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10

Irish Romanticism, 1800–1830

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Ireland entered the period of Romanticism scorched by what Quaker writer Mary Leadbeater called the 'ruthless fires' of the 1798 rebellion.[1] Reacting against the threat of Ireland separating from Britain and becoming a client state of France, William Pitt's government moved quickly to draw the neighbouring island more securely to its side. Ireland was in future to send its electoral representatives (considerably reduced in number) to Westminster: the uneasy constitutional compromise that was the Dublin parliament was concluded. Other legal anomalies were cleared up also. The Copyright Act of 1709 was extended to Ireland, all but killing off an Irish publishing industry that was reliant on markets for cheap reprints in Ireland, Britain, the American colonies and the West Indies.[2] More profoundly, the Union created a professional literary culture characterised by movement between and across the two islands. A chapter such as this one therefore has to account for an 'Irish' literature that developed both outside and inside Ireland: the vast majority of the writers discussed here either lived in Britain or published there, and London and Edinburgh play as important a part in the shaping of Irish Romanticism as Dublin, Belfast or Cork. Moreover, the experience of travel and cultural bi-location was itself to become an object of interest in the literature of the period.

Romanticism and Ireland

Romanticism across Europe took its political bearings from the Enlightenment, with its radical faith in social progress and human perfectibility. At the same time, however, the cultural forms and styles favoured by Romantic writers encode a rejection of central eighteenth-century tenets; thus, the liberated imagination takes precedence over enslaved reason, natural forces threaten to overwhelm the established social order, and idealism challenges realism. Apprehending and analysing Irish Romanticism requires reading strategies

alert to a series of contests: between politics and culture, progress and nostalgia, crude classificatory systems and sensuously rendered detail.

It is generally agreed that Romanticism 'occurred in national phases', as Stuart Curran puts it, its rhythms 'keyed to the distinct exigencies of national culture'.[3] Until recently, however, mainstream Anglo-American scholarship has tended to treat 'the British Isles' as forming one phase in this process. Differences between component parts of the recently United Kingdom have been largely ignored. Irish literary history, on the other hand, has preferred to seek out evidence of the late flowering of a Romantic sensibility, first glimpsed in the writings of James Clarence Mangan and Thomas Davis and coming to fruition in the early poetry of W. B. Yeats. This chapter treats Irish Romanticism both as a distinct cultural phenomenon, separate from 'British' and other literary histories in the same period, and also as a 'phase' that is temporally coincident with, and shares important connections to, the Romanticism that swept across Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. An important effect of Romantic aesthetics was the development of Romantic nationalism. Ireland emerged from this period with a renovated reputation as a naturally distinct national culture; this in turn fostered and supported new theories of nationality and nourished the cultural nationalism of the 1830s and 1840s.

This is not, however, to sketch a smooth scene of historical change, but rather to begin to fill in the contours of the 'confused and introverted' cultural moment described by Tom Dunne in his groundbreaking essay on Irish Romanticism.[4] The intellectual origins of Irish culture in this period are to be found in the eighteenth century, especially in the antiquarian (or 'first' Celtic) revival which constitutes the enabling ground of Irish Romanticism. Books, essays and lectures by antiquarian scholars, along with cultural gatherings like the Granard and Belfast harp festivals of 1781 and 1792, allowed the writers of Irish Romanticism to negotiate a route back to the Irish past (the paths laid down by historical writings are traced in detail by Clare O'Halloran in chapter 14). Irish writers of the early nineteenth century were greatly influenced also by the cult of the bard, especially Macpherson's translations of Ossian which promised access to a hitherto unseen Celtic sensibility. Nor were these traditions entirely consigned to the past: bardic practices survived in memory and in stories for authors such as Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson, while poets like Patrick O'Kelly strove to keep the legacy alive. The figure of the bard was powerfully revived for the 1790s (and for Ulster writers in particular) in the figure of Robert Burns.[5] Most influential of all were the efforts of late eighteenth-century writers such as Charlotte Brooke and

Charles Henry Wilson, who sought to give expression to a vanishing world by capturing the oral tradition in print. This sense of change and decline is significant: even as they undertook their heroic attempt to preserve and revive the fragments of Gaelic culture, the antiquarians and revivalists gave powerful expression to the idea of loss. Irish Romanticism as a whole developed new and sophisticated ways of representing defeat and enervation, while at the same time retaining the raw energy and exhibitionism characteristic of the revivalist impulse. The sense of a cultural barrier that had to be crossed was intensified by the passing of the Act of Union, memorably described by Thomas Moore as 'the phantom by which the dawn of the Nineteenth century was welcomed'.[6]

Union and identity

The Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland passed into law on 1 January 1801 amidst a great outpouring of words. For Irish literature, the impact was swift. The Union debates, expressed in pamphlets, reprinted speeches, poems and mock-playbills, exploited the resources of print culture and quickly spilled over into literary forms. Among these the novel dominates, not only as the genre most associated with the kinds of questions ushered in with the Union, but as the pre-eminent cultural form of this period of Irish literature.

The legal formula employed in legislatively joining Ireland to Britain was, according to liberal Wicklow MP William Parnell (1780–1821), one of the Act's critics, an aggravating trick of rhetoric: 'the Union is a name, a sound, a fiction; there is no Union; the nominal Union is only an additional source of discord'.[7] Such accusations entered a literary culture sensitised to the idea of a separate national identity – a familiar theme of Irish literature since at least Swift and Molyneux – and poised to move the issue into a new and distinctly cultural register. In the place of economics, however, or abstract political concepts such as rights (found in eighteenth-century patriotic discourse), the Romantic period witnessed a turn to culture itself as the ground on which ideas of Ireland and Irishness were debated. An understanding of culture not only as vehicle for identity but as constitutive of its essence is characteristic of Romanticism across Europe; Ireland in this period begins to think of itself as Irish in ways that specifically relate to the English-language literature it produces.

Hopes that the Act might allow Catholics a greater share in public life were swiftly disappointed, and lingered as an open sore on the surface of the new body politic. The literary culture of Irish Romanticism is thus strongly marked by a sense of grievance, generated by broken political promises and failed rebellion. The note of complaint, however, was heard alongside persistent

calls to mould civil society in a more progressive shape. Critics conventionally map different literary genres on to these cultural registers: the discourse of improvement finds expression in the novel, while poetry and (to the extent that it is noticed at all) drama are associated with despair and decline. Such schemata ignore the extent to which the English-language literature of early nineteenth-century Ireland – whether optimistic or elegiac in mood – comes to bear the burden of reform and change. The account offered here attempts a more wide-ranging and comprehensive treatment of the connections between cultural form and political content, and shows how the work of writing constitutes an intrinsic part of the desire to effect transformations in Irish culture.

Overall, the period sees a distinct shift in what may be termed, with equal applicability to literary history and affairs of state, the politics of representation. Catholic rights were recognised with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the granting of emancipation in 1829; the 1820s in particular see the emergence of a distinct body of professional Catholic men of letters and a squeezing out of liberal Protestant opinion. Writing in 1823, judge and baron of the exchequer Sir William Cusack Smith (1766–1836) warned politicians and journalists no longer to 'expect that what [they] address to the public will be a sort of theatrical *aside*; which none but Protestants shall hear'.[8] Questions of representation pervade literary culture at every level. Lady Olivia Clarke's (née Owenson, ?1785–1845) play, *The Irishwoman*, performed in Dublin in 1819, compares dramatic prologues to 'those civil speeches / In which a candidate for votes beseeches'. The conceit of the play's own prologue, written by Clarke's brother-in-law, Sir Charles Morgan (*c.*1780–1843, husband of Sydney), is to introduce the performance as a candidate seeking the votes of the audience. The play's themes are presented via a series of linked references to demands for Catholic suffrage: 'On stage or hustings, when they take their station, / Both Speakers seek to gain – representation.'[9] The prologue to Clarke's play further associates calls for political change with the distinct claims, fears and feelings of women: the 1820s also saw the start of public lobbying for the rights of women, with the publication of Cork-born Anna Doyle Wheeler and William Thompson's *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men* (1825).

This sense of a broadening public stage for which new roles had to be scripted (or old truisms tested) is crucial for understanding texts as diverse as Maria Edgeworth's novels, Thomas Moore's poetry and Charles Robert Maturin's dramas. A concern with voices and their framing within narrative is a recognisable hallmark of Irish culture from the Act of Union up to Catholic emancipation, and should be understood in terms of contemporary

developments: the loss of an independent legislature, and increasing agitation for proper public representation of Catholics as political subjects and, most significantly of all, as a bilingual culture on the cusp of a major shift from one language to another. Irish literary texts of this period are equipped with a strong sense of opposing audiences, and manifest an awareness of what W. J. McCormack describes as 'the dynamics of . . . rival, even irreconcilable readerships'.[10] Along with this public dimension, however, the texts discussed in this chapter are shadowed by a need for secrecy and a lingering sense of the value of illegitimate knowledges. It is thus within the genre of the novel, with its narrative mastery of social visibility and public authority, that the greatest energy is concentrated and distilled.

Prose fiction

This period of Irish literature opens with a series of ground-clearing exercises undertaken by a young but intellectually assured writer living on her family's estate in County Longford. Resident in Ireland from 1782, Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) had an unusually liberal upbringing, largely a result of her father's radical educational theories, her reading in the French and Scottish Enlightenments, and the family immersion in Romantic print culture. The most respected novelist of her day and the benchmark by which new arrivals like Jane Austen and Walter Scott were judged, Edgeworth visited Britain, France and Switzerland and acquired a growing circle of influential correspondents. Her career was, however, largely lived out among family and friends in Longford, and she remained close to midlands gentry families like the Beauforts, who formed the first horizon of her readership. Edgeworth's literary career embraced a diverse but ultimately interrelated set of concerns, all of which can be seen in embryo in her earliest publications: *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *Belinda* (1801).

Letters for Literary Ladies uncovers and scrutinises assumptions about female education and authorship. Written in mock-epistolary form with a concluding essay, the text suggests that it is only women who have the leisure to be wise and to unite different professional specialisms in the domestic sphere: this is the bedrock of national unity and a strong guarantor of social progress. *Practical Education (*1798) was written with Edgeworth's father and life-long collaborator, Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744–1817). It treats education as a public issue that ought to be debated in the full light of rational inquiry, a proposition considered radical enough to attract several negative reviews that focused especially on the Edgeworths' neglect of religion. She continued to

publish works aimed at both children and educators, including *Moral Tales* (1801), *Early Lessons* (1801) and *The Parent's Assistant* (1796).

