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IMAGINING IRISHNESS: EVOLVING REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY GENRE FICTION

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IMAGINING IRISHNESS: EVOLVING REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY GENRE FICTION

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Abstract

Though it has garnered some attention from recent scholars, the field of nineteenth-century Irish literary studies remains neglected. It seems to occupy a rather nebulous space, too "foreign" to be exactly Victorian and too early to be exactly "modern." For Victorianists, the mid- to late-nineteenth century—the heyday of the triple-decker novel—was a time ruled by such writers as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and the Brontë sisters. The English novel proved the measuring stick for most literatures produced within the British Empire, and numerous Irish studies scholars do not see Ireland's literary output as quite measuring up until the appearance of the Modernist texts of the twentieth century. My dissertation moves the conversation beyond the commonplace scholarly lament of the lack of an Irish *Middlemarch* toward a consideration of Anglo-Irish and Irish genre fiction—Big House fiction, Gothic fiction, the national tale, and folk and fairy tales—as a vital precursor to the national literature that would become the cornerstone of the Celtic Revival. I analyze how writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, and W. B. Yeats manipulated these existing generic forms to construct new national narratives while representing historical and cultural change. Furthermore, my project establishes clear points of connection between the fields of Victorian and Irish studies by examining how "Irishness," which is inextricably linked to rhetorics of nationalism and colonialism, is imagined, employed, and transformed in this era.

Chapter One

This Ireland, Right Now: Imagining Irishness in the Nineteenth-Century

(1) Exorcizing the Specter of Instability, or Abandoning the Search for the Irish

Middlemarch

In the second act of Brian Friel's 1980 play, *Translations*, Hugh, an aging scholar in charge of a rural hedge school, self-consciously extolls the many unique qualities of the Irish language in order to indulge the romantic fancies of Yolland, an English soldier deployed to Ireland during the Ordnance Survey of the 1830s.[1] For Yolland, the Irish community of Baile Beag/Ballybeg, in which he has landed somewhat by mistake, is a kind of Shangri-La, a mystical Celtic otherworld that is utterly enthralling yet also one that proves problematically "hermetic" to outsiders. Hugh half-heartedly encourages Yolland, noting that he may one day learn to "decode" his Irish neighbors, and that the language Yolland so badly wants to learn, the language Yolland believes will grant him access to a hidden culture, is a fluid entity whose value can (and does) shift as time progresses and cultures change. Hugh encourages Yolland to "remember that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen—to use an image you'll understand—it can happen that a civilization can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of…fact"

[1] Friel's character, whose first name is George, shares a name with William Yolland, an actual English soldier active during the Ordnance Survey. The soldiers' job was to survey the land for purposes of taxation, making a map of every county. Perhaps more importantly for Friel's play, the soldiers were also tasked with creating a uniform, English map, which meant changing the names of Irish places into English translations, or, in some cases, changing the original names completely.

(284). Hugh's commentary betrays a psychic awareness of a changing political landscape and of the necessity of new modes of negotiating national identity, helped along by the occupation by English forces connected to the Ordnance Survey, his students' cautious curiosity about the English language, and Friel's own advantageous hindsight informing his portrait of nineteenth-century, pre-Famine Donegal. The core conflict of *Translations* is language: who has the authority to determine the value of a language, who has the power to name and assign worth to people and places, to what extent a language serves as a signifier of national identity, what happens when the sovereignty of language is challenged, and so forth. That Ireland is "imprisoned in a linguistic contour" that operates outside of, or in opposition to, "fact," is a sentiment that brandishes a keen double edge within the play. The idea of the Irish language, and hence Irish culture, as occupying the dual role of both asset and liability grounds the other matters addressed in *Translations*, namely the replacement of the hedge school with the National School, the rotting of the wheat and potato crops, and the love story between the monoglot Yolland and the local Maire, who can speak Irish, Latin, and Greek, but who knows no English save for a sentence taught to her by her aunt. Each event heralds the inevitable collision between Ireland's culturo-political past and present.

While he was writing *Translations*, Friel wrote in his notes that "[t]he play has to do with language, and only with language," but concluded that "it is a political play—how can that be avoided?" (Morash 551). Even for himself, Friel could not separate depiction of Ireland from political expectation. From its time as a brand new play premiering in Derry to its present status as one of the most often revived plays at

the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, *Translations* has confronted modern audiences with an issue central not only to the artistic-political landscape of nineteenth-century Ireland, but to contemporary ways of imagining and talking about the era: competing constructions of Irishness. The complications of evaluating Irish national and cultural identity, especially in terms of literary representation, continue to gnaw at contemporary critics and writers alike. More specifically, the study of nineteenth-century Irish literature remains a bit of a sticky wicket.

Though it has garnered moderate attention from recent scholars, the field of nineteenth-century Irish literary studies remains neglected. It seems to occupy a rather nebulous space, too "foreign" to be exactly Victorian and too early to be exactly "modern." For Victorianists, the mid-to late nineteenth century stands as a major high point for fiction—the heyday of the triple-decker novel—as a time ruled by such writers as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and the Brontë sisters. Novels such as *Great Expectations*, *Jude the Obscure*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Middlemarch* proved the measuring stick for most literatures produced within the British Empire, the pinnacle of English imagination. The rise of the realist novel, in particular, has informed much of the contemporary scholarship in the field, and has in some sectors come to represent simply "the novel" or, in some rare cases, "fiction." The privileging of the realist novel as British literary tradition *par excellence* in nineteenth-century literary studies has done much to affect the way critics consider Irish fiction of the era. The scarcity of realist fiction, and the purported absence of a novel that might be considered as exemplary of an "Irish literary tradition," has contributed to a discourse of marginalization.

The quest for an Irish *Middlemarch*, famously articulated (yet by no means initiated) by Terry Eagleton over fifteen years ago, has become a constant consideration for critics ever since.[2] In Irish Studies, too, the nineteenth century has only in recent years gained more sustained exploration, the search for a representative Irish novel having established the trend of prioritizing the twentieth century and a preference for Revivalist or Modernist texts. These trends have, undoubtedly, led to the devaluation of other types of "popular" fictions, which were widely read in Ireland throughout the century and immensely lucrative, yet do not, it is argued, exactly fit alongside their English counterparts. Genres such as the Gothic novel, the Big House novel, the National Tale, the Famine novel, or the Fenian novel, which often relied on, among other things, exoticism, hyperbole, and easy sentiment, were by the end of the century exchanged for newer texts that more closely fit the mission of the Gaelic and Literary Revival and that even now do not, for the most part, enjoy "canonical" status. As David Lloyd remarks, as much as scholars debate the narrative intricacies and cultural merit of sentimental and other genre fiction, "the suspicion remains that we want an Irish *Middlemarch*, not an Irish *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and that this realist desire continues to organize critical reflection" (Lloyd 233). But why?

Numerous critics have tried to pinpoint possible catalysts for the exclusion of nineteenth-century fiction from wider discourse in Irish literary studies. One of the

[2] Eagleton discusses the lack of an Irish *Middlemarch* in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (1996). While he was the first to use the term, he is by no means the first critic to privilege realism, a move that goes back to the early Revivalists. This group sought to distinguish themselves in stark contrast to what was becoming a dominant English realist tradition, leading to an organized and deliberate move to recover Irish histories, folktales, songs, and so forth. These "artifacts" were to be the answer to high realism until the modern novelists came along.

most notable explorations into this issue is John Wilson Foster's *Irish Novels 1890-1940: New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (2008), which looks to the politics of the Revival and the establishment of a new literary canon. For Foster, the cultural nationalist agenda of the early Revivalists, and the exclusionary intellectual atmosphere it nurtured, led to the marginalization of scores of texts that were not deemed conducive to a new Irish national literature and literary tradition. This rule applied not only to early twentieth-century texts, but retroactively excluded numerous mid- and late nineteenth-century ones. Foster pinpoints several possible offenses that warrant banishment from the new nationalist project, including violating the "residency requirement" by living and writing outside of Ireland, writing in the form of the Anglo-Irish novel or for primarily English audiences, or writing anything that could be seen as a low-brow extension of popular English fiction (Foster 1).[3] Additionally, he, like numerous other scholars, cites Douglas Hyde's famous 1892 speech, "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland," as a driving force behind the movement's assessment of various types of Irish fiction.

Hyde, a champion of the Irish language and Gaelic sports, an all-around cultural nationalist, and the future first President of Ireland, held remarkable sway. In the speech, which was given to the Irish Literary Society, Hyde hammers home a strongly separatist brand of nationalism, remarking that the "failure of the Irish people in recent times has been largely brought about by the race diverging from the right path, and

[3] Foster notes that the "Residency Requirement" was put into action by Yeats when he convinced Synge, who was living and writing in Paris, to come back to Ireland and continue to write there. This, he argues, affected many young and creative writers, many of whom were women and writers of popular fiction, who either lived in England, or traveled back and forth between England and Ireland, including Charlotte Riddell, Rosa Mulholland, W. M. Letts, and Katherine Cecil Thurston (35).

ceasing to be Irish without becoming English" (119). For Hyde, this "anglicisation" of Ireland was brought about largely due to the rejection of Gaelic language and literature and the embracing of English-language "popular" literature. As to the decay of the Irish language, Hyde places great blame with the Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, who saw the English language as more beneficial than Irish in terms of national matters like participation in Parliament, trade relations, and so forth. Hyde argues that "the ancient Gaelic civilization died with O'Connell, largely, I am afraid, owing to his example and his neglect of inculcating the necessity of keeping alive racial customs, language, and traditions," which proved politically influential for most of the nineteenth century (130-31). Such an argument does not bode well for the hundreds of fictional texts, many of which were immensely popular works of genre fiction written in English, that were produced from the 1830s onward to the end of the century.

One must wonder at the necessity to erase such English-language texts, which had been such a mainstay of Irish public life and served as important markers in the development of Irish literature. Were they not "Irish enough"?[4] With exactly what traditions had they lost touch? For Hyde, popular fiction was a dangerous kind of "West-Britonism," encroaching on what he saw as the core of the cultural nationalist movement—Irish exceptionalism. The desire to preserve an essential Celtic consciousness along "racial lines" led Hyde to denounce what he called "penny

[4] Hyde chastises novelist William Carleton, whose work I discuss in chapter four, for changing his "Milesian" name from "that of O'Cairellan, who was ancient chief of Clandermot" (143). Carleton, whose *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* made him a favorite of Yeats and who enjoyed great celebrity throughout the middle of the century, had fallen into relative obscurity by the 1890s.

dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and…the garbage of vulgar English weeklies," and to mandate that every home "should have a copy of Moore and Davis" (159-60).[5]

This recommendation had been anticipated by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, in "What Irishmen May Do For Irish Literature," a speech also delivered to the Irish Literary Society in July of 1892, five months prior to Hyde's momentous address.[6] Duffy was slightly more conservative in his call to action. He explains the current rejection of the texts of writers such as William Carleton, Sidney Owenson, and Maria Edgeworth in favor of popular literature as an artistic consequence of the Famine, which "paralysed" Irish literary output during a time that was "intellectually and singularly a fruitful one" (3). While Duffy acknowledges that a small number of writers have successfully taken up the task left to them—to continue in the footsteps of their literary predecessors and help to reign in young Irish minds by exposing them to ancient Irish legend and poetry—he bemoans the popular fictions (he gives the examples of detective stories, sensation fiction, and translations of "vile" French texts) as the agents of debasement and depravity (4). The Famine had been a huge blow to the nation, not just in terms of the physical and economic tolls, but in terms of the development of a growing national consciousness as well. For Duffy, this development was at an impasse. The only way to combat this "garbage of literature" was to have it "driven out by books more attractive," books that would improve upon the Irish mind and strengthen the Celtic spirit, making the country's men "wiser, manlier, more honest, and

[5] Here, Hyde refers to poets Thomas Moore, best known for his Irish Melodies, and Thomas Davis, primary poet of the Young Ireland movement.
[6] Duffy's speech drew a large crowd, including Maud Gonne, Edmund Downey, D. J. O'Donoghue, T. W. Rolleston, and others (endnote from "What Irishmen May Do For Irish Literature," published by the Irish Literary Society, National Library of Ireland).

what is less than any of these, more prosperous" (4-6). For Duffy, good readers made good patriots—if they were reading the right things.[7]

Considering the audience and authority of Hyde and Duffy, coupled with the influence of Yeats, it seems logical for critics like Foster to look to the Revival for answers regarding the marginalization of nineteenth-century Irish fiction, and of genre fiction in particular. Nonetheless, other critics argue that it might be a bit too tidy to designate these fictions as collateral damage of the Revival. For instance, Derek Hand dismisses the notion underlying Foster's argument, that Irish nationalism and the Revival were complementary, unified movements, as "palpable nonsense" and argues that movements toward nationalism were varied, diverse, and competitive (116-7). Indeed, one need only look to the vast difference between, say, the Fenian movement and the cultural nationalism of the Revivalists to see that this is clearly the case. Still, in terms of the privileging of certain types of texts, and the derision of others in the name of "literary nationalism," we cannot underestimate the power of the Revival, which included politicians, writers, propagandists, publishers, and journalists. To be sure, vast progress was made in the way of the recovery and preservation of Irish texts, the recovery of the Irish language, and the establishment of Irish literature as a viable artistic and political agent, but the quest to produce a "national literature" that drove the

[7] As I discuss at length later in the project, Duffy had a vested interest in such arguments. Through his own publishing company, he maintained a substantial catalog of Irish books, many of them reprints of histories, antiquarian works, and sometimes national tales, and made additional efforts to combat the influx of "garbage" literature through the failed Irish Publishing Company, a joint venture with Edmund Downey and T. W. Rolleston. While Duffy and his nationalist publishing ventures were revered due to his long attachment to the Young Ireland movement, he was seen by the young Yeats and other Revivalists as being old fashioned.

literary Revivalists, while doing much to pull Irish literature from the colonial shadow of Britain, also did much to malign the texts that came before.

Revivalists aside, though, it makes sense to look at the concrete realities of the nineteenth-century literary market and the expectations of the growing popular readership. The complaints of Hyde and Duffy echo a very real condition of the literary market: "popular" literature was, in fact, popular. Following the 1800 Act of Union and the implementation of British copyright laws within Ireland, the business of Irish publishing was considerably impeded, and in exchange facilitated an immense inward flux of British popular fiction. Genre fiction such as Gothic novels, many of which were published by London's Minerva Press, were incredibly popular in England, and that popularity spread to Irish shores; a number of Irish writers, including Sidney Owenson and Regina Maria Roche, had works published by the Minerva Press, and from the 1840s through the end of the century, Dublin's James Duffy published many works of Irish genre fiction (Kilfeather 79).[8] Also worthy of note is that the best-selling, most widely read novel in Ireland from its time of publication through the end of the century was Fenian leader Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1873), a tale that served up Tipperary violence and national concerns with a heaping side of Dickensian sentimentality.[9]

[8] Kilfeather marks the preference for Gothic texts at the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as a result of a waning interest in political matters and a growing fascination with sexuality and subconscious desires. "The mixture of sex and power, dreams and history, costume drama and terror," Kilfeather writes, "fired the imagination of writers and readers and the popularity of Gothic fiction became one of the most striking publishing phenomena of the late eighteenth century" (79).

[9] I discuss *Knocknagow* at length in chapter four.

This text, which still remains underexplored, capitalizes on the growing nationalist fervor that was sweeping through the mid-to late nineteenth century, which led Kickham to revisit the post-1798 trauma that, for many Irish people, was still very much a part of their lives. For example, a Knocknagow resident, Mrs. Donovan, retells the story of her brother's brutal murder during the aftermath of the 1798 United Irishmen uprising. After he was shot inside his home, upon suspicion of taking part in the uprising, British troops dragged his body outside and dismembered it in front of his family and neighbors, decapitating the 17-year old boy and kicking his head "like a football" (376). In a more nostalgic turn, Kickham depicts the human toll of the common practice of leveling Irish homes and clearing once populated land for British livestock. Young Jemmy Hogan, complete with wooden leg, tries to alleviate his immense grief by rolling a gigantic boulder to the place where his family home once stood, to somehow acknowledge that he and his family had existed. He sits among the sheep that now occupy the area, reliving nights spent with his mother in front of a blazing fireplace (623).[10] Such examples, combined with the character of Norah Lahy, who takes all the best parts of Little Nell and Tiny Tim and gives them an Irish lilt, more than satisfied public demand for popular fiction.[11]

In studying the demands of growing readerships in Britain and Ireland, which were not only economically diverse but were also varied in terms of gender and age, we

[10] As Jemmy and his family are being evicted from their home in order to make room for the sheep, he struggles against the bailiffs, resulting in an injury that leads to the necessity of a wooden leg. Much like Dickens, Kickham's use of sentimentality is, more often than not, a political device.

[11] As I discuss in later chapters, these Irish texts were not devoid of realism, especially in the case of George Moore, but were classified as genre fiction and relied on a mix of generic literary conventions.

must also consider the other necessary components in the production of fiction: the writer and the publisher. For Irish writers who lived and wrote in England, many of whom were women, producing and selling as many novels as possible was a top priority. Doing so meant giving the market what it wanted, which was popular fiction. This desire was not just a matter of taste, but one of economics and access. From the 1830s onward, a three-volume novel was costly to purchase, so the majority of consumers borrowed them from the new circulating libraries such as the "Select Library" founded by Charles Edward Mudie (Eliot 39). Circulating libraries did much to expand public access to literature of the day, but were very selective in terms of content, often censoring genre fiction or excluding it altogether. On the other hand, many works of genre fiction were relatively affordable. The low cost of printing and paper, in addition to the growing prevalence of marketing venues like railway bookstalls, encouraged the reprinting and redistribution of scores of romances, sensation fiction, gothic novels, and national tales.[12]

It is therefore not especially shocking that Irish writers favored popular fiction over the "less lucrative realist novel" (Belanger 21). Those who migrated to England to write included Francis Cashel Hoey, Charlotte Riddell and Annie Hector, writers of sensational, sentimental, gothic, and urban fiction (Kelleher 199). A number of influential male writers also chose to make their careers in England or to work with English publishers. Bram Stoker, famed purveyor of gothic and sensational fiction,

[12] Simon Eliot writes that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, popular fiction often came in the form of chapbooks and broadsheets that were usually sold at book fairs, by door-to-door salesmen, or "hawked about in the streets." These editions were inexpensive (around a penny to two pence for a chapbook, and around a halfpenny for a broadsheet) and were often "multi-genre" texts, recounting heroic tales or "horrendous event[s]" such as "a murder, an execution, or a monstrous birth" (42).

lived and worked in London, publishing his most famous novel, *Dracula*, with the firm of Archibald Constable and Company in 1897. Stoker had published his first novel, *The Snake's Pass*, seven years earlier with Samson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington in London. Fellow gothic writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, whose 1872 female vampire novella, *Carmilla*, served as a primary inspiration for *Dracula*, published his well-known Protestant gothic romance, *Uncle Silas* (1864), in London as well.[13] Waterford writer Edmund Downey, whom I discuss at length in chapter five, made a long career in London as a writer and publisher, first at *Tinsley's* magazine and later in Ward and Downey and his own firm, Downey and Company. He was heavily invested in publishing books by Irish writers, or books that dealt with Irish concerns, and was involved in London's Southwark Literary Club and the Irish Literary Society, along with many prominent members of the early literary Revival.

That so many Irish writers made their careers in England, or partnered with English publishing houses, has led some contemporary critics to see this displacement as a serious impediment to the development of nineteenth-century Irish fiction. This critique, it should be noted, gains additional significance within the prevailing practice of examining Irish writing in comparison to its realist English neighbor. Joe Cleary, who attributes this mode of evaluation to the perennial search for an Irish *Middlemarch* as well as to a critical desire to produce an Irish version of Ian Watt's influential *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), notes that the precarious Irish position of "constantly negotiating between two distinct cultures," while potentially effective in terms of

[13] As I discuss in chapter two, Le Fanu published much of his fiction in serialized form in *Dublin University Magazine*, which he owned. He was still, however, primarily dependent upon his London publisher for reasons of economic stability.

exploiting generic conventions, also helped to foster a "habitual instability of narrative voice," thus making the Irish novel a poor competitor for its English counterpart (212). The "instability" of nineteenth-century Irish fiction as a reflection of the "instability" of Ireland within the British colonial theater remains a given in much contemporary critical assessment of these texts. Yet, while it seems fair to assert that Ireland's national and historical trajectories are not, as Eagleton argues, exactly "story-shaped," to diminish an entire century's worth of literary output on the basis of comparison to an ideal, ever-stable English literary and culturo-political sphere is dubious.

To be sure, it is essential to view Irish fiction in terms of its colonial subjectivity and within the context of its political, economical, ecological, and cultural crises (and the reality of Irish writers working in England can certainly be seen as an extension of Ireland's colonial identity). To do otherwise would be intellectually irresponsible. But a wholesale categorization of such complicated events as evidence of "instability"—as opposed to, say, a realization of the inevitabilities of a multi-national literary marketplace or the acknowledgement and exploration of multi-faceted national identities—is reactionary. Such an argument simply relies old Revivalist imaginings of an organized, identifiable Celtic consciousness and limits the ways in which we can interpret Irish fiction. Furthermore, we must not rely on the assumption of a "stable" nineteenth-century English literary tradition, or consistent literary format, to serve as a measuring stick for all literatures produced within the empire, but rather should recognize the literary marketplace as a dynamic, developing entity.

Even the most established Victorian writers were susceptible to the whims of the literary market. Writers such as Dickens, Trollope, and George Eliot were obliged to

adhere to the material requirements of the (often serialized) triple-decker novel, routinely extending and contracting storylines to fit the allowable textual space, creating cliffhanger conclusions for each installment, and frequently reintroducing characters; such writers also structured their narratives to accommodate a public interest in romantic plots, happy endings, and a sense of "moral certitude" (Flint 22, 30). Yet the privileging of realism and assumptions about the superiority of the Victorian novel overshadow these facts of literary life: what are "accommodations" in the work of Trollope, Thackeray, and Eliot are "instabilities" in the work of Owenson, Carleton, and Kickham.

To be clear, I do not intend to underemphasize the national trauma associated with Ireland's position as a colonized space. Far from it. What I do mean to suggest is a new way of approaching and assessing the literary and political value of nineteenth-century Irish fictions. To rid ourselves of the specter of instability, we must not only rethink the ways in which we consider Irish fiction, but make way for a new, more intensive inclusion of Irish genre fiction. Part of a new consideration of the Gothic novel, the Big House novel, the National Tale, the Fairy Tale, and other popular genres is accepting that there are myriad ways to conceive of a national literature and to imagine Irishness—and that such a reorganization of scholarly priority is necessary to any acknowledgement of nineteenth-century Ireland as a multi-vocal literary space.[14]

As of late, a handful of scholars have made significant strides toward this goal. Foster's book, Derek Hand's *A History of the Irish Novel* (2011), James Murphy's *Irish*

[14] In *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age*, James Murphy draws attention to numerous popular genres in Irish fiction writing, many of which serve as an outlet for marginalized voices, including the land-war novel, the fenian novel, the military novel, the fictionalized autobiography, and Catholic intellectual fiction.

Novelists in the Victorian Age (2011), and Heidi Hansson's collection of essays, *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women's Prose* (2008), which includes the work of such scholars as Margaret Kelleher and Jacqueline Belanger, strive to capture a broader perspective on nineteenth-century Irish fiction and to make these texts part of the greater critical discourse. These scholars contribute to the field by interrogating established fictional texts alongside lesser-known fictions, many of them by women, expatriates living in Britain, America, and Australia, and Anglo-Irish writers that have only recently been recovered through extensive archival research. New scholarship of this kind works toward a questioning of current trends in the field, namely the tendency to view the nineteenth-century Irish novel (and other fictions) as a subordinate offshoot of a strong Victorian tradition, and to elide popular texts for their perceived lack of literary import.

Nineteenth-century Irish literature should and must be considered in conjunction with Britain, not through a discourse of lack, but rather, as Declan Kiberd argues, as "a matter of negotiation and exchange" (*Inventing Ireland* 1). Moreover, we must also look at how these writers negotiate shifting generic space and competing constructions of Irish national and cultural identity—how they *imagine* Irishness. To constantly labor to evaluate nineteenth-century Irish literature in terms of realism, or to criticize it for the lack of it, works directly against the idea of an imagined national identity, which provides greater opportunity for fluidity and inclusion of previously marginalized voices. To view Ireland and Irishness in terms of "imaginings" allows us to move beyond the Revivalist trope of a Celtic consciousness and to take a broader look at Irish literature and national identity, as well as at the process of self-definition as it is

explored and developed in literary texts at specific points in time. This is what genre fiction can do for us. These fictions should not be examined in terms of a prescribed end result, a "cohesive" representative national novel (whatever that might be), but more as a documentation of *imaginings in progress*, indicating possibilities for multiple readers and diverse loci of power. When we read a text like Carleton's *The Black Prophet,* for example, we become privy to the immediacy of these imaginings—"this Ireland, right now"—and how they develop over time.

(2) Imagining Irishness as Process

While any analysis of Irish literature in the context of identity or literary nationalism must certainly involve a consideration of Irishness, the process is rife with complications. For instance, critics have questioned whether Irish literature must always be considered in the context of national and cultural identity, resulting in what Cheryl Herr has referred to Ireland's "over-identity crisis" (276). In terms of giving new consideration to nineteenth-century genre fiction, I suggest that any valuable conversation on the topic must situate these texts within their own colonial context. While Irishness is not the only lens through which to view these texts, the ways in which it is imagined and negotiated remain inextricably enmeshed in these narratives.

Still, the fear of stereotyping, essentializing, and generally reducing complex culturo-political interactions to a tidy set of categories remains. Vincent J. Cheng warns of the "perilous dilemma" in pursuing a study of Irishness. Seemingly taking a cue from numerous postcolonial theorists, from Franz Fanon to Edward Said, Cheng is concerned with stepping into the trap of indulgent self-definition, falling prey to the

"almost irresistible urge to define oneself (one's national identity) in terms of one's specific distinctiveness" (30). In short, Cheng sees the potential for a destructive auto-othering, which would simply repeat colonial strategies of oppression and perpetuate racialist discourse. Here, he writes, is where colonial and national strategies merge, in the "striking but inescapable paradox at the heart of the project of national self-definition: the *invention* of the authentic self" (30).

Therein lies the problem with arguments surrounding national identity, particularly in terms of Ireland in the nineteenth century. The notion of inventing an "authentic" national self is debilitating, especially in the context of an actively colonized culture and space. Not only does this way of considering national identity welcome the kind of essentialist construction Cheng fears, but it becomes impossibly troubled when one considers issues of particular importance to Ireland, such as class, religion, gender, and Irish/Anglo-Irish relations. One cannot ignore the trauma of colonialism, but one can reimagine one's relation to and within that trauma. One can imagine different ways of negotiating one's existence and understanding of national spaces. In other words, the "authentic" national self assumes a stasis of power, which simply isn't the case, whereas an *imagined* Irishness—when viewed as a process and not an essential product—allows for the fluidity of power that is part and parcel of every colonial relationship.

