers for ten years (and was then extended), meaning Chinese immigrants in San Francisco were actively denied assimilation with and by the city's white population, and yet their confinement to Chinatown led to their criticism for fostering degeneracy and rejecting assimilation.<sup>91</sup> The negative effect of hostilities towards the Irish in London in terms of ease of adjustment and coexisting has been demonstrated and, in San Francisco, this directing of hostilities away from the Irish placed them in the same category as migrants from Great Britain or America, rather than being ostracised, allowing them to become mainstream players in their new society.<sup>92</sup> The cultural gulf between the Chinese and the white populations in terms of appearance, language, and religion was so great that it diminished the differences between the natives of Cork and Boston or Ireland and

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<sup>89</sup> Meissner, 'Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco', p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> Rolle and Verge, *California*, p. 203.

<sup>91</sup> Meissner, 'Irish and Chinese Labour in San Francisco', pp. 73-76.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds*, pp. 101-102.

England.<sup>93</sup> The same observation was made for the Irish in Philadelphia, where the presence of a large African-American population directed antagonisms away from the Irish population, though the history of racism and segregation in the United States makes this a more complex subject. While the Irish were perpetrators of violence towards this community, the level of antagonism carried out by the Irish in San Francisco, however, appears to have been more sustained and vitriolic than in Philadelphia, as does the city's anti-Chinese rhetoric as a whole. In the words of philanthropist Charles Loring Brace (1869), it is man's instinct to attack or oppress those who are weaker and in London it was the Irish who suffered while in San Francisco it was the Chinese who became "the luckless object of this brutal instinct".<sup>94</sup>

Language was another element to the distinction between the Irish and the Chinese: the ability of Irish migrants to speak English upon arrival, or acquire it relatively quickly, was seemingly to their advantage – unlike the Chinese, where "the difficulty of mastering the English language forced the Chinese to herd together".<sup>95</sup> The Irish could easily align themselves with the white working class. For the Irish, the directing of prejudice towards another group resulted in less of a desire or need to unite in the face of hostility and remain isolated, thus making the continuation of home traditions more challenging. This absence of unity in the face of hostility was compounded by the presence of a far greater degree of religious tolerance than either on the Atlantic coast or in Great Britain. The prior presence of Roman Catholicism and the diversity of faiths in San Francisco from the mid-century ensured that there was less fertile

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<sup>93</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 181.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Loring Brace, *The New West: or, California in 1867-68* (New York, 1869), p. 209.

<sup>95</sup> Frank Roney, *Frank Roney, Irish Rebel and California Labour Leader: An Autobiography*. Edited by Ira B. Cross (Berkeley, 1931), p. 267.

ground for the nativism on religious grounds with which Irish immigrants were confronted elsewhere. Life in the west was distinguished by a lack of religious enmity and the vitality of the Catholic Church: the *Monitor* noted that Irish people “need not fear that they will have to encounter prejudices against their race or religion, that are such drawbacks to their settlement in many parts of the Eastern states”,<sup>96</sup> while histories of the city chart the rapid growth of the Catholic Church as a result of Irish immigration; from its beginnings of just two members of clergy in 1850 to two hundred in 1890.<sup>97</sup> New parishes were created to cater for these rising numbers: with the exception of Mission Dolores (which was inherited from Mexico), the earliest Catholic Churches began with the foundation of St Francis of Assisi on Vallejo in 1849, St Patrick’s on Market Street in 1851, and St Mary’s Cathedral at California and Dupont in 1853.<sup>98</sup> Between 1778 and 1928 San Francisco erected 48 parishes, 37 of which were “territorial parishes” dominated by Irish Catholics.<sup>99</sup> This need to construct new institutions not only gave the San Francisco Irish the opportunity to be among the first patrons of the new Catholic Church, which many were, it also helped give them their hegemony within it.<sup>100</sup> Their important role in the Church was frequently noted by contemporaries: Maguire stated that “whatever religious indifferentism there may be

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<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Patrick J. Dowling, *California: The Irish Dream* (San Francisco, 1988), n.p.

<sup>97</sup> Rev. William Gleeson, *History of the Catholic Church in California*. Vol. 1 (San Francisco, 1872), p. 203. Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 7. 1860-1890, p. 730. In 1850-51 there were fifteen Catholic priests in California and 24 churches – the residue of the Franciscan missions. In 1875 there were three bishops, 93 churches, sixteen chapels, 121 priests, thirteen convents and academies, four colleges, seven orphanages, five hospitals, and four asylums. See Bancroft, *History of California*. Vol. 7. 1860-1890, pp. 726-727. The number of seats in Roman Catholic Churches grew rapidly from 6,050 in 1860 to 21,000 in 1870. See Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 88.

<sup>99</sup> These parishes served mixed communities of various ethnic groups so exercise must be cautioned when ascribing Irish domination to them, however, the parishes of St Peter’s, St Patrick’s, St Rose’s, St Brendan’s, St Joseph’s, St Paul’s and St John’s were predominantly Irish. See Steven M. Avella, ‘Irish Catholic Identity and California Public Life: Peter Yorke versus C. K. McClatchy, 1890-1916’ in Jordan and O’Keefe, *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area*, pp. 28-50.

<sup>100</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 89.

in other parts of America, there is none in San Francisco among its Irish Catholic population”, while Quigley claimed that without the Irish “the churches would not be filled” in the city.<sup>101</sup> Unlike London and Philadelphia, where evidence for the continued use of Irish within certain aspects of religious practice was located, no such evidence was located in San Francisco and the Catholic Church there appears to have been very much an English-speaking one.

The result of religious tolerance was that the predominantly Catholic Irish immigrants were not discriminated against on the grounds of religion and the Roman Catholic Church was less besieged in this environment. Its role was more than to simply support an oppressed laity, often impoverished; meaning that it was more open and accommodating, and was able to grow, provide an important institutional affiliation for the state’s Irish Catholics, and stimulate fraternal organisations that eased the path of immigrant adjustment.<sup>102</sup> It became the centre of much social and cultural life for Irish migrants in the city, as well as providing important social services.<sup>103</sup> This paints a very different picture of the Catholic Church than that in London, in particular, where both the religion and its followers were deeply mistrusted. The intimate relationship between the act of religious ritual and a mother tongue, detailed in Chapter Two, is also of note; religious practice from the homeland can be closely associated with the mother tongue while the celebration of religious ritual re-enacts again and again the context in which the language is associated. In Schrauf’s view, the maintenance of religious beliefs and rituals and maintenance of the mother tongue may be

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<sup>101</sup> John Francis Maguire M. P., *The Irish in America* (London, 1868), p. 277; Quigley, *The Irish Race in California*, p. 269.

<sup>102</sup> Campbell, *Ireland’s New Worlds*, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> For example, the orphan asylum, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, and the hospital. See Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 92.

interdependent.<sup>104</sup> If, in San Francisco, these religious rituals happened exclusively through the medium of English then the relationship was no longer supported, contributing to the decline of that language.

## Conclusion

San Francisco stands out in the study of the Irish diasporic experience, particularly in the United States, for a number of reasons – namely the city’s power structures, the prevalence of transmigration, and a lack of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic hostility – all of which had a direct impact on the Irish migrant experience there, and especially the maintenance and transmission of the Irish language. As this chapter has illustrated, the linguistic backgrounds of Irish migrants in San Francisco are difficult to uncover owing to their likelihood of having had a prior of residence in the United States before their arrival in San Francisco. The period before the Gaelic Revival yields little evidence for the continued use of Irish, with both contemporary and historiographical material suggesting that the language did not reach the city, unlike in London, where Irish remained a primary cultural resource for many migrants. It was only when it came to form a crucial element of a new Irish American cultural identity at the beginning of the twentieth century that the Irish language achieved any visibility in the city, to be discussed in the next chapter. However, evidence from court cases does reveal that a small number of Irish speakers were present in San Francisco, while the example of Margaret Walsh’s boarding house can be used as a basis to answer questions about Irish speakers’ experiences and adjustment to the city. Her boarding house facilitated the gradual disuse of Irish as a primary language in first the public and then the private

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<sup>104</sup> Schrauf, ‘Mother Tongue Maintenance’, pp. 179-188.

sphere. Fishman's theory that language contact situations cause one language to, over time, become the dominant language in both public and private settings, when originally each occupied separate domains and having their own functions, can be seen at play within the boarding house; contact with English-speakers within the home and in the workplace, as well as marriage, meant that although the Irish language reached the west coast, it very quickly slipped beneath the surface of society and was gradually replaced by English. The strong likelihood of the Irish in San Francisco being transmigrants means it is plausible that the linguistic transition, demonstrated by Margaret Walsh's boarding house, had already occurred in another urban centre. By the time a once Irish-speaking migrant arrived in San Francisco, they had already achieved proficiency in English, at least to a sufficient degree to cope. Similarly, in the later nineteenth century, widespread bilingualism in Ireland makes it likely that the majority of migrants had some English prior to their emigration, and could opt to use it upon their arrival in their chosen destination. The reasons for every individual's decision to choose English cannot be established, of course, but it is likely that it was usually for practical and economic reasons, rather than any shame or prejudice regarding the language as expressions of negative attitudes towards Irish on the part of San Franciscan society were not located in this research.

In addition, the environment met by Irish migrants in San Francisco was not favourable for language maintenance. Chapter Two demonstrated how the residential patterns of the Irish in London led to cultural security and conditions suitable for language preservation – through the reduction of external influences and the presence of enclosed systems, a limited geographical range, and a high density of Irish people from similar backgrounds, often the same province. Anti-Irish sentiment exacerbated this

tendency to live in enclaves and did not encourage integration, and the resultant physical and psychological separation of the Irish in London played an important role in the continuation of home traditions and customs. In San Francisco, the Chinese community fulfilled this role while the Irish were residentially dispersed and did not live with, marry, or work exclusively with fellow Irish natives, resulting in a far less isolationist environment than other urban centres in Britain and the United States; the difficulty of maintaining the Irish language in this type of environment is once again demonstrated by Margaret Walsh's boarding house.

The city's fluid and open society allowed the Irish access to equal competition and opportunity from the outset and the establishment of a tradition of participation, while the presence of the Chinese community directed any racial antagonism away from the Irish. San Francisco's Irish were also experienced migrants, many of whom had adapted to the social, economic and psychological difficulties associated with emigration, and could take advantage of the city's open environment. All of this served to allow the Irish to avoid the poverty and segregation experienced by their counterparts in London and, in Philadelphia's case, the difficulty in entering the city's long-established power structures and Protestant ethos. It also reduced the tendency for the Irish to band together in the face of adversity and create a distinct Irish identity, though this changed from the 1880s with the emergence of the Gaelic Revival, when a concerted effort to teach the Irish language and to promote all aspects of Irish culture materialised and flourished. The Irish language in San Francisco in the period 1850-1880 is elusive but the city provides an important comparison to the previous two case studies, demonstrating the centrality of migrant origins, regional variations, and contemporary attitudes in the maintenance and transmission of a minority language.

Following a similar trajectory to London and Philadelphia, the language became considerably more visible from the 1880s onwards, largely owing to the revivalist and political activities of one Fr Peter C. Yorke. The final chapter will explore the revival movement in each case study, with focus on its outcome and effects.

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Irish-born % of ward population</b>	<b>No. of Irish-born in ward</b>
1	22.9	2,467
2	11.3	1,335
3	10	297
4	7.2	1,191
5	14.3	402
6	6.9	648
7	27.8	2,891
8	14.4	2,381
9	21.4	2,245
10	22.4	5,011
11	20.2	4,594
12	18	2,272
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>25,735</b>

*Figure 11: Irish-born residential patterns in San Francisco by ward, 1870<sup>105</sup>*

<sup>105</sup> Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 47.