Belinda (1801), a courtship novel that endorses the contemporary ideology of companionate marriage as the only safe foundation for domestic and social happiness, carries forward Edgeworth's interest in women's social power. The novel displays Edgeworth's wide reading in 1790s feminism, and cleverly caricatures Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays in the character of a hysterical advocate of the rights of woman named Harriet Freke. In *Belinda*, Edgeworth takes a measured step away from the discredited Jacobinism of her father's generation (although she continued to publish with the radical Joseph Johnson and later his nephews) and moves towards a more cautious endorsement of the virtues of domesticity, a private sphere that is always closely connected with the public world and dominated – sometimes damagingly so – by well-educated and independent women who freely transgress the threshold between private and public. In the case of *Belinda*, the invasion of the public into the private is marked via a series of extreme bodily sensations, most notably the wound and subsequent terror experienced by the character of Lady Delacour. Later fictions like *Leonora* (1803) and *Patronage* (1814) repeatedly cross the public/private boundary and her final novel, *Helen* (1834), represents a sustained examination of the limits of women's public power.

The preface to Edgeworth's experimental first-person narrative, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), surveys established literary models and coolly considers which genre might best suit the story at hand. Nothing less than Ireland's future in prose is at stake here: *Castle Rackrent* moves between established literary modes, self-consciously in search of a new style of prose fiction. Long recognised as innovative, its newness has been claimed for different traditions: the first 'regional' fiction in British literature, the first distinctively Irish novel and even, according to anecdote, the first text to help George III to understand his Irish subjects (this at the very moment he decided to refuse them religious tolerance). *Castle Rackrent* acts as a vehicle for the point of view of an Irish servant, Thady Quirke. His opinions are expressed in an English that is heavily marked by the traces of Irish syntax and vocabulary, framed by the crisp explanatory prose of the editor's preface, notes and glossary.

Despite his loquaciousness, the character of Thady Quirke retains a degree of ironic impenetrability that has generated a rich and varied critical response to the novel. *Castle Rackrent*'s framing of Thady's voice remains a subject of critical discussions that were to become increasingly heated once the embryonic Catholic energies that Edgeworth seeks to represent found their own political voice in the early years of the twentieth century. This has led to a tendency

to dismiss the later Irish novels, *The Absentee, Ennui* and *Ormond*, as patrician and prescriptive fictions of progress, blind to the complex realities of Irish life. Important as part of a history of Irish cultural politics, these debates have, however, condemned readings of Edgeworth's ironic masterpiece to tread a deeply grooved but narrow-gauged circle of ideas concerning authenticity and political responsibility. Edgeworth's experiment with voice and genre is a product not only of her residence in Longford from age fifteen and her conversations with the family steward John Langan, but also of her reading in Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, French moral tales and English novels. Like Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* or Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas, Castle Rackrent* is a sophisticated fictional experiment that seeks to convey within the medium of print culture a perspective otherwise alien to a novel-reading audience. Edgeworth's choice of an Irish peasant narrator is new, as is her Romantic interest in orality and in the politics of language. This precise sense of language and its political consequences finds further expression in *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802), a witty and self-consciously Swiftian examination of Hiberno-English usage, co-authored with her father. The text was revised in 1803 and in 1808.

All of Edgeworth's Irish novels from *Castle Rackrent* onwards effect a transfer of land: property that had formerly belonged to the Williamite generation of Protestant landowners passes into the hands of Catholic (or strongly Catholic-associated) characters, as in her novels *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812) and *Ormond* (1817). In each case, the mechanism of transfer is a marriage that effects an alliance between native and settler cultures. The novels end with the promise of a happier future that can be read in both domestic and national terms. This kind of doubled narrative, where sexual relations are made to relate to political ones, lends the novels an allegorical aspect that connects them most immediately to Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). Through Owenson, a path can be traced back to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bardic verse and the *aisling* tradition. Another direct source may be found in radical feminist fictions of the 1790s, with their overdetermined politics of plot. More generally, allegory may be seen forming part of what Tom Dunne calls 'the colonial character of Irish Romantic literature':[11] the injunction to speak otherwise (*allos-agoreuein*) remained a powerful one throughout the nineteenth century and connects Edgeworth's and other Irish fictions of this period to twentieth-century postcolonial literatures.

The attachment to allegorical forms within Irish Romanticism marks one of its key differences from mainstream British literary trends in the same period. Critics such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge contributed to an influential and pervasive devaluation of allegory in contemporary aesthetics; meanwhile, symbol

took pride of place as the most sophisticated form of metaphor. Inheritors of this Romantic distrust of the simple and simplifying effects of allegory include the many critics of Irish literature who dismiss national allegories like those of Edgeworth as having an 'analgesic' effect.[12]

Alongside this allegorical tendency, Edgeworth's novels develop a realist mode that won her wide praise. Her later Irish fictions were consistently described as offering authentic images of Irish life, and praised by liberal journals like *The Edinburgh Review* for contributing to the great project of reforming Ireland. Such praise proved short-lived, however, and did not survive even into mid-century. Negative reviews of her father's *Memoirs* (1817), combined with the masculine capturing of the novel described below, meant that Edgeworth's reputation suffered severe blows. The backlash can be witnessed from as early as *Patronage* (1814), the publication of which was greeted with accusations of impropriety and ignorance. Edgeworth was to be dogged throughout her career by similar charges of perceived breaches of propriety, whether linguistic, political or moral, and often made revisions to the text of her novels (for collected and other editions) in order to counter accusations levelled against her in public forums like the reviews.

Partly as a result of the energies unleashed by Edgeworth's experiments in prose, and partly, perhaps, as a consequence of Union itself, the Irish novel marshalled fresh energy and momentum in this period. The decade after the Union saw the emergence of the national tale, product of the precocious literary talent of Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan) (*c*.1783–1859). Her greatest success was *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* (1806), the text now credited with the first use of this innovative brand or badge of generic identity. Owenson had published two earlier novels, *St Clair; or the Heiress of Desmond* (1803) and *The Novice of St Dominick* (1806). The former was first published in Dublin, and is worthy of note as one of the few novels originally published in Ireland in the years between the passing of the Act of Union and the revival of the Irish publishing industry in the 1830s. *The Wild Irish Girl* takes elements from these earlier fictions – an Irish setting, religious difference, Gothic plots and an interest in a contested past – and combines them with Owenson's extensive knowledge of antiquarian debates and contemporary politics to produce a national romance. A young English man is banished to his father's estates in Ireland. There he learns the history of those lands, which have come into his family as a result of the Cromwellian conquest. He falls in love with the daughter of the Gaelic family dispossessed by his ancestors and their marriage serves to allegorise a happier future for a divided Ireland, as well as more immediately reminding readers of the recent Union between Great Britain

and Ireland. The longevity of this plot (up to and including contemporary Troubles romances and films like Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*) suggests its resilience and flexibility; and should remind us also of the many possible meanings of Owenson's narrative manoeuvres.

The national tale's distinctive generic qualities are the result of efforts by (chiefly) Irish female writers to give fictional shape to an interrelated set of concerns, including history, property and national conduct. The national tale combines elements of feminist fictions of the 1790s with bardic verse, allegory and the contemporary novel of courtship and companionate marriage. From 1808 to 1814 may be seen as the great years of the national tale and the period evidences a set of titles that prove the instant marketability of *The Wild Irish Girl* formula. These include Charles Robert Maturin's *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808) and *The Milesian Chief* (1812), Henrietta Rouviere Mosse's *The Old Irish Baronet: or, Manners of My Country* (1808), Elizabeth Plunkett's *The Exile of Erin* (1808), Theodore Melville's *The Irish Chieftain, and His Family* (1809), John Agg's *Mac Dermot; or, The Irish Chieftain* (1810), and Ann Mary Hamilton's *The Irishwoman in London* (1810).[13]

An indicative arc can be observed in the writings of the Waterford-born Regina Maria Roche (1763/4–1845). Her Gothic bestseller *Children of the Abbey* (1798) – still in print as late as the 1890s and the basis of an early silent film – has occasional Irish references. Her home country then comes more fully into view with *Clermont: A Tale* (1798). Roche continued to write formulaic fictions for the Minerva Press, but by 1820 had moved into a recognisably Irish mode with *The Munster Cottage Boy* (1820), which draws heavily on the plot and style of *The Wild Irish Girl*. Much more than the intellectually respectable but still eccentric experiment that was *Castle Rackrent*, then, the success of *The Wild Irish Girl* is to credit (or blame) for making Ireland a recognisable location within the world of Romantic-era fiction.

Sydney Owenson was daughter to the actor-manager Robert Owenson and had travelled widely with him in Ireland. The influence of the sentimental comedies of John O'Keeffe, a staple of her father's companies, can be seen in her early Irish fictions. Owenson had an active publishing career until her death in 1859, carried on after this by her secretary Geraldine Jewsbury and her friend W. J. Fitzpatrick. Such was her success and exposure that she was a key point of contact for Irish writers moving into the London publishing scene in the 1810s to 1830s. As with Regina Maria Roche, Owenson's own first novel, *St Clair*, can help chart the process of generic and cultural change that Owenson herself instigated. In many respects, the novel is remarkably similar in form and theme to *The Wild Irish Girl*: told in letter form, *St Clair* relates how a

stranger arrives in the wilds of the west of Ireland, and falls in love with the daughter of a chieftain. In *St Clair*, however, the setting, scenery and location are incidental.

A revised edition of the novel appeared in 1812, and added aspects of *The Wild Irish Girl* formula to the earlier fiction. The recipe was to be repeated in *Woman; or, Ida of Athens* (1809) and *The Missionary* (1811), each of which takes on a new national context (Greece and Goa) and has a young woman with fervent attachments to her native place come into passionate conflict with established authority and join forces with a man whose oppositional stance affirms her own. In the case of *The Missionary* in particular, the price of such affirmation is the near-annihilation of the heroine's sense of self, already rendered precarious by the experience of romantic love. The conclusion of that novel sees the heroine, a Brahmin princess, ascending the funeral pyre of the Franciscan friar with whom she had fallen in love, scenes that so affected the young Percy Bysshe Shelley that he borrowed them for his *Revolt of Islam*.

These novels fully inhabit the culture of sensibility, and Owenson fine-tunes her narratives to sound an almost unbearably high-pitched note of intense feeling. Her fluency in the language of sentiment was to lose Owenson readers once literary fashions shifted; in an attempt to recapture the market she revised *The Wild Irish Girl* (1846) and *The Missionary* (as *Luxima*, in 1858), removing what she described as 'superfluous epithets' and some of the more purple passages.