As I have noted, interrogating ideas of Irishness is a complicated matter, and it is prudent to take pains to distinguish the narrow border between essentialism and empowerment. That said, it was necessary for nineteenth-century Ireland to develop a collective persona of opposition, something that people could rally around and embrace

as Ireland moved forward within a nascent national consciousness. We clearly see a more organized version of this persona in the work of the Revivalists, but such imaginings can be identified well before the end of the century. A collective, ever-developing, multi-faceted persona of opposition, as I will argue throughout my project, is identifiable in much nineteenth-century genre fiction, within the very texts that have been so long excluded from discourses on Irish literary nationalism. This serves to challenge the loci of colonial power by confronting linguistic hegemony with Hiberno-English or Irish Gaelic, by protesting mid-century Parliamentary policy and laissez-faire economic doctrine through graphic depictions of the human consequences of horrific national events such as the Famine, and by other such measures. Thus, the colonized is empowered to challenge the Empire itself and, more specifically, the national identity imposed upon subjects by the state. Assigned Irishness gives way to versions of Irishness Ireland imagines for itself, positioning the very *act* of imagining as a powerful political exercise.

The importance of emphasizing process, or as Ann Rigney argues, "project," over product in discussing national identity cannot be overstated. Representation, Rigney argues, is defined "by the attempt itself and not by the extent to which that attempt is successful" and thus is "a starting point for an exchange, rather than the endpoint of the discussion" (2).[15] By focusing on constructions of Irishness as a process, within which countless competing methods and agendas are laboring, we are

[15] In *Imperfect Histories: The Elusive Past and Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (2001), Rigney is particularly concerned with textual representation, making connections between historiography and the role of the literary text as an historical document.

able to broaden definitions of national literature and track literary imaginings in progress.

Overall, the aim of my project is to move the critical conversation beyond the commonplace scholarly lament of the lack of an Irish *Middlemarch* toward a consideration of Anglo-Irish and Irish genre fiction—Big House fiction, Gothic fiction, the national tale, and folk and fairy tales—as a vital precursor to the national literature that would become the cornerstone of the Celtic Revival. I analyze how writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, and W. B. Yeats manipulated these existing generic forms to imagine new national narratives while representing historical and cultural change. This aim is tethered by an examination of how Irishness, a fluid process inextricably linked to rhetorics of nationalism and colonialism, is imagined, employed, and transformed in the nineteenth century.

In my second chapter, I scrutinize how writers such as Anne Radcliffe, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Emily Brontë, and Bram Stoker manipulate generic conventions associated with the Gothic and demonstrate how such modes of manipulation are suggestive of the colonial relationship between England and Ireland. Using the images of haunting phenomena as a starting point, I explore how the Gothic provides a method of addressing developing conceptions of national identity while interrogating recurring narratives of colonial oppression and the complicated politics of Anglo-Irish subjectivity. A primary question framing the chapter is how a narrative may negotiate the precarious position of nineteenth-century Ireland, a space in nearly constant danger of cultural erasure, in terms of national identity. I argue that the Gothic can offer some assistance in approaching this query: rooted in repetition and anachronism, the genre

can serve to resist erasure by reviving and acknowledging the spectral history of Ireland and reassessing colonial power narratives. For instance, in his 1864 novel, *Uncle Silas*, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu uses familiar gothic tropes (family secrets, miscegenation, usurpation of family property, imprisonment, and so forth) to depict conflicted power dynamics between oppressor and oppressed that mirror the problematics of living within Anglo-Irish culture. For Le Fanu, the Gothic provides a context for imagining, or reimagining, the structures of the nation and of Irish/Anglo-Irish colonial subjectivity. Like Le Fanu, Stoker also found political refuge in the Gothic, presenting *The Snake's Pass*, his first novel and his only book to be set in Ireland, as his contribution to the Home Rule debate. Within the novel, Stoker gothicizes the Irish terrain, characterizing it by an ominous, amorphous "Shifting Bog"; the land is constantly moving, constantly changing and being changed, and its state of unremitting flux positions it as an object of fear. Ireland, within this context, becomes familiar yet unfamiliar—*unheimlich*. Stoker uses the land, in its physical and metaphysical significance, to intervene in colonial discourse, echoing contemporary nineteenth-century political rhetorics in both England and Ireland.

In Chapter Three, I analyze the symbolic import of the colonial "big house," or landed estate, and approach the overarching query of most Big House fiction: to whom does Ireland belong? If Ireland is truly for the Irish, and the Act of Union oppressive, then how is Irishness negotiated? Moreover, what of the inhabitants of the big house, the products of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, who are simultaneously linked to and removed from both England and Ireland? In my argument, which juxtaposes the Big House fictions of Maria Edgeworth and George Moore with nationalist and unionist

political writings, I assert that land drives the genre and lies at the center of imaginings of Irish identity. Reflective of the nineteenth-century system of land tenure in Ireland and the ethical objections surrounding it, the Big House tradition is very much concerned with the ins and outs of landlordism. It presents a pervasive fear that lands confiscated by the Ascendancy will one day be claimed, or reclaimed, by the native tenantry. I trace how political rhetorics centered on land, as metaphysical marker of "native Irishness" and as a physical reminder of colonial oppression, contributed to national discourse, both in the actual space of nineteenth-century Ireland and in fictional representations of that space within the Anglo-Irish Big House novel. Finally, I extend my critique to look at how these rhetorics call into question English colonial power to construct geographic identity.

Chapter Four focuses on the national tale—that is, on texts that explore themes of national importance by depicting particular national "types" (the handsome Highlander, the lovable Irish rogue) within their homeland. I argue that there are clear points of development in the genre that correspond with historical or cultural events, such as the return of the "stage Irishman" as a national stereotype or the famines of 1817 and 1845. These developments are indicative of changing perspectives on Ireland's colonial position within the British empire. Starting with the Romantic nostalgia of Sidney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) and moving to the schizophrenic patriotism of William Carleton in the 1840s and 50s and still further to the radical nationalism of Fenian leader and popular novelist Charles Kickham in the 1860s and 70s, I dissect the significance of the growing public desire for a newer, more "realistic" literature. This desire, spurred on by a growing literate population, speaks to

a distinct shift away from the assumed cultural authority of elite, Anglo-Irish writers like Edgeworth and Owenson toward voices of the peasantry and of those outside of the landlord class, such as Kickham, Carleton, John Banim, and Gerald Griffin, who wrote of the peasantry from first-hand experience. For example, Owenson's tale is a romantic, antiquarian extravaganza, complete with wild, wind-swept terrain, ruined castles, and displaced, harp-playing aristocrats; the story ends happily, with a national marriage between Glorvina, the eponymous "Wild Irish Girl," and Horatio, the English traveler and ancestor of Glorvina's oppressors. Owenson's antiquarian edge all but disappears in William Carleton's *The Black Prophet* (1847), a text written during the Great Famine but set during the earlier famine of 1817. This tale asserts Ireland's desire to help itself, yet the preface, addressed to Prime Minister John Russell, reminds Parliament that Ireland, as a colonized space, is England's responsibility. Carleton, who gives new voice to the Irish peasantry, is always patriotic, but his allegiances shift, quite contrary to those of Charles Kickham. Where Carleton appeals to a sense of duty and shared ideas of humanity, Kickham warns in *Knocknagow* (1879) of an impending "day of retribution" that represents the kind of volatile enthusiasm that would come to characterize the nationalist Fenian movement and Irish Republican Brotherhood, of which he was an integral part. These writers help to transform the voyeuristic national tale, which encouraged the reader to look upon a wild and romanticized Ireland yet never to engage it, to an activist tale, providing (re)imaginings of national identity and national space that gesture toward the construction of a collective persona of resistance.

In my fifth and final chapter, I concentrate on the genres of folk and fairy tales and look at the ways nineteenth-century writers and collectors of folklore, such as Oscar

Wilde, Edmund Downey, Lady Gregory, Stoker, and Yeats, use these forms to make connections between Ireland's ancient past and political present. These writers present specific modes of imagining national or cultural identity and interpreting historical change and crisis. My analysis establishes clear links between the development of genre and the rapidly changing political landscape of both England and Ireland, locating in generic shifts an early move toward a national literature and a reassessment of Ireland in its colonial context. Beginning with the early work of the Grimm Brothers, whose tales are notable vehicles of Romantic nationalism and were enormously influential in all parts of Britain, I track the development and evaluate the historical significance of the fairy tale as a political genre in Victorian England: that is, as a genre designed to champion bourgeois moral and social codes and thereby to raise upright British subjects. I then look to mid-to late nineteenth-century Ireland and explore how the genre serves as a foundation for cultural nationalist ideas. Texts I employ as primary case studies are Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), Stoker's collection of children's stories, *Under the Sunset* (1881), and Edmund Downey's "Dan Banim" stories. The "Dan Banim" stories, which Downey presents in the three volumes, *Through Green Glasses* (1887), *From the Green Bag* (1889), and *Green as Grass* (1892), offer humorous, gleefully anachronistic rewritings of folk tales and historical colonial narratives. These new approaches to old stories serve the dual purpose of translating the legacy of historical rupture left to post-famine writing and using humor to help diminish the act of colonial conquest. These texts, then, reimagine Ireland as being in a position to write its own national narratives, resisting prescribed constructions of Irishness as the nation moves into the modern era.

These five chapters, taken together, comprise a nuanced consideration of nineteenth-century Irish fiction. Though it has become routine to accept the early twentieth century as marking the emergence of Irish literature as a vital political and artistic form, the politicization of Irish fiction can be traced back much further. This new assessment provides a broader, more inclusive way of looking at issues that have long concerned scholars of Victorian studies and Irish studies alike.

Chapter Two

Situating the Irish Gothic: Narrative and Nation

It is certainly no stretch to argue that there are clear connections that can be made between the ways in which a nation imagines itself and the texts it produces. The novel has come to serve as a socio-cultural barometer, giving insight into contemporary political concerns and offering critical commentary on public and private life, capturing and preserving the radical as well as the quotidian. Benedict Anderson argues that the structures of nations are mimicked by their novels and that these novels serve as a "means for re-presenting the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (Anderson 25).[16] The novel is a veritable microcosm of nation-building *isms*: colonialism, realism, mannerisms, witticisms. One need only look to nineteenth-century Britain for examples.

A high point for the novel, to be sure, this era provides us with a wealth of cultural narratives: Austen's novels chronicling the ins and outs of the marriage market and the decorous modes of polite society (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*), Dickens's "social problem" novels drawing the attention of the reading public to the plight of the working poor and the dark side of industry (*Oliver Twist*, *Little Dorrit*, *Hard Times*), George Eliot's painstakingly realistic portrayals of Victorian politics, rural life, and the place of women in a rapidly changing society (*Felix Holt, the Radical*, *Adam Bede*,

[16]It should be noted that Anderson also extends this argument to newspapers. For Anderson, this medium, along with the novel, is one of the best forms through which to trace the imaginings of national community.

Middlemarch). The list goes on. These are the novels on which scholars, and indeed readers, cut their teeth, and are easily accessible points from which to explore constructions of the British nation.

This argument is complicated, however, whenever we consider colonialism, yet another *ism* that lends an additional layer that is sometimes difficult to negotiate. In regard to the nineteenth century, narratives of colonialism can be tricky. In terms of genre, these narratives are often more in line with romances and adventure stories. We see how the colonizer imagines nation through tales of conquest, exploration, and self-discovery. We see Conrad's Africa and Kipling's India: exotic and far-away places full of the mysterious, the unfamiliar, the untamed.

Certainly, these are the narratives in which men from Britain learn to be British Men. But what of the Other? If the colonist must indeed, as Edward Said argues, first define the Other in order to define himself, then we must look at the ways colonial power is exercised.[17] That is to say, by attempting to designate the Other as such, the colonist assumes an inordinate quantity of power, not simply in the ability to name, but in the ability to position himself in a place of superiority, thus enabling himself to declare his political, social, and cultural systems the norm, the standard. By naming the Other, the colonist absorbs his agency. "Not one of us" becomes "lesser than" and, therefore, conquerable. This colonial power manifests itself in a number of ways, the most prevalent being racial or ethnocentric discourse designating colonial groups as barbaric, unsophisticated, childlike or primitive, inherently violent, and so forth. This type of discourse was an intrinsic part of the public purview in Britain, serving as a

[17] Said explores this argument at length in *Orientalism*.

foundation on which to define the Other, and thereby as a way for Britons to define themselves.

For example, the Irishman was a primary target of choice for the racial satire of Victorian-era writers and cartoonists. L. Perry Curtis, Jr. traces at length the progression of artistic portrayals of Irishmen during the nineteenth century. He marks a strong correlation between the increase of political unrest in Ireland and the degradation of the caricatures of Irishmen. Curtis presents the specific example of *Punch* (which began publication in 1841), a magazine that had garnered a reputation for being staunchly anti-Irish, and notes that when Ireland began to demand an end to British rule, the caricatures created by *Punch* artists started to become more and more demeaning.[18] What was a "prognathous garroter" in the 1840's became by the 1860's something more akin to a "gorilla" with an oversized jaw, thick lips, and an emphasized brow (Curtis 31).[19] While the "garroter" was certainly a figure symbolic of violence, he was still clearly human, and the violence solidly situated in terms of politics; the transition to the gorilla-like figure is a more overt gesture toward common fears of the Irish as a "primitive" group. It is also important to note that for the most part it was understood that these simian portrayals were limited to Irish Celts, as opposed to the Anglo-Irish. A noted exception is the character of the regal "Hibernia," always portrayed as a woman, always beautiful, and positioned as a counterpart to "Britannia" (who is

[18]These caricatures were very much in keeping with public fears of miscegenation and "degeneration," a concept touted by Max Nordau and others. This portrayal of the "Paddy" was quite similar to those of African men and women, who were also pictured as having simian characteristics.

[19] Curtis gathers information on this artistic progression from the work of Marion H. Spielmann, a chronicler of *Punch*.

portrayed as alternately male or female, depending on the context). She is shown as a figure of sympathy and vulnerability, as opposed to the "Paddy," who was a figure of ridicule and disdain.[20] By portraying the Other as lesser, animal-like, the culturally and politically dominant elite were able to symbolically secure their place at the top of the heap.

All this is not to say that this racialized view of the Irish was limited to the comedic arena; thinkers like Thomas Carlyle and Friedrich Engels also subscribed to a kind of othering of the Irish Celt. Luke Gibbons notes that even those, like Engels, who were sympathetic to the Irish (at least as far as such sympathy benefitted his own purposes) still participated in destructive racial discourse. In response to Carlyle's profile of the Irish—that "with the Irish, feeling and passion predominate: reason must bow before them," because their "sensuous, excitable nature prevents reflection and quiet persevering activity from reaching development"—Engels seemingly agrees (Gibbons 63). While Engels decries Carlyle's "prejudice in favor of the Teutonic character," Gibbons notes that he "accepts Carlyle's racial profile, except he places a different valuation on it." This would serve to propel Engels's ideologies, and he looked forward "to the abundance of hot Irish blood that flows in the veins of the English working class; to precipitate them out of their cautious British moderation" (63). Here, Engels addresses a major fear among Victorians: miscegenation. While he

[20] As Victorian caricature is not the primary focus of this chapter, I have chosen not to include artwork. I merely refer to it as an example of popular racially charged discourse in Victorian Britain. Curtis's text, however, offers numerous interesting examples of these cartoons, many from *Punch*. Additionally, Luke Gibbons devotes a significant portion of his argument to race and caricatures of the Irish in *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture* (2004).

doesn't seem to harbor the same fears of the downfall of the British empire, he still maintains the same racial bias, and still communicates in a language of blood (an issue addressed in Stoker's *Dracula*, and one that would remain in fashion well into the next century).[21]

If we are to examine the systems whereby narrative mimics nation, then, we have a particularly interesting case study in Ireland. Its contentious relationship with Britain runs throughout nineteenth-century texts and makes clear that there are competing imaginings of Irish nationhood and Irishness, so much so that trying to make heads or tails of it is fraught with potential difficulties. In the case of Ireland, a space in constant flux, always in danger of erasure, how does a narrative negotiate its precarious position in terms of national identity? How can a narrative mimic a nation that has been made, unmade, and remade many times over? I propose that the Irish Gothic can offer some assistance to our inquiries in this regard.

That said, I should take a moment to briefly explain how I will be employing the concept of the Irish Gothic. A gothic text composed by an Irish writer is not always necessarily an Irish Gothic text any more than a gothic text composed by a woman is necessarily a Female Gothic text.[22] A mainstay of the Irish Gothic is a narrative chronicling the colonial relationship (or aspects of it) between Ireland and Britain. David Glover argues that the Irish Gothic was constantly struggling to attach meaning to Ireland and Irishness and was a genre in which "the social and psychic fears

[21] Joseph Valente explores the issue of blood and Stoker's own obsession with racial purity in *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (2002).
[22] I use the example of the Female Gothic, as it is a popular subgenre and can be contested in terms of its conventions or validity, much as the Irish Gothic can be.

[addressed in the texts] of English writers like Anne Radcliffe and Matthew 'Monk' Lewis were subtly inflected into a monstrous version of Ireland as imagined through the eyes of some of the poorer members of the Protestant Ascendancy" (Glover 25). While some Irish Gothics are actually set in Ireland (C. R. Maturin's *The Milesian Chief* and Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* are notable examples), many of these texts were often set outside of Ireland and dependent on an English readership, leading Glover to invoke W. J. McCormack's idea that the Irish Gothic is, actually and metaphorically, a "fiction of exile" (25).[23] These fictions, however, are all in exile together, as it were, and there are still connections to be made.

Texts such as Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, and Stoker's *Dracula* (perhaps the most popular Irish Gothic novel) are all set in places other than Ireland, yet they all employ a trope central to the Irish Gothic (and, indeed, the Gothic genre in general): repetition.[24] Melmoth bends time, moving back and forth between centuries, and the narrative itself moves backward and forward; Silas Ruthyn and his family are haunted by a sinister secret that repeatedly returns; Dracula, no matter how one decides to read him, is the undead, the embodiment of repetition. Repetition is used in many different kinds of Gothic texts, but it has added significance for the Irish Gothic. Siobhán Kilfeather has noted that repetition takes on a deeper,

[23] McCormack explores the idea of fictions of exile in "J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Richard Marston' (1848): The History of an Anglo-Irish Text" in *The Sociology of Literature* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1978).

[24] The practice of reading *Dracula* as an Irish Gothic is relatively common, especially when the text is examined in the context of colonialism. For many contemporary scholars in Irish studies, Joseph Valente, Seamus Deane, and Luke Gibbons being notable examples, one cannot set aside the narrative of *Dracula* from its political context, and such implications dovetail nicely into a discussion of the relationship of Ireland and England during the time the novel was written.

politically charged meaning in that it "represents a formal enactment of one of the major gothic themes of particular significance in Ireland, namely that history is repeating itself and that its victims cannot stop themselves banging on about the same old story" (Kilfeather 82). In these texts, time is certainly out of joint, folding in on itself and back out again, creating a frightening sense of distortion. Repetition speaks to the fear of the revenant, the ghostly figure that returns from the dead to haunt those who still live, or, thinking in colonial terms, the Other that *just won't go away*.

To be clear, I am not positioning the Irish Gothic as a magical vehicle for voicing colonial dissent. Many arguments have made speculations as to the potential aims of the Gothic, and it is not my purpose here to argue the radicalism or conservatism of the genre. I merely mean to suggest that the Gothic is a particularly useful lens through which to examine Ireland and its identity in relation to Britain. But what does it mean if a nation is mimicked by a gothic text?

Repetition is, to be sure, at the heart of my argument. The very notion of a Gothic Ireland presents a nation at the confluence of past and present and immediately conjures a revenant of sorts, the *specter*, as Jacques Derrida employs the term, which is neither living nor dead (as far as knowledge can ascertain). It is a thing both being and not being. This idea of the specter, or of the ghostly revenant that returns again and again, is a valuable place to begin an exploration of how text mimics nation. The Gothic itself is all about repetition: ghosts, doppelgangers, family curses, *das Unheimliche*. In this chapter I will discuss some of the ways the Irish Gothic mimics Irish national identity (or, at least, how it is imagined) and negotiates its colonial relationship with Britain. I will be chiefly drawing on Derrida's concept of *hauntology*

and Erich Fromm's idea of the *necrophilious* and employing them in the context of the Irish Gothic to look at constructions of Irishness, necrophilious character, and the desire for destruction.[25] Finally, for the purposes of this chapter, I will be looking at the texts of Bram Stoker, with a primary focus on his lesser-known first novel, *The Snake's Pass* (1890).

(1) Haunting Ireland: Specters and the Irish Gothic

One way to imagine a Gothic Ireland is through Derrida's idea of haunting. For Derrida, haunting is something that is always already a part of history, and is a part of every hegemony; it is always present (or not always present, as it were), and is perhaps most easily understood through this shadowy version of the and/both dialectic (Derrida 4). It is out of this that grows *hauntology*, which Derrida defines as "the paradoxical state of the specter, which is neither being nor non-being" (11). It becomes difficult to pinpoint the specter—to say "this is the specter"—as it occupies an in-between space, and it is always working, always laboring. Derrida writes,

> Here is—or rather there is, over there, an unnamable or almost unnamable thing: something between something and someone, anyone or anything, some thing, this "thing," but this thing and not any other, this thing that looks at us, that concerns us, comes to defy semantics as much as ontology, psychoanalysis as much as philosophy. (4)

[25] It is important to distinguish the concept of necrophilious character from sexual necrophilia. I will enumerate the differences between the two and discuss the concept in depth later in the chapter.

It is this *thing*, and the interpretation(s) and values placed on it, that forms the foundation upon which national identity is imagined. The specter bears historical traces, colonial traces. As surely as histories exist, so do specters exist. And, as Derrida writes, "a specter is always a revenant. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back" (8). This constant confusion of time is in keeping with the Gothic, where things (ghosts, secrets, doubles, oppression) are destroyed only to return again, each manifestation being new, yet the same. If this characterization seems abstract, it is nonetheless reflective of imaginings of Irishness, or of national identity, and I shall try to make sense of it.

To be clear, I am not employing this theory in the context of the Irish Gothic to purport to contemplate the existence of actual ghosts (though the Gothic is rife with them). In a discussion of the Gothic novel, the distinction of the Irish Gothic subgenre becomes important, not because it does not feature "actual" ghosts, but because it places greater stock in the colonial narrative, and thus the supernatural becomes a tool whereby to explore colonial oppression. The specter of the Irish Gothic is always already working, simultaneously fueling the imaginings of cultural and national identity and stressing the point that it will, without notice, re-present itself again, being only what it is presently, and, in that, not being.

One primary way this idea of the specter works easily into the framework of the Irish Gothic is that it echoes and speaks to repeating narratives of oppression. How these narratives differ from, say, those of some English Gothics, is that they cannot necessarily always rely on the power or privilege that comes with being in a position of political dominance. The narratives of oppression that run continually throughout Irish

Gothic texts deal not only with women (as in the gothic novels of Radcliffe, Lewis, or even a writer like Charlotte Brontë), but with men as well. No matter the nationality of the character, these men are intrinsic to a narrative that speaks to the horrors of oppression in Ireland.

A discussion of the interrelatedness of these narratives of oppression is best served by the use of examples. As I've noted, English gothic novels are rife with narratives of female oppression, one of the most ready examples of course being Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which the innocent and swooning Emily is imprisoned by the sinister Count Montoni. In Montoni, a man who commands both fear and strange attraction, Radcliffe creates the prototypical Gothic oppressor. When he is first introduced, both his dark allure and potential danger are evident to Emily. Radcliffe writes,

> This Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit, and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance, yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and, more than once in this day, the triumph of art over nature might have been discerned in it. His visage was long, and rather narrow, yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features, that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore. (122)

Straight away, the power evoked by Montoni's character is anchored in the villain's artifice. He is pretending to be something he is not. This is not to say that he is posturing as heroic; he does not position himself as a virtuous man (as does Valencourt, Emily's valiant young love interest). Montoni is, rather, keeping up the pretense of one who simply isn't an out-and-out villain. It is the diabolical glint, the slip of countenance quickly perceived and corrected, that strikes fear into Emily and elicits an anxious deference from those who surround Montoni. For Radcliffe, good and evil are clearly aligned with nature and artifice, respectively, and her heroes exude a "purity" of character and lineage.[26] Emily is continually shocked at the behavior of those around her, often to the point of fainting, because it is in her nature to be so. As a proper Radcliffian female protagonist, Emily is bound to be well mannered and virtuous, and to be shocked when others do not act accordingly. Also, though she is French, she exudes a strong sense of Englishness that serves to further play against the dangerous foreignness of Montoni. Colloquially speaking, she is "good people." In contrast, Montoni, who is not insignificantly described as being of a dark countenance, is seen as even more sinister, as one who, in his role as oppressor, would not only usurp control of Emily's inheritance, but also (and perhaps more pressingly) sully the natural purity of the heroine.[27] Still, good or evil, villain or victim, agency is clear.[28]

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[26] This "purity" is associated with actual nature as much as it is with familial and social ties. In the days of his "health and youthful freedom," Emily's father, M. St. Aubert, is associated with the natural world and spends much of his time in "the wild walks of the mountains, the river, on whose waves he had floated, and the distant plains, which seemed boundless as his early hopes" (2). Emily's mother, Mme. St. Aubert, is likewise linked to nature and fostered Emily's love of the outdoors and her appreciation and reverence of Nature's "stupendous works" (3).

[27] This obsession with purity and anxiety over its corruption is evident in Stoker's texts. *Dracula* is a particularly good example.

The Radcliffian model did have some influence on the Irish Gothic. Take, for instance, Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*. First published serially in *Dublin University Magazine* in 1864 and then as a three-volume text later that year, the novel centers around themes common to many gothic texts: family secrets, miscegenation, usurpation of family property, and so forth. [29] The titular, prototypical villain, the mysterious (and murderous) Silas Ruthyn, haunts much of the novel, never actually appearing until well into the second volume. Like Montoni, Silas is swirling with contradictions. He is constantly referred to as a very "religious man" and called both "kind" and "cunning." When Maude, Silas's young niece and a primary protagonist of the novel, is finally introduced to Silas, there ensues the same battle between art and nature that troubles Radcliffe's Emily. He has a "face like marble, with a fearful, monumental look, and, for an old man, singularly vivid eyes" (200). To Maude, he is something other than human; she compares him to a painting, then to a ghost, noting, "I know I can't convey in words an idea of this apparition, drawn as it seemed in black and white, venerable, bloodless, fiery-eyed, with its singular look of power, and an expression so bewildering—was it derision, or anguish, or cruelty, or patience?" (201). Here, Silas's power is clear, and he is clearly a potential oppressor, as he is also, according to a last-minute codicil to her father's will, Maude's legal guardian—he has imprisoned her

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[28] Maria Edgeworth is an example of an Irish writer who plays on the kind of "traditional" gothic narratives employed by Radcliffe, particularly in *Castle Rackrent*, and would serve to complicate this discussion further. I will place greater focus on her work in the next chapter, during my discussion of the Big House novel.

[29] Le Fanu purchased the magazine in 1861, after it had fallen into some difficulties, and subsequently published a number of his own novels, including *The House by the Churchyard* (1863). A detailed discussion of the history of *Dublin University Magazine*, as well as Le Fanu's relationship with the institution, may be found in Wayne E. Hall's *Dialogues in the Margin: A Study of the* Dublin University Magazine (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000).

financially as well as physically by holding her at Bartram-Haugh, the Ruthyn clan's ancestral home. Silas's tyrannical treatment of Emily, similar to Montoni's treatment of Emily, denotes a clear narrative of female oppression. Significant differences arise, however, when we look at Le Fanu's novel in an Irish context.

