

特別寄稿

The Second Boer War (1898–1902): Context of Queen Victoria's Final Visit to Ireland in 1900

Richard J. Kelly
Kinki University

The final years of Queen Victoria's reign were principally defined by the Second Boer War (1898–1902).¹ Britain's protracted campaign to eliminate the two independent Boer republics in southern Africa was intensely unpopular internationally, especially throughout a large part of mainland Europe. In Ireland, it produced curious paradoxical responses. Both radical and traditional nationalist elites condemned the war as an imperialist escapade concerning two white, Christian nations; they viewed the predicament of the Boers as having certain similarities with the predicament of Ireland and the Irish vis-à-vis the British Empire. The varied range of nationalist groups now had a galvanizing issue to reenergize their cause, though it was happening some 18,000 km away in a distant land in the southern hemisphere.

Around four hundred Irish volunteers, including John McBride (1868–1916) volunteered for military service with the Boers.² However, nothing illustrates the inadequacy of official nationalist discourse, of whatever variety, to encompass all the realities of Catholic nationalist Ireland more than the fact that some seventy times that number (28,000 Irishmen) signed up to fight with the British army against the Boers. Until the end of World War I (1914–18), a career in the British army was viewed as a perfectly acceptable choice in Ireland. The Irish contribution to the British Boer War effort, at a time when Britain was increasingly

unpopular internationally, led the English to have a more increasingly positive view of the Irish. This newly acquired good will was also reiterated by Queen Victoria; in fact, she deliberately embarked on a campaign of dynamism in order to boost her army's morale and resolve, which culminated in her final visit to Ireland (4–26 April 1900); she wanted to show in person her sincere indebtedness to the Irish military contribution. For a brief period in 1900, it appeared as if Ireland had metamorphosed itself into a normal part of British territory.

Dublin, nevertheless, remained rather volatile and fickle during the early years of the Second Boer War. Maud Gonne (1866–1953) had become influenced by the anti-Semitic French right. She held the stance that the war was part of the same Jewish conspiracy that had resulted in the Dreyfus affair; and to this end, she founded the Boer Franco-Irish Committee in October. A short but acrimonious riot occurred on 17 December when the committee actively and publicly celebrated the early Boer successes in the war.³ This acrimony continued; for example, on 1 March 1900 there was another much larger riot outside the Mansion House in central Dublin in the aftermath of the successful British liberation of Ladysmith. It took place between pro-British students of Dublin University (Trinity College) waving Union Jacks and cheering Queen Victoria and Generals Roberts and Buller and a diverse gathering vociferously supporting General Paul Kruger and the Boers.⁴ Four days later the Dublin City Corporation agreed to extend an official message of sympathy to the Boers because of the heavy casualties they incurred during the fighting in and around the inhospitable terrain at Ladysmith.⁵

In Britain, the reputation of Irish soldiers as brave fighters was growing both with the queen and the general public. Arthur Dunn, a bugle signaler with the Dublin Fusiliers regiment, had become an unlikely hero after surviving a failed attack on the enemy that he prematurely waged without

the necessary planning. He was presented to the queen who bequeathed him with the gift of a beautifully crafted silver bugle.⁶ The Irish soldiers played a crucial role in the freeing of Ladysmith from the control of the Boers.⁷ A telegram sent from Queen Victoria to General Redvers Buller extols her admiration for the Irish soldiers, who suffered a very high casualty toll during the intense fighting for this territory:

I have heard with the deepest concern of the heavy losses sustained by my brave Irish soldiers. I desire to express my sympathy and my admiration of the splendid fighting qualities they have exhibited throughout their trying operation.⁸

Visiting the war casualties at the Herbert Hospital in London some weeks later, the queen noted ‘a great number of Irish soldiers ... Some were badly wounded.’⁹ The *Times* stated that the burgeoning positive mood in Britain because of the Irish military contribution was a far more significant social achievement than what could ever have been possible through political deliberation:

The Irish regiments, faithful alike to their Queen and to the long-established and often-confirmed traditions of their valour and their loyalty, have done more to promote the Imperial interest of Ireland than could have been accomplished by legislators in a generation and have gilded everything Irish in a halo of romance which is not likely to disappear.¹⁰

Irish members of parliament also began to glean political profit from this new positive sentiment towards Ireland. John Redmond, leader of then recently revamped Irish Party, told the House of Commons in a speech sympathizing with the Boers that ‘I, as an Irishman, cannot help feeling a thrill of pride at the record of the heroism of the Irish lads from Mayo and Roscommon, who have suffered so terribly in this war.’¹¹

In early March, a special gesture of gratitude was being considered for

Ireland; this culminated in three gestures actually to be granted. One was the formation of a regiment of elite Irish guards. This had first been suggested during the Crimean War (1853–1856);¹² but on this occasion, both the War Office and the monarch were in a consensus that such a regiment should be created in the British army.¹³

The second gesture concerned the wearing of the shamrock by Irish soldiers. This had long been forbidden and the issue was frequently seized upon by Irish MPs to lambast the government for waging its various military campaigns. In 1897, one Irish soldier took his own life when dismissed from the army for, among other things, wearing the shamrock on St Patrick's Day (17 March).¹⁴ By 1900, it was not only permitted in the army but became the trendy London thing to do on St Patrick's Day – it was widely worn by all sections of the metropolitan population. The *Freeman's Journal* aptly articulated and acknowledged the unease of official Irish nationalism to this unaccustomed British appraisal:

The truth is that the imagination and enthusiasm of the venerable Queen of England and of her people have been startled by Celtic valour. The spear with which the gallant Boer was struck down was forged in no English forge; it was unhappily purely Celtic in its make.¹⁵

On 10 January 1900, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, who had not been permitted to join the British forces in southern Africa as he had desired, was made commander-in-chief of Ireland.¹⁶ Queen Victoria communicated her approval of it to her daughter, the Empress Frederick: 'I am very glad Arthur is going to Ireland. It is a good thing in every way I think.'¹⁷ On the same day as the duke's investiture, the editor of a French satirical magazine was acquitted of a charge against public decency for publishing an offensive cartoon featuring Queen Victoria and President Paul Kruger.¹⁸ It was the queen's custom in the spring of each

year to spend some time on either the French or Italian Riviera to enjoy some necessary sunshine to benefit her health. Due to continental enmity and the inappropriateness of the queen taking a holiday during a time of national crisis, it was agreed that the queen would not travel to the continent in 1900. This facilitated the third favour to Ireland: a royal visit to Dublin.

The queen discussed the Irish visit with Prince Arthur on 3 March. He personally arranged the greater part of the itinerary, but the decision to make the visit was hers alone.¹⁹ She wrote to Empress Frederick, ‘You will be startled when I tell you that I am going early next month to visit Ireland. It is entirely my own idea as was also my giving up to go abroad. It will give great pleasure and do good.’²⁰

The royal visit was formally announced on 7 March 1900; the same day Lord Wolseley officially lifted the ban on wearing shamrock in the British army. The initial reaction among nationalist elites to the visit was unanimously hostile. The *Freeman’s Journal*, now no longer under the control of the Gray family, opportunely recalled that during the early part of the queen’s reign how a ‘State-aided famine decimated the people and made the land desolate.’ It doubted whether the queen would be greeted with any ‘transports of loyalty’ and went on to lament how Irish soldiers had been ‘butchered whole-scale’ to achieve a British victory in the Transvaal.²¹ Meanwhile the London press anticipated that a successful visit would have negative consequences for the Irish nationalist cause.

On 8 March, John Redmond welcomed the legislation that permitted the wearing of shamrock in the British army with the following courteous but reserved statement:

Our people will, moreover, treat with respect the visit which the venerable

Sovereign proposes to make to their shores, well knowing that on this occasion no attempt will be made to give that visit party significance, and that their chivalrous hospitality will be taken in no quarter to mean an abatement of their demand for their national rights, which they will continue to press until they are conceded.²²

Gerald Balfour, the Irish Chief Secretary, told the queen that though Redmond's statement was less than most loyal subjects would say, it was 'more than might perhaps have been expected of one who, whatever his private views, poses in America and elsewhere as something very little better than a rebel.'²³ It was certainly a great deal more conciliatory than what some of Redmond's fellow Irish parliamentarians were prepared to say about the visit. It privately infuriated William O'Brien, whose United Irish League had not yet affiliated itself with the Irish Parliamentary Party:

Redmond's statement in the House of Commons last night revolutionises the whole situation. Unless we are to throw up the national cause altogether it is impossible for any nationalist to cooperate any longer with a gentleman who uses his situation as a leader to express his gratitude for the Shamrock ... and he puts in for a slavish reception for a lady who comes to typify all that is most hateful in English rule.²⁴

The day after Redmond's speech, the nationalist members of the Dublin Corporation, taking their cue from him, met in Dublin's Mansion House and voted by forty-three to three in favour of presenting a royal address to the queen. In other nationalist circles, however, the response was different. The Irish-Transvaal Committee, whose members included Griffith, Connolly, Yeats and Gonne, sent Redmond a telegram challenging him 'to come to Dublin and repeat in public the statement you made tonight on behalf of the Irish people.'²⁵ Anna Parnell (1852–1911), sister of the late Irish nationalist leader, Charles Stuart Parnell (1846–91), wrote a public letter suggesting that people dip

their shamrocks in ink; the opposition to a royal address was gaining in momentum.²⁶

From the new centenary year 1900, St Patrick's Day instead of New Year's Day became the new date for the Lord Mayor's procession. There was only one open carriage in the procession, which was for the nationalist members of the Corporation who had voted against the royal address. They carried a Transvaal flag. The Lord Mayor's stagecoach was hurled with stones in Harcourt Street. Other Irish Lord Mayors had been invited to participate, but all but two refused: just the mayors of Cork and Belfast attended. The crowds heckled D. J. Hegarty, Mayor of Cork because it was known that he was one of four members of Cork Corporation who voted in support of an address. The Lord Mayor of Belfast received a better reception, with the crowd intermittently shouting at him: 'He is against us, but he is honest.'²⁷

The other significant event of the day occurred at Thurles, Co. Tipperary where one of the numerous monuments to the 1798 Rebellion constructed in the wake of its 1898 centenary commemoration was unveiled. John Dillon (1851–1927) used his speech on the occasion to lambast the impending royal visit in the strongest possible terms:

But today we are invited to be grateful because the monarch of another race has sought to dip that emblem [the Shamrock] of our people in the blood that has been shed in the Tugela and on other battlefields in South Africa and to dye the green shamrock red in the rivers of Irish blood which have been shed in an unjust, a cruel and unholy war.²⁸