Irish literature of the Romantic period shows evidence of a sustained interest in and interrogation of the culture of sensibility, always understood in Ireland (as in the American republic) as involved in and associated with the project of nation-building. With Edgeworth and Owenson, we see the incorporation of the domestic novel, with its in-built generic focus on shaping and guiding behaviour, into the repertoire of Irish fiction, where it becomes a way of addressing issues of political as well as sexual propriety. Translating ideas of sympathy into an Irish context causes problems, however, chiefly because of its problematic link to political and religious enthusiasm. Irish writers like Elizabeth Plunkett (née Gunning, 1769–1823) and Thomas Moore (1779–1852) strive to vindicate sensibility in a climate which is already sceptical of its Jacobin and United Irishmen associations (Plunkett, *The Exile of Erin*, 1808). The figure of Lord Edward Fitzgerald is central here, especially as he is depicted in Moore's 1831 biography but also in his role as shadowy presence behind the characters of Ormsby Bethel in Maturin's *Wild Irish Boy* and Lord Walter Fitzwalter in *The O'Briens and The O'Flaherties*.

Owenson's later Irish novels (*O'Donnel* (1814), *Florence Macarthy* (1818) and *The O'Briens and The O'Flaherties* (1824)) move out of the mode of fatal sincerity and into what Ina Ferris has identified as an obliquely angled and shape-changing mode of address.[14] Owenson (by now Lady Morgan, thanks to her marriage to the physician of her Whig patrons, Lord and Lady Abercorn) creates in these novels a series of highly artificial and 'performative'[15] heroines, who translate a need for secrecy (demanded by even the most blameless of public causes) into disguise, theatricality and display. Owenson's interest in powerful women sequestered within convents or other all-female spaces allows us to connect her writings to later fictions by Kate O'Brien and Julia O'Faolain. Like them, she combines a strong interest in romance with narrative strategies that move 'on the diagonal', as Ferris puts it, and address history aslant. Her later Irish novels show evidence of a sustained engagement with recent Irish history, in particular the turbulent decades of her own youth. The 1780s and 1790s are presented almost as a series of tableaux, connected via a series of cinematic fades back into the sixteenth century.

The later fictions of both Owenson and Edgeworth were published in the context of a significant shift in the gendered hierarchies of authorship and genre. Peter Garside's authoritative bibliographical study of the Romantic-era novel identifies a 'male invasion of mainstream fiction' taking place in the early years of the nineteenth century in both Britain and Ireland, with 'female dominance' up to the 1810s reversed by the 1820s.[16] An initial female dominance of the fiction market was thus followed by what is now recognised as a masculine capturing of the novel in both Britain and Ireland.[17] This coincided with a fashion for military and naval fictions, evident by the 1820s, with Irish novelists William Hamilton Maxwell (1792–1850) and later Charles Lever (1806–72) in the forefront of this new trend.[18] Furthermore, the masculine capturing of the novel described by Garside and exemplified in the figure of Walter Scott encodes a wider cultural phenomenon, whereby the novel itself moved into the cultural mainstream.[19]

Cultural change of this sort does not occur without a degree of confusion and contradiction on the ground. A generic approach to the fictions of this period shows the Irish novel splitting across a series of fictional fashions. A great many novels in the 1810s veer between parody and pastiche. The latter include Cork-born Eaton Stannard Barrett's (1786–1820) satire of novel reading, *The Heroine; Or Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader* (1813), while Maturin's *The Wild Irish Boy* balances precariously between heartfelt emotion and camp display. Examples of pastiche include more straightforwardly imitative and far

less assured novels such as Francis Higginson's *Manderville; or, The Hibernian Chiliarch* (1825).

Across this period, Gothic gives way to historical fiction,[20] but in the case of the Irish novel the latter form retains within it important elements of the former. The interpenetration of these modes can be witnessed in the novels of the Dublin-born Protestant cleric Charles Robert Maturin (1782–1824): *Fatal Revenge* (1807), *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808), *The Milesian Chief* (1812), *Women; or Pour et Contre* (1818), *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and *The Albigenses* (1824). Maturin's family origins lay in the Huguenot flight from religious persecution in seventeenth-century France. The relation between religious and state power concerns him everywhere in his novels, and provides the backdrop for dynamic fictions of persecution and flight. Maturin's novels allow us to see the evolution of Irish Gothic as a fictional idiom in which excessive forms of subjective experience (passion, terror, starvation) compel the invention of new structures of feelings within which political affiliation can be reimagined.[21]

Melmoth the Wanderer uses the shadow of dissident sexualities and the bodily and mental weakness brought on by hunger to wreck any possibility of affective social bonds. Maturin thus calls into question the idealised national communities proposed in the national tales of Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson. To this extent, Maturin, and nineteenth-century Protestant Gothic fiction more generally, should be understood as sharing generic ground with the O'Connellite fictions of the 1820s; like *Melmoth*, the Catholic novels 'as often blocked as enabled sympathetic attachments' and similarly seek to interrogate the processes by which closed communities are formed.[22]

Melmoth was originally conceived, Frankenstein-like, from a patchwork of different literary models. Maturin first describes it as a poem like *Lallah Rookh* (inspired no doubt by Thomas Moore's great financial success with the title), then a 'Prose Romance', and finally as a series of linked tales imitating the structure of Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate*.[23] What was eventually published is an embedded narrative of linked stories that move backwards in time (from the roughly contemporary to the Reformation and the English Civil War) while ranging widely through Ireland, Spain and the east. Maturin's correspondence with his publisher, John Constable, helps explain the ragged nature of the text, as well as providing some insight into the working life of an author dogged by poverty and ill health.[24]

Maturin was assisted early in his career by Walter Scott, who sought to challenge the Whig dominance of the Irish question in fiction by nurturing the talents of a fellow Tory. Maturin, however, proved far from doctrinaire. Curate of St Peter's church in Dublin, he ignored Scott's advice and courted

controversial religious topics with publications like *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* (1824). Maturin's literary imagination shows evidence of a deep involvement with the forms and rituals of the Catholic faith. The anti-Catholic stereotypes characteristic of Gothic fiction are thus transmuted into something unique and troubling; connected perhaps to the interest in 'dead-alive' bodies and states of suspended animation found in later fictions by Catholic novelists Gerald Griffin and the Banim brothers.

The Milesian Chief depicts an imaginary insurgency taking place in the aftermath of the rebellions of 1798 and 1803. Borrowing details from both of these events for a rebellion taking place in a projected future, the narrative achieves a strange acceleration of temporality that contrasts strongly with the overall atmosphere of ruins and relics. Maturin, like Owenson and the Banims, also achieves some of the best writing of city life in the period; his *Women; or Pour et Contre* satirises evangelical Dublin life and contains some urban set-pieces that cast the Irish metropolis as scene of melancholy splendour.

The Church of Ireland began its steady move towards evangelical Christianity from the 1800s onwards. Proselytising novels and tales played a key part in the advance of the Protestant Crusade (also known as the Second Reformation). Short tales published and distributed by evangelical groups like the Kildare Place Society usually focus on exemplary Irish heroines, whose discovery of a copy of the Bible proves the key to their salvation. Examples include *The Irish Girl* (1814) and *The History of Mary* (1820). Evangelical novels regularly borrowed from the tropes and themes of the national tale, as in Patrick Brontë's (1777–1861: father of Charlotte, Emily and Anne) *The Maid of Killarney* (1818), which reworks *The Wild Irish Girl*, or Selina Bunbury's (1802–82) *The Abbey of Inismoyle* (1828), which imagines Ireland's north-western coast infiltrated by a Jesuit conspiracy.

The Second Reformation prompted angry ripostes from Catholic writers, including John Banim's *The Nowlans* (discussed below) and Thomas Moore's prose satire, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824). *Captain Rock* opens with a description of a young man sent to Ireland, not by his parents (as in so many national tales), but by an English society of Protestant charitable ladies. He immediately encounters the eponymous hero, who presents him with a bundle of papers containing his life story and the history of his family; the Captain's memoirs form the remainder of the narrative. They are narrated by an agrarian outlaw with a long family history of rebellion, and resemble *Melmoth* in their Gothic obsession with the effects of historical trauma. Yet *Captain Rock* is quite different (from *Melmoth*, as from almost every Irish fiction that surrounds it) in seeking to make that trauma part of a coherent narrative whole, the consequences

of which have been, are and always will be bruised souls, broken bodies and armed rebellion. The continuity of Irish insurgency is realised in a series of brilliant, quasi-symbolist images that illuminate a vast panorama of historical injustice, even as they disrupt the flow of the plot. Moore's fondness for iconic images that capture and condense historical processes is ascribed by Ronan Kelly to his reading in contemporary French historiography; whatever their origin, these moments in his prose connect powerfully to his *Irish Melodies* and help join up different aspects of Moore's varied literary career.[25] His next prose fiction, *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833), continues in satiric mode: like *Captain Rock*, it targets evangelical Protestantism, although this time in the changed context of post-Catholic emancipation Ireland.

The 1820s is the decade in which 'an Irish *line* of fiction begins to be defined' in the British reviews, with Irishness now negatively understood as associated with an excessive political commitment.[26] This marks a move away from an earlier more positive climate, but did not stem the production of Irish titles. When Gerald Griffin (1803–40) came to publish his first fictions, the pressure of expectation and counter-expectation is clearly felt. The introduction to the first series of his *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1826) features a conversation between an enthusiastic writer of national tales and a dour antiquarian who believes that a 'ruined people stand in need of a more potent sedative than an old wife's story'. Griffin makes the old man's 'sour' cynicism part of his narrative frame, allowing the *Tales* to voice strong and self-conscious criticism of existing modes of national fiction even as they stake out new fictional territory: 'You would, I suppose, have a typhus fever, or a scarcity of potatoes, remedied by a smart tale, while you would knock a general insurrection on the head, with a romance in three volumes.'[27]

Novelists who embark on publishing careers in the 1820s are aware of entering a crowded field, and an element of fictional meta-consciousness enters their writings. They also begin to turn in new directions for material for their 'smart tales': towards Irish folklore, being collected and made available from the 1820s, and, with a new confidence, to the recent past. The 1820s sees a spate of novels that explicitly make the rebellion of 1798 part of their plot: Lady Morgan's *The O'Briens and the O'Flaherties*, John and Michael Banim's *The Croppy* (1828), James McHenry's *The Insurgent Chief; or, O'Halloran, An Irish Historical Tale of 1798* (1828), and Eyre Evans Crowe's 'The Northerns of Ninety-Eight', part of his *Yesterday in Ireland* (1829).

The Irish novel in the Romantic period thus moves between the modes of historical fiction and national tale. Katie Trumpener has put in place a useful set of distinctions between these literary modes, contrasting their treatment of

past and present. Where the national tale slides back and forth between competing modes and does not organise them hierarchically, the historical novel reorganises the opposition along chronological lines and decisively shifts the terms into a narrative of development and progress.[28] The historical novel creates a verifiable past via the presence of recognisable world-historical characters, lending to fiction a decisively evidential basis and a stiffer chronological spine.

