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Death of a Capital? Dublin and the Consequences of Union

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DUBLIN'S LONG CYCLE OF GROWTH from modest walled town in the 1590s to one of the premier European cities two hundred years later rested on a fortunate conjuncture of factors: its emergence as Ireland's leading port and unchallenged national centre of distribution of goods and printed information; its pivotal position in the provision of financial services during the long commercialisation of Irish agriculture; its monopoly of certain professional services, notably higher education and the higher courts of law; the (intermittent) presence of a viceregal court and a national legislature; and, linked to that, the social imperative that brought the landed classes to Dublin in wintertime to live, play and consume to excess. There is more than a faint echo in all this of early modern London.

I

The set of factors that had powered Dublin's growth were still emphatically present in the final decades of the eighteenth century. The city was still functioning as national warehouse in the distribution of consumer imports, and its huge artisan population were still the chief manufacturers of luxury and high quality commodities for the whole country. And Dublin's tastes and fashions—cultural, political and material—were now being broadcast across the island by its unprecedently busy printing presses. The 1780s and early 1790s were also crucial years in planning terms, when a neo-classical template was imposed on the city core and a new trunk canal system came to define the city limits.

A number of great building projects in the city were well under way when war, domestic political crisis and economic uncertainty began to change the climate of development. These ongoing works included Gandon's Four Courts, a new downstream crossing of the Liffey at Carlisle Bridge, the south-side extension of the Grand Canal, the earl of Aldborough's great house overlooking North Strand, a new Trinity

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College chapel, and the Commercial Buildings in Dame Street. Each of these six projects tells a larger story.

The first, the new riverside Four Courts, changed the city skyline. Opened in 1796, the complex was a spectacular improvement on the cramped old premises attached to Christ Church Cathedral. Its commissioning coincided with a period of remarkable growth in the prestige, size and remuneration of the legal profession, which now had become an entirely Irish professional élite: the first Irish-born Lord Chancellor in seventy years, the earl of Clare, ruled the roost.[1] The opening of Carlisle Bridge to traffic the previous year marked the end of a long war of attrition over the strategic direction of Dublin's growth: the aristocratic 'east enders' had comprehensively won. This new crossing of the river was an integral part of the first revenue commissioner, John Beresford's great Custom House project; it linked the partly widened Sackville Street north of the river to the parliamentary approaches, and in so doing it created a new north–south axis, a far more magnificent route than the Capel Street/Parliament Street one it replaced.[2]

The Grand Canal extension running from the south-west outskirts of the city to the lavishly finished canal docks at Ringsend, enclosing 35 acres (14 hectares), was opened with great viceregal pomp in April 1796. It had been financed by soft loans from the Irish parliament (which had done a great deal to develop eighteenth-century Dublin's infrastructure). Whatever the commercial prospects of the Grand Canal extension, it soon came to be regarded as the southern boundary of the city.[3] And on the northern edge of the city Aldborough House was being completed at about the same time, a landmark famous less for its (decidedly archaic) appearance than for the fact that it was the last of the great town houses of eighteenth-century Dublin. Erected more than a decade after any comparable structure, it is sometimes held up as the final demonstration of the aristocratic taste for conspicuous urban display in Dublin; in fact there was no absence of aristocratic home-making in the 1790s—but the new households were to be found in the terraced luxury of Belvedere Place, Merrion Square, and St Stephen's Green.[4]

Meanwhile, the consecration of the Chambers-designed university chapel in 1798 completed the great eighteenth-century programme of rebuilding on the Trinity College campus; the chapel, one of the most successful essays in neo-classical design in

[1] Edward Wakefield, *Ireland, statistical and political* (London, 1812), vol. II, p. 785; Edward McParland, *James Gandon: Vitruvius Hibernicus* (London, 1985), pp. 153–65; Daire Hogan, *The legal profession in Ireland* (Naas, 1986), pp. 158–64.

[2] James Warburton, James Whitelaw and Robert Walsh, eds, *History of the City of Dublin* . . . (London, 1818), p. 1097; McParland, *Gandon,* pp. 74–6; E. McParland, 'Strategy in the planning of Dublin, 1750–1800', in Paul Butel and L.M. Cullen, eds, *Cities and merchants: French and Irish perspectives on urban development, 1500–1900* (Dublin, 1986), p. 104.

[3] Warburton *et al*., eds, *Dublin*, p. 1225; Ruth Delany, *The Grand Canal of Ireland* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1995), pp. 51–7.

[4] Maurice Craig, *Dublin, 1660–1860: a social and architectural history* (London, 1952), pp. 231–3. See also below, ch. 15.

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the city, was on one level an obvious statement of the primacy of the established church in the academy and of the academy's primary function as Church of Ireland seminary. But the college had a more complex and interesting relationship with the city than its strongly levitical atmosphere might suggest: the master *stuccodore* of the chapel and of its twin building, the public theatre, was the Catholic Michael Stapleton, a fine exemplar of new wealth in a community where even the most highly regarded craftsmen were making their fortunes faster as property speculators. And a small number of Stapleton's co-religionists had for the first time in 200 years joined the student body.[5]

The new Commercial Buildings were located a stone's throw from parliament on one of the avenues reconstructed by the Wide Streets Commissioners; the project was a joint-stock speculation, promoted by a number of leading city merchants who saw the potential for a more intimate meeting and dealing space than the Royal Exchange, which was several hundred yards to the west. The Buildings were opened in 1799 and included a hotel, a coffee-house, merchants' rooms and the city's first stock exchange. Indeed they constituted the embryo of what was to become the city's financial district.[6]

The promoters of the Commercial Buildings were lucky: before the project was complete, the prospect of Anglo-Irish parliamentary Union loomed—and perforce the closure of the Irish parliament up the street. The post-Union decision by the Bank of Ireland to acquire the parliament house in 1802 was a further factor determining the future shape of Dublin's central business district. But if the Commercial Buildings were a harbinger of the new Dublin, what of the fate of other projects after Dublin lost its status as a capital? Aldborough House and the Grand Canal extension were certainly symbols of the old parliamentary regime, but what of the Four Courts, the re-edified university and the new bridge? Were they also obsolete before the city smoke had darkened their Portland stone?

II

In the eighteen-month controversy over the proposed Anglo-Irish Union, spokesmen purporting to have the interests of the city at heart made a substantial contribution to the huge pamphlet debate. In the bitter wake of the 1798 rebellion, local political divisions had become sharply inflamed, but most of those with a public stake in the city—whatever their politics—were against the Union or had at least great difficulty in seeing any benefit for Dublin should the measure be passed. Some city-based interest groups, most obviously the legal profession and the press, made the early running in

[5] C.P. Curran, *Dublin decorative plasterwork of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1967), pp. 79–87; J.V. Luce, *Trinity College Dublin: the first 400 years* (Dublin, 1992), pp. 55, 60–1.
[6] Warburton *et al.*, eds, *Dublin*, pp. 987–9.

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whipping up opposition to government; others—merchants, manufacturers and property owners—were less shrill but equally disconcerted.[7]

We can distinguish three types of argument used by these writers to demonstrate how Dublin would be damaged by the Union. The first concentrated on the anticipated exodus of peers, MPs and their families: it was claimed that with their migration—to London or wherever – the residential property market would collapse, the luxury retail trade would wither, and the building industry, driven for several generations by demand from the winter influx of gentry to Dublin, would be severely dislocated.

