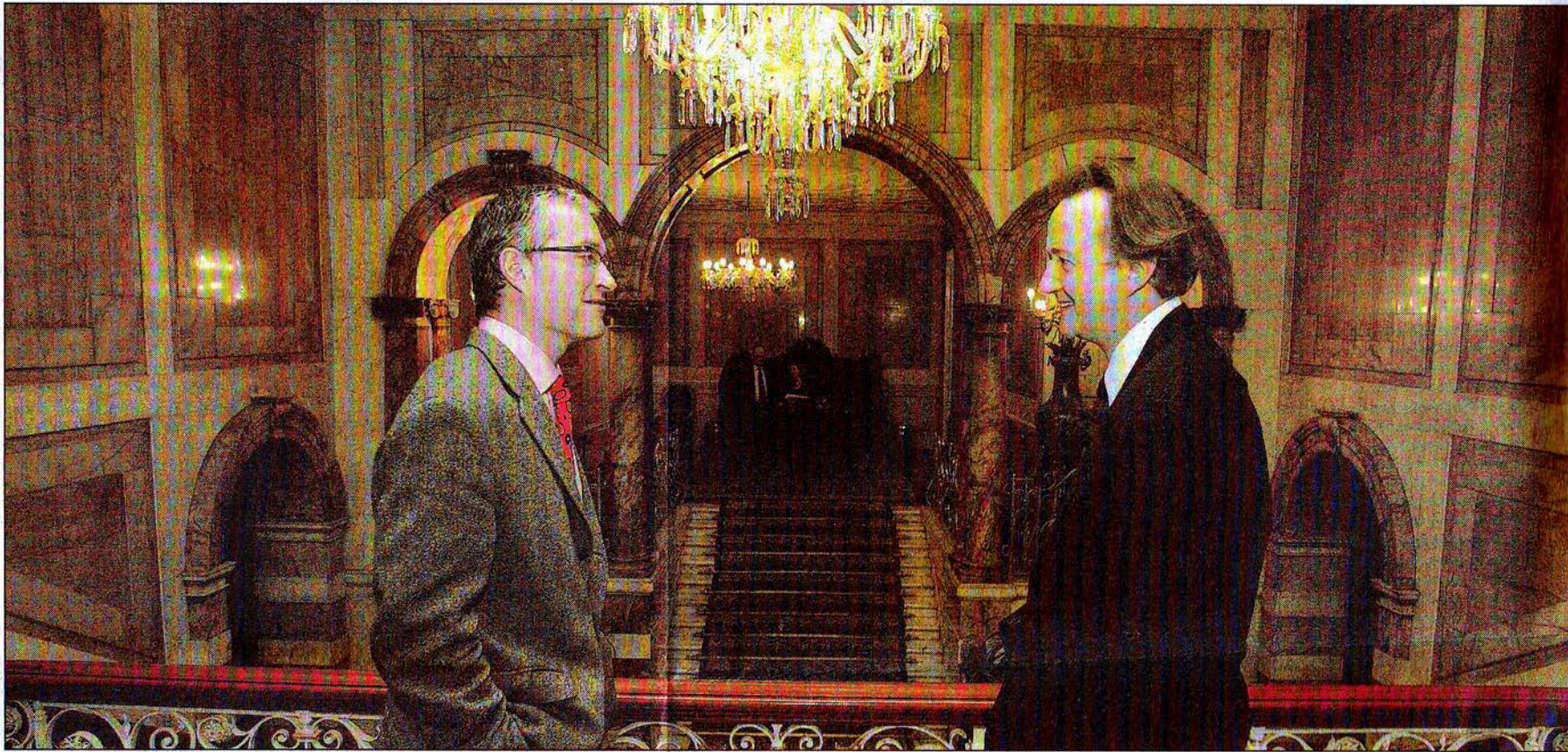


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Roy Foster, chairman of the Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize (right) with Richard English, winner of the prize at Iveagh House last night. Photograph: Aidan Crawley

Historian of nationalism wins Ewart-Biggs prize

STEPHEN COLLINS

Historian Richard English has won the 19th Ewart-Biggs Memorial Prize for his book *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*. A special award was also made to the poet Michael Longley.

The prizes, worth £5,000 sterling each, were awarded in memory of Christopher Ewart-Biggs, the British ambassador to Ireland, who was murdered by the IRA in south county Dublin in 1976.

The objectives of the prize are to recognise work which promotes and encourages peace and reconciliation in Ireland, a greater understanding between the peoples of Britain and Ireland, or closer co-operation between the partners of the European Union.

The awards were presented by novelist Colm Tóibín at a reception hosted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Iveagh House. Speaking on behalf of the judges, Prof Roy Foster said: "This year we were

faced with the almost impossible task of choosing between works brilliantly representing different genres - history, fiction, autobiography, poetry, political science, memoir, journalism. Every book on the list is remarkable, indeed a tour de force.

"In the end we felt that Richard English's *Irish Freedom* triumphed because of its ambition to explain and place Irish nationalism against a broad, comparative, intellectual background, weaving together a number of themes and approaches in

order to illuminate a complex, enduring and many-sided phenomenon." Prof Foster said the book used psychology, anthropology, intellectual history and political science to define processes of excluding as well as bonding.

"We also felt that, in the year of the publication of Michael Longley's *Collected Poems*, it was time to celebrate and acknowledge a tremendously accomplished poet who has never flinched from recording the Northern experience."