

# »Une Seconde Patrie«: The Irish Colleges, Paris, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries<sup>1</sup>

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The large-scale migration of Irish Catholics to continental Europe commenced in the later sixteenth century and continued until the 1790s. The expansion of English administrative and military control across the island of Ireland, combined with attempts to bring the Protestant reformation to the country, created military conflict, political upheaval and intermittent religious persecution which necessitated or encouraged emigration. In addition, Ireland's peripheral geographical location ensured that during periods of economic hardship people looked to opportunities abroad. Mass migration, which involved thousands of people, coincided with the successive military defeats of Irish Catholics and their allies in 1602-3, the 1650s and 1690-1. However, steady migration also occurred throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though the number of people migrating to continental Europe was already decreasing by the 1750s and the decline continued into the later eighteenth century. Migration from Ireland to the continent was overwhelmingly Catholic. While it was socially diverse, a number of categories of migrants stand out. Thousands of Irish soldiers enlisted abroad, many of them in the Irish regiments established in the French and Spanish armies. Merchants and traders established bases in ports along the western Atlantic seaboard. During periods of persecution Irish clergy sought refuge in Catholic states on the continent and, from the late sixteenth century, many students resided at more than thirty Irish Colleges, which emerged in the leading centres of Catholic education in France, Spain, the Low Countries, the Italian states and beyond. (Cullen 1994; O'Connor 2001, 2001a; O'Connor and Lyons 2003, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> This essay draws, in part, on material discussed in more detail in Chambers 2009, forthcoming.

The Irish Colleges emerged in response to the needs of the communities of Irish Catholic students which had sprung up in European university towns in the later sixteenth century. Their founders wished to facilitate the education of students for whom higher educational opportunities were unavailable in Ireland (or England and Scotland). This was especially pressing as the Catholic church re-organised and re-structured in Ireland. Most colleges were therefore established by Catholic clergy, with the intention of forming well-educated priests capable of taking their place on the Irish mission. In reality the colleges fulfilled a range of functions as student hostels, university colleges, lay boarding schools, monastic establishments and seminaries. Most colleges were small, catering for less than twenty students, though there were exceptions such as Paris, where two colleges catered for 180 students by the 1780s. Among the students were ordained priests, as well as younger unordained students, some of them destined for ordination, others for secular careers. The number of staff was usually relatively small, though this was related to the provision of education within the colleges. Many of the Irish Colleges were not educational institutions in their own right. Students attended classes and took degrees at a local university or college. Only a small number of colleges, notably those of the regular clergy, provided courses in humanities, philosophy and theology. Even where colleges were not directly responsible for the provision of lectures, they provided a controlled environment, where discipline was imposed and (ideally at least) opinions were monitored, though a detailed daily timetable, spiritual exercises, instruction in the Irish language and, in some cases, extra lectures. In this sense, the colleges were responsible for much of the formation of the Irish Catholic cultural elite, clerical and lay, and comprised an integral aspect of Irish Catholic culture in the early modern period. Indeed, they also played an important role in the development of Irish communities in continental towns. The colleges were obvious focal points and some provided a range of services to expanding Irish communities: the staff and students assisted the destitute, invested money on behalf of soldiers and others, provided legal advice and assistance (for example, in the drawing up of wills), translated documents and produced attestations of identity. Moreover, not all students or priests returned to the Irish mission on the completion of their studies. A large proportion chose to remain on the continent, many of whom ministered to the Irish Catholic migrant communities. As Irish migration to Europe declined significantly in the late eighteenth century (re-orienting across the Atlantic and into the British Empire), the colleges encountered serious difficulties. Almost all of the colleges closed as a result of the French Revolution and its continental impact. A few re-emerged in the early nineteenth century, at Rome, Salamanca, Lisbon and – especially – Paris. An

Irish College in Paris continued to function as an educational institution until 1939.

The Irish Colleges have not lacked historians, especially during a »golden age« of Irish ecclesiastical history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the survival of Irish Catholicism in the early modern period was ascribed in large part to their influence. A more sophisticated analysis of the colleges has emerged only in the past few decades as Irish, English and other European historians have waded more deeply in continental archives. This work is placing the colleges more firmly within Irish migrant networks and the social, political and religious fabric of their host communities (O'Boyle 1935; Walsh 1973; Boyle 1901; Swords 1978, 1980; Brockliss and Ferté 1987, 2004; O'Connor 2006; Chambers 2006). In tandem with other developments in Irish history, recent work has also renewed interest in the connections between Irish Catholic migration to Europe, especially before 1789, and the construction of Irish national identities (McBride 2001; Mac Cana 2001). This article considers how the Irish Colleges in Paris negotiated identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It argues that the experience of exile, or migration, or simply living abroad for an extended period, both encouraged the development of an Irish identity and produced a fluid and adaptable approach to identity necessary for survival and success.