The second argument related to the vulnerability of Dublin's artisanal industries; the large and diverse workshop economy within and adjacent to the city was overwhelmingly dependent on the Irish market and had been helped to hold market share by the import tariffs put in place by the Irish parliament. The prospect of a customs and monetary union with Britain was regarded by Dublin manufacturers as a thoroughly disastrous one. Having been under pressure for a generation from north of England textiles and other 'new' industrial products, the leaders of Dublin industry were unconvinced as to whether in open conditions the city could hold on to the Irish market.[8]

Another and less clearly articulated argument was that Dublin's infrastructure would decay and its consumers suffer with the loss of a paternalistic parliament on the doorstep. What Westminster parliament would be inclined to give national or imperial resources to widen Dublin's streets, improve its navigation, or ornament its university?

These were powerful arguments, made stronger by the need of anti-unionists to find unifying issues for their political campaign, given that they were a very disparate coalition with few other interests in common. And some of these arguments had a long pedigree: one of the factors that had previously restrained government from pushing for Anglo-Irish Union had been the fear of huge and possibly unmanageable opposition to such a measure in the Irish capital. The events of December 1759—when a violent riot had erupted in Dublin in protest against what turned out to be a phantom proposal for parliamentary union—were not easily forgotten.[9]

Despite tactical victories early in the great debate, anti-unionists had little to show for their efforts in the actual legislation of 1800. The most significant concession affecting local interests was on the commercial front: import tariffs were to be maintained until 1808, with a provision for their substantial reduction by 1816. But two vital elements of Dublin's metropolitan status were left untouched by the Union (although anti-unionists may not have registered the point): first, the viceregal office and court continued in existence, Dublin being thereby destined to remain a seat of executive

[7] PP 1833, XXXV, *Report of evidence before the Irish House of Commons on the legislative union, 1800*; G.C. Bolton, *The passing of the Irish Act of Union* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 194–6; P.M. Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union* (Dublin, 1999), p. 78.

[8] *Evidence on the legislative union, 1800*, *passim*.

[9] James Kelly, 'The origins of the Act of Union: an examination of Unionist opinion in Britain and Ireland, 1650–1800', in *Irish Historical Studies*, 25 (1986–7), 247–63.

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government and the locus of a burgeoning bureaucracy; and second, the higher courts of law remained in Ireland, Dublin's new Four Courts being set to flourish as the great arena for Irish litigation.

Yet a powerful general impression has always remained that the urban community of Dublin was, overall, a major victim—perhaps even the greatest victim—of Anglo-Irish political integration. Every nineteenth-century nationalist accepted this as an established fact, and it was a view shared by many Dubliners who supported neither Daniel O'Connell nor repeal of the Union. Morbid assessments of the state of the city became commonplace, even during the French wars. An early example of the genre appeared in *The Dublin Magazine* of May 1813:

> Where are we now? – What are we about? – Where are we going? – It might be answered – Not what we were twenty years ago. – We are an almost ruined people – we are doing worse than nothing . . . At the time of the union . . . we then had a trade, flourishing in all its various directions, more than sufficient to support the wants of cheerful industry. Now, what with the removal of our parliament, the absence of our nobility and gentry, the inundation of British articles, and the strange contempt for our home-manufactures, numbers wander meal-less in our streets, [and] the fatigued eye of charity meets beggars in every direction.[10]

Dublin's decline was taken here to be self-evident, and the Union was seen as the cause, or at least the catalyst, of the process. And in the rhetoric of the Repealers of the 1830s and 1840s, the revival of Dublin and the recapture of its supposed golden age under 'Grattan's Parliament' were standard arguments.

The repeal argument was not however left unchallenged. Some among the host of writers who sought to defend the Union also focused on Dublin, challenged the assumptions about the capital's demise, and took issue with O'Connellite predictions as to its future should repeal of the Union occur. William Stanley in his *Commentaries on Ireland* highlighted the evidence for pre-Union distress within Dublin's industrial sector; he drew parallels between recent de-industrialisation in London and that in Dublin:

> In the general silk trade of Dublin, there has not been greater distress than in London, which is attributable to a variety of causes, but principally to the rivalry of Macclesfield, Derby &c. where the trade is free from wage rules.

Stanley characterised Dublin and London as traditional centres of over-regulated luxury manufacture which were suffering a common fate.[11] He also played down the significance of the aristocratic exodus from Dublin after 1800, since

> their old mansions are [now] occupied by public functionaries, or affluent professional men, or merchants, except those in trading streets and a few in private streets, which are occupied as seminaries, club-houses, or hotels. How many of the old London mansions of the British nobility and commoners are now devoted to similar uses?[12]

[10] *The Dublin Magazine*, 1 (1812–13), 392. For a more benign local view, see 'A sketch of the Irish metropolis', in *The Dublin Satirist* (November 1809), 1–5, 67–70.
[11] William Stanley, *Commentaries on Ireland* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1833), p. 160.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 72–3.

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R.M. Martin, an even more influential pro-Union advocate, dismissed the argument that the late eighteenth century had been Dublin's moment of glory: 'the gaudy decoration of a capital is anything but an indication of the general weal of a country'. In any case, he argued, the architectural evidence of a golden age was flawed, for

> those very buildings, referred to with so much exultation, and affording innumerable tropes for agitating eloquence, were erected previous to 1782 and subsequent to the Legislative Union.[13]

Surveying national population trends since the Union, he went on to argue that

> even in Dublin, the decay of which has been so loudly lamented, the improvement has been truly remarkable. Since the Union, more than one hundred handsome streets and squares have been added . . . it now possesses, within the limits of the Circular Road, a largely augmented population, better lodged, better fed, and better paid as wages for labour, than they have ever heretofore been.[14]

Martin's characterisation of Dublin in the midst of the Great Famine in such upbeat terms is a little unconvincing but, before we reject the optimistic case, what of other less demonstrably partisan observers of the post-Union city?

The comments of visitors fresh to the nineteenth-century city seem to have taken three forms. First there were the essentially positive reactions—both to the physical appearance of Dublin and to its citizenry, reactions often mingled with surprise that, despite the jeremiads of anti-unionists in 1799–1800, no grass was to be seen on the streets and that quite considerable public and private building activity was visible. Dublin was still being seen as a London writ small, with elements of Berlin, Paris and Bordeaux.[15] 'There is no part of London which can compare with the centre of Dublin in beauty and magnificence', declared an American visitor in 1817.[16] Or, as the keener-eyed Ulster army surgeon John Gamble had noted a few years earlier:

> The waters of the Liffey do not bear, like the waves of the Thames, the riches of the two hemispheres; the inhabitants of its banks have no Eastern mines of gold; but they have what is better still – they have humane and benevolent hearts.[17]

[13] R.M. Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union with Great Britain* (3rd edn, London, 1848), pp. 37–8. [The first edition had appeared under the title *Ireland as it was, is, and ought to be* (London, 1832).]