In her discussion of *Uncle Silas*, Marjorie Howes argues that while social and cultural traditions were similar between English society and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy (of which Le Fanu was a product), a pronounced fragmentation existed in the latter. This fragmentation, a state of near-constant flux, became a defining characteristic of the Ascendancy. As a result of existing within a system that was continually seeking to (re)define itself, there was a need for a certain amount of invention in terms of traditions. She writes that "because of their hybrid cultural status and tenuous political position, the Protestant Ascendancy imagined an Anglo-Irish tradition that was legitimating and empowering, but simultaneously broken, betrayed, and corrupt" (165). The problematics of living within this hyphenated culture are clearly evident in Le Fanu's texts, as well as those of fellow Anglo-Irish writers Edgeworth, Maturin, and Stoker. This imagining, or reimagining, of the structures of nation and subjectivity are perhaps best interpreted through the lens of the Gothic. Silas Ruthyn's primary objective is to have his niece's fortune, whether it be through a forced marriage between his son and Maude, or through a more immediate form of violence: Maude's murder. This in itself is nothing new, yet when viewed in the context of nineteenth-century Ireland it alludes to the presence of colonial power.

So, to return to my initial point, this particular construction of the Gothic villain, and the powers of oppression associated with it, becomes important when extending the

conversation to the Irish Gothic. In a novel like Radcliffe's, narratives of female oppression establish a clear center of power, identified with oppressive male figures, and help to establish masculine identity within the narrative. While it is true that Valencourt is temporarily imprisoned by Montoni, this narrative of male oppression is rather superficial. Valencourt's imprisonment does not call into question his male agency; rather, it places added importance on his industriousness and eventual rescue of Emily. In short, this setback does not set him up as a victim; it is merely a pause in his development as the hero. This situation is a contrast to Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*. While Silas himself plays the role of oppressor, it is the past oppression he himself has suffered, a sinister marriage plot, which acts as a catalyst for his tyranny. What happens, then, when traditional gothic narratives of female oppression are complicated by the consideration of the male oppressed? To be sure, these narratives do not necessarily eliminate the traditional figure of the female victim. They do, however, further complicate what are, in the context of the Gothic, historically sexed narratives.

Within the Irish Gothic, it is useful to consider narratives of oppression in the context of Ireland and its relationship to Britain. In his examination of the Gothic, Jim Hansen views these narratives via the metaphor of an unhappy marriage or union. He employs this metaphor to look at the sociopolitical implications of sexed gothic narratives, beginning with the 1800 Acts of Union. Following the 1798 rebellion, these Acts were seen as "a kind of marriage in which Ireland, a vulnerable 'sister kingdom' threatened by the destabilizing violence of the French Revolution, would… be joined to England in the 'sentiment of mutual affection and common interest'" and would form "as far as possible, into one firm and lasting fabric, the strength, the power, and the

resources of the British Empire" (Hansen 3).[30] For Hansen, this sexing of the Irish national body echoes the sexed narratives of oppression within the Gothic, presenting a situation in which "an Irish masculinity coded by the Western male/female binary as masculine also fell into the category of an overarching Irish identity coded as feminine" (4). Again, we are faced with the contradictions of being and not being. While Hansen does not directly speak to Derridean ideas of haunting, he does invoke similar logic in his argument, as he sees the Gothic as a clear illustration and exploration of "the anxious state of at once being and not being a masculine subject" (6). This strange subjectivity is easily identifiable in the character of Silas as the returning oppressed, which I will discuss presently. Furthermore, the element of repetition remains key. Within the Irish Gothic, narratives of female oppression are revived and reimagined to echo the colonial subjectivity of Ireland, and this confusion of gender is revealed to be symptomatic of the larger problem of nation. The specter remains difficult to reconcile.

So, if we are to concede that this reimagining of male identity marks a redefinition of power in terms of victim and oppressor, as Hansen does, we must question the import of it all. He uses what he calls the "Unionist Gothic" to explore the breakdown in Anglo-Irish relations and how these novels play on classic gothic tropes by creating a narrative reversal that "situates masculine agents in social and cultural spaces that the more familiar English Gothic novel had reserved only for its embattled

[30] Hansen takes this declaration from Charles Coote's *History of the Union of the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland; With an Introductory Survey of Hibernian Affairs, Traced from the Times of the Celtic Colonisation* (London: S. Hamilton, 1802), 31-32.

yet passive female heroines" (5).[31] To return to Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, it is important to note that, while Silas is indubitably a sinister figure, his problems initially stem from an unfortunate marriage to a Welsh barmaid. The union came about as a result of a casual, physical relationship between Silas and the barmaid, and served to sever all ties between Silas and his family, who thought the match distasteful and the woman low and vulgar. While it was thought that it was his initial intent to simply "ruin her," he was coerced into marriage. Le Fanu writes that Silas endeavored "after the honeymoon to prove the marriage bad," but that ultimately "the Welsh parson and the innkeeper papa were too strong for him, and the young lady was able to hold her struggling swain fast in that respectable noose—and a pretty prize he proved" (157). If we are to read this situation, an event which sets into motion a system of terror that serves as the very foundation of the novel itself, in the context of the unhappy union between Ireland and England, we have plenty of material with which to work. Silas is forced into a marriage he doesn't want, a marriage that ends up ruining him and isolating him from his family. In this instance, Silas occupies a role that is traditionally coded as female within the Gothic. His resurfacing as a villain is in itself a return of the oppressed, and a very violent return it is. And while his power grabbing is certainly financially motivated in that he wants to claim the inheritance that has been entailed to Emily, it is also a move that will reinstate him in the Ruthyn clan. This narrative thus serves as a useful vehicle

[31] Hansen defines the Unionist Gothic as a genre that not only encompasses the era of the Acts of Union, but that also chronicles growing dissatisfaction and breakdown of the union of Ireland and England. This breakdown is, for Hansen, vitally linked to changing ideas of gender and empire. Writers he offers as examples are Maturin, Edgeworth, Wilde, Stoker, and Le Fanu. Hansen uses the obvious example of Stoker's Jonathan Harker to illustrate this point, but I find Le Fanu's Silas to be a more complicated and interesting case study.

for exploring the contradictions inherent in nineteenth-century Irish (or, more specifically in this case, Anglo-Irish) national identity.

As an additional point of contention, Howes notes that Le Fanu, though he had purchased the *Dublin University Magazine* and had a stake in others, was tied to his London publisher for economic survival, relying on selling his novels to a business that catered to a primarily English audience (166). This situation, of course, was a factor in Le Fanu's writing and revision process. It is also important to remember that *Uncle Silas* stemmed from Le Fanu's earlier short story, "Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess," which was itself set in Ireland.[32] It became Le Fanu's task to frame the novel in such a way to appeal to his English readership, while still maintaining the integrity of the original core narrative. It becomes necessary to reimagine the novel in a hyphenated context, an Irish story revived and made palatable for English readers. Le Fanu scholar and biographer W. J. McCormack writes that a function of Le Fanu's fiction is to "[show] the present as a repetition or indeed a higher confirmation of the past: the past, by producing the degenerate and self-extinguishing present, is condemned as the fount of corruption" (197). Certainly, *Uncle Silas*, a text that relies on the return of the oppressed, speaks to the specter and indeed to a major tenet of the Irish Gothic—repetition.

To attempt to interpret this present McCormack references is to attempt to put a finger on something that is, in itself, erasure. This ever-working, ever-changing "thing" which

[32] Howes also references the fact that it was not until Le Fanu was pressured to change the setting of the tale from Ireland to England that he "added the sexual corruption of a cross-class marriage to the list of Silas's sins, and, further, made Silas's misalliance with a Welsh barmaid his original sin, the one that initiates his family's decline and functions as a symbol for his corruption in general" (168).

Derrida argues is a part of every hegemony is what ties together past and present and is also what makes reading the colonial relationship between England and Ireland, Anglo-Irish subjectivity, and indeed any formulation of Irishness extremely complicated.

(2) National Bodies: Politicizing Necrophilism

During and following the Famine, many landlords, having absorbed the bulk of the expense attached to the Poor Laws, engaged in mass evictions of Irish tenants to help defray costs. As a result, tenants were left to seek employment and shelter elsewhere. Those who did not or could not emigrate or receive help from workhouses were often left to roam the countryside; this landscape was dotted with ruined cottages, many of which had either been leveled for the purpose of accommodating imported livestock or irreparably altered for the purpose of discouraging any habitation within them.[33] In his letters and journal, Charles Kingsley recollects his travels in Ireland by calling it "a land of ruins and of the dead" (112). While he asserts that English rule has ultimately been good for Ireland, or is, at least, better than any system the Irish could set up themselves, he still makes a point to note the devastation around him, and that the condition of the land itself is enough to bring him to tears. He writes,

> You cannot conceive to English eyes the first sight of the ruined cottages; and when it goes on to whole hamlets, the effect is most depressing. I suppose it had to be done, with poor-rates twenty shilling

[33] I discuss this situation at greater length in chapter four, particularly in my examination of Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow*, which includes a character, Mick Brien, who, following his eviction, lives as a squatter in his roofless cottage. In his sickness brought on by continuous exposure to the elements and the starvation brought on by extreme poverty, Mick contemplates the murder of a land agent, in the hopes that such an action might alter his purgatorial existence.

> in the pound, and the people dying of starvation, and the cottier system had to be stopped; but what an amount of human misery each of these unroofed hamlets stands for! (112)

For Kingsley, the destructive effects of colonialism are echoed in the ruins. The domestic shells left behind were in themselves objects of fear, signifiers not just of the sheer power of imperial force, but of the desire that propelled it—the political necessity to dismember and consume. This said, Kingsley's hand wringing should be put into perspective. This lamentation is more complicated than the casting of a wistful eye over the devastation one's government has wrought—it is simultaneously defensive and reflective. Kingsley is very much a product of his time, and his views of the Irish fall neatly into step with popular tenets of Victorian racial pseudo-science, particularly in terms of evolution and degeneration. Upon first seeing Irish people during his travels, he writes, "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault." He goes on to comment that "to see *white* chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were *black*, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as *ours*" (my emphasis, 112). For Kingsley, the Irish served as a source of paternalist guilt and as a specter of sorts—referencing either the ongoing course of time, and, in this, degeneration, or simply a shadowy primitivism. Either way, Irishness, and its sheer proximity to Englishness (and, in this case, whiteness), proves a fearful thing.[34]

[34] Viewing Irishness in such a way is also a useful mechanism. To dehumanize the Irish cottiers means to distance them from human sympathy, thus making the devastation easier for Kingsley to make sense of.

This point of anxiety makes the Gothic an ideal vehicle for further exploration of colonial tensions within nineteenth-century Ireland. David Glover argues that seeing Ireland as "a land of ruins and of the dead" is indicative of a tradition that runs counter to the Victorian fascination with the picturesque, as exhibited in the works of William Carleton, particularly his depiction of Irish life during the Famine, or in Thackeray's *Irish Sketchbook* (1843) (32).[35] The lush, untamed, idealized landscapes so common in Victorian literature give way to a reality showing mere remnants of what was perhaps once a pastoral ideal. The context of colonialism precludes the picturesque. If one were simply to look upon the ruined hamlet, as Kingsley did, but without the benefit of knowledge, or history, one might see potential for the pastoral. The tricky thing about history, though, it that is has a way of bringing things back. As "a land of ruins and the dead," Ireland is not only a place of actual, physical death (though there was plenty of that to go around) and of tangible "unroofed hamlets," but a land of specters. It is anachronistic: a Gothicized, colonial space. Common features of the Irish Gothic, such as contested inheritance, the problems of the Big House, and rightful ownership of land play on Victorian ideas of the pastoral and emphasize the disconnect between

[35] Thackeray's *Irish Sketchbook* features a plethora of Irish characters and caricatures and includes numerous musings on economic and political conditions which reveal the writer's own ambivalence about the Irish Question. The lion's share of Thackeray's constructions of Irishness depends upon well-defined distinctions between the Irish and the English, sometimes used to poke fun at what he saw as English expectation of the Irish. For instance, Thackeray recounts an interaction between his travel party and a Tipperary salmon fisherman, noting, "Blessings, jokes, and curses trolled off the rascal's lips with a volubility which caused his Irish audience to shout with laughter, but which were quite beyond a cockney. It was a humor so purely national as to be understood by none but natives, I should think…I think it rather served to frighten than to amuse; and I am not sure but that I looked out for a band of jocular cut-throats of this sort to come up at a given guffaw, and playfully rob us all round. However, he went away quite peaceably, calling down for the party the benediction of a great number of saints, who must have been somewhat ashamed to be addressed by such a rascal" (43).

English and Irish realities. A major advantage of examining these issues through a gothic lens is the ability to draw attention to their inherent violence. At the heart of the Gothic often lies the problem of consumption, and within the Irish Gothic, this consumption is ripe with political import and vital to any reading of Irish cultural and literary space.

It is within this Gothic space that the myriad complexities of colonial narratives of consumption and violence come to light, and this is where Erich Fromm's idea of the necrophilious character becomes important. First, it is imperative to distinguish the concept of the *necrophilious*, as Fromm discusses it, from *sexual necrophilia*. In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Fromm writes that the term necrophilia, or "love of the dead," has two traditional primary applications: "(1) sexual necrophilia, a man's desire to have sexual intercourse or any other kind of contact with a female corpse, and (2) nonsexual necrophilia, the desire to handle, to be near to, and to gaze at corpses, and particularly the desire to dismember them" (Fromm 325).[36] The taboo of sexual necrophilia is by no means out of place within the Gothic: there is arguably a whisper of necrophilia in Heathcliff's intentions toward the remains of Catherine in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, for example. Of the deceased Catherine, Heathcliff exclaims, "I'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills *me*; and if she be motionless, it is sleep" (Brontë 220). His everyday life is consumed with the desire for their bodies to intermingle—it is a yearning that has "devoured [his] existence" and he is "swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfillment"

[36] Fromm offers an in-depth discussion of actual case studies of sexual necrophiliacs. As my argument focuses on the more abstract, discursive concept of the necrophilious, rather than sexual necrophilia, I have chosen not to examine these cases here.

(Brontë 248). Though perhaps, in terms of a reunion between the two lovers, more emphasis is placed on Heathcliff's own death, and thus an end to his torment, he derives a substantial amount of pleasure from thinking of Catherine. He is not only longing for a woman who has previously died; he desires her dead body.

Pinpointing the necrophilious is slightly more difficult, as it is more abstract. Fromm borrows the term "necrophilious," which had also been used by Vladimir Lenin and Sigmund Freud, from Miguel de Unamuno.[37] Fromm's strongest influence, however, is the theory of the death drive and the life and death instincts Freud discusses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), though the two ultimately disagree as to the particular significance of these drives. Fromm attempts to situate the necrophilious in terms of "character"—that is, to bend the concept beyond the physical or psychosexual. So the *necrophilious* is a conceptual extension of the act or practice of *necrophilia*. He writes that necrophilia in the "characterological sense" can be the "passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is *alive* into something *unalive*" (my emphasis, 332).[38] To more clearly explain the concept of necrophilism, Fromm uses the example of murderers: unlike a typical murderer, who is motivated by gain, jealously, or revenge, "the real aim of necrophilious murderers is not the death of the victim—which is, of course, a necessary condition—but the act of dismemberment" (329).[39] It is the act of destruction that is

[37] According to Fromm, Unamuno first used this term in an exchange with Millán Astray at the University of Salamanca. Unamuno was responding to Astray's motto, "Long live death," calling it a "necrophilious and senseless cry" (330-31). Fromm discusses the exchange at length in Ch. 12, *Malignant Aggression: Necrophilia*.
[38] Fromm takes this language from German criminologist H. von Hentig.
[39] I understand that the term "typical" can be problematic here, as a crime such as murder can depend on any number of factors. I am simply adopting Fromm's language

necessary in order for the murderer to achieve satisfaction. The pleasure is in the rending.

In his discussion of the Gothic and eighteenth-century Ireland, Jarlath Killeen closes in on the clear *discursive* positioning of the necrophilious and notes Fromm's point that "cultures should be considered infected with necrophilism when they are characterized by practices and discourses which inculcate in their citizens a love or over-interest in death or corpses"; for Killeen, this applies to both the symbolic and the literal, and Fromm's theory helps to explain eighteenth-century characterizations of Ireland in which it is "constantly metaphorized as a sickly body, contagious, gangrenous, contaminated, headed for death" (Killeen 157).[40] This language echoes Kingsley's assessment of Ireland as a "land of the dying and the dead." The usefulness of this metaphor is not limited to the eighteenth century, as it proves invaluable to a discussion of the nineteenth as well.

So, if the meaning of the necrophilious is situated within discourse, and the core of the concept is situated within the pleasure wrought by the process of destruction, then what is the import of the necrophilious to an examination of Ireland and Irishness within a colonial context? Within the concept of the necrophilious exists the potential to apply the idea to more abstract "bodies"—political bodies, cultural bodies, national bodies.

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and wish to gesture toward a general, textbook profile that serves as a good jumping off point for a discussion and understanding of Fromm's definition of necrophilious character.

[40] Killeen offers the specific example of Catholic-Protestant relations and argues that, following years of civil war and the metaphorical vanquishing of Catholicism in 1641 during which parliamentary oppression and dispossession of Catholics was fully enacted, the religion was viewed by eighteenth-century Anglicans as "cadaverous" and "a form of cultural death." This interpretation is part and parcel of the fear that Catholicism would return from the grave (158).

As Fromm notes in his example of the necrophilious murderer, destruction or death of the body is a necessary condition, but it is the act of dismemberment from which the desired relief, or satisfaction, is derived. That said, the necrophilious germ is always already a part of colonialism. The very ideology of British colonialism, indeed the colonizing act itself, is absolutely dependent upon dismemberment and consumption. The colonial necrophilious character is driven by the desire to conquer and assert ownership over national and cultural bodies (individual and collective, personal and political, physical and ideological), take them apart, and ravage them. The achievement of this conquest determines the social and political parameters of empire.

I do not at all mean to oversimplify something as complex as colonialism by establishing it simply as an ideology of sadism—quite the contrary. What I mean to argue is that, in terms of the colonial relationship between Ireland and England, the necrophilious is more political than sadistic. This argument is by no means an attempt to defang colonialism, though I must note that the preponderance of conveyor-belt criticism romanticizing Ireland and villainizing England in discussions of nineteenth-century national identity is unfortunate and often counterproductive in terms of offering a nuanced examination of constructions of Irishness.[41] Any discussion of Irish identity must endeavor to uncover the mechanism of colonial Othering and acknowledge that the colonial dismemberment of national bodies brings more benefit than that of land and

[41] In *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett*, Jim Hansen laments this trend in current scholarship, and singles out Joseph Valente and Seamus Deane as notable exceptions.

resources.[42] The very process of rending national bodies brings a personal and political self-awareness, serving as an affirmation of the colonizer's own identity as a ruling and powerful agent. Thus, the necrophilious is an integral and necessary part of this awareness.

Additionally, repetition is an essential element of the colonial desire for destruction, and it is this particularly gothic element that speaks to haunting and to the precarious, spectral state of Ireland, which is being and not being a national body, perpetual, yet fluctuating. Within colonial Ireland, things are topsy-turvy, disorienting, not quite what they seem. The imaginings of nation are associated with fear and anxiety. The foundations upon which ideas of nation are built—culture, economy, historical traces, language, and so forth—become, within a gothic context, unreliable, thus bringing attention to the mutable condition of such constructions.

In *The Chain of Destiny*, a short story serialized in four installments (from May 1 to May 22) in 1875 in the Dublin weekly periodical *The Shamrock*, Stoker explores these complications of identity, property, and the search for "genuine history."[43] At

[42] In this instance, I use the term "national bodies" to refer to the physical space and resources of countries, counties, territories, and so forth, but the term can also refer to political and cultural bodies as well.

[43] *The Chain of Destiny* appeared in *The Shamrock* three years before Stoker left Dublin for London. "A Stoker, Esq.," as he was then credited, published two previous works in *The Shamrock* that same year: his novella *The Primrose Path*, which explored the disastrous consequences of alcoholism, and his short story *Buried Treasures*, an adventure tale. In terms of context, it is important to note that *The Shamrock* had a clear nationalist stance, often publishing patriotic sheet music, poetry, folktales, and nationalist propaganda alongside serialized fiction. For example, the first installation of Stoker's story, published on May 1, 1875, is directly preceeded by a short piece entitled *Irish Gallantry*, which praises the Irishman for his impeccable manners, poetic sensibility, and balance of power and emotion. The Irishman, the piece states, is "born for triumphs: national, individual, and illimitable. England trembles to know this, but knows it too well" (*The Shamrock* 50). The issue also features Charles Kane O'Hara's

the center of his gothic narrative stands Scarp, an old house recently bought and remodeled, that serves as a remnant of the past, of what villagers call "times of horror" (Stoker 24). The house itself is a veritable microcosm of a colonial past. In his search for "genuine history," the narrator, Frank, is told that this history is not to be found in the stories told by villagers, but is in fact something much older, much more nebulous. When imagining such a history, Frank pictures "long lines of villagers, loyal to their suzerain lord" (24). The choice of "suzerain" to mark the locus of power within this account of history is significant, as it alludes to a colonial relationship. A suzerain lord rules over a nation, maintaining complete control over foreign affairs, while allowing only a marginal amount of domestic autonomy. Given Stoker's own feelings on the issue of Home Rule, it is not a stretch to draw a connection between the history within *The Chain of Destiny* and the historical relationship between Ireland and England. Within Stoker's story, history has been retold and rewritten to the point where the "truth" has been lost.[44] Along with the conventional gothic ghosts (a portrait that comes alive, doppelgängers, a prototypical Dracula figure called "the phantom of the Fiend"), history haunts the narrative. This example is reflective of the genre of the Irish Gothic.

The Legend of the Black Friar, which tells of the oppression of the friars at Carrickbeg Abbey. The legend concludes with the appearance of the ghostly Black Friar, who materializes during a siege of the Abbey orchestrated by William of Orange and frightens away the soldiers as he "waves through the air as if calling upon a host of invincible beings to advance and blot out the blood-stains of the memory of a past century" (50). These pieces are characteristic of the material published in *The Shamrock*; thus, it makes sense to keep this information in mind, along with the politics of the readership, when examining Stoker's, or indeed any, fiction serialized in its pages.

[44] As I mentioned earlier, the issue of "purity" is a theme common to Stoker's work, *Dracula* of course being the prime example. The search for "genuine history" in *The Chain of Destiny* reflects Stoker's fascination with contested ideas of "authenticity" and "truth."

Palimpsestic notions of identity and nation, as they are enacted and acted upon, are constantly being written, erased, and rewritten, perpetuating a constant building up of the new and, in doing so, a tearing down of the old. This process is ultimately rooted in repetition.

(3) The Gothic and Necrophilism: The Example of Stoker

Often relegated to the shadow of the more popular *Dracula*, Stoker's first novel, *The Snake's Pass*, has received only moderate critical attention. To be sure, *Dracula* is a choice text for explorations of Victorian fears and the idea of the Other, and it has become a prime textual example of the return of the colonial oppressed. It is also, of course, especially useful to those who study the nineteenth-century Gothic. That said, *The Snake's Pass*, while arguably less complex than *Dracula* in some ways, remains useful and exhibits evidence of the beginnings of themes that Stoker would continue to develop throughout his career.

The Snake's Pass, published seven years before *Dracula*, has been called Stoker's most "Irish" novel, and is often used as contextual evidence by scholars defending the case of *Dracula* as an Irish text. As Stoker's only novel to be set in his native Ireland and around a significant collection of Irish characters, it undoubtedly lends itself to speculations and interpretations of issues surrounding ideas of Irishness. Upon its initial publication, it was seen as a Romance, a tale of Irish country life. A reviewer from *Punch* called the novel

> a simple love-story, a pure idyl of Ireland, which does not seem, after all, to be so distressful a country to live in. Whiskey punch flows like milk

> through the land; the loveliest girls abound, and seem instinctively to be drawn towards the right man. Also there are jooled crowns to be found by earnest seekers, with at least one large packing-case crammed with rare coins. (Senf 55)

The reviewer went on to write that Stoker "knows the Irish peasant, and reproduces his talk with a fidelity which almost suggests that he, too, is descended from one of the early kings" (55). This is typical of the critical reception of *The Snake's Pass*, on both sides of the Atlantic. In an 1899 review of *Dracula*, a critic from the *San Francisco Chronicle* references *The Snake's Pass*, noting that "several years ago [Stoker] wrote a weird story about Irish life, but this is his first long romance" (Auerbach 366).

The *Punch* review of Stoker's novel is troublesome in obvious ways, the main one being the downplaying of the state of affairs in Ireland. To say that Ireland does not seem to be "so distressful a country to live in" is to ignore completely the overlying event of the novel—the creeping, ever-menacing bog, the destruction of the land itself—and to deny colonial impact. The Shifting Bog is, for all intents and purposes, a primary character of *The Snake's Pass*. The novel itself is centered around the bog's physical and symbolic importance. In a strictly material sense, the bog is illustrative of the problems that come along with destruction of Irish land. When Dick, a young English scientist, and Murdock, the local gombeen man and the novel's primary antagonist, section it off and dig into it in their search for a buried treasure, the integrity of the land is compromised, and the bog spreads beyond its borders to the farmland beyond. Metaphorically, the bog is representative of an Irish "body" that is exploited

for outside profit.[45] It also serves to provide the main tension of the narrative, as it threatens to sully the land around it, thus speaking to the complicated, colonial relationship between Ireland and England, and also to nineteenth-century fears of miscegenation. Though the *Punch* review is written in jest, the magazine was certainly not known as a sympathizer of Ireland. It is true, however, that *The Snake's Pass* embodies the conventions of a Romance, and includes what Joseph Valente calls the problematic "metropolitan marriage," which he defines as "an Anglocentric framework for projecting gendered, hierarchically disposed stereotypes of Englishness and Irishness under the sign of a harmonious reconciliation of the two lands and peoples" (Valente 12). The characters are, in many ways, undeniable stereotypes, and the novel is not what one may categorize as a "typical" Gothic novel like those of Radcliffe, Lewis, or even Le Fanu.[46] Nevertheless, I suggest that *The Snake's Pass*, a novel within which Stoker illustrates the very soil of Ireland as a gothic space, is an excellent text through which to examine constructions of Irishness, and to trace gothic narratives of consumption and oppression within a colonial context. This may seem a complicated task, as at first blush *The Snake's Pass* does not look like a Gothic novel; there are no bodies hiding behind curtains, grisly murders, or secret rooms. In fact, there are very few of what we might consider to be "typical" Gothic tropes, at least superficially. We also see little, if any, influence of writers like Le Fanu, whose *Carmilla* (1872) Stoker would later acknowledge as an inspiration for *Dracula*. What we do have, as I have

[45] I will go on to further discuss the importance of land in Stoker's novel later in this section.

[46] Joseph Valente calls attention to the problem of the inclusion of the metropolitan marriage narrative to readings, such as those offered by David Glover and others, of *The Snake's Pass* as a serious comment on the debates surrounding Home Rule.

previously claimed, is the presentation of Ireland as a gothic space, and the typical generic tropes are internalized in the people and the land itself.

When it comes to Ireland and the imaginings of nation, Seamus Deane argues that it is important to mark the distinction between "soil" and "land." He notes an 1847 exchange between Fintan Lalor, a leader of the Irish Confederation, and Gavin Duffy, editor of the Irish nationalist newspaper, *The Nation,* in which Lalor calls for an Ireland free from English government. Lalor makes clear connections between national identity and soil, writing of "Ireland her own, and all therein, from the sod to the sky. The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland, to have and to hold from God alone who gave it—to have and to hold to them and their heirs forever, without suit or service, faith or fealty, rent or render, to any power under Heaven" (Deane 128).[47] For Deane, this and other post-Famine writings of Lalor's mark a distinct political difference between land and soil, designating *soil* as "a material-metaphysical possession" in which "nation" is located and *land* as "a political legal entity" and the location of the "state" (Deane 129). Within Deane's argument, the definitions of the two terms are clearly separated and speak to Anderson's concept of imagined national identity. The land, as a marker of the state, is within the confines of established government, in this case English law. The soil, however, is a physical and metaphorical reminder of the mutable quality of conceptions of Irish nation, a spectral "thing" not defined along judicial lines.