## Chapter Five: The Gaelic Revival in the Diaspora, c.1880-1920

As discussed in the first chapter, the Irish language in nineteenth century Ireland had come to be associated by many with poverty and backwardness, a result of the combination of centuries of language contact with English and a lack of institutional support, while English had come to be seen as a requirement of social and economic advancement. The examples provided throughout this thesis have demonstrated not only the low status of Irish and the level of indifference, shame and even hostility surrounding it, but also the widespread demand for English in Ireland and abroad. The shift in attitudes initiated by the Gaelic Revival from the 1880s onwards was notable and the Irish language became much more visible in both Ireland and the diaspora from this period, eventually coming to the forefront as a key aspect to Ireland's independence movement in the twentieth century. Nationalists' adoption of Irish as a symbol of national identity marked an important turning point in the history of the language: it created a cultural realm very different to that of the native speakers.<sup>1</sup> This shift was so great that the two periods, 1850-c.1880 and 1880-1920, have been treated separately throughout this thesis, owing to their differences in attitudes towards the language, outlooks and aims, speakers and participants, as well as source material.

Although the precise genesis of the revival movement in Ireland is difficult to pinpoint – Ruairí Ó hUiginn points to the year 1880, when the Gaelic Union was established, whereas Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin points to 1892, when Douglas Hyde gave his lecture – from the early 1880s onwards the Irish language entered a new phase and

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<sup>1</sup> Gillian Ní Ghabhann, 'The Gaelic Revival in the US in the Nineteenth Century', *Chronicon*, 2: 6 (1998), pp. 1-34.

began to transition from being simply a vernacular and a mode of communication, to being identified as a key element in the emerging nationalist ethos.<sup>2</sup> The change in attitudes is apparent among the diaspora too and the rise of cultural nationalism in British and American cities generally followed a similar course to that in Ireland, arising from many of the same motivations and having many similar results, though naturally also experiencing regional variations and particular motivations. In London, the beginning of the revival is dated by historians John Hutchinson and Alan O'Day to the establishment of the Southwark Irish Literary Club in 1883, while in Philadelphia and San Francisco it was the establishment of Philo-Celtic Societies in 1881 and 1884, respectively. London's revival movement was more closely aligned and involved with that in Ireland, largely owing to proximity, though it was influenced by local circumstances, while the movements in Philadelphia and San Francisco became more focused on their own aims and objectives, while remaining committed to the overarching cause of maintaining and developing native Irish culture. It will be demonstrated here how the various movements differed in terms of origins, development and outcomes, but also how the revival similarly affected the Irish language in each case study, beginning with London.

## London

The onset of cultural nationalism changed the contemporary climate in London and the city became an important centre for the revival movement: cultivating Irish music and song and establishing Irish literary clubs, GAA clubs, and Gaelic League branches. It

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<sup>2</sup> Ruairí Ó hUiginn, 'The Irish language' in Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín and Seán Ó Cearnaigh (eds), *A New View of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 1-10; Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin, *Language from Below: The Irish Language, Ideology and Power in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland* (Oxford, 2006), p. 131.

was not simply an imitation of the movement in Ireland, however: while relinguification was the aim in Ireland, in Great Britain it was more about constructing and establishing an Irish identity. In London specifically, anti-Irish sentiment and disillusionment with the Home Rule organisation led to an emphasis on questions of communal identity in the city and whether or not the Irish wanted to accept integration into the dominant metropolitan culture.<sup>3</sup> There was no major institution that acted as a focus for Irish identity prior to the establishment of the Gaelic League, with the exception of a number of small ephemeral institutions, and instead associations were devoted to the political aspirations and interests of Ireland, namely the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain, the Irish National League of Great Britain (1882) and the United Irish League of Great Britain (1900), while the Catholic Church and schools made efforts to incorporate the Irish into the host community, rather than encourage Irish distinctiveness.<sup>4</sup>

The Southwark Irish Literary Club was established in 1883 by Francis Fahy, an Irish-born civil servant, becoming the meeting place of Irish intellectuals such as W. B. Yeats, D. P. Moran, and William Ryan, and providing both the platform and the personnel for later revivalist activities, though making relatively little wider impact on London Irish life at the time. It became the Irish Literary Society in 1891, under the direction of Yeats, when it became a busy centre, organising lectures, concerts and

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<sup>3</sup> John Hutchinson and Alan O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London, 1900-22: limits of ethnic identity' in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 254-276.

<sup>4</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 255. The Irish National League of Great Britain was founded by Charles Stewart Parnell and was the British wing of the constitutional nationalist political party in Ireland that campaigned for Irish Home Rule and organised a whole host of social activities for the Irish. By the 1880s there were 630 branches of the Irish National League in Britain. See Stephen Moore and Paul Darby, 'Gaelic Games, Irish Nationalist Politics and the Irish Diaspora in London, 1895-1915', *Sport in History*, 31: 3 (2011), pp. 257-282.

sponsoring theatrical productions before and after the creation of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the Irish language, it appears that the only effort to preserve or teach the language prior to the establishment of the Gaelic League came in the form of Irish classes run by the poet Tomás Ó Flannghaile from 1883 in the Southwark Club.<sup>6</sup> Considering London's large Irish population and the city's cultural, economic and political importance, it is not surprising that it eventually became a centre for the revival – as a recruiting ground and for financial support and a sympathetic audience.<sup>7</sup> It had relatively slow beginnings though; the predominantly working class Irish population were typically reluctant to join societies at all but if they did, they were more likely to join political leagues and associations than revivalist ones, particularly as organisations like the Ancient Order of Hibernians offered more concrete, material benefits to the working class.<sup>8</sup> However, this began to change after the 1870s, when the emigration of the middle class increased, as discussed, meaning there was a growing educated class of Irish migrants now present in London who were perhaps more receptive to revivalist sentiments and activities. This Irish-born Catholic intelligentsia comprised civil servants, teachers, postal officials and teachers who had migrated to London partly owing to limited career prospects at home and their concentration in London offered a new opportunity for cultural revivalism.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', pp. 262-263. Additionally, the GAA was established in 1895 and had ten clubs affiliated to the London County Board by August 1897. Moore and Darby, 'Gaelic Games, Irish Nationalist Politics and the Irish Diaspora in London', p. 268.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ó Flannghaile, Tomás (T. J. Flannery)' in Robert Welch (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland VI, Ireland Under the Union II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 653-723. Political leagues and associations, such as the National Brotherhood of St Patrick founded in London in 1863, built politicised national sentiment in the city. See Moore and Darby, 'Gaelic Games, Irish Nationalist Politics and the Irish Diaspora in London', p. 261; Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 271.

<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', pp. 257, 264.

As was the case in Ireland, the hub of the revival was the Gaelic League, established in 1896, three years after its inception in Ireland, with Francis Fahy, Art Ó Briain, D. P. Moran, Pádraig Ó Conaire and William Ryan being notable members.<sup>10</sup> The focal point of League activities in London was learning the Irish language and weekly language classes for advanced, intermediate and beginner's levels, as well as for children, were established throughout the city.<sup>11</sup> Teachers of these classes included Pádraig Ó Conaire, one of the most distinguished and prolific of the writers of the early revival, who lived in London from 1900 to 1915, and Fionán Mac Coluim, an Irish-born clerical worker in London who was actively involved in many aspects of both cultural and political nationalism, becoming secretary of the London Gaelic League and collecting and publishing extensively on Irish folklore and music.<sup>12</sup> The League also established a monthly journal, *Inis Fáil*, in 1904 and held an annual industrial exhibition of Irish manufactures (*Aonach*) and religious celebrations in Irish on St Patrick's Day, initiated and carried out by Father Moloney of Bermondsey in 1901. Related societies included those for folk singing, pipe music, dancing, and debating, while other activities included seasonal festivals, sporting meetings, and Gaeltacht outings.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Darragh Gannon, 'Celticism in Exile: the London Gaelic League, 1917-1921', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 30 (2010), pp. 82-101. Despite the dominance of male names, the revival was not a male-only affair and, in fact, the League was the first organisation to admit women on an equal footing to men. One such woman is Winifred M. Patton, an Irish writer and nationalist, born in 1876 in Derry and resident in London from 1893 where she worked as a clerk at the Post Office Savings Bank, and who became joint vice-president of the Forest Gate Gaelic League branch in November 1897. See Tony Murray, 'Winifred M. Patton and the Irish Revival in London', *Studies Review*, 22: 1 (2014), pp. 22-33.

<sup>11</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day list Fulham, Kensington, Islington, Tower Hill, Wandsworth, Clapham, Hampstead, Vauxhall and Camberwell. 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> Lesa Ní Mhungaile, 'Ó Conaire, Pádraic' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009); Seán Ó Súilleabháin, 'Fionán Mac Coluim (1875-1966)', *Béaloideas*, 33 (1965), pp. 181-183; Art Ó Briain, 'Some Notes on the History of the Gaelic League of London', *Capuchin Annual* (1944), pp. 116-126.

<sup>13</sup> Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 265, pp. 269-270.

The London Gaelic League was one of the most successful branches in Great Britain and came to be an important influence on the revival development as a whole; London served as a place where Irish political and cultural identities were invigorated amongst the migrant community and then fed back into events in Ireland, through proximity and regular interaction between London and Dublin, particularly on the part of Arthur Griffith and W. B. Yeats.<sup>14</sup> This allowed the movement in London to remain involved with that in Ireland, sharing key players, something which was less the case in Philadelphia or San Francisco. In addition, the London branch was a central, organising force and sent organisers to existing branches in other British cities in order to co-ordinate efforts, and published a short pamphlet advocating the establishment of more League branches in Britain, with directions on how to do so.<sup>15</sup> It reached its peak between 1900 and 1908: the 1902-03 report claimed that it had 1,500 members and was running fifty language classes per week in fourteen locations in the city, while in 1906, membership was three thousand.<sup>16</sup> Art Ó Briain, in his brief history of the London branch (1944), recalls that the high demand for language classes caused their relocation to larger premises on several occasions in the early years.<sup>17</sup> As was the case in Ireland, however, the actual numbers of people attending classes on a regular basis is difficult to establish, as well as who exactly they were, and it is reasonable to conclude that not all members were interested in learning the Irish language and instead enjoyed the social aspect of League activities, including music and dance. When the prospect of Home Rule increased after 1909, attention shifted to more political

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<sup>14</sup> Murray, 'Winifred M. Patton and the Irish Revival in London', p. 22; Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 261.

<sup>15</sup> Gannon, 'Celticism in Exile', p. 83.

<sup>16</sup> Murray, 'Winifred M. Patton and the Irish Revival in London', p. 25. For 1906 statistic: Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London', p. 265.

<sup>17</sup> Ó Briain, 'The History of the Gaelic League of London', pp. 116-126.

concerns and by 1917, League membership had fallen to four hundred. It increased again to 1,100 in 1920, however, a result of the development of the Irish republican movement and the League's more obvious affiliation with it.<sup>18</sup> These numbers as a proportion of the total Irish population of the city demonstrate the relatively small pool of individuals who were actually involved in the revival: in 1906, when membership reached its peak at three thousand, there were an estimated 375,000 Irish in the city – meaning membership was less than 1 per cent of the Irish population, which itself was only 1.33 per cent of the city's total population in 1901 and 1.14 per cent in 1911.<sup>19</sup> It had a limited effect – because the driving force behind the revival in London was the young Catholic intelligentsia, the movement appealed mainly to those who also fit this description, and its organisers and participants were typically young men and women who had recently migrated from Ireland to take up positions in the civil service and schools. Its aim to “promote a true national feeling among all classes of Irishmen independent of political and religious differences” was worthy in theory but not necessarily in practice.<sup>20</sup> The League certainly contributed to intellectual, cultural and linguistic advancements while also fulfilling a socio-cultural function, but it had relatively few attractions for the working-class Irish community and their realities and needs.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gannon, ‘Celticism in Exile’, p. 90. The League's association with the nationalist movement is further illustrated by the fact that it shared an address at 55 Chancery Lane, London – Fenian Headquarters – with, amongst others, the Young Ireland Society (established in 1882), the Parnellite Leadership Committee (1891), the Parnellite Irish National League of Great Britain (1891), the GAA, the Irish National Club (1899), Cumann na nGaedheal (1903), and Sinn Féin (1905). See Fitzpatrick, ‘The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921’, p. 677.