[14] *Ibid*., pp. 169–70. For a similar argument from a local writer, see *The Dublin Literary Gazette and National Magazine*, 1 (1830), 628–9.

[15] Sir John Carr, *The stranger in Ireland* (London, 1806), summarised in Constantia Maxwell, *The stranger in Ireland* (London, 1954), pp. 223–7 ; Kenneth Bourne, ed., *The letters of the third Viscount Palmerston to Laurence and Elizabeth Sulivan, 1804–1863* (London, 1979), p. 104. For the reactions of Sir Walter Scott and J.G. Lockhart in 1825, and of J.G. Kohl and W.M. Thackeray in 1842, see Maxwell, *Stranger in Ireland*, pp. 253, 278–9, 297–8, 308. Cf. Fergus D'Arcy, 'An age of distress and reform, 1800–1860', in Art Cosgrove, ed., *Dublin through the ages* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 93–5.

[16] William Curry, *A new picture of Dublin* (Dublin, 1825), p. 20. Cf. N. Jefferys, *An Englishman's descriptive account of Dublin* (London, 1810), summarised in Maxwell, *Stranger in Ireland*, pp. 255–6.

[17] John Gamble, *Sketches of history, politics and manners taken in Dublin in the autumn of 1810* (London, 1811), quoted in *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing* (Derry, 1991), vol. I, p. 1111. Gamble did however feel that Dubliners were a little too quick to praise their city's superior attributes over London: *ibid*., p. 1110.

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He was not alone in his flattering judgement.

A second line of comment was a puzzled fascination with the 'flight of the earls' and the disappearance of the *ton*,[18] a theme explored in contemporary imaginative literature as well as in travel writing:

> Woe to the land where the mansions of her nobility have become the receptacles of office, or the palaces of pedagogues,

as a character remarks in Charles Maturin's *Women* (1818), one of the few locally composed substantial works of fiction of the period.[19] In some accounts the emphasis was on the dilapidation of once great houses; in others it was on the changing nature of fashionable society, the displacement of aristocratic leadership, and the implications for the city of the emergence of a newly empowered bourgeoisie.[20]

A third reaction of visitors was horror at the army of beggars observed on Dublin's streets and astonishment at the contrast between the public improvements and the personal squalor of so much of the city housing. The decaying housing stock of the south-western Liberties and their impoverished inhabitants gave ample ammunition to many writers (surprisingly little was said about the north-west quarter and the markets area of the city). Before 1839 some observers quite reasonably linked the 'mendicity problem' with the absence of a parish poor law. However some of the most eloquent portrayals of urban poverty were written in the 1840s and after poor-law reform. An American medical visitor caught an echo of Swift:

> Dublin – rent and split – worm-eaten, mouldering, patched and plastered – unsightly to the eye, unsavoury to the taste, and not very grateful to the olfactories – here there is but one step from magnificence to misery. . . [And in the Liberties] winds and rains have *liberty* to enter freely through the windows of half the houses – the pigs have *liberty* to ramble about . . . the silk-weaver has *liberty* to starve or beg.[21]

III

Against this tableau of contradiction, what of the statistical indicators of the post-Union city's performance ? Much quantitative work on the city in this period still needs to be done, but there are some data series readily available. These can be broken down

[18] See Scott's comment to Edgeworth, cited in Maxwell, *Stranger in Ireland*, p. 277; Gamble in *Field Day*, pp. 1107–8.

[19] C.R. Maturin, *Women: or, pour et contre* (London, 1818), vol. III, p. 298. See Julian Moynahan, 'The image of the city in nineteenth-century Irish fiction', in Maurice Harmon, ed., *The Irish writer and the city* (Gerrards Cross, 1984), pp. 2–10.

[20] Moynahan, 'Image', pp. 2–10; David Dickson, 'Second city syndrome: reflections on three Irish cases', in S.J. Connolly, ed., *Kingdoms united? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500: integration and diversity* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 97–8.

[21] Quoted in Thomas and Valerie Pakenham, *Dublin: a travellers' companion* (London, 1988), p. 111. Cf. Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall, *Ireland, its scenery and character* (London, 1841), vol. II, pp. 326–31.

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under three heads: population censuses, property valuations, and customs and shipping returns.

Whitelaw's private census, carried out in 1798 and re-worked in 1804, provides an obvious bench-mark for post-Union demographic analysis; within its limitations it seems to be as robust a source as the official censuses of 1821 and 1831, and to be more satisfactory than that of 1813. Taking these together, it is quite evident that the expansionary trends of the eighteenth-century city continued for the first three decades of the nineteenth century: conventional estimates for 1804 (derived from Whitelaw) pitch the city population at around 182,000, rising to 227,000 in 1821, and 265,000 in 1831.[22]

The far more comprehensive 1841 returns appear to suggest a modest continuation of these trends: an aggregate figure of 287,729 inhabitants was given for the metropolitan police district (embracing Ballybough, Chapelizod and the south-east salient out to Dalkey), but this is a rather deceptive figure. Indeed there are several problems. The census report for 1841 came in the wake of considerable boundary revision, making inter-censal comparisons difficult, a problem compounded by an accelerating centrifugal population movement on the part of middle-class Dubliners.[23]

Furthermore, the basis for the 1831 census commissioners' calculation of an aggregate metropolitan figure of 265,000 is unclear, and like much else to do with the 1831 census their result seems somewhat inflated. But, if the 1831 figure is excluded, the census totals imply a fairly steady rate of civic growth between 1804, 1821 and 1841. Such a pattern would if true be quite surprising, given the wider context. In fact the trajectory of Dublin's population growth after 1821 remains problematical and requires further investigation. For now, a comparison of the census returns of the corporate area and of the contiguous suburban baronies (which, of course, included many predominantly rural parishes) may help to indicate what was happening during the critical twenty years after 1820 (see Table 7.1).

Growth in zone A seems to have been reversed in the 1830s, and to have slowed down markedly in zone B. Within B there were sharply diverging trends: at one extreme was the south-eastern barony of Rathdown, embracing the Pembroke estate, Blackrock and the new railway destination of Kingstown: there the population rose by a massive 43.9 per cent between 1821 and 1841. By contrast, in the Liberties districts of Donore and St Sepulchre, embracing the south-western suburbs and immediately adjoining parishes, the population fell by 17.7 per cent over those two decades. If the 1831 return is to be believed, this fall occurred exclusively in the 1830s, but a somewhat more drawn-out process is likelier.

[22] Warburton *et al.*, eds, *Dublin*, appendix I, pp. vi–vii; PP 1822, XIV, *Census of Ireland, 1821*, pp. xxii–xxiii; PP 1833, XXXIX, *Census of Ireland, 1831*, pp. 12–13; M.E. Daly, *Dublin, the deposed capital: a social and economic history, 1860–1914* (Cork, 1984), pp. 2–3; D. Dickson, 'The demographic implications of Dublin's growth, 1650–1850', in Richard Lawton and Robert Lee, eds, *Urban population development in Western Europe from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century* (Liverpool, 1989), pp. 179–81.

[23] PP 1843, XXIV, *Census of Ireland, 1841*; W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, eds, *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971* (Dublin, 1978), p. 28; Daly, *Dublin,* p. 3.

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Table 7.1. Population of Dublin city and contiguous baronies, 1821–41.

