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Tadhg FOLEY

Monotheism and Modernity: W. E. Hearn, Ireland, Empire, and the Household Gods

'[T]he half-ruined cottage still stood, though roofless, next to the new one out of respect for the household gods' (Lloyd 2011, ix).[1]

ABSTRACT: Operating with Darwinian categories, and beginning with Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861), scholars in comparative ethnology, jurisprudence, and philology claimed that some societies evolved organically in a series of stages while others failed to develop. In religious discourse a key indicator of modernity was a belief in monotheism. This belief, however, like the related achievement of 'civilisation', was generally held to be incapable of spontaneous growth in savage or barbaric societies and the transition from archaic polytheism to the monotheism of modernity was powerfully enabled by the spread of empire. W. E. Hearn (1826-1888) published *The Aryan Household* in 1878, with the subtitle *An Introduction to Comparative Jurisprudence*. He saw archaic society as household-centred, lacking both a state and law, operating a regime of what Maine termed 'status' rather than 'contract', where the foundation of human association was religion rather than kinship. This shared worship was symbolized by a common meal in honour of the household gods, the spirits of deceased ancestors. In Hearn's words, 'The common meal was the sole means by which a communication could be maintained between the spirit-world and the earth'. Christianity waged a 'war without parley and without truce' against the household gods but its victory in 'clannish' Ireland was far from complete, for Hearn saw Ireland, in many respects, as closer to archaic society than to modernity with its unreformed majority religion and its still unvanquished household gods.

KEYWORDS: Household Gods; Monotheism; Empire; Ireland; Brehon Laws; Patriarchy

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[1] I am grateful to Professor David Lloyd for permission to use this quotation from his late father.

Introduction

This paper attempts to explore the thinking of W. E. Hearn, an important but neglected nineteenth-century Irish scholar, on the role of religion in archaic Aryan society.[2] It begins with a biographical note on the life and works of Hearn and outlines briefly the evolutionary perspective of his social analysis and the connection he makes between the growth of empires and the victory of monotheism over archaic polytheism, of Christianity over the household gods. The next section deals with the structure of archaic society which was household centred and where each household was under the dominion of the house father, usually the eldest male of the line. As households expanded they spontaneously divided into a number of households, all related to one another, eventually giving rise to the clan. Normally the eldest male of the eldest branch of the family became the clan chief, being nearest in blood to the eponym or founder; his duties included, like the house father, the conducting of religious worship. This society lacked the apparatus of state, was governed by custom rather than law, its religious worship was domestic, and the bond which united it was not kinship, but religion.

Then follows the main part of the paper, which considers the nature and functions of religion among the Aryan nations, with the community of worship symbolized by a common meal which both signified and performed communal integration, as well as uniting the worshippers with the divinity, the living with the dead. The hearth was the 'focus' (the Latin word for hearth) of domestic worship and the place where sacrifice was offered to the house spirits, the actual or assumed burial-place of deceased ancestors whose 'spirit-rule', according to Hearn, was the belief 'which guided the conduct of our forefathers' (Hearn 1878, 39). This section concludes with an account of the various kinds of relationships these Aryan peoples had with their gods and a discussion of their rigidly patriarchal societies, with descent traced through the male line, and where the house spirit was always masculine and the celebration of his worship always confined to males. The gradual disintegration of the family and the clan leads to the eventual formation of the state, a political structure based on contiguity, with a regime of law and contract, with the individual, and not the household, as the central unit of society. The next section examines the role of Christianity in the destruction of the clan and its ceaseless warfare with the household gods.

Finally, this paper addresses the problem of Ireland, which, from the 1860s, was widely perceived as having never progressed beyond the

[2] For related aspects of Hearn's thinking, see Tadhg Foley, "The Twilight of the Household Gods: Between Archaic Society and Modernity: W. E. Hearn and the Matter of Ireland", *The Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 13, 2013, pp. 108-27.

tribal condition and failing to develop into a nation or state, unlike other countries in Europe. In Hearn's view, the precepts of Christianity were totally antagonistic to the clan. In Ireland, and the 'Keltic' (Hearn's spelling) church generally, where Christianity was unaccompanied by Roman law, problems emerged. The Church adapted itself to the clan system, with the spread of independent monasteries reflecting tribal arrangements, and with centralized and hierarchical Roman ideas of church government unknown in the Irish Church, an unhappy situation, in Hearn's opinion. In Ireland the household gods made their last stand in the western world.

Hearn

William Edward Hearn, was born in Belturbet, Co. Cavan, Ireland on 21 April 1826 and educated at Trinity College Dublin, graduating in 1847. Two years later he was appointed the first Professor of the Greek Language in Queen's College Galway before emigrating in 1854 to Victoria where he became a founding professor of the University of Melbourne. His most celebrated work, *Plutology, or the Theory of the Efforts to Satisfy Human Wants* (1863), was the first treatise on political economy to deploy Darwinian evolutionary ideas and it should be seen as a counterpart to *The Aryan Household, Its Structure and Its Development: An Introduction to Comparative Jurisprudence* (1878), a work of historical jurisprudence; the one a study of modernity, the other a historical treatise on archaic society. He was also the author of *The Cassell Prize Essay on the Condition of Ireland* (1851), *The Government of England, Its Structure and Its Development* (1867), *The Theory of Legal Duties and Rights: An Introduction to Analytical Jurisprudence* (1883), and 'The General Code 1885: A Bill to Declare, Consolidate and Amend the Substantive General Law, Brought in by Hon. W.E. Hearn' (1885). He was the unnamed author of *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland, in 1846 and 1847* (1852). While still in Ireland, most likely in 1853, he also wrote an unpublished, book-length manuscript, 'On Natural Religion', now preserved in the Baillieu Library in the University of Melbourne. Hearn was chancellor of the Anglican diocese of Melbourne for ten years (1877-1888) and he was also active in the affairs of Trinity College, which was founded in 1872 as an Anglican residential college of the University of Melbourne. He was a second cousin of Lafcadio Hearn as his father was a half-brother of Lafcadio's grandfather, Daniel Hearn of Correagh, Co. Westmeath. He died in Melbourne on 23 April 1888.