<sup>19</sup> For 1906 membership see Hutchinson and O'Day, ‘The Gaelic Revival in London’, p. 265; for the population of London see Fitzpatrick, ‘The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921’, p. 692.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 19 December 1904.

<sup>21</sup> Gannon, ‘Celticism in Exile’, p. 83; John Hutchinson, ‘Diaspora Dilemmas and Shifting Allegiances: The Irish in London between Nationalism, Catholicism and Labourism’ (1900-22) *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10: 1 (2010), pp. 107-125.

What the League did do, however, was bring an air of respectability to the Irish community more generally and, significantly for this study, it raised the profile of the Irish language and resulted in its increased visibility, particularly in the press – which is in stark contrast to the period 1850-c.1880. From the early 1880s onwards there feature regular reports of revivalist activities in London, often highlighting their successes and popularity. In 1884, the *South London Press* reported on a series of lectures at the Southwark Irish Literary Society on the Irish language and its philology, while an 1885 report on the same Society’s annual meeting stated that it was “in a prosperous condition” and was assisting the Gaelic Union in Ireland in its efforts of upholding the Irish language and literature.<sup>22</sup> The formation of the Gaelic League and the structure and organisation which it heralded resulted in the further increased visibility of such activities: its second annual *aonach* (fair), held in 1904, where “one heard of Irish language freely used by those present” was deemed “already a great success” by the *Times*;<sup>23</sup> Douglas Hyde delivered an address on the Irish language movement to “a largely attended public meeting” in Hammersmith, 1905, organised by the Gaelic League of London;<sup>24</sup> special Irish-language Catholic Church services were held on St Patrick’s Day;<sup>25</sup> while celebrations of Irish culture (including music, dancing and sport as well as language) also became more widespread.<sup>26</sup> The Gaelic

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<sup>22</sup> The 1884 lectures were delivered by Dr Norman Hoare of St Bartholemew’s Hospital, Rev Father Feeney of the Italian Church, Mr Peter O’Leary, and Mr Flannery of the Gaelic Union. *South London Press*, 28 June 1884; *South London Press*, 10 January 1885.

<sup>23</sup> *The Times*, 19 December 1904.

<sup>24</sup> *West London Observer*, 24 March 1905.

<sup>25</sup> In Dockhead, Bermondsey, in 1904; the fourth time this happened. *The Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 16 March 1904, 17 March 1904. These services were initiated and conducted by Father Moloney. Hutchinson and O’Day, ‘The Gaelic Revival in London’, p. 268.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the Bealtaine Festival of Irish Music was held in Queen’s Hall in 1901 (the second largest theatre in London), where every seat was reportedly filled. See Ó Briain, ‘The History of the Gaelic League of London’, p. 122. In 1909 a gathering was held in the grounds of the Franciscan monastery which “served the purpose of providing a venue for the members of the Irish-speaking classes in the Peckham locality and their fellow countrymen from different centres where the Gaelic tongue is

League's campaign to have Irish included in the school curriculum in Ireland was the subject of lengthy and robust debate in the contemporary press, with the *Times*, in particular, featuring a number of letters to the editor on the subject and responses from the early 1900s onwards. Despite this debate being centred on a campaign in Ireland, its prominence in British publications suggests that the topic was of interest to readers outside of Ireland and illustrates contemporary views on the language and its revival, with both support for and opposition to the movement being voiced. To some, Irish was still an "artificial cultivation"<sup>27</sup> and "practically a dead language" which was only spoken by "the most backward of the Irish nation".<sup>28</sup> Despite some continuing negative perceptions such as this, however, press coverage clearly demonstrates a change in attitudes towards the Irish language, through both the volume and the content of coverage. Evidence of the Irish language prior to the 1880s is elusive, as discussed in Chapter Two, largely owing to its being obscured by the prevalence of bilingualism, its transition from the public sphere to the private, and its oral nature. The sheer number of stories, articles and debates concerning the Irish language within the press from the 1880s onwards was unprecedented, but became almost exclusively revival-focused.

Like the revival in Ireland, which ultimately failed to win over the Irish-speaking population, the people who spoke Irish as a vernacular in London as revealed through the commentaries and reminiscences of individuals like Henry Mayhew, Thomas Beames, William Todd, Rev Edward Price and Rev Francis Kirk do not feature in this later press coverage. This can be attributed to the nature of the revival movement: it

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spoken," in addition to featuring Irish sports, music and dancing. *South London Press*, 3 September 1909.

<sup>27</sup> *The Times*, 4 October 1882.

<sup>28</sup> *The Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 4 May 1911.

was top-down and attracted a predominantly middle-class intelligentsia, meaning London's revival activity was centred on a comparatively small number of people, several of whom have been mentioned, whose activities were disproportionately visible.<sup>29</sup> This middle-class movement comprised a very different group to the traditional language community in London discussed in Chapter Two, whose use of Irish often only made it onto the historical record by chance. There was little continuity or connection in terms of language use between the two groups, however, the stark contrast between the two periods is noteworthy in itself.

## The United States

A similar observation can be made for the revival in the United States: while evidence of language use prior to the 1880s is scarce, as detailed in Chapters Three and Four, it becomes abundant from this period onwards and the language ultimately became a public cultural symbol. Although there were parallels, the movement in America differed from that in Ireland in several respects and, in fact, predated it. The *Irish American* (New York) published the occasional Irish column from 1857 and created a Gaelic Department in 1869, while the *American Celt* (St. Louis), *The Citizen* (Chicago) and the *Irish Echo* (Boston) also ran articles in Irish from the 1860s.<sup>30</sup> The 'movement' began in earnest in the 1870s, however, with the foundation of the first Philo-Celtic Society of America in Boston in April 1873, with a further 56 clubs formed between

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<sup>29</sup> Hutchinson, 'Diaspora Dilemmas and Shifting Allegiances', p. 111.

<sup>30</sup> Prionsias Mac Aonghusa, 'An Ghaeilge i Meiriceá' in Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin (ed.), *Go Meiriceá Siar: Na Gaeil agus Meiriceá: Cnuasach Aistí* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 13-30; Ní Ghabhann (1998), pp. 1-34.

1874 and 1886 (though remaining independent of one another).<sup>31</sup> By 1884 the *Irish World* claimed that there were over fifty ‘Irish’ schools or schools devoted to the Irish tongue, while the Gaelic League of America was founded in New York in November 1898.<sup>32</sup> As in Ireland and London, the revival was led by a number of activists, one of these being Michael Logan, a teacher and real-estate agent from Co. Galway described by the *Irish World* as “the pioneer of the Gaelic Language Movement in America”.<sup>33</sup> He founded an Irish language class in Our Lady of Victoria School in Brooklyn in 1872 and the Philo-Celtic Society of Brooklyn in 1874, and published *An Gaodhal* (*The Gael*) in 1881, a bilingual monthly journal “devoted to the preservation and cultivation of the Irish language and autonomy of the Irish nation”, with an emphasis on providing Irish language reading material.<sup>34</sup> It was centrally important to the revival in America, giving writers a chance to publish in Irish and acting as a unifying organ for activists nationwide, and it is from this journal that we get a sense of what the language movement in America was truly about.

The aims and objectives of the language movement in the United States had a broader and more encompassing focus than just language preservation. The language came to play a vital role in the Irish quest for integration, identity and respectability in the United States, where the Irish in many areas were still on a somewhat tentative footing

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<sup>31</sup> The New York Philo-Celtic Society and the New York Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language were established in 1878. Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin, *Mícheál Ó Lócháin agus An Gaodhal* (Dublin, 1990), p. 65

<sup>32</sup> These schools were not necessarily permanent institutions and membership is difficult to estimate as only new members were recorded, not total numbers. See Úna Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America, 1870–1915: The Gaelic Revival* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 36-37. For the Gaelic League: Mac Aonghusa, ‘An Ghaeilge i Meiriceá’, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Uí Fhlannagáin, *Mícheál Ó Lócháin agus An Gaodhal*, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 33. Other Irish schools also existed: e.g. one opened in Newark in 1890 and one in Providence in 1894. Mac Aonghusa, ‘An Ghaeilge i Meiriceá’, p. 24; Uí Fhlannagáin, *Mícheál Ó Lócháin agus An Gaodhal*, p. 22.

as Catholic immigrants in a Protestant land. Logan, in *An Gaodhal*, frequently reiterated the sentiment that knowledge of the Irish language would raise the status of the Irish in their own eyes and therefore in the eyes of others, as well as the belief that a free and independent Ireland would raise the morale and status of the American Irish.<sup>35</sup> The revival in America saw the Irish language as being crucial to maintaining the integrity of Irish identity and national unity and, therefore, cannot be divorced from the wider nationalist movement.<sup>36</sup> The movement's main interests were local, centred on America and the elevation of Irish social standing there, though at the same time supporting the movement in Ireland. In later years, the Gaelic League of America established more formal links with the League in Ireland, though the essence of this link was financial rather than inspiration, and its principal aim remained the creation of a broad movement which would unite Irish Americans, educate others, and break down stereotypes – meaning the study of Irish was more incidental than it was in Ireland.<sup>37</sup>

The impact and reach of the language movement in America are difficult to assess, as is the case in Ireland and London and for many similar reasons. Although there were many schools and societies dedicated to the study of Irish from the 1880s, they were small, scattered and local and it is difficult to estimate the membership as only new members were recorded, rather than total numbers, while not everyone who attended classes would have necessarily been a due-paying member. Even though the main

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<sup>35</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Úna Ní Bhroiméil, 'American Influence on the Gaelic League: Inspiration or Control?' in Betsey Taylor FitzSimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 63-70.

<sup>37</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 53; 'American influence on the Gaelic League', p. 65.

business of the societies was the preservation of Irish, this message had to be reiterated again and again to members, and it was ‘pleasant hour’ (songs, recitations and dancing carried out in a mixture of Irish and English, following the language instruction) that proved most popular, while the various picnics, balls and entertainments were highly successful.<sup>38</sup> Membership fluctuated and was, in reality, small: Logan’s monthly subscription for *An Gaodhal* was one thousand in 1881 and 2,880 in 1890, while in the year 1900 there were approximately 25 to 30 Gaelic League branches in the United States with one hundred members each, out of an Irish-American population of five million.<sup>39</sup>

We cannot know precisely how widespread the appeal of this movement was, who it reached, how deeply it influenced the Irish-American community, or the actual extent of language proficiency but it is possible to posit some suggestions. Logan records that language teachers were usually native Irish speakers, but also were occasionally students who had reached a sufficient level of fluency in Irish, suggesting that the language movement in the United States was composed of native Irish-speaking migrants and English-dominant language enthusiasts (though it is not possible to establish the social backgrounds of society members).<sup>40</sup> Logan also observed in 1883 that the poorest migrants from Ireland did not join Irish groups and societies “for fear that their neighbours would recognise them”.<sup>41</sup> This is an indication that the negative attitudes that native people held for their language, discussed in the first chapter, followed migrants to America, and that there existed, for some, a polarisation of views

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<sup>38</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, pp. 37-42.

<sup>39</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, pp. 45, 54.

<sup>40</sup> *An Gaodhal*, July 1894, quoted in Ní Ghabhann (1998).