	1821	1831	1841
A. *Dublin city (civic area as defined in 1831)*	185,881	204,155	199,762
B. *Suburban and contiguous baronies* (1831 boundaries)*	123,701	147,056	148,251
C. Total	309,582	351,211	348,013

Source: PP 1822, XIV, Census of Ireland, 1821; PP 1833, XXXIX, Census of Ireland, 1831; PP 1843, XXIV, Census of Ireland, 1841.
*Baronies of Castleknock, Coolock, Donore, Newcastle, Rathdown, St Sepulchre and Uppercross.

A closer view of the city figures reveals further evidence of a crisis specifically in the south-west of the city: in 1798 42.3 per cent of Dubliners within the Circular Road had lived in the south-west quarter; by 1821 the proportion had fallen to 35.6 per cent, by 1841 to 31.7 per cent.[24] Population densities there remained very high until beyond mid-century—six of the eleven parishes had over 200 inhabitants per acre in both 1821 and 1841[25]—but nine of the eleven recorded lower population levels in 1841 than in 1821.[26] Only one other city parish (St Paul's in the north-west) showed a marked loss of population in these decades; the six large east-side parishes all recorded significant growth.[27]

There is no straightforward index of urban consumption available that might confirm the apparent slow-down in the city's population in the 1830s: the vigorous growth in the volume of bricks, stone flags and slate being transported into the city on the Grand Canal in the 1820s and 1830s points in the opposite direction, and the long-term trends in city coal imports point to an early nineteenth-century acceleration in domestic household consumption.[28] But given changes in consumption patterns and the apparent suburban building boom, such figures do not undermine the (albeit frail) censal evidence of a halt to the city's demographic expansion in the 1830s.[29]

[24] Taking the south-west quarter to consist of the parishes of Sts Audeon, Bride, Catherine, James, John, Luke, Michael, Nicholas Within and Without, and Werburgh, and also St Patrick's deanery.
[25] The six most crowded parishes were Sts Bride, John, Michael, Nicholas Within and Without, and St Patrick's deanery.
[26] The parishes suffering depopulation were Sts Audeon, Bride, Catherine, James, John, Luke, Michael, Nicholas Without, and St Patrick's deanery. The 1821 totals are of the population within the Circular Rd; 1841 totals are of population as returned within the municipal boundary.
[27] These large east-side parishes were Sts Anne, George, Mark, Mary, Peter and Thomas.
[28] PP 1837–8, XXXV, *Second report of the Railway Commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a general system of railways for Ireland*, appx B, pp. 52, 78; D. Dickson, 'The place of Dublin in the eighteenth-century Irish economy', in T.M. Devine and David Dickson, eds, *Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1850: parallels and contrasts in economic and social development* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 180.
[29] See the journeymen carpenters' assertion that Dublin's housing growth was something of an illusion: 'new houses [in the city] do not amount to near the number which have gone to premature decay': RIA, MS 4.B.31, 'Reports on the trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c.*1834, vol. II, p. 115.

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Whatever occurred about a reversal in the city's overall growth, there is no shortage of evidence for the continuing relocation of bourgeois Dublin outside the municipal boundaries and far from the workshop heart of the old city. The process has obvious London parallels, but the intensity of the movement out of the artisanal quarters of Dublin was singular, helping to create that derelict urban landscape around the Liberties which shocked visitors. Why the flight from the old city? It had several elements to it: poor-quality local governance (proprietorial and municipal); disproportionately high local taxation; worsening amenities; and environmental degradation, as traditional forms of mainly textile employment declined and public health worsened. From the 1810s emigration and suburban relocation were complementary options for those with the means to escape the sunset industries with some of their capital intact. Those with little or no means stayed. In addition to these social factors there was a political dimension: after municipal reform and Daniel O'Connell's 'capture' of Dublin Corporation in 1841, many Protestant citizens felt that the newly embodied Tory suburban townships—mainly on the city's south side—were a natural refuge.[30]

IV

The long-term trends in Dublin property values were much cited as evidence of the city's post-Union difficulties. Given the prevalence of an active and unregulated leasehold market similar to that which operated in London, house rents were highly demand-sensitive. No study has been undertaken of any of the major Dublin estates in this period, so at this stage we are forced to rely on aggregate evidence: until 1830 the numerous city taxes were levied according to local, parish-determined valuations, organised in somewhat haphazard fashion. One of Speaker Foster's correspondents on the eve of the Union had estimated that Dublin houses produced a mean rental income of £60 p.a., exclusive of fines at lease renewal.[31] If this is taken as an optimistic upper-bound estimate, how does it compare with the house/tenement rating averages that were decided upon at the city-wide valuations of 1830 and 1854?

The mean house valuation for the city of Dublin in 1830 was £40 13s. 6d. The implied fall of one-third between the time of the Union and 1830 is striking, and happens to be exactly what Foster's informant had predicted as a consequence of the passing of the Union. However, in making such a comparison several points need to be borne in mind: the impact of post-war deflation on the cost of living; the depressed economic state of much of the urban economy around 1830; and the effect of currency union exaggerating the fall in the nominal valuation. But, that said, the direction of

[30] Daly, *Dublin,* chap. 6; D'Arcy, 'Distress and reform', pp. 97–8.
[31] PRONI, Foster papers, D207/10/30, 'Estimate of what Dublin would lose by the Union'.

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Dublin property values in the early nineteenth century, and certainly after 1820, was very much out of line with London trends.

In the revaluation carried out for the new poor law *c*.1840, the assessment for the city gives an average tenement valuation of £29 12s. 6d.[32] And in the 1854 valuation, the final one done for Dublin during the nineteenth century, the average tenement valuation for the city had fallen further, to just under £25.[33] The criteria used in these exercises are not strictly comparable; Griffith's Valuation in 1854 was by far the most rigorous. But the ongoing decline in property values that they point to is quite plausible, and it was very much the conventional belief as far as the old city was concerned.[34]

A comparison of the 1830 and 1854 surveys confirms the specificity of the crisis in the south-western parishes: in the 1830 exercise, the eleven parishes west of Dublin Castle contributed 20.7 per cent of the total city valuation; by 1854 their contribution had shrunk to an insignificant 14.4 per cent. House values in the south-west averaged £28 12s. 0d. in 1830, and £13 0s. 6d. in 1854.[35] But even in the more favoured parishes there was an echo of this decline: the parliamentary inquiries of the 1820s and 1830s resonated with claims about the fall in commercial property values in such places as Capel Street and Sackville Street. Of course the reason why this issue was so much in the public mind was the coincidence of a greatly swollen local tax burden and falling rental values. Some saw in the mounting tax demands evidence of the incompetence and corruption of an unreformed city government; others recognised that the financial burden bearing down on tax-paying citizens, whoever their governors, could only get heavier as long as the haemorrhage of the well-to-do across the city boundaries and beyond the fiscal net continued.[36]

V

Long-term trends in Dublin port provide a sharply different view of the city's fortunes. The crude measure of ship tonnage invoiced indicates a quite solid expansion of activity along the lower Liffey quays in the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet compared with Belfast, Liverpool or London itself, Dublin's performance was hardly spectacular.