Though the Irish Colleges established in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries asserted a clear national identity, as »Irish« Colleges, during the early phase of their existence, from the late sixteenth century to the mid-to-late seventeenth century, there was a constant tension between the »national« claims and the provincial realities. It is not surprising that the nascent colleges reflected the ethnic and provincial divisions which marked Irish Catholicism, socially and politically, during this period (Walsh 1973, 14–15). The Irish Colleges in Paris initially fitted this pattern, i.e., laying claim to an »Irish« identity, but in reality linked most closely migrant students from Leinster (O'Connor 2006, 10–56). By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, Paris was attracting a diverse range of students from Ireland, cutting across ethnic and provincial lines, so that by the time a permanent Irish College (the *Collège des Lombards*) was established in the city in the 1670s, it could realistically claim to be a national Irish college, and regulations were drawn up in 1670s and 1680s which guaranteed this »national« character (Swords 1980, 28–32). During the eighteenth century the Irish College in Paris became by far the most important institution of

its kind and a second permanent college opened in the city in the 1770s (Swords 1980, 4).

In the early seventeenth century leading figures associated with the Irish College in Paris were developing ideological and cultural responses to the political and military setbacks suffered by Irish Catholicism. Thomas O'Connor has illustrated how the early superior of the Irish College in Paris, Thomas Messingham, played a key role in the creation and promotion of an Irish Catholic nationality for a European audience (O'Connor 1999). In a sermon preached at the college in 1620, his colleague David Rothe emphasised the need to bury divisions in favour of a common Irish identity (Rothe 1620, 124–49). In the eighteenth century, a group of scholars associated with the college produced a series of important and influential works on the Irish language and Irish history. These included Irish language dictionaries published in the 1730s and 1760s and a bi-lingual Irish-English Catechism published in the 1740s ([Begley and MacCurtain] 1732; Donlevy 1742; O'Brien 1768). They also included David Henegan's historical writings on Ireland, published in the 1759 edition of Moreri's *Dictionnaire*, and Abbé James McGeoghegan's three-volume *Histoire d'Irlande* published in the late 1750s and early 1760s (Henegan 1759; MacGeoghegan 1758–62; Geoghegan 1991). Together, these works illustrate the important role of migrant scholars in the development of an Irish Catholic national identity in the eighteenth century. That the experience of migration influenced their writings is clear. James MacGeoghegan, for example, pitched his *Histoire* directly at an *émigré* Irish (as well as a French) readership.

However, the peculiar position of the Irish Colleges in Paris fostered an adaptable approach to identity, which encompassed Irish, French and British aspects. This adaptability is revealed by the response of the college authorities to moments of crisis, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One response to crisis was closely linked to the promotion of the Irish language and historical scholarship, and emphasised the distinctive Irish and foreign identity of the colleges. In 1762–1763 the Irish *Collège des Lombards* was threatened with amalgamation into the *Collège Louis-le-Grand*, from which the Jesuits had been expelled in 1762 (Tuilier 1994, 161–74). The administrators (*provisseurs*) argued forcefully against amalgamation, rooting their case on the distinct nature of the Irish Colleges from the other colleges and student bodies within the university. The main petition highlighted:

»Leur nombre, leur langage, leurs mœurs, leur façon de vivre et de se nourrir, le genre d'étude, qui est leur particulier, la nécessité de conserver des supérieurs tirés de leur nation, le peu de ressource, enfin, que l'on trouveroit dans la location de leurs bâtimens pour améliorer leur condition sont des raisons dont chacune, en particulier, semble former un obstacle invincible à leur reunion avec les boursiers des autres colleges.«<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, continued the petition, the college should form »une maison particulière et isolée«.<sup>3</sup> The administrators also drew on the »extremely severe« penal laws in Ireland (though these were largely ignored by the 1760s) to make their case. The image of persecuted Irish Catholics remained an important rhetorical device long after it had ceased to exist in reality.<sup>4</sup> In 1763 the administrators' argument was successful and the college was exempted from the proposed amalgamation (Amadou 1986, 37–8). But this very success in maintaining institutional autonomy now meant that the college stood out as a clear anomaly. As Mike Rapport has pointed out in relation to the Scots College in Paris, which used a very similar tactic in the 1760s and was also successful in retaining institutional autonomy, the very factor which saved the college in the 1760s became a liability in the 1790s (Rapport 2002, 81–4).