He then went on to give a robust paradoxical analysis of the reason for the queen's visit, focusing in particular on those inherent opacities in Ireland with regard to the war and the crown, which anxious nationalist leaders pretended did not exist. The queen, Dillon categorically stated,

was visiting for two reasons. The first was because Ireland opposed the war. This reason acknowledged that at least in some quarters it was felt that the queen had sufficient influence in Ireland to change public opinion on the matter. The second reason was that the Irish were good soldiers and she needed to recruit more for the war. This reason alluded to the existing Irish military contribution to the war, and thus of course implied that opposition to the war in Ireland was not as universal as Dillon had been implying.²⁹ He ended his speech on a note of caution about protests against the queen that distinguished the Irish parliamentarians from the younger, more radical nationalists: ‘The Queen is a woman and an old woman and in Ireland these two facts would save her from insult.’³⁰

On 19 March, the *Freeman’s Journal* published a letter from John H. Parnell (1843–1923), older brother of Anna Parnell and Charles Stuart Parnell. He held the honorary position of city marshal of Dublin, whose role it was to present the city keys in the traditional ceremony of welcome to lord lieutenants and members of the royal family:

We have Royalty here; let us make the most of it for the welfare of the country. It is the brave Irish who began this change in English sentiment. Let us then do all we can to encourage the visit of her Majesty and of all foreigners to our rich and beautiful country.³¹

This prompted his sister to compose a subsequent letter sharply critical of the visit and referring to Queen Victoria as ‘the famine queen’.³² John H. Parnell’s letter is not only contrary to mainstream nationalist sentiment regarding the visit but its reference to the British monarch as a foreigner visiting Ireland is of particular significance. Regarding the British establishment as foreigners was a growing trend in public discourse in Ireland; in fact, John O’Leary (1830–1907), one of the Fenians, had effectively used it with the maximum effect. This ‘foreigner’ label went further than the traditional use of ‘Queen of England’ by nationalists and

even ‘the monarch of another race’ reference by the Irish parliamentarian John Dillon because it deliberately infers that Queen Victoria is merely an outsider in the context of Ireland. At the United Irish League meeting in Killarney on 8 April, William O’Brien was to adopt the custom, referring to Queen Victoria as ‘the foreign queen’; this had the effect of enshrining it in the Irish public consciousness more officially.³³

The next prominent person to enter the public debate concerning the royal visit was the poet and dramatist, William Butler Yeats (1856–1939).³⁴ He argued that there were also two reasons for the queen’s visit: recruitment to the British army and ‘National hatred; hatred of our individual National life.’ He noted that Queen Victoria planned to set out for her trip to Ireland on 2 April which was the centenary anniversary of the enactment of the Act of Union which resulted in the Dublin legislature being effectively controlled by the British Parliament at Westminster. In order to protest the Act of Union, Yeats called for a meeting in the Rotunda on that very day with John O’Leary in the chair and all Irish parliamentarians in attendance. He concluded with a rather retrospective comment on the Diamond Jubilee: ‘If the people are left to organize their own protest as they did on Jubilee night, there will be broken glass and batoned crowds.’³⁵

Irish politicians were not going to be told what to do by literary figures such as Yeats and did not realise his recommendations, though Tim Harrington did get the Dublin Corporation to pass a resolution against the Act of Union as being ‘obtained by fraud and shameful corruption.’³⁶ On the day of the queen’s entry into Dublin (4 April), it was revealed that James Egan, a former Fenian prisoner and now Dublin’s civic sword bearer, had quit his position rather than participate in the official royal welcoming ceremony. Yeats warned that welcoming the queen was to support the British Empire in an unlawful military conflict against the

Boers: ‘Whoever stands by the road way cheering for Queen Victoria, cheers for that Empire, dishonours Ireland and condones crime.’³⁷

Maud Gonne’s unequivocal lambasting of the visit came in her ‘Famine Queen’ article in Arthur Griffith’s *United Irishman*; the piece was so caustic that the police confiscated as many copies of the newspaper as possible on publication.³⁸ Ramsey Colles, editor of the *Irish Figaro*, compared Gonne to Herodotus (Ἡρόδοτος Hēródotos) (c. 484–425 BC). This ancient Greek scholar has been generally recognized as the first historian, but he was also known for his recording of fanciful stories, which earned him the less complementary title ‘Father of Lies’. In retaliation, Griffith attacked Colles in his office resulting in his being imprisoned for two weeks when he rejected to be bound to keeping the peace. Colles went on to accuse Gonne of being the beneficiary of a state pension of £300 a year that the British government granted to her late father who was a British army officer. He had to officially apologize to Maud Gonne when she sued him for liable; however, she and Griffith faced a very tough and embarrassing cross-examination by lawyers when they took the witness stand during the hearing of the case in court.³⁹

According to Gonne’s ‘Famine Queen’ article, the queen, whose soul was ‘vile and selfish’, hated Ireland, a country ‘whose inhabitants are the victims of the criminal policy of her reign, the survivors of sixty years of organized famine.’ She contrasted the fate of ‘poor Irish emigrant girls, whose very innocence makes them easy prey’ with ‘this woman, whose bourgeois virtue is so boasted, and in whose name their homes were destroyed.’ The article concluded by demonising the queen into a kind of evil witch that has arrived to recruit the defiant Irish because the English were so afraid of losing the Boer War:

Taking the Shamrock in her withered hand, she dares to ask Ireland for soldiers – for soldiers to fight for the exterminators of their race. Ireland's reply, 'Queen, return to your own land ... because once more hope has revived and it will be in the ranks of your enemies that my children will find employment and honour.'⁴⁰

The royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* arrived in Kingstown port on the afternoon of 3 April. The queen came ashore the next day at 11:30 am. She received an enthusiastic welcome. Driving through the cheering crowds towards Dublin she observed that there was 'scarcely a policeman or soldier' visible. She passed under inscriptions over the road reading 'Best for ever is she who relied on Erin's honour and Erin's pride.'⁴¹ At Leeson Street Bridge near central Dublin a special gate was erected for the formal entry into the capital. Athlone Pursuivant, a heraldic officer, went through the ritual with the lord mayor, requesting and gaining entry for the queen into the city. As the queen drove through Dublin on her way to the Vice Regal Lodge she noted that 'even the Nationalists in front of the City Hall seemed to forget their politics and cheered and waved their hats.'⁴²

Frederick Ponsonby, who was accompanying the queen, was surprised and impressed by the warmth of her reception in Dublin, 'Although I have seen many visits of this kind, nothing had ever approached the enthusiasm and even frenzy displayed by the people of Dublin.'⁴³ When Queen Victoria reached the Vice Regal Lodge in the Phoenix Park a shocking news awaited her: there had been an attempted assassination of the Prince and Princess of Wales in Brussels, Belgium, by a pro-Boer anarchist. That evening the Dublin police prevented the Irish-Transvaal Committee from holding a torch-lit procession to protest the queen's visit.⁴⁴ In spite of this, Dublin and Ireland seemed to be a safer place for the queen to visit than did other European destinations. The *Times*

appreciatively acknowledged that Ireland did not exhibit any fanatical militancy against Britain for its war against the Boers, ‘They [the Irish People] will rejoice that political passion does not take the brutal form of Continental Anarchism.’⁴⁵

The enthusiastic welcome the queen received presented nationalist elites with a difficult challenge. Strongly opposed to the idea that monarchical enthusiasm could be compatible with a republican and nationalist ethos, they had to adhere to the ambiguous and contradictory reasoning of the *Freeman’s Journal* in its lacklustre reporting of the queen’s arrival in Dublin:

Whenever the welcome was demonstrative it was partisan, when it was national it was restrained with the bounds that courtesy demanded ... It is the weakness of the Irish character ... that a nation is ever prone to trust too readily to friendly professions, to forget and forgive at the first vague hint of repentance and atonement.⁴⁶

The queen was frail and in the last year of her life. The visit was essentially a private one, so the three weeks of her visit were relatively quiet ones, though she was attending to correspondence concerning the war against the Boers. Almost every afternoon she went for a three-hour drive in her horse-drawn coach through the Irish countryside. The people always gave her a reception; as the royal entourage approached a village, Frederick Ponsonby would cause his horse to make a special sound to notify Princess Beatrice to wake up her mother to wave to the assembled crowd. Ponsonby noted that the people were astute at distinguishing between the head of state and the legislature. In one small village, he heard a woman call out, ‘God Save the Queen’ and another, mistakenly pointing to him, yelling ‘And down with the Minister in Attendance.’⁴⁷

Royal engagements had been arranged, but for the most part they

were carried out by the other members of the royal family who were accompanying the queen. However, Queen Victoria undertook a number of engagements herself. At the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham an old soldier who had fought in the Afghan war of 1839 presented her with a bouquet of flowers and ‘all the old men cheered’. At Dublin Castle, not now being very mobile, she was carried upstairs to the state drawing room, where Gottlieb’s orchestra performed two pieces and Lady Limerick played the piano. On her journey back to the Vice Regal Lodge, she observed and wrote in her diary that ‘the people were very enthusiastic as they always are here’.⁴⁸

On 21 April, there was an elaborate military pageant in the Phoenix Park; it was arranged by Prince Arthur with his mother in attendance. When the event was concluded, she once again observed that ‘We then drove home amidst such tremendous cheering as I have ever heard.’⁴⁹ The queen visited the Meath and Mater Hospitals and the Masonic School and drove ‘through endless streets full of enthusiastic people.’⁵⁰ The Adelaide Hospital was ‘situated in the very poorest part of the town. The street in which it stands is a very narrow one and people literally thronged around the carriage, giving me the most enthusiastic welcome, as indeed I receive everywhere.’⁵¹

In a significant gesture to the Catholic middle classes, Queen Victoria also visited Ireland’s three leading Catholic boarding schools. Two of them were girls’ schools: Loreto Convent, Rathfarnham, where the college orchestra (that included six Irish harps) played a rendering of ‘God Save the Queen’, and the Sacred Heart College, housed in what had once been the Mount Anville home of the eminent civil engineer William Dargan (1799–1867); his Industrial Exhibition of 1853 in the lawns of Leinster House was the context for her second royal visit to Ireland.⁵² Castleknock College was a school for boys; on account of the extra

rapturous welcome the queen received from the boys of the school, she invited them to visit the Channel Fleet then moored at Kingstown as part of the royal visit. The then Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Russell of Killowen, was a former student of Castleknock.⁵³ He had monitored the case of the miscarriage of justice concerning Captain Dreyfus, whom Maud Gonne and her followers so hated, for the British government and directly reported to Queen Victoria concerning it.

