



Patrick Mannion. *A Land of Dreams: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Irish in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Maine, 1880–1923.* McGill-Queen's Studies in Ethnic History Series. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018. 360 pp. \$39.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7735-5361-3.

Reviewed by Niall Whelehan

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Commissioned by Cristian Cercel (Ruhr University Bochum)

There has been a welcome growth in comparative approaches to Irish migration over the past decade, with the appearance of a number of studies that compare Irish migrants in different places of settlement and Irish experiences with those of other migrant groups.[1] Some have considered this growth to be no more than a new “fashion,” but comparative history has been around a long time.[2] These studies have built on the small but longstanding presence of comparative perspectives on Irish migration that has enriched the scholarship for decades, particularly on Irish America. No doubt the wider interest among historians over the past decade or so to move beyond nation-state approaches, as well as the increasing accessibility of source material, has reinvigorated engagement with comparative history and made old obstacles less formidable.

One of the most recent additions to this body of work is Patrick Mannion’s ambitious study of Irish Catholic migrant identities in three cities, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Portland, Maine, during the period from 1880 to 1923. The focus on urban spaces reveals how identities varied considerably in local situations, challenging the neat, homogenizing interpretations based on national contexts. At the same time, local expressions of Irishness did not devel-

op in isolation, Mannion argues, rather they were “created and sustained by the complex interaction of local, regional, national, and transnational networks” (p. 4). The Irish in St. John’s were not marginalized but represented a well-established, multigenerational community that formed a majority of the city’s population. The Halifax Irish were similarly well integrated, though were not a majority. The Irish in Portland were a minority in a Republican and Protestant-dominated city and included more Irish-born migrants who lived in working-class districts. These demographic differences shaped engagement with Irish nationalism but did not define it, and the comparison challenges linear theories of assimilation and ethnic fade over generations.

The book begins and ends with two moments when engagement with Ireland peaked, during the Land War and Home Rule movements of the 1880s and the War of Independence and Civil War, 1919-23. In between, public expressions of nationalism flatlined in each city, though charitable societies and ethnic associations maintained a quiet presence and were typically divided along class lines. Spikes in nationalist activism were primarily stimulated by regional and transnational networks that brought Irish communities into the greater diaspora nationalist movement. All three

cities were among the North American ports closest to Ireland, yet interestingly the ports featured very little in connecting them to the homeland, rather nationalist politics, literature, and speakers came west via continental networks on North America. St. John's was some distance from the epicenters of Irish American nationalism in New York or Boston, but nationalist activity there was still influenced more by Irish American networks than direct links with Ireland.

The book emphasizes how the location of St. John's and Halifax within the British Empire was crucial for how nationalist sentiment was articulated. Home Rule was supported within "a loyal, pro-imperial paradigm" (p. 196), and calls to extend the political freedoms enjoyed in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia to Ireland were arguably a means for middle-class Irish to celebrate the status quo in both places, a combined expression of Irish nationalism, local patriotism, and loyalty to empire. Due to its US location and proximity to Irish American networks, Portland saw relatively higher levels of republicanism and anti-British sentiment, though constitutional nationalism still predominated until 1919. Nationalism was more moderate in St. John's and Halifax, yet it also encountered more opposition due to the presence of the Orange Order, whereas in Portland there was little or no hostility. Sectarian tensions did not engender more militant expressions of nationalism.

Responses to the 1916 Rising and the following executions were surprisingly muted in all three cities, apart from some expressions of disappointment with the rebels. In the postwar environment, Irish leaders in each city felt more willing or able to engage with Irish affairs and 1919 marked a striking nationalist resurgence after decades of inactivity. The Portland Irish proved more willing to publicly support separatism, while in St. John's and Halifax the reaction was framed more ambiguously in calls for Irish self-determination that sought to remain within the boundaries of imperial loyalty. Nonetheless, the

emergence in St. John's of the Self Determination for Ireland League of Newfoundland and a branch of the Friends of Irish Freedom broke with previous moderation. Here the transnational dimension of distant events in Ireland, particularly outrage at acts of British violence, seems more significant than the local context in shaping reactions, though there is brief mention of postwar disillusionment that may have contributed to new attitudes at the local level. Again, wider North American networks and traveling speakers were vital in shaping activity in each city in these years, including Katherine Hughes and the Orangeman-turned-nationalist Lindsay Crawford (a fascinating figure who could perhaps have been given more attention).

The book places Catholicism at the center of Irish life in the three cities. Mannion demonstrates how Catholic institutions, personnel, and societies were often more significant than nationalism in nurturing connections with Ireland. The Catholic Mutual Benefit Association, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, temperance societies, and the circulation of Irish-born men and women religious all contributed to maintaining Irish identities, particularly in St. John's where there was no significant Irish Protestant population. An interesting section on St. John's reveals that a large minority of Irish-born priests served the city in the late nineteenth century, but also that the majority of Newfoundland-born priests were trained in either All Hallows' College, Dublin or the Irish College in Rome. Irish Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Presentations Sisters also formed a large presence, and by 1900 "the education of Catholic pupils in St John's was almost entirely carried out by Irish teaching orders" (p. 154). Men and women religious, particularly the clergy, took the lead in fostering a sense of ethnic distinctiveness and also played important roles in directing, and sometimes restraining, nationalist activity. In St. John's and in Halifax, Catholic and Irish identities folded more neatly into each other than in Portland, where significant numbers of

non-Irish Catholics were present and the clergy mainly hailed from North America.

A strength of the book's comparative approach is how it reveals that ethnic identities and engagement with the politics of the homeland were never static but surged and faded depending on circumstances. In all three cities we see the "waxing and waning" of Irish identity (p. 118). Ethnic solidarity was not permanently in the foreground, but it had the capacity to "generate remarkable unity when domestic and external circumstances permitted it" (p. 234). Transnational linkages played inconsistent roles: they were crucial at certain times but negligible at others. In each city those of Irish birth and descent never felt their expressions of Irishness come into competition with their Canadian, American, or Newfoundland identities; they found ways to accommodate both without difficulty. Mannion's book adds considerable nuance to longstanding questions about migrant identities and the variable nature of links to the homeland, and demonstrates the importance of comparative and transnational approaches to the Irish diaspora.

Notes

[1]. William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion: The Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1867-1916* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Regina Donlan, *German and Irish Immigrants in the Midwestern United States, 1850-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018); Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Sophie Cooper, "Irish Migrant Identities and Community Life in Melbourne and Chicago, 1840-1890" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2017); Donald H. Akenson, *Ireland, Sweden and the Great European Migration, 1815-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); and J. Matthew Gallman, *Receiving Erin's Children: Philadelphia, Liverpool, and the Irish Famine Migration, 1845-1855* (Chapel Hill: University of

North Carolina Press, 2000). Recent comparative approaches are not, of course, confined to migration in Irish history. See, for example, Richard McMahon and Andrew Newby, eds., "Ireland and Finland, 1860-1930: Comparative and Transnational Histories," special issue, *Irish Historical Studies* 41, no. 160 (2017); and T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[2]. K. Theodore Hoppen, review of *Histories of Nationalism in Ireland and Germany: A Comparative Study*, by Shane Nagle, *Irish Historical Studies* 42, no. 161 (2018): 194.

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