<sup>41</sup> *An Gaodhal*, March 1883, quoted in Ní Ghabhann (1998).

regarding the language. The revival brought Irish from the home into the public sphere and Gillian Ní Ghabhann (1998) argues that its location in the classroom and university led native speakers to identify the language as the preserve of the wealthy, the scholar, or the nationalist, and the movement as an elite club where Irish was predominantly an academic exercise, therefore alienating native speakers from the language movement.<sup>42</sup> However, William J. Mahon (2007) argues that the leaders of the Irish language movement in America were not ‘out-of-touch bourgeoisie’.<sup>43</sup> The idea that the relationship between the native speakers and revival movement was more nuanced than Ní Ghabhann suggests is further supported by the involvement of native speakers in the language movement in Ireland – such as the *múinteoirí taistil* (travelling teachers) who taught literacy to native speakers and who were usually from Irish-speaking or bilingual districts – as well as Logan’s observation that language teachers in the United States were usually native Irish speakers.

Ultimately, from the early twentieth century onwards, it is clear that learning Irish in any real sense was not the perceived goal of the language movement in the United States. Picnics, balls and entertainments were the highlights of various Gaelic societies’ activities and were well-attended and financially successful. The Irish language aspect of the American societies was confined to basic classes and simple phrases but became a building block of ethnic pride and separateness.<sup>44</sup> This was certainly the case in Philadelphia, where the period after 1880 witnessed the increased

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<sup>42</sup> Ní Ghabhann (1998), pp. 1-34.

<sup>43</sup> William J. Mahon, *Thomas Griffin (1829-96) of Corca Dhuibhne and the Irish Community of Lawrence, Massachusetts* (Aberystwyth, 2007), preface.

<sup>44</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, pp. 100, 134.

visibility of the Irish language, supported by the energy supplied by the many Irish societies and second-generation Irish-Americans.<sup>45</sup>

## Philadelphia

Residential dispersal, mobility, and inefficient public transport had once been an obstacle to organising the Irish in Philadelphia on a city-wide basis, but by the last third of the nineteenth century Philadelphia's Irish population was becoming older, more settled, and more affluent, and had both the means and interest to take part in the growing associational culture. The community came to be connected by the proliferation of the Irish ethnic press from the late 1880s, a wide range of Irish-American associations and institutions, and numerous 'Gaelic' events and entertainments. As discussed in Chapter Three, there existed no Irish-American newspaper prior to this period and the religious press instead served this purpose, however, a host of such publications appeared in Philadelphia in the 1890s: most notably the *Philadelphia Hibernian* (1893-97), the *Freeman and Irish American Review* (1889-91), the *Irish American News* (1892-93), and the *Irish American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate* (1898-1904). Additionally, New York's *Irish World* and *An Gaodhal* were available. These newspapers printed local, national and international news of Irish interest, often with an emphasis on events in Ireland, and reported on the meetings and events of the myriad of Irish societies in Philadelphia, including the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Clan na Gael, sports clubs, language associations, Catholic associations, county societies (such as the Donegal Society), and political

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<sup>45</sup> Michael L. Mullan, 'Sport, Culture, and Nation among the Hibernians of Philadelphia: Irish American Civic Engagement and Cultural Nationalism, 1880-1920', *Journal of Urban History*, 39: 4 (2012), pp. 579-600.

organisations, as well as those throughout America, in Great Britain and in Ireland. For example, in 1899, the *Irish American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate*, under its regular feature ‘Gaelic Notes’, features a list of active Gaelic societies and the locations and times of their meetings from New York, Harlem, Brooklyn, Boston, Buffalo, Providence, Pawtucket, Springfield and New Haven, to Philadelphia, Chicago, Maryland, and San Francisco, as well as detailed accounts of AOH Division meetings.<sup>46</sup> These organisations acted as neighbourhood clubs for the Irish and, together with the Irish-American press, gave direction and ideological coherence to the emerging Irish consciousness.<sup>47</sup> The period 1890-1910 saw what Michael Mullan calls a “staggering presence of ethnic civic activity”.<sup>48</sup>

This ethnic civic activity was not centred on the revival of the Irish language or on the Gaelic League to the same extent as it was in London and, instead, the range of Irish communal associations and societies spread throughout Philadelphia worked in tandem to promote both cultural and political nationalism. However, efforts to promote the language in the city still predated those in London (which began in 1883 in the form of language classes in the Southwark Club): the Philo-Celtic Society of Philadelphia was founded in 1881 “for the purpose of preserving the Irish language”.<sup>49</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on its foundation and noted “with approval the result of the study of the Irish language as one of the elements in the general progress of the race, and encourage the efforts of those engaged in its cultivation”.<sup>50</sup> *An Gaodhal*

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<sup>46</sup> *Irish American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate*, 10 June 1899; 17 June 1899 (e.g.).

<sup>47</sup> Dale B. Light Jr, ‘The role of Irish-American organisations in assimilation and community formation’ in P. J. Drudy (ed.), *The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation and Impact* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 113-142.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Mullan, *Opposition, Discipline and Culture: the Civic World of the Irish and the Italians in Philadelphia, 1880-1920* (PhD Thesis, Temple University, 2010), pp. 130-131.

<sup>49</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 June 1884.

<sup>50</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 August 1884.

reported in 1884 that it was founded by three native Irish speakers (names undisclosed) and that it initially conducted all of its business in Irish.<sup>51</sup> The Society held free Irish language classes on Sunday evenings at the Philopatrian Hall and by 1886 it had over eighty members. The Sunday evening meetings of the Philo-Celtic Society were also opportunities for lectures on Irish culture, politics and, naturally, language, and the closing of the meeting was a time reserved for leisure, socialising and song.<sup>52</sup> This society continued to be the vehicle for the promotion of the language throughout the nineteenth century (Douglas Hyde noted during his visit to Philadelphia, part of his 1905-06 tour to America, that he requested that a Gaelic League branch be established.)<sup>53</sup> Further details regarding the Philo-Celtic Society are somewhat scant, though Deirdre Ní Chonghaile (2015) suggests that it was possibly still in operation in 1914.<sup>54</sup> In 1895, the *Philadelphia Hibernian* reported that:

The unmistakeable evidence that the study of the Irish language is steadily growing. Societies are being formed, many earnest men are giving it their time and talents, and on every hand are to be seen signs that their work is bearing good fruit.<sup>55</sup>

Echoing the situation in Ireland, establishing actual membership of and active involvement with such societies is difficult. Dennis Clark quotes an advertisement circulated by the Philo-Celtic Society in the 1890s which states that “ten thousand can

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<sup>51</sup> *An Gaodhal*, July 1884.

<sup>52</sup> Mullan, *Opposition, Discipline and Culture*, p. 348.

<sup>53</sup> Douglas Hyde, *My American Journey, or, Among the Irish-Speakers in the United States*. Edited by Liam Mac Mathúna et al. (Dublin, 2019), p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, ‘‘Sagart gan Iomrádh’’: an tAthair Domhnall Ó Murchadha (1858-1935) agus Amhráin Pennsylvania’ in Riona Nic Congail, Máirín Nic Eoin, Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, Pádraig Ó Liatháin and Regina Uí Chollatáin (eds), *Litríocht na Gaeilge ar Fud an Domhain: Cruthú, Caomhnú agus Athbheochán*. Imleabhar 1 (Dublin, 2015), pp. 191-214.

<sup>55</sup> *Philadelphia Hibernian*, 27 April 1895.

converse in the Irish language” in the city, though follows this up by noting that language enthusiasts were few in number and that attempts to build a following for the Gaelic movement remained a small and marginal feature of local Irish life.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Mullan states that although the Irish in Philadelphia embraced the Gaelic Revival, it was a ‘ceremonial gesture’, an attraction for language as a cultural artefact and not as a useful means of communication for work or commerce.<sup>57</sup> This is demonstrated by a report in the *Irish-American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate* on the establishment of a new Gaelic League branch (assisted by a committee of the Philo-Celtic Society) in Manayunk, Philadelphia, in 1899 which had 100 names after its initial meeting. In a similar vein, a report in *An Gaodhal* in 1884 criticises the Irish in Philadelphia for their lack of interest in their language:

Níl aon bhaile sa thír is mó a bhfuil ann a dtig leo Gaedhilge labhairt, ná tá sa gcathair seo, ach faraor! is beag a n-aird air chúis na Gaedhilge / There are more people in this city that understand Irish than anywhere else, but, alas, it’s little the interest they have in the cause of Irish<sup>58</sup>

This suggests that the impact of the revival on the teaching and learning of Irish was minimal, but also that language enthusiasts and native speakers perhaps had different priorities. Recent work by Deirdre Ní Chonghaile on the Irish songs collected in south Philadelphia by Fr Domhnall Ó Murchadha in the final decade of the nineteenth century reveals something of the large numbers of Irish speakers in the city. Ó Murchadha hailed from Co. Sligo and emigrated to the United States in 1885, where

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<sup>56</sup> Dennis Clark, ‘Our Own Kind: Irish Folk Life in an Urban Setting’, *Keystone Folklore*, 23 (1979), pp. 28-39.

<sup>57</sup> Mullan, *Opposition, Discipline and Culture*, p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> *An Gaodhal*, May 1884, quoted in Ní Ghabhann (1998).

he attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pennsylvania. It is possible that he had some literacy in Irish prior to his emigration though Ní Chonghaile notes that this is unclear and there is a stronger likelihood that he was an Irish learner in Philadelphia (based on correspondence in which he apologises for his standard of Irish). Ó Murchadha became involved with the Philo-Celtic Society of Philadelphia when he was appointed assistant priest in the parish of St Teresa's in south Philadelphia between 1889 and 1897, close to where the Society met. He collected over 1,100 songs in Irish from local people during these years, presumably when attending his parishioners in their homes. This large and rich collection is testament to the tradition of Irish singing in the city and demonstrates that Irish was still used within the home and perhaps the local community.<sup>59</sup> Ní Chonghaile's work not only challenges that historiography which suggests that Irish speakers were ashamed of their language, mostly notably Joseph Callahan who stated that Irish was seen as 'a relic of the past, a badge of ignorant savages', it also reveals the seemingly small pool of people involved in the language movement in the city.<sup>60</sup> Ó Murchadha was associated with a number of other collectors, most notably Seághan Ua Laighinn, or J. J. Lyons, a song and folklore collector from Co. Galway who had been collecting Irish-language material in Philadelphia and the surrounding area since 1884. Lyons was also a frequent contributor to the city's Irish-American newspapers, reporting on the progress of the language and the various language classes and societies, and is revealed within the

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<sup>59</sup> Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, 'Sagart gan Iomrádh': an tAthair Domhnall Ó Murchadha (1858-1935) agus Amhráin Pennsylvania' in Ríona Nic Congail, Máirín Nic Eoin, Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, Pádraig Ó Liatháin and Regina Uí Chollatáin (eds), *Litríocht na Gaeilge ar Fud an Domhain: Cruthú, Caomhnú agus Athbheochán*. Imleabhar 1 (Dublin, 2015), pp. 191-214.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Callahan, 'The Irish Language in Pennsylvania' in Thomas W. Ihde (ed.), *The Irish Language in the United States: A Historical, Sociolinguistic, and Applied Linguistic Survey* (Westport and London, 1994), pp. 18-26.

press to have been present at a large number of meetings and classes, such as the aforementioned establishment of a Gaelic League branch in Manayunk, Philadelphia, in 1899. The small number of active members suggests that uptake of the learning of Irish was small, particularly as a proportion of the total Irish-born population of the city at this time.