[32] PP 1847, XXVI, *Minutes of evidence on the Dublin Improvement Bill, 1846*, p. 146.

[33] A figure of £24 8s. 8d. is obtained by dividing the city valuation total (buildings including exemptions but excluding land) by the number of houses returned in the 1851 census: *Thom's Almanac and Official Directory . . . for 1860*, (Dublin, 1860), p. 1125.

[34] See, for example, the correspondence in the Costello papers, Balch Institute, Philadelphia.

[35] PP 1830–31, XIV, *Summary of the valuation of the City of Dublin, 1830*; *Thom's Directory, 1860*, p. 1125; George O'Brien, *The economic history of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (London, 1921), p. 569; J.H. Martin, 'The social geography of mid nineteenth-century Dublin', in W.J. Smyth and Kevin Whelan, eds, *Common ground: essays on the historical geography of Ireland* (Cork, 1988), pp. 177–82.

[36] PP 1823, VI, *First report from the select committee on the local taxation of the city of Dublin, 1823*, *passim*, esp. p. 60.

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Dublin's national share of tonnage invoiced, which in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century had hovered around 55 per cent, was slipping from the 1770s and this trend apparently continued for the next three-quarters of a century, by which time Dublin handled less than 30 per cent of Irish shipping by tonnage. However, it is worth noting that the greatest relative decline in Dublin's primacy occurred in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a time of commercial renaissance for a number of the Irish outports, and not later.[37] The city's share of national customs revenue held up rather better: having consistently contributed close to 50 per cent of Irish receipts until the end of the eighteenth century, it was averaging slightly over 40 per cent in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.[38]

Table 7.2. Aggregate tonnage of vessels entering Dublin port, 1794–1854.[39]

	Tonnage of inbound vessels	
	Annual average (tons measurement)	National share (percentage)
1794–98	252,521.6	39.6
1817–21	321,950.4	32.4
1831–35	493,561.6	30.2
1841–45	599,365.4	29.0
1851–54	876,667	28.1

Note: Data relate to the tonnage burthen of vessels coming from British or overseas ports. Years end 5 January.

Colliers continued as always to be the most common sight in Dublin Bay, but they were joined in the mid-1820s by a small flotilla of commercial steam-boats. The regular coastal and Anglo-Irish services which the steam-packet companies soon developed helped Dublin hold onto its still pivotal position in Irish Sea trade. And for the most part, ownership of the new transport companies remained in Dublin hands. On their craft were shuttled the ever-growing quantities of livestock, flour and perishable foodstuffs, trades that changed the character and composition of Dublin's wholesale merchant community.

A particularly striking feature of the shipping statistics is the minuscule showing of foreign trade in the life of the nineteenth-century port: by the early 1840s less than 8 per cent of the tonnage invoiced was coming from outside the United Kingdom, and less than 9 per cent of the tonnage cleared. The eclipse of Dublin's Atlantic trade was

[37] Dickson, 'Place of Dublin', p. 192n.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 179; Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union*, pp. 67–8; Anthony Marmion, *The ancient and modern history of the maritime ports of Ireland* (London, 1855), p. 243.
[39] Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union*, pp. vii–ix, 54–5; Marmion, *Maritime ports*, pp. 242–4. For a fuller tonnage series up to 1820–21, see Dickson, 'Place of Dublin', p. 180.

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by then very evident: it was claimed in 1834 that 'formerly there were more direct arrivals in one year [from the U.S.A.] than [there] have been for the last twenty years altogether'.[40] Others saw the coming of the steam-boats in the 1820s as undermining the overseas merchant houses: Dublin 'is no longer a depot for merchandise . . . [but] merely a place of transit'.[41] There was no Dublin parallel to the great West India Docks on the Thames, nor it seems a need of them. Neither the Ringsend Docks nor the smaller St George's Docks (opened in 1821 east of the Custom House) offered faint comparison.

And as for the Custom House itself, in the era of free trade it stood like an anachronistic colossus. Only the Canadian timber trade and the complementary transatlantic emigrant traffic showed much dynamism in the 1820s; direct trade to the Far East remained something of an exotic side-show.[42] Yet when the commercial and financial connections between the merchant communities of Dublin and Liverpool in the early nineteenth century come to be investigated, the importance of Dublin capital and Dublin partners in the development of Liverpool's oceanic trade may turn out to have been not wholly insignificant.[43]

VI

The statistical evidence, such as it is, provides therefore some confirmation of urban difficulty, or of at least a loss of impetus, in what was still claimed to be the second city of the empire, in an era when nearly all major cities in the two islands were growing very rapidly. How far can we still ascribe Dublin's poor performance to the fact of Anglo-Irish Union?

We can usefully revisit the three types of loss predicted *c.*1800 in the event of the Union proposal being carried: first, the impact on commerce, building and property values in the event of an aristocratic exodus; second, the impact on Dublin's workshop economy of Anglo-Irish free trade and a customs union; and third, the impact on public works and new civic infrastructure if the metropolitan and parliamentary status of the city was ended.

Likely changes in property values and household spending were predicted in a tantalising exercise carried out in 1800 for Speaker Foster to determine the current value of each city house occupied by a peer or MP and an assessment of their annual

[40] 'Trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c.*1834, vol. I, pp. 27–8. Cf. Warburton *et al.*, *Dublin*, pp. 991–2; Samuel Lewis, *A topographical dictionary of Ireland* (London, 1837), vol. I, pp. 535–6.
[41] PP 1836, XXX, *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, p. 3c. See also *ibid.*, pp. 37c, 44c; Marmion, *Maritime ports*, p. 242.
[42] 'Trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c.*1834, vol. I, pp. 25–6; Richard Harrison, 'Dublin Quakers in business, 1800–1850' (MLitt thesis, University of Dublin, 1987), pp. 168–75.
[43] See Harrison, 'Dublin Quakers', pp. 179–91, 195–204.

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expenditure in Dublin, where 'shrewd guesses' were given for the houses of 76 lay peers, 15 Church of Ireland bishops, and 236 of the 300 Irish MPs (see Table 7.3). In addition, the return included expenditure estimates on their own for another 10 peers and 15 MPs (some of these men had, it would seem, no fixed property in the city; others, the author assumed, would from their continued tenure of public office not be disposing of their houses).

The prophesied exodus did indeed occur: by 1824 there were only 25 lay peers listed as resident in the city—compared to the tally in 1800 of three times that number.[44] And there were barely a hundred upper-class families—peers and commoners—returned at that stage as having both Dublin and country residences; one may assume that nearly all of the 327 'active' spenders of 1800, plus dozens of gentry families outside parliament, would have enjoyed dual residence on the eve of the Union.[45] But the great departure did not occur with the suddenness or with the consequences predicted.

Table 7.3. Estimate of property and annual consumption of peers and MPs in Dublin, 1800.[46]

	House property, furniture etc.	'Annual expenditure that will be lost to Dublin'
Lay peers (av. of 76)	£4,171*	£2,283
Bishops (av. of 15)	£2,467	£1,467
MPs (av. of 236)	£2,040	£1,273

Sums rounded to nearest pound.
*If the £30,000 valuation on the duke of Leinster's property is excluded, the figure would fall to £3,827.