Aryanism and Empire

It was received wisdom in the second half of the nineteenth century that all Aryan societies were engaged in the same evolutionary process, but while some branches of the Indo-European family were progressive, as in western Europe, others, such as India, languished in the past, being generally considered, in the words of Thomas R. Trautmann, as 'a museum of the past of Europe' (Trautmann 1997, 205). Hearn begins his *Aryan Household* by proposing to describe 'the rise and the progress of the principal institutions that are common to the nations of the Aryan race' (Hearn 1878, 1). He is anxious to emphasize that his focus is not on archaic society in general but on the evolution of the Aryan race, a race of which he, not uniquely, had a very high opinion:

> That family of nations of which I write is confessedly the foremost in the world. It includes almost all the nations of Europe. It includes the Empire, once so great, of Persia, and the multitudinous tribes of Hindostan. Its history is more glorious, its renown is more diffused, its progress in science and in art is more advanced, its religion is more pure, its politics and its laws are more beneficent and more just, than those which prevail elsewhere upon earth. It, too, is that great mother of men by whose sons vast continents have been, and still are being, won from the wildness of nature, and converted to purposes of human use and human enjoyment. (Hearn 1878, 1-2)

Hearn connects the greatness of Aryanism with empires of various kinds, and for him empire and the spread of Christianity were intimately connected. Speaking about Rome, he writes that 'It was Imperial law and Imperial tradition, and not those of the Republic, that shaped the history of modem Europe' (Hearn 1878, 479). Christianity 'accidentally became the means of carrying a legal system with it, and that system was the matured wisdom of the Imperial code' (Hearn 1878, 478). It was the 'centralized Church, and not the isolated churches of the several tribes, that administered that law and built up the modern kingship' (Hearn 1878, 480). This powerful combination of the sacred and the secular was virtually irresistible:

> Thus the Empire furnished the law, and the Church furnished the lawyers, by which, and by whom, the customs of the Barbarians were insensibly changed; and both the Empire and the Church presented that high organization, and that spectacle of centralized activity, which made so deep an impression upon the Barbarian mind. (Hearn 1878, 479)

There was organic evolution from the original home of the Aryans in central Asia to later empires, from germs to fully-formed, complex

organisms. Hearn's objective is to 'indicate the germs of those institutions which have now attained so high a development; and I shall attempt to show the circumstances in which political society took its rise, and the steps by which, in Western Europe, it supplanted its ancient rival' (Hearn 1878, 1). Continuing in his chosen biological mode, he argues that archaic Aryan society was the 'germ—even yet in some places discernible in its original form—from which, by lineal descent, came the Empire of Rome and the Empire of Byzantium, the chivalry of the Latin nations, the restored sceptre of the united Fatherland, and the long glories of the British Crown' (Hearn 1878, 7).

Just as modern colonists saw their role as a 'missionary' one, religious missionaries were seen, and saw themselves, as adjuncts to secular colonization. The original function of missionaries was to service the colonies, that is, the settlers, rather than the indigenous peoples. But, according to Herman Merivale and others, the imperial and colonial governments also had a duty of promoting the 'civilization' of native tribes in the colonies. He claimed that in history 'no instance can be shown of the reclaiming of savages by any other influence than that of religion' (Merivale 1861, 294). This view was generally accepted by the colonizers; the only debate centred on whether the 'natives' should be civilized before being Christianized or vice versa. Regarding colonization, or what has become known as settler colonialism, Hearn held the conventional position: 'Our mission is to spread the British language, the British religion, the British laws, the British institutions, over this remote portion of the globe'. Though he wrote in 'On Natural Religion', that the 'history of modern colonization records many a tale of suffering', yet the benighted colonial territories 'ultimately have attained or will attain a higher civilization and a purer worship' (Hearn 1853, 196). That 'purer worship' was monotheism.

Archaic Society

In his synopsis of archaic society, Hearn states that

> In all its leading characteristics—political, legal, religious, economic—archaic society presents a complete contrast to that in which we live. There was in it no central government, and consequently there were no political organs. There was no law to make, and there was none to be executed. There were neither parliaments, nor courts of justice, nor executive officers. There was no national church. The great bulk of property, not only as to its tenure, but as to its enjoyment, was in the hands—not of individuals, but of corporate households. There were few contracts, and no wills. Men lived according to their customs. They received their property from their fathers, and transmitted it to their heirs. They were protected, or, if need were, avenged, by

> the help of their kinsmen. There was, in short, neither individual nor State. The clan, or some association founded upon the model of the clan, and its subdivisions, filled the whole of our forefathers' social life. Within its limits was their world. Beyond it, they could find no resting place. (Hearn 1878, 4-5)

Hearn writes that for archaic man, his duties lie within the clan, while '[w]ithout it he acknowledges no more obligation towards other men than he does towards the inhabitants of another planet' (Hearn 1878, 11). As with the theories of political economy, contemporary moral systems would be not only alien but beyond comprehension:

> The theory of utility would have been altogether incomprehensible to our archaic forefathers. The theory of the moral sense would have been intelligible, provided that its operation was limited to a man's own kin. The recognition of the brotherhood of the human race has been a slow and painful lesson, and perhaps even yet some portions of it remain to be learned. (Hearn 1878, 11-12)

As Hearn and others (including the editors of the translations of the *Ancient Laws and Institutions of Ireland*, better known as the Brehon Laws) argued, archaic society was household centred, knowing no state or law, and worshipping only household gods, whereas modern society was monotheistic, focused on the individual, with the state and law as central institutions. For Sir Henry Maine, archaic society was the infancy of society, modernity its adult status, the one feminine, the other masculine, these biologically based models involving both the infantilisation and feminisation of archaic societies. The family or household was the unit of society, not the individual person, and an aggregation of families constituted the clan which, in Hearn's words, 'marked the boundary line of human sympathy in the archaic world. Within the clan there were the truest loyalty and devotion. Beyond the clan there was at best absolute indifference, and usually active hostility' (Hearn 1878, 6). Archaic society was composed of a 'number of small, complete, and mutually repellent organisms. No social tie was recognized other than a personal relation, and that relation must be created in a particular way' (Hearn 1878, 271-2). Within each 'organism' there was respect for property but not outside it, for where

