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Introduction – Ireland and Finland, 1860–1930: comparative and transnational histories

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The 'decade of centenaries' has allowed for renewed attention to be paid to key episodes in modern Irish history from the Dublin lockout to the First World War to the 1916 Rising and beyond. It has also led to important investigations of the economic, social, political and cultural roots of conflicts surrounding questions of national identity. Allied to this, there is a growing awareness of the need to locate Irish experiences within wider comparative and transnational frameworks.[1] Ireland is not alone in this. This decade also marks a period of commemoration in Finland. In 2017, Finland celebrates 100 years as an independent nation, 2018 marks the centenary of the country's bloody Civil War, and we are approaching the sesquicentenary of Europe's last peacetime famine, the Great Finnish Famine of 1867–8. Here too, historians have contributed to and, in some cases, ignited important public debates on the country's past.[2] In this, the value of international comparison is also increasingly acknowledged and, in particular, the direct comparison between Finland and Ireland is ever more pertinent. In Finland, for instance, the centenary of Ireland's Easter Rising led to comments about the similarities between the national histories of Finland and Ireland, admittedly along with platitudes such as the comment that 'Ireland is like Finland – a small but tenacious country'.[3]

The comparison is not new. The general parallels in Finnish and Irish history were well recognised by commentators in the nineteenth century and, by the time of Finland's independence in 1917, it was widely referred to as

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[1] For a call to locate the Irish Revolution within wider transnational frameworks, see Niall Whelehan, 'The Irish Revolution, 1912–1923' in Alvin Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history* (Oxford, 2014), pp 621–44.

[2] See, for example, Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius (eds), *The Finnish Civil War 1918: history, memory, legacy* (Leiden, 2014); Pavel Ozinsky and Jari Eloranta, 'Historicising divergence: a comparative analysis of the revolutionary crises in Russia and Finland' in Jari Eloranta, Eric Golson, Andrei Markevich and Nikolaus Wolf (eds), *Economic history of warfare and state formation* (Tokyo, 2016), pp 103–16; Irma Sulkunen, 'An international comparison of women's suffrage: the cases of Finland and New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century' in *Women's Journal of History*, xxvii, no. 4 (Winter 2015), pp 88–111.

[3] *Helsingin Sanomat*, 26 Mar. 2016.

'the Ireland of Russia'.[4] In the late 1930s, in a short but pioneering account, John Hampden Jackson reflected on the potential for comparison between the two countries, looking to Finland as an example of the success of a small nation in establishing a democratic regime and countering fascism but offering a somewhat more critical (and, at times, typically patronising) view of Ireland.[5] In 1970, the Norwegian social scientist Stein Rokkan also highlighted the potential for comparisons and contrasts to be made between the histories of Finland and Ireland. Both countries, he stressed, were 'at the periphery of Europe', and both had been 'for centuries subject territories under representative regimes'. Moreover, both grew 'out of a long struggle for national identity against powerful oppressors … [and] both were baptised in traumatic civil wars'.[6] Rokkan's call for comparison has been repeated in recent years, with Cormac Ó Gráda, for example, recognising the potential for rigorous comparative studies of Finland and Ireland.[7] The desire and need to develop the comparison has re-emerged now as perhaps more vital than ever as historians look to explore, in a more rigorous and sustained fashion, the comparative and transnational dimensions to political, social, cultural and economic history. In this sense, the era of commemorations has also revealed the potential for exploring the notable parallels which can be found by looking outside of the national historical paradigm and through the adoption of comparative and transnational approaches.

Mae M. Ngai, of Columbia University, argued in December 2012 that in the new millennium, the 'transnational turn' had possibly been 'the most important development in the historical discipline'.[8] From the perspective of this collection, two important local manifestations of this global phenomenon emerged just as Ngai was writing her article. First, the formation of the 'Transnational Ireland' group in 2012 reflected a wave of innovative new research in Irish political, social and cultural history.[9] Second, in Finland, the Centre of Excellence in Historical Research began a series of 'Finland in Comparison' seminars, which discussed various comparative and transnational methodological approaches, and attempted to overcome the particularism which can accompany narrowly-national historiographies.[10] Drawing inspiration from these new approaches, and having been aware for some years of several researchers working on diverse comparative

[4] A. G. Newby, *Éire na Rúise: An Fhionlainn agus Éire ar thóir na saoirse* (Dublin, 2016).

[5] John Hampden Jackson, 'Suomi ja Irlanti: eräitä vertauskohtia' in *Suomalainen Suomi*, vi (1937), pp 415–21. See also Edward J. Coyne, 'Finland and its lessons for Ireland' in *Studies*, xxviii, no. 112 (Dec. 1939), pp 651–61.

[6] Stein Rokkan, 'The growth and structuring of mass politics in western Europe: reflections on possible models of explanation' in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, v (1970), pp 68–75. Rokkan is also quoted in Bill Kissane, 'Nineteenth century nationalism in Finland and Ireland: a comparative analysis' in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vi, no. 2 (2000), p. 25.