This designation is especially helpful when examining the Irish Gothic. As Deane notes, the Gothic is "devoted to the question of ownership, wills, testaments, hauntings of places formerly owned…" (132). He offers *Dracula* as a prime illustration

[47] These comments were contained in a letter between Lalor and Duffy, which Duffy later published in *The Nation* on April 24, under the title "A New Nation" (Deane 128).

of this devotion, calling it a "story of an absentee landlord who is dependent in his London residence on the maintenance of a supply of soil in which he might coffin himself before the dawn comes" (132). *Dracula* is certainly an apt vehicle for exploring constructions of the colonial Other, and the practice of reading the novel as an Irish text, as Deane does here, is undeniably attractive. That said, if one is to look at the importance of soil (and, through that, nation) within the Irish Gothic, *The Snake's Pass* has much to offer beyond the readily identifiable advantage of actually being set in Ireland, for the soil, in this narrative, is the locus of physical manifestations of Irish nation. For example, the treasure that is the object of Murdock's desire is a chest of gold coins, hidden somewhere deep within the Shifting Bog, that had been left by France to aid the Irish Revolutionaries. At the close of the novel, Arthur, the novel's English protagonist who has inherited land near Shleenanaher, and Dick find the treasure with the skeletons of the two French couriers still clutching the handles on either end of the chest. Dick states that "they did their duty nobly, they guarded their treasure to the last" and goes on to exclaim that "France should be proud of such sons. It would make a noble coat of arms, this treasure-chest sent by freemen to aid others, and with two such supporters!" (Stoker 207). This "treasure-chest sent by freemen to aid others" immediately speaks to the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and, more specifically, *Bliain na bhFrancach*, or the Year of the French.[48] On August 22, 1798, a small French force landed in the west of Ireland, near northwest county Mayo (just north of county Clare, where *The Snake's Pass* is set), and within five days the French and United Irish soldiers defeated a much larger opposition in Castlebar, in what would be remembered

[48] The French Revolution was, of course, a significant influence on the decision of the United Irishmen to seek French assistance.

as “Races at Castlebar”; the “Republic of Connaught” was established soon after the victory “in the style of French satellite republics” (Beiner 6). Later that same year, the Republic fell to government forces. The French offenders were held as prisoners of war, while the Irish participants of the insurgency fell victim to a mass execution.[49]

Dick and Arthur’s discovery of the French treasure, which sets Stoker’s narrative within a clear colonial context by echoing the events of 1798, is important in two main respects. First, it lends itself nicely to Lalor’s (and Deane’s, for that matter) argument of soil versus land. In *The Snake’s Pass*, the two competing concepts are embodied in a single entity: the Shifting Bog. Arguably the principle character in the novel, the bog is a frightening, ambiguous, threatening mass. It is a thing that is simultaneously changing and being changed (principally by Dick, who is sectioning it off for scientific study, and Murdock, who is searching for the French treasure). Chris Morash suggests that the bog is representative of Homi Bhabha’s idea of the “colonial signifier,” which is “an act of ambivalent signification, literally splitting the difference between binary oppositions or polarities through which we think of cultural difference; it is a thing that is ‘neither one nor other’” (Morash 128).[50] This metaphor is valuable to an examination of imaginings of Irishness, as it recalls again Derrida’s principles of hauntology—the colonial signifier runs parallel to the specter. The ambiguity of the

[49] In *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (2007), Guy Beiner offers an interesting look at not just the relationship between French and United Irish forces, but at the myriad ways the events of the Rebellion of 1798 are remembered, and places special emphasis on memorials, folk stories, and ceremonies. Additionally, Marianne Elliott’s *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (1982) provides a detailed history of the Rebellion, the events leading up to it, and the mythic legacy of the event.

[50] Bhabha discusses the importance of the colonial signifier in *The Location of Culture* (1994).

bog, its state of constant flux, situates it as an object of fear. One can never fully grasp its import, as its perpetual movement excludes it from easy definition or control; it becomes familiar yet unfamiliar.

Once Arthur has bought up most of the land surrounding *Shleenanaher* (The Snake's Pass), he is informed by Dick that whatever lies beneath the bog belongs to Arthur, as he is now owner of the land. Again, the problems of soil and land arise. In terms of the law, Arthur is the legal owner of the land; in terms of his position, he takes ownership of the soil. By discovering the treasure that was "sent by freemen to help *others*" (i.e. the Irish) and taking ownership of it, Arthur essentially claims a thing that is material, in dramatic terms, and yet utterly spectral—it is a thing upon which Irish identity is imagined, and Arthur exercises English dominance over it, thus repeating colonial narratives of oppression.[51]

If we examine the bog's significance as a metaphorical body, this reading attaches added importance to Dick's strategy of suppressing the bog. In lecturing Arthur on his scientific methods, Dick states, "In fine, we cure the bog by both a surgical and medical process. We drain it so that its mechanical action as a sponge may be stopped, and we put in lime to kill the vital principle of its growth. Without the other, neither process is sufficient; but together, scientific and executive man asserts his dominance" (44). Here, the bog can be seen as representative of the Irish national "body," or, at the very least, something upon which the national body is imagined. The violent and methodical suppression of the bog Dick is proposing strikes a particularly

[51] By "thing" I mean to refer to the treasure itself, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the historical and cultural significance of it. The treasure is, in itself, representative of Irish national resistance against colonial forces.

ominous chord. Similarly, Glover suggests that the bog can be interpreted as a sexual "body," noting Stoker's choice of the word "demoralize" to describe Dick's suppression of the bog. Dick reveals his fears of the bog creeping over the land around it, stating that the land might "mingle with [the bog], become incorporated with its semifluid substance, and form a new and dangerous quagmire, incapable of sustaining solid weight"; for Glover it is "as if the decomposition of the land can only be properly grasped by somehow being mapped onto cultural fears" (48).[52] Here, there is a connection to an overlying theme in *Dracula*: miscegenation. The fear of being corrupted by a thing one can't define, and the strong desire to suppress it, runs throughout *The Snake's Pass*.

This repetition of narratives of oppression and the emphasis placed on issues of ownership do much to comfortably situate Stoker's novel within the Gothic. Endeavoring to exert control over the bog, whether it be through removing things from it or trying to confine it, is a fearful enterprise, as the bog is consistently dynamic, at once moving inward and outward in all directions. It is indicative of an uncertain present being swallowed up by a shadowy past, and produces a markedly eerie tension, an anxiety of identification.

In addition to the Shifting Bog, Ireland's contentious past is also embodied in the ghostly Snake King. The Snake King is the constant throughout the narrative, as stories of him or traces of him are always lurking. Like the bog, he is a figure that speaks simultaneously to Ireland's past and present. Upon arriving in County Clare, Arthur is regaled by the locals with the legend of Shleenanaher and the Snake King.

[52] This passage from Stoker's novel is taken from Glover's text.

According to local lore, when St. Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland, the Snake King resisted, insisting on his place as the true ruler. In an effort to retain his power he hid his jeweled crown from St. Patrick, placing it deep inside the mountain. The story, as told to Arthur by Jerry, a local villager, ends with the Snake King's reply to St. Patrick,

> 'An'till ye git me crown I'm king here still, though ye banish me. An' mayhap I'll come in some forum what ye don't expect, for I must watch me crown. An' now I go away—iv me own accord.' An' widout one word more, good or bad, he shlid right away into the say, dhrivin' through the rock an' makin' the clift that they call the Shleenanaher—an' that's Irish for the Shnake's Pass—until this day. (15)

Immediately, the Snake King is situated as a revenant, linked to folklore, Irish language, and resistance. He leaves traces in addition to the legend, including physical traces, like the tunnel he digs through the mountain (the Shleenanaher), the Ogham inscriptions left inside the pass, and the crown itself. The use of Ogham, an early "alphabet" of collected symbols carved into rock through the use of sharply pointed instruments, connects the Snake King to a Celtic (and even perhaps a pre-Celtic) Ireland. He is ancient, anchored in the past, and yet possesses the ability to return, to come back through the centuries to his homeland. The legend itself uses the same language to speak of both the Snake King and the bog, marking them as being part of the same metaphorical body. Again, the spectral residue of cultural and national identity is mingled with the soil.

So, all things considered, where does the necrophilious fit into Stoker's text? To begin to explore this question, we must first look at Stoker's political leanings, and particularly at his stance on Home Rule. Though *The Snake's Pass* may not necessarily serve as Stoker's "Home Rule Manifesto," it demonstrates a clear awareness of issues surrounding the debate. Throughout his lifetime, Stoker wavered in his views on Irish nationalism, but eventually came down on the side of the Irish, albeit lightly, and was a great admirer of William Gladstone. Still, his political views remained a bit complicated. On the one hand, when recording the events of a visit to Belfast, he made note of the fact that "Belfast is the very home of fiery and flamboyant oratory and all our local friends were red-hot Orangemen" (Stoker 58). While Stoker was clearly comfortable among this company, he did seemingly express relief that, in a night full of "lots of speeches" he was "spared any contentious matter, though the harmless periods of the oratory of the 'Northern Acropolis,' as some of them called their native city, were pressed into service" (58-9). Hardly a flag-waving nationalist, Stoker blended easily into loyalist circles and was not averse to discuss the "glory of Empire" with groups of friends and individually with celebrated actor Henry Irving, as exhibited in Stoker's *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*.[53] On the other hand, there were occasional political disagreements between Stoker and Irving. For example, Stoker writes that Irving, though he had little interest in politics, was "always chaffing" Stoker about his support of Home Rule. According to Stoker, Irving took great pleasure in taking the "violently opposite side" of a debate, and it seems that Stoker took similar pleasure in

[53] *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, vol 1, p. 342.

discussing his philosophical support of Home Rule (343).[54] In the case of *The Snake's Pass*, there is similar controversy as to whether or not Stoker published the novel as a response to Home Rule. In his discussion of *The Snake's Pass* and Home Rule, Chris Morash calls attention to the fact that Stoker sent a copy of the novel to William Gladstone, designating this act as a clue to the text's political significance.[55] Conversely, Joseph Valente takes issue with this assumption and directly responds to Morash's argument by passing off Stoker's action on the author's "passion for the company and approbation of great men," noting that Stoker was "more likely to seek objectives as a topical novelist than as a policy expert" (Valente 149). Whether or not the novel is ultimately a statement on the Irish land question, to ignore the presence of colonial issues would be to take the novel completely out of context, and to overlook the fact that Stoker had personal and philosophical interest in Irish politics. Perhaps *The Snake's Pass* does not stand as a clear "Home Rule Manifesto," but it clearly highlights the problematic constructions of Irishness involved in the debate over Home Rule.

The tenets informing the Home Rule movement run parallel, in terms of the necrophilious, to narratives of dismemberment and consumption in *The Snake's Pass*. Arthur, having inherited land in Western Ireland, travels over from England to

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[54] In *Reminiscences*, Stoker recounts a rather humorous story in which, during a discussion of Home Rule, he and Irving come across a policeman. Irving, thinking the bobby will support his views, exclaims, "Here comes the voice of England. Just listen to it and learn!" Upon being asked about "the troubles in Ireland," however, the bobby blames the "dirty Gover'mint," speaking in an brogue that "might have been cut with a hatchet." Stoker ends by adding that afterward he often "managed to bring in the 'Voice of England' whenever Irving began to chaff about Home Rule" (344).

[55] *"Ever Under Some Unnatural Condition": Bram Stoker and the Colonial Fantastic*, p. 112.

"familiarize himself with Irish affairs" (6). He sees the villagers living around Shleenanaher as exotic and equates them with simplicity and honesty as opposed to "the more artificial existence of [his] own station" (81). This collision of artifice and authenticity, or "the natural," echoes themes explored by Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The major difference here, though, is that the Other is labeled as "authentic" and the English Arthur labels himself as "artificial." Still, this association serves to adequately mark the Irish as Other, and Arthur's romantic visions of Irish authenticity are in keeping with English paternalist views of Ireland. For instance, Arthur likens his driver, Andy, to a child and shrugs it off when Andy (clearly the voice of the people of Shleenanaher) speaks of the poverty consuming the village. For Andy, who thinks that patched clothing is "more frightfuller nor even the polis," poverty is worse than a crime. He tells Arthur, "Most crimes is forgave afther a bit; an' the law is done wid ye whin ye're atin' yer skilly. But there's some people… what'd rather see ye in a good shute iv coffin than in a bad shute iv clothes!" (157). Arthur chides Andy, calling him "cynical" and "quite a philosopher," rejecting Andy's realism in favor of his own picturesque appreciation of the village. In this context, the Irish inhabitants of Shleenanaher are held at arms length, defined against Arthur's Englishness. They are, therefore, locked into the role of colonial subjectivity and become, in their need for authoritative guidance (at least as far as Arthur is concerned), acceptable to consume, economically speaking.

As he begins buying up the land piece by piece, Arthur calls it his "good fortune" to have come across Irish families who "wished to emigrate" and quickly buys up their bankrupt properties, soon owning the village and the mountain in its near

entirety. So, if the soil is akin to a national "body," this process of dismemberment and consumption, carried out under the guise of paternalism, is a sinister colonial exercise indeed. To complicate this reading further, Arthur's actions exist alongside, and in relation to, those of Black Murdock, a sinister, opportunistic moneylender, or gombeen man. All things considered, Black Murdock and Arthur have similar goals in terms of obtaining land. Whereas Arthur benefits from the guise of paternalism, however, Murdock is depicted as a more stereotypical gothic antagonist. He is dark and aggressive, maniacally single-minded in his quest, a constant threat to those living around him. It is also significant that Stoker employs common derogatory methods to transform Murdock into a coarse Irish caricature, using Murdock's ethnic Irish identity to intensify his force as a villain. Murdock is completely dehumanized by Dick, who during a disagreement says to Murdock, "Of course I don't expect a fellow of your stamp to understand a gentleman's feelings—damn it! How can you have a gentleman's understanding when you haven't even a man's?" (48). Additionally, he is referred to as a "black-jawed ruffian," a "divil," and likened to a "wild beast" who emits a "wild, savage cry" (25-27). Like Radcliffe's Montoni, Murdock is positioned as an object of fear because of his otherness, but this depiction of Murdock goes far beyond that of Montoni. He is not just frightening because he is foreign or mysterious. The terror in the text, as far as Murdock is concerned, stems from his questionable humanness. This depiction, along with Stoker's use of Murdock as a scapegoat for all of the ills of the narrative, is what, for Valente, makes *The Snake's Pass* an unlikely champion of Home Rule.

The dehumanization of Murdock marks within the text a clear connection between the Irish Murdock and the Irish soil. Tellingly, Arthur has a series of dreams in which the Snake King's head morphs into the face of Murdock. Of his dream of Shleenanaher, Arthur recalls that "The Hill seemed to be ever under some uncomfortable or unnatural condition. When my dreams began it was bathed in a flood of yellow moonlight, and at its summit was the giant Snake, the jewel of whose crown threw out an unholy glare of yellow light, and whose face and form kept perpetually changing to those of Murtagh Murdock" (176). The melding of Murdock, the Snake King, Shleenanaher, and the bog creates a strange national amalgam and suggests a spectral national identity is the thing that haunts the narrative. It is a thing that is being and not being, a dangerous thing, and the soil, the people, and mythology are all a part of it. Ultimately, these apparitions illustrate Arthur's simultaneous acknowledgement of an Irish past and fear of a future, independent Ireland in which the revenant returns once again. Yet this anxiety that threatens Arthur's colonial identity feeds his desire to consume. By obtaining property and placing himself in a station of superiority (intellectually, philosophically, biologically, and so on), Arthur acquires power, and, in doing so, absorbs Irish autonomy. Each metaphorical limb severed brings pleasure, the pleasure of reaffirmation of colonial identity—a necessary pleasure completely dependent on a narrative of colonial oppression in which the colonizer defines himself by defining the Other as a consumable body. The instability of Irishness becomes the stability of the Englishman.

Chapter Three

Locating the "Soul of the Soil" in the Big House Novel

(1) Conventions and History: A Complicated Colonialism

A discussion of the Irish Gothic proves an ideal transition to a discussion of the Big House novel. Much as the Irish Gothic evolved within a rapidly changing political climate and reflected Ireland's precarious position in its colonial relationship with England, so, too, did the almost exclusively Anglo-Irish genre of Big House fiction. The inherently political underpinnings of both genres lead to striking similarities, particularly in the attention paid to themes of disputed inheritance and land ownership, oppression, and miscegenation. To return for a moment to Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, we can see clear connections between the Gothic and the elements of Big House fiction. For instance, a requisite theme of the Big House novel is the complicated issue of inheritance in terms both physical (who owns what lands, to whom the big house will be entailed, who will be in charge of maintaining tenant-landlord relations, and so forth) and symbolic (location of national identity, the problem of the Ascendancy). Though *Uncle Silas* more readily offers itself up to a reading of the Gothic, it has clear connections to the Big House genre in terms of the disputed inheritance within the Ruthyn clan. Following the upset brought about by the codicil to his brother's will, the sinister Silas sets out to undermine Maude's claim to the ancestral family home, Bartram-Haugh, and the added financial security that goes along with it. While Bartram-Haugh itself, with its dark, winding, staircases, secret passageways, and locked

rooms, is firmly rooted in the Gothic tradition, the home, and all that is associated with it, is what also ties the narrative to the Big House genre.

As it stands, the nineteenth-century big house was a mainstay of the Irish political landscape—a tribute to English power. It is important to note that these were not simply ancestral homes, but centers of large estates, immense expanses of land (much of it confiscated from native Irish owners centuries before) that anchored the entire rural economy as the center of agricultural production. These estates were owned by landlords who were almost exclusively Protestant, though there were a handful of prominent Catholic landowners by the 1870's.[56] A portion of the lands surrounding the big house was used by the family and a larger portion rented out to tenant farmers. These tenant farmers, often native Irish Catholics, had an existence distinctly different from the landlords' in terms of class, culture, and religion, suffering religious oppression, loss of language, and crippling poverty. As the nineteenth century progressed and tenants became increasingly dissatisfied with their impoverished positions on the estate, dissatisfaction grew into unrest, and unrest into revolt, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Indeed, the big house stood amid this growing political upheaval as an object of contempt to the Irish peasantry, offering a constant reminder that Ireland was indeed an occupied colonial space. Thus, the Big House novel, a genre that runs roughly from the 1800 Act of Union well into the twentieth century and the Irish fight for independence, is both a reflection and exploration of what remains a very complicated colonialism.

[56] Terrence Dooley notes the example of the Earl of Granard, a Catholic landlord who was in possession of around 15,000 acres of land in the midland counties of Longford and Leitrim. Also, George Henry Moore, father of novelist George Moore, was a Catholic landlord, and worked very hard to cement his image as such.

For Le Fanu, the big house is a gothicized space, a brick and mortar manifestation of a long history of oppression, that houses inhabitants who are ultimately doomed to lives of misery or uncertainty. This history in itself gestures toward the overarching query in Big House fiction: to whom does Ireland belong? If Ireland is truly for the Irish, and the Act of Union oppressive, then how is Irishness defined? Moreover, where does this history leave the Anglo-Irish products of the Ascendancy? Negotiating the implications of Anglo-Irish identity in terms of nationality emerges as a primary concern for Big House writers, as Julian Moynahan emphasizes in arguing that Anglo-Irish identity embodies "the doubled or split consciousness of a unique situation, this situation entailing, on the one hand, a link with, yet removal from, English origins and English society; and on the other, a closeness to, and yet a removal from, the Irish community" (Moynahan 13). Furthermore, where does this history leave the landowning classes in a country where their way of life and sustenance are becoming obsolete?

These questions that whirl around within big house narratives, like those of Maria Edgeworth, George Moore, and the later works of Somerville and Ross and Elizabeth Bowen, indicate an uneasy sense of identity similar to what we see in the Irish Gothic.[57] The Gothic, however, has the luxury of dwelling in the imagination; the use of the fantastic or supernatural may hint at social or political criticism, but the narrative is not bound by the strictures of realism. This is not to say that the Big House novel fits into the tradition of novelistic realism in a straightforward way. Terry Eagleton reminds

[57] Somerville and Ross was the collective pseudonym under which Edith Somerville and her cousin, Violet Martin, published. Individually, they were known professionally as "A. Æ. Somerville" and "Martin Ross."

us that realism operates under the assumption "that the world is story-shaped—that there is a well-formed narrative implicit in reality itself, which it is the task of such realism to represent" (Eagleton 147). The national stage of nineteenth-century Ireland, however, is anything but "story-shaped," and the political instability surrounding power struggles between landlords and tenants is far from a simple progressive narrative. However, while the Big House novel is certainly rooted in fiction, and is by no means to be read as an historical play-by-play of nineteenth-century rural Ireland, there is a clear devotion to a certain stain of realism, as politically and artistically colored as it may be, that is committed to presenting Irish life in a way the Gothic cannot, exposing a nation on the verge of sweeping change.

Historical change is at the heart of the Big House novel and must be considered in any examination of the genre. The big house, along with the fiction it inspires, is a product of a colonial history. Vera Kreilkamp argues that Ireland's colonial history, of which the big house is an integral part, must be acknowledged in any study of the Big House novel, as it is the catalyst for the genre. For Kreilkamp, to examine this genre is "to trace the gradual evolution of a literary symbol set against the political history of class and sectarian conflict, rather than conciliation" (Kreilkamp 4). The Big House novel is a reflexive entity, born of conflict to explore conflict, a genre unfolding alongside famine, agricultural depression and outrages, evictions, and the rise of political figures like William Gladstone or Charles Stewart Parnell, who would forever change the country of Ireland. Much as in the case of Irish Gothic, a spectral history hangs over the big house, and its inhabitants cannot escape the reality that there will be no smooth conclusion to it. The acceptance and exploration of the conflicts stemming

from the hyphenated culture of the big house helps to form the basic conventions of the literary genre.

In the most general terms, the Big House novel is an in-depth look at an institution that is on its way out (or, in the early nineteenth century, feared to be on its way out), chronicling over time life inside and around the house and its eventual decay. Reflective of the nineteenth-century system of land tenure in Ireland and the ethical objections surrounding it, the Big House tradition is very much concerned with the ins and outs of landlordism and presents a particular fear that lands confiscated by the Ascendancy will one day be claimed, or reclaimed, by the native Irish tenantry. Land is what drives the genre in terms of method and narrative, and what lies at the center of imaginings of national identity. As previously noted, these novels are primarily written by Anglo-Irish writers who had first-hand experience of the big house environment; they were writing from within the walls, so to speak. Therefore, there is a particular focus on the gentry. Readers are treated to lavish dinners, balls, and marriage-market drama that would put any Austenian event to shame. There are manners and linen napkins and polite conversation by the fire. There is also, however, the ever-looming knowledge that the way of life inside the big house is only temporary.

Harbingers of change within the Big House novel often come in the form of outsiders: peasants who revolt and strike, characters of questionable birth who can potentially sully an established big house family, a strange relative come to claim the family fortune, and the like. Sometimes Gladstone or Parnell play the part of the bogeyman, progressive politics being a useful tool to express anxieties surrounding the

fading Irish gentry.[58] The structural state of the big house (often depicted as being in disrepair, rotting and falling in on itself) is also important, as it is indicative of the instability of Ireland's elite, landowning class. Given all this, it is useful to look to a specific example of the Big House novel to help illustrate these conventions, the best place to begin being, of course, at the beginning.

(2) *Castle Rackrent*: The Civilizing Mission

Considered by most critics to be the first Big House novel, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, which was published anonymously, serves as a glimpse into both life inside the big house and the relationships between Ireland's peasantry and landowning elite.[59] In terms of historical context, it is important to note that *Rackrent* was published in 1800, the same year as the Act of Union, which would in effect abolish the Dublin Parliament and move it to London, thus binding Ireland to England, Scotland, and Wales under a common British flag. The novel also came on the heels of the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798 (an event to which I refer in the previous chapter during my

[58] This is not to say that Big House novels ignore the tenantry. Writers such as John and Michael Banim, William Carleton, and Charles Kickham place a great deal of emphasis on peasant life and strive to present a more in-depth look at life outside the walls of the big house. Additionally, George Moore dedicates a good portion of *A Drama in Muslin* to tenant life, as I will discuss thoroughly later in this chapter. Though these writers deal with the problems of the big house, I would argue that, excepting Moore, they are more solidly in the camp of the National Tale, especially in the case of Carleton and Kickham. I will discuss these writers at greater length in chapter four.

[59] As *Castle Rackrent* was one of the first major novels to address Irish issues in the English language, it is also considered by some critics to be the first Anglo-Irish novel, as well as the first historical novel, though some grant this title to Walter Scott's *Waverley*, which was published in 1814, fourteen years after *Castle Rackrent*. This said, I will be focusing on the novel's place as the original Big House novel.

discussion of Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*). *Castle Rackrent* is, without a doubt, a political product, and to get a clearer impression of the novel's import, it is helpful to look at the political life of Maria Edgeworth's father and frequent editor, Richard Lovell Edgeworth.

The Edgeworth family had been in Ireland nearly two centuries, situated in their ancestral home of Edgeworthstown, by the time Maria was writing novels. Richard, a landlord of his vast family estate, aligned himself with political causes that were somewhat opposed to those of his fellow members of the Protestant Anglo-Irish gentry, which resulted in Richard and his family becoming rather isolated from their County Longford community. For example, his participation in Catholic relief, an early movement for Catholic emancipation, and his outspoken support of the French Revolution marked Richard as a rebel, even though he was much more "progressive" than "revolutionary."[60] In her definitive look at Maria Edgeworth's literary life, Marilyn Butler notes an instance during the 1798 Uprising, following an Anglo-Irish defeat of French troops only miles from the Edgeworth estate, when Richard was nearly lynched by an angry mob, the group having been "harangued by one of the Protestant bands of militia, who claimed Edgeworth was a French spy and had been signaling to his allies from the roof of the town gaol" (Butler 138). This is probably the most dramatic example of the palpable tension between Richard and his conservative Protestant neighbors. As a landlord, Richard was fair (at least as far as the current

[60] While it was true Edgeworth supported the French Revolution, and to a certain extent supported the spread of similar ideologies in Ireland, he did not support the idea of the French aiding the United Irishmen in their uprising. For all his uncharacteristically progressive political views, Edgeworth believed in reform in Ireland, not necessarily in outright revolt.

system of land tenure would allow), making sure his tenants were "kept regularly employed, well housed, and effectively secure of their land," a philosophy that clearly had an impact on Maria, who took it as her task to use her platform as a popular novelist to convince her readers to follow her father's "enlightened" example. We can clearly see this influence in *Castle Rackrent* and in Maria's later works, such as *The Absentee* (1812) and *Ormond* (1817), which both prominently feature heroic landlords (Butler 115, 125). A problem arises, however, when we acknowledge that it is impossible to get around the fact that championing a landlord, even a progressive one, is a clear mark of allegiance to the colonial system of land tenure in Ireland.