Prior to that nemesis, wartime prosperity, shared by *rentiers*, merchants and the rural consumers of Dublin's goods and services, had masked the dislocating effects of the parliamentary exodus: a dozen years of post-Union prosperity stimulated the fresh building on the Gardiner and Fitzwilliam estates, and sustained the expansion in luxury craft production—silver-plating and musical instrument manufacture for example[47]

[44] *Pigot and Co.'s City of Dublin and Hibernian Provincial Directory* (London, 1824), pp. 15–32. The above number includes new peerage creations but excludes dowagers and those holding courtesy titles.
[45] PRONI, Foster papers, D207/10/9; *Pigot's Directory*, 1824, pp. 15–32 (excluding those with dual city and suburban Dublin addresses). The journeymen carpenters claimed in 1834 that there had been 150 resident nobility in Dublin at the time of the Union, plus 600 'commoners and gentlemen of extensive property': see 'Trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c.*1834, vol. II, p. 114. Michael Maley was nearer the mark in 1823 when he suggested that 98 peers had resided before the Union; he estimated that only 12 peers and 6 MPs had Dublin houses in 1823: *First report on Dublin local taxation*, 1823, p. 140. Cf. Jacqueline Hill, *From patriots to unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant patriotism, 1660–1840* (Oxford, 1997), p. 292.
[46] PRONI, Foster papers, D207/10/9. Note that Lord Kenmare was listed twice—as a viscount and an earl; his elevation to the higher title occurred in December 1800, and only the valuations associated with that entry are used. This mistake helps to date the document to the very eve of the Union.
[47] PP 1822, XIII, *Third report of the commission of inquiry into revenue arising in Ireland*, appx, pp. 20–1; Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700–1850', in T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan, eds, *A new history of Ireland. IV: 1691–1800* (Oxford, 1986), esp. pp. 627–8.

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—and in the high-status professions. Indeed Napoleonic Dublin saw more signs of expansion than contraction, and it seemed to a careful observer like Edward Wakefield a surprisingly lively place, especially in springtime (the new social season), its theatre 'better frequented than the play-houses in London', and respectable society more animated than in either London or Paris.[48] Yet insiders felt that where once the city had been 'gay, convivial, and in some degree dissipated', it was now becoming 'more serious, prudent, and religious'.[49]

By contrast, the post-war years were particularly grim for the city. In architectural terms the transformation of Moira House, the old centre of Whig intrigue, into a new asylum for beggars (the Mendicity Institute) was a powerful metaphor.[50] Most such large private residences, those with sixty feet or more street frontage, were gradually surrendered to institutional use (education and the public service for the most part); they were often divided up in the process. The sale of the seventy-year-old Leinster House to the Dublin Society in 1815—at two-thirds the valuation assigned to it in 1800—may well have been seen as the end of an era.[51] Yet the Leinster family, like many other leading Irish peers, retained a discreet presence in Dublin far into the future. 'Absenteeism' certainly remained a live issue for those seeking to account for Dublin's difficulties; but after 1815 local commentators were as quick to blame the *post-war* exodus of financially strapped Irish gentry to the Continent as to refer back to the post-Union departure.[52]

However, those gentry who chose to give up their Dublin houses were not giving up Dublin. Long into the nineteenth century the city's range of tertiary services in law, medicine, education and finance had no English provincial rival, and not until late Victorian Belfast reached its prime was there any Irish challenge. But Dublin, like the old centres of aristocratic resort in Britain, had had to adapt to more peripatetic upper-class life-styles. The development of well-appointed hotels and gentlemen's clubs was symptomatic of this changing world: in Dublin the Shelbourne and Morrison's Hotels became established places of gentry resort by the late 1820s, being sited in the heart of an old upper-class neighbourhood; and several successful 'city', services, and 'country' clubs had by then also put down roots, led in size and prestige by the Kildare Street Club (near Morrison's and the Shelbourne) which in 1822 had 687 gentlemen

[48] Wakefield, *Ireland, statistical and political*, vol. II, pp. 783–5. Of the many wartime monthly magazines, one that perhaps captures this upbeat tone best is *The Dublin Satirist* (1809–10).

[49] Warburton *et al.*, *Dublin*, p. 1169. (Note that most of the text of this *History* was written more than a decade before its publication in 1818: *The Cyclopaedian Magazine and Dublin Monthly Register*, 1 (1807), 226.) Cf. Hill, *Patriots,* pp. 292–3.

[50] The Mendicity Association was established in 1818, but Moira House only became operational as a *de facto* workhouse in 1826.

[51] Lewis, *Topographical dictionary*, p. 538.

[52] 'Viator', *Letters to the Rt Hon. Robert Peel . . . relating to the improvement of the metropolis* (Dublin, 1816), pp. 19–20; *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, pp. 19c, 24c.

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members.[53] Its cellarer was doubtless a crucial client for the city's diminishing fraternity of wine merchants.

But if the gentry of Ireland were still regularly *in* the city, they were for the most part no longer *of* it. Cultural leadership in Dublin, even by 1820, seems to have become predominantly professional, whether measured in terms of philanthropic initiative, active membership of scholarly and improving institutions, or setting the *ton*. How far the viceregal court steered or resisted this process remains unclear; prominent city Catholics were not as a rule invited to social events in the Castle until the 1820s, suggesting at best a partial accommodation with changed times.[54] Patrick Boylan, owner of a very long-established firm of house decorators, claimed in 1834 that 'the only persons in Dublin now who furnish their houses in any style or magnificence are professional men, or men in business, who have amassed fortunes'. With nearly 200 craftsmen on his payroll, he was in a position to know.[55]

The second predicted consequence of the Union in 1800 was a severe blow to Dublin's manufacturing base. There was near unanimity in Dublin by 1840 that the city had undergone severe and painful de-industrialisation over the previous four decades. The opaque occupational data in the 1821 and 1841 censuses indicate a structural shift in employment patterns, but not quite a revolution: from 53.2 per cent of the 'metropolitan' population engaged in 'trades, manufactures, and handicrafts' in 1821 to 41.1 per cent of the municipal population 'ministering to clothing', 'lodging [i.e. building], furniture, machinery etc.', or involved in food and drink processing. Perhaps more telling was the fact that the total number recording any occupation in the city showed no overall growth between 1821 and 1841.[56]

The qualitative evidence, especially that gathered in the 1830s, suggests a more profound change—a general de-skilling across many trades, a fall in both the quality of employment and the quality of the craft product. With talk of repeal of the Union on everyone's lips, such perceived changes were conventionally measured against the state of things on the eve of the Union. But how far can this whole process be blamed on the Act of Union and its implementation? To what extent had the staggered reduction in tariffs between 1808 and 1824 opened up the Dublin-dominated Irish market to the cheaper products of a more advanced economy? Dublin commercial and industrial lobbyists had in 1800 predicted a grisly future for themselves in the event of free trade, so were they proven right?[57] We can begin to hazard an answer.