Archbishop Walsh of Dublin was unreceptive to the visit; but the queen, who in old age had once more become favourable to Catholicism, made a cordial acquaintance with the archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Logue, who dined with her on 19 April. The queen thought Logue ‘pleasing in manner, though hardly in looks.’⁵⁴ Ponsonby wrote that ‘the Queen went out of her way to make herself agreeable, while the Cardinal was quite captivated by her.’⁵⁵ Queen Victoria was also charmed to meet a nun from the Sisters of Charity, ‘a nice little thing, who does my washing, and she kissed my hand.’⁵⁶

Paradoxically, religion, inasmuch as the monarch was a Protestant and most of her Irish subjects Catholic, had never been a major public issue for the monarchy in Ireland. Yet denominational barriers were becoming increasingly pronounced and the issue entered into arrangements for the queen’s most significant engagements during her visit. The queen’s stay in Ireland had been criticized by the nationalist movement for its apparent military agenda. The organizers of the visit managed to brilliantly wrong-foot those who propagated this criticism by focusing on visits to children. On Saturday, 7 April, Lady Arnott organized a large children’s garden party in the Phoenix Park in the presence of the queen. The event proved such a success that five days later the queen met with a thousand more children who had been unable to make it to the original event.⁵⁷ Just before she left the gathering, Queen Victoria gifted £5 each

to two little girls who presented her with a gift of shamrock. Shamrock poured into the Vice Regal Lodge from all quarters thereafter.⁵⁸

The official figure given for those who attended the main children's garden party was fifty-two thousand. The *Freeman's Journal* said it was twenty-one thousand, but reluctantly admitted that 'the number was by far in excess of that anticipated.'⁵⁹ Even though there were a number of Catholics as well as Protestants on the organizing committee, there was opposition to the gathering in some Catholic quarters on the grounds that the children were being lured to the event with the promise of refreshments. Receiving food from a Protestant revived the negative memories of 'souperism' – the practice whereby Catholics were allegedly given food during the famine on condition they converted to Protestantism.⁶⁰

More vocal condemnation came from Maud Gonne, who announced that she was going to hold a counter-Patriotic Children's Treat for those 'who had the courage to refuse to assist at the Queen's Show in the Phoenix Park.'⁶¹ Initially planned as a pilgrimage to Wolf Tone's grave in Bodenstown, it was scaled down to a much more modest picnic, which took place at Clonturk Park, just north of Dublin city centre on 1 July, to which some exaggerated accounts claimed as many as twenty to thirty thousand children participated; the actual number was in the thousands rather than in the tens of thousands.⁶²

Queen Victoria was thoroughly satisfied with her visit to Ireland. 'I left the Vice Regal Lodge with regret, having spent a very pleasant time there, though a somewhat tiring one.' Her yacht sailed out from Dublin's North Wall quay side on 26 April 1900:

I felt quite sorry that it was all over and that this eventful visit which created

so much interest and excitement had, like everything in this world, come to an end, though I own I am very tired and long for rest and quiet. I can never forget the really wild enthusiasm and affectionate loyalty displayed by all in Ireland and shall ever retain a most grateful remembrance of this warm hearted and sympathetic people.⁶³

The visit had been an excellent success in promoting a positive experience of monarchy among ordinary Irish citizens. Even the *Freeman's Journal* had to grudgingly admit that this was the case, though it did so by emphasizing that the queen was an old lady:

But nobody ... could fail to discover that undernote of indifferent curiosity, mixed, perhaps here and there with some admiration for the pluck of the little old lady who after thirty-nine years' absence and in the extremity of old age conquered her repugnance towards Ireland in order to put in a stroke for her Army, her Empire and her Throne. The Queen seemed to reciprocate the civility of the popular attitude.⁶⁴

It was somehow easier to deal with a British monarch if she could be presented in the guise not of an adult but of a guileless, childlike young woman, as Queen Victoria had been during her earlier trips to Ireland, or of a harmless, childlike old woman, as she was now seen. As she lay dying early next year, the same newspaper depicted her as an 'aged lady who had hoped to end her reign in peace' but who had been 'deliberately deceived' about the Boer War and was coerced into visiting Ireland.⁶⁵ It was echoing Daniel O'Connell's claims that she had been beguiled about Ireland by Peel's government. Queen Victoria thus ended her life, as far as this strand of Irish discourse was concerned, as an innocent but deceived old woman, having once been an innocent but deceived young woman. When she died, the Dublin Corporation, in spite of the protest of the newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Tim Harrington, officially extended its condolences.⁶⁶

At the end of the 1900 visit, the council of the Royal Dublin Society proposed to commission a statue of Queen Victoria for the city. It was emphasized that this would be a personal tribute to the queen and not a glorification of the monarchy. John Hughes was the sculptor; the statue that he produced was designed to be as acceptable as possible to Irish nationalist sensibilities. The queen was depicted as an old woman and the surrounding figures celebrated the heroism of Irish soldiers in the Boer War. It was unveiled in 1908 on Leinster Lawn in front of Leinster House, which was to become the seat of the independent Irish parliament. It was removed in 1948 in order to make way for a monument to some of the founders of the new state; in 1987, it was donated by the Irish government to Australia; it is currently displayed in the city of Sydney.⁶⁷ The statue of Prince Albert still survives on Leinster Lawn.