In fact, the Irish Colleges were firmly embedded within the educational, ecclesiastical and political fabric of eighteenth century Paris and they (and the Irish student population more generally) had no difficulty in expressing a form of French identity or »attachement« when this was required. When the reputation of a group of Irish students resident at the *Collège des Grassins* was attacked by college and university authorities in 1710, the students published a *Mémoire* which carefully outlined the service of former students and related family members to both the French army and the Irish Catholic mission, consciously linking the two (Anon. 1710; Boyle 1901a). When the Irish college in Paris was in severe financial difficulties in the 1780s, the superior, John Baptist Walsh, penned a *Mémoire* to solicit funds from potential French patrons. In this case, Walsh stressed the value and attachment of the college to France: supplying chaplains to the Irish and other regiments in the French army, priests to the French church and service to

2 »Mémoire pour le Collège des Lombards«, 24 November 1762 (Archives Nationales, F13 2561B, Collège des Irlandais: Historique, lettres parentes, pièces diverses, 1623 to XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle).

3 Ibid.

4 »Addition au Mémoire du Collège des Lombards«, undated, with attachment: »Extrait du Recueil des Loix d'Irlande« (ibid.).

the French state. Similar sentiments are evident after 1789.<sup>5</sup> In December 1790 a group of Irish students were arrested following a fracas at the Altar of the Fatherland on the Champ de Mars (Swords 1989, 31–6). Predictably, they were quickly denounced as counter-revolutionaries by some radical pamphleteers, who highlighted the fact that they were foreign, though they failed to identify the students as Irish. However, a number of pamphlets appeared which defended the Irish. One work, signed by a member of the »Club de Cordeliers« is particularly revealing. It argued that the Irish were, in fact, good patriots: »Français par reconnaissance, Français par attachement, Français par intétêt, comme propriétaires, comment pourroient-ils, ces Irlandois, chercher à être odieux à la nation Française.« (Anon. 1790a, 3) Another pamphleteer drew on the heritage of Franco-Irish connections: »Ce sont des Irlandois qui se font remarquer dans tous le pays par leur attachement pour la France; *qui, de tout temps, ont chéri la France comme une seconde patrie.*« (Anon. [1790], 4, my italics) After two weeks in prison, the students were tried for disfiguring the altar of the fatherland and attacking the sentinel and were acquitted. It is interesting that the students were referred to as »English« not Irish in the judgement.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most significant point about the incident is the means of defence available to the Irish. Their defence cast them as good French patriots and saw no contradiction in highlighting simultaneously their Irish and French identities. In this they reflected the arguments developed by college administrators in 1789–90.

During the early French Revolution, the Irish College administrators (who were probably behind the pamphlets cited above) saw no contradiction in simultaneously projecting Irish and the French identities. Indeed, the cosmopolitanism of the early Revolution encouraged this outlook and helps to explain the tactics used by the Irish Colleges as the structures of higher education (within which the colleges were firmly embedded) were dismantled. In the face of this threat the Irish College administrators amalgamated two positions – that the Irish Colleges were »distinct« institutions and that the Irish students were essentially French, at least by »attachement« – to produce a Franco-Irish anti-Britishness that suited the political climate of the early 1790s. This position was clearly articulated in a petition penned by John Baptist Walsh to the ecclesiastical committee of the National As-

5 Mémoire ([Paris], 1787) (A.N., T 1636, Papiers séquestrés, Collège des Lombards et Collège des Irlandais).

6 The subsequent legal proceedings detail the case: A.N. F7 4624 (plaq. 4), ff 182–212.

sembly requesting exemption from the nationalisation of ecclesiastical property (Swords 1989, 22–9). Walsh argued that the majority Irish Catholic population was antipathetic to the government. Indeed they were comparable with the Revolutionary French: »[Ils] sentiront les droits et la dignité de l'homme et ils secourront le joug d'un pareil esclavage.« (Daumet 1912, 202)<sup>7</sup> For this reason, Ireland afforded France an opportunity to enhance its international standing in relation to Britain: »N'en doutons pas, si cette isle devenoit indépendante de l'Angleterre, la France n'auroit plus rien a redoubter de sa rivale qui sera humiliée sans coup férir.« (ibid.) On this basis (a shared anti-Britishness), Walsh argued, the French Revolutionaries ought to maintain the Irish Colleges:

»Le gouvernement anglois déteste la Révolution que rénénère la France et il fera tous ses efforts pour empêcher les étudiants irlandais et venir puiser dans nos écoles les principes qui feront tôt ou tard éclore le germe de la liberté si naturelle aux hommes.