[53] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Shelbourne: a centre in Dublin life . . .* (London, 1951); R.B. McDowell, *Land and learning: two Irish clubs* (Dublin, 1993), p. 46. The Sackville Street Club had 400 members in the mid-1830s: Lewis, *Topographical dictionary*, vol. I, p. 541.
[54] Hill, *Patriots*, p. 292.
[55] *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, p. 31c.
[56] *Census of Ireland, 1821*; *Census of Ireland, 1841.* See also Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and beyond: the great Irish Famine* (Princeton NJ, 1999), pp. 158–60.
[57] *Evidence on the legislative union, 1800*, *passim*.

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Table 7.4. Explaining the decline in Dublin industrial employment, *c*.1834.*

	Percentage offering explanation	
	Masters	Operatives
Local trade combinations	44.9	0
Superior English capital/credit/division of labour etc.	26.1	19.4
Absenteeism of the gentry	4.8	20.1
Official contracting policy	3.2	15.3
Withdrawal of protecting duties	3.8	12.5
General economic depression (nationally)	4.3	11.1
New taxes	3.2	5.6
Impact of maritime steam-power	4.6	0
Influx of cheap labour	0	3.5
Other	5.1	12.5

Source: PP 1836, xxx, *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appendix C, part ii.
*These results are only indicative. Scores have been calculated as follows: 10 points have been assigned for a sole-cause explanation and fractions of 10 assigned proportionately. Aggregate score totals (for masters 186, for operatives 144) are expressed in percentages.

The rapid post-Union contraction of the Dublin book-trade and the migration to America of a number of its leading figures formed one instance where integrative legislation had directly negative effects: the catalyst was the 1801 extension of British copyright to Ireland which undermined the profitability of Dublin book production almost immediately and narrowed the scope of the printing trade.[58] The disappearance of local watch-making shortly after the Union was explained in terms of a tariff anomaly that gave English producers premature duty-free access to the Irish market.[59] But these were unusually clear-cut cases.

In the extensive official and unofficial inquiries into the state of Dublin manufacturing that were carried out in the 1820s and 1830s there was little unanimity as to why industrial decline was occurring. Thus the respondents to the Poor Inquiry's investigation of the state of city manufacturing in 1834 (divided in the report into masters and 'operatives') came up with strikingly different opinions. Table 7.4 is an attempt to present the responses of 24 groups of operatives and 31 masters, as summarised by the commissioners.

The remit of the Poor Inquiry inspectors had been to examine the city's trade combinations, so the hostile emphasis placed by the spokesmen for the employers on the damaging effect of journeymen organisations is perhaps to be expected. But Dublin

[58] Warburton *et al.*, *Dublin*, pp. 1157–63; *Third report into revenue arising in Ireland, 1822*, appx, pp. 16–17; Charles Benson, 'Printers and booksellers in Dublin, 1800–1850', in Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Charles Benson, eds, *Spreading the word: the distribution networks of print, 1550–1850* (Winchester, 1990), pp. 47–59.
[59] *Third report on revenue arising in Ireland, 1822*, appx, p. 20.

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does seem to have had a very high proportion of its urban craftsmen organised by that time: D'Arcy's estimate that three-fifths of the city's 20,000 skilled artisans were members of trade societies by 1830 is impressive, and it is striking that it was in the high-quality crafts—cabinet-making, paper-staining, hat-making, saddlery—that the proportion of organised artisans was greatest.[60]

Manufacturers blamed the strength and obduracy of the Dublin trade societies, notably those of the journeymen silk weavers and ship carpenters, for the recent collapse of several industries in and around the city. Insofar as they could account for the particular strength of Dublin unions, they put the blame on the cossetting effects of the old protectionist regime before 1825, and claimed that overpaid craftsmen had been able to exploit Dublin's monopoly of the Irish market in certain sectors.[61] It is true that when the customs union and currency union were in the offing in the mid-1820s, labour conflict across many trades was at its most acute. But this upsurge of tensions in the city seems to have primarily been a defensive strategy at a time of economic crisis and rapid technical change. Yet industrial relations cannot be factored out of the debate; the relatively high levels of Dublin skilled wages in the sectors that were well organised, and the inflexible work practices (notably the rules governing apprenticeship, female labour, new technology and the methods of payment), together with Dublin's possibly exaggerated reputation for industrial violence, cumulatively damaged the city's capacity to adapt economically.[62]

Relatively less emphasis was placed by the 1834 respondents on the effects of the degentrification of the city, although masters and operatives in the building trades stressed their gradual loss of business. What is far more surprising in this opinion test was the high weighting accorded to broadly macro-economic forces (the greater capitalisation and lower production costs of English manufacturers and/or the longer credit-lines offered by English suppliers) *vis-à-vis* policy factors (free trade, export drawbacks, public contracting and new taxation) on the part of both employers and trade representatives. But among the policy grievances it was the repatriation of government contracting (by the army, the Revenue and the Post Office) to England—and to London in particular—that some trade representatives complained about, more than the fact of free trade itself. As for the employers, the very low proportion among them prepared to blame free trade directly for their problems is a most eloquent rebuttal of the politicians' simplistic linkage (then and later) of the Act of Union with industrial decline.

[60] F.A. D'Arcy, 'Dublin artisan activity, opinion and organisation, 1820–50' (MA thesis, NUI [UCD], 1968), *passim*.
[61] *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, pp. 35c, 39c, 43–44c. But a minority of masters dissented: *ibid.*, pp. 18–19c, 27–28c; O'Brien, *Union to Famine* , pp. 391–2. The wages of silk-weavers and of shipwrights were unusual in being officially regulated, the first by the Dublin Society, the latter by statute. Calico printing was a case where labour organisation was ineffective and wages substantially lower than English levels: *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, p. 16c.
[62] D'Arcy, 'Dublin artisan activity', *passim*; Liam Kennedy and M.W. Dowling, 'Prices and wages in Ireland, 1700–1850', in *Irish Economic and Social History*, 24 (1997), 62–104.

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This less than obsessional view of the importance of free trade was not new to the 1830s: in 1820, when several Dublin interests had lobbied for a delay in the final removal of tariffs and had won a stay of execution, by no means all were happy; some 314 Dublin merchants and manufacturers signed a memorial to the Treasury in December 1823 calling for full free trade forthwith.[63] In other words, there were real sectional divisions within the merchant community as to the costs and benefits of maintaining limited duties on Anglo-Irish commerce, and it was only the handicraft textile sector that seems to have paid a very heavy price when customs union became a reality in 1825.

Handicraft textile manufacture in any location, however specialised the product or the end market, was not going to be able to avoid its day of reckoning in the early factory age. The operation of comparative advantage did not favour the survival of labour-intensive industry producing a standardised product in any metropolitan centre. But the collapse of employment in cotton and silk weaving in Dublin's Liberties in the later 1820s was particularly dramatic and irreversible because of a malign coincidence: the sudden policy change on tariff elimination coming on the eve of a British industrial recession and at a time of falling Anglo-Irish transport costs (with the introduction of steam-boat services).[64]

It was said that even in 1820 there would have been 'a cart load of gold in the Liberties'; by the mid-1830s 'entire streets have disappeared', the district as a whole presenting 'the general appearance that may be supposed after a bombardment, deserted and left for some years to the ravages of wind and weather'; once 'the humblest of [the Liberties] workmen would get one or two suits a year; now [in 1834] the few left in this district can only purchase annually a cast-off suit imported from London'. In particular, the financial wipe-out of the fifty-odd master silk manufacturers in the course of the 1820s astonished contemporaries.[65] Yet out of the wreckage of those years a few branches of Dublin textiles survived: tabinet and carpet making, and in the suburbs calico printing and a few vertically integrated linen plants.[66]

The resilience and in some cases expansion of the food, drink, iron founding, precision engineering and leather trades provided cold comfort for most of the displaced. How many families emulated the Caffrys of Summer Street in their successful

[63] *Third report on revenue arising in Ireland, 1822*, appx, pp. 16–17, 21–2, 26–8; PP 1824, XI, *Seventh report of the commission of inquiry into revenue arising in Ireland*, appx, pp. 35–6. George O'Brien (*Union to Famine*, pp. 424–6) overstated the opposition to free trade in Dublin.