The relationship between nationalism and monarchy in nineteenth-century Ireland was one of increasing hostility on the part of the former to the latter. It was generally a hostility based on fear: fear of the undoubted popularity of monarchy among large sections of the Irish Catholic nationalist population and fear of the uses to which that popularity might be utilized. Nationalist leaders were concerned that royal visits might hinder the support for Irish independence and that the enthusiasm with which royal visitors were received would have the effect of bolstering the British will to rule in Ireland, by seeming to provide evidence that the nationalist Irish, in spite of their leaders, were loyal both to the monarchy and, by extension, to the constitution. It was the very combination of the monarchy's popularity and its official association with the constitution that made it such a perceived threat, though nationalist leaders could never acknowledge the nature of that threat. The popularity of the monarchy was an embarrassment and had to be refuted. Instead, the hostility to monarchy that nationalist elites vigorously promulgated enforced on the population was shrouded in

an ideology in which the monarchy bore the blame for the actions of British politicians in Ireland; this was intentionally desinged to mirror the admiration for the monarchy in Britain which was esteemed for being synonymous with the imperial successes of the nineteenth century.

Queen Victoria visited Ireland on four occasions during her long reign. These visits occurred in 1849, 1853, 1861 and 1900 – she was met with a popular enthusiasm that surpassed all expectations and generally unsettled hostile nationalist sentiment. In considering Queen Victoria’s posthumous reputation in Ireland, though, it is ironic to note that the very success of her 1900 visit ensured a deepening personal hatred of her among many staunch nationalists for whom loyalty to the monarchy was now incompatible with Irish national identity and who were bewildered and troubled by the continuing capacity of monarchy to capture public admiration in Ireland. Their opposition to her needed a focus that disguised its real cause, and they discovered it in the ‘Famine Queen’ slogan.

The Irish implication that Queen Victoria should be directly held directly responsible for *An Gorta Mór* (The Great Famine) can be traced back to her Golden Jubilee (1887), when in England she became the symbol for British imperial success. The jubilee was even commemorated at the Church of the Holy Innocents on 37th Street, New York, with a requiem Mass for those who perished in the famine, complete with catafalque surrounded by six candles.⁶⁸ The famine queen myth also came to be associated with the allegation that Queen Victoria, as a sign of her supposed indifference to Irish suffering, had given only £5 for famine relief. It is uncertain when and how this story arose, but it may be associated with a real incident during the mid-1890’s when the queen gave £5 to Mary Donnelly whose family perished in the Kerry mudslide. The leaders of the United Ireland movement drew attention to

the incident and used it to criticize the Irish taxation being used for the maintenance of the queen.⁶⁹

The famine queen caricature sees Queen Victoria as being somehow directly responsible not only for the famine but for the entire canon of nationalist grievances during her reign. The famine queen largely displaced the hostile memory of British politicians, such as Lord Clarendon, the ‘starvation Viceroy’ and Lord John Russell, the ‘Attorney General of starvation’ – these two men had been the real objects of nationalist ire in a way in which the queen had not been.⁷⁰ In 1848, for example, the *Freeman’s Journal* had commended another paper for drawing ‘the line of demarcation between the starvation ministry and the Queen.’⁷¹

The early-twentieth-century antipathy to Queen Victoria was particularly strong among radical nationalist women of Anglo-Irish background, many of whom had a feminist tendency. It was their efforts in particular that resulted in her lasting vilification in nationalist mythology as the famine queen. Prominent among the promoters of the slogan was Maud Gonne and Anna Parnell. The latter’s verse composition on the death of Queen Victoria is a good example of their ideological stance:

Not four more years have passed to-day
And now the Queen, the Famine Queen,
Herself has passed away
And that dread form will never more be seen...⁷²

The famine queen passed quickly into the common brief of nationalist mythology. As late as 1994, a statue of Queen Victoria was unearthed in the President’s Garden of University College Cork (formally Queen’s College Cork because it was commissioned and established by the queen); the statue was buried there in 1946 after being removed from an

office in the East Wing of the college. This discovery enabled the myth to have another outing in the letters columns of Irish newspapers from correspondences hostile to the statue being put on public display. The statue is now permanently on display in an annex to the staff common room at the university which has limited public access.⁷³

Queen Victoria's reputation concerning Ireland did not fare much better in English discourse. This was for very different reasons, though out of a similar overestimation of the power of monarchy as that which had caused nationalist antipathy. In England, Queen Victoria became the scapegoat for the malfunction of British policy in Ireland. *The Dictionary of National Biography* described her 1900 visit to Ireland in the following critical terms:

But it brought into broad relief the neglect of Ireland that preceded it, and it emphasized the errors of feeling and judgment which had made her an almost complete stranger to her Irish subjects in their own land during the rest of her long reign.⁷⁴

In the 1930's the renowned historian Frank Hardie severely criticised the failure of the success of Queen Victoria's 1849 visit as 'the greatest mistake of her life' and reported that 'It has been said that Queen Victoria lost Ireland for England.'⁷⁵ In the early 1950's when it was clear that the British Empire was in the twilight years, Algernon Cecil in his book on the British Prime Ministers during Queen Victoria's reign made the following insightful comment:

If Victoria had brought herself to cross the Irish Sea year by year, or even rather less often, she would have won the hearts of her Irish subjects ... and, as he [Lord Salisbury] saw, more than Eire hung upon the result. 'If Ireland goes,' he once told his daughter, from whom I had the story, 'India will go fifty years later.' Ireland went, and India, to all intents and purposes, not so much as fifty years later.⁷⁶

The queen's apparent lack of interest in Ireland, especially during the latter part of her reign, had ironically become a causative issue in the disintegration of the wider British Empire. This was an argument that overemphasized the influence of the monarchy over the role of Irish nationalism. It was part of the *raison d'être* that had legitimized the British will to continue to rule in Ireland and enabled members of the political establishment to believe that nationalist grievances were more apparent than real and that Ireland could become a normalised part of the United Kingdom – if only it was bequeathed justice or afforded adequate royal consideration.