The structure of *Castle Rackrent*, subtitled *An Hibernian Tale. Taken from Facts, and from the Manners of the Irish Squires, Before the Year 1782*, involves on the inside an historical account of the Rackrent family, very likely based on Edgeworth's own ancestors, narrated by the Rackrent's aging steward and perhaps Edgeworth's most popular character, Thady Quirk.[61] This account is framed by commentary from an Editor, a distinctly male, authoritative voice that exudes Englishness and helps translate Thady's dialect and idiomatic expressions for readers who might not be familiar with the native Irish (i.e. English readers).[62] In addition to a preface and footnotes, the Editor also provides an extensive glossary to accompany the novel. The preface begins with a discussion of the role of the historian, bolstering the idea that *Castle Rackrent* is indeed a true account of a family of Irish squires. It goes on to state its purpose as a

[61] From this point onward, I will refer to Maria by her surname and will use "Richard Edgeworth" when referring to her father.
[62] *Castle Rackrent* was first published in London by Joseph Johnson, who published many groundbreaking volumes, including work by Mary Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth family friend Erasmus Darwin.

guide for readers who might find Thady's story to be "scarcely intelligible" or "perfectly incredible." Edgeworth writes

> For the information of the *ignorant* English reader a few notes have been subjoined by the editor, and he had it once in contemplation to translate the language of Thady into plain English; but Thady's idiom is incapable of translation, and besides, the authenticity of his story would have been more exposed to doubt, if it were not told in his own characteristic manner. (xii,xiii)

Edgeworth, writing as the editor, goes on to emphasize that the stories included in Thady's narrative are "tales of other times" and that figures like the Rackrent men—"the drunken Sir Patrick, the litigious Sir Murtagh, the fighting Sir Kit, and the slovenly Sir Condy"— are no longer to be found in Ireland, their replacements having "acquired new habits, and a new consciousness" (xiv, xv). This idea of a "new consciousness" leads into the conclusion of the preface, and to what seems to be the primary, driving point of the piece: that just like individuals, nations eventually lose their identity, and "when Ireland loses her identity by an union with Great Britain, she will look back with a smile of good humored complacency on the Sir Kits and Sir Condys of her former existence" (xv, xvi). This small addition to the text, which was actually written by Edgeworth after *Castle Rackrent* went to print and was at first bundled along with the individual copies of the novel, does a great deal to complicate the politics of the work. The Editor's explicit reference to loss of national identity clearly positions Ireland in a submissive role and plays down the importance of Irish national identity by illustrating it as something that will be seen in retrospect as unimportant, a kind of youthful folly.

It also calls into question what the Editor could mean when he refers to the identity of Ireland. Tellingly, Ireland is looking back on the Sir Kits and Sir Condys, not on the Thady Quirks. The Editor presents the Anglo-Irish face of Ireland and elides its native roots. Considering the 1800 publication date of *Castle Rackrent*, and the anxious events of the 1798 Rebellion just preceding it, it is not difficult to imagine why Edgeworth's distancing herself from the native Irish might be desirable. It was the dawn of Union, and publishing a high-profile novel highlighting elements of Irish national identity or emphasizing the differences between England and Ireland could prove highly problematic, to say the least, especially considering Richard Edgeworth's already volatile political position.[63]

All things considered, it is easy to read the preface as an effort to perhaps soften Thady's narrative and to categorize *Castle Rackrent* as an unquestionably pro-Union work, and having the English Editor speak of Union as an inevitable ideological triumph expresses an overt colonial mentality. Within the confines established in the preface, there is no way to evaluate Irishness outside the context of Englishness, whereas without the preface such an evaluation seems more conceivable, if only slightly more so. The squires presented in Thady's narrative are extinct (as the preface takes the narrative, which could easily be seen as a contemporary account, and strategically hurls it backward into nebulous "other times"), and Thady himself is reduced to such a simple stereotype. He doesn't even rate being included in the Editor's construction of Irish national identity; the "new consciousness" of the generations of Irish squires proceeding the Rackrents is part and parcel of identification with England.

[63] Richard did not vote in favor of the Act of Union for political reasons, though he did see clear economic advantages of the movement.

For Seamus Deane, Edgeworth's fixation on national character as a political and narrative tool can be broken down to a battle between enlightenment and romanticism, the former being supported by Protestant and British values and the latter by those that are Catholic and Irish. The overarching point to keep in mind when examining the "civilizing mission" that is Edgeworth's fiction, though, is "that her Irish Protestants have to be recuperated from a long degradation which has led to their impoverishment and irresponsibility. So restored, they will redeem the other Irish from their native and unreliable, if endearing, romanticism" (Deane 33). This civilizing mission is clear in *Castle Rackrent*: the historical account of the Rackrents, filtered through Thady's romantic narrative, illustrating the degradation of the landowning elite and the preface offering assurance of reformation.

Indubitably, the Rackrent squires have their fair share of flaws. Sir Patrick, who inherits the estate from his cousin on the condition he change his name from O'Shaughlin to Rackrent, is a hopeless alcoholic (said to be the inventor of "raspberry whiskey") who spends money on drink and parties even though his money is gone, and whose dead body is "seized for debt" at his funeral to cover his extensive bills.[64] Sir Murtagh is a penurious lawyer who challenges his family debts by wrapping up his creditors in lawsuits. His wife, a daughter of the aptly named Skinflint family, exploits the tenants on the Rackrent estate by collecting "duty" goods, such as fowls, turkeys, geese, fish, eggs, and honey, and knows "to a tub of butter everything the tenants had,

[64] On the condition of the name change, Thady notes that the name O'Shaughlin was "related to the kings of Ireland" and that Sir Patrick took the proviso quite personally, but he "thought better of it afterwards, seeing how large a stake depended upon it" (6).

all around" (15).[65] The tenants, frightened by the possibility Sir Murtagh will bring suit, acquiesce to her demands even though it means they will have to work all the harder to provide basic necessities for themselves. Murtagh eventually dies from a broken blood vessel, brought on by the stress of his many financial tangles. Thady notes that he heard wail for Sir Murtagh the very same Banshee that his grandfather heard call for Sir Patrick only days before his death. As the Banshee, or *bean sidhe*, is a fixture in Irish folklore, the Editor takes it upon himself to provide a footnote for the "*ignorant* English readers" referenced in the preface. The Banshee is referred to as "a species of aristocratic fairy," known to sing to members of prominent families, heralding their imminent death. The footnote ends with the assurance that "[i]n the last century every great family in Ireland had a Banshee, who attended regularly, but latterly their visits and songs have been discontinued" (21). This echoes the guarantee of the preface: that Ireland will lose her national identity upon becoming a part of Britain. Verbally erasing a mainstay of ancient Irish folklore betrays an implicit strategic progression in Edgeworth's civilizing mission, and is a clear distancing of her Anglo-Irish squires from Ireland's Celtic history.

Sir Kit, the penultimate Rackrent to maintain control of the estate, begins as an absentee landlord, choosing to live abroad in Bath and leave the day-to-day dealings up to the agent. It is at this point in the narrative that the agent is established as a villainous type—a "middle man" who would "grind the face of the poor" and who

[65] Included in the Glossary is an entry on "duty work," which results from a clause in a lease requiring the tenant to provide certain goods or perform certain personalized jobs for the landlord, in addition to his own obligations. This duty work was often to the detriment to the tenant's welfare, frequently resulting in a degraded harvest and, thus, late payment of rents. Edgeworth, writing as the Editor, calls this institution of duty work "the height of absurd injustice."

"ferretted the tenants out of their lives—not a week without a call for money" (29-30). In a long footnote, the agent, or "middle man," is described essentially as a hired goon, one who combats non- or late payment of rents with seizure and sale of the tenants' harvests, sometimes at double the amount actually owed. Perhaps most important, though, is that the agent is presented as a low, vulgar counterpart to the genteel landlord, who has the luxury of maintaining a pretense of noble generosity in his absence. The middle man is a "new" man; that is to say, he is representative of an emerging Irish middle class and is described by the Editor as one characterized by "servility to his superiors, and tyranny towards his inferiors" (29). This depiction of the agent, as one who acquires power through business as opposed to birth, becomes especially important when examining the character of Thady's son, Jason Quirk, as I will do later in this chapter.

Sir Kit finally returns to Castle Rackrent, having made an advantageous marriage to a wealthy Jewish woman after gambling away his fortune. Thady immediately dislikes her when it becomes clear that she knows little to nothing about Ireland or Irish life, expressing her ignorance of turf stacks, barrack rooms, and bogs, and exclaims, "To be sure to hear her talk, one might have taken her for an innocent, for it was 'what's this, Sir Kit? And what's that, Sir Kit?... To be sure, Sir Kit had enough to do to answer her" (41). As a loyal Irishman, Thady is eager to defend the nation of his birth, and as a loyal steward of the Rackrent family, he is only too quick to criticize (inwardly, of course) the new Lady Rackrent once Sir Kit displays his clear displeasure in her ignorance. Kit goes on to prove himself a rake and a brute, keeping his wife locked up in her room for seven years while philandering with various young women.

He is eventually killed by receiving "a ball in a vital part" during a duel with the angry brother of one of his dalliances (55).

The descriptions of the Rackrent men are almost comical, as if the corruption of the Anglo-Irish gentry must be presented in hyperbole to be believed. Still, despite all their flaws, Thady remains a loyal servant of and constant apologist for the family. And while his odd speech and unfamiliar colloquialisms serve to label him as a simple-but-honest figure, his blind affection for the Rackrents does much to call into question his reliability as a narrator. One of the very few native Irish characters in the novel, Thady Quirk is a champion of good, old-fashioned feudalism; he is just one in a long line of Quirks bound to the big house, and he knows his role. As a narrator, he constantly defends the actions of his masters, even when the absurdity of such a response is painfully clear to the reader. For instance, in an anti-Semitic interlude, Thady defends the actions of Sir Kit, blaming his Jewish wife for his poor fortune, saying that he would have "made a good husband to any Christian" and that Sir Kit's only real fault was that "he was never cured of his gaming tricks" (53).[66]

Thady is an odd stereotype, an almost cartoonish portrayal of an Irishman, whose mannerisms, history, and dress warrant a full examination through editorial commentary, commentary which, by delegating him to the past, simultaneously explains and erases him. Again, this strategy seems a logical move for Edgeworth,

[66] While Thady consistently derides Sir Kit's wife, primarily because she is "a Jewish," he does acknowledge her unfortunate marriage by stating, "When she was lying, to all expectation, on her deathbed of a broken heart, I could not but pity her, though she was a Jewish" (52). This kind of sympathy is characteristic of Thady, who feels it necessary to respect each Lady Rackrent because of her position as wife of his beloved master, no matter his personal feelings toward the women.

presenting "honest Thady" as a foil to the dangerous Irish rebels associated with the events of 1798 and thereby showing Ireland as a reformed and contrite mate for England. It is easier to imagine a Thady Quirk toeing the English line than, say, a Wolfe Tone or a Joseph Holt—he is a useful and necessary factor helping to cement the colonial logic that permeates *Castle Rackrent*. Julian Moynahan argues that though Edgeworth's channeling of Thady Quirk offers a voice to "the silenced majority, who at this time have no more access to articulate literary expression in English than they have to social and economic control and political power," this voice says far more of her own Anglo-Irish sphere than of "the submerged world of the cabins, boneens, and crossroads" (40). In other words, while it may seem egalitarian to give Thady a *voice* in the novel, his *words* do little but perpetuate the status quo and bolster the idea of the superiority of Anglo-Irish civility over native Irish primitivism. He is foolish, simple, and loyal to a fault; such a figure is no political threat, but rather an ally within a colonial system. More importantly, the voice of the Editor successfully pulls rank while seemingly validating Thady's perspective, claiming ownership over the entire narrative and directing the reader to interpret the tale through a lens of Englishness.

This rather clean-cut division of national identities becomes complicated, however, when we consider Thady's son, Jason Quirk. Though we see him grow from childhood to adulthood as the novel progresses, his most important role is in the last section of the book, *The History of Sir Conolly Rackrent*, the last of the squires. On the whole, this section dedicated to Sir Condy (as he is affectionately called) is the most substantial, and a curious departure from the tone and message established in the earlier parts of the novel. Whereas Sirs Patrick, Murtagh, and Kit are shown as extravagant,

self-centered, and even cruel, Sir Condy stands as a stark contrast. As a distant relation in possession of relatively little fortune and of a head for the law instead of for the running of a vast estate, Condy shows himself to be a poor manager of the Rackrent finances. Thady recalls Condy as a child, running through the streets "bare-footed and headed," playing games alongside Jason, whom Thady refers to as his "white-headed boy" (64).[67] Due to his close proximity in age and friendship with Jason, as well as his good-hearted nature, Condy holds a special place in Thady's affections, much greater than that of the other Rackrents, and these affections seem understandable. Though he ends up neglecting his necessary duties as a landlord (collecting rents, managing harvests, settling with creditors, monitoring his spending), he is steadfastly generous, kind, and of general good humor. He is greatly loved by the tenants and positioned as their protector, a quality which makes it all the more tempting for the reader to see Condy as a Rackrent who is finally worthy of sympathy.

This willingness to sympathize with Condy is only strengthened by the events and consequences of his dealings with Jason Quirk. Once Condy takes possession of the estate, Jason, already an established agent, emerges as a vulpine antagonist, shrewdly schooled in matters of business and finance. He convinces Condy to give him the authority to act as his agent and then informs him that the debts are insurmountable and something must be done. "There is but one way," he tells Condy, "and that's ready

[67] The Editor provides a footnote adding that "*White-headed boy*—is used by the Irish as an expression of fondness—It is on par with the English term *crony*.—We are at a loss for the derivation of this term." It is interesting that Edgeworth should choose to equate cronyism, a concept that could more readily be applied to describe the relationship between Jason and Condy, with the relationship between Thady and his son. This paints the father-son dynamic as oddly detached, especially when by all other accounts Thady is a doting father.

enough, when there's no cash, what can a gentleman do, but go to the land?" (137). While Condy agrees to sell part of the property to cover the bills, Jason secretly buys up all of Condy's debts, necessitating the sale of the entire Rackrent estate—to Jason. This incident between Jason and Condy is the dramatic climax of the novel: the triumph belongs not to the landlord, but to the rising middle-class Irishman. Still, Jason is the villain, taking advantage of the lazy-yet-amiable Condy, building on the idea of a new meritocracy and eschewing the feudalist loyalties of his father; his gains are unmistakably portrayed as ill-gotten. The sympathy Edgeworth builds up for Condy, depicting his exile to the much-smaller lodge, abandonment by his wife, and a near revolt of his tenants, speaks to a certain longing for the old system the Rackrents represent, a view not progressive but rather wistful, nostalgic. Even old Thady, who has doted over Jason throughout the narrative, buries his head in his hands and cries like a child when he learns what his son has done. This pathetic depiction of Sir Condy seems to completely contradict the earlier, seemingly more critical, view of life around the big house. What was once hyperbolic and almost comical becomes in the end tragic. This apparent shift in message, according to Butler, enables a reading of *Castle Rackrent* "as a not unsympathetic account of the passing of old-fashioned landlordism" (358). For Butler, *Castle Rackrent* is best read as a parody, a sharp critique of the colonial system of land tenure, and Thady's unrelenting loyalty is meant to facilitate a more critical examination of big house politics. The task of the reader, Butler argues, is "to reject actively [Thady's] indulgent view of the Rackrents, and supply the correct, the enlightened, moral frame of reference" (358). Still, even if it were feasible to view the sections prior to Condy's history as parodic, such a reading becomes almost impossible

when the last, and longest, part of the novel is taken into account. As Butler concedes, Thady's once ridiculous attachment to the Rackrents becomes, in the context of Sir Condy's tale, understandable. Only the most hard-hearted reader could not spare a sigh of sympathy for Sir Condy, no matter what his or her politics might be, and this reaction shows Thady's attachment in a different light.

Castle Rackrent's shift in tone and Butler's reading of the novel as parody point to a set of problems that lead us back to the Big House genre as a whole. First, if we are to interpret *Castle Rackrent* as a parody, and depend upon the reader to supply the "enlightened" or "moral" conclusion, we must question the meaning of such a process. For Edgeworth's readership, which was almost wholly comprised of English and Anglo-Irish readers, what would it mean to construct the kind of interpretation Butler describes? Depending on Edgeworth's readership in such a way works to perpetuate the Anglo-centric idea of the civilizing mission. It seems logical to assume the "enlightened" view to which Butler refers is one that chides the Rackrents for their selfish, irresponsible ways and thus sees the shortcomings of the Anglo-Irish system of land tenure, but such a reading still relies on degrading Thady by either dismissing his views as foolish or punishing him for his lack of critical insight. Either way, the "enlightened" view necessitates reformation, or civilization, of Thady as a character.

All of this goes out the window, though, when we consider Condy's story. Putting aside for a moment questions of Thady's reliability as a narrator, it is important to look at the collision between the first and second parts of the novel. What Butler sees as a fatal contradiction of ideologies in *Castle Rackrent* is based on the assumption that its underlying historical narrative is story-shaped; but, as Eagleton reminds us, it is

simply not. There is not a clear and logical progression of events to follow; just as in the Irish Gothic, time often turns in and out of itself and power is constantly ebbing and flowing, making interpretations difficult, especially in terms of Irish identity. This contradiction is a hallmark of the Big House novel and is indicative of the hyphenated culture from which it is derived. It gestures toward a fear surrounding disruption of stasis, brought about by the competing desires for liberation and control. What does it mean to demonize the Sirs Patrick, Murtagh, and Kit only to romanticize Sir Condy and insert Jason into the role of the antagonist? The first section of the novel speaks to the desire for liberation from antiquated feudalist constructions, yet the second acknowledges the fear of such a disruption. The Rackrents are the devils one knows, whereas Jason is a witches' brew of possibilities, throwing the imagined territory of the big house into complete disarray. His usurpation of the Rackrent estate centers on a common theme of the Big House novel: that lands once confiscated from the native Irish might one day be taken back, either by ink or by blood, culminating in a reversal of fortune so significant that it would destroy big house life altogether. This threat is the driving force behind the most common concerns that form the Big house genre: national identity, systems of politics, and the preservation of genteel society and economic stability.

Thus, land, in its physical and metaphorical importance, is central to any examination of Big House fiction. Every political issue tied up in big house matters ultimately goes back to the land, and the Big House novel offers a clear look at its contradictory roles, chiefly as fuel for oppression and food for freedom. That said, the genre rarely moves beyond this contradiction—it cannot. From novels like *Castle*

Rackrent on to George Moore's works at the end of the nineteenth century, and to Somerville and Ross's early twentieth-century writings, there is no tidy exploration of Irishness; there is always the case of having one foot in Ireland and one in England.

In Moore's *A Drama in Muslin*, the non-solution to this problem is to expatriate. Much like Stoker's Arthur and Norah in *The Snake's Pass*, Moore's Alice Barton and her husband ultimately leave Galway for the London suburbs, though, contrary to Stoker's novel, where the land implodes in a dramatic, gothic gulp, Moore's narrative plays out against the rise of Parnell and the Land League, showing the land as a more explicit political force and emphasizing the metaphorical importance of soil in the construction of national identity.

(3) Imagining Irishness: Land and National Identity

George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* and its companion piece, *Parnell and His Island*, offer a rather pessimistic view of the big house. Not only do both works chronicle the decay of the Anglo-Irish landowning class, but they also exhibit the degradation of Ireland at the hand of big house culture. This is not to say that Moore is wholeheartedly sympathetic with the Irish, but the situation of tenant farmers as depicted in *A Drama in Muslin* is nonetheless a point of disgust for him, both as a writer and as an aesthete. Later in his career, he would display an outright disdain for Ireland, the country of his birth, which could not be more of a contrast to the views of his father,

George Henry Moore.[68] Like the Edgeworths, the Moores were a long-established genteel Irish family, their ancestral home, Moore Hall, having been built in County Mayo in the years 1792-95. The house was eventually burned in February of 1923 by the IRA; around 200 other big houses around rural Ireland were burned as well. Years later, in 1964, the "Old IRA" honored the men who had lived in the house for their contributions to the nationalist cause; George was not mentioned, however, prompting a local priest to note that George was weak in his political endeavors and "died neither an Irishman nor a Roman Catholic" (Frazier xii).[69]

Though a landlord himself, George's father, George Henry, had political beliefs that were progressive, more so than those of Richard Edgeworth. As a Parliamentary representative for County Mayo, George Henry was a vociferous proponent of tenants' rights, Catholic relief, and, to an extent, Fenianism. Father Patrick Lavelle, a nationalist and supporter of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) dedicated his 1870 book, *The Irish Landlord Since the Revolution*, to George Henry Moore, who died in April of the same year. Lavelle refers to George Henry as "a dear personal friend, an incorruptible politician, a sterling patriot," and "a true and constant advocate for tenants' rights" while also praising his writing and oratory skills. Lavelle ends the dedication by

> [h]oping, with almost every true lover of his country, on both sides of the Channel, that such a land measure as will secure to the Irish tenant a sure

[68] As both Moores I will be discussing are called George, I will refer to the father as "George Henry" and the son simply as "George."
[69] The "Old IRA" refers to the incarnation of the Irish Republican Army in existence up to the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, and should not be mistaken for other, later factions of the army, such as the Official IRA (OIRA), Provisional IRA (PIRA), or Continuity IRA (CIRA).

> foothold in the land of his birth and love, without interfering with any one right of the landlord, except the long possessed and long exercised right to do wrong, will become the law of the land. (Lavelle 4)

As Lavelle makes clear in his dedication, George Henry was known as a champion for tenants' rights and one strongly in favor of an independent Ireland. He did not, however, favor the abolition of landlordism, in a stance which is a rather odd for one with such ties to nationalist groups. Adrian Frazier speculates that George Henry's simultaneous support of Irish independence and reluctance to abandon landlordism, and in particular his support of the Fenians and opposition to the Ribbonmen, could be associated with his expectation that "the local sense of outrage that fed the Ribbonmen, as well as the desire for political recognition of the new Catholic professional class, could both be channeled into a national, patriotic, and interdenominational organization for an independent Irish parliament," which was his ultimate goal for the Fenian movement (Frazier 4).[70] It is this same strategy of harnessing public outrage that would be used later by Parnell, who also favored the simultaneous, and in many ways problematic, reform of systems of land tenure and preservation of landlordism. To be sure, George Henry left a significant political legacy that at first mobilized his son, but this legacy ultimately left him with an overwhelming sense of futility when it came to the Irish political scene. Nevertheless, politics played a significant role in George

[70] The Fenians were primarily in favor of armed resistance to colonial oppression, though some factions preferred less violent means, and had for the most part an organized political presence. In contrast, the Ribbonmen were only one of a number of underground vigilante groups who engaged in agrarian agitation that ranged anywhere from strikes to cattle mutilation and to murder. For more on mid-nineteenth-century Ribbonism in western Ireland, see Jennifer M. Kelly's *The Downfall of Hagan: Sligo Ribbonism in 1842* (2008).

Moore's work, especially as they pertained to the big house. *A Drama in Muslin* was published in London in 1886, and the story is set in Ireland during the anxious years of 1881-84. Before we look more extensively at Moore's novel itself, though, it is helpful to remember the context in which it was written.

It is no surprise that the biggest political issues of post-famine Ireland revolved around the land. Following the end of the Great Famine in 1849, there came a period of agricultural recovery and relative economic stability. There was an increase in the construction of public buildings like banks and schools, and crops were again flourishing. This period proved a great relief after the disastrous effects of the Famine, and fattened pocketbooks led to a greater sense of security in the agricultural market, which resulted in a significant increase in spending and borrowing among farmers. By 1877, however, poor crop performance led to a decrease in profits from Irish goods, and by 1879 Western Ireland was again facing the threat of famine (McCartney 71-72). Following this destructive double threat, tenant-landlord relations steadily deteriorated. The lack of viable exports was a burden on both parties. Without goods to sell, tenants were unable to make their rents, never mind feed themselves, and landlords, faced with the financial strain of decreased rent payments, and so unable to meet their own financial obligations, began a rash of evictions. Thousands of families faced either emigration or the workhouse. Earlier in the century, landlords like Richard Edgeworth and George Henry Moore made sure to keep their tenants in a state of relative comfort, but the excessive spending following the Great Famine made it impossible for many landlords to maintain their current lifestyles. As a result of these mass evictions, agrarian crime increased at an alarming rate. Donal McCartney notes that in 1877 there

were just over 2,000 people affected by eviction; by 1882, that number had increased to nearly 27,000. In turn, the occurrence of agrarian crimes, or "outrages," was in 1877 around 200, a number that by 1882 had climbed to 3,400 (72). These years were particularly difficult, as many estates had been all but destroyed by the Famine, and the reputation of landlords had suffered a blow from which it would never really recover.

During these early post-Famine years, landlords were deluged with accusations of rack-renting, a complaint which, according to most contemporary historians, was rather exaggerated.[71] Terrence Dooley argues that the growing outcry surrounding rack-renting was directly related to propaganda issued by the Land League, which demanded that all rents be reduced to Griffith's valuation. This valuation, carried out from 1852-1865 by Richard Griffith, determined the value of land and corresponding local taxes. The problem was, according to Griffith's predecessor John Ball Greene, that Griffith's valuation had been based on 1849-51 prices, which were by the late 1870's around 33 percent lower than the real rental value of the land (Dooley 118). Thus, returning to Griffith's valuation would have meant certain ruin for the vast majority of landlords, as the loss of income would have proven insurmountable. Still, the landlords' wholesale refusal to return to the valuation proved invaluable to the Land League. The Irish National Land League was established in 1878 by Michael Davitt and was headed up by Charles Stewart Parnell, who was elected president of the organization. The primary purpose of the Land League was to organize tenants and to work for increased rights under landlordism; later, there would be an expressed desire

[71] Rack-renting refers to the practice of charging tenants exorbitant rates, often collected through the threat of eviction, or through evicting one tenant and replacing him with one who is willing to pay the higher rent.

by some League members to remove landlords altogether. It became commonplace for the Land League to organize rent strikes, in which the tenants refused to pay anything at all while still occupying their lands; these strikes came to be termed "boycotts," after Captain Charles Boycott, an English land agent and object of a particularly publicized 1880 rent strike.[72] In addition to organizing boycotts, the Land League also took part in agrarian agitation, which ranged from destruction of crops to cattle maiming to, in some instances, murder. These activities, commonplace and radical, were all seen by the Land League and its associates to be in the service of the nationalist cause.

In *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, or The Story of the Land League Revolution*, published in 1904, Michael Davitt employs methods similar to those of James Fintan Lalor, whose writings proved a strong inspiration for him, and other nineteenth-century Irish revolutionaries by making a rhetorical connection between *land*, as a material entity, and *soil*, as a metaphysical marker of national identity.[73] For Davitt, the Irish soil is within oneself as well as without—what one *is*, not just what one owns. His rhetoric positions the Land Wars as more than simply a struggle for property ownership; he illustrates them as a fight for one's very existence. Here, existence is distinct from survival, which is connected to physical health and sustenance; Davitt

[72] In 1881, Gladstone passed the Coercion Acts that were aimed at preventing boycotts and stamping out the Land League. These acts led to the imprisonment of a number of political radicals (in most cases without a trial), including Parnell himself. The Coercion Acts were later repealed through the 1882 Kilmainham Treaty (named after Kilmainham Gaol, where the prisoners were kept), in which Parnell called off Land League agitation in exchange for getting rid of rent adjustments and putting an end to coercion.