[7] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history* (Oxford, 1994), p. 208.

[8] Mae M. Ngai, 'Promises and perils of transnational history' in *Perspectives on History*, l, no. 9 (Dec. 2012) (online edition: https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/the-future-of-the-discipline/promises-and-perils-of-transnational-history) (16 Aug. 2016).

[9] See 'Transnational Ireland' (http://www.transnationalireland.com) (10 July 2016).

[10] See 'History of society: re-thinking Finland, 1400–2000' (http://www.uta.fi/yky/coehistory/index.html) (10 July 2016).

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Irish–Finnish topics, the carefully-selected articles collected here offer a rigorous and critical approach to the idea of comparing these two nations. Each individual article is comparative, self-reflective, and aware of broader European contexts. While not claiming to be comprehensive, the aim is to highlight the value of enhancing our understanding of the comparative and transnational aspects of Finnish and Irish history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There are, of course, dangers in relying on two small peripheral nations as the basis for transnational histories. There is, in particular, a risk that we might mistake the comparative for the transnational and fail to take our subjects 'out of national frameworks'.[11] Yet, it is a central contention here that comparative and transnational approaches, while distinct, can be complementary and richly reinforcing. The use of methods which combine these approaches is valuable in at once understanding the differences between specific national contexts while exploring how these were, in turn, shaped by the shared experience of the transnational phenomena discussed in this collection, namely, nationalism, popular politics, conflicts over land and resources, rural poverty and cooperation, and urban development. This does not imply that the nation is the inevitable or natural focus of comparative history but rather that it is a useful one. The comparative history of nations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is, in particular, useful and important, in allowing for explorations of nationality at a time when the idea of the nation state was, at once, both a compelling and binding force as well as a highly divisive one.[12] Thus, the collection unapologetically places an emphasis on the 'national' in transnational while also exposing how national frameworks are shaped and bound by the wider movements of ideas and forces which can come to define and mark out the 'nation'.[13] In this sense, we eschew essentialist or universalising ideas of the 'nation', while recognising the enduring power and force of the idea of the 'nation' in modern European history.

This is of particular importance in Ireland and Finland as both countries mark the centenaries of nation-defining political conflicts that continue to impact upon social, cultural and political life, as well as scholarly and popular debate. The essays provide a crucial context for our understanding of these events by examining key developments in both countries in the decades

[11] Niall Whelehan, 'Playing with scales: transnational history and modern Ireland' in idem (ed.), *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (Abingdon, 2015), p. 7. See also Katarina Friberg, Mary Hilson and Natasha Vall, 'Reflections on transnational comparative history from an Anglo–Swedish perspective' in *Historik Tidskrift*, cxxvii, no. 4 (2007), pp 717–37; Philippa Levine, 'Is comparative history possible?' in *History and Theory*, liii, no. 3 (Oct. 2014), pp 331–47.

[12] As Koccka and Haupt note 'the most mature comparative history of Europe analyses similarities and differences in respect to convergence and divergence between national identities, national societies, and national cultures. There are good reasons for such an approach that are related to the huge importance of national borders, identities, cultures, and politics in structuring both the life of the past and the present images of history' (Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparison and beyond: traditions, scope, and perspectives of comparative history' in idem (eds), *Comparative and transnational history: central European approaches and new perspectives* (New York, 2009), p. 19).

[13] For a neat summary of the transnational history of nationalism, see C. A. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world* (Oxford, 2004), pp 199–243.

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preceding their respective conflicts and by looking at aspects of their legacy. In this way, the collection is both a contribution to burgeoning transnational and comparative approaches and also a timely contribution to centenary commemorations in both countries.[14]

Although contemporaries certainly made liberal use of international comparisons in the 'long nineteenth century', either in making cultural or political points or in seeking examples of what is now called 'best practice' in socio-economic matters, historians in the period after the Second World War were slow to develop analyses which cut across and transcended national boundaries. In recent decades, however, the national paradigm, while still prominent, has been supplemented and, at times, challenged by a variety of transnational and comparative approaches to economic, social, political and cultural history. On the Irish side, a variety of European states have been examined, either in strictly comparative terms or, just as often, in exploring the connections and intellectual currents which may have, in Joep Leerssen's words, 'criss-crossed Europe'.[15] Modern Ireland has been coupled in comparative and transnational accounts with Sweden, Poland, the Czech lands, Hungary, Germany, Italy, and France.[16] Colin Graham and Leon Litvack's 2006 volume, *Ireland and Europe in the nineteenth century*, and Brian Heffernan's *Life on the fringe? Ireland and Europe, 1800–1922*, published in 2012, feature ground-breaking comparative work in a number of thematic areas and on a variety of national comparative levels.[17] Publishers have also taken a proactive interest in the new perspectives offered by such approaches, and Peter Lang's innovative 'Reimagining Ireland' series, in particular, has provided a great deal of interesting material in recent years.[18]

[14] See 'Decade of Centenaries' (http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/) and 'Suomi Finland 100' (http://suomifinland100.fi/info/?lang=en) (10 May 2016).