This particular historical perspective, which is too simplifying, directly implies that Queen Victoria was responsible for fatally damaging the union of Britain and Ireland through her indifference towards the Irish. The monarchy had essentially impeded the role of the constitution. This was not, however, the case. A dutiful compliance to a very problematic and complex constitution had significantly hampered the efficacy of the sovereign's role in Ireland.

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 found the relationship between the monarchy and nationalism in the context of the union in a very different position from what it had been at the beginning of her reign. The union between Britain and the whole of Ireland itself had two more decades to run and the issues that had beset Queen Victoria concerning Ireland were now passed on to her son Edward VII, who reigned until 1910, and her grandson George V, who reigned until 1936. The division of Ireland occurred in 1922: the six counties in Northern Ireland continued to be part of Britain while the remaining twenty-six counties formed an independent state, known as the Irish Free State (*An Saorstát Éireann*).⁷⁷

The queen's fourth and final visit revealed more than any of her previous

Irish visits the complex and paradoxical relationship between the British Monarch and her Irish subjects. The fact that 28,000 Irish soldiers volunteered to fight on the side of the British against the Boers while the nationalist leaders could only muster up 400 volunteers to take up arms with Paul Kruger and his Boer fighters presents a number of interesting issues. Why did so many sign up for the British army? The Irish viewed joining the British army until the period of World War I (1914–18) as an opportune way to earn income to sustain their impoverished families and to acquire necessary skills that could later help secure a livelihood after the term of duty was completed. National leaders offered fine and lofty rhetoric but little of substance that would materially provide the Catholic population with a livelihood. This interesting situation clearly highlighted a certain disconnect between nationalist leaders and those that they claimed to represent. The queen, now an aged and frail figure, received much affection from the Irish peasantry. Despite the best efforts to portray the visit as a recruiting mission for the British army, the organizers of the royal visit effectively upstaged them by organizing several opportunities for the queen to meet with the young people of Dublin. This had the desired positive effect: these youth gatherings proved very popular by all who attended them. The visit of Queen Victoria exposed the nationalists as being a less than unified movement. Her empathy and frailness seemed to have won the hearts and minds of a large section of the Irish population, resulting in the nationalist elites finding themselves short footed in their disapproval of her presence in Ireland.

The success of the visit, however, was only immediate because the death of Queen Victoria on the Isle of Wight on 22 January 1901 afforded Irish nationalists the opportunity to demonize her memory and perpetually label her the 'Famine Queen'. Not only did the slogan (which had already existed for some fifty years) glean potency, it eventually became

synonymous throughout the Irish populace with her reign in Ireland. Irish Catholics came to view her as the cause of their misfortune and this was cultivated to cult status by their nationalist leadership. The image conjured up the horrors of the mid-nineteenth-century famine and deliberately mythologized and distorted the historical facts around the image of the late queen. The relationship between Ireland and the British monarchy which was fundamentally changed with the nationalists gaining the upper hand – it eventually culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916, which marked the commencement of the end of British rule in Ireland.⁷⁸

Endnotes

1. On the Boer War, see Gooch (2000) & Pakenham (1979).
2. Major John MacBride, born in Westport, County Mayo, married the political activist Maud Gonne in 1903 and he was executed for his participation in the 1916 Easter Rising. On the life and writings of MacBride, see Jordan 2000: 49–104.
3. See MacBride White & Jeffers (1992): 222–3.
4. *Freeman's Journal*, 2 March 1900.
5. *Freeman's Journal*, 6 March 1900.
6. Weintraub (1996): 611–12.
7. *Ibid*: 615.
8. *Freeman's Journal*, 1 March 1900.
9. Buckle (1930–32) 3: 516.
10. *Times*, 17 March 1900.
11. 7 February 1900, *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th Series, vol. 78, col. 834.
12. 27 June 1855, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, vol. 139, cols. 1459–60.
13. Buckle (1930–32): 498.
14. 11 April 1897, *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th Series, vol. 68, cols. 277–80.
15. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
16. Frankland (1993): 214.
17. Ramm (1990): 242.
18. *Freeman's Journal*, 11 January 1900.
19. Buckle (1930–32): 497.

20. Ramm (1990): 247.
21. *Freeman's Journal*, 9 March 1900.
22. 8 March 1900, *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th Series, vol. 80, col. 402.
23. Buckle (1930–2): 506.
24. O'Brien (1976): 120-1.
25. *Freeman's Journal*, 10 March 1900.
26. *Freeman's Journal*, 12 March 1900.
27. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
28. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
29. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
30. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
31. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 March 1900.
32. *Freeman's Journal*, 20 March 1900.
33. *Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1900.
34. On the life sand works of William Butler Yeats, see Brown (1999).
35. *Freeman's Journal*, 20 March 1900. The Rotunda was originally known as the Rotundo.
36. *Freeman's Journal*, 31 March 1900.
37. *Freeman's Journal*, 4 April 1900.
38. *Freeman's Journal*, 7 April 1900.
39. For an account of the trial, see McCracken (1989): 83–6.
40. See Coxhead (1965; reprinted 1979): 45–6.
41. This slogan is from the final two lines of Thomas Moore's song, 'Rich and Rare Were the Gems She Wore'. For an edition and score, see Moore (ca. 1887).
42. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 4 April 1900.
43. Ponsonby (1951): 63.
44. *Freeman's Journal*, 5 April 1900.
45. *Times*, 5 April 1900.
46. *Freeman's Journal*, 5 April 1900.
47. Ponsonby (1951): 64.
48. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 14 April 1900.
49. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 21 April 1900.
50. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 24 April 1900.
51. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 17 April 1900.
52. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 20 April 1900.
53. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 22 April 1900. On Castleknock College, see Murphy (1996): esp. 99–100.
54. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 19 April 1900.