One danger of these distinctions is that they prop up a process whereby Irish fiction by women began to be either excluded from the literary canon, or only admitted on certain terms. Maria Edgeworth's Irish novels have been a victim of this trend, as have other femino-centric fictions of Irish life. These include Sarah Isdell, *The Irish Recluse* (1809), Mrs Kelly, *The Matron of Erin* (1814), Elizabeth Plunkett, *The Exile of Erin* (1808) and Ann Hamilton, *The Modern Irishwoman in London* (1810). These novels all share an interest in the rebellion of 1798 (a decade earlier than the fictions discussed above), and offer set-piece discussions or striking images of the events of that summer. They might also be read alongside the range of non-fictional responses to the rebellion written by female loyalist witnesses like Dinah Goff and Jane Adams.[29] To these women's fictions of rebellion may be added Lady Caroline Lamb's scandalous novel *Glenarvon* (1816), which uses a Lady Morgan-inspired version of the rebellion of 1798 as a backdrop against which to replay the drama of her recent affair with Lord Byron.

Despite the considerable interest of these past-oriented fictions by female Protestant writers, however, literary historians still tend to ascribe the proper beginnings of Irish historical fiction to two middle-class Catholic men: John and Michael Banim (1798–1842 and 1796–1874), brothers from Kilkenny who collaboratively published their *Tales of the O'Hara Family* throughout the 1820s (including *The Nowlans* (1824), *The Boyne Water* (1826), *The Croppy: A Tale of 1798* (1828) and *The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century* (1828)). The Banims (like Thomas Moore and Gerald Griffin) subscribed to the cult of anonymity made fashionable by Walter Scott and published under the pseudonym 'The O'Hara Family' (as brothers Abel and Barnes O'Hara). Scholars have disputed the exact authorship of each fiction, and the precise nature of their literary collaboration remains under-researched. The novels are prefaced with letters from one (fictional) brother to the other, usually rooted in reported travels around Ireland.

The Banims' fictions broadly divide into stories of contemporary peasant life, which take the form of tales or short fictions, and large-scale historical fictions that are presented in novel form. The tales flirt with supernaturalism,

but usually assign rational causes to such Otherworldly manifestations as fetches and banshees, fairy-blasts and strokes. The novels are more evidently in the tradition staked out by Edgeworth and Owenson (often specifically responding to their themes and tropes), yet also represent a new departure. Like Maturin (and the later Owenson), the Banims' novels allow us to chart 'the transformation of an allegorically flattened national character . . . into one torn apart by the contradictions of uneven development'.[30] The novels characteristically end (and sometimes begin) with a depiction of nervous and shaken individuals, their futures blighted by the invasion of politics into their lives. Most notable is their characterisation of the anguish suffered by John Nowlan, the novice priest of *The Nowlans*, who falls in love with and marries a young Protestant woman.

The Banims were not the first writers to feature the Catholic clergy in their fictions: *The Wild Irish Girl* features a genial chaplain who encourages the young lovers, and in 1819 William Parnell published *Maurice and Berghetta; or the Priest of Rahery* (1821), a controversial national romance centring around the benevolent actions of a kindly Catholic priest. Narrated by a cleric at the end of his life, the novel caused one reviewer to accuse Parnell of apostasy[31] and led another to condemn the flawed understanding of any individual who could 'speak of Popery as in itself of innocuous or of beneficial tendency'.[32] In *The Nowlans*, however, the focus falls emphatically on the psychological suffering of the priest figure, himself made the centre of the romance plot. The shadow of conversion looms large, and helps explain some of the anguish experienced by the young John Nowlan. The Revd George Brittaine's (1790–1847) virulently anti-Catholic fictions (*Reflections of Hyacinth O'Gara* (1828), *Confessions of Honor Delany* (1829), *Irishmen and Irishwomen* (1830)) belong to this world also, immersed as they are in the detail of evangelical battles and evoking the new spectre of the 'Maynooth priest': educated in Ireland, not on the continent (Maynooth College opened in 1795), and part of the machinery of O'Connellite politics.

The emergence of organised Catholic politics in the 1820s is crucial for understanding the Banims' historical fictions, published in the years just before the gaining of Catholic emancipation. *The Boyne Water* opens with news of the Catholic James II having succeeded to the throne and concludes with the end of the Williamite wars and the introduction of the Penal Code. In the place of the Glorious Revolution of popular English memory, *The Boyne Water* depicts a tripartite story of dynastic contest between Scottish, English and European interests; a struggle between Tories and Whigs for power over the islands, centred in London; and, finally, a conflict between natives and settlers in

Ireland that has a crucially religious dimension. The influence of Scott on the novel has often been noted, in particular on a narrative designed to allow opposing forces to rub up against each other until equilibrium is achieved. *The Boyne Water* does not provide any final moment of balance or harmony, however, nor can it reassure its readers that insurgency is safely consigned to the past. Published in the immediate aftermath of agrarian disturbances, the novel concludes on the open question of Ireland's political future.

With the fictions of the Banim brothers and Gerald Griffin (1803–40), the adventure story moves into prominence in Irish fiction. Griffin left his native Limerick for London in 1823, following the emigration of his parents to America. Dejected at the rejection of his tragedy *Aguire*, and his failure to make his way in the theatre, Griffin turned to journalism. He wrote prose and poetical pieces for the London papers (under 'five hundred different signatures', as he puts it),[33] and wrote and published his first tales before returning to Ireland in 1827. *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1826–7) and *Holland-Tide; Or, Munster Popular Tales* (1827) are presented within a frame narrative that recalls *The Canterbury Tales*. An audience of Irish peasants gathered to celebrate a festival are made the narrative occasion for a set of linked tales that move Irish prose in English onto new ground: legends from myth and folklore are presented on their own terms, and, via the frame narrative, to their own audience. Griffin's tales echo the Romantic supernaturalism of James Hogg in Scotland, combining as they do uncanny tales of resurrected corpses and ghostly limbs with a detailed account of political unease and social stratification in the southern part of Ireland. Munster in the 1820s was still recovering from the economic crisis created by the ending of the Napoleonic wars and the famines of 1817 and 1822; at the time of Griffin's writing, the south of Ireland was generally considered the most lawless and troubled province. Griffin's short life involved a return to his native Limerick, where he met and (unhappily) fell in love with Lydia Fisher, the married daughter of Mary Leadbeater; he subsequently joined the Christian Brothers and died in a monastery in Dublin.

Griffin's *The Collegians* (1829) is perhaps the best representative of the new Catholic fiction: published in the year in which Catholic emancipation passed into law, it blends themes from Irish history with contemporary trial reportage and the new trend for society (or 'silver-fork') fiction. *The Collegians* depicts the densely textured social landscape of rural Ireland: landowners, strong farmers, middlemen, smugglers, lawyers, boatmen and buckeens all jostle for space in a narrative that shows how conflicting codes of conduct create moral chaos and political turmoil. The novel has a murder at its centre – innocent Eily O'Connor falls victim to the lazy morals and attractive indolence of local Protestant

landowner Hardress Cregan – that puts a fatal twist on the Protestant/Catholic pairing familiar to readers of the national tale. *The Collegians* does end with a more honourable version of cross-cultural union, but the promise of the union of virtuous Catholic masculinity and chaste Protestant conscience exemplified in the alliance of Kyrle Daly and Anne Chute is far outweighed by the impact of the earlier seduction and murder. This 'coarse'[34] tendency towards melodrama and mayhem was what interested later readers of Griffin's novels such as Dion Boucicault. Like *The Davenels*, a silver-fork novel published anonymously in the same year, *The Collegians* shows how the literary consequences of emancipation may include new demands on narrative form. The frame narratives adopted by both Griffin and the Banims (and later William Carleton) all seek to produce a range of authenticity effects that might be read in terms of the consequences of Catholic authorship for what had been largely a Protestant form.

Non-fictional prose

Irish periodical literature is usually thought to have suffered with the Act of Union and the decline in the indigenous publishing industry. Around twenty new titles were launched between 1800 and 1830, however, published in Cork, Newry and Sligo as well as in Dublin and Belfast. Most were short-lived, but as a group they testify to a self-reflective interest in Irish cultural formations, and especially to the emergence of the concept of Irish literature in English as a category for debate.[35] Neither should Irish involvement in the major British periodicals be underestimated. William Maginn's contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* (from 1819 through to the end of the 1820s) and later editorship of *Fraser's* (1830–42) make him a key figure: John Banim, Gerald Griffin and Jeremiah Joseph Callanan all turned to him for advice when looking to pursue careers in London. The most significant critical commentator of the Romantic period was the Waterford-born and Trinity College-educated John Wilson Croker (1780–1857). Croker was secretary to the Admiralty from 1809 and spokesperson for a range of Tory cultural causes through to the 1840s. These included the building of the British Museum to house the King's Library, the acquisition of the Elgin marbles and designs for Dublin's Wellington monument. He was one of the founders of *The Quarterly Review* (established in 1809 in Tory opposition to the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review*) and devoted the pages of its first number to a slashing review of Owenson's *Ida of Athens*.

If the novels of Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson are marked by what Thomas Flanagan calls 'the language of explanation', the 1820s and 1830s see a range of other genres assume this responsibility.[36] Increased tourist interest

in Ireland in this period can be seen in travellers' accounts by writers such as John Carr, Anne Plumptre, and the Revd James Hall as well as statistical studies like Edward Wakefield's *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political* (1812). The range and extent of these writings has led Glenn Hooper and Ina Ferris to make a case for a distinct post-Union travelogue, emerging as a generic response to the awkwardness of Ireland's role in the new United Kingdom.[37] In addition, Irish writers themselves began to contribute to a body of travel writing. Lady Morgan published accounts of her travels in France and Germany; Lady Blessington (1789–1849) capitalised on her success with *Sketches and Fragments* and *The Magic Lantern* to publish *Journal of a Tour through the Netherlands to Paris in 1821* (1822). Blessington moulds her observations to the established form of the 'sketch', already used by Owenson in her *Patriotic Sketches* (1807), in which femininity becomes the politicised sign of an emotional susceptibility to the effects of history and politics on landscape.[38] Blessington's accounts of London focus on civic spaces that allow for a collision of classes, manners and accents.

Although they form no part of the print culture of this period and do not constitute travel literature in any ordinary sense of the word, it is also worth noting here that the 1820s and 1830s saw the composition of Gaelic scholar John O'Donovan's (1806–61) extraordinary field reports detailing Irish place-names and local history. The letters languished in the Ordnance Survey office in Phoenix Park in Dublin until the period of the Literary Revival.[39] For readers keen to know more of the world represented in the texts of Irish Romanticism, they stand as a rich and densely textured resource with which our scholarship has yet to fully engage.