[15] Joep Leerssen, *National thought in Europe: a cultural history* (Amsterdam, 2006), p. 169.

[16] Donald H. Akenson, *Ireland, Sweden and the great European migration* (Liverpool, 2011); Niall Whelehan, 'Youth, generations and collective action in nineteenth-century Ireland and Italy' in *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, lvi (2014), pp 934–66; idem, 'Revolting peasants: southern Italy, Ireland and cartoons in comparative perspective, 1860–1882' in *International Review of Social History*, lx (2015), pp 1–35; Róisín Healy, *Poland in the Irish nationalist imagination 1772–1922: anti-colonialism within Europe* (Basingstoke, 2017); idem, 'Irish–Polish solidarity: Irish responses to the January Uprising of 1863–4 in Congress Poland' in Whelehan (ed.), *Transnational perspectives*, p. 149; Lili Zách, 'Ireland, Czechoslovakia and the question of small nations in the context of Ireland's wartime neutrality' in Aidan O'Malley and Eve Patten (eds), *Ireland, west to east: Irish cultural connections with central and Eastern Europe* (Berne, 2014); Zsuzanna Zarka, 'Irish nationalist images of Lajos Kossuth and Hungary in the aftermath of the 1848–49 Revolution' in Brian Heffernan (ed.), *Life on the fringe? Ireland and Europe, 1800–1922* (Dublin, 2012); Shane Nagle, 'Confessional identity as national boundary in national historical narratives: Ireland and Germany compared' in *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, xiii, no. 1 (2013), pp 38–56; Thomas Kabdebó, *Hungary and Ireland: historical contrasts, historical parallels* (Dublin, 1992).

[17] Colin Graham and Leon Litvack (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the nineteenth century* (Dublin 2006); Heffernan (ed.), *Life on the fringe?*

[18] See, *inter alia*, O'Malley & Patten (eds), *Ireland, west to east*; Gerald Power and Ondřej Pilný (eds), *Ireland and the Czech lands: contacts and comparisons in history and culture* (Berne, 2014); Una Hunt and Mary Pierse (eds), *France and Ireland: notes and narratives* (Berne, 2015); Benjamin Keatinge and Mary Pierse (eds), *France and Ireland*

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Such comparisons are, of course, not completely novel and some important comparative work emerged from the 1970s onwards. Arguably the best model for comparative studies involving Irish history can be found relatively close to home, with Irish–Scottish studies providing the most important comparative breakthroughs thus far. Since the publication in 1977 of *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history*, edited by Louis Cullen and Chris Smout, Irish–Scottish studies has grown into a self-sustaining and, vitally, self-critical interdisciplinary research area.[19] The year 1999 saw the establishment of a Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen, and a Centre for Irish–Scottish Studies at Trinity College Dublin. A biannual *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* was launched in 2007. More recently, Alvin Jackson has provided a ground-breaking exercise in comparative history through an incisive exploration of the varying experiences of political union in Ireland and Scotland.[20] Although not as common as the comparative histories of Ireland and Scotland, important comparative studies of Ireland and France were also published in the later decades of the twentieth century, with historians based at Trinity College Dublin again to the fore.[21]

Yet, despite such important work, sustained comparative and transnational studies involving Ireland and other European countries, when viewed within the broader context of Irish historical studies, constitute but a small fraction of published work in the field. This is particularly the case for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While medievalists and early modernists have, at times, eagerly embraced the European dimensions of the Irish experience,[22] the study of late modern Ireland often remains, as Enda Delaney points out, something of an 'island story' in much scholarly work. The focus outside of Ireland,

in the public imagination (Berne, 2014); Eamon Maher and Catherine Maignant (eds), *Franco–Irish connections in space and time* (Berne, 2012).

[19] See, inter alia, Louis M. Cullen and T. Christopher Smout (eds), *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history, 1600–1900* (Edinburgh, 1977); Thomas M. Devine and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1850: parallels and contrasts in economic and social development* (Edinburgh, 1983). More recent volumes demonstrate the extent to which Irish–Scottish studies has become a very refined and self-reflective comparative project. See: Robert J. Morris and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: order and disorder, 1600–2000* (Edinburgh, 2005); Liam MacIlvanney and Ray Ryan (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: culture and society, 1700–2000* (Dublin, 2005); Frank Ferguson and James McConnel (eds), *Ireland and Scotland in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2009).

[20] Alvin Jackson, *The two unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the survival of the United Kingdom, 1707–2007* (Oxford, 2012).

[21] See, for instance, L. M. Cullen and François Furet (eds), *Ireland and France 17th–20th centuries: towards a comparative study of rural history* (Paris, 1981); Hugh Gough and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Dublin, 1990).

