Dublin's Turbulent Priest: Cornelius Nary (1658-1738)

by Patrick Fagan
Cornelius Nary was known for having elegant manners but is remembered for creating turbulence, as this penetrating biography tells. Born in County Kildare and educated at the Irish College in Paris, Nary was a high-profile Catholic figure during the Penal Law period in early 18th century Ireland. As parish priest of St Michan’s in Dublin for 40 years he stood as a public intellectual and campaigner. His controversial texts led him into a number of clashes with the Protestant hierarchy, and he caused ire in the Vatican. In 1702 he was imprisoned in Dublin Castle under Penal Law. His most influential publication was ‘The Case of the Roman Catholics in Ireland’ (1724), written in response to the oppressive Popery Bill. His 1718 Vulgate translation of the New Testament was the first complete English Catholic translation of the Bible. Cornelius Nary was hitherto neglected by modern historians, yet he was described by the historian Lecky as ‘probably the ablest priest then living in Ireland’. This biography restores Nary to his rightful place, while enlightening the reader on the position of Catholics in 18th century Ireland.
Patrick Fagan, a native of Crookedwood, County Westmeath, has spent the greater part of his life in the Civil Service in Dublin. Since his retirement he has devoted his time largely to research on eighteenth-century Dublin, and, in addition to the present work, has published The Second City: a portrait of Dublin 1700-1760 and A Georgian Celebration: Irish Poets of the Eighteenth Century.
In this podcast, Laura McAtackney aims to re-focus our attention away from the personal narratives of oral testimonies as well as the documents of government archives in terms of how we understand the Northern Ireland Troubles and its continuing presence.
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Cornelius Nary, an Irish priest and religious writer. For a time he was tutor to the Earl of Antrim. He returned to Ireland at some point about 1700 where he became parish priest of St. Michan's, Dublin. He wrote about fifteen books.