> a community of religion existed, respect for property was also found: the corresponding negative is equally true; where no special relation existed, all respect for property was wanting. It was only those who worshipped the same gods, or who had made some specific agreement, that had any scruples about each other's goods. Beyond these limits they acknowledged no moral duty of forbearance. (Hearn 1878, 416)

Clans eventually gave rise to new combinations, culminating in the state, a union that was personal at first but subsequently territorial, being united not by genealogy or common worship but by the occupation of a common country. Hearn agrees with Maine that the movement of progressive societies is manifested in the gradual dissolution of family dependency and the concomitant growth of individual obligation, arguing that the 'freedom of individual action is found in the State, and is not found elsewhere' (Hearn 1878, 455). In Hearn's view, 'As the Household expands into the clan, so the clan expands into a people. In course of time, and with the increase of its numbers, the simple homogeneous body becomes in the usual way a collection of heterogeneous related bodies' (Hearn 1878, 259). Cliffe Leslie, distinguishing between 'voluntary association' and 'spontaneous growth', argues that Hearn seems to reason here, 'not from historical evidence, but by deduction from Mr. Herbert Spencer's generalization that evolution is everywhere a movement from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous' (Leslie 1879, 119).

Religion in Archaic Society

There were, according to Hearn, two kinds of religion, 'the one was the mythical, or heroic, or Olympian religion; the other was the domestic religion, the religion of the hearth and of daily life' (Hearn 1878, 19). For him, among the Aryan nations the basis for human association was religion, the worship of forefathers; it was a domestic religion which consisted of two closely related parts: the worship of deceased ancestors and the worship of the hearth, the actual or assumed burial-place of the ancestors. 'The Household was thus an association formed upon religious belief, and contemplating religious objects. But it was something more. It was a permanent association' (Hearn 1878, 66). Ancient kinship, in short, 'consisted not in community of blood, but, as Plato expressly tells us, in community of worship' (Hearn 1878, 137). 'Every aggregation of men', writes Hearn, 'whether domestic or passing beyond that limit, had its tutelary spirit; and this spirit was the only known means of securing the permanency of the aggregation' (Hearn 1878, 20). Society, in this context, implied 'religious union' and the 'Community of worship was, indeed, the one mode by which, in early times, men were brought together and were kept together' (Hearn 1878, 26).

In an important review of *The Aryan Household* in *The Athenæum*, Hearn's former fellow-student at Trinity College Dublin, Cliffe Leslie (they both graduated in 1847), disagreed with him on the role of religion, arguing that the 'root of the religion was reverence for forefathers, that the common worship was the effect of common descent, and that the fundamental bond of association, alike in the case of the family and the clan—for the clan, too, worshipped a common ancestor—was actual

kinship' (Leslie 1879, 118). Just as Leslie states that the society which is the object of Hearn's analysis has itself evolved to a settled and agricultural state, in like manner he claims that its religion too

> [i]s manifestly not a primitive product of the human mind, but the growth of time and of family traditions and feelings. There is, indeed, reason to suspect that it had succeeded earlier superstitious ideas, and that the ancestral gods who in later times were expelled as false idols, had themselves dethroned objects of a more primitive worship.[3] (Leslie 1879, 118)

This dramatic scenario is reminiscent of the story of the warrior-priest of the goddess Diana by the shores of Lake Nemi, at the Arician grove:

Those trees in whose dim shadow

The ghastly priest doth reign

The priest who slew the slayer,

And shall himself be slain.[4]

(Macaulay 1917, 32.)

Common Meal

In the domestic worship of Rome, states Hearn:

> We meet with the Genius, Lares, Manes, Penates, Vesta. Of these words, Genius is generally taken to mean the spirit, or guardian angel, of a living man. The Manes, whether the word means the good people, or, as some suppose, the little people, are the dead generally. Vesta is the hearth, with its holy flame. But the Lares and the Penates are the true House Spirits, the souls of deceased progenitors that dwell in the interior of the house, and, along with the holy fire, collectively form its protecting deity. (Hearn 1878, 43)

Given the household and clan structure of archaic Aryan societies, it is little wonder that 'Many comments have been made upon the want of concert among uncivilised people' (Hearn 1878, 264), though Hearn does allow that 'Even among civilized men nothing is more difficult than co-operation' (Hearn 1878, 265). The realm of the divine was seriously lacking

[3] Though Leslie had other criticisms of the book, he began his review by speaking of "this learned and interesting work" and concluded as follows: "yet it were grossly unjust not to admit that Dr. Hearn's work is one of great learning, ability, and value, and that it does great honour to the University of Melbourne, in which he now holds office, as well as to the author's Alma Mater, the University of Dublin" (Leslie 1879, 119).

[4] This story is central to J. G. Frazer's celebrated study, *The Golden Bough* (1890).

in celestial concord with its bewildering array of deities, each dedicated exclusively to the interests of his worshippers. Every household had its own god, and regarded that god as its exclusive property, as well as having its own secret, closely-guarded ritual. According to Hearn, 'Men seem to have then lived in constant dread that their god should be stolen from them, or be seduced to abandon them' (Hearn 1878, 23). One of the consequences of the 'peculiar conception of property in a divinity' was that the 'relation was held to be terminable at the pleasure of the parties. The divinity might neglect or even desert his worshippers; and in like manner the worshippers might abandon, and, in the old sense of the term, defy or withdraw their allegiance from their divinity' (Hearn 1878, 23).