[22] On medieval Ireland, see, for example, Peter Crooks, 'Medieval Ireland and the wider world' in *Studia Hib.*, xxxv (2009), pp 167–86 and, more recently, Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes (eds), *Early medieval Ireland and Europe: chronology, contacts, scholarship* (Turnhout, 2015). For the early-modern period, see Nicholas Canny, 'Early modern history: Ireland, Britain and the wider world' in *Hist. Jn.*, xlvi, no. 3 (Sept. 2003), pp 723–47. See also: Thomas O'Connor (ed.), *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815* (Dublin, 2001); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish communities in early modern Europe* (Dublin, 2006).

when it emerges, tends to follow, admittedly with considerable success, the well-trodden paths of empire and the related patterns of Irish migrant dispersal.[23] Even explorations of the dominant connection with Britain have, as Alvin Jackson notes, often concentrated on particular links with the metropolitan centre.[24] While some excellent regional studies have been undertaken, the political, intellectual and commercial links with London still overshadow the sweatier exertions of life in the sugar refineries of Greenock or the dock work of Cardiff and, on a more basic level, we still lack simple and sustained comparisons of rural life between Ireland and Britain. Where comparisons and connections are developed, the focus often remains firmly on the political (broadly defined) and the urban while the fine grain of social practice and cultural life in rural areas, although ripe for comparative analysis, remains in a state of relative neglect. In the Finnish case, aside from occasional works that have developed analogies with Hungary, Ireland and Poland respectively,[25] comparative European studies remain, if anything, an even rarer sighting, which suggests that, for all its limitations, the Irish level of engagement in comparative studies has been relatively impressive. Yet, even where comparative collections have emerged, they have often been more suggestive than sustained. Thus, while much valuable research has been produced, the comparative elements are often left for the readers to work out for themselves – vaguely similar themes are dealt with, and a very light editorial hand is used to suggest comparisons and contrasts.

There is a need, therefore, to adopt a more rigorous and sustained approach to the comparative and transnational study of both Ireland and Finland. As has been found in Irish–Scottish studies, there is a need to seek out complexity beyond the obvious comparison and it is likely to be the moments of contrast, more than those of similarity, which provide the most interesting points of departure for debate, discussion, and further research. We believe that, albeit on a more limited scale, there is scope for developing Irish–Finnish studies along these lines and in, recent years, valuable comparative work on Finland and Ireland has emerged from both countries. This includes Bill Kissane's discussions of nineteenth-century nationalism, and, more recently, the two countries' civil wars;[26] Michael Coleman's account

[23] Enda Delaney, 'Our island story? Towards a transnational history of late modern Ireland' in *I.H.S*, xxxvii, no. 148 (Nov. 2011), pp 599–621. For a discussion of the contrast between the strong comparative focus of some key studies of early-modern Ireland and the often narrower focus of late-modern histories, see Whelehan, 'Playing with scales'.

[24] See Alvin Jackson's Foreword in this issue.

[25] Tapani Mauranen, *Economic development in Hungary and Finland, 1860–1939* (Helsinki, 1985); Olli Vehviläinen and Attila Pók (eds), *Hungary and Finland in the 20th century* (Helsinki, 2002); Michael Branch, Janet Hartley and Antoni Mączak (eds), *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire: a comparative study* (London, 1995); Raimo Pullat, *Suomi ja Puola: Suhteita yli Itämeren, 1917–1941* (Helsinki, 1997). For past comparative work on Ireland and Finland, see below footnotes 26–29.

[26] Bill Kissane, 'Democratization, state formation, and civil war in Finland and Ireland: a reflection on the democratic peace hypothesis' in *Comparative Political Studies*, xxxvii (Oct. 2004), pp 969–85; idem, 'Victory in defeat? National identity after civil war in Finland and Ireland' in John A. Hall and Siniša Malešević (eds), *Nationalism and war* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 321–40.

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of the language question;[27] Kati Nurmi's work on comparative cultural and linguistic nationalism;[28] and Andrew G. Newby's articles on famine, emigration, and more general national questions.[29] Such studies point to the potential of comparison and this collection constitutes another small but important contribution to realising the ambition of placing Ireland and Finland within wider comparative and transnational contexts. It is hoped also that this collection will open up further 'routes of exchange' which other scholars might follow to explore key themes in the histories of both countries.[30] These might, to name but a few, include the study of the specific themes of poverty, violence, war, nationalism, language and cultural revival, as well as concepts of gender, political culture and social practice.

I

On the surface, Finland and Ireland share many similarities in their economic, social and political histories. Both countries were part of wider political unions and dominated by larger neighbours. Ireland was, as a consequence of the Act of Union, part of the United Kingdom and political control of the island very much rested in London and a unionist administration in Dublin.[31] This was also a source of much nationalist agitation (and, at times, violent political action) throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth

[27] Michael Coleman, '"You might all be speaking Finnish today": language change in nineteenth century Finland and Ireland' in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, xxxv (2010), pp 44–64.

[28] Kati Nurmi, 'Imagining the nation in Irish and Finnish popular culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in Heffernan (ed.) *Life on the fringe?*, pp 39–61.