[73] Seamus Deane notes Lalor's use of this rhetorical connection, as I discussed in Chapter II.

makes an effort to capture the spirit of an age, which is a logical way to channel the immense anger of Irish workers. He writes,

> The struggle for the soil of Ireland involved a combat for every other right of the Irish nation. The lordship of the land carried with it the ownership of the government. The usurpers of the national claim to the possession of the source of employment, of food, of social distinction, extended their power over every privilege and right, and ruled the people only and solely for the security of that which the power of confiscation made the property of those whom England made rulers of the country. (Davitt xvi)

Here, Davitt establishes land as something tangible, that can be worked and owned, confiscated and reclaimed. Soil, on the other hand, is an all-encompassing concept from which all elements of national identity spring. To hold the soil is to have the right to imagine one's own identity, one's own community. The soil is the Motherland, or the Fatherland, as Davitt calls it, choosing to inject a shot of masculinity in a political sphere in which Ireland was routinely feminized and diminished. He goes on to make connections between the concept of soil and the "Celtic Character," emphasizing the importance of ancestral ties and the love of country, and states that England's strategy of claiming the land of Ireland was a direct strike against Irishness itself (xv). It is also important to note that Davitt establishes the timeliness of his fight. He repeatedly references Queen Victoria, thus effectively making a relevant, contemporary matter of an old issue—a Victorian issue.

Davitt's argument speaks to a kind of geographic violence which is, according to Edward Said, part and parcel of imperialism. Said argues that the loss of locality to an outside force is part of the colonial condition, and it becomes the task of the native to find and restore geographic identity. "Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider," he writes, "the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination" (Said 225). The imagining of soil as a metaphor for Irish national identity helps to construct a unifying idea of what organizations like the Land League were fighting against by calling into question English colonial power: the power to construct geographic identity, moving in the Anglo-Irish while pushing the native Irish out. The notion of restoring geographic identity is not necessarily reliant on arguments grounded in essentialism—it does not have to refer to some magical Irish "core" (though Davitt does employ racialist language to describe the "Celtic Character," much in the way Engels uses it to describe the Irish; this depiction is undoubtedly problematic, yet indicative of Victorian-era rhetorical strategies).[74] Said is careful to caution against the "emotional self indulgence of celebrating one's own identity," a fault he sees in Yeats and with the movement for Irish cultural nationalism (226).[75] What the need for reclamation does speak to, though, is the power of imagining one's own identity in a changing political landscape, and, in the context of the big house, this power is inextricably connected to, among other things, religion, language, and land.

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[74] When Davitt describes his first meeting with Parnell in *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, he calls the Anglo-Irish landlord "a man of conscious strength, with a mission, wearing no affectation, but without a hint of the Celtic character or a trait of its racial enthusiasm." He is careful to cement his solidarity with Parnell, however, by concluding that he was "[a]n Englishman of the strongest type, moulded for an Irish purpose" (110).

[75] I will explore this issue further in chapter four, my discussion of the National Tale.

(4) "The Soul of the Soil": George Moore and the Big House

In discussing modes of imagining Irish national identity, it is only natural to return to the novel, and to the work of George Moore in particular. Moore proved to be a rather controversial figure, publishing novels rife with risqué material and developing his style of brutal literary naturalism. Due to his frank treatment of sexuality, Moore's Flaubert-esque novel, *The Mummer's Wife* (1885), put a strain on his already tense relationship with Charles Mudie, resulting in Mudie's decision to ban the novel from his libraries (a decision which also extended to *A Drama in Muslin*).[76] Moore was branded as an "immoral" writer, though he maintained a significant place among artistic communities in England and France. In her essay dedicated to Moore, included in *The Death of the Moth*, Virginia Woolf expresses her amused respect for him. She describes him as a man who can say what he likes and more or less get away with it: "The storm never breaks over his head, the thunder never roars in his cars, the rain never drenches him." She goes on to call his novels "silken tents which have no poles," but says that, in spite of this, "he has brought a new mind to the world; he has given us a new way of feeling and seeing" (Woolf 159-60). Additionally, Moore counted Walter Pater among his most admired acquaintances, and worked tirelessly to initiate and maintain their connection, constantly putting himself in Pater's path and fashioning himself as something of a dandy. In *Confessions of a Young Man*, Moore refers to Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* as "the book to which I owe the last temple in my soul." He writes that *Marius* showed him the beauty and potential of the English language that he thought

[76] In *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), Moore addresses his relationship with Mudie and his distaste for the censorship practiced by librarians. He remarks that "a taste for dirty stories may be said to be inherent in the human animal" and sarcastically praises Mudie as a paragon of morality and virtue.

was only possible to attain through French, and calls the work "a stepping-stone that carried me across the channel into the genius of my own tongue" (237,240). Moore was so enamored of Pater, as an individual and a writer, that he sent him a copy of *Confessions*. Pater wrote a letter in response, which Moore included in the preface of the revised 1904 edition of the book. In the letter, addressed to "My Dear, Audacious Moore," Pater thanks Moore for his kind treatment of *Marius* and praises him for his "unfailing liveliness." Pater was a bit wary, though, of Moore's often harsh, Naturalistic depictions of people and events. Pater writes, "And still I wonder how much you may be losing, both for yourself and for your writings, by what, in spite of its gaiety and good-nature and genuine sense of the beauty of many things, I must still call a cynical, and therefore exclusive way of looking at the world. You call it only 'realistic.' Still!" (xi).

What was for Woolf a "new way of feeling and seeing" was, for Pater, a point of discomfort. Indeed, Moore's Naturalist style was both: his depictions of the dirtiness of life (dirty thoughts, dirty sex, dirty money, dirty stories) have a way of achieving a certain recognizable verisimilitude, yet seem to delight (perhaps a bit too much) in the myriad warts of humanity.[77] Of his own style, Moore writes, "Naturalism I wore round my neck, Romanticism was pinned over my heart, Symbolism I carried like a toy revolver in my waistcoat pocket, to be used in an emergency" (*Confessions* 205). In *A Drama in Muslin*, it is clear that Moore was endeavoring to strike a balance between a Paterian aestheticism and brutal Naturalism, depicting the roughest side of reality in the

[77] Declan Kiberd suggests that Moore's Naturalist approach might be a response and "corrective" to the steady supply of and demand for comical or stagey novels that "depicted rural people as lovable, lyrical rogues and landlords as handsome, spirited bucks" (*Irish Classics* 296).

most beautiful language possible. The novel is dominated throughout by what Terry Eagleton refers to as "purple" or "hothouse passages" in which Moore (often abruptly) waxes Romantic amid the realism. While it is clear that Moore wished to pay homage to Pater, these purple passages provoked harsh criticism, causing him to edit and significantly revise the novel. He republished it in 1915 under the title *Muslin*.

A Drama in Muslin was intended by Moore to be a "girl book" in which he would explore issues of female education, the marriage market, and life inside the big house. The narrative centers around a group of Galway girls who have just finished their education at the Convent of the Holy Child in England: Alice Barton, our heroine, and her beautiful-yet-vapid sister Olive; the fiery May Gould; soft-spoken Violet Scully; and Cecilia Cullen, the crippled, philosophizing neighbor of the Bartons. Uncharacteristically for a Big House novel, Moore gets beneath the surface of domestic life of the Irish and Anglo-Irish elite, and while his look at the lives of the girls speaks much to the importance of female independence, it also shows the full force of Moore's disdain for Ireland and for the people who call it home.

For Moore, Ireland was a place to flee. The death of his father in 1870 had left him with a tremendous sense of freedom. Moore writes of the event: "His death gave me power to create myself, that is to say, to create a complete and absolute self out of the partial self which was all that the restraint of the home permitted; this future self, this ideal George Moore, beckoned me, lured me like a ghost" (*Confessions* 10). Ireland was a nation characterized, much like Moore's early life, by Catholicism, which he saw as putrid and impotent, and he was eager to eschew it for the heroic virility of Protestant England and the stylish "paganism" of France. This auto-creative impulse is

echoed in the women of *A Drama in Muslin*, particularly Alice and Cecilia, the former searching for her place as a writer and the latter struggling to reconcile her sexual desire for Alice and her utter hatred of masculine control. Ultimately, however, the big house proves too powerful an institution, and Cecilia, who can neither embrace her sexuality nor resign herself to the strictures of gentry life, returns to the convent of her schooldays, this time as a nun. Alice, on the other hand, is able to find her own voice as a writer, but only after leaving the big house and Ireland behind, just as Moore himself did. Within the Ireland Moore imagines, self identification (and, indeed, all the tenets on which the nationalist movement was based) is a futile endeavor.[78]

Within *A Drama in Muslin*, everyone, save Alice, is ultimately either made a fool or made miserable as a consequence of big house life, and nowhere in the novel is this effect more evident than in Moore's description of the winter season at Dublin castle. No society, outside of the rural big house, could be more deplorable. In *Parnell and His Island*, where much of the material included in *A Drama in Muslin* is given a new, harsher consideration, Moore describes Dublin society thus: "Nobody reads, nobody thinks. To be considered a man of the world, it is only necessary to have seen one or two plays in London before they are six months old, and to curse the Land League" (18). This is what awaits the Barton sisters and their friends during the season. To play her appropriate part as a fairer member of the landlord class, a woman must seek out and snag one of these empty-headed men, preferably one of good fortune, and settle into a prescribed life of comfort and listlessness. But before one can arrive at this

[78] By "self identification" I am referring to the power to determine one's own national identity, as opposed to being assigned an identity by a colonizing force. When I use the term in reference to Alice, I am referring to her desire to imagine a way of existing outside of Big House life and the expectations of gender associated with that space.

conclusion, there is the ball itself. Moore depicts the scene at Dublin Castle as a combination of unadulterated excess and animal impulse. Young women draped in furs, silks, tulle, and pearls slide through the corridor of "powdered and purple-coated footmen" and suits of armor, "white ware tripp[ing] to the great muslin market," all while bored men stare "stupidly" down the backs of the ladies' gowns (172). The marriage market once associated with circular dances and witty repartee becomes in Moore's novel a flesh fair. In a space where women are reduced to the turn of a shoulder, or the bat of a lash, there is certainly no room for self identification; the only course of action for these "muslin martyrs" of the big house is to loiter in a room where they outnumber the available men three to every one, "their eyes liquid with invitation, striving to inveigle, to stay the steps of the men as they pass by" (*Parnell* 26). Inside the castle walls, the participants are caught in an endless cycle of decadence and crudity. This sense of entrapment, which is echoed by his depiction of the peasants who try to watch the excitement inside the castle by pressing their faces up to windows (and by a depiction of the gentry who pretend these peasants do not exist), sums up a main theme of Moore's Big House novel: that Ireland, and its people, are caught in an impossible impasse from which there is no hope of escape. Where Edgeworth speaks to a questionable future of the big house, Moore is writing its obituary.

In terms of *A Drama in Muslin* as a "girl book," there is really hope only for Alice, who emerges as a champion of individualism. As a student of Darwin and Shelley and a staunch atheist, Alice, a very Moore-like character, maintains a balanced respect for science, aestheticism, and reason that is uncommon in Moore's other big house characters. Even as a young woman, she has "already begun to see something

wrong in each big house being surrounded by a hundred small ones, all working to keep it in sloth and luxury" (68). For Alice, "sloth" and "luxury" permeate every aspect of big house life, and they are qualities she tries to overcome by imagining a life for herself outside the demesne walls. Her rejection of religion is a large part of her self-identification. When pressed by Cynthia to explain her unwillingness to pray, Alice responds that she only believed in God in a "very half-hearted way" when she was a child, much as she held a belief in mythical creatures like hobgoblins. "I could never quite bring myself to credit," she adds, "that there was a Being far away, sitting behind a cloud, who kept his eye on all the different worlds, and looked after them just as a stationmaster looks after the arrival and departure of trains from some huge terminus" (60). Certainly, Alice's privileging of logic over dogma marks her as an outsider, not just in terms of the big house, but in terms of her nation, whose identity is significantly defined by religion and religious conflict. Her categorization of the Christian God as a "stationmaster" also speaks to her reliance on realism, and betrays her distaste of pretense. She cannot espouse religious beliefs; thus, she cannot bring herself to participate in ritual performances. She cannot dedicate herself to the pursuits of the winter season because of the same reason—for Alice these things are all performance, all contradictory, all irrational. Her only refuge is in her own literary work. While she is able, through the help of journalist John Harding, to establish a writing career to a certain extent while still operating within the domestic sphere, she must do so in secrecy, using Harding as a middle-man by which to receive her payment and send covert submissions to newspapers and journals. It is not until she decides to abandon her home of Brookfield, and its corresponding ideologies, that Alice is able to truly

embrace her literary ambitions. By emigrating from Ireland and escaping the mental, social, and political decay of the big house, she is able to achieve the same end as Moore himself; she is able to imagine her own, ideal self.

Alice emerges as the hero of the novel, a harbinger of impending modernism and new womanhood. It is also necessary to consider, though, what is essentially the most sinister "character" of *A Drama in Muslin*: the Land League. Within the novel, the Land League provides the tension of the narrative; the very knowledge of its existence strikes fear into the inhabitants of Brookfield and the surrounding estates, affecting everything from tenant negotiations to dinner conversation and the simplest outdoor activities.[79] This fear is representative of two main threats: of the destruction of the landlord class and of the possibility of physical violence. The fear of these threats is not necessarily unfounded, given that, as Terence Dooley notes, the rise of the Land League gave Nationalist politicians newfound courage to employ an anti-landlord rhetoric that was much more violent than it had been previously. For example, William O'Brien, editor of *The United Irishman*, the journal of the Land League, stated that "[t]he grand army of Irish freemen will march unconquered and unconquerable until they have trampled down in its last ditch alien landlordism and ascendancy, and hauled down from its highest pinnacle the last shred of English misrule" (Dooley 211). As the dissatisfaction of the tenants and the power of the Land League grew outside the walls of the big house, fear grew on the inside.

[79] It was common for agents, landlords, and other residents of the big house to be attacked while walking along the grounds of the estate. In *A Drama in Muslin*, Moore mentions these casual assaults (which sometimes result in murder), using the casual violence to increase the tension of his narrative.

As the years of 1881-84, during which Moore's novel is set, saw a marked increase in agricultural agitation to correspond with the increase in heated nationalist rhetoric, hatred of the Land League becomes, within the novel, indicative of personal politics and social class. Of the scores of outrages committed during these tumultuous years, none caused fear to ripple through the gentry more than the Phoenix Park murders of May 6, 1882. Following the brief incarceration of Parnell in Kilmainham Gaol and the subsequent Kilmainham Treaty, Thomas Burke and Lord Henry Cavendish were stabbed to death by members of an IRB splinter group while walking in Dublin's Phoenix Park. Though Parnell, Davitt, and other members of the Land League denounced the murders, the event sent shockwaves through England and Ireland, among loyalists and nationalists alike. Following the event, Davitt and Parnell were shown a telegram informing them of the murders. In *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, Davitt remarks that Cavendish was known as "one of the most modest and best men in the House, and a thorough supporter of the new policy" (357).[80] Davitt was in disbelief, thinking the murders had been invented as a scare tactic, and Parnell took the news quite hard, threatening to quit politics altogether. He told Davitt that he wanted nothing more to do with "Irish movements," asking, "What is the use of men striving as we have done, and calling on the country to make such sacrifices as those the people have made during the last three years, if we are to be struck at in this way by unknown men who can commit atrocious deeds of this kind?" (Davitt 358). Clearly, Parnell was disillusioned by the murders, seeing them as a signifier of the egregious degradation of what was once a unified nationalist front. Still, he went on to speak out publicly against

[80] This is a reference to Home Rule.

the Phoenix Park murders and ended up riding anti-landlord sentiment and the popularity of the Home Rule movement to win eighty-five out of the 103 available Parliamentary seats three years later in the 1885 election (Dooley 211).

As a consequence of the Phoenix Park murders, anti-Land League sentiment hit fever pitch. Politicians spoke out, as always, but there was also a spate of novels, written by Irish as well as English writers, demonizing the Land League, including Emily Lawless's *Hurrish*, Anthony Trollope's *The Landleaguers*, and Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* (Costello 174). It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Moore's novel as mere propaganda, as there are precious few sympathies to be found within it. The Land League and the landowners are despised with equal fervor. While at first the Land League is seen as a possible path to relief for the working Irish, a savior for the impoverished and starving, it eventually devolves into a basic tool for fear, or, in the words of Mrs. Barton's lover, Lord Dungory, "a society legal, that exists and holds its power through an organized system of outrage!" (Moore 45). The novel is chock full of discussion centered on the Land League and Home Rule; these topics invade most scenes common to the Big House novel: church, a dinner, a ball, a carriage trip to Dublin.[81] Whenever the narrative becomes too cohesive, too generic, Moore is careful to interject the uncomfortable certainty of political turmoil, never letting his reader forget that he is chronicling the dissolution not only of Ireland's ruling class, but of Irish national identity altogether.

[81] The most developed discussion of Home Rule and the Land League comes from Mr. Adair, a country squire who is looked upon as a valuable Western ally of Gladstone's. Though he is clearly knowledgeable about progressive politics and issues facing Ireland's elite, he is dismissed by his friends as boring and uncouth.

After describing the events of a ball at the neighboring town of Ballinasloe, Moore turns again to the Land League, which is quickly spreading across the west of Ireland. The winter of 1882 brings threats, news, and rumors of murders on Ascendancy estates, and "each post brought letters marked with coffins and crossbones, or almost equally melancholy epistles from agents, declaring that the law was in abeyance, that whole armies of people assembled to prevent the bailiffs from serving their notices of eviction" (Moore 94). Moore seems to delight in this reversal of fortune, that the same people who draped themselves in jewels for a ball, or sat to have their portraits painted, could now be facing a poverty similar to the kind suffered by their tenants, and that they lacked the ability to thrive outside the comfort of the big house. After all, "What could they do with their empty brains? What could they do with their feeble hands?" (95). Brookfield and estates like it are unsustainable: tenants are too angry, landlords too decadent, activists too persistent. And at the center of all this conflict is the one constant—the land—which the gentry sees "vanishing from them even as a vapour," and, with it, everything upon which their identity in Ireland is structured (Moore 95).

This is not to say that the land offers any hope for the Irish peasantry. While, like nationalists, Moore makes an association between the people of Ireland and the Irish soil, the connection is more contemptuous than celebratory. In *Parnell and His Island*, Moore takes his contempt a step further in giving a more in-depth treatment to Irish "types" he only touches on in *A Drama in Muslin*. *Parnell* was made up of a series of special interest pieces Moore had written for the French newspaper *Le Figaro* under the title *Lettres sur l'Irelande*, in which he treated his French readers to the

oddities of Irish life. The work dedicates entire chapters to specific characters, like the Dressmaker, the Tenant Farmer, the Priest, and the Patriot, and offers sketches so offensive, so scathing, that his relationship with Ireland was severed for the twelve years following the English-language publication of *Parnell* (Frazier 141).[82] *A Drama in Muslin* could be explained as Naturalism, the sect of realism that disturbed Pater so, but *Parnell* was a clear swipe at the country from which he profited as an absentee landlord yet which he hated as an artist. His depiction of the Patriot, for example, makes a clear connection to the Irish soil as metaphor and seems to knowingly play on what were the current rhetorical strategies of nationalist politicians and activists. James, who is described as "running barefoot to the National School," is respectful of landlords during his childhood, but after being taken in and educated by Father Pat, a local priest, he begins to misbehave and eventually becomes involved in radical politics, being appointed president of the County Mayo chapter of the Land League by Davitt and Parnell.[83] After being imprisoned for his political activities, James is elected to Parliament. Moore writes,

> Imagine, therefore, this Celtic peasant—for James is pure, unadulterated peasant; chance has given him intelligence a little sharper than his cousins who remain in the Western bogs, but he is *of the soil*, as they are;

[82] Further emphasizing the impact of *Parnell and His Island*, Frazier writes, "Out of the Norman rape of Ireland, Moore makes beauty. The book is mined throughout with explosives of this sort. Ireland itself he compares to an 'old clothes shop': nothing seems to belong to the people themselves; 'language, dress, and manners at one time or another' belonged to other people, a deadly image of the colonial condition" (140).

[83] Dr. Edward Reed, Alice's eventual husband and fellow writer in *A Drama in Muslin*, is also described as "running barefoot to the National School." Alice's mother notes this as she is trying to dissuade Alice from going through with the marriage. Dr. Reed has not the radicalism of James, though he does encourage Alice to break away from big house life and to pursue her goal of making writing her profession.

> he is cunning, selfish, cruel, even as they; his blood is thin with centuries of poverty, damp hovels, potatoes, servility; his passions are dull and sullen as an instinct. And this half-animal walks out of Eustace Square and into London. (my emphasis 141)

Moore's description of James, the Patriot, uses the same "soil as metaphysical" metaphor used by nationalists, but to a derogatory, even grotesque, end. While certainly nationalist rhetoric exploited certain Irish stereotypes—love of the home and hearth, religious fervor, ancient and warrior-like ancestry—to propel their connections between the soil and Irish patriotism, Moore takes the metaphor and reverses its purpose. A connection to the soil becomes shameful at best and bestial at worst. To be "of the soil" is to be primitive, and to be intellectually and physically impoverished. Moore also employs racialist rhetoric common to the Victorian era, much as Davitt does, but uses it as a tool of degradation, holding up Irishness as a poor competitor for Englishness. Irishness is, for Moore, unstable, relying on animal instinct and cunning rather than the logic or philosophy he reveres. It is in the blood, an unchangeable, inferior condition. Moore writes that, though "the most obvious marking of the peasant origin will be rubbed away," James's "thick, greasy brogue will remain, the *soul of the soil*, of the bog will still be reflected in his face…" (my emphasis 146).

No matter how seamlessly James assimilates into urban London life, and no matter how many political victories he wins, he will always be an outsider, an Other. Again, soil becomes akin to soul, but this passage tells us much more than that; it provides interesting further perspective on Moore's narrative of the big house. While the sketch of James the Patriot shows a clear desire to maintain a distance between the

rural and urban, and thus the primitive and the civilized, it also speaks to the same fear running through *Castle Rackrent*—the rise of an Irish middle class. That a boy like James could go from "running barefoot to the National School" to the halls of Parliament addresses the very real fear that the colonial mindset hovering over Ireland for so long was beginning to change, and change rapidly. Thus, discussions of land ownership and allotment in *A Drama in Muslin* can be more easily understood in the context of the Big House genre by considering their treatment in *Parnell and His Island*.

Still, the question remains how to negotiate among competing ideas of Irish identities within the colonial context of the big house. For Moore, like Edgeworth, there is no simple resolution. He sees no hope in Ireland for a person of intellect, compassion, and creativity. The only option is to do as Alice Barton does, as Moore himself did, and flee. Alice's final experience in Ireland puts a human face on the definitive economic event that had been only been alluded to for most of the novel; as she and Edward are beginning their journey to England, they witness an eviction. Moore describes the small hovel Alice and Edward happen upon while their driver is asking directions: "a dark, fetid hole, smelling of smoke, potato-skins, and damp." There is an elderly woman, six children sobbing into their mother's skirt, and a husband "with nothing but a pair of trousers and a ragged shirt to protect him from the terrible rain," all standing next to an enormous dung heap while armed soldiers threaten the family with bodily harm if they do not immediately vacate the premises (323). This event is characteristic of Moore's Naturalist approach, in all its repugnant glory: dirt, excrement, shrieking, nakedness, and violence. Alice questions how people could exist

in such wretchedness and begs Edward to pay their rent and save them from their horrible fate, a request with which Edward nobly complies. Upon completion of the transaction, an agent laughs, saying, "There are plinty more of them over the hill on whom [Richard] can exercise his charity if he should feel so disposed!" (323). The newlyweds leave dejected, recognizing the impotence of their humanitarian pursuit. Thus, Alice and Richard's final experience in Ireland is indicative of the futility of imagining a life for oneself in Ireland. Like the muslin martyrs, the tenants are caught in a vicious cycle perpetuated by the colonial structure within Ireland. For Moore, neither the colonist nor the native can survive without destroying the will of the other, and he sees no way out of this push and pull aside from leaving it all behind. He was certainly not alone in this conclusion, as in 1833, the same year that Alice Barton left County Galway, nearly 8,000 people left Galway's neighboring County Mayo (Grubgeld 35).

The philosophical stalemates and anxieties of identification highlighted in the works of Edgeworth and Moore are indicative of the concerns running throughout most Big House fictions—concerns that continue to haunt even more contemporary imaginings of the era. From Somerville and Ross's most acclaimed novel, *The Real Charlotte* (1894), which features Charlotte Mullen, an ambitious, social-climbing Anglo-Irish version of Thackeray's Becky Sharpe, to Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last* September (1929), a romance set during the Irish War of Independence, to John Banville's *Birchwood* (1973), which centers around the protagonist's visit to the decayed family estate, the politics of Irishness are rehashed many times over. In the case of the Big House novel, the reclamation of geographic identity within a colonized

space is an endlessly complicated endeavor for Irish and Anglo-Irish alike. The further exploration of this struggle is to be left up to the National Tale.

Chapter Four

Space, Crisis, and the Evolution of the National Tale

(1) Plasticity of Genre: Romance to Reality

It is relatively safe to argue that few genres have more impact on the imaginings of national identity than the national tale. It is certainly a category of grandiose images: rugged men on majestic steeds; beautiful, wild women equally adept at both music and swordplay; tattered banners of ancient ruling clans long deposed; a harsh but enthralling exotic landscape. To be sure, the national tale is fertile ground for budding nationalist ideologies. It is also true, however, that genres are unstable, bending and stretching to accommodate a changing public consciousness. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be discussing the genre of the national tale in terms of *space* and exploring the ways in which this space shifts and evolves in response to outside economic, ecological, and political factors. In doing this, I will be paying special attention to the system of land tenure and the tense landlord-tenant relationships that ran throughout nineteenth-century Ireland; to the problem of famine, specifically the famine of 1817 and the Great Famine that began in 1845; and to the government response to this event.[84]

[84] Though Ireland was besieged by famine throughout the nineteenth century, I have chosen to focus on these two particular points for a few reasons. First, the famine of 1817 was especially significant in terms of the contagion of fever and dysentery that spread through all areas of the island. Additionally, 1817 serves as a good measuring stick of what kind of research was being done on the effects of fever and famine in Ireland and of the organization of government aid; it is also the setting for William Carleton's *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine*, which I will be discussing later in the chapter. The Great Famine is of course important to any study of nineteenth-

When looking at genre in terms of *space*, it is important to consider that not only is space always changing, but it encompasses innumerable contributing factors that are "spaces" in themselves, some examples being the political, the literary, the economic, and the cultural. Thus, examining genre in this context can be a rather abstract business, and it makes sense to break down the discussion further, into a specific category of space (taking into account, of course, the transient nature of such categories). According to Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1974), the words contained in a literary text, once recognized and reflected upon, constitute a *spatial code*, which forms the basis for understanding a "system of space" (Lefebvre 14-16).[85] These systems, in that they are composed of and defined by constantly varying codes—codes that, in addition to serving as a mode of *understanding* said space, provide a means of *existing within* that space—shift and evolve with the discovery of knowledge, increases or decreases in political agency, and temporal progression (Lefebvre 47).

For my discussion of the national tale, I will be implementing Lefebvre's concept of *representational space*. For Lefebvre, representational space is "the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects"; it is the space of the mind, and as such, it is a space that resounds with "imagery and symbolic elements, [that] have their source in history—in the history of a

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century Ireland, as it was one of the most impactful events to the construction of Irish national identity and to Anglo-Irish political relations. The immense decrease in population, both through death from starvation and disease and through emigration, helped to perpetuate a national crisis that marked both people and landscape. These years are the backdrop for Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow*, which will also be a focus of mine later in the chapter.