However, the terms and conditions of the relationship between archaic people and their gods seemed to have been more relaxed and favourable to the worshippers than was the civilized regime of monotheism. However, in their devotion to the Lares and Penates, archaic people were indeed the children of lesser gods. For Hearn the central ceremony of this domestic religion was a meal shared in homage to the gods which was a symbol of common worship. Of these various worships, he writes:

> Probably the oldest, and certainly the most persistent, was the worship of the Lares, or house spirits, or, in other words, deceased ancestors. These spirits, together with their living descendants—whether natural, or adoptive—in their several ranks formed collectively that corporate body which, though it is known by a variety of names, I have called the household. (Hearn 1878, 5)

According to Hearn, community of worship 'always implied both a fact and a symbol', the fact was the 'special and intimate relation that thereby arose between the co-worshippers. The symbol of that relation was the participation by them of a meal intentionally prepared and eaten in honour of the object of that worship' (Hearn 1878, 26). The 'common meal prepared upon the altar'

> was the outward visible sign of the spiritual communion between the divinity and his worshippers. The connection between this meal and the religious ceremony is constant. We never hear of any public worship without a common meal. In domestic life every meal was a sacrifice; that is, it was eaten in honour of the house spirits, and, as it was thought, in their presence. (Hearn 1878, 29)

The common meal was the 'sole means by which a communication could be maintained between the spirit-world and the earth' (Hearn 1878, 34), and it was believed 'that the gods and their worshippers form one community' (Hearn 1878, 36). When, in the words of Sir John Lubbock, quoted by Hearn, 'it is observed that meat-offerings are not consumed, it

is supposed that the spirit eats the spiritual part of the victim and leaves the meat to the worshipper' (Hearn 1878, 35).

Hearth

The hearth, where the meal was cooked, was also the object of worship; it was an altar and every meal was a sacrifice. But it was more:

> the fact that the hearth is the seat of the fire, and that the fire is the instrument by which the sacrifice is conveyed to the spirit, is not the only connection between the worship of the ancestors and the worship of the hearth. There seems to be a still closer relation. The hearth was the seat, not of the fire only, but of the spirit himself. (Hearn 1878, 52)

The hearth is, 'so to speak, the organ through which the living maintained their intercourse with the dead' (Hearn 1878, 49), and 'We have abundant evidence to prove both the early worship of the hearth and its connection with the worship of deceased ancestors' (Hearn 1878, 50). Indeed, Seamus Heaney uses the image of the hearth to differentiate the old Ireland from the new:

> The old world has been unfocused, literally *unfocused*. Indeed, this Latin word *focus* for *hearth* provides us with one single, central, physical and etymological instance for reading the big shift from the old Ireland to the new. That was a shift from the undifferentiated world of storytime and seasonal recurrence, settled values, absorbed rhythms, the world of sacred, common, impersonal modes of behaviour. A shift from that to the new world of individuated freedom, economic independence, emotional self-direction, unsanctioned behaviour almost, and a secular, almost relativist permissiveness. (Heaney 2015, 16-17)

In his very lucid summing up, Hearn explains the connection between the worship of the house spirits and the worship of the hearth:

> The primitive religion was domestic. This domestic religion was composed of two closely-related parts: the worship of deceased ancestors, and the worship of the hearth. The latter form was subsidiary to, and consequent upon, the former. The deceased ancestor, or his ashes, was either actually buried, or assumed to be buried, beneath the hearth. Here, therefore, according to the primitive belief, his spirit was supposed to dwell; and here it received those daily offerings which were its rightful dues, and were essential to its happiness. The fire which burned on the hearth rendered these offerings fit for the finer organs of the spirit world, and transmitted them to him for whom they were designed. Thus the worship of the Lares was the foundation and the support of the adoration of the hearth, which was in effect its

> altar, and of the holy fire which for ever burned there. (Hearn 1878, 54)

Offerings

The 'simple minds of uncultured men', declares Hearn, 'unhesitatingly believed that the spirit of the departed House Father hovered round the place he loved in life; and, with powers both for good and evil supernaturally exalted, still exercised, although unseen, the functions which in his life-time he had performed' (Hearn 1878, 39). Offerings had to be made to this House Father, even food and drink, suitably sublimated in keeping with his status as a spirit:

> He still, in his spirit state, needed the shadow-food and drink such as spirits enjoy; and he still continued sensible both of the reverence and the neglect of his descendants. To him, therefore, were daily made, at the commencement of every meal, libations and offerings, not merely as tokens and pledges of honour and affection, but as his share of the property of the household. To this share he was entitled as of right, and its possession was essential for his happiness in the spirit world. Consequently, the due performance of the sacred rites was to him a source of constant satisfaction. (Hearn 1878, 39)

However, there were dire consequences if no offerings were made to the spirits:

> On the other hand, the spirit to whom no such offerings were made was supposed to suffer the pangs of eternal hunger. If, therefore, the proper libations were made by the proper person, in the proper place, and at the proper time, the spirit would graciously guard and assist his sons. But the case was far otherwise, when, from neglect of his duties of piety (such was the technical expression among the Romans), a man destroyed his happiness and caused the misery of all his forefathers. The offended spirits did not perish. They were changed from faithful friends into deadly enemies. The benignant Lares became the dreaded Larvæ. Those powers which formerly were used for the offender's benefit were now turned to his destruction. The impious man, the man who neglected his filial duty, or violated the customary laws of the household, had not to dread any human punishment. He was given over to his own tormentors. His gods were against him; and every former blessing became a curse. (Hearn 1878, 40)

The *Manes* were chthonic deities, beneficent spirits, located beneath the earth, the source of life-giving food and also the abode of the dead, representing the souls of deceased ancestors. The *Lares* and *Penates,* the quintessential household gods, were beneficent tutelary spirits associated with the domestic, the local, and the personal, whereas the *Lemures,* and especially the *Larvæ*, were figures of terror, restless, malignant, and vengeful. According to Hearn, the 'test of freedom was the power of unrestricted locomotion' (Hearn 1878, 255). However, the dead were supposed to rest in peace and the fear of the restless dead, of post-mortem vagrancy, greatly troubled the living. The pre-mortem nomadic possessed its high postmodern status only for the upper classes; reclassified as vagrancy, it was criminal activity for the lower orders.