Advanced Romantic theories of education saw the development of a body of literature written especially for children. Edgeworth, who 'helped invent modern children's fiction',[40] wrote rationalist tales based on hers and her father's belief in the value of education in the home. Adelaide O'Keeffe (1776–*c*.1855) published poems as part of Ann and Jane Taylor's *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804), *National Characters Exhibited in Forty Geographical Poems* (1808), as well as biblical stories under the title *Patriarchal Times; or, The Land of Canaan* (1811). O'Keeffe was the daughter of the playwright and actor John O'Keeffe, and the amanuensis for his *Recollections* (1826). Mary Leadbeater and Harriet Beaufort (Edgeworth's step-niece) also published instructional books aimed at children, as did Edward Groves (1775–?), an ardent repealer and author of melodramatic history plays in the 1830s, who wrote adaptations of the Greek legends for children.[41] Some of the same authors – notably Edgeworth and Leadbeater – wrote tales and stories aimed at adult audiences whom they believed were in

need of improvement or education. Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* (1804) target a middle-class readership, while Mary Leadbeater's *Cottage Dialogues among the Irish Peasantry* (1811) utilises a simple dialogue form to appeal to Irish peasants and warn them against adopting the mores and manners of 'the quality'. Edgeworth provided explanatory notes for *Cottage Dialogues*, which are indebted to the style (if not the politics) of Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795–8).

The same moment saw the birth of Irish folklore studies, with the publication of Thomas Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824). Croker borrowed extensively from the antiquarian researches of the Cork poet Jeremiah Joseph Callanan (discussed below). Callanan and Croker corresponded, with the young poet seeking payment for material he had collected in Cork and Kerry. Croker was also involved with the Grimm brothers: in his chapter on 'Fairies and Supernatural Agency', Croker compares 'the fairies of Ireland' to 'the elves of Northern Europe'.[42] *Daniel O'Rourke*, a pantomime in verse by Croker based on oral fairy legend, was performed at the Adelphi Theatre in London during Christmas of 1826.

Drama and the novel

The preceding discussion suggests the extent to which cultural initiative had been seized by the novel in this period. Closely linked with the powerful new English and Scottish periodicals, the Irish novel was involved in commentary on everyday life and on the still fresh facts of recent history. This is not to ignore, however, the co-existence of drama and the novel as modes of address in the imaginations of many of the writers already discussed (Edgeworth, Owenson, Maturin, John Banim and Griffin all wrote plays for performance), as well as the extent to which drama and novels developed in relation to an interrelated set of aesthetic categories and political concerns.

It is worth noting also that two of the great talents of the early period, Edgeworth and Owenson, were, as women, likely to encounter some difficulties in the exposed world of the Irish theatre. Even when a literary success, Owenson was pursued by rumours that she had herself acted in her father's touring company, and never shook off the dubious social reputation that went along with her theatrical connections. Meanwhile, Maria Edgeworth had designs on the London (although not the Dublin) stage: she wrote *The Absentee* (her most admired novel in her own time) as a play script and sent it to Richard Brinsley Sheridan for his consideration. Sheridan wrote back, warning the young author that Irish topics were not welcome in British theatres. There is, however, strong evidence of her continuing interest in drama: *Patronage* (1814) also

began life as a play and Edgeworth later scripted two comic dramas, *Love and Law* and *The Rose, Thistle and Shamrock*, as well as the ambitious but unfinished *Whim for Whim*, a comedy of philosophical and political manners published for the first time in 2004 as part of a new edition of Edgeworth's works.[43] None of these plays was performed in public.

It may be that Irish novels absorb a kind of theatricality, comparable to the way in which English poetry of the same period commandeered some of the greatest dramatic impulses of its moment. Mrs Plunkett's novel *The Exile of Erin* ends with the text of a five-act play (*The Favourite*), which revisits the central themes of the novel (sympathy and the 1798 rebellion) but dresses them up as events taking place in the Swedish court, presented in blank verse. Edgeworth regularly incorporates drama inside the folds of her fiction. In *Vivian* (1812), the central characters stage Nicholas Rowe's racy drama *The Fair Penitent*. The characters' involvement in private theatricals precipitates a moral crisis in the world of the novel, a device Austen was to borrow for *Mansfield Park* (1814). Edgeworth's own interest in the theme was probably sparked by the fashion for private theatricals in post-Union Ireland (also reflected in *The O'Briens and the O'Flaherties*), and should also be read alongside Maturin and Owenson's use of theatricality as a trope for the brilliant but brittle texture of Irish political life.

The trope of theatricality may be further understood as the product of a culture in which the legitimating rules of political representation were under challenge. The rebellions of 1798 and 1803 were, as Christopher Morash remarks, to 'have long, lingering afterlives on the Irish stage';[44] more immediately, however, the rebellions, together with the Union debates and mounting calls for Catholic emancipation, contributed to a highly charged cultural climate. If England was (to paraphrase Edmund Burke) 'able to contain theatre within theatres',[45] Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed a series of public political dramas that provoked memories of revolutionary France.

Fiction's physical medium meant that it was perhaps better equipped to handle the complex bi-cultural experience of life under the Union. A novel might be published in London or Edinburgh but still declare itself 'Irish' or 'national'; in the theatre, the physical facts of performance produce different pressures and raise issues of location and identity. Drawing drama into a narrative of Irish Romanticism thus poses challenges. What does 'Irish' mean in relation to drama of the period? Is Irishness best established at the level of content or of style? And what difference do location and institutional history make? The succeeding sections deal with theatre in Ireland and Irish dramatists and actors on the London stage, and further suggest some ways in which to

combine these stories in order to create a more cohesive narrative of Irish drama in the period.

Theatre in Ireland

As Christopher Morash has shown, Irish theatre-going audiences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century participated in a vibrant theatrical culture in cities such as Dublin, Cork, Belfast and Waterford (although he makes no special case for Romanticism either as a period or as an aesthetic).[46] Performances were always prone to interruptions, however, the result of political unrest and economic uncertainty. Moreover, audiences who were internally divided along the lines of class and religion were, in the case of Ireland, grouped together in a small number of theatres that attempted to cater to all tastes. The volatile nature of theatre business and institutions thus had a distinctly national dimension, and the 1820s in particular were to witness repeated disturbances and riots in Dublin theatres.

A critic considering the repertoire of these theatres, however, will have some difficulties in establishing the lineaments of a national culture. Irish theatres in this period continued to stage a list of largely eighteenth-century plays, in addition to the newly fashionable Gothic melodramas. References to contemporary events, including the passing of the Act of Union, can be found in Alicia Le Fanu's *The Sons of Erin* (1812). First performed at the Lyceum Theatre in London before being taken up in Dublin, the play seeks to counter metropolitan prejudices against the Irish, especially their reputations as fortune-hunters and bad husbands. To the stock characters of stage Irish servant and charming rogue, it adds a 'Lady of science' who is an advocate for the 'rights of rational creatures'.[47] A number of Dublin-produced plays by women have not survived: these include Owenson's comic opera *The First Attempt* (1806), Sarah Isdell's *The Poor Gentlewoman* (1811) and *The Cavern* (1825), as well as Elizabeth Gunning's *The Wife with Two Husbands* (1803; never performed).

Evidence does exist of attempts to stage events or plots from Irish history, including Mary Balfour's *Kathleen O'Neil: a Grand National Melo-drame*, staged in Belfast in 1814. A now lost play by Daniel Mara entitled *Brian Boroimhe (The Victorious)* was performed in Dublin in 1810 and later adapted by Cork-born James Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862), cousin of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Knowles moved to London with his family in 1793 and later studied medicine at Aberdeen University. Though writing from a young age, he also acted, taught and lectured and was not able to pursue a full-time career as a playwright until the 1840s. *Brian Boroimhe* (1811) and *Virginius* (1820) (first performed in Glasgow,

later a success in London) successfully toured Ireland and were to become staples of American theatres. Knowles is a key figure in the development of the 'Irish play' in the nineteenth century and his significance continues to be felt right through to the century's end, especially in America.

More typical for this period though is the oblique Irishness of John Banim's *Damon and Pythias* (1821), a verse tragedy that dramatises the fall of a corrupt senate. Despite its classical credentials and debt to Joseph Addison's *Cato*, the play indexes many recognisably contemporary concerns, in particular in its depiction of a parliament that decides to 'dissolve' itself[48] alongside criticism of the heavy military presence needed to maintain the new dispensation. The senators are persuaded by threats and bribery to hand over their power to a would-be tyrant king. Chiefly consisting of lengthy speeches and containing little dramatic action, the play may further be read as a meditation on the role of rhetorical eloquence in political life. This is a topic with which both Banim and Richard Lalor Sheil (barrister and playwright, said to have assisted in the composition of this play) are stylistically as well as thematically engaged. Sheil's *Evadne or, The Statue* (1819) ends with the eponymous heroine solving all of the play's dilemmas by taking upon a Scheherazade role.

A need to establish the Irishness of the Irish theatre was keenly felt by contemporary commentators, and the period immediately after the Act of Union sees a great flurry of controversy and criticism directed at the stage. This opens with John Wilson Croker's anonymous *Familiar Epistles to Frederick Jones, Esq., on the Present State of the Irish Stage* (1804). Croker's vicious attack on the Dublin theatrical establishment supposedly brought about the death of one Irish actor (just as his later harsh review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly* was said to have killed John Keats). Responses included Robert Owenson's *Theatrical Tears* (1804), Sydney Owenson's *A Few Reflections, Occasioned by the Perusal of a Work, entitled, 'Familiar Epistles to Frederick J – s Esq. on the Present State of the Irish Stage'* (1804) and Sydney Owenson's comic opera *The First Attempt* (1806). For Morash, this moment revolves around 'the demand for Irish material on Irish stages',[49] a pressure that finds expression in the prologues of such Dublin-produced plays as Richard Lalor Sheil's *Adelaide* (1814), Alicia Le Fanu's *The Sons of Erin* (1812) and Lady Olivia Clarke's *The Irishwoman* (1819).

The remodelling of the Theatre Royal in Hawkins Street, Dublin (opened 1821) resulted in the first major nineteenth-century Irish theatre, and signalled the arrival of the theatre of spectacle in Dublin. Another large theatre, the Adelphi, opened in 1829. Political unrest seems to have sharpened with these new larger theatres. A number of political riots and protests took place in

the 1820s, most famously the bottle riot of 1822, in which Orange protestors attacked the new pro-Catholic lord lieutentant, Lord Wellesley, during a performance of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Despite what Morash calls the 'unravelling' of 'the old reciprocal arrangement between the castle and the theatre', however, there remains a vital sense of the theatre as a political venue, which lasts at least until the founding of the Abbey. (In the case of the bottle riots of 1822 Chief Lord Justice Charles Kendal Bushe ruled on the difference between a 'noisy' and a 'riotous audience', a judgment that was to be invoked in the aftermath of the *Playboy* riots in 1907.)[50]

Irish drama on the London stage

The greatest Irish theatrical successes of this period were staged in London (to audiences that may of course have been partly Irish) and did not take Ireland or its history as their overt theme or plot. The stage Irish roles discussed in the preceding chapter persist into this period, for instance in Richard Butler's (earl of Glengall) popular and widely performed *The Irish Tutor, or New Lights* (1800), a one-act comedy revolving around mistaken identities that was still being performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in 1823 and 1828. Similar stage Irish characters (usually servants) appear in comedies by Eaton S. Barrett (*My Wife! What Wife?* (1815)), Joseph Sterling Coyne and the prolific James Kenney (witness the character of Mr Teddy Fitzgrallaghan Macmullinoch O'Cloghorty in his 'petit opera' of 1804, *Matrimony*).