The Irish language was certainly a source of ethnic pride and separateness in Philadelphia, however: with the exception of those attending evening language classes, it was primarily utilised as a symbol of the cultural revival, referenced frequently at Irish American gatherings in Philadelphia but rarely understood as common language by the turn of the century.<sup>61</sup> Instead, the language was just one aspect to the intertwined cultural and political nationalism present in the city, which often embraced a united front of oppositional images and slogans.<sup>62</sup> The frequency at which the Irish language features in the contemporary press is in stark contrast to the decades before, though it is interwoven with political nationalism, while the newspapers within which the language features are themselves overtly political and nationalist, meaning the language is difficult to assess in its own right: the *Irish American News* in 1892 proclaimed that it was devoted to “those principles so dear to all Irishmen – the restoration of an Irish parliament”, while the *Philadelphia Hibernian* claimed to be “always a sturdy advocate for unity in the ranks of Irishmen and United Ireland”.<sup>63</sup> *The Freeman and Irish-American Review* reported regularly on evictions in Ireland, on Charles Stewart Parnell, and had a long-running feature on Oliver Cromwell in Ireland, and the *Irish-American News* also published extensively on tenant evictions and Home

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<sup>61</sup> Mullan, *Opposition, Discipline and Culture*, p. 351.

<sup>62</sup> Mullan, ‘Sport, Culture, and Nation’, p. 595.

<sup>63</sup> *The Irish American News*, 1 October 1892; *Philadelphia Hibernian*, 4 May 1895.

Rule, and was devoted to “the Restoration of an Irish parliament”.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile the *Philadelphia Hibernian* was a self-proclaimed “chronicler of the latest news from Ireland, gleaned from exchanges printed in every section of that country”, while also featuring notes on the Irish language and translations of Irish poetry.<sup>65</sup>

In Philadelphia, it was the cultural entertainments and activities associated with the various Irish-American organisations and societies that appealed to a wider audience, rather than language classes (and even within these classes, it was the songs, music and recitations that followed language lessons that attracted and entertained people, rather than “routine business”).<sup>66</sup> Public gatherings – most notably the Clan na Gael and AOH Gaelic games of the 1890s with their attendant hurling matches and Gaelic football contests, fiddler’s contests, Irish jig and reel competitions and Irish folk dancing – attracted huge crowds. The 1889 Nationalist Games sponsored by the Clan na Gael reportedly attracted a crowd of 45-50,000 people;<sup>67</sup> 20,000 tickets were printed and distributed among the divisions to sell for the AOH Memorial Day picnic in 1894, and posters were hung around the city two weeks in advance,<sup>68</sup> while there were a reported 15,000 in attendance at the 1899 Fourth of July Clan na Gael games.<sup>69</sup> This suggests that many more Irish Philadelphians turned their attention to sport as leisure and, in turn, as an expression of nationalist sentiment, as opposed to scholarly

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<sup>64</sup> E.g. *The Freeman and Irish-American Review* on the Irish Tenants’ Defence League, 10 August 1889, on Clanricarde, 17 August 1889, and on The Mayo Convention, 8 February 1890; *The Irish-American News*, 3 December 1892, 22 October 1892, 1 October 1892.

<sup>65</sup> *Philadelphia Hibernian*, 5 October 1895.

<sup>66</sup> *An Gaodhal*, January 1891. When the Philo-Celtic Society celebrated its third anniversary in 1884 with a concert and prize-giving, the address and eight of its twenty-two items were in Irish. *An Gaodhal*, July 1884, quoted in Ní Ghabhann (1998).

<sup>67</sup> *Freeman and Irish American Review*, 17 August 1889.

<sup>68</sup> *Philadelphia Hibernian*, 5 May 1894; Mullan, ‘Sport, Culture, and Nation’, p. 589.

<sup>69</sup> *The Irish-American Review and Celtic Literary Advocate*, 8 July 1899.

pursuits.<sup>70</sup> There was not a polarisation between these pursuits, however: the Irish community in Philadelphia enjoyed a degree of crossover among the various nationalist movements and associations and it is likely that a member of the Philo-Celtic Society would also have been attracted to other traditional Irish arts, dance, music and sport.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the language was utilised at these events as a public, cultural symbol – featuring on display banners and signage with token Irish words or slogans, such as “Erin go bragh” and “céad míle fáilte”.<sup>72</sup>

The revival in Philadelphia took on a uniquely paramilitary tone, while the connection between cultural and political nationalism is cemented by the fact that Philadelphia’s GAA clubs took their names from Irish Republican heroes or moulded their public image on republican themes. The Hibernian Rifles of Philadelphia’s AOH were organized in the 1880s “to encourage the formation and maintenance among citizens of Irish birth or descent of an independent body of citizen soldiers”.<sup>73</sup> They put on exhibitions, drills, and manoeuvres, and missed few opportunities to appear at Irish American public gatherings in the 1890s: St Patrick’s Day in 1894 not only consisted of a mass, a procession, Gaelic games and an evening banquet, but also a parade by the Hibernian Rifles in full dress uniform to be inspected by prominent Philadelphians.<sup>74</sup> St Patrick’s Day parades were, in the words of Kenneth Moss, part

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<sup>70</sup> Mullan, ‘Sport, Culture, and Nation’, p. 585; Paul Darby argues that sport plays a tangible role in the process of acculturation by allowing a group to gain acceptance in a new society, by acting as a vehicle for the production (or reproduction) of a sense of ethnic pride, and by allowing a group to mark themselves out as culturally distinctive and separate from the other national groups. Paul Darby, ‘Without the Aid of a Sporting Safety Net?: the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco (1888-c.1938)’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26: 1 (2009), pp. 63-83.

<sup>71</sup> Mullan, ‘Sport, Culture, and Nation’, p. 595.

<sup>72</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 31 October 1884.

<sup>73</sup> The Limerick Guards Hurling Club of Philadelphia was the first, established by 1889, followed by the Thomas Francis Meaghers and the Charles Stewart Parnells in 1893. Mullan, ‘Sport, Culture, and Nation’, pp. 587-591.

<sup>74</sup> *Philadelphia Hibernian*, 17 March 1894.

of the process of communal identity formation and can be studied as reflections of the process of identity-formation which the Irish community underwent in the nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> In Philadelphia, this process of identity-formation was intimately connected with Irish republicanism, to a greater extent than in London. From the 1880s onwards, a coherent, self-conscious ethnic community was constructed, one that could be considered a cultural alternative to the dominant American culture. In terms of the Irish language, the revival period represented a significant change in attitudes towards and visibility of the language but its primary role was symbolic and real efforts to teach the Irish language were confined to the small membership of the Philo-Celtic Society. Although the language became much more visible within contemporary material, it is not in relation to the unnamed native speakers for whom Bishop Neumann learned Irish, who worked on Philadelphia's docks or from whom Ó Murchadha collected songs.

## San Francisco

Lastly, a similar situation can be found in San Francisco, where public celebrations of Irish culture akin to those in Philadelphia were also prevalent from the early 1850s. Irish culture was present from the city's beginnings through the medium of a variety of Irish benevolent, social, political and fraternal societies – including, but by no means restricted to, the Hibernian Society (the first, established in 1852), St Mary's Ladies' Society, the Fenian Brotherhood (whose origins are obscure but was established in 1857 or 1859), the Irish-American Benevolent Society (1860), and the Ancient Order

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<sup>75</sup> Kenneth Moss, 'St. Patrick's Day Celebrations and the Formation of Irish-American Identity, 1845-1875', *Journal of Social History*, 29: 1 (1995), pp. 125-148.

of Hibernians (established in 1869 and becoming a focal point for the Irish community, reaching ten divisions in the city by 1880).<sup>76</sup> The paramilitary displays particular to Philadelphia were absent, however, with the first St Patrick's Day occurring in 1851 as a low-key event, continuing as such throughout the 1850s, and becoming a "grandiose assembly of musicians, dancers, benevolent societies and nationalist associations" by the mid-1860s.<sup>77</sup> In the 1880s, celebrations continued to be large and included masses, parades, and literary and musical exercises, with much coverage in the press, while by the early 1890s press coverage of St Patrick's Day constituted front-page news.<sup>78</sup> The *Monitor's* account of the itinerary for 1910 demonstrates the extent and scale of these celebrations, a contrast to the somewhat muted discussion in the 1850s and reflecting the growing visibility of Irish culture. The day opened with a grand parade of three thousand schoolchildren and five floats (one of which held 32 girls representing the 32 counties) to St Mary's Cathedral for a solemn high mass by Reverend Jerome B. Hannigan, after which the parade reformed and continued to the American Theatre for Irish music and dancing. The day closed with evening entertainment at the Auditorium. In addition, individual parishes had their own celebrations too, comprising sermons, speeches, entertainments, music and Irish dancing.<sup>79</sup> Irish musicians and singers found a forum in San Francisco: traditional musicians were in high demand and were called upon to play at picnics, excursions, dinners, sporting events, benefits, political and religious gatherings, parades, and

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<sup>76</sup> Darby, 'The Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco', p. 67; Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish*, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> "Here in California however, our Irish citizens and their descendants have not as yet sufficiently organised themselves as to make any very marked demonstration", *Daily Alta California*, 17 March 1851. Quote: Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Old Age Pipers and New Age Punters: Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco, 1850-2000' in Donald Jordan and Timothy J. O'Keefe (eds), *The Irish in the San Francisco Bay Area: Essays on Good Fortune* (San Francisco, 2005), pp. 110-132.

<sup>78</sup> Examples: *Daily Alta California*, 18 March 1887; *San Francisco Bulletin*, 17 March 1891.

<sup>79</sup> *The Monitor*, 12 March 1910.

festivals, with fiddlers and flute players comprising the majority, while the singer Catherine Hayes, born in Co. Limerick in 1818, rose to fame in Europe, America and Australia singing a mix of operatic and nationalist airs and toured the United States in 1851. She returned to San Francisco in 1852 for four months, when one concert-goer reportedly paid \$1,150 for the best seat in the house.<sup>80</sup>

As has been discussed, the Gaelic ‘movement’ in America began to gain momentum following the foundation of the Boston Philo-Celtic Society in 1873, and it had reached San Francisco by the mid-1880s. In 1883 the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on the first Irish language class in the city:

Several literary Irish-American residents of San Francisco are trying to awaken locally an interest in the correct speaking, reading and writing of the Irish language... Much interest is reported in New York, Brooklyn and other eastern cities. Only recently the movement reached San Francisco. Now a promising class is studying Irish and several of those already talk fluently.<sup>81</sup>

Although initially slow to take root, by 1885 interest amongst San Francisco’s Irish community in the reviving and teaching of Irish was high:

If the Irish people of every other portion of the United States would manifest the same interest that a portion of the patriotic Irish people of San Francisco do, in the revival of the study of the ancient Celtic tongue, it would not only redound to their credits as Celts, but it would also create a

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<sup>80</sup> Ó hAllmhuráin, ‘Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco’, pp. 111-116.

<sup>81</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 August 1883.

public opinion which would soon recognise the value of the venerable language and inspire a new interest in its favour.<sup>82</sup>

The Philo-Celtic Society was established in San Francisco in 1884 “for the promotion of the use of the Irish language among those of Celtic stock”, and the Gaelic Literary Society in 1886 for “the study and cultivation of the Irish language”.<sup>83</sup> These early societies were not overtly political and instead they were an attempt to affirm a threatened Irish identity and to prove Ireland an old and civilised race through its language and culture.<sup>84</sup> Reports of society meetings, lectures and other activities feature regularly in the contemporary press, such as a lecture by Frederic Louis Otto Roehrig (former Professor of Sanskrit and Modern Oriental Languages in Cornell University and a member of the Dublin Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language) on Irish language and the Irish nationality in May 1891.<sup>85</sup> However, it was under the auspices of the Gaelic League in the early 1900s that Irish language and culture became a much wider and more visible phenomenon in San Francisco, in addition to gaining an overt political element.