Baal was originally a supernatural being, the most important male deity of the Canaanites and Phœnicians. The word 'Baal' (plural Baalim) comes from the Hebrew word for lord. Baalim were supernatural beings, each of whom inhabited his own tract of ground and was responsible for its fertility. When applied to a deity, the word Baal had connotation of ownership, expressing his lordship over the world or some part of it. Consolidation seems to have been a central strategy in achieving modernity, for in progressive societies households were consolidated into clans, clans into nations, and finally nations culminated in empire. Perhaps monogamy, that great sign of modernity, might well be seen as the consolidation of both polygyny and polyandry. In like manner, one might speculate that in time the household gods were consolidated into Baal; these very localised godlings were amalgamated imperially, and doubtless unwillingly, into a single divinity. This amalgam of inferior gods was made in the image and likeness of God, with the prince of peace arrayed in mortal combat with the prince of this world, the prince of darkness. By transference, Baal simply came to mean false god, with the terms 'Baalist', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* informs us, meaning 'a worshipper of false gods or idols, an idolater', adding that 'opprobriously' it means a 'Romanist' (a term which itself could qualify as being opprobrious to Roman Catholics). The *Dictionary* also informs us that, in the seventeenth century, the word 'Baalish' was 'applied opprobriously to Roman Catholic worship'.

In Roman Catholicism there is a hierarchical cultus, with Latria as the supreme worship offered to God alone and which is idolatrous if offered to creatures. Dulia is the veneration of the angels and saints, while hyperdulia, a higher form of dulia, is the veneration given to the Virgin Mary. However, traces of archaic worship persisted and Christianity had to develop strategies to counteract them, and, in Hearn's words, 'At length a compromise was effected, and the Feast of All Souls converted to pious uses that wealth of sentiment which previously was lavished on the dead' (Hearn 1878, 60), a truly spectacular feat of consolidation. The mainly

Roman Catholics doctrine of Purgatory, and the doctrines of the Communion of Saints and the Mystical Body of Christ, because they include the faithful on earth, as well as those in purgatory and heaven, were sometimes seen as nearer to the household gods than was comfortable for Christians. According to Addis and Arnold, in their entry on 'Communion of Saints', it consists in the 'union which binds together the members of the Church on earth, and connects the Church on earth with the Church suffering in Purgatory and triumphant in Heaven' (Addis and Arnold 1955), ideas which are also central to the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. The faithful on earth and in heaven can intercede for the souls in purgatory and those in heaven can assist members of the Church on earth.

Patriarchy

Archaic society was rigidly patriarchal. 'It is remarkable', writes Hearn, 'that, in the folk-lore of all the Aryan nations, the House Spirit is always masculine', while it was 'easy to accumulate evidence to show the prevalence of agnation among the nations of the Aryan race' (Hearn 1878, 148). Fatherhood and motherhood were offices rather than physical relationships, and marriage was the foundation of the household but not an end in itself: 'That end was the birth of a son. It was the son alone who could continue the Household' (Hearn 1878, 69), for 'A legitimate son, therefore, every House Father must have; and as he could not have a legitimate son without having a wife, he took a wife, not for his own pleasure, but in fulfilment of a sacred obligation. He married for duty, not for pleasure' (Hearn 1878, 70-71). A woman was always in the 'Hand' (in Roman Law, the power of the husband over his wife) 'of some House Father, whether he was father, or husband, or son, or some remoter kinsman'. (Hearn 1878, 89); this was full sovereignty, not admitting of degrees. Hearn speaks of 'The incapacity of women to inherit the property of the Household or any part of it, and their liability to perpetual tutelage' (Hearn 1878, 95), a term meaning guardianship or protection but clearly involving control, whether benign or malign. A woman never had legal independence; if she was not under the *potestas* (in Roman Law, the power or authority of the head of a family over those depending on him, usually referring to parental authority), she was under *manus* (Hand) or *tutela* (tutelage). Agnation, according to Hearn, as distinguished from cognation, means 'relationship through the male line only. It traces through the father alone; and it traces through his sons, not through his daughters' (Hearn 1878, 147). With reference to the difference between the agnates and the cognates, the relatives by the male line and the relatives by the female line, Hearn concludes that in 'the more advanced races descent through males is the rule; and that in savage races descent through females is the rule'

(Hearn 1880, 110). The household was presided over by the House Father 'with powers limited only by the custom of his race. He was generally the eldest male of the line. He represented the household in all external dealings. He was charged with the management of its property and with the celebration of its worship' (Hearn 1878, 5).

Archaic Physiology

Agnation, in Hearn's view, 'was a consequence of the doctrine of House-worship in the male line'. But he asks what was the cause of that form of house-worship, and 'why was that spirit always a male, and never a female? Why, too, was the celebration of his worship always limited to males'? (Hearn 1878, 163). In his explanation Hearn has recourse to what one might call archaic physiology; as perhaps one of the lesser-known justifications of patriarchy, it demands quotation at length:

> The theory to which I refer is that of generation. It was, and in some countries still is, a common belief, that a child proceeds from his father alone; and that the mother supplies to it nutriment and gives it birth, but nothing more. Many of the lower races hold that there is an intimate physical connection between father and child. They hold that what is done to the body of the one directly affects the body of the other. Hence, they infer that the food, or the exercise taken by the father, materially affects the health of the unborn, or newly-born child. When a child is born among these people, the father is always subject to numerous and severe restrictions, both as to his food and his conduct. (Hearn 1878, 163)

According to the *Institutes of Hindu Law, or, The Ordinances of Menu* (translated by Sir William Jones and published in 1796), and quoted by Hearn, 'the woman is considered, in law, as the field, and the man as the grain' (Hearn 1878, 164). However, though not a member of the 'lower races', the very civilized nineteenth-century Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, given the gendering of nations in colonial relationships, justified colonization, and, more generally, patriarchy, in terms not unrelated to archaic physiology. In his view, the 'savage himself, though he may be, as it were, a soil capable of receiving the seeds of civilization, can never, in the first instance, produce it, as of spontaneous growth; and unless those seeds be introduced from some other quarter, must remain forever in the sterility of barbarism' (Whately 1847, 112). Here the application of the principle is dramatically extended from the household and clan to the relationships between nations. Finally, Hearn spells out in detail, under the rubric of his foundational hypothesis, why both the object of household worship and its celebrant had to be males:

> It is, in these circumstances, no unreasonable inference to conclude that this theory was part of the Aryan stock of beliefs. Assuming, then, the existence of this premise, we may trace the course of thought in some such direction as the following:—A male was the first founder of the House. His descendants have 'the nature of the same Blood' as he. They, in common, possess the same mysterious principle of life. The life-spark, so to speak, has been once kindled, and its identity, in all its transmissions, must be preserved. But the father is the life-giver. He alone transmits the life-spark which, from his father, he received. The daughter receives, indeed, the principle of life, but she cannot transmit it. She can, at most, be the medium for transmitting another, and quite different, life-spark. None but males possessed this capacity of transmission. None but males, therefore, could maintain the identity of the original life-principle, or could perform the worship of which that principle was the centre. Thus, males were exclusively the lineal representatives of the founder of the kin; and as collateral kinship means only the fact that certain persons are alike lineal representatives of a common ancestor, it follows that all relationship, whether lineal or collateral, so far at least as it implied the possibility of celebrating the House-worship and the consequences of that worship, was confined exclusively to males. (Hearn 1878, 165-166)

Christianity

In his unpublished manuscript, 'On Natural Religion', Hearn states that the 'general tendency of the first stage of the human mind, as Hume and Comte have insisted, is towards Polytheism', yet he adds that 'in the earliest records of our race we find the unity of the Godhead distinctly laid down' (Hearn 1853, 6). But even the wisest of the 'noblest minds of Greece', 'never attains to a full and certain assurance of One Supreme Author and Ruler of the Universe'. Yet, he continues, 'many centuries before Thales lived, the Hebrew Law-giver had announced to a barbarous and un-lettered nation, and his statement met with universal and unhesitating acceptance, that 'the Lord, their God, was one God'' (Hearn 1853, 6). In Hearn's opinion, modern science supported this position, adding weight to the 'slighted narrative of the Hebrew Sage', and confirming the statement which Moses, 'thousands of years ago, had made, that all mankind were of one blood' (Hearn 1853, 6-7). He concludes that the 'doctrine of the Unity of God, which all philosophers agree in considering a very late development [*sic*] of the human mind, and which the highest intellects of Greece could not realize, was, in its purest form the habitual creed of a tribe of wandering barbarians' (Hearn 1853, 65). Polytheism he dismisses as requiring 'no discussion', claiming that no 'philosophic account of such a system is extant', and that 'in all the

grotesque variations of modern infidelity, we nowhere find any tendency [*sic*] to revert to this once popular creed' (Hearn 1853, 150).

Interestingly, another Irishman, Max Arthur Macauliffe (1838-1913), contrasted what he saw as the archaic polytheism of Hinduism in India with the progressive and enlightened monotheism of Sikhism, in the process associating Roman Catholicism, the majority religion in Ireland, with Hinduism. According to Macauliffe, the 'tenets of Nanak, of his precursors and his followers are very simple. They rejected the idolatry and superstitions of the Hindus, taught that God was one alone, and that dire vengeance would pursue those who worshipped strange gods before Him' (Macauliffe 1898, 294). However, he wrote in 1881 that 'Notwithstanding the exertions and exhortations of the gurus, the Sikhs of the Punjab have now completely relapsed into idolatry', and that their 'worship in all respects resembles that of the Hindus' (Macauliffe 1881, 277). Despite 'virulent denunciation' by Gurus of Brahmins, Macauliffe wrote that 'Brahmins, with all the deftness of Roman Catholic missionaries in Protestant countries, have partially succeeded in persuading the Sikhs to restore to their niches the images of Devi, the Queen of Heaven, and of the saints and gods of the ancient faith' (Macauliffe 1881, 283). Thus the Sikhs would seem to exemplify Hearn's view of the 'general tendency' towards polytheism in early society, yet 'the unity of the Godhead' was 'distinctly laid down' (Hearn 1853, 6), apparently autonomously generated before the modernizing intervention of empire, in this case the British Empire.

In his poem, 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', John Milton sees the birth as the beginning of the end of the ancient gods, including the household gods:

In consecrated earth,

And on the holy hearth,

The Lars, and Lemures moan with midnight plaint.

(Milton 1968, 110.)

According to Hearn, the Lar had good reason to moan, though 'his importance in the new warfare, obscure as he seemed, was far beyond that of those more pretentious deities of whom the poet sings'(Hearn 1878, 473). 'Ever since that memorable night', he continues, 'there has been between the Lar and the Church a war without parley and without truce. In the East the Lar to this day obstinately maintains his ground. In the West he has been remorselessly hunted down' (Hearn 1878, 473). But the Celts (including the Irish), frequently seen as the Orientals of the West, resisted progress, cleaving to their gods, especially their household gods. Hearn speaks of the 'general success' of 'the war of extermination which

the Church carried on against the Household worship'. However, this worship was:

> the foundation of archaic society; and when the old beliefs were thus destroyed, the social superstructure could no longer stand. Nor was this all. The precepts on which the Church daily insisted were antagonistic to the most cherished principles of the clan. The God of the Christians was no mere Gentile deity, who confined his favours to his own people .... All men were alleged to be of one blood, 'for we are his Offspring'. To the clansman, blood revenge was the most imperative of duties and the resentment of injuries was a sacred obligation. How, then, could he forgive his enemies, and pray for those that despitefully used him? Further, the whole theory and practice of Christianity implied the recognition of the individual man, and the value of the single human soul. It involved rights and duties which could not be subordinated to the commands of the House Father. (Hearn 1878, 473.)

The God of the Christians was a jealous God, and his worship was both 'exclusive and aggressive'. In Hearn's words, 'the Church, and the State under the influence of the Church, were little inclined to make any terms with idolatry' (Hearn 1878, 59).

Ireland

The state-sponsored translation of the Brehon Laws in the second half of the nineteenth century was a matter of more than local interest. Maine's *The Early History of Institutions* (1874), based on lectures delivered at the University of Oxford, is devoted almost exclusively to a study of the Brehon Laws. In his view, ancient Ireland lacked a central government, or, if it had one at various times, it was never strong. Now, it was 'allowed on all hands to have never formed part of the [Roman] Empire; it was very slightly affected from a distance by the Imperial law' (Maine 1890, 11). Alexander George Richey co-wrote, with Thaddeus O'Mahony, the General Preface to volume III of the *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (1873), and he also wrote the Introduction to volume IV (1879), both book-length documents. In his *A Short History of the Irish People*, Richey concluded that 'The Irish tribal system was merely the western survival of the original form adopted by all tribes of the Aryan branch of the human race' (Richey 1887, 37). Its laws were denounced by the statute of Kilkenny in 1367 as 'wicked and damnable', by Edmund Spenser as 'in many things repugning quite both to God's law and man's', and by Sir John Davies as 'lewd' and 'unreasonable' custom in contrast with the 'just and honourable law' of England (Maine 1890, 18). But Maine concludes that the 'lewd' institutions of the Irish 'were virtually the same institutions as

those out of which the 'just and honourable law' of England grew' (Maine 1890, 19).