[85] In this instance, we can view genre as a "system of space."

people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people" (Lefebvre 39, 41). This representational space is the terrain of the literary, and specifically of the national tale; it is the space in which national identity is imagined and historical events synthesized and interpreted, thus proving an ideal vehicle for the simultaneous examination of the evolution of genre and competing perceptions and representations of Irishness. Given the strange cultural and political flux of nineteenth-century Ireland, and the competing philosophies of fiction resulting from the transition from Romanticism to Realism, it makes sense to view the evolution of the national tale through such an active mode as representational space, for, as Lefebvre reminds us,

> [r]epresentational space is alive: it speaks. It has an effective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, *because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic*. (Lefebvre 42, my emphasis)

This element of fluidity is an inevitable reality of genre, which must necessarily evolve as modes of understanding, imagining, and expressing evolve, as time passes and as space is recoded. So, if spatial codes, and thus genre, shift over time, it becomes necessary to identify potential catalysts for such shifts. Though there are myriad possibilities, perhaps it is useful to do as Kate Trumpener does and look to the influence of historical crisis.

As crises occur, Trumpener argues, literary forms change to accommodate the altered climate, whether it be ideological, economic, or so forth; thus it becomes necessary for genres to eschew outdated conventions and adopt new ones to affect adequate representation or interpretation of new world events in what she calls a "literary equivalent of a paradigm shift" (Trumpener 150). One could also put it this way: as representational space of symbols and imaginings is recoded in a process which is correlated to a historical crisis, modes of imagining must in turn adjust in order to accommodate and interpret changing ideologies. This progression is evident when we look at mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Take England, for example. As the technological and economic landscapes began to shift, and emphasis moved from the pastoral to the urban, literary genre eventually followed suit, away from Romanticism and more toward Realism. We need only look to popular novels of the period, like Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) or Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) or *North and South* (1855), only a few examples among many, to see that public and artistic interest, at least among the reading public, was becoming less invested in nostalgia and more in seeing the commonalities of everyday life: ladies in their drawing rooms, a conversation in a club, the laborer in the factory, and the realities of the workhouse.[86] This premise holds true for nineteenth-century Ireland as well, where the relationship between historical crisis and generic change is particularly distinct when we consider national traumas such as those brought about by the Act of Union, the

[86] I am acutely aware that the move from Romanticism to Realism is a complicated history dependent on many factors, and that it deserves a significant amount of time devoted to its discussion. For the sake of my own argument, however, I use this information merely as an introduction, and will limit my discussion to the narrower, more manageable issue of the nineteenth-century Irish national tale.

Great Famine, and the land wars. Within Ireland itself, still very much a colonized space, there is a marked shift over time from the Romantic nostalgia of writers like Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, at the beginning of the century to the rather schizophrenic patriotism of William Carleton in the 1840's and 50's, and then to a more radical, volatile nationalism by the 1860's and 70's, like that of popular novelist and Fenian leader Charles Kickham. Throughout the century, along with a growing interest in realism, an expanding literate population, and a desire for a new kind of "authenticity" in literature, there is a distinct shift in authority, moving from the distanced, "symbolic" authority of Anglo-Irish writers like Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson to voices of the peasantry, such as those given to us by William Carleton, John Banim, Gerald Griffin, and Charles Kickham.[87] These latter writers held a significant degree of what we might call "empirical" authority, as they were part of the communities and people they depicted in their novels, and were able to draw on personal experience rather than second-hand information. However, before we further discuss the evolution of the Irish national tale, we must go back not to *the*, but *a* point of origin for the genre, and Sydney Owenson's ever-popular masterpiece, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), is a practical place to start.

Though the national tale has been seen primarily as a Romantic genre, it remains difficult to define. For Trumpener, the national tales of the nineteenth century, like those written by Owenson and, more famously, by Walter Scott, are primarily reliant on

[87] I say these writers belong to the "peasantry," as Ireland at the time had no real middle class to speak of, at least not such a class as existed in Britain. With the exception of Carleton, who was an educated son of a low tenant farmer, these men came from relatively established working families. They were, however, Irish Catholic, and seen as a separate class from the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, of which Edgeworth and Owenson were a part.

antiquarian or bardic nationalisms that seek to celebrate the history and culture of the past and generally follow a common formula centering around a foreign traveler who finds natural and artistic appreciation of an exotic land and, having come to love the native culture, eventually falls in love with and marries a comely local (Trumpener 13, 41).[88] This seems to be a succinct way to plot out these novels, most of which take place in the "wilds" of Scotland, usually exemplified by the Highlands, or Ireland, usually in the west or a location far from the sophistication of Dublin. These locations are still part of Britain but have the added advantage of remaining amazingly "foreign" to the average English reader at whom such tales were aimed. The point was to portray a regal country full of regal people, likely deposed royalty from ancient families, and a loyal, friendly peasantry, thus cashing in on the mysteriousness of an unfamiliar culture while creating sympathetic Celtic characters.

Ina Ferris takes a more overtly political tone in her classification of the national tale, and one that proves quite useful when examining the evolution of genre. For Ferris, the national tale is not a text that merely addresses issues of national importance, but "a fiction that locates itself in a contentious zone of discourse in order to articulate grievances of a small people"; this issue of grievance is central for Ferris, as presenting national narratives in the form of a grievance "is to write Ireland less as a problem to be resolved than as a claim that demands to be heard" (Ferris 50).[89] This reading of the genre is intriguing, as it changes the trajectory of the nineteenth-century "Irish

[88] Comparisons to Walter Scott among Irish nationalist writers were rampant throughout the nineteenth century. Carleton and Banim were at one time each called "The Walter Scott of Ireland" and, later in the century, Kickham's immensely popular *Knocknagow* was criticized for not living up to Scott's national tales.

[89] Ferris names *War and Peace* and *Persuasion* as examples, though neither are a national tale.

Question" from "What do we *do* about Ireland?" to "What is Ireland *saying*?" To return to *The Wild Irish Girl*, both definitions work in combination: Owenson is certainly seeking to communicate a particular national grievance, as I will presently discuss, but the bulk of her narrative undoubtedly relies on the kind of antiquarian nationalism Trumpener discusses.

Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* is of particular interest for its contribution to the genre of the national tale, but also because of the way Owenson herself forwarded her own political and social agendas by embodying Glorvina, her literary heroine. A self-proclaimed nationalist, Owenson became a quick celebrity following the release of the novel. She frequented the homes and salons of her wealthy Dublin and London patrons, who were both Whig and Tory, always clothed in her Glorvina costume of cloak, bodkin, and harp, and was responsible for initiating a Celtic fashion fad for Glorvina accessories and other "Girl paraphernalia," which became the "disposable identity of the moment" (Dennis 180). The idea of the romantic Celt was pervasive among Owenson's contemporaries, and similar characterizations are echoed later in Lady Jane Wilde's *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887). In her discussion of early Irish art, Wilde notes the "vivid imagination that delights in the strange and unusual, often fantastic and grotesque, in place of the absolute and real…so truly Oriental in its spirit" that defines these works. This speaks to what Owenson was trying to achieve: a vision of strange, alluring, foreign splendor—the unknown wild, romantic Ireland—all wrapped up in an attractive female body, with fingers that trailed across harp strings rather than extending themselves in need.

Seeing Owenson's Glorvina persona as subversive, Julie Donovan argues in *Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan and the Politics of Style* that Owenson's "Celtic chic" was a sly way to communicate a covert nationalist agenda. "As she was providing a national stereotype for her audience," Donovan argues, "she was also disseminating antiquarian scholarship through her conversation and presence—giving a material or discernable form to abstractions of historical and political division through her dress" (37). While it is arguable that Owenson did indeed bring a certain level of national or cultural awareness through her performances, it is difficult to overlook the reality that she was enforcing cultural bias toward the Irish, promoting the impression that they were a provincial, wild people averse to social progress. Also, considering the typical atmosphere of such *fêtes*, it is far more likely that the information disseminated through Owenson's Glorvina was regarding where to purchase similar accessories, rather than of a cultural or political interest. Ultimately, the fact that she was embodying and embracing a national stereotype, even through she seemed to be trading the barbarian for the fairy, is difficult to ignore.

Owenson was no stranger to the stage. Her father, Robert, was a stage actor of Irish Catholic heritage who claimed a connection with the ancient families of Galway; her English Protestant mother, who had married Robert against her family's wishes, saw Ireland as "the land of potatoes and papists," but Owenson chose to embrace her father's homeland and Irish identity (Kirkpatrick vii-viii). The identity Owenson created, however, was strongly rooted in an antiquarian vision of the Celt. With her outmoded dress, harp, and English translations of old Irish songs, she appeared more like a representative of *Tír na nÓg* than of Ireland, more fantasy than reality.

In exploring these performances of identity, Joep Leerssen discusses Owenson's Glorvina in terms of what he calls "auto exoticism," which is "a mode of seeing, presenting and representing oneself in one's otherness (in this case, one's non-Englishness)" (37). For Leerssen, the Glorvina persona is the apotheosis of romantic literature, which is the primary space of auto-exoticism. He argues that auto-exoticism itself is based on three overarching characteristics, which are rooted in romantic fiction, these being "the extraordinary preoccupation…with self-analysis," the action of constantly "explaining Ireland in terms of its past," and the assumption that "Ireland is most itself in those aspects wherein it is most un-cosmopolitan, most unlike other nations" (38). This romanticization of a glorified Celtic past is what propels the narrative of *The Wild Irish Girl*, and it is visible through its setting as well as through the characters themselves, thus blending together people and soil in a neatly cohesive, idealized representational space.

Owenson's national tale takes the form of an epistolary novel composed of letters written by Horatio, the English protagonist, while travelling in the province of Connaught in western Ireland. His expectations of Ireland and the Irish are quite specific in terms of geography. For Horatio, Dublin is more or less a copy of London, with similar society, events, and diversions, while he sees the west as the wild unknown; it is as if perforating the pale were reversing time itself, allowing him to "[behold] the Irish character in all its *primeval* ferocity" (Owenson 17). Owenson's western landscape no doubt encourages such expectations, though its power can only be appreciated by one of appropriate sensibility, or, as Burke might say, "taste." Horatio writes in an early letter that the scenery of Connaught will not appeal to one who finds

pleasure in "the embellished scenes of art, rather than the simple but sublime operations of nature," but that

> the bold features of its varying landscape, the stupendous attitude of its 'cloud-capt' mountains, the impervious gloom of its deep embosomed glens, the savage desolation of its uncultivated heaths, and boundless bogs, with those rich veins of a picturesque champagne, thrown at intervals into gay expansion by the hand of nature, awaken in the mind of the *poetic* or *pictoral* traveller, all the pleasures of *tasteful enjoyment*, all the sublime emotions of a rapt imagination. (Owenson, my emphasis, 18)

Such rhetoric would be equally at home in the poetry of Shelley, Keats, or Wordsworth, and Owenson uses this language early on to establish a set of conditions by which the reader is to interpret her novel. Only the refined, poetic individual, one who is (or aspires to be) of the very best taste, can properly interpret Ireland as Owenson presents it; those who prefer artificial "embellishment" over the terrifying beauty of nature are presupposed to be simple, common, vulgar. This clever rhetorical approach pushes a nationalist agenda in an indirect yet fascinating way: by appealing not to reason, but to vanity and expectations of class. If readers see Ireland—the land, the ruined castles and churches, and the people who live there—as barbarous or uncultivated, they are not merely guilty of xenophobia, but, much worse, guilty of having poor taste.

Following these parameters for "reading" Ireland within the representational space of the national tale, Owenson describes the Castle of Inismore and the family

dwelling within it as an embattled yet beautiful extension of the landscape. As he walks along a peninsula, which he calls "wildly romantic beyond all description," Horatio approaches a point at which there arises "a vast and grotesque pile of rocks, which at once form[s] the scite and fortifications of the noblest mass of ruins on which [his] eye ever rested," and further remarks that this structure, the Castle of Inismore, is "[g]rand even in desolation, and magnificent decay" (44). The castle, a remnant of Ireland's old glories, remains, even though the roof has half succumbed to decay and to "the ocean breeze, [which] as it rushed through the fractured roof wafted the torn banners of the family which hung along its dismantled walls" (46). It is as if the castle has been pushed up from the earth, as if the very soil of Ireland had conspired to create an extension of itself, rock by rock. This description works along with that of the landscape to achieve an effect of vastness, while linking the land with the ancient family of Inismore. Additionally, as Horatio approaches, he offhandedly muses upon "the days of civil warfare" in which his ancestors took possession of the lands surrounding the castle; he is, however, so enthralled by the vision of the castle that he almost forgets the "crime" of his "daring ancestor" (45). Clearly, amid all this unfettered beauty, there is an awareness of Ireland as an infiltrated, colonial space, and of Horatio, as one who explores and one who looks, as a beneficiary of that invasion, but Owenson also seems to be aware of the fact that stressing the injustices of British imperialism straight away will not go over with her English readership. Instead, the reader follows Horatio on a journey, guided by Glorvina, of *gradual* understanding of Owenson's imagining of Irish identity.

As for Glorvina, the Princess of Inismore, she is a strange yet delicate Other whom Horatio finds to be "scarcely mortal" from the moment he hears her from afar, singing and playing her harp. She is adorned with silver, silks, gems, and a lace veil; Owenson states in a footnote that this veil is "the general costume of the female *noblesse* of Ireland" and that it was customary for fifteenth-century Irish ladies, "like those of ancient and modern Greece," to wear such a veil in public (48). Comparisons between Ireland and ancient Greece run throughout the novel and are applied to both the aristocracy and the peasantry. Horatio, though, is far more impressed with the princess than he is with the peasant women he encounters, whom he describes as "grotesque and coarse," even though their quaintness pleasingly supports his expectations of the Irish. These women, who are on their way to Mass at the castle, are clothed in various headdresses, the older among them wearing "several wreaths of white or coloured linen"; in a footnote, taken from Joseph Cooper Walker's *Historical Essays on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern Irish* (1788), Owenson writes that these headdresses resemble those worn by Isis, so much so that "it cannot be doubted but that the modes of Egypt were preserved among the Irish" (45).

These classical comparisons are significant: by placing Ireland alongside such venerable models as ancient Greece and Egypt, Owenson seeks to establish credibility by association, thereby showing that Ireland is worthy of respect, and even of admiration.[90] But herein lies a conundrum. By drawing such associations between

[90] The imagining of Ireland as a kind of classical space would prove a powerful element for Yeats, who saw the advent of the twentieth century as the new golden age of the nation. For Yeats, the new century would bring to Ireland a renewed interest in the arts and an intense respect, reflective of ancient Greece, for poetry and the dramatic arts in

Ireland and classical lands, Owenson conjures an almost mythic Irish identity that can exist only in her romanticized version of the past. For a novel written only eight years after the United Irishmen rebellion and just six years after the Act of Union, such grand comparisons make the real, and significantly more difficult, conditions of Ireland seem like indicators of vast, national deterioration.

For instance, let us return to Glorvina, whose fantastical characterization contributes greatly to the romantic glaze that covers the narrative. Horatio dreamily recounts his first encounter with Glorvina, describing her figure as "so almost impalpably delicate, that as it floated on the gaze, it seemed like the incarnation of some pure ethereal spirit, which a sigh too roughly breathed would dissolve into its kindred air" (48). He goes on later in the text to compare her to a fairy, a Valkyrie, and a Druid priestess, thereby strengthening his association of the "Irish character" with nature; like the Castle of Inismore, Glorvina is a kind of folkloric extension of the Irish landscape. She is so bound by this mythical idea of ancient Celtic femininity that it is difficult to imagine how such a "fairy princess" could take on the pressing realities of an early nineteenth-century Irish nationalist agenda. Still, while her characterization may make her seem far removed from contemporary events, Glorvina does serve in a political capacity. She, along with Father John, the priest of Inismore, gives voice to the grievances of the people of Connaught. It is clear, though, that Glorvina is tasked with

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particular. Greco-Roman mythology also played an important role in much of Yeats's work.

providing emotional context, primarily through crying at gravesides, picking flowers, and trembling, while the dissemination of all other information is left up to the priest.[91]

During a ride through the countryside, Horatio, Glorvina, and Father John chance upon a peasant's wake, during which the priest takes the opportunity to educate Horatio on the local customs of the "lower orders" and the problems of religious oppression. Like the earlier descriptions of Glorvina and of the peasant women, Father John's explanation is rooted in comparisons between the Irish and the Greeks, especially in terms of the procession to the grave. In both Ireland and Greece, the priest tells Horatio, if one dies while unmarried, it is customary for the body to be followed by "young attendants dressed in white…carrying garlands, and strewing flowers as they proceed to the grave" (183). He goes on to compare the *keeners*, women who are hired to sing the death song, to the hired mourners at Greek funerals.[92] While the association with the Greeks does, as I've already noted, help the reader to understand Irish culture by positioning it in a familiar context and adds credibility to customs that were frighteningly foreign to most English readers, it also works to counteract common associations between Ireland and paganism, thus endeavoring to make a move from the "barbarous" to the "classical" in terms of interpretation. These descriptions of the

[91] It is worth noting that, though Owenson was very much a secularist, she paints a positive picture of Catholicism, mainly through the character of Father John. Doing so is an unconventional move in an era when it was common for writers to depict priests as villainous and Catholicism as treacherous. While this is not necessarily surprising, given Owenson's support for Catholic Emancipation, it does prove interesting in terms of her later hatred of the populist Catholic leader Daniel O'Connell.

[92] William Carleton recounts in his introduction to the 1843 edition of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* and in his autobiography that his mother, Mary Kelly, was a well-respected keener. When his mother "raised the keene," Carleton writes, "the general clamour of violent grief was gradually diminished, from admiration, until it became ultimately hushed, and no voice was heard but her own—wailing in sorrowful but solitary beauty" (x).

peasantry, however, are still coded within a romantic space, which is rather problematic in terms of the airing of grievances. On the one hand, the Irish peasantry is being addressed in a way that is relatively new: it is being seen. On the other hand, the peasants are presented as caricatures, making any such innovation lose a great degree of its political weight. It is only at the end of the novel that Owenson addresses the peasantry in a more concrete way, offering a distinctly Anglo-Irish view of the system of land tenure and a strangely contradictory commentary on the Act of Union.

As the trio departs the wake and continue on their tour through the countryside, Horatio notices the men and women toiling in the fields, a scene that contradicts his idea that Ireland's peasantry is idle. Father John concedes that the Irish peasants do not have the same motivation as English workers of similar rank, but says this is mainly due to lack of the proper "encouragement to awaken their exertions" and to the "misguided" idea that they are themselves the "hereditary proprietors of the soil they cultivate" (189). Herein is evidenced a primary tenet of the early nineteenth-century anti-Union argument: that the division between the landowning classes and the peasantry should be upheld in order maintain a functioning economic system, but that this is a responsibility that should belong to the Irish landowning classes, not to a British Parliament. Within the space of *The Wild Irish Girl*, paternalism is the order of the day. Having learned all he needs to know about Ireland's political climate, Horatio finally expresses his certainty that, were the duties of the peasants "obviously made clear" and their "true interests fully represented by reason and common sense," they would ultimately be "a people as happy, contented, and prosperous, in a political sense, as in a *natural* and national one" (my emphasis, 191). What this shows us is that Owenson has adapted the

arguments commonly levied against Ireland as a whole—that the people are primitive and incapable of ruling themselves, that they need a strong hand to guide them toward their best interests, that they are naturally beneath the more cultivated English, and so forth—and changes the voice of authority from an English voice to an Anglo-Irish one, which is essentially Owenson's own. This claim of authority is what Owenson has been building throughout the novel: the claim that Glorvina as the embodiment of Ireland, though exotic and "wild," adheres to the same principles that organize the rest of Britain, namely a belief in a feudalistic system of political and economic control; such is seen as the *natural* order of things. It is just that Owenson has shifted and narrowed the focus of a larger conversation.

Strangely enough, however, what seems like a clear nationalist move is overshadowed by the structure of the tale itself. First, Owenson implements the marriage trope, a convention common to national tales, to form a union between Horatio and Glorvina, and, through them, unites Ireland and England. This choice of structure, especially in the context of the recent Act of Union and the political upheaval surrounding it, eschews all previous efforts at building a nationalist narrative in favor of upholding typical generic conventions. What's more, the letters that comprise the text are written by Horatio, ensuring that, no matter how significantly Horatio changes in terms of his conceptions of Ireland, the nation and its people are always seen through English eyes. Given these narrative features, it seems that Owenson's political agenda, or any nationalist agenda for that matter, has been strangled by the generic conventions of the Romantic national tale. This narrative twist is not surprising, given that Owenson is writing in an antiquarian tradition hardly suitable for the rapidly changing political

climate of nineteenth-century Ireland, a reality of which she became aware by the middle of the century.

A combination of Owenson's hatred of O'Connell, whose movement was rapidly moving from a successful campaign for Catholic emancipation toward a repeal of the Act of Union, and what she saw as the tendency of Victorian novelists to pander to the "plebian tastes" of the expanding literate population (i.e. the increasing interest in realism), moved Owenson to abandon novels in favor of journalism and non-fiction writing; in 1837 she left Ireland for London (Donovan 185). Unwilling to bend to the demands of a changing market and to accept the necessary evolution of genre, Owenson was out of moves. The nationalist fiction that followed her, like Banim's immensely successful *Tales of the O'Hara Family* (1825), Griffin's *The Collegians* (1829), Charles Lever's *The Martin's of Cro'Martin* (1856), and the majority of Carleton's work, saw a greater advantage in presenting a more realist representation of Irish national identity, thus helping to recode the space of the national tale.

(2) A "Complex Destitution": Representing Famine in William Carleton's *The Black Prophet*

In terms of timing, William Carleton's career is a fascinating one, as he occupies a rather nebulous literary space between the romantic nostalgia of Owenson and the critical, cultural nationalist moment of the Celtic Revival facilitated by Yeats, Lady Gregory, and others. A contemporary of Dickens and William Thackeray, Carleton was associated with some of the leading political and literary figures of the day, such as

Lady Wilde, Maria Edgeworth, and Charles Gavan Duffy, and was generally praised as one of Ireland's most powerful literary voices, the "National Novelist of Ireland" or "The Walter Scott of Ireland." His frequently controversial career was long, his life was incredibly well documented, and his call for a national literature predated that of Yeats by around 60 years. Yet, by the turn of the century, many of Carleton's books were out of print, and Yeats, who was an admirer, obtained copies of Carleton's novels by rummaging through the inventory of used bookshops (Fegan 131). Yeats saw much value in Carleton's writings, for both their literary and historical merits, and in introducing a volume of Carleton's collected stories in 1889, he would write: "The history of a nation is not in parliaments and battle-fields, but in what people say to each other on fair-days and high days, and in how they farm and quarrel, and go on pilgrimage. These things has Carleton recorded" (*Stories From Carleton* xvi). If there were to be a Dickens or Thackeray of Ireland, surely Carleton would hold the honor, for no writer managed to capture the imagination and the everyday routine of the Irish peasantry in such a resoundingly popular and historically significant way as did he.[93] Numerous scholars have pondered the reasons for the seeming non-existence of an Irish Charles Dickens, George Eliot, or William Makepeace Thackeray. The point of particular immediate interest, however, is the time and space of Carleton's fiction, and

[93] While Carleton admired both Dickens and Thackeray, he saw his own writing as superior in terms of capturing the everyday, and the Irish everyday in particular. In his autobiography he comments that Thackeray, who published his travel piece, *The Irish Sketchbook*, in 1843, "knew Ireland very well in an English way" and that Dickens "is fertile, varied, and most ingenious, but all is caricature. There does not appear a genuine, fine, sensible Englishman in all his works. His women are dolls and makeweights" (*The Life of William Carleton* 158). To Carleton's mind, the Irish writer could not afford to write in caricature.

the ways in which we can gauge the further evolution of the national tale through his works.

A self-crowned king of the quotidian and irreproachable authority on the traditions and history of the Irish peasantry, Carleton derived the lion's share of his credibility from his own upbringing in County Tyrone as the son of a tenant farmer, a quality that separated him from the majority of his literary contemporaries. It is therefore necessary that we consider the events of his personal life. In the preface to the 1852 edition of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, probably his most highly praised work and a great favorite of Marx, Carleton positions himself as the voice for the common people of Ireland. To show the nation of Ireland as it really is presents a task that Carleton undertakes "more for the sake of his country than himself," and he seeks therein to dispose of "many absurd prejudices which have existed for time immemorial against his countrymen" (*Traits and Stories* i).[94]

At the time Carleton was writing *Traits and Stories*, depictions of the peasantry were often limited to the comedic or the primitive, as exemplified by stage plays and antiquarian works like Thomas Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824).[95] For example, in a comical illustration of Irish "ingenuity," Croker plays up the conception of Ireland as a stage for widespread drunkenness. He observes that it is common for a peasant, after suffering the effects of a rather egregious hangover, to

[94] *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* was first published in book form in 1830 by William Curry in Dublin.

[95] In his critique of stage Irishness, Carleton points to the specific example of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, great uncle of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, and his 1775 play, *The Rivals*. Sheridan's play enjoyed great success due in part to the comical Sir Lucius O'Trigger, in what Carleton saw as Sheridan's blatant pandering to the prejudices of his English audience (*Traits and Stories* ii).

swear off all alcohol, but that the Irishman will find "amusing stratagems" to avoid keeping said promise. For instance, if a man has promised to consume liquor "neither in nor out of a house," he will, according to Croker, consume the alcohol "with one foot within the door and the other without"; if he promises to consume "not a drop at all," then "he surmounts this difficulty by eating the bread he has sopped in '*the cratur*'"(Croker 228). On the darker side, Croker discusses a "horrible and diabolic" superstition that "the left hand of a corpse, if dipped into the milk-pail, has the effect of making the milk produce considerably more cream and of a richer and better kind than it would have done without this spell" (Croker 234).[96] Much like Owenson's method in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Croker successfully others the people of Ireland through such "observations" and "data collection," though his peasants are far less refined than Owenson's anachronistic echoes of Isis.

A meticulously detailed work, *Researches in the South of Ireland* touches on myriad commonly held nineteenth-century markers of Irishness, including the "natural" inclination toward musicality. Croker notes that though there is a vast quantity of Irish songs, few have been written down, a gap he attributes to their short length and "treasonable nature"; and while Croker notes that the comedic value and "peculiar quaintness" of the songs are impossible to translate, he in the same breath degrades them for their awkward or "absurd" classical allusions, noting a particular "village bard" who had "described his mistress as looking 'just like Venus or Jove'" (336). Here, Croker makes the typical mistake of viewing one nation's cultural product

[96] In his discussion of this superstition, Croker notes a specific example as recent as 1816, in which a woman was arrested, and later acquitted, on the charge of possession of two severed, decomposing hands, presumably for the purpose of "raising cream" (234).

according to the strictures of another, different nation. By noting the absurdity of the English translations of Irish songs, Croker completely negates his previous point on the impossibility of communicating the intricacies of vernacular and idiom through a straight language-to-language translation, especially when such a transition is moving from a tongue like Irish Gaelic to English. This act of diminishment significantly downplays the importance of the oral tradition in Ireland, a tradition which Carleton feels is almost sacred, and one that had to be preserved in an era in which the Irish language is being rapidly overtaken by English. For Carlton, the peasantry is the locus of such preservation, the remaining representative of what he sees as an "authentic" Irishness.