Unlike Philadelphia, the Gaelic League was the focal point of the city’s revival movement. The San Francisco branch of the Gaelic League was established in 1905 by Fr Peter C. Yorke, who was ordained for the Archdiocese of San Francisco in 1887, having arrived from Galway twenty years prior.<sup>86</sup> Fr Yorke was a notable character: political activist, republican, champion of the working class, editor of the *Monitor*, and

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<sup>82</sup> *The Monitor*, 15 July 1885.

<sup>83</sup> *Daily Alta California*, 8 March 1886; *Daily Alta California*, 3 March 1886.

<sup>84</sup> Úna Ní Bhroimeil, ‘The American Mission: The Gaelic revival and America, 1870-1915’ (PhD Thesis, Lehigh University, 1998), p. 57.

<sup>85</sup> *The Monitor*, 26 June 1891.

<sup>86</sup> Hyde, *My American Journey*, note 16, p. 164.

a key player in the city's revival. He was one of the principal architects of the Gaelic League in the Bay Area, founder of his own newspaper, the *Leader*, in 1902, and founder of San Francisco's central GAA authority in 1903.<sup>87</sup> He also was involved in the establishment of a department of Celtic languages and philology at the University of California, Berkeley, which was staffed by a 'Reader of Irish' – the first of whom was a student named Joseph J. O'Hegarty who also conducted night Irish classes in Yorke's parish hall for members of the Gaelic League.<sup>88</sup> This illustrates the relatively small number of people actively involved in the city's revival, as was the case in Ireland and elsewhere, and these key players were often recruited from precursor organisations. For example, one Jeremiah Deasy, a flute player and Gaelic singer who had come to prominence as an Irish National Convention activist in the late 1870s, featured throughout San Francisco's revival movement and by 1900 was dean of the Gaelic School.<sup>89</sup> This school was reportedly founded in 1883 and was initially connected to the Philo-Celtic Society; it had over one hundred students in 1885 and three hundred in 1901.<sup>90</sup> The *Monitor* provides a detailed account of its leaders and students, as well as its apparent popularity:

He who believes the movement for the revival of the Irish language is chimerical and doomed to live no longer than a literary fad, should visit Hibernian Hall on a Tuesday evening, when the Gaelic School is in session... If Gaelic students the world over are as enthusiastic and earnest

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<sup>87</sup> Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco', pp. 118-119; Darby, 'The Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco', p. 71.

<sup>88</sup> James P. Walsh, 'Peter C. Yorke: San Francisco's Irishman Reconsidered' in James P. Walsh (ed.), *The Irish in San Francisco 1850-1976* (San Francisco, 1978), pp. 50-51.

<sup>89</sup> Ó hAllmhuráin, 'Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco', p. 120.

<sup>90</sup> For 1885: *The Monitor*, 15 July 1885.

as the local students, it will not be long before the grand old language will be spoken by cultured people of every creed and nationality... The local Gaelic School is a chartered branch of the Gaelic League. Its aim is twofold. First, the preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue. Secondly, the study and publication of existing Gaelic literature and the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish. It is strictly non-political and non-sectarian.<sup>91</sup>

The newspaper also reported that the study of Irish was not new to San Francisco and had been undertaken by “a little coterie of patriotic Irishmen” for a quarter of a century, beginning with Eugene O’Growney (following his relocation from Ireland to California) and continued by Fr Yorke, thus demonstrating both the composition of the movement as well as the target audience.<sup>92</sup>

Compared to Philadelphia, where League activities integrated with the wide range of revivalist activities in the city, the League was far more prominent in San Francisco, with the broader Bay Area having one of the highest concentrations of branches in the United States by 1902.<sup>93</sup> The Gaelic League’s activities in San Francisco were by no means novel – the Philo-Celtic Society had been hosting monthly Gaelic entertainment evenings since 1885 and the Gaelic Literary Society had been conducting its meetings through Irish since 1887<sup>94</sup> – but the Gaelic League upped the momentum and added

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<sup>91</sup> *The Monitor*, 9 February 1901.

<sup>92</sup> *The Monitor*, 9 February 1901.

<sup>93</sup> Ó hAllmhuráin, ‘Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco’, p. 130, note 47.

<sup>94</sup> Ó hAllmhuráin, ‘Irish Traditional Music and Musicians in San Francisco’, p. 120.

an invigorating sense of cultural nationalism to Irish social life and served to establish more formal links between the movements on each side of the Atlantic, as discussed.

Echoing the situation in Philadelphia and London, the revival resulted in a significant increase in contemporary engagement with the Irish language in San Francisco. The *Monitor* featured a weekly 'Irish Language Department' from 1888 containing stories often printed in Irish text, as well as an alphabet and simple lessons in Irish. It frequently reported on the positive attitude many San Franciscans had toward the revival movement: "the immense crowd that filled the hall showed the true spirit and intense interest which the sons and daughters of Erin's Isle take in the revival of the language of their fathers".<sup>95</sup> Engagement with the language movement was not confined to this publication: the various Irish-language classes in the city, St Patrick's Day activities, Literary Society events, and Gaelic League activities and entertainments were all widely advertised and subsequently reported upon in newspapers, as in Philadelphia, while the popularity of the movement is demonstrated by the extensive and exhaustive coverage of Douglas Hyde's six-week visit in 1906 as part of his tour of America. Hyde's arrival was eagerly anticipated, his speeches well-attended, and his fundraising efforts well-rewarded.<sup>96</sup>

Dr. Hyde comes to San Francisco from his tour of the United States. He comes to awaken interest and to collect funds for the renewal of the Irish language among the Irish people. He has everywhere met with success, and

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<sup>95</sup> An account of a concert organised by the Gaelic School. *The Monitor*, 4 August 1900.

<sup>96</sup> Typical headlines: "Irish-Americans of San Francisco turned out royally last night to bid formal welcome to Dr. Douglas Hyde, the distinguished leader of the Gaelic League", *San Francisco Call*, 14 February 1906; "Dr Douglas Hyde Thrills Audience with Message. Speaks to Vast Throng Assembled in Tivoli", *San Francisco Call*, 19 February 1906.

the Irish citizens of San Francisco are determined to make his visit here one that will always remember as the best of the whole trip.<sup>97</sup>

To the Gaelic League in Ireland, the movement in the United States was an inspiration but, more importantly, a financial source for promoting the movement at home, and Hyde estimated that he collected as much money in San Francisco as he did in New York.<sup>98</sup> His reception and popularity in San Francisco are notable in terms of what he represented: a belief that the cultivation of the Irish language was crucial to maintain Irish nationality and to make a case for Ireland's independence. The positive reception suggests that the Irish community in the city accepted this ideology, representing a major shift in attitudes towards the language. Not long before, the Irish language was "looked upon as a low and vulgar gibberish", but the language movement went some way towards altering this view.<sup>99</sup> However, the high profile of Hyde's mission masks the nature of the language movement in the United States. In reality, the various Gaelic and Philo-Celtic societies were not high profile: they were small, local and scattered. While picnics, balls and entertainments were well-attended and financially successful, with dances being described by the *Monitor* as "the best conducted and the most successful social affairs held in San Francisco and [which] have attained an immense popularity among all classes",<sup>100</sup> the Irish language aspect of these societies was confined to basic classes and simple phrases.<sup>101</sup> Joseph O'Hegarty made the following statement regarding his new Irish courses in Berkeley:

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<sup>97</sup> *San Francisco Call*, 19 January 1906.

<sup>98</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America* p. 135. Hyde estimated that he raised \$9,836.75 and an extra \$1,500 from the St Patrick's Day celebrations. See Hyde, *My American Journey*, p. 158.

<sup>99</sup> *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, 17 December 1899.

<sup>100</sup> *The Monitor*, 22 April 1916.

<sup>101</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 134.

It is my purpose to make the Irish language as interesting as possible to the students. I believe that the dry, uninteresting drudgery, such as the mastery of vocabulary and grammar, should be done at home, and that the classroom time should be devoted principally to developing facility in conversation.<sup>102</sup>

The membership of the Gaelic League in early twentieth-century San Francisco mostly comprised “native sons and daughters [who have] taken up the study of the beautiful tongue of their forefathers”, rather than native speakers.<sup>103</sup> These were predominantly, though not exclusively, male and upper class too; for example, the death of one John Egan of the California Militia was reported in the *San Francisco Call* in 1896. He was a well-known figure in Democratic circles and merchant in the city and also a native of Shanagolden, Co. Limerick:

About ten years ago Captain Egan began the study of the Gaelic language, and since that time has read and written much of that ancient tongue, which is the mother of all that is original of the English language... He became one of the best Gaelic scholars in the United States... Up to the day of his death he was engaged in his researches in the ancient tongue of the Celts.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, it must be noted that the apparent popularity of the Gaelic League in San Francisco was not necessarily indicative of language use in the area – native speakers of Irish did not always rise to prominence within the League hierarchy and at the National Convention of the Gaelic League held in Philadelphia in October 1902, the

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<sup>102</sup> *San Francisco Call*, 22 August 1910.

<sup>103</sup> *The Monitor*, 9 February 1901.

<sup>104</sup> *San Francisco Call*, 14 April 1896.

Californian delegates were criticised for their lack of knowledge of the language and only one delegate, a Mr Murphy, could contribute to proceedings in Irish, though just two from Pennsylvania could.<sup>105</sup>

Working alongside the Gaelic League in San Francisco was the GAA, founded in 1888.<sup>106</sup> Its early growth was relatively slow, especially compared to Philadelphia, which received a boost from the Irish GAA's 'invasion of America' tour in 1885.<sup>107</sup> However, Yorke's creation of a central authority provided the GAA with powerful allies, embedding the association within the broader range of Irish organisations in the city, and helping preserve a strong sense of Irishness. It also started a long association between the Catholic Church, the GAA, and the Gaelic League in the city.<sup>108</sup> The Catholic Church came to play an important role in the Gaelic Revival, largely through the activities of Fr Yorke, and its support perhaps gave the language movement a stronger sense of validity, given the prominence of the Church as a cultural institution. The Church's promotion of Irish was largely symbolic, however, and took the form of special events or sermons in Irish on St Patrick's Day. St Rose's Parish included "a novel feature" as part of their annual picnic and outing in 1906; an address in Irish by Reverend Father Concannon.<sup>109</sup> St Brendan's Church held a special mass "in the Gaelic Tongue" for St Patrick's Day in 1902;<sup>110</sup> St Rose's Church held Gaelic sermons in 1904 and 1905;<sup>111</sup> and St Teresa's Parish held a recital of the Rosary in Irish in 1910.<sup>112</sup> Prior to the revival, there is no evidence of Irish-language sermons and this

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<sup>105</sup> *An Gaodhal*, November 1902.

<sup>106</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 7.

<sup>107</sup> Mullan, 'Sport, Culture, and Nation', p. 587.

<sup>108</sup> Darby, 'The Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Émigré in San Francisco', p. 71.

<sup>109</sup> *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, 8 September 1906.

<sup>110</sup> *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, 18 March 1902.

<sup>111</sup> *San Francisco Call Bulletin*, 15 March 1904, 13 March 1905.

<sup>112</sup> *The Monitor*, 12 March 1910.

development was most widespread in the first decade of the twentieth century and was undertaken by a relatively small number of clergy, although instances occurred at least up to the 1920s.<sup>113</sup> Unlike Bishop Neumann in Philadelphia, there are no reports of clergy learning Irish in order to hear confessions in San Francisco. The fact that Irish was not institutionalised by the Catholic Church does not mean it did not exist, as demonstrated by both Philadelphia and London, but evidence suggests that the language played a less significant role in Irish Catholicism in San Francisco than elsewhere. In 1885, the *Monitor* credits the Irish with the “rebirth of Catholicism among the English speaking people” in America, suggesting that they too were seen, and treated, as an English-speaking group by this period.<sup>114</sup> This can be attributed to reasons already discussed: namely Irish migrants’ period of acculturation prior to arrival in San Francisco and their likelihood of already being English-speaking or, at the very least, bilingual.

