

Irish History

A Topical Triptych

The Land

Eire: A Wild Geography

- an island never united politically, though homogenous culturally & linguistically
- difficult terrain (complicates invasions by Norseman (Vikings), Normans, and English)
- modern transportation can now overcome barriers: some idealists envision unification . . .



Four Provinces

- the west (Connaught): difficult geographies; inaccessible; romanticized
- the south (Munster): heavily Frenchified by Norman influence
- the east (Leinster): incl. “eastern triangle” w/ less rain, bog, & mountain; contains NewGrange, Tara, Dublin
- the north (Ulster): historically aloof; intractable (till Tudor “Plantations”)



Christianity's Advent: 5th c.

- Celtic thru 5th c. A.D.
- St. Patrick arrives (c.430-450), authors 1st extant document written in Eire (in Latin) narrates conversion of Eire north of Munster. *No martyrs.*
- introduces monastic life; monasteries proliferate after St. Pat's death
- Eire's growing monastic (not diocesan) hierarchy *unique* in western Christendom at the time



statue of St. Pat on Slieve Patrick,
overlooking Saul & Raholp

Two Tudors: King Henry VIII

reign: 1509-1547

- 1534: establishes Church of England after dispute w/ Pope Urban VIII; monasteries dismantled
- 1541: declares self king of Eire. Confiscates land owned by Irish Catholics & redistributes to ennobled friends (now *earls*);
- “Plantation” continues w/ subsequent Tudor monarchs; by 1590, most of Eire controlled by English



Hans Holbein the Younger's "King Henry VIII" (1537-47)

The Tudors: Queen Elizabeth I

reign: 1558–1603

- given strategic position of Eire in ongoing hostilities w/ France & Spain, Elizabeth ensures fidelity by granting plots of land to Protestant English settlers *who hold onto English language and culture*
- 1593-1603: Ulster War — Irish clan leaders revolt; ends w/ Battle of Kinsale (1601-1603)



“The Rainbow Portrait, “an allegorical, “ageless” representation, c.1600

Flight, Rebellion, Banishment

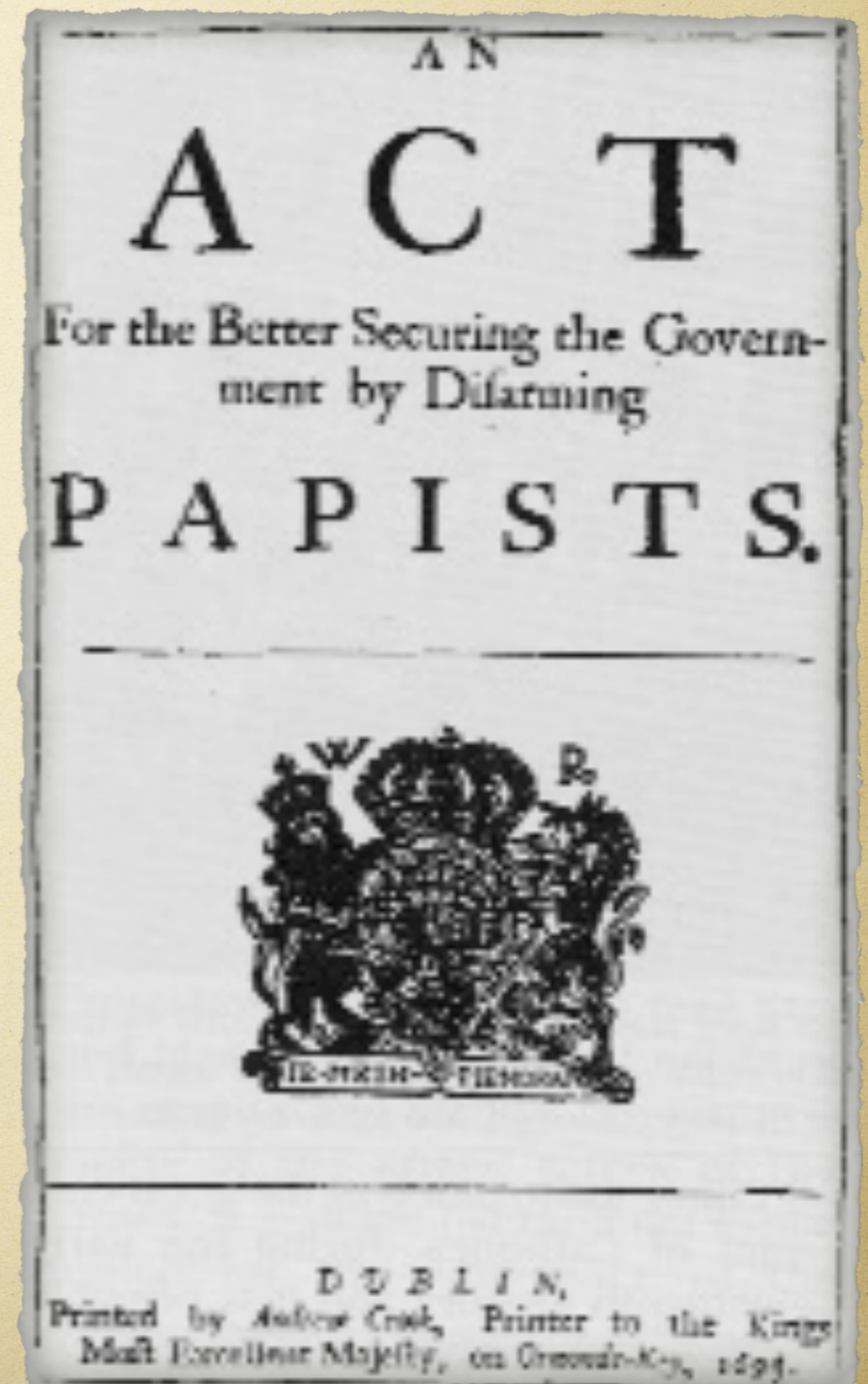
- 1607: Flight of the Earls (90+ Ulster aristocracy)
- 1609: Plantation of Ulster w/ English & Scottish Protestants (by James I)
- 1641: Irish Rebellion successful; Catholic Confederation in 1642; wars
- 1649-53: Cromwellian conquest
- 1697: Banishment Act (priests)



