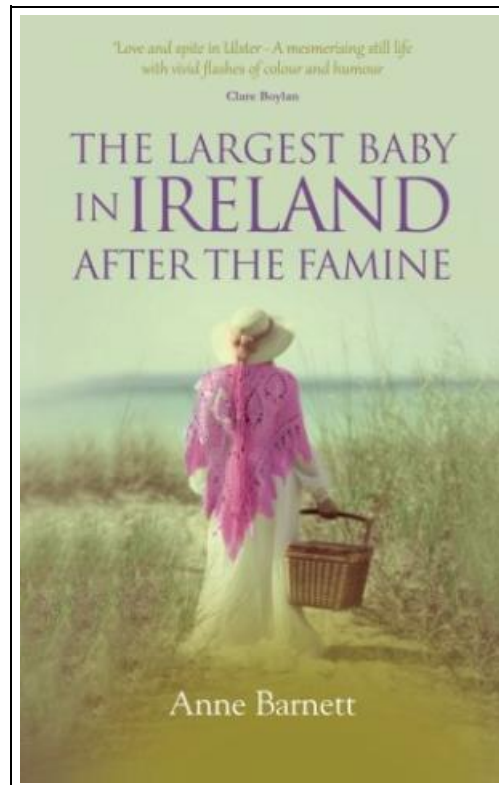


## The Largest Baby in Ireland After the Famine



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Paperback. Book Condition: New. Not Signed; As the title of Anne Barnett's debut novel suggests, this is a tale that makes things bigger than they are. The everyday, intricate dramas of a 1920s mid-Ulster rural community are observed with the grace, humour and languor of a fine story-telling voice that is assured, romantic and replete with the dour idiomatic phrases of people who never travel beyond a 10-mile radius. In the townland of Ballymully, near Cookstown, lives Felix Campbell, a Protestant and a bachelor through and through, who at 42, dreams of a woman in purple. He grew up in a glen with a glen-shaped soul, and baptism in his heart and catechism in his mind, unprepared for the tribulations of high emotion, so when he falls for Sarah-Ann O'Malloran, a big bawdy widow with 14 children, his soul sparks for the first time and he discovers lonesomeness. In Sarah-Ann, irrepressible, idiosyncratically attired and unconcerned about the morals of a very small town in the centre of a very small country, Barnett creates an exceptionally vivid, larger-than-life character, who was born weighing in at 13 pounds, is the novel's eponymous heroine. Not only does she cavort in silly frippery with Sean Boyd, the polygamist, she's Catholic and that strikes fear into the Ulstermen who gather on the bridge of a Sunday, not only for Felix's heart, but for his farm as well. Irish history is always the same. To be born Protestant or Catholic in Ireland, almost always sets the course of a man's political identity. It was as easy as telling a dog from a cat. Against a backdrop of World War One, which Protestants hope will end Home Rule for good, Felix awkwardly courts Sarah-Ann, regardless of the inevitably cruel gossip. The narrative lilts...

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