## Conclusion

A report from the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported in February 1906 illustrates one of the most important effects of the revival movement in San Francisco; it garnered the American Irish respect and standing and this, really, was the ultimate aim of the Gaelic League in America.

More than 450 of the best citizens of San Francisco sat down to dinner last night with Douglas Hyde at the Palace Hotel at what was probably the

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<sup>113</sup> It was reported that an address in Irish was to be given by a Seamus Moriarty in the Exposition Auditorium as part of the St Patrick’s Day celebrations in 1920. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 March 1920.

<sup>114</sup> *The Monitor*, 29 April 1885.

biggest banquet ever given in this city to a private person. All religions and classes and nations were represented at the banquet and all had the same aim; to restore the respect of the Irish to themselves again, and to give themselves cause to be proud that the country of their ancestors was behind them, the same as the Germans, the French and the other nations.<sup>115</sup>

The Gaelic Revival in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco followed similar trajectories, though reacting to and evolving with local circumstances, meaning each of these cities had a unique experience of the revival, ranging from the more literary in London to grand, public displays of Irishness in the American cities. While London's revival was more in line with the parent movement in Ireland, largely owing to proximity and the sharing of leading revivalists, in Philadelphia it became centred on sport, and in San Francisco relied heavily on the activities of Fr Yorke. Ultimately, the revival in the United States was different to that in Ireland: its focus was on the Irish in America and their need for asserting a distinctive and cultured identity in order to become a part of the multi-ethnic American society. The Irish language was central to this movement but relinguification was never the aim; instead, Irish became a building block of ethnic pride and distinction, along with Gaelic games.<sup>116</sup> The popularity of public entertainments over language classes is testament to this. It has been demonstrated that the movement instigated significant change in terms of the visibility of and attitudes towards the Irish language in each city: bringing it from occupying a private to a public role. Once the language became the subject of scholarly concern and became intertwined with the fate of Ireland, it becomes difficult to

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<sup>115</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, p. 79.

<sup>116</sup> Ní Bhroiméil, *Building Irish Identity in America*, pp. 134-135.

separate this ‘language’ from that of the traditional language community from predominantly Irish-speaking areas in Ireland. The revival never truly took hold in Irish-speaking areas in Ireland. In the diaspora, participants appeared to be happy to learn some Irish while taking part in social events and elevating Irish social standing. What the revival succeeded in doing in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco was to increase the visibility of the Irish language through publications and various social and sporting events, and create a written record through the creation of pamphlets, newspapers, journals, books, etc. and the keeping of society records and membership lists. By the early twentieth century, Irish had transformed from occupying an invisible, private, and apologetic role to being a highly visible, public manifestation of a cultural revival.<sup>117</sup> It was adopted by nationalists as a symbol of Irish national identity, and ultimately it became a public, cultural symbol. This newfound symbolism separates it from the period 1850-c.1880, when it could be argued that it was a symbol for something else entirely – poverty, backwardness and a lack of education. The investigation of the revival period puts into greater relief the notable differences in visibility and attitudes between this period and the years 1850-1880 and the diasporic traditional language community.

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<sup>117</sup> Liam Mac Mathúna, ‘From Manuscripts to Street Signs via *Séadna*: the Gaelic League and the Changing Role of Literacy in Irish, 1875-1915’ in Betsey Taylor Fitzsimon and James H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised*, (Dublin, 2004), pp. 49-62.

## Conclusion

This thesis began with a discussion of the condition of the Irish language in Ireland in the post-Famine period and the circumstances that led to its decline, and explored what effect this had on the maintenance and use of the language in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco between the years 1850 and 1920. There are a number of limitations involved in studying an oral, minority language such as Irish, detailed in the introduction; however, by using a broad methodology this thesis has investigated the use of the Irish language amongst migrants of these cities, including perceptions of the language, its role in shaping identity, and the ways in which these diverse regional environments affected its decline or survival during this period.

Comparisons are valuable in their revealing of differences or universalising of experiences. The three case studies of London, Philadelphia and San Francisco were home to numerically large Irish populations between the years 1850 and 1920 but presented very different social and political environments: their inclusion incorporated both an east-coast and a west-coast city in the republican political environment of the United States and another, the metropolitan capital of the British Empire. In focusing on these cities, this research contributes to the scholarship on the Irish diaspora in both countries and, by incorporating a seventy year time-frame, presents a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the Irish communities in each than has previously been examined. While historians have traditionally focused on the Gaelic Revival, public celebrations of ‘Irishness’ and the role that the language played in the construction of an Irish diasporic identity, this thesis focused on the traditional language community, the fate of the vernacular in the three cities, and the relationship between the language

in Ireland and across the diaspora. It develops the history of the Irish language abroad chronologically and in scope, contributing to the expanding scholarship on this subject.

Taking a regional and comparative approach, this thesis examined the transnational and local influences on the maintenance of the Irish language in the diaspora during two temporal spans, with particular focus on the decades between 1850 and 1880, exploring whether Irish-speaking people resided in each selected city, how their range of linguistic practices was able to find expression, and how this shaped their immigrant experience. In doing so, it has demonstrated how cultural nationalism and language can be treated separately and how the experiences of, and consequences for, Irish-speaking communities in the diaspora can be recognised separate to the language's role in the Gaelic Revival. The introduction to this thesis argued that while the historiography of the Irish diaspora has recognised that a significant number of Irish migrants were Irish speaking, it has assumed that the Irish language was insignificant overseas and that because many Irish migrants could speak English, they did so exclusively. A result of this has been the classification of the Irish as an English-speaking migrant group by contemporary observers as well as historians. This thesis does not refute the view that Irish migrants came to prioritise English over Irish but it provides a thorough explanation for *why* the language disappeared so quickly and the effect urban environments had on the speed of this decline. The Irish did not *arrive* as an exclusively English-speaking group, but the combination of local circumstances and linguistic practices inherited from Ireland caused English to prevail.

The connection between the Irish language in Ireland and the diaspora was noteworthy for this research: the sociolinguistic factors affecting the language in Ireland followed

migrants abroad and directly influenced the language's development in the diaspora. The first chapter therefore provided a detailed analysis of the condition of and attitudes towards Irish in Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as an outline of the scale and composition of emigration during this period – a feature of Irish life that was intricately intertwined with the Irish language. This chapter acknowledged that although language shift was certainly underway in Ireland by the year 1850 (the beginning of this investigation), contemporary rates of Irish speaking and of emigration suggest that Irish speakers, comprising a range of levels of fluency, were an important element of the emigration flow to a multitude of destinations after this point. This chapter concluded that language shift in nineteenth-century Ireland was caused by a series of adverse historical events operating in tandem with internal pressures, and that the subsequent revival of Irish was inseparable from the nationalist movement that emerged in the 1870s and 1880s. These factors were then traced to each of the selected cities, beginning with London.

The second chapter detailed the experiences of the Irish in London between the years 1850 and 1880. Irish migrants in Britain were typically, though not exclusively, the least well-off of Irish emigrants, largely owing to proximity and ease of travel within the United Kingdom. Their predominantly rural backgrounds rendered them ill-prepared for urban life, leading to their isolation within London upon arrival and their likelihood of remaining so, while existing anti-Irish sentiment exacerbated this tendency to live in enclaves and discouraged integration. The great majority of the Irish lived in close proximity to one another; the resultant physical and psychological separation played an important role in the continuation of home traditions and customs, including language. Evidence for the continued use of the Irish language in London

was the most accessible owing to the fact that there was a high proportion of Irish speakers in the migrant stream to London. This was largely a result of migrant origins: a large proportion of London's Irish immigrants hailed from Munster, where contemporary rates of Irish speaking remained high into the twentieth century. As a result, Irish remained a primary cultural resource for many migrants in the city, though the extent of varying levels of bilingualism confined this to specific realms, namely the home, the local community and religious practice, while contemporary perceptions of the language served to mark Irish speakers as different, in addition to their poverty, religion and political allegiance. Schrauf's observation that mother tongues are more likely to be maintained in tight-knit, centralised settlements, as co-residence in a language community simply increases the frequency of the opportunity to use and reinforce the mother tongue, was affirmed in this chapter. It highlighted how the specific dynamics of each urban environment contributed to the fate of the language.

This thesis highlighted the influence of each city's physical environment and settlement patterns on the use and maintenance of the Irish language, as well as on the Irish migrant experience more generally. This influence was further reinforced by the findings presented in Chapter Three. Philadelphia provided greater opportunity than London to Irish migrants, owing to a wider range of employment opportunities as well as the provision of housing, while Irish migrants' arrival coincided with a period of rapid physical expansion and industrialisation in the city, resulting in the absorption of the influx of immigrants. This brought about lower levels of overcrowding and squalor than in other urban centres, while the diversification of labour from the mid-century offered the chance for the Irish to enter semi-skilled or skilled work. This chapter detailed the effects on the Irish language of the Irish population's mobility and

dispersal throughout the city – the kinds of close-knit, centralised, community-based settlement patterns that facilitated the maintenance of familial relationships and provided cultural security were less present. For the Irish in London, the enclosed systems, limited geographical range and high density of Irish people from similar backgrounds provided suitable conditions for language preservation through the reduction of external influences, but Philadelphia's mobile and dispersed environment did not.

Evidence for the continued use of Irish in Philadelphia therefore was obscure and the cultural encounters present in London, such as court proceedings requiring interpreters or priests attending Irish speakers in their homes, were almost entirely absent from the historical record. However, the limited evidence suggests that Irish continued to be used in certain circumstances, such as within the home and the local community and, to an extent, religious practice, but that English rapidly came to be the language of choice within the public sphere. In order to explain this lack of evidence and highlight key considerations, this chapter incorporated a comparison with Irish communities elsewhere in Pennsylvania and with the Welsh. This proved illuminating: in the towns of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre instances of and evidence for both Irish and Welsh speaking are considerably more prevalent. The concentration of the Welsh in Pennsylvania – constituting 38 per cent of the total Welsh-born population in the United States by 1900 – and the predominance of localised chain migration, a concentration of Welsh speakers and the presence of Welsh-language churches, publications, and social outlets were noted as creating an environment favourable to language maintenance. The Welsh language and customs survived the longest in the United States in rural-agricultural communities, and the places where it disappeared

the quickest were settlements where the population was mobile and heterogeneous, with the Welsh forming a small minority. This comparison suggested that in a large urban environment like Philadelphia, the mobile and dispersed Irish faced a challenge in maintaining their language and customs, a challenge that was less present in smaller towns elsewhere in Pennsylvania. Although the Irish language made it to Philadelphia, this chapter concluded that it was a private language that stayed in the home and the private sphere and which left little presence in the historical record.

The importance of migrant origins for language maintenance overseas was also central to this thesis. While a significant proportion of London's Irish migrants came from Munster, Philadelphia's Irish migrants came predominantly, though not exclusively, from Ulster, from Irish-speaking areas in Donegal as well as English-speaking east Ulster. However, the predominance of migrants from the east means they were less likely to be Irish speakers by this period, while the predominance of young, single migrants had the same consequence.