Sir John Davies denounced Irish customs, especially the practice of commuting all offences by an eric or fine, giving the following example which is quoted by Hearn:

> Therefore, when Sir William Fitz-Williams (being Lord-Deputy) told Maguyre that he was to send a sheriff into Fermanagh, being lately before made a county, 'Your sheriff' (said Maguyre) shall be welcome to me, but let me know his eric (or the price of his head) beforehand; that, if my people cut it off, I may cut the eric upon the country'. (Hearn 1878, 387.)

Yet, continues Hearn:

> The ancestors of the Brahmans and the ancestors of Sir William Fitz-Williams undoubtedly practised, and at no very distant date, the custom which Maguyre proposed to observe. So, too, the English judges in Ireland did not measure their language, when, early in the reign of James I., they decided against the customs of Tanistry and Gavelkind. These customs were held to be inconvenient and unreasonable: they were inconsistent with that just and honourable law of England which His Majesty, by extending his royal protection to all Irishmen, had by implication introduced. They admitted of no permanent estate in the land, without which there could be no good government; and the interest under them amounted at most to a 'transitory and scrambling possession'. Yet these unlucky customs were only an older form of that Kentish Gavelkind which the judges were careful to distinguish; and their origin was much more ancient than that of the just and honourable law, which, in an evil hour, and to the great miscarriage of justice, was substituted for them. (Hearn 1878, 387-388.)

The state, for Hearn, 'is not the only possible condition of human society. It is, I think, the main error of the analytical jurists, that they, in effect, admit no intermediate condition between law and anarchy' (Hearn 1878, 384). Not all human societies are organized politically, and 'Large societies have lived, and are now living, happily, under an organization quite different from that of the State' (Hearn 1878, 384). For Richey, ancient Ireland was:

> a community without a government or executive; without laws, in the modern sense of the term; in which the individual has no rights save as a member of a family; the trade of which was carried on without currency, and uninfluenced by the laws of political economy; in which private, or rather individual property was scarcely existent. (Richey 1887, 35.)

Yet there was neither anarchy nor chaos in this society governed by 'inarticulate rules'. However, Ireland remained stagnant for:

> the Irish nation...never advanced beyond the tribal condition, and failed to develop into a nation with a central government and executive; the laws which existed among the native Irish were in substance those that are found to have prevailed among the Aryan tribes in a similar stage of social progress; as the social development of the nation was prematurely arrested, so were the legal ideas of the same stage of existence retained after they had disappeared in all other nations in Europe. (Richey 1887, 54.)

Thus did the Celtic nations, with their preference for 'personal and social rather than for civil and legal relations', deprive their 'village communities of their most essential characteristics, and prevented their progress to a higher form of polity' (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1873, xxxviii). This evolutionary failure had serious repercussions for the Keltic Church generally, and specifically for Ireland.

Christianity and Ireland

There were two kinds of clan in Ireland, genealogical and non-genealogical. Over time, many people related in blood to a family were excluded, while adopted sons were admitted to the worship of the ancestral gods. Eventually, in Hearn's view, 'the mass of these dependants were not connected by any tie of consanguinity with the clansmen of pure descent' (Hearn 1878, 256). This facilitated the survival of the clan but seriously inhibited the grand evolutionary narrative, including the ascent from household worship to the monotheism of Christianity. In Hearn's view, Christianity itself suffered in regions where it was unaccompanied by Roman law and where:

> The primitive Keltic Church adapted itself to the clan system, and seems not to have materially affected the structure of its society. But no Clan Church, if I may use the expression, has ever been able to maintain itself in competition with the definite organization and the vigorous impulses of the Churches that were founded on the model of the Empire. (Hearn 1878, 478.)

The structure of the Church replicated that of Irish society, in the view of modernity being merely *disjecta membra* rather than constituting a unified body, bearing the stamp of imperial Rome. According to O'Mahony and Richey:

> As the nation was split into independent tribes, the church consisted of independent monasteries. The civil chaos, out of which society had not yet escaped, was faithfully reproduced in a Church devoid of hierarchical government; intensely national, as faithfully reflecting the ideas of the nation; but not national in the

> ordinary acceptance of the term, as possessing an organization co-extensive with the territory occupied by the nation. (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1873, lxxvi.)

They conclude that 'unfortunately the idea of a national sovereignty never took root, and therefore the conception of the State was never attained by the Irish Celts' (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1873, lxxxvi). There was 'no trace that any new legislation, either derived from Roman sources or founded upon specifically Christian morality, was introduced by Patrick'. On the contrary, 'the traditional tribe-law became the ecclesiastical law, and the Roman ideas of Christian organization were wholly unknown in the Irish Church' (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1873, li). Early Irish Christianity was distinctly unRoman.

The Druids of ancient Ireland were, for Hearn, like the Brahmans and Magi, partly a religious and partly a professional association. They had 'the usual organization under their Eponym'; they were a literary order, 'men of science', and they performed legal and military, as well as religious, functions (Hearn 1878, 315). Their duties were manifold, including the following:

> It was their duty to interpret dreams, to use the divining-rod, to offer incantations, and generally to practice magic rites, in their case apparently very harmless, with the intention of securing benefit to their own friends, and of discomfiting their enemies. They also exercised jurisdiction, especially in cases of homicide, boundaries, and inheritances; the latter subjects, I may remark, depending upon the old customs founded upon the ancestral worship of the tribe, and requiring for their determination a knowledge of the genealogies and of the family rights of the tribesmen. (Hearn 1878, 315.)