[64] D. Dickson, 'Aspects of the rise and decline of the Irish cotton industry', in L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout, eds, *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history, 1600–1900* (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 108–11; David O'Toole, 'The employment crisis of 1826', in D. Dickson, ed., *The gorgeous mask: Dublin, 1700–1850* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 157–71. On the costs of sudden policy change and the coming of the steamboats, see *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, p. 39c; O'Brien, *Union to Famine*, pp. 340–1, 434.

[65] PP 1831–2, XIX, *Report of the select committee on the silk trade*, pp. 836–40; 'Trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c.*1834, vol. II, p. 115; *Poor Inquiry (Ireland)*, appx C, part ii, pp. 28c, 39c, 41c.

[66] Halls, *Ireland*, vol. II, pp. 330–1.

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transition from cloth to drink is unknown but there cannot have been many: the Caffrys were Liberties stuff manufacturers who switched from a largely urban weaving workforce to rural labour after the wars, and who eventually left textiles to become successful brewers, with presumably a far smaller payroll.[67] It was indeed somewhat ironic that the foundations of the city's great brewing and distilling dynasties were being laid immediately adjacent to the devastated hand-loom communities. Perhaps the best known family to make a successful escape out of textiles were the Bewleys, who diversified in a different direction: moving from silk to 'groceries', Samuel Bewley and company were pioneers (for Ireland) of the China trade and the direct importation of tea.[68]

Anti-Unionists had also warned that Dublin's civic and cultural infrastructure would wither with the loss of the Irish parliament. As with so much else, they greatly exaggerated their case. It is true that the (very ample) Irish parliamentary grant to the Dublin Society was cut back after 1800, and that the city's Wide Streets Commissioners had to fall back on local tax revenues in order to continue their programme of street widening, quay construction and avenue creation.[69] But both institutions continued to develop and to innovate, albeit on somewhat tighter budgets and with periods of retrenchment, and their affairs were enthusiastically overseen by professional city families of high status.[70] Some Dublin cultural institutions only received parliamentary support after the Union, notably the Royal Irish Academy which was given an annual grant for the first time in 1816; it had pleaded hardship following the end of the winter influx of the gentry. Other institutions, like the Library Society and the Dublin Institution, flourished without such support.[71]

Exchequer loans were regularly made to the city's Paving Commissioners, and from the time of the reform of the city police in 1808 its salaries were met by parliamentary grant.[72] Of the Irish public works separately voted on in Westminster between 1809 and 1840, the reconstruction and extension of Howth and Dún Laoghaire harbours were the largest single projects, between them drawing down nearly £605,000, all part of the project to narrow the distance between London and Dublin.[73] In other words, Dublin's quasi-metropolitan status was still recognised by the state, and this was very much tied

[67] 'Trades and manufactures of Dublin', *c*.1834, vol. I, p. 171; *I. Slater's National Commercial Directory of Ireland* . . . (Manchester, 1846), p. 190: Harrison, 'Dublin Quakers', pp. 403–13.

[68] Harrison, 'Dublin Quakers', pp. 175–7, 193–4.

[69] H.F. Berry, *A history of the Royal Dublin Society* (London, 1915), pp. 210–11; Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union,* p. 41; Dickson, 'Second city syndrome', p. 100. Much of the quay reconstruction was done by the Ballast Board and was funded by the 'Anna Liffey' tax.

[70] Berry, *Royal Dublin Society*, chaps. xiv–xvii; Niall McCullough, *Dublin: an urban history* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 79–85. The opening up of Nassau Street, the south end of Grafton Street, and of Church Street/Constitution Hill were among the projects of the Wide Streets Commissioners in their final years; their functions were taken over amidst much party controversy by Dublin Corporation in 1849.

[71] J.T. Gilbert, *A history of the City of Dublin* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1978), vol. III, p. 239; J.B. Howell, *A history of the Dublin Library Society, 1791–1881* (Halifax NS, 1985).

[72] *First report on Dublin local taxation, 1823*, pp. 222, 229.

[73] Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union,* pp. 41, 158.

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in with the continuation of a viceregal system of government and the presence of occasionally pro-active chief secretaries who could make Dublin's case in London.

But the public work that encapsulated the ambiguities of post-Union Dublin most perfectly was the new General Post Office, completed in 1818. Built by the city's most successful early nineteenth-century architect Francis Johnston at a cost of around £50,000, it marked the final eclipse of Sackville Street as an upper-class residential quarter. With a strategic 220-foot (56 metres) façade located towards the centre of the newly completed boulevard—Dublin's answer to Regent Street—the GPO was regarded even before it was built as the natural epicentre of the city.[74] It lay in the shadow of that great monument of the city's wartime loyalism, Nelson's Pillar, and a block away from the embryonic pro-cathedral in Marlborough Street, the first post-reformation Catholic architectural *tour de force* in the city.

Indeed the GPO was a public building which (unusually for Dublin) seems to have had no detractors, and its scale was more than matched by the subsequent growth in its volume of business.[75]

> No building in this city has enriched it so much as the General Post Office; independent of its important utility, its erection in Sackville-street has given life and business to the very first of our principal streets, which formerly was nothing more than a mall or Sunday parade for our gentry in winter.[76]

It was a suitable motif for nineteenth-century Dublin, the capital of communications and commerce, of information, ideas and knowledge. It was perhaps appropriate that the building designed to celebrate the power of communication within the Union should have been chosen as the birthplace of its dissolution a century later.

[74] 'Viator', *Letters to Peel*, *passim*; Eamon Walsh, 'Sackville Mall: the first hundred years', in Dickson, *Gorgeous mask*, pp. 42–50.
[75] Dickson, 'Second city syndrome', pp. 99–100.
[76] William Martin, *A commercial guide through Dublin for 1825* . . . (Dublin, 1825), p. 12.

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List of Abbreviations

APC	*Acts of the Privy Council*
BL	British Library
CARD	*Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin*, ed. J.T. and R.M. Gilbert, 19 vols (Dublin, 1889–1944)
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CJ	*House of Common Journals, England*
CSP	*Calendar of State Papers*
Ec.HR	*Economic History Review*
HCJI	*Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*
GL	Guildhall Library
HMC	*Historical Manuscripts Commission*
Lambeth PL	Lambeth Palace Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
PRONI	Public Record Office, Northern Ireland
RCB	Representative Church Body Library, Dublin
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
WAC	Westminster Archives Centre

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