Chapter Four demonstrated how, in San Francisco, Irish migrants' backgrounds set them apart from their counterparts in London and Philadelphia. The Irish in San Francisco were notable for having had a period of residence in the United States prior to their arrival in the city and were an experienced urban minority who were able to compete on a more equal basis than their counterparts in other American or British cities. Additionally, the hostile host environment experienced by the Irish in London was absent in San Francisco, with negative stereotyping centred on the Chinese population and the Irish even becoming perpetrators of racial hatred themselves. The directing of hostilities towards another group allowed the Irish to become mainstream

players in their new society; the cultural gulf between them and the Chinese population in terms of appearance, language, and religion was so great that it diminished the differences between the natives of Cork and Boston or Ireland and England.

Chapter Four explored how these factors affected immigrant identity and the continuation of and attitudes towards the Irish language in the city. It illustrated how the length of time an individual was away from their ‘homeland’ and the context in which they speak a language will have affected their propensity to use that language. This, along with diversity in class and regional backgrounds, obscures the linguistic backgrounds of San Francisco’s Irish migrants. As a result, evidence for these linguistic backgrounds was minimal. This research suggests that in San Francisco the shift from Irish to English had already happened elsewhere and the discussion on Margaret’s Boarding House provides a microhistory of how this may have happened. This boarding house facilitated adjustment to a new environment and the gradual disuse of Irish as a primary language in both the public and private spheres, when originally it had continued to be spoken in the private, domestic domain. Fishman’s theory that language contact situations cause one language to, over time, become the dominant language in both public and private settings, when originally each occupied separate domains and having their own functions, can be seen at play within the boarding house; contact with English-speakers within the home and in the workplace, as well as marriage, meant that although the Irish language was initially present, it was gradually replaced by English. This example can be used as a foundation to understanding language shift in other cities. This city stands out in the study of the Irish diasporic experience, particularly in the United States, for a number of reasons – namely the city’s power structures, the prevalence of transmigration, the timing of

Irish migrants' arrival, and a lack of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic hostility. Although the Irish language in San Francisco in the period 1850-1880 is elusive, the city provides an important comparison to the previous two case studies and demonstrates the centrality of migrant origins, regional variations, and contemporary attitudes in the maintenance and transmission of a minority language such as Irish.

By the 1880s, the linguistic landscape had begun to change in Ireland, Britain and the United States, where the Gaelic Revival heralded similar changes in attitudes towards and visibility of the Irish language across the board. Chapter Five served as a comparison to demonstrate this shift and to reflect the changing composition of the Irish-speaking communities in Ireland and the diaspora. The Gaelic Revival in these cities followed similar trajectories to the movement in Ireland, arising from many of the same motivations though naturally having region-specific ones also. While the aim in Ireland was to restore Irish as a spoken language, the various revivalist organisations established throughout the diaspora were concerned with the creation and maintenance of a new and distinct Irish identity and culture. In London, the movement succeeded in bringing an air of respectability to the language, as well as to the Irish community more generally, while in the United States the language came to play a vital role in the Irish quest for integration, identity and respectability. Evidence of language use increased very considerably in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco from the 1880s onwards, becoming a much wider and more visible phenomenon. Notably, these years also witnessed a change in the composition of the Irish speaking community. The revival was primarily, though by no means exclusively, a middle class movement, organised and supported by a young intelligentsia, and many of its members differed to the traditional language community revealed by the insights of social commentators,

religious clergy, the authorities, and individuals in each city in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Some historians such as Gillian Ní Ghabhann (1998) have suggested that there was a polarisation between these two groups, however, evidence from each city of native Irish speakers taking part in revivalist activities suggests that this was not the case, though tensions may indeed have existed. The separate treatment of these two periods in this thesis served to put into greater relief the significant differences in terms of the visibility and perceptions of the Irish language across the diaspora after 1880.

This final chapter demonstrated how the language, once just spoken as a vernacular, ultimately became a public cultural symbol and a building block of ethnic pride and separateness in the move to assert a distinctive and cultured Irish identity within the multi-ethnic American society. The revival brought the language from occupying a private to a public role, but once the language became attached to Ireland's nationalist movement, it becomes difficult to separate this 'language' from that of the traditional language community. This thesis explored the ways in which a diasporic sense of 'Irishness' was constructed and displayed throughout the period in question, and whether language was a factor in Irish migrants' construction of their own identity. The discussion in the introduction on definitions of 'identity' demonstrates how identity is understood to be either passive or active and a social construct that is either assigned to people by others outside the group or created through active self-ascription. This thesis concluded that between the years 1850 and c.1880, the Irish language was not *actively* seen as a crucial component to the diasporic sense of identity, though it perhaps passively was, whereas self-identification became more important from the late 1870s for the growing Irish middle classes who found themselves in a position where they could rediscover, or reconstruct, their identity and the social groups to

which they belonged. Evidence suggests that prior to the revival, Irish speakers viewed their language as a vernacular, a mode of communication, but it became an identity resource and a symbol of Irish national identity thereafter. Edwards' distinction between language as an instrumental tool and language as "an emblem of groupness, a symbol, a psychosocial rallying-point" was therefore central to this thesis.<sup>1</sup> Across the diaspora, the cultural and symbolic capital associated with a native language became significant from the 1880s onwards, particularly in the United States, where the middle class Gaelic Revival activities ultimately garnered the American Irish respect and standing. The Irish language became increasingly central to the independence movement in Ireland throughout the course of the years covered by this thesis; its revival in Ireland, London, Philadelphia and San Francisco went hand-in-hand with the construction of an Irish identity, distinct from and in contrast with notions of Englishness or Britishness.

In addition to environmental factors, the relationship between the Irish language and religion was a key theme in this thesis. It was within the realm of religious ritual that evidence of Irish speaking was most frequently located in London and towns in Pennsylvania, affirming Schrauf's theory that the relationship between religious practice and mother tongues is central to language maintenance in the diaspora. This was a trend that followed migrants from Ireland, where confession, mass attendance and communion became important aspects to religious practice in the post-Famine years, with confession standing out as significant in the diasporic context. In Ireland, Nicholas M. Wolf notes that confessing in the language most comfortably spoken was desired by Irish Catholics and that preaching, instruction and confessions were

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<sup>1</sup> John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 54-55.

provided in Irish at the discretion of individual priests, though this does not necessarily mean their congregants were unable to speak English. In London, there was a recognition that a large proportion of the Irish there learned their religion through Irish and efforts were made to minister in the native language, while evidence from Philadelphia, namely Bishop Neumann's learning of Irish, and from Schuylkill and Carbon counties of confession being carried out in Irish suggests the same. Irish was preferred in the special context of the confessional and Irish Catholics took advantage when they could but, ultimately, they were not necessarily Irish-dominant speakers.

The importance of the relationship between religion and language extended to the Catholic Church's lack of formal support for the language and the effect this had on language shift, both in Ireland and abroad. Chapter One detailed how the Church's lack of support for Irish-language publishing in Ireland was not only central to contemporary literacy but also to language shift – without a secular print culture in their native language, Irish speakers had nothing to read in their own language but had an abundance in English, thus encouraging proficiency in the latter. Institutional support from churches and the religious nature of print culture was crucial for sustaining print culture in other minority languages such as in Welsh, as well as Breton and Scottish Gaelic, and for encouraging, in turn, a secular printing culture: in 1896, there were up to 10,000 Welsh-language titles in existence in Wales (compared to Ireland's 150 in Irish) and a flourishing periodical press with dozens of Welsh newspapers and periodicals, compared to just one in Irish. Moving the focus to the United States, in Scranton alone in 1877 there were seven Welsh-language churches, as well as a thriving Welsh-language press, but nothing comparable for Irish. For the Welsh language, the church's endorsement facilitated the language's survival for

longer in Pennsylvania. In comparison, with the exception of London in the early years of this study, efforts to minister in Irish in the diaspora were minimal and infrequent, though evidence demonstrates that Irish migrants took advantage of confessing in Irish when the opportunity arose. This suggests that language was important to religious practice in a symbolic sense, but day-to-day religious needs could be met through the medium of English, though this relationship between language and religious practice would benefit from further research.

This thesis emphasised the importance of the relationship between the fortunes of the Irish language in Ireland and in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco and has outlined how the linguistic situation in the former influenced that in the diaspora. While attitudes towards Irish in Ireland were often outwardly negative, on the part of speakers and observers alike, they were often expressed more subtly in the diaspora. In February 1882, Tomás Ó Néill Ruiséil wrote in *The Gaelic Journal* (Dublin), in reference to Irish migrants in the United States, that “chomh luath is a thagann Éireannach chun na tíre seo, má tá Gaeilge acu, déanann sé a dhícheall í a dhearmad / As soon as an Irish person comes to this country, if they spoke Irish, they do their best to forget it”.<sup>2</sup> This encapsulates the attitudes of Irish migrants in America towards their native language before the effects of the revival were fully felt: perceptions leaned more towards indifference than towards outward hostility or shame. The small number of examples of direct encouragement on the part of emigrants for those in Ireland to learn English were the exception and, as discussed in Chapter One, this encouragement was instead indirect by nature of the fact that correspondence, advertisements and

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<sup>2</sup> Quotation in Prionsias Mac Aonghusa, ‘An Ghaeilge i Meiriceá’ in Stiofán Ó hAnnracháin (ed.), *Go Meiriceá Siar: Na Gaeil agus Meiriceá: Cnuasach Aistí* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 13-30.

other information were usually written in English. The introduction to this thesis discussed Kerby A. Miller's theory that being Irish-speaking forced many Irish emigrants to experience emigration as exile rather than opportunity; this can be identified in the case of London. The disdain and contempt that the Irish experienced in London extended to their language abilities to the extent that William Todd, in his survey of the Irish in England (1856), cited the Irish language as being one of the reasons the Irish community was viewed as ignorant in Victorian Britain. Because the Irish did not always understand English expressions or questions, this gave them the appearance of being ignorant and it is reasonable to infer that this would discourage language use, as well as affect patterns of integration and the migrant experience overall.

The same forces that led to the decline of the language in Ireland were as strong in American cities, where civic, educational, legal, and financial institutions operated through the medium of English. This research concluded that in the period 1850-1880, it was primarily sociolinguistic factors in Ireland combined with unique local circumstances that shaped views of the language across the diaspora, while in London the language was also a distinct negative identifier, but the Gaelic Revival had the effect of altering these perceptions in each city. Although entertainments and activities proved more popular than language lessons, the very existence of these lessons and the use of Irish as a cultural symbol demonstrate this change.

This thesis brings together scholarship on the Irish language and the history of migrant communities in the first comparative and transnational study. It expands upon existing research that seeks to uncover the presence and experiences of Irish speakers outside

Ireland; future research would benefit further from the inclusion of a greater number of case studies. It develops the history of the Irish language in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco both chronologically and in scope. While historians have traditionally focused on the Gaelic Revival at the turn of the century, if at all, this thesis focuses on the period prior to this, exploring the use of Irish as a vernacular amongst the lower classes and the ways that people engaged with the language in everyday life and publicly. In doing so, this research recognises the range of linguistic abilities of Irish migrants, the spheres in which language contact situations occurred, and the resulting methodological challenges in assessing this language.

This was primarily a study of the Irish speakers in London, Philadelphia and San Francisco during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth. It was principally concentrated on the lower classes owing to the high concentration of Irish speakers among this group, particularly in the period 1850-1880, and also assessed the nature and impact of the Gaelic Revival. Using comparison, this thesis expanded on recent work on the language in Ireland and investigated language contact situations and the ways in which the language was maintained in the diaspora, as well as the circumstances which led to its eventual decline overseas. It explored if and how the issues surrounding the language in Ireland (in terms of falling numbers and preference for English) followed migrants abroad, and assessed the central role of the urban environment, the relationship between religious practice and language, and migrant origins in facilitating the maintenance and use of the language overseas. This thesis concluded by exploring the changing role that the Irish language played in the diaspora between the years 1850 and 1920, transforming from being a component of a private, personal identity to a public expression of an Irish diasporic identity.

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