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Paul Bew. *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 632 S. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-820555-5.

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In *Ireland*, Paul Bew argues that the central theme of modern Irish political history is "the conflict between the Protestant British–both on the British 'mainland' and in Ireland itself–and the Catholic Irish" (p. viii). His work seeks to explain "the ideas and attitudes which underpin that conflict" (p. viii). The various constitutional frameworks devised between the Act of Union of 1800 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, Bew maintains, represent attempts to contain the ethno-religious "enmity" that has persistently threatened political stability and poisoned the wellsprings of Irish society. Such a thesis runs against the grain of much recent work on modern Irish politics. Other important syntheses written in the last two decades, for instance, have underscored the opportunities for collaboration as well as conflict presented by Ireland's religious and cultural pluralism, have highlighted the shared experience of Catholics and Protestants, and have emphasized the extent to which constitutional politicians operating within a centrist tradition have sought to mollify the asperities of ethnic and sectarian animosity.[1]

Bew brings his considerable erudition and vast knowledge to bear in defense of this iconoclastic but perceptive thesis, and the result is a convincing portrait of a deeply, indeed tragically, divided polity. The early years of the French Revolution, in Bew's view, provided the last and best opportunity for a reconciliation of loyalism and nationalism, as personified by Edmund Burke and Theobald Wolfe Tone, both of whom, despite their dramatically divergent political sympathies, were in fundamental agreement on the need for Catholic emancipation. The 1798 rebellion, however, created an atmosphere of sectarian distrust, which the union and the long delay in granting emancipation only reinforced. Daniel O'Connell's repeal agitation in the 1840s encouraged a fresh political polarization, as the coalition of O'Connellite Catholics, Belfast liberals, and British Whigs, which had been formed during the campaign for emancipation and remained active into the 1830s, could not be sustained when Catholics mobilized for a severance of the union. The Famine, accompanied as it was by accusations of genocide, left its own bitter legacy, while the immediate post-Famine decades were dominated not by a "League of North and South," united on the issue of tenant right, but by the recrudescence of the revolutionary tradition in the form of Fenianism. Similarly, the essentially conservative home rule movement, which sought to provide security for Irish Protestants and guarantees for British strategic interests, ultimately failed in the face of Unionist and Republican intransigence. The result, of course, was a partition of Ireland, which reflected–crudely and imperfectly–the ethno-religious division within the island. Even as the

Free State and Republic adopted rhetoric of unification, the social, economic, cultural/linguistic, and foreign policies of the South between 1923 and 1968 introduced serious obstacles to a rapprochement with the North, while the attitude of the Stormont leadership became harsher and less accommodating to the large Catholic minority in the six counties. Republican violence since 1968 has ensured that a lasting and stable settlement of the relationship between North and South has remained elusive, even as the British government has signaled a willingness to divest itself of its commitments in Northern Ireland should a majority of that community so desire.

Bew's prose is crisp and clear, and his argument is supported not only by referencing the most recent specialist studies, but also by an impressive quantity of primary source material, published and unpublished, which makes his *Ireland* a major piece of original research as well as an excellent guide to the current state of the field. It is, however, a work that will likely be more rewarding to the specialist than to the general reader or the undergraduate. A dense and analytical text, the uninitiated may find the rapid succession of personalities and events disorienting. Economic and social developments, moreover, are subordinated to the political narrative and are discussed only when germane to Bew's central theme. For a work of this scope and length, covering over 200 years in 581 pages of text, there are remarkably few errors. The eighteenth-century Irish parliament possessed three hundred seats, not two hundred; the author James Stephens is not clearly distinguished from the Fenian chief of the same name; and there are a few passages repeated almost verbatim in close succession. More to be regretted, in light of the vast mine of secondary source material that Bew has quarried, is the absence of a select bibliography.

Inevitably, Bew's depiction of an Ireland divided between two cohesive, antipathetic communities will not satisfy every reader. He never explicitly addresses the contention–classically articulated by Francis Stewart Leland Lyons in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (1979)–that Anglo-Irish and Presbyterian identities were not only distinct from one another, but also more than simply local manifestations of "mainland" Britishness. His narrative is also open to the objection that it minimizes the persistence of moderate elements within Irish politics. Oliver MacDonagh's influential characterization of O'Connell (in *The Hereditary Bondsman: Daniel O'Connell, 1775-1829* [1987] and *The Emancipist: Daniel O'Connell, 1830-1847* [1989]) as a cosmopolitan liberal, for example, is set aside in favor of a more sectarian portrayal of the Liberator.[2] The respective emphases of Jennifer Ridden and K. Theodore Hoppen on the centrality of Whig-liberalism before the Famine, and its survival into the 1870s, is basically ignored.[3] Revealingly, the shortest chapter in the book covers the home rule movement after the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell, when, according to Alvin Jackson's recent work on the subject (*Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* [2003]), constitutional nationalists and British liberals generally worked in harmony, the prospects for an accommodation of Ulster seemed possible, and (until 1916) less compromising nationalists failed to gain significant traction in politics. But, it is clear, of course, that Bew wishes to call into question precisely this received version of the Irish past. *Ireland* provides a powerful, compelling challenge to recent, more benign accounts of Irish history, and is destined to become required reading for every serious student of modern Irish politics.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Robert Fitzroy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989); K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London: Longman, 1999); Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); and Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[2]. See also K. Theodore Hoppen, "Riding a Tiger: Daniel O'Connell, Reform, and Popular Politics in Ireland, 1800-1847," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 100 (1999): 121-143; and Sean McGraw and Kevin Whelan, "Daniel O'Connell in Comparative Perspective, 1800-50," *Ãire-Ireland* 40, nos. 1-2 (2005): 60-89.

[3]. Jennifer Ridden, "Irish Reform between the 1798 Rebellion and the Great Famine," in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain, 1780-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 271-294; and K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 257, 273.

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