[29] Andrew G. Newby, 'Overcoming amnesia? Memorializing Finland's "Great Hunger Years"' in Emily Mark-FitzGerald, Oona Frawley and Marguérite Corporaal (eds), *The Great Famine and its impacts: visual and material culture* (Liverpool, forthcoming 2017); idem, *Éire na Rúise*; idem, '"Acting in their appropriate and wanted sphere": the Society of Friends and Famine in Ireland and Finland, *c*.1845–68' in Christine Kinealy, Patrick Fitzgerald and Gerard Moran (eds), *Irish hunger and migration: myth, memory and memorialization* (Quinnipiac, 2015), pp 107–20; Andrew G. Newby and Timo Myllyntaus, '"The terrible visitation": Famine in Ireland and Finland, 1845–68' in Declan Curran, Lubomyr Luciuk and Andrew G. Newby (eds), *Famines in European economic history: the last great European Famines reconsidered* (Abingdon, 2015), pp 145–65; Andrew G. Newby, '"Rather peculiar claims on our sympathies": Britain and Famine in Finland, 1856–68' in Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack, Lindsay Janssen and Ruud van den Beuken (eds), *Global legacies of the Great Irish Famine: transnational and interdisciplinary perspectives* (Berne, 2014), pp 61–80; idem, '"Neither do these tenants or their children emigrate!" Famine and transatlantic emigration from Finland in the nineteenth century' in *Atlantic Studies*, xi, no. 3 (2014), pp 383–402; idem, '"The cold, northern land of Suomi": Michael Davitt and Finnish nationalism' in *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, vi, no. 1 (2013), pp 73–92; idem, '"The manly spirit of the Finlanders": Michael Davitt, Finland och irländsk nationalism, åren 1904–5' in Peter Stadius, Stefan Nygård and Pirkko Hautamäki (eds), *Opera et dies: Festskrift till Lars-Folke Landgrén* (Helsingfors, 2011), pp 131–46.

[30] On the idea of 'routes of exchange' between Ireland and Europe, see Lucy McDiarmid, 'Irish men and French food' in Graham and Litvack (eds), *Ireland and Europe*, pp 186–98; Graham and Litvack, 'Introduction' in ibid., pp 13–15.

[31] On the Irish Act of Union, see, for instance, Michael Brown, Patrick Geoghegan and James Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union: bicentennial essays* (Dublin, 2003).

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centuries. In 1809, eight years after the Act of Union came into force in Ireland, Finland, amidst the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars, was removed from Swedish control under the terms of the Treaty of Frederikshamn, and became a grand duchy of the Russian Empire. It was absorbed within Russian imperial structures and the highest political and judicial powers were held in the hands of the emperor in St Petersburg. Finland, however, enjoyed a good deal of autonomy and much power was delegated to the Finnish Senate in Helsinki.[32] The Russians, keen to counter residual Swedish influence in the grand duchy, were by no means averse to the development and promotion of distinctive expressions of Finnish national identity through cultural forums and the promotion of the Finnish language.[33]

This level of autonomy, and the consequent political and cultural development in Finland was, as we shall see, a source of envy and comparison for Irish nationalists in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. One of the mantras that underpinned the growth of Finnish national consciousness was the notion that: 'Swedes we are no longer. Russians we can never become. Therefore, let us be Finns!' As Kati Nurmi has observed, there are echoes here of Michael P. O'Hickey's assertion that 'We may, to all intents and purposes, cease to be Gaels; we may, in a sense, become West Britons; further we cannot go – Saxons we cannot become!' The acceptance of home rule as a means of preserving Irish identity within a broader union with Britain meant that Finland became a role model for some home rulers. Finnish nationalists did not, as we shall see, return the admiration.[34]

These political machinations emerged within a shared experience of economic uncertainty but were also built on important contrasts when it came to questions of land and religion. Both countries in the nineteenth century were predominantly rural and were dependent on agriculture to sustain their economies. For most of the nineteenth century, well over three-quarters of the Irish population lived in rural areas or in towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants while in Finland the rural nature of society was even more pronounced with urban dwellers accounting for only 10 per cent of the population in 1890.[35] Both sustained (or, at times, failed to sustain) large populations of labouring poor and were, by European standards, economically under-developed. Indeed, their relative economic weakness and vulnerability is reflected in the fact that the last large-scale peacetime famines in Europe took place in Ireland between 1845 and 1852 and in Finland in 1867 and 1868 – although the severity of the Famine in Ireland was more sustained and ultimately much greater than in Finland, and had a more serious impact

[32] Particularly in comparison with its Scandinavian neighbours, Finland is well served by English-language accounts of its history. For overviews of the nineteenth century, see *inter alia* David Kirby, *A concise history of Finland* (Cambridge, 2006); Jason E. Lavery, *The history of Finland* (Westport, CT, 2006); Henrik Meinander, *A history of Finland* (London, 2010).