La France est donc intéressée par humanité et par une saine politique à conserver les maisons étrangères, sans parler du lustre et de la gloire de devenir le centre et l'Athènes des sciences.« (ibid.).

In a second petition, Walsh drew on the service of the Irish Colleges to France, which he had outlined before the Revolution. Moreover, he argued emphatically that the Irish Colleges did not require the assistance of the British ambassador in Paris, unlike their colleagues in the Scots College (ibid. 204–5; Rapport 2002, 85–8). A third petition, to the National Assembly (seeking confirmation of a decision by the Ecclesiastical Committee to exempt the Irish Colleges) pushed the arguments even further:

»Le supérieur a l'honneur d'observer que cette maison n'a rien de commun soit avec les religieux étrangers quelconques, soit avec MM. les Ecossois ou Anglois de Paris. Ceux-ci sollicitent la permission de vendre pour quitter la France. Au contraire, les Irlandois demandent à s'y attacher de plus en plus.

Le Comité est donc supplié de prendre en considération *le nombre, l'utilité et le civisme des prêtres irlandais étudiants en France* et de poser la base de leur tranquillité en faisant decreter promptement la conservation de leur maison principale dans le Collège des Lombards.« (Daumet 1912, 205).

The exemption, which ensured the short-term future of the college, was duly confirmed in October 1790 (Anon. 1790b).

<sup>7</sup> Daumet (1912) printed Walsh's first two mémoires (pp 201–4). The original documents are in A.N. D XIX 30, liasse 472 (Comité Ecclesiastique).

Of course, recognising this pragmatic approach to identity politics does not imply that the Irish College authorities were ardent revolutionaries. In fact, while they proclaimed their revolutionary credentials when appropriate, they also facilitated the development of a refractory church network in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel (Chambers 2009; Burstin 2005, 211–45, 667–76). As the Revolution passed from the early moderate phase to the Terror, it became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for the Irish College authorities and students to present themselves as Irish *and* French, revolutionary and refractory. As Mike Rapport has argued »the French Revolution [...] made citizenship dependant on nationality« (Rapport 2000, 333). In consequence, foreigners had to abandon other allegiances in order to be members of the French nation and thereby to exercise political rights. This placed foreign clergy in a particularly difficult situation.

As foreign and ecclesiastical institutions it is remarkable that the Irish Colleges remained open until 1793, when the war with Great Britain finally resulted in their closure. Elsewhere in France and across Europe, the Irish Colleges were affected by the Revolution. Most closed and would not re-open after the dust finally settled. In Paris, the colleges were returned to Irish control in 1795, but the damage inflicted since 1793 and the collapse of student migration from Ireland meant an uncertain future (Swords 1989, 82–106). However, the value of the properties and the lucrative investments attached to the colleges ensured that there was keen interest in reviving them. From the later 1790s until the 1820s there ensued a battle for control between two key Irish groups. The »secular group« favoured the Revolution and wanted to transform the college into a Franco-Irish institution for the education of the children of *émigrés* sympathetic to the revolution and to remove Irish clerical and Episcopal influence. In the ascendancy during the early 1810s, this group remained influential until the early 1820s (Purcell 1985). In the long term, however, the other side of the struggle emerged victorious. This »clerical group« were antagonistic towards the Revolution, viewed the college as an Irish Catholic ecclesiastical institution and envisaged it as an Irish seminary.<sup>8</sup> This group found it in-

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<sup>8</sup> The pre-1789 administrators of the Irish Colleges played an important role in this respect, though both John Baptist Walsh and Charles Kearney were willing to compromise with the Napoleonic regime in order to secure the future of the colleges. After 1814, Paul Long emerged as the key figure. For Walsh and Kearney see: Swords 1989; Boyle 1905, 1908. There is, as yet, no satisfactory study of the role of Paul Long, which emerges in his correspondence with Dublin: Dublin Diocesan Archives

creasingly difficult to reconcile their Irish Catholic identity with attachment to France. In response, they began to engage with a new British sense of identity the early nineteenth century. This is particularly evident in the correspondence of Paul Long, a Dublin priest who was dispatched to Paris by the Irish bishops in 1814 to take charge of the sole Irish College to re-open in Paris and to assert the claims of the Irish bishops. Long, who had studied in Paris before the French Revolution, was deeply pessimistic about its effects. In a letter written in September 1815 he commented:

»Such are the fruits of the Revolution, that the four-fifths of Frenchmen can be considered as Atheists, or Deists, and the greater number of the remaining fifth as merely nominal Catholics. The clergy of course are held in no estimation; they are ranked with the lowest class of society, are reviled on every occasion, and almost entirely excluded from what is termed genteel society.«<sup>9</sup>

As a result, he urged the Irish bishops »to sell the property, and transfer the price to Ireland. There is no longer any security for our property in this kingdom«.<sup>10</sup>

There were other factors which facilitated Long's assertion of the »British« identity of the college. In the 1790s the British government and the Irish Catholic bishops had formed an alliance, against the Revolutionary threat which horrified them both. One important consequence was the foundation of a third-level Catholic college at Maynooth, in Ireland, which undermined the importance of the Irish Colleges on the continent as formation centres for well-educated Irish Catholic clergy (Keogh 1993, 1–88). However, in the early nineteenth century the Catholic population in Ireland was growing rapidly and the Irish bishops therefore realised the importance of re-opening the recently constructed Irish College in Paris and re-establishing Irish Catholic claims to the investments made in scholarships at the Irish and other colleges attached to the University of Paris over more than a century.<sup>11</sup> In response to requests made by John Baptist Walsh, proviseur of the Irish *Collège des Lombards* on the outbreak of the Revolution and a key figure behind its survival during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, and similar appeals from those charged with the

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DDA/AB3/34/17, Papers of Archbishop Daniel Murray: Irish College Paris Part 2 (1814–1853).

<sup>9</sup> Paul Long to Dr Hanuill, 5 September 1815 (DDA/AB3/34/17/161)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Paul Long to Bishop Daniel Murray, 17 February 1815 (DDA/AB3/34/17/153).

affairs of the Scots and English Colleges in Paris, Napoleon made an unexpected decision. In 1802 and 1803 he ordered the amalgamation of all the Irish, English and Scots institutions under his jurisdiction into a single entity called the »British Establishments«. This was done against the wishes of the Irish, Scots and English authorities in Paris and Ireland, Scotland and England. However, the Irish were by far the largest of the three groups and while they were not keen on the arrangement, John Baptist Walsh ensured that he was appointed as administrator of the new »British establishments« and used the situation to re-open the *Collège des Irlandais* to Irish, English and Scots, as well as some French, students in 1805. Napoleon's willingness to re-open the Irish College, albeit as part of the »British Establishments« was predicated on the establishment of a French *bureau*, charged with oversight of the college. This was done in response to the vacuum left by the collapse of the *ancien régime* structures within which the colleges had functioned (Swords 1989, 160–74).

In 1816 the government of Louis XVIII finally ended the unhappy marriage of the Irish, Scots and English Colleges.<sup>12</sup> However, the French *bureau* remained, which ensured that the Irish College looked to Britain for protection against the alleged encroachments of the French government, especially after 1814 when the college was increasingly under the control of the »clerical« faction. By this stage there was another practical reason for expressing a sense of British identity. Paul Long hoped that he could recover compensation for the losses suffered by the Irish College during the 1790s. This possibility was offered by the second treaty of Paris, which stipulated *inter alia* that British subjects would be indemnified for properties or investments lost after 1 January 1791 and that a commission would be established to assess claims (Anon. 1815). Between his arrival in France in 1814 and the end of his mission in 1819, Long wrote regular and generally pessimistic accounts of his affairs back to Bishop Daniel Murray in Dublin. While the establishment of a commission promised the return of investments lost during the 1790s, which would put the college back on a secure financial basis, Long quickly ran into problems. In April 1817 Long explained to Murray, that French government officials were arguing that the Irish Colleges had been established contrary to British law and were therefore not encompassed within the agreement:

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<sup>12</sup> Long to Troy, 30 January 1816 (DDA/AB3/34/17/uncalendared item).