Despite their awesome powers, St. Patrick overcame the Druids of King Laeghaire, 'by the great signs and miracles wrought in the presence of the men of Erin' (Hearn 1878, 315). However, his victory was incomplete. It was not difficult to understand, according to Hearn, how the Druids, in their religious functions, 'were superseded by the clerics of the Christian Church'. However:

> the old customs were less easily changed than the external modes of worship; and St. Patrick could not carry, against the Brehons, death as the punishment of homicide, in place of the Eric fine. That branch, at least, of the Druids which exercised judicial functions, maintained its ground; and there is little doubt that the Brehons were the legitimate representatives of the Druids of Caesar. (Hearn 1878, 315-316.)

In like fashion, after it was, in Maine's words, 'forcibly suppressed' (Maine 1890, viii), Brehon Law retained its hold on the hearts and minds of many Irish people, a matter not unconnected with a change in policy by the Crown in the 1860s, from coercion to what was often called 'kindness'. From the 1860s on, notions of 'governing Ireland according to Irish ideas' became particularly influential in official circles; Ireland was to be treated not as a modern country, but in terms of its evolutionary position, seen in many respects as closer to archaic society. For instance, in 1859 Neilson Hancock read a paper to the Dublin Statistical Society entitled, 'The Family and not the Individual the True Unit to be Considered in Social Questions', and he later celebrated what he called the 'wonderful and strong family and clan feeling' of the Irish (Hancock 1873, 287). Hancock and O'Mahony saw continuity between this 'spirit of strong family affection and of mutual obligation and dependence' and ancient law (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1869, lvi).

Visitors to Ireland in the nineteenth century often remarked on the contrast between advanced civilization and what was usually referred to as 'barbarism', between the imperially-sponsored enlightenment of the Pale and the benighted condition of the rest of the country. The light of reason and modernity had banished the household gods in the civilized enclaves, but they retained a vigorous subterranean existence elsewhere, just like the legendary *Tuatha Dé Danaan* who had been defeated by the Milesians and condemned to live underground. In Hearn's view, 'Of all the worships of Rome, as Mommsen has observed, the worship of these House Spirits had the deepest hold; and of all those worships, as we know, it was the one which lasted the longest' (Hearn 1878, 43). From the perspective of the illuminati, the rest of the country was a place of idolatry and superstition, a universe of death, controlled by the past, from beyond the grave. Here death had dominion and the absolute distinction between the quick and the dead was not recognised; indeed, as in James Joyce's short story, 'The Dead', the dead, in their unquiet graves, were often more active than the alleged quick. In general, there was a benign relationship between the living and the dead. In this remnant of archaic society, a realm of the undead, every household was haunted and the spirit of Brehon Law still animated the people. In the view of the cognoscenti this Gothic realm of the undead was, one might say, characterised by necrophilia, indeed by necrolatry. Philosophical tourists in nineteenth-century Ireland frequently decried the ubiquity of ruins, especially of dwelling houses, as an affront to modernity and another sign of the refusal of the dead past to bury its dead. Picturesque tourists were more forgiving. There were numerous schemes for the modernization of Ireland, political economy being the overarching discursive mode, the 'dismal science' being the indispensable vector of light, if not of sweetness. Hearn, using the example of Tuam, Co. Galway, identifies the roles of a

literary society and political economy in bringing enlightenment to that benighted town:

> Even in Tuam itself, under the gloomy shadow of St. Jarlath's—long the undisputed kingdom of Old Night—we find that a literary institute has been organised, and has actually published a very respectable report of their transactions; and, more portentous still, they are, during this very summer, to have their faith and morals contaminated by a course of lectures in very heretical political economy. (Hearn 1851, 118-119.)

This gothic scenario is a clear reference to the redoubtable John MacHale, Roman Catholic archbishop of Tuam (1834-1881),[5] Gallican, and for long an implacable opponent of the ultramontane Cardinal Paul Cullen. Indeed, Cullen's 'devotional revolution'—Roman, imperial, and ultramontane—could be described as a belated declaration of war against the household gods. He went to study in Rome in 1820 and, according to Colin Barr (in his entry on 'Cullen' in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*), 'in many ways he never left', becoming, in 1831, the Rector of the Irish College. His plan was that the students of the College 'will be the means of introducing Roman maxims into Ireland and uniting that church more closely with the Holy See' (McGuire and Quinn 2009).

However, this antiquated Irish society exacted revenge on modernity, both Roman and imperial, subverting civility, undermining notions of progress; it haunted rationality with its incubi, succubi, nightmares, and other spirits of the night. Its ghosts, spectres, ghouls, and revenants were the dark familiars of civility and were, in an important sense, the inevitable by-products of modernity itself. Luke Gibbons puts the matter succinctly: the 'savagery of the Irish infiltrates—indeed, is produced by—modernity' (Gibbons 2004, 23), or, as he states elsewhere, 'Others had little doubt that the primitivism of Ireland was a result of progress, a product of imperial modernity' (Gibbons 2014, 31). In the words of David Lloyd, these spectres 'coeval but out of kilter with the imposed disciplines of modernization':

> [M]ark a countermodern effect of modernity that haunts the modernizing subject with an uncanny glimmer, that of an alternative track of human unfolding that is at once there and not there, of the present and of another time. And, as with all ghosts, that other time is not necessarily the past, but may intimate an only fitfully imaginable possible future. (Lloyd 2005, 155.)

[5] Ulick Bourke, a relative of MacHale, was his private secretary and first biographer and became President of St Jarlath's College, Tuam. Curiously enough, he too, like Hearn, wrote a large book on Aryanism, *The Aryan Origin of the Gaelic Race and Language* (1875), sporting an extravagant dedication to the archbishop.

Even within modernity, entails on landed property were often condemned for, in effect, constituting control of the living by the dead. Indeed, in his critique of capitalism, Karl Marx famously defined capital as 'dead labour', which lorded over living labourers. So it appears that modernity itself is not immune from ghastly visitations. In nineteenth-century Ireland, battering-rams enjoyed considerable success in evicting tenants but were less effective in the eviction of the household gods. In like manner, St Patrick famously banished the snakes out of Ireland but the household gods proved more intractable.

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