55. Ponsonby (1951): 63.
56. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 16 April 1900.
57. *Freeman's Journal*, 13 April 1900.
58. Ponsonby (1950): 65.
59. *Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1900.
60. See McCarthy (1901): 486, 535.
61. *Freeman's Journal*, 17 April 1900.
62. For further discussion on this exaggerated Nationalist response, see McCracken (1989): 86; and Pasetta (1998–99): 494–95.
63. Royal Archives: Queen Victoria Journals, 26 April 1900.
64. *Freeman's Journal*, 27 April 1900.
65. *Freeman's Journal*, 19 January 1901.
66. *Freeman's Journal*, 24 January 1901.
67. Hill (1998): 141–42, 146.
68. *New York Times*, 22 June 1887.
69. *United Ireland*, 23 January 1897; *Freeman's Journal*, 16 May 1897.
70. *Freeman's Journal*, 4 April 1850 & 29 May 1878.
71. *Freeman's Journal*, 12 July 1848.
72. From a poem by Anna Parnell titled '22nd January 1901' in Côté (1991): 262.
73. The original location of Queen Victoria's statue was on the east pinnacle of the Aula Maxima. In 1934, the statue was replaced by a sculpture of St Finbarr who is the patron saint of the Catholic Diocese of Cork and Ross. The Victoria statue was then placed in an office in the East Wing of the college, but after proving too heavy for the floor boards it was removed again in 1946 and buried in the President's Garden. See Murphy (1995): 233–35, 240, 244–45. For a discussion on the ideological changes in Irish culture, see Gibbons (1996).
74. Stephen (1885–1903), vol. 22 (Supplement): 1368.
75. Hardie (1935; reprinted 1963): 18, 177.
76. Cecil (1953): 83.
77. On the establishment of the Irish Free State, see Pakenham (1935) and Knick (2006).
78. On the Easter Rising of 1916, see the National Library of Ireland's exhibition of personalities and perspectives at www.nli.ie/1916/

Bibliography

Brown, Terence. *The Life of W.B. Yeats: A Critical Biography*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

- Buckle, George Earle ed. *The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the Years 1886 and 1901*. Third Series. London: John Murray, 1930–32.
- Cecil, Algernon. *Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953.
- Côté, Jane, McL. *Fanny and Anna Parnell: Ireland's Patriot Sisters*. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Coxhead, Elizabeth. *Daughters of Erin: Five Women of the Irish Renaissance*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1965 / Gerrards Cross : Smythe, 1979.
- Frankland, Noble. *Witness of a Century: The Life and Times of Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, 1850–1942*. London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1993.
- Gibbons, Luke. *Transformations in Irish Culture*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1996.
- Gooch, John. *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image*. London: Cass, 2000.
- Hardie, Frank Martin. *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861–1901*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935 / London: Frank Cass & Co., 1963.
- Hill, Judith. *Irish Public Sculpture: A History*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998.
- Jordan, Anthony J. *The Yeats- Gonne- MacBride Triangle*. Dublin: Westport Books, 2000.
- Knick, Jason K. *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.
- MacBride White, Anna, & Norman A. Jeffares, eds. *The Gonne-Yeats Letters*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992.
- McCarthy, M. J. F. *Five Years in Ireland, 1895–1900*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1901.
- McCracken, Donald P. *The Irish Pro-Boers 1877–1902*. Johannesburg: Perskor, 1989.
- Moore, Thomas. *A Selection of Irish Melodies*. London: Edwin Ashdown, ca. 1887.
- Murphy, James. H., ed. *Nos Autem: Castleknock College and Its Contribution*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996.
- Murphy, John A. *The College: A History of Queen's/University College Cork, 1845–1995*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1995.
- O'Brien, Joseph V. *William O'Brien and the Course of Irish Politics, 1881–1918*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1976.
- Pakenham, Frank, *Earl of Longford. Peace by Ordeal: An Account, from First-Hand Sources of the Negotiation and Signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1935.
- Pakenham, Thomas. *The Boer War*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979.
- Paseta, Senia. 'Nationalist Responses to Two Royal Visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903' in *Irish Historical Studies* 31(1998-99): 488-504.

- Ponsonby, Frederick. *Recollections of Three Reigns*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951.
- Ramm, Agatha, ed. *Beloved and Darling Child: Last Letters between Queen Victoria and her Eldest Daughter, 1886–1901*. Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1990.
- Stephen, Leslie ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*. London: Smith, Elder, 1885–1903.
- Weintraub, Stanley. *Victoria*. London: John Murray, 1996.

Websites

- British Parliamentary Debates (www.parliament.uk/business/publications/)
- Easter Rising 1916 (www.nli.ie/1916/)
- The Life and Work of William Butler Yeats (www.nli.ie/yeats/)
- The Victorian Web (www.victorianweb.org/)