»Nothing can be done here [i.e. in France]. The matter must evidently be settled in London. It is therefore of the highest importance to our interests to endeavour to induce Lord Castlereagh [the Irish-born British Foreign Secretary] to consider our property here as British property, being purchased by British subjects, with British money, & to give orders accordingly to the English commissioners in Paris.«<sup>13</sup>

A few months later, in July 1817, Long explained the position again:

»The validity of the objection, raised against our claims by the French government, being once admitted by the English cabinet, all hope of indemnity for past losses is totally destroyed; our houses are no longer Irish but French institutions, & we remain involved in the same general and irreparable misfortune. However it is very difficult to conceive for what manner establishments formed by and for British subjects with British money can be viewed in this light.«<sup>14</sup>

Rooted in pragmatic considerations, especially concerns about the level of French government interference, the Irish College administrators and the Irish bishops looked to the British government for protection. In 1818 Bishop Murray of Dublin sought the assistance of Sir Charles Stuart, the British ambassador in Paris, stressing that the Irish College was an Irish establishment not a French one.<sup>15</sup> Despite this approach, in 1825 a British Commission established to assess claims for losses during the French Revolution finally rejected the Irish College's claims, despite the assertion of a British identity.<sup>16</sup> The possibility of re-activating the claim (especially around 1830 and again in the 1870s) ensured that this British identity remained (Historicus Hibernicus 1870; *Claims* 1871). More generally, throughout the nineteenth century, the Irish Colleges could use their British connection to protect the institution, especially when the college was seriously threatened.

The point is that the collapse of the French »attachment« or identity of the Irish Colleges, and its administrators and students, facilitated the expression of »Britishness«, however pragmatic this may have been. This underlines how adaptable the Irish Colleges were: Irish, French, »franco-Irish«, anti-British and even British. However, as the nineteenth century progressed the Irish College, increasingly distanced from Patisian and

13 Long to Murray, 26 April 1817 (DDA/AB3/34/17/188).

14 Long to Murray, 20 July 1817 (DDA/AB3/34/17/190).

15 [Murray] »A son excellence Sir Charles Stuart Ambassadeur de Sa Majesté Britannique près la Cour de France« (copy; c. 1 April 1818) (DDA/AB3/34/17/210).

16 Charles Baldwin to Paul Long, 2 Dec. 1825 (copy dated 1 March 1830) (Archives of the Irish College, Paris, MS 3.C).

French culture, more clearly identified itself simply as »Irish«. There are a number of significant reasons for this. In the nineteenth century the Irish College no longer formed part of a large Irish migrant community in Paris, as had been the case in the *ancien régime*. The growing secularisation of French politics and society, especially during the Third Republic had a profound effect on the college. Threatened with closure and confiscation after 1905, the superior of the college wrote tellingly: »If, therefore, France closes the college and retains the capital, she violates the intentions of the founders, she strikes a blow at the rights of aliens all over the world. She inflicts a wrong on a nation which in the past looked to France as a friend and protector.« (Boyle 1907, 298) The increasing remoteness of the Irish College from French society co-incided with the rise of Irish cultural nationalism. The Irish College was not a hotbed of revolutionary activity, but it participated in the development of nationalism. Irish language studies were re-introduced at the college from the middle of the nineteenth century. Students at the Irish College responded enthusiastically to the visit of the radical Irish nationalist John Mitchell in 1866 (Swords 1985, unpaginated). The nationalist influence is also evident in the Celtic Revival art and architecture promoted (ironically) by the French administrator of the college from 1859, Abbé Charles Ouin LaCroix (McDonnell 2002).

The experience of migration (exile is probably too strong) encouraged Irish Catholic students and priests associated with the Irish Colleges in Paris to develop an Irish Catholic identity in the early modern period. However, the experience of migration also fostered an adaptable approach to »identity«, one which permitted the Irish Colleges to emphasise their French-ness or French »attachment«. Like the wider Irish migrant community, this encouraged assimilation and the permanent migration of priests and students, though they were theoretically destined to return to Ireland. The rupture of the French Revolution and the rise of nineteenth century cultural nationalism contributed to the emergence of an Irish College which was more remote from the society around it, one which was increasingly an outpost of Irish Catholicism. Yet, even in the nineteenth century the practical problems of maintaining an »Irish« College in a foreign country meant that the college could balance its Irish nationalist sympathies with a pragmatic Britishness. Irish, French and British identities were, of course, themselves malleable and contested throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the long term approach taken by the present essay suggests that the success (or longevity) of the Irish Col-

lege(s) in Paris may, in part, be attributed to an adaptable and flexible approach to identity, fostered by the experience of migration.

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