[33] See, e.g. Kenneth D. McRae, *Conflict and compromise in multilingual societies: Finland* (Waterloo, ON, 1997), pp 49–51. For late-imperial conflict over the language question, see Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial borderland: Bobrikov and the attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904* (London, 1984), pp 133–51.

[34] Nurmi, 'Imagining the nation', p. 45.

[35] W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971* (A new history of Ireland, ancillary publications ii: Dublin, 1978), p. 27; *Annuaire Statistique de Finlande* (Helsinki, 1909), p. 7.

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on the ranks of the labouring classes. Beneath the obvious comparisons, therefore, there are considerable differences between the Great Famines of Ireland and Finland – both in the events themselves and their longer-term impact and memorialisation. With regard to depopulation, Finland's 100,000 excess deaths, and levels of emigration that numbered in the thousands, were dwarfed by the Irish case. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, demographically and economically, it can be said that Finland recovered much more quickly.[36]

The related question of land was central to economic and social life in both countries but patterns of settlement and ownership were quite distinct. Whereas Ireland had experienced the mass transfer of land ownership, in a short, brutal and sustained manner in the seventeenth century, Finland had not undergone a similar upheaval and there was a relative stability in native control of economic resources. In Ireland, the question of land was a source of mass agitation and became embedded in nationalist rhetoric and politics in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. In Finland, as we shall see, agitation came later, was less extensive and, drawing in the ranks of the labouring poor, was bound more to the socialist movement than tied overtly to a 'national question'.[37]

Political life and society in Ireland was also shaped to a far greater degree by sectarian and religious divisions. In Finland, religion was undoubtedly a force for greater social and cultural cohesion with an overwhelmingly Lutheran population, whereas in Ireland deep divisions existed between the Protestant minority and the Catholic majority. The Swede-Finn political elite in Finland were also more clearly aligned, and comfortable, with the development of Finnish nationalism than the Anglo-Irish elite, who often struggled with and fought against the development of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century.[38]

The similarities and differences in the Irish and Finnish experiences were also not lost on commentators in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Although Bill Kissane notes that nationalism in Finland and Ireland had different characteristics in the nineteenth century – he classes Irish nationalism as a predominantly ethnic movement, whereas the Finns focused more on elements of civic identity – there were nevertheless enough similarities that politicians and activists on both sides were able to look to each other for comparison.[39] Indeed, the historical and constitutional parallels between Finland and Ireland were well-known on both sides, and, at times, employed as rhetorical devices. In an Irish context, these points of comparison came into particularly sharp focus during the debates over home rule in the 1880s, when the relationship between Finland and Russia was presented by home rule advocates as a perfect accommodation between a larger and a smaller power, allowing the growth of native ingenuity and identity, but within an imperial framework which then benefited from these developments. Thus, in the early 1890s, Finland was championed by home rulers as 'assuredly the best-governed country in Europe'[40], and 'probably the happiest instance in the

[36] Newby & Myllyntaus, '"The terrible visitation"', pp 145–65.

[37] For an overview of the 'land question' in Ireland, see Terence Dooley, 'Land and the people' in Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford handbook*, pp 107–25. For the comparison with Finland, see Sami Suodenjoki's article in this issue.

[38] See Kissane, 'Nineteenth century nationalism'; idem, 'Democratization, state formation, and civil war'.

[39] Kissane, 'Nineteenth century nationalism', p. 40.

[40] *John Bull*, 17 Jan. 1891.

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world of a Home Rule country governed thoroughly well'.[41] Irish nationalists used Finland as an example to illustrate that home rule was not only possible, but desirable; that it could strengthen, rather than dissolve, the union of Great Britain and Ireland, and consequently the British Empire; and that British support for the rights of a 'small nation' like Finland exposed considerable hypocrisy. C. Harold Perrott countered in 1899, in the context of the Russification policy in Finland, that the comparison between Ireland and Finland was 'absurd', and that 'Ireland's autonomy vanished very long ago'. Ireland, in demanding home rule, was 'asking for what she does not possess', whereas 'Finland would keep what is already hers'. As a result, the Irish question was 'a British domestic difference', but Finland was 'of political interest to the whole world'.[42]

The attempted idealisation of the Finnish situation relative to Ireland and perhaps also Finland's greater potential links to international tensions and conflict were severely exposed in the context of civil wars in both countries in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the contrast between the two countries is most obvious in the context of political violence and civil war. Estimates suggest that fatalities during Ireland's Civil War were but a fraction of those in its Finnish counterpart. Even if we include the outbreak of conflict in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, levels of lethal political violence in Ireland remained low relative to Finland. In the late 1910s, Finland probably had three times more deaths than arose from political conflict in Ireland in the whole of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[43]

The often striking parallels between the history of modern Finland and Ireland, and their place within wider patterns of European development, deserve greater attention. This can be achieved without compromising the need to acknowledge the diversity of experience in both countries. To this end, comparative and transnational approaches, if undertaken with care, and with an awareness of the challenges they pose and the differences between them, can illuminate and offer new perspectives on the history of two countries that are too often overlooked or side-lined within the grand narratives of modern European history. While acknowledging the distinctive features of both countries, the contributors to this collection also eschew notions of Irish or Finnish exceptionalism but rather try to integrate the histories of both countries into wider trends and developments. In this sense, the selection of two countries that are too often overlooked in wider histories offers something

[41] *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Feb. 1891.