Kenney, who wrote farces, burlettas and melodramas, was associated with the illegitimate theatre. A division between legitimate and illegitimate theatre lasted until the effective abolition of theatrical monopoly in 1833 (officially 1843), and forms a vital context for our understanding of plays by Irish writers written for London audiences. Broadly, illegitimate drama refers to plays other than tragedies and comedies that were performed in unpatented theatres (venues other than Covent Garden or Drury Lane), which proliferated across the burgeoning metropolis. Dublin also had a patented theatre, the Theatre Royal, as did Edinburgh, Bath and Liverpool. Theatrical licence in Westminster and for the provincial patents was the responsibility of the Lord Chamberlain but – in one of the anomalies of power in which post-Union Ireland abounds – the licensing of Irish-based drama remained under the control of the lord lieutentant in Dublin.

This was a period of dispute over categories and styles as much as theatrical venues. Illegitimate genres were reliant on tableaux and spectacle and went under names like melodrama, burletta, burlesque, extravaganza,

pantomime, hippodrama and aquadrama (examples include *The Gheber; or the Fire-Worshippers*, based on Thomas Moore's *Lallah Rookh*).[51] Within the Romantic period, such techniques began to permeate the legitimate stage, bringing with them an emphasis on the art of the gesture and a new concern with physiology. This new emphasis on actors' bodies (rather than niceties of facial expression) was also related to the increased size of London theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden had both been expanded considerably in the 1790s).

A parliamentary Select Committee on Dramatic Literature met in 1832, bringing issues of dramatic style and cultural taste into the political mainstream; their findings were issued in new legislation (the Dramatic Copyright Act of 1832 and the Theatres Act of 1843). It is difficult to determine exactly the role played by Ireland in what was essentially a dispute about cultural democracy in late Georgian Britain, but it is hard to ignore the high visibility of Irish writers, plays and actors in these debates. The playwright Richard Lalor Sheil served on the parliamentary inquiry into the condition of the drama, chaired by Edward Bulwer Lytton, as did George Lamb, MP for Dungarvan, County Waterford from 1822. A Whig with O'Connellite sympathies and an amateur interest in drama, Lamb served on the Drury Lane committee and wrote the epilogue to Maturin's *Bertram*. Lamb's sister-in-law was Lady Caroline Lamb, discussed above, and his half-brother, Lord Melbourne, was chief secretary for Ireland from 1827 to 1828. The testimony gathered by the inquiry pays attention to Ireland and witnesses included professionals like Eugene McCarthy, former lessee of several Irish theatres, who cheerfully reported on the 'completely illegal' performances that took place in Fishamble Street, Dublin, and advocated 'the free trade principle' for drama; without regulation, he argued, 'everything of that kind would find its level'.[52]

The most significant Irish contribution to the legitimate drama came from Richard Lalor Sheil (1791–1851). It is possible to connect Sheil to a wider European impulse to reinvent the resources of tragic drama for a range of national cultures: writers from Germany, Italy, France, Poland and of course England all sought, as Jeffrey N. Cox puts it, 'to redefine the tragic and renew the stage'.[53] Following an early success in Dublin with *Adelaide; or The Emigrants* (1814), Sheil moved to London to pursue a career that involved politics and the law as well as the stage. His plays are built around powerful dramatic monologues that give expression to sexual jealousy, violence, black hatred, revenge, madness, intrigue and conspiracy. The surviving stage directions given (especially in the plays that followed *Adelaide*) suggest the extent to which Sheil made full use of the resources of the London stage: wing-and-backdrop scenery gives

depth and colour, characters move to the front of the stage to deliver powerful speeches and there is a strong overall sense of pictorial symmetry, as when twin pillars are placed at either side of the stage to frame the closing scenes of *Bellarima*. Like Maturin, Sheil was criticised for an excessive dramaturgical vigour and an undue violence of effect.

Sheil's work returns repeatedly to the subject of religious difference, thrown into the sharpest possible relief by plays that dramatise historic conflicts between Islam and Christianity in Moorish Spain (*The Apostate* (1817)) and North Africa (*Bellamira* (1818)). No distinct confessional line emerges, however. *Bellamira* does make lavish use of orientalist and anti-Muslim stereotypes, while *The Apostate*'s depiction of the Spanish Inquisition is quite as Gothic as anything Maturin might produce. In general, the plays do not seek to defend or celebrate any one oppressed group but are rather concerned to show that the experience of oppression will inevitably generate tragic consequences and sour the futures of those who wield power as well as those enslaved by it. For the barrister and defender of Catholic rights to produce these dramas of religious oppression must have raised eyebrows. In the preface to *The Apostate*, a play that voices the anguish of a deposed Moorish king who must convert to Christianity or lose the hand of his noble Spanish love, Sheil (writing in the third person) insists that his depiction of the Inquisition should not be read as mischievous: 'He mentions this to relieve himself from the imputation of having sought the illegitimate assistance of political allusion; and he hopes that, upon reflecting on the nature of the subject, the reader will consider the introduction of the Inquisition as unavoidable.'[54] With the founding of the Catholic Association in 1829, Sheil turned his attention increasingly to political journalism and popular agitation, eventually winning a seat in the reformed post-1829 parliament.

Sheil's (and Maturin's) plays were, as Jeffrey N. Cox has noted, performed in London at the very moment when it seemed as if 'the romantics might have captured the stage'.[55] Sheil himself refers to 'the bias of the Public towards the tragic drama in this country' and, up to as late as Gerald Griffin's verse tragedy *Gisippus* (not staged until 1842), Irish playwrights made a conscious bid to create a sensation within the genre of tragic drama. But, perhaps more significantly, Sheil and Maturin were also practitioners of a Romantic dramaturgy organised around spectacle and tableaux. Both influenced and were influenced by the ways in which illegitimate genres were infiltrating the respectable stage. These are plays that emerge out of classical tragedy but have their destination in nineteenth-century melodrama, the greatest exponent of which was the Irish playwright Dion Boucicault.

First staged in Drury Lane in 1816, Maturin's *Bertram* was the controversial 'hit of the season'.[56] Seeking fresh material as part of a concerted effort to reclaim the stage, the Drury Lane committee had written to Walter Scott soliciting a new drama. He sent them *Bertram*, a play for which Maturin had sought his assistance as early as 1814. The committee, which included Byron, responded enthusiastically to the play's poetic language and sensational plot, and committee member George Lamb set about making the play stageable. This involved a series of strategic cuts and replacements, including the near-elimination of a character known in the original version as the Dark Knight. Neither Scott nor Lamb would allow Maturin to bring this satanic figure before an audience, and he survives in the play only as an ominous off-stage threat. Much else in Maturin's play was judged by Lamb to be 'too much for an Audience',[57] and even the revised version did not fail to shock.

Bertram takes from illegitimate forms such as melodrama a sense of evil as ever present and beyond reform.[58] Its hero, the leader of a robber band who has led a failed rebellion against the husband of his lover, is a characteristically Romantic tragic figure, comparable to Joanna Baillie's De Montfort and Byron's Manfred. Undoubtedly representative of a rootless spirit of Romantic agony, Bertram is also shadowed by melancholy reflections of past commitment to his country and 'the sheeted relics of mine ancestry'. His robber band are rather vaguely realised, but these 'desperate followers' help him to launch his attack from a 'wild and wooded shore'[59] that lies across a narrow gulf from Sicily, site of Aldobrand's authority. These references, along with the strongly religious terms in which his transgressions are described (false idol, perjurer, apostate and fallen archangel), help give the play some of the flavour of Irish politics, and make the passionate Bertram legible in terms of such glamorous Irish insurgents as Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Robert Emmet, as well as evoking the military prowess and charismatic public persona of the duke of Wellington.

With *Bertram*, Maturin brought melodrama and Gothic spectacle – or, in Jane Moody's words, 'the moral cacophony of illegitimate culture' – onto the stage of Drury Lane.[60] Among the play's fiercest critics was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who launched a blistering attack on *Bertram* in a review that was later tacked onto the final section of his *Biographia Literaria*. In striving after effects that are all too literally realised on stage, Maturin endorsed a literary style that Coleridge elsewhere described as 'the material Sublime'.[61] Defined by him in opposition to the mental theatre of the great Romantic poetry where imagination can roam free, Coleridge employs this term to identify literary texts that fail to shed the cumbersome mechanics of affectivity. Irish poetry

of this period similarly retains a rawly material focus that is the subject of the next section.

Poetry

Readers in search of a cohesive account of the poetry of Irish Romanticism must negotiate a route between seemingly diverse texts, contexts and reputations. The 'remarkable exfoliation of verse forms'[62] associated with British Romantic poetry extends itself in the case of Ireland into a further splitting of literary and political layers, brought about by asymmetries of languages and cultures. This section presents a constellation of Irish poets working in this period and aims to reconceptualise their relationship both to Irish literary history and to each other.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw the publication of collected editions of the work of some of the radical poets of the 1790s: these include the Ulster weaver poets James Orr and Hugh Porter, influenced by the 'tutelary' figure of Robert Burns;[63] the fugitive verse of Thomas Dermody; and the political poetry of former United Irishman William Drennan (these late eighteenth-century writers are discussed in more detail in chapter 7). Echoes of the 1798 rebellion sound throughout the English-language poetry of Irish Romanticism (although its resonance in Gaelic poetry is still in dispute); its literary legacy passes through Moore and continues through to the writings of Thomas Davis and James Clarence Mangan. United Irishmen like Belfast Dissenter and physician William Drennan, as well as the younger radical Robert Emmet, wrote directly political poems. Drennan retired from medical practice and returned from Dublin to Belfast in 1807, and in 1814 helped establish the Belfast Academical Institution; his *Fugitive Pieces in Verse and Prose* were published in Belfast in 1815.