Robert Walker's
"Oliver Cromwell" (c.1649)

Anti-Catholicism

- 1695-1727: harshest penal laws (for practicing Catholic worship, not conforming to Established Church, refusing to take Oath of Supremacy)
- penalty for 1st offense: forfeit all possessions unless total < 20£ (then, imprisonment)
- 1729: Swift's "A Modest Proposal"
- 1793: franchise restored to Catholics
- 1829: Catholic Relief Act



Act of Union & Resistance

- 1800: Act of Union
- 1823: D. O'Connell forms Catholic Association (“monster” meetings, “Catholic Rent”); 1840: forms Repeal Association; Clontarf meeting fails
- 1858: James Stephens & Irish Republican Brotherhood (*Fenians*); 1867 uprising
- 1879: Irish National Land League founded by Michael Davitt & Charles Parnell; 1881: Landlord & Tenant Act (fair rent, fixity of tenure, tenant free to sell interest in holdings)
- 1886: Gladstone's 1st Home Rule bill defeated



Theobald Wolfe Tone's
death mask

Literary Arts as Protest

- 1729: Swift's "A Modest Proposal"
- 1842: Young Ireland formed, associated with weekly paper *The Nation*; failed insurrection in 1848
- 1892: D. Hyde's "The Necessity for De-Anglicising the Irish Nation"
- 1893: Gaelic League founded
- 1893: WBY's "To Ireland in the Coming Times"
- 1897: WBY, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn discuss theater



photo of Inis Oírr,
part of Aran Islands

Irish Literary Renaissance

- 1899: *United Irishman* weekly paper resurrected by Arthur Griffith & John Mitchel; contributors incl. poet Padraig Pearse & incendiary Maud Gonne
- 1899: performance of WBY's play "The Countess Cathleen"
- 1901: Douglas Hyde's *Casadh an tSúgáin* (*The Twisting of the Rope*), in Irish
- 1902: WBY's *Cathleen ni Houlihan*; 1903: Synge's *Riders to the Sea*
- 1904: Abbey Theater opens w/ WBY's *On Baile's Strand* and Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News*



the original Abbey Theater