[42] [C. Harold Perrott], 'Ireland and Finland' in *Finland: An English Journal Devoted to the Cause of the Finnish People*, no. 3 (Sept. 1899), p. 11.

[43] See J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 69. Lee notes a ('probably exaggerated') figure of 4,000 fatalities arising from the Irish Civil War and offers a figure of 25,000 fatalities for the Finnish Civil War – over six times the Irish total in a country with a smaller population. More recent estimates suggest the death toll in the Finnish Civil War was even higher at 36,000 – nine times Lee's estimate for the Irish Civil War. See: Pertti Haapala and Marko Tikka, 'Revolution, civil war, and terror in Finland in 1918' in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p. 72. Deaths from lethal political violence in Ireland, including periods of warfare, over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are difficult to estimate precisely but were, even with high estimates, unlikely to have exceeded 12,000 in number.

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new – a view from the margins that can inform and challenge dominant narratives of European development and provide case studies within which to develop new and rigorous methodological and theoretical approaches for comparative and transnational histories. Indeed, both countries demand new, comparative and ground-breaking histories which acknowledge but transcend national boundaries and which can, at this moment of commemoration, inform public debate.

II

The articles gathered here mark a start on the journey to a wider comparative and transnational history of both countries. They offer insights into the economic, social, political and cultural history of Ireland and Finland from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries – encompassing key themes of rural unrest, urban development, political conflict, and cultural and national identity. The collection also includes a select document which highlights the fact that the comparison of Irish and Finnish history is not a novel academic activity. We present the first translation of J. Hampden Jackson's 'Suomi ja Irlanti: eräitä vertauskohtia' ('Finland and Ireland: assorted comparisons') which, eighty years ago, set out for a Finnish readership the broad parallels in the Irish and Finnish experiences. It provides a fascinating insight into the use of Finland and Ireland as mutual comparators in the mid-twentieth century, as well as a narrative that helps to provide a context for the other articles. Although Hampden Jackson's analysis is sometimes superficial, the article highlights the potential for comparison on questions of nationality, culture and social life.

The centrality of questions of national identity and of nationalism in the experiences of both countries is evident, in a rather different form, in the first article of the collection, Andrew G. Newby's study of Ireland and Finland as 'oppressed nationalities'. One of the recurrent themes in Finnish reporting of Ireland's 1916 centenary, for example, was the presence in the G.P.O. of a Finn who, it was said, had come to fight on behalf of 'small nationalities'.[44] Captain Liam Tannam recalled being approached by the Finn and his Swedish companion, who explained that they wanted to fight for Irish freedom:

> I asked him why a Swede and a Finn would want to fight against the British … 'Tell me why you want to come in here and fight against England'. He said: 'Finland, a small country. Russia eat her up'. Then he said: 'Sweden, another small country, Russia eat her up too. Russia with the British, therefore we against'.[45]

For Newby, the discourse of imperial subjugation that existed in both Ireland and Finland in the first decade of the twentieth century has somewhat obscured the fact that the nineteenth century experiences of these nations differed considerably. As noted, both Finland and Ireland were part of larger imperial systems in the nineteenth century, and both sought to develop political, economic and cultural autonomy. Finland became a regularly-employed

[44] Newby, *Éire na Rúise*, pp 76–90.
[45] Liam Tannam statement (N.A.I., Bureau of Military History, WS 242).

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model for Irish national aspirations, but the analogy was consistently rejected by Finns in the nineteenth century. Only after 1899, when Russia imposed severe restrictions on Finnish autonomy, did Finns start to see themselves as a 'distressed small nation', alongside the likes of Bulgaria, Portugal and Ireland. Although Poland and Hungary were the examples most frequently presented by Irish nationalists, even before Arthur Griffith's publication of *The resurrection of Hungary* in 1904, Finland was used recurrently as a model for a small, self-governing country. Conversely, however, while many other national movements in Europe decried British misrule, Finns distanced themselves from what they perceived as the lawless, violent, and uneducated Irish. Newby charts the development of the Finnish–Irish constitutional analogy from the middle of the nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century. In doing so, he demonstrates that despite the similarities in historical timelines, contemporaries understood and reacted to the considerable difference between the two cases.