The Glasgow-born poet Thomas Campbell (1777–1844) had met some of the exiled United Irishmen in Hamburg in 1800 (and himself incurred government suspicion because of his association with them). He subsequently wrote a poem that first frames and then voices the feelings of an 'Exile of Erin'. Sometimes criticised for easy nostalgia and moody fatalism, the poem does sound a defiant, even martial note. Three of the stanzas, including the first and last, end by invoking the United Irish motto, 'Erin go Bragh!', or, 'Ireland for ever!' (used to similar effect in Sydney Owenson's 'The Irish Harp'). The final lines of the poem move from the 'sad recollection' of a 'bruised and cold' heart through to a sound that defies silence: 'And thy harp-striking bards sing aloud with devotion / Erin mavournin – Erin go bragh!'[64] Edward Bunting, arranger of Irish tunes, used

Campbell's poem as a last-minute replacement for the potentially incendiary songs collected by Patrick Lynch, a Belfast acquaintance of Bunting's who had been arrested on suspicion of sedition.[65] Other translators employed by Bunting for the second (1809) edition of his *Ancient Music* included Mary Balfour (1780–1819) and William Drennan.[66] The post-rebellion context did not favour directly political verse, although notable exceptions include satires by Moore and John Banim,[67] as well as Balfour's *Hope: A Poetical Essay*; *with various other Poems* (1810), which features recognisably political emblems and events. Balfour's collection features a number of poems adapted to traditional airs collected by Bunting ('Ellen a Roon', 'I am Asleep and Don't Waken Me', 'My Lodging is on the Cold Ground'), although no musical notation is given. Eliza Ryan's 'In the Time of the Rebellion in Ireland', 'At the Time of the Irish Rebellion' and 'On Saunder's Grove at the Time of the Rebellion' appeared in her collected *Poems on Several Occasions* (1816); here, the 1798 rebellion takes its place alongside an array of occasional verse concerning marriage, fashion, morality and popular science.

Even more difficult to establish is the part played by 1798 (and radical politics in general) in the poetry of Thomas Moore. Son of a middle-class Catholic grocer and born in Dublin, Moore had been an undergraduate at Trinity College when the rising took place. He moved thereafter to distance himself from radicals like his friend Emmet. The influence of these early connections remained, however, in particular Moore's exposure to Edward Bunting's *General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1796). Moore's orientalist poem *Lallah Rookh* (1817) presents characteristic difficulties of interpretation: details borrowed from the failed Irish rebellions of 1798 and 1803 are presented against a backdrop of sexual tyranny and eastern luxury, in language calculated to heighten the poem's exotic impact. Like Owenson's *The Missionary, Lallah Rookh* is at once deeply involved with Irish debates and fully immersed in the erotics of the British imperialist imagination. The difficulty of establishing any single reading of the poem's politics is only heightened by its popular success: written at the height of Moore's career in London, the poem garnered him an astonishing £3,000 from Longmans and went into numerous editions.

It is with Moore's *Irish Melodies* that questions of popular appeal, literary style and political meaning become most urgent. Remembered chiefly for their aestheticising of despair, the *Melodies*, published between 1808 and 1834, called up memories of Ireland's past only to banish all hope of future glory. Yet, as Matthew Campbell has argued, the *Melodies*' characteristic 'air of defeat' and 'tone of enervation' may also be read as generating symbols and sound effects that resonate through English-language poetry up to Yeats. Campbell's

reading of the *Melodies* establishes that, although often associated with a kind of bland poise, movement does occur in the poems, principally experienced at the level of sound and rhythm.[68]

Moore's *Irish Melodies* recast the Romantic myth of inexpressibility to political ends. This is most powerfully the case in his poem 'Oh! Breathe not his name', which (silently, namelessly) invokes the memory of recently executed rebel leader Robert Emmet. Emmet's Dublin-centred rebellion of 1803 had been limited, short-lived and disastrous, but Moore's poem suggests a more profound meaning for Emmet's legacy even as it enjoins silence on its inheritors. The dates, names and events associated with the rebellions of 1798 and 1803 are often, for the *Melodies*, where readers can trace specific details of Irish history. 'Oh! Breathe not his name' creates a network of watery images (dew, tears, dampness) to create a kind of swell that surges through the poem: 'And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls, / Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.' The dynamic present in the Emmet poem, in which the vital living past washes over and begins to seep through the frozen surface of the present, is most vividly present in the first number of Moore's *Melodies* but occurs across the series, combining with repeated sonic patterns and image sequences to give the poems their distinctive atmosphere.

New on the ear as such sounds were, their wide popularity and easy recognition factor made the *Melodies* easy prey for parody. Less easily assimilable, both in their own day and now, are Moore's verse satires. Collected, arranged and edited for the first time in 2003, it is now possible to see the development of Moore's stinging wit across a range of satiric forms and styles. Composed throughout his writing life, the satires show evidence of a sustained engagement with the day-to-day politics and scandal of Regency England and Ireland. An abrasive Juvenalian satire written in heroic couplets, *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) attacks both the Glorious Revolution itself and competing Tory and Whig claims to its legacy. The passing of the Act of Union is a specific target, and Mary Helen Thuente suggests that the poems resonate with sounds and images remembered from United Irish popular songs.[69] The greatest number of Moore's satires, however, are written in loose anapaests and correspond to gentler Horatian models: these include several squibs attacking the Prince Regent as well as his *Intercepted Letters: Or, The Two Penny Post-Bag* (1813), a witty and inventive attack on the Regent's social circle. Moore's ability to infuse verse satire with a strong narrative thread is best seen in his *Fudge Family in Paris* (1818). Organised around a linked set of characters (an Irish family), each of whom recounts her/his travels in her/his own characteristic metre, *The Fudge Family* is a *tour de force* of 'combative liberal politics'[70] and mocks Irish

patriotism alongside French food and fashions, political place-seeking and fantasies of romantic love. Moore's decision to pillory the 'groups of ridiculous English people who were at that time swarming in all directions through Paris'[71] in the shape of Phil, Biddy and Bob Fudge (as well as their firebrand tutor, Phelim Connor) is, however, a curious one, and helps us to think about the persistence of Irish themes in even the most English of his writing.

Moore had a bitter political and literary enemy in the Cork-born writer William Maginn (1794–1842): hostile to Moore's luxuriant verse and to Lady Morgan's Romantic nationalism (always connected with the Whiggism of both), Maginn was a vocal spokesperson for the crusty circle that gathered around *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The talented son of a Cork schoolmaster, Maginn began writing for *Blackwood's* from Cork (a place, remarks Mrs Oliphant, William Blackwood's daughter-in-law and memoirist, 'more associated with pigs and salted provisions than with literature'[72]), and finally moved to Edinburgh in 1823. Oliphant wonders at how he 'took up the tone, and even the local colour' of Edinburgh before even visiting there; one answer may be found in the connection (suggested by Terry Eagleton) between Maginn's beleaguered Cork Protestantism and the reactionary Toryism of the 1820s.[73] A further reason may lie in the magazine's embrace of 'the nationalist discourses of the post-Enlightenment', including antiquarianism and vernacular poetry.[74] Maginn remained deeply sceptical of the forms of literary Irishness practised by Moore and Morgan, but it is important to note that the *Blackwood's* context offered an alternative form of cultural nationalism – one better fitted for his own politics – rather than a rejection of its tenets. In a letter Maginn tries to explain to William Blackwood the particular antipathy to Catholic emancipation experienced in his native Cork: 'If you were in Ireland you would not wonder at our hostility. I never knew a traveller from the sister island, even were he bitten by the "Edinburgh Review" . . . who did not leave Ireland with the same feeling.'[75] Maginn's criticisms of Moore similarly upbraid him for a lack of local knowledge, accusing him of only paying lip-service to 'our localities' and refuting his 'absurd' and 'unIrish' *Melodies* in ringing Munster metaphors.[76] This 'crystallised Paddy' (in Mrs Oliphant's terms) quickly became the star of the *Blackwood's* scene, favourite spokesperson for its Tory politics and dislike of literary innovation.[77]

Maginn's own writings, however, roamed across a precocious range of genres and voices. 'Some Account of the Life and Writings of Ensign and Adjutant Odoherty, late of the 99th regiment' was first published in the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of February 1818 and became a regular feature of the journal. In these admiring memoirs of a sometime poet, militiaman and soldier, Odoherty

presents himself in a drunken overblown style that consistently undercuts his many claims to virtue and excellence. Maginn offers such specimens of Odoherty's verse as 'Odoherty's Garland in honour of Mrs Cook, *The Great*' and 'The Eve of St Jerry',[78] in which he stretches the resources of vocabulary and grammar to ludicrous effect. Maginn's poetry brilliantly mocks Romantic literary values (the fragment, the cult of the imagination, the elevation of subjective genius). The high disdain for literary originality, the combination of prose and poetry, the use of Arabic languages and typography, and the inebriated and eccentric range of voices deployed all prefigure the work of James Clarence Mangan. Maginn, however, left nothing as serious or politically committed as Mangan's lyrics or ringing refrains, and his cranky Cork genius soon faded from the vision of a literary establishment that became more sternly nationalist in outlook as the century progressed.

Maginn promoted the work of a fellow Cork poet, Jeremiah Joseph Callanan (1795–1829). He published Callanan's translations in the pages of *Blackwood's*, perhaps in the hope of attaching his talents to the magazine's brand of Counter Enlightenment cultural nationalism. A Catholic, Callanan had attended Maynooth Seminary in County Kildare but left after two years. He went from there to Trinity College, Dublin and then on to a short period of military service. In Cork, Callanan worked as an assistant in Maginn's father's school, only finally to die in Portugal, having travelled there as a tutor to a merchant family.

Callanan spent a period travelling around Cork and Kerry, collecting stories and songs. Remembered now chiefly for his translations of the poems he encountered, it is worth noting Callanan's quasi-anthropological relationship to his material and the extent to which, as Robert Welch reminds us, he turned his eyes to London even as he roamed the roads of west Cork.[79] Callanan's significant formal achievements are discussed by Matthew Campbell in chapter 12, but it is worth noting here how the poetry speaks from a place located somewhere between English and Gaelic cultures: the overall result is an aesthetic that moves between intimacy and distance, and calls to mind the 'migratory impulse' of the national tale.[80]

Callanan may also have written a lost manuscript novel, based on a legendary tale concerning Lough Ine (near Skibereen); he also published in the Cork-based *Bolster's Magazine* under the editorship of the antiquarian John Windele. His original poetry inhabits a characteristic rhythm: a soaring moment of hope builds up only to fall away ('But oh!') in an atmosphere of delicious agony. The influence of Moore is strong, but the poems are also reminiscent of Mary Tighe (1772–1810) (discussed below). Robert Welch has criticised Moore for

producing only 'generalised moods' and being unable to delineate 'states of feeling' in his verse; in this respect, Callanan and Tighe succeed where Moore fails.[81] Their writing shares a strong desire to co-ordinate private and public meanings in the poet's search for authentic subjectivity. Like Tighe, Callanan's strongest work aestheticised solitude, as in his 'Recluse of Inchidoney', which echoes Byron's 'Childe Harold'. Like Tighe also, he is ambitious with form and metre: both court a sense of poetic purpose, only then to banish it (and with it their own selves) elaborately in verse.