One of the key differences noted by Victorian commentators, that of land tenure, is explored in Sami Suodenjoki's article. In examining the parallels between Finland and Ireland in 1885, for example, the *Freeman's Journal* noted that 'There, as here, the great bulk of the people are agriculturalists. But the Finnish farmer owns the land he ploughs, and the Fins [*sic*] have Home Rule in a very full measure.'[46] In his study of rural protest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Suodenjoki notes how, despite apparent similarities in imperial contexts and the shared centrality of the rural economy in both countries, land agitation took strikingly different political directions in Finland and Ireland at this time. He offers a compelling comparative account of the scale and character of the land movements in these two countries and the influence of imperial policies and transnational exchanges on their development. In doing so, he draws on comparative historiography and new findings on Finnish rural protests based on archival materials and newspapers. He demonstrates how rural unrest was far more extensive in Ireland than in Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. The Finnish countryside was admittedly also marked by growing discontent among tenants and workers, the scale and repertoire of which expanded after the turn of the century, partially owing to the crisis over the status of Finland within Russia. But the political unfolding of the rural protest movements in Finland and Ireland was essentially different in their relationships to nationalism and socialism. This difference stemmed from various factors, ranging from the patterns of land ownership to the influence of international socialism and the Russian revolutions. Thus, the mobilisation of agricultural labourers in Ireland was, from early on, subsumed into the national movement dominated by the rural middle class, whereas Finnish landless people's political activity was eventually channelled into the socialist movement, enabling the Social Democrats to gain a strong position in the Finnish political system after 1905.

Both countries, of course, were not simply marked by rural conflict – there were also attempts at cooperation. As Mary Hilson demonstrates, agricultural co-operative societies were widely discussed across late nineteenth-century

[46] *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Aug. 1885. See also, *The Nation*, 15 Aug. 1885.

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Europe as a means of addressing issues such as agricultural depression, land reform and rural poverty. In Finland, the agronomist Hannes Gebhard initially drew inspiration from the rural co-operatives of Germany in founding the Pellervo Society, intended to promote rural cooperation, in 1899. But his attention quickly turned away from Germany. Ireland's 'tragic history', its struggle for national self-determination, and the introduction of co-operative dairies to tackle rural poverty seemed to offer a useful example for Finnish reformers. In her article, Hilson analyses the exchanges between Irish and Finnish cooperators at the turn of the twentieth century, and examines the ways in which the parallels between the two countries were constructed and presented by those involved in these exchanges. She also considers the reasons for the divergence in the development of cooperation, so that even before the First World War it was Finland, rather than Ireland, that had come to be regarded as 'a model co-operative country'.

Although both Finland and Ireland were predominantly rural, the question of the city, and particularly of urban development, loomed large in both countries. In Dublin, for instance, the poor state of housing and the high levels of poverty were a key refrain in burgeoning nationalist critiques of British influence in Ireland. The city itself would also become a centre point for the rejection of British rule in Ireland – literally becoming, in 1916, a battleground for competing futures and subsequently a major centre of conflict in the independence struggle. This, of course, meant that when independence was won the new government had to confront what, if anything, could be done to re-shape and re-build the capital. This was no minor consideration. As Marjaana Niemi neatly demonstrates capital cities are important arenas for displaying national identity. Through these cities, nations express central aspects of their identity and seek to define relations with other countries. In the aftermath of the First World War nine new European states, Finland and Ireland among them, were confronted with the question of how to create a capital city befitting their new status and all rejected the idea of developing an entirely new capital city, choosing rather an existing city as the capital.

In her article, Niemi elaborates the processes through which the two capitals, Helsinki and Dublin, were renewed physically and symbolically to fit the needs and demands of the new independent era. In both cities, policy-makers planned and implemented material and symbolic transformations in the cityscapes to make the political change 'real'. Some elements and versions of the past were chosen over others, preserved and reinvented in the cityscape, while others were obscured or simply denied. Niemi discusses how the material and symbolic changes in the cityscapes reflected and reinforced new interpretations of the history of the city and the nation and, what kind of continuities and discontinuities were created between the past and the present. In doing so, she emphasises how a shared European identity, rooted in classicism, shaped the re-building of both cities.

Taken together, these articles represent the growing willingness to embrace comparative and transnational histories. They also provide a framework for further comparative studies between these two countries. The challenges of such work are clear – mastery of languages, expertise in different national histories and archives, the ability to trace complex phenomena across national boundaries – but so too are the potentially rich histories than can emerge from

an engagement beyond the immediate national context.[47] Indeed, such comparative and transnational approaches are not only desirable but are also a necessary and almost inevitable aspect of any full and rounded history. Ireland and Finland are different places with distinct histories but they also share a range of common experiences and it is the fine details of convergence and divergence in the particular local, regional and national contexts of those experiences that make comparative and transnational studies so rich and vital. It serves to bring to light the complexity of forces and phenomena which transcend but also shape life within real and imagined boundaries and borders.

[47] Donald M. MacRaild and Avram Taylor, *Social theory and social history* (London, 2004), p. 68. The editors acknowledge the support of the Academy of Finland (grants #1264940 and #1257696) in the development of this collection. We are grateful too for the support of Carlow College as this collection emerges, in part, from a new inter-institutional arrangement between Trinity College Dublin and Carlow College and, in particular, the development of a new comparative and inter-disciplinary programme in Irish history and culture entitled 'Reimagining Ireland'.