Where the two poets differ is perhaps just as significant: a poet of place also, seeking to give expression to the dilemmas of a self only insecurely located in a landscape, Tighe appears to share none of Callanan's interest in the culture, peoples or languages of the Ireland she evokes. This difference has meant that she is largely omitted from surveys of nineteenth-century Irish poetry. Tighe's work is, however, coming back into view in studies of women's Romantic writing and may yet benefit from new trends in Irish feminist criticism. Like John Keats, who admired her verse passionately,[82] Tighe died young and of consumption. Born in County Wicklow to a liberal gentry family, she lived a short and unhappy life. Like the heroine of her manuscript novel *Serena*, Tighe married a cousin to cement family connections. Her miserable life was in part a consequence of the Act of Union: her husband (Henry Tighe) was one of those Irish men for whom the Act had immediate professional consequences. The indulged younger son of a proudly anti-Union family, he lost his parliamentary seat with the Union and moved with his new wife to London to study law. The move was experienced as dislocation for the poet. Charles Kendal Bushe, who owned a copy of Tighe's most famous poem, *Psyche*,[83] tried to describe the effect the Union had on his own mental health: 'Ever since', he wrote to his wife, 'my mind has been agitated in the way I have described to you. I am seven years older and my nerves twenty years older than at the period of the Union.'[84] In Mary Tighe's poetry of inner turmoil we may read an oblique commentary on the psychic as well as professional and political consequences of Union. The prevalence of poems and popular songs about maniac figures in this period should also be noted: as well as the ballad 'Mary le More' (sometimes known as 'The Maniac', or 'The Irish Maniac' and described by Siobhán Kilfeather as a 'debased *aisling*'), James Orr, James Stuart and Amelia Bristow all wrote poems that imagine fugitive (usually female) figures driven mad by the experience of political turmoil.[85]

In the few years before her final illness, Tighe moved among the burgeoning Irish social scene in post-Union London. Henry Luttrell (1768–1851) belonged to the same circles, and wrote poetry satirising social norms and fashionable

life. Tighe knew Owenson and Moore (the leaders, with Lady Blessington, of the literary absentees), as well as Arthur Wellesley (later duke of Wellington), Lady Charlemont, Lady Argyll and William Parnell. Tighe's Methodist mother worried about her son-in-law's fondness for 'amusement' and 'water-drinking places',[86] but was no more approving of her daughter's literary ambitions. That Tighe's own religious convictions troubled her literary ones is borne out by a hint from her brother-in-law and literary executor, William Tighe,[87] and helps explain the distrust of her own medium that permeates the poetry:

> Vain dreams, and fictions of distress and love,
> I idly feigned, but, while I fondly strove
> To paint with every grace the tale of woe,
> Ah fool! my tears unbid began to flow.[88]

Worrying over the status of the 'real sorrow' produced by fictitious arts, Tighe prays to be allowed repose 'in the arms of truth'.[89]

Psyche was first published in 1805, in a limited edition of only fifty copies. A long narrative poem in Spenserian stanzas, it tells the story of Cupid's forbidden love for Psyche, stolen from her parents' home and confined in the Palace of Love. Tighe adopts what Marlon B. Ross calls a 'muted, arch-conventional style'[90] that nonetheless draws attention to its considerable formal achievements. These include skilled versification and a frank eroticism unusual in women's writing of the period. Keats came to think of Tighe's verse as all too agonisingly transparent or understandable. Her refusal of the mists of allegory and her decision to 'let my meaning be perfectly obvious' is better understood in relation to the thrust towards public meaning found in her male Irish contemporaries; instead Tighe privileges the 'raw nerves and emotional excess'[91] associated with the Romantic revival of the sonnet from the 1790s. The titles of her poems characteristically offer details of time and place but privatise and interiorise the moment of reflection. The majority of her sonnets join subjective experience to natural landscape but fail to achieve a restoration of completeness. 'Lines Written at Scarborough, August, 1799' closes with a characteristic note of unrelieved bleakness: 'I, like the worn sand, exposed remain / To each new storm which frets the angry main'.

Tighe died in 1810, and a year later her brother-in-law William Tighe republished *Psyche* with Longmans. The profits went to a charity residence for 'unprotected Female Servants' founded by her Methodist mother. The Welsh-born poet Felicia Hemans, living in Dublin in the 1830s, composed her 'Grave of a Poetess' on seeing Tighe's grave at Inistioge, County Kilkenny, and thus

set in motion a vital chain of connection for female poets of the nineteenth century: Laetitia Elizabeth Landon and Elizabeth Barrett Browning continue the theme of graveside meditations on the life and writings of gifted women. Tighe was thus claimed in the Victorian period for an embryonic tradition of women's poetry, only to be forgotten once more when the fashion for lyrical 'poetesses' passed.

Like Tighe, Mary Shackleton Leadbeater (1758–1826) republished in a commercial edition of 1808 poems that she had written for private circulation. Leadbeater was born into the Quaker community of Ballitore in County Kildare. Her father ran the local school, founded by her grandfather who had counted Edmund Burke among his pupils. She married William Leadbeater in 1791 and throughout her life kept a daily record of the village world she inhabited. The journals were edited and published with a memoir of her family as *The Annals of Ballitore* in 1862. They vividly depict a small town shadowed by events such as the 1798 rebellion and the passing of the Act of Union; the journal records the particular difficulties of maintaining Quaker values in the face of the rebellion and its violent repression.[92] The consequences of rebellion for civil society are expressed in a range of poems written in the immediate context of rebellion, all marked by outrage at the military and especially the yeomanry: 'Yet listen to mercy; – the guilty are fled: / Oh let not the guiltless fall victims to rage!'[93] A similar anxiety about violence and its consequences informs her translation of Maffeo Vegio's continuation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, also published as part of her *Poems*.

Leadbeater's evocation of her locality is vivid and detailed, but the poems do not yield the kind of rich and intimate engagement with place that is usually associated with Romantic aesthetics. It is, however, possible to trace in Irish literature across the long eighteenth century the halting emergence of a loco-descriptive tradition that flows from the grudging 'topophobia'[94] of Jonathan Swift and gives rise to a steady trickle of imaginative writing about place in the period of Romanticism. Poems by Mary Tighe, William Tighe, Patrick O'Kelly, James Orr and Ulster writer James Stuart (1764–1840) all testify to an emergent aesthetics of place in Irish writing of this period. William Tighe's 'Lines Addressed to the River at Rosanna, in the County of Wicklow', a poem finely attuned to the way in which place forms the ground of subjectivity, represents one (slender) strand of this loco-descriptive tradition in Irish writing of this period. Echoing Mary Tighe's 'Written at Rosanna, November 18, 1799' and written in a visionary present tense, the poem pursues a line of memory along a familiar local river, transporting the poet back to his childhood and evoking thoughts of death and oblivion. Redemption eludes his 'soul depress'd'

and the poem ends by evoking a precarious present existence poised at the threshold of darkness.[95]

Patrick O'Kelly's (1754–*c*.1835) poem about Killarney, County Kerry, represents the dominant thread in Irish topographical poetry, being chiefly concerned with place in relation to a national rather than a personal past (he describes his own travels as 'ethicographical' rather than topographical).[96] O'Kelly addresses the famous beauty spot with a conscious awareness both of its eighteenth-century reputation as tourist attraction and of the precedents set by the landscape poetry of William Cowper and James Thomson.[97] Written in rhyming couplets, his epic poem about Killarney tries to comprehend not only the place itself but the layers of history and myth that lie under its surface. The poem ends with an acknowledgement of the difficulty of such comprehensiveness, as well as a reminder of O'Kelly's claim to be considered the last of the bards: 'Sweet scenes adieu! – oh! takes your Bard's farewell, / A Bard who wishes all your scenes to tell.'[98]

A similar refusal of the 'pleasing evocative associations' of place in favour of 'an historical moral imagination' is found in Drennan's long poem 'Glendalloch'.[99] The poem creates a kind of Celtic mist of magical enchantment, borne along by incantatory rhyming couplets with few stanza breaks. The valley described in the poem serves as a metonymy for Ireland itself, surrounded by awe-inspiring dense darkness on all sides. A roll-call of history generates sublime sensations that darken and draw closer as the poem nears the present moment. Bearing the date 1802 at its head, the poem is accompanied by a stern note that explicitly attaches the significance of the ancient round tower at Glendalough, County Wicklow to the period of Union: 'Amidst a silent and melancholy waste, it still raises its head above the surrounding fragments, as if moralizing on the ruins of our country, and the wreck of legislative independence.'[100]

Conclusion

Silent, melancholy, ruin, fragments, wreck: Drennan's depiction of the ancient monument is fluent in the 'decline-speak' we now associate with Irish Romanticism. Such language derives from the early political experiences of the period (post-1798 devastation, the broken promises and forced measure of the Union, Emmet's failed rebellion, famine and agrarian disturbances), yet survives as a literary and cultural resource into more prosperous and promising times. Daniel O'Connell, who admired Owenson, Moore, Griffin and the Banims, began the exploitation of 'Romantic Ireland': his Catholic Association and later

the repeal movement drew on images made familiar by the writings discussed in this chapter (round towers, harps, picturesque peasants). In the process O'Connell earned the suspicion and dislike of many of the early writers discussed here: Edgeworth, Owenson and Moore all expressed doubts as to his politics and methods, and resented his success.

This chapter thus ends on a note of contest, made intense by the broadening of the literary as well as the political franchise. By 1830, a tumult of Irish voices struggle to make themselves heard within print culture. Literary conflicts assumed a distinctly confessional dimension. 'I confess I should have see[n] the old Lady of Babylon's mouth stopd with pleasure', wrote Walter Scott in his journal in 1829, 'but now you have taken the plaister off her mouth and given her free respiration I cannot see the sense of keeping up the irritation about their right to sit in parliament.'[101] Scott's sense of a vocal if gasping Catholic body finds an echo in Owenson's view, also expressed in 1829, that '[a]mong the multitudinous effects of catholic emancipation, I do not hesitate to predict a change in the character of Irish authorship'.[102] At the same moment, however, the choice of cultural script can be seen to become narrowed and constricted. The complexities of Irish Romanticism, with its busy traffic back and forth between modes of historical feeling, were thus honed down, sharpened and split across a more specialised range of voices and genres.

Notes

1. Mary Leadbeater, 'The Summer Morning's Destruction', *Poems by Mary Leadbeater* (Dublin, 1808), p. 287.
2. See M. F. Pollard, *Dublin's Trade in Books, 1550–1800* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1989).
3. Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 209.
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