The oral tradition is, for Carleton, strongly tied to depictions of the Irish peasantry, and his access to such a tradition, which he interprets essentially as a kind of birthright, serves to boost his own credibility as a "national" voice for Ireland. Carleton credits his foundation of knowledge in part to being raised in County Tyrone, "a spot rife with old legends, tales, traditions, customs, and superstitions" in which everyone, even the land itself, was saturated in myth. Though Carleton's father was a farmer without a formal education, he was "a perfect storehouse" of folk knowledge, histories, and poetry, and had an inventory of prophecies, fairy stories, and local anecdotes to rival even the most learned antiquarian. These stories were passed on to Carleton from his father, told to him in Irish more often than English, though his father spoke both languages equally well. Carleton credits this verbal exchange with his ability to "transfer the genius, the idiomatic peculiarity and conversational spirit of one language into the other, precisely as the people themselves do in their dialogue, whenever the

heart or imagination happens to be moved by the darker or better passions," a quality sorely missing from the works of Owenson and Edgeworth (*Traits and Stories* viii). In contrast to claims like Croker's, on the absurd or comedic quality of Irish songs, Carleton positions the discrepancies between the Irish originals and the English translations as a matter of aesthetics and of national pride. He notes that his mother, who was a celebrated singer as well as a keener, was averse to singing Irish songs in English, seeing this kind of translation as an "invasion" of Irish custom and an upset to the modes of common life. When asked to sing *The Red-haired Man's Wife*, the English version of a popular Irish tune, Carleton's mother replied, in Irish, "I will sing it for you; but the English words and the air are like a quarrelling man and wife: *the Irish melts into the tune, but the English doesn't*" (*Traits and Stories* x). Much as in the case of his mother, it was imperative that Carleton get it right when it came to representing the Irish peasantry to an English and Anglo-Irish audience, and not just in terms of producing a true and authentic picture. For Carleton, methods of translating the quotidian days and ways of the Irish were a matter of national political importance.

As a writer, Carleton was aware of the growing power of the pen. He saw a strong connection between popular British opinion of Ireland as a nation and the literary representation of the Irish, particularly in those artistic mediums—stage plays, novels, short stories, antiquarian writings—composed by English writers, or by others for consumption by the English market. Therefore he was especially wary of the tendency to represent Irish people in caricature. For Carleton, this practice went beyond artistic differences and right to the heart of Ireland's place on the colonial stage, as he saw it as "inconvertibly true, that the man whom you laugh at, you will soon despise" (*Traits and*

Stories iii). In this regard, the novel is a political agent, with a direct role in imaginings of national identity. To harness the power of the text is likewise to control the power to define, and, for Carlton, a national literature was all about the power of self-definition; it would be, to borrow a phrase from Declan Kiberd, a "literature of self-explanation" (Kiberd 268).

The power to explain oneself, in one's own words, makes all the difference in the world in terms of the development of the national tale. To transfer authority from a writer like Owenson, who speaks from a place of privileged paternalism, to one like Carleton, who positions himself as the mouthpiece of a perpetually silenced majority, is to see the perspective from which national identity is imagined shift dramatically and the level of urgency vastly increase. Carleton and his call for a national literature, however, did not want for critics; he was condemned both for being too fickle in his allegiances and too devoted to the peasantry.

On the one hand, there is no doubt that Carleton was willing to lend his pen to any cause that could afford to pay. During his career, he wrote for such politically diverse publications as the overtly nationalist *Nation* and the *Irish Tribune* and the widely read Protestant-helmed *Dublin University Magazine*, which had an international circulation of about 4,000 copies per month before the Famine (Murphy 80). In numerous forums, Carleton managed to insult almost every sector of his readership, doing such immense damage to his career that he was able to redeem himself only after the publication of the highly praised nationalist novel *Valentine McClutchy* (1845), a scathing indictment of Orangism (Eagleton 211). In the preface to the novel Carleton apologetically writes that while he never compromised the "truth or integrity" of his

writings, he produced passages "which were not calculated to do any earthly good; but, on the contrary, to give unnecessary offense to a great number of my countrymen" (vii). It should be stated, though, that Carleton's intentions in writing *Valentine McClutchy* might not have been entirely altruistic, as he also asserted that the novel was an intentional revenge piece, meant to punish the Orangemen for a clash at the Carleton family home which left Carleton's sister with a nasty bayonet wound (Fegan 139).

On the other hand, Carleton was criticized for being so overly involved with the plight of the peasantry that his fiction suffered in other areas, particularly when it came to development of his more genteel characters. In his 1883 memoir, *Retrospect of a Long Life*, journalist S. C. Hall, husband of novelist Anna Maria Fielding and reported prototype for Dickens's character of Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, writes that Carleton had a knack for showing the worst side of Irish life. "He was essentially of the people he describes," writes Hall, "peasant-born and peasant-bred, and most at home in a mud cabin or shebeen shop. Of the Irish gentry he knew none beyond the 'squireens'; his occasional attempts to picture them are absurdities." He goes on to note that Carleton's face was "of the lower Irish type, giving little indication of the great ability he undoubtedly possessed" (O'Donoghue 134-5). Hall's blatant snobbery and racialist rhetoric aside, it is certain that Carleton's greatest strength as a national writer resides in his ability to render persuasive representations of peasant life, a strength that serves him well in *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine*, a work that bridges between the famines of 1817 and 1845 in an exploration of great national trauma.

The Black Prophet was serialized in *Dublin University Magazine* in 1846 and then published in book form in 1847. Nearly halfway into the nineteenth century, the

space of Ireland, and thus of the national tale, had changed dramatically from the time of the Act of Union and of *The Wild Irish Girl*. Ireland had faced decades of sporadic famine and crop failure, and tenant farmers were continuing to suffer under an oppressive system of land tenure that greatly exacerbated ecological and economic conditions; in terms of grievances, there were more than enough. So the problem facing Carleton became how to go about representing Ireland in a way that would communicate the most pressing grievances—namely, the starvation and sickness of hundreds of thousands of people— in a way that would most effectively communicate to an English audience through the medium of fiction. Overall, *The Black Prophet* proved a success, being well received in both England and Ireland and praised in numerous literary journals. In a review of the novel, *Howett's Journal* called Carleton a "master of fiction" and a "man of genius" able so expertly to capture peasant life because, as a man of the peasantry himself, "he depicts their life and their character because he is deeply familiar with both, and knows the causes, whether remote or immediate, which have made them what they are" (O'Donoghue 99-100). Even Carleton himself felt that the novel might be remembered as his best work, and it certainly seemed that he had found the magical ratio of realism to romance that would best speak to the present conditions of Ireland.[97]

Carleton was unfortunate, however, in that he sold his copyright to the work for a trifling sum and did not benefit from the sale of the book. His shortsightedness, combined with his rather consistent state of poverty and need for ready money, led him

[97] David James O'Donoghue, who was tasked with putting together *The Life of William Carleton* after the writer's death, writes that *The Black Prophet* is "the most irreproachable of his books, being almost entirely free from the bad taste, coarseness and rancor which occasionally blemish his works" (101).

to make a regular practice of selling copyrights, an issue that Maria Edgeworth felt the need to address. During a campaign for a government pension, which he eventually won, Edgeworth wrote a letter in support of Carleton, conveyed through D. P. Starkey, a mutual friend. In the letter, Edgeworth praised Carleton's literary talent, an endorsement that thrilled Carleton to such an extent that he showed the letter around to all his friends and beamed at the mere mention of it. Edgeworth, however, also mentioned to Starkey, "And I trust that he will keep in future his copyrights in his own hands. Will you be so good as to give him this last, but not least, useful hint from me" (O'Donoghue 99, 109). Eventually, an inexpensive edition of *The Black Prophet* was published by the Belfast firm of Simms and McIntyre in their Parlour Library series, leading Carleton to write a new novel for the company, another national work called *The Emigrants of Ahadarra*, in 1848 (O'Donoghue 101).

From the very first pages, Carleton establishes *The Black Prophet* as a political product, first through the subtitle, *A Tale of Irish Famine,* and then through the preface, which is dedicated to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell.[98] Carleton's preface itself serves as evidence of an important inch forward in the evolution of the national tale in terms of construction: from "presentation" to a "call for action." For example, Owenson, as we have discussed, establishes a narrative strategy of "unveiling" and "exoticizing" Ireland for the English reader, as if she is leaning in close, beckoning her audience to come nearer so that its members might experience the rough yet majestic beauty of Ireland and her people, beguiling them to look and to sigh, but not necessarily to act. Moreover, her antiquarian approach sets her tale in a representation of the past,

[98] My discussion of the preface refers to the 1847 book version.

glorious though it is, and affects a tone that vacillates between the poetic and the anthropological. In contrast, Carleton establishes himself as one who is not only an authority on national issues, but who is also an educator, able to better inform his ignorant readers of the problems of famine and land ownership in Ireland. Additionally, he makes explicit the grievances that he will be addressing more indirectly later in the text, though it must be noted that he does so gently, seeking assistance and mercy. He does not issue angry calls for retribution such as we will see later in Kickham's work.

In the preface, Carleton writes to Russell: "This is an Irish Book, my Lord, to which I would respectfully solicit your Lordship's attention; it is painful to me to be obliged to add that it is written upon an exclusively Irish subject" (v). Though he maintains a tone of absolute reverence, he clearly uses the preface, written in Black '47, to position the Famine in a place of critical importance, and to define it not only as a financial concern of Parliament, but as a personal, Irish concern, one that affects Irish lives and Irish lands. Carleton is also careful to cement a link between Russell's government and the national trauma of the Famine, writing that Russell, as "the man who, in his ministerial capacity, must be looked upon as a public exponent of those principles of Government which have brought our country to her present calamitous condition, by a long course of illiberal legislation and unjustifiable neglect," should necessarily have his name attached to a tale that stands as a testimony to the deleterious effects of such legislation (v). Carleton ends with the hope that Russell will amend his policies so as to ensure that no other writer ever has the chance to proffer a similarly desperate plea to a Prime Minister again.

The plea was timely. By the time Carleton wrote the preface to *The Black Prophet* in 1847, the country had already suffered unimaginable loss, and over the course of the event Ireland would see a decrease in population due to either death or emigration from 8, 500,000 people in 1845 at the beginning of the Famine to 4,700,000 by 1891 (Murphy 97). The conditions in Ireland were deteriorating faster than the British government could address them; this increasing distress, along with the ideological divisions within Russell's administration, which were best exemplified by the *laissez-faire* economics of Charles Trevelyan and Charles Wood, remnants of Peel's previous administration, led to desperation, growing unrest, and outright anger.

One of the leading voices of dissent during the Famine was that of Daniel O'Connell, who saw an opportunity to boost support for Irish independence. He argued that the British were only interested in using Ireland for its resources, stripping it of its crops and turning it into pastureland, whereas an independent Irish parliament would look after its own. This pillaging of Irish land, O'Connell stressed, was a case of an invader preying on a victim too weak to defend itself from attack. In response to such criticism, Britain often placed the blame on its favorite scapegoats in such matters, the Irish landlords (Jenkins 81). Additionally, in 1846 O'Connell requested that Britain give Ireland a sum from £30 million to £40 million to "ransack the world for food and buy it at any price," a move which he defended by reminding Britain of the £20 million they had just given to West Indians who had emancipated their slaves (Ó Gráda 117).[99]

[99] Cormac Ó Gráda notes that there was also dissent from within the ranks of British Parliament. Lord George Bentinck asserted that a country that spent such an exorbitant amount of funds fighting Napoleon "should not be 'downhearted' about providing properly for Ireland." For Edward Twistleton, whom Ó Gráda calls the "increasingly disillusioned dispenser of Irish Poor Law relief," the money it would take for Britain "to

In terms of policy, though, Parliament stressed the greatest importance on aid that came from within Ireland itself, lest the provision of aid lead Ireland to become overly dependent or impotent.[100] In the 1848 edition of his book, *English Misrule and Irish Misdeeds,* Irish poet and activist Aubrey de Vere addresses the problematic expectation that a country nearly devoid of provisions will be able to provide for itself without outside aid. He writes,

> Poor we are, and he would be a bold man who denied it. Landlords, farmers, and labourers; these three classes are all poor, and so poor, that if you would support the country by compelling any one of them to maintain the other two, (to receive no doubt the same assistance,) you act as wisely as if you desired a man to become rich by shifting his halfpence from one pocket to the other. (50)

Carlyle, who was an advocate of the beliefs de Vere criticized in *English Misrule and Irish Misdeeds*, wrote a letter to de Vere upon receiving a copy of the book. Coming down firmly on the opposite side of de Vere, Carlyle writes, "Men, and Nations, do indeed fall among thieves, and are sadly maltreated and trampled out of shape; but a man, you will find, is generally responsible for his own face, and a Nation; let it, if insufferably ugly say, 'I have deserved to be so.' There is no hope otherwise, I believe,

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spare itself the deep disgrace of permitting any of [its] miserable fellow subjects to die of starvation" would be only slight in comparison to "the expenses of the Coffre War" (117).

[100] This is the reasoning behind the Irish Poor Laws, which placed responsibility for tenants with the individual landlords, except in the case that a tenant were to relinquish his lands, which would then and only then entitle him to receive assistance through a work house. This policy, of course, led to mass evictions, as landlords did not have the funds to look after all of their tenants.

for any Nation or man" (de Vere 133).[101] That Ireland "deserved" to be in its current situation was not something de Vere was willing to accept. While traveling around Ireland in the 1840's, he engaged in relief work and wrote extensively of the conditions he witnessed personally. Small relief committees, like the one de Vere worked with, were present throughout Ireland, offering aid in small doses, but unable to adequately meet the growing number of the impoverished, starving, and displaced.[102]

This time of mortal flux was the era in which Carleton composed *The Black Prophet.* Yet, it is interesting to note, even though he was living through one of the most horrific events in Irish history, he chose to set the story during the previous famine of 1817. While this deliberate regression is quite telling, especially when one considers Ireland's history of violent repetition, it does seem curious. Christopher Morash speculates that Carleton's strategy was a way to put temporal distance between the famine as presented in *The Black Prophet* and the Famine beginning in the 1840's, thus allowing him to illustrate a "complete, documented event" with clearly defined beginning and end points, as opposed to providing commentary on one that was still chaotically unfolding (Morash 177). This kind of strategy would no doubt serve to elevate Carleton's reputation as the chronicler of "genuine" experience among the peasantry, the people hit hardest by the effects of famine, but it is also interesting in

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[101] Carlyle's letter is reproduced in *Aubrey de Vere: A Memoir Based on His Unpublished Diaries and Correspondence* (1904), which was compiled and edited by de Vere's literary executer, Wilfrid Ward.

[102] The Central Relief Committee, established by the Society of Friends, was especially helpful to the relief cause, establishing soup kitchens, providing clothing and blankets, and caring for the sick. The organization was also extremely important in that it kept meticulous records of how it organized relief and to whom it was given, thus providing invaluable records of the event. This information, as well as an interesting critique on the absence of an Irish middle class, is included in *Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland* (1852).

terms of the possible implications for the national tale. If we are to consider the national tale in terms of representational space, Carleton's decision to restrict his narrative to the famine of 1817, to push it ever so slightly backward in time, implies a knowledge of and comfort with the codes constructing that particular space, which was still very fresh in Irish memory. Thus, the knowledge of how to exist and interpret such a space makes it much more likely that Carleton can represent it accurately, authentically. Moreover, this narrative strategy anticipates the sheer power of what would become the Great Famine, suggesting that the only way such a force—one that would mark nearly every aspect of Irish life—could possibly be addressed or comprehended is through examination of a smaller, more manageable calamity.

It may perhaps seem reductive to say that famine is tied to the land, but in the representational space of *The Black Prophet*, land takes on immense symbolic value, becoming integral to the structure of the literary space itself—it is both ecological and political. Any imagining of national identity in *The Black Prophet* is built upon famine first, and it is in this context that we see further development of the characters and plots. For Carleton, a narrative "founded upon" famine, and on the suffering that accompanied it, was an advantageous way to "awaken those who legislate for [Ireland] into something like a humane perception of a calamity that has been almost perennial in the country" (Carleton vii). From the beginning of the text, the eponymous Black Prophet, Daniel M'Gowan, called Donnel Dhu (black/dark) by the locals, proves his mettle by seeing what the villagers cannot, or will not: that famine is indeed upon them. But it is a deciphering of the land, rather than divine insight, that provides him with this

knowledge. When asked for a prophecy by a pair of laborers who pass him on the road, M'Gowan replies thus,

> "Look around you, and say what is it you see, that doesn't foretell famine—famine—famine! Doesn't the dark wet day, an' the rain, rain, rain foretell it? Doesn't the rottin' crops, the unhealthy air, an' the green damp fortell it? Isn't the airth a page of prophecy, an' the sky a page of prophecy, where every man may read of famine, pestilence, an' death? The airth is softened for the grave, an' in the black clouds of heaven you may see the death-hearse movin' slowly along…" (14)

Here, the reader is shown an Ireland far different than Glorvina's Connaught, situated not in inspiration but in apprehension. The romanticism of Owenson cannot work in such an Ireland as this, as the space has been marked, and thus changed, by crisis.

Carleton sees it as his responsibility to represent *this* Ireland to his readers, and in this way identifies with his prophet, Daniel M'Gowan. During a journey to his native town of Clougher, in County Tyrone, Carleton comments on his reception in a letter to his daughter (whom he affectionately called "Sizzy"), exclaiming, "Certainly I am a prophet—not the Black one—honoured in his own country…" (O'Donoghue 90).[103]

[103] As evidenced by his letters and personal records, what Carleton lacked in funds he made up for in ego. He consistently placed himself within the highest rank of nineteenth-century writers, a result of what O'Donoghue calls "harmless vanity," and earnestly believed that he would be remembered long after his death as one of the giants of Irish literature. Alternately, he was prone to "frequent fits of gloom," threatening once to throw the manuscript of *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* into the fire. During such a fit, Lady Wilde wrote to him saying, "In truth I cannot bear this despondency of yours—*unrecognized* genius may name its miseries, deep and poignant, but not yours…" (O'Donoghue 138).

Perhaps, though, it is better to see Carleton as a *seanchaí*, simultaneously presenting and preserving a land and its people.[104] In terms of representing the famine of 1817, and, in that, the people and grievances of the nation, Carleton draws on actual effects, particularly on the human body and psyche, which were so vivid in themselves they needed little literary embellishment.

Carleton's peasants, as representatives of Ireland, are interesting to consider alongside Glorvina. While both Carleton's peasantry and Owenson's princess are both being employed as sources of pathos, they differ wildly in the way they are put to use. While Glorvina is shown as exotic and regal, and therefore worthy of interest, Carleton's peasant is portrayed as an everyman. More than that, though, he is an every*body*. That is to say, in order to build a point of understanding with his Ireland (i.e. Ireland as he presents it in his national tale), Carleton presents his peasants to the reader not just in their humanity, but in their mortal human*ness*, and explores what happens when constructions of this humanness are questioned. Material embodiment is just as vital as the symbolic import of the body.

For example, in a scene where neighboring villagers are visiting the home of a young mother, Peggy Murtagh, who, along with her infant, had recently died of starvation, they bring with them all the provisions they can spare, even though they themselves are starving. The narrator, in a characteristic editorializing moment, notes that these neighbors are not ones to stand by and cry over a sad situation. Instead, they are willing to act: "whatever can be done—whatever aid can be given—whatever

[104] A *seanchaí* is a storyteller, one who is in possession of a store of ancient knowledge and responsible for presenting and preserving it.

kindness rendered—or consolation offered, even to the last poor shilling, or 'the very last bit out of the mouth,' as they say themselves will be given with a good will, and a sincerity that might in vain be looked for elsewhere" (Carleton 139). Aside from its clear pathetic purpose, the political import of the scene is twofold. First, the fact that the villagers are offering assistance to one another, making an effort to keep their own community afloat, addresses the contemporary ideologies informing relief policies on the part of the British parliament.[105] Furthermore, the scene recalls numerous real-life examples that were happening all over Ireland. In their exhaustive multi-volume work, *An Account of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Fever lately Epidemical in Ireland* (1821), physicians Francis Barker and John Cheyne noted that in many parts of the country small farmers, though poor themselves, would routinely share what food they had with their destitute neighbors. In the areas around Edgeworthtown, for example, the farmers would boil large pots of cabbage and give it away, and no remnant of food, no matter how small, was ever wasted—it was "a rule" to give it to someone in need (125). This comparison brings us to the second particular point of importance in the scene: it stresses the fact that though the desire to help is there, and the feeling of responsibility is there, the necessary provisions such as food, clothing, fuel, medicine, and so forth are not, at least not in quantities suited to sustain a large group of people for a substantial length of time. This fact makes the narrator's concluding point about "good will" and its scarcity all the more germane. It is as if Carleton is extending his

[105] As I will discuss, Ireland was, in the eyes of Charles Trevelyan, a country too far gone, full of backward people incapable of adapting to ecological crisis. He saw the effects of famine as inevitable and potentially beneficial to the local and collective economy.

index finger and issuing a challenge to the policies of the Russell administration which he had directly addressed as ineffective in the preface.

Just as important to the humanitarian acts of the neighbors, though, is the way Carleton shows their bodies. To merely say that the peasants are starved is not nearly enough for Carleton. The neighbors who file into the mud hut where the young family is laid out are themselves pictures of death-in-life. What was once skin as "fair and glossy as ivory" is now stripped of all evidence of its former vitality; bones jut out violently, and the clothing hangs from "wasted and feeble" bodies. Perhaps more disturbingly, the eyes of the neighbors are marked by a "dull and languid motion, as if they turned in their sockets by an effort" (135). Here, the reader is confronted with the very mechanics of the human body and is reminded of a universal truth: that we all have bodies of blood and bone that must be nourished, and that, one day, every body ceases to function. But Carleton's peasants are not dead. They are yet one more example of the in-betweenness that characterizes the space of nineteenth-century Irish literature: the metaphorical in-betweenness emphasized by the Irish Gothic or in the Big House novel becomes physical in Carleton's novel. The figures of the starving peasants are disturbing not only because they are suffering, but because the experience they represent is, in essence, a breaking down of accepted constructions on which ideas of "society" or "civilization" are built.

Stuart McLean argues that hunger appears as a "condition of exile from the social world." Given that starving Irish people resorted to eating everything from boiled animal blood to weeds, grass, and the rotting flesh of dead animals—and that many people died and were, in turn, eaten by starving animals—hunger served to

destroy prescribed ideas of how food was to be consumed, and by whom (73). In *The Black Prophet* Carleton speaks to this destruction in a riot scene in which almost ghostly rioters, their feeble bodies unable to scream or move swiftly, attack carts of food that is being exported out of Ireland. Amid the silent chaos, people devour loaves of bread, the less fortunate "gobbling up raw flour and oatmeal" (223). But lest it all become too extreme, or the Irish seem caricatured in their misery, Carleton asks his readers to remember that the people who are pillaging the grain carts are the same individuals who were willing to share every available provision with neighbors in need, as evidenced in the funeral scene. Famine, Carleton notes, is a time of "complex destitution" in which "whole families, who had hitherto been respectable and independent, were precipitated, almost at once, into all the common cant of importunity and clamour during this frightful struggle between life and death"; hence, while the famine of 1817 is an "Irish subject," as Carleton terms it in the preface, it also becomes a much larger, philosophical issue. By showing how easily a neatly compartmentalized society can disintegrate in the face of national tragedy, Carleton shifts the emphasis and increases the intensity of his call to action: from feeding Ireland to preserving the very order of civilization by maintaining the codes that separate humans from animals.[106]

For Carleton, a man who had known much poverty and deprivation, suffering is an elemental part of Irish national literature. The downside to his representation of Ireland is, of course, that showing *this* Ireland could feed the already popular sentiment that the country was too far gone; that in times of national crisis, death is, as Charles

[106] Carleton goes on to discuss the necessity that Russell's administration move toward improving education, establishing a "more enlightened system of public health and cleanliness, and a better…provision of food for the indigent and poor" (220).

Trevelyan argued, to be viewed as acceptable and inevitable.[107] Herein lies a primary problem in communicating national grievances, especially during a time of such mortal and ideological turmoil. In Carleton's work the problem of the starving peasants is never resolved, but, again, the famine is not so much a plot point in *The Black Prophet* as an established condition of the space in which other plots unfold.

Despite this emphasis on suffering, Carleton did not shun the conventions readers had come to expect from the national tale. Most notably, the marriage plot remains intact, though Carleton manipulates it somewhat. Whereas in *The Wild Irish Girl* the marriage plot is used to bring together England and Ireland in a happy union, Carleton's marriage unites two Irish characters: Con Dalton, the son of a man falsely accused of a murder committed by Daniel M'Gowan years before, and Mave Sullivan, a descendant of the man murdered by M'Gowan. Their marriage is the conclusion of a triangular romance plot played out with Sarah M'Gowan, the daughter of the Black Prophet, in a fever hut. The two women are reminiscent of Rose Bradwardine and Flora McIvor of Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814).[108] Mave, affectionately called the *Gra Gal*, or "fair love," by the locals owing to her fair hair and complexion, is the picture of "unstudied ease and harmony" who is able to charm everyone around her with her beauty and sweet disposition, and who "breathed of utter guilelessness and angelic purity itself" (27). She is so gentle and good that she could "turn the hatred of a demon

[107] McLean notes that Trevelyan and Charles Wood both shared the belief that the mid-century potato blight could be "potentially beneficial in its long-term effects, irrespective of the short-term suffering it might cause, insofar as it would enable Irish agriculture to move from a potato-based subsistence to the compound cultivation of grain, with a resultant increase in prosperity and employment" (61).

[108] Oddly enough, in a turn of events in which Daniel M'Gowan is exposed as a villain and a murderer, he is also revealed to be living under a false identity. His true name is M'Ivor.

into love," and she is also immensely generous. Mave pays exorbitant prices to Darby Skinadre, the villainous local merchant who stockpiles and then overcharges for grain, so her poorer neighbors can eat, and she tends to Con in the fever hut, at great risk to her own health (27). Sarah, on the other hand, is passionate and volatile, with flowing raven locks and eyes that are at once "black and brilliant" and "piercing and unsettled." Equally comfortable caring for the ill or attacking her stepmother with a knife, Sarah is characterized by her unpredictability, Carleton noting that, at times, "her smile was as sweet as that of an angel, but let a single whim or impulse be checked, and her face assumed a character of malignity that made her beauty appear like that which we dream of in an evil spirit" (4). Thus, the reader is presented with two conventional literary types, the fair, angelic do-gooder and the dark, bad girl with a heart of gold, and they meet the corresponding, expected endings. Sarah, upon hearing that Con has fallen ill with the fever, rushes to his side, acting as nurse to him and his family. She falls ill herself after finally confessing her love to Con, who replies, "I like you, but I love [Mave]"; after sacrificing herself to save Mave from a kidnapping plot, Sarah dies of the fever with Mave by her side. Mave, of course, marries Con (292).

All in all, the plots playing out within the scene of famine (the marriage plot, an underdeveloped murder plot that frames the narrative, and a gratuitous kidnapping plot) are rather formulaic, if perhaps jumbled and oddly timed, but the marriage plot stands out in a couple of respects in regard to our examination of the evolution of the national tale. First of all, we should note that, in a seemingly subversive move, Carleton has taken a convention of the national tale and manipulated it. Instead of using marriage to stress the union between colonizer and colonized, he uses it to bond together two Irish

people, looking forward to a stronger, united nation. The fact that the marriage of Mave and Con also represents the reconciliation of their families, two sects long at odds, would also speak to this point. Perhaps the largest implication of the union, though, is that it cements the novel as an Irish national tale in a way that *The Wild Irish Girl* does not. This is not a story about England and Ireland, and it is not told through an English narrator; the "foreign visitor" has been omitted. There is, undoubtedly, the intended English audience: the reader, to whom Carleton imparts his lessons on Ireland, and Russell, to whom Carleton addresses his grievances. Overall, however, *The Black Prophet* remains as Carleton intended it: a book that moves beyond prevailing conceptions of Irishness to examine the Irish peasantry from a nuanced perspective.

It is important to note, though, that Carleton was not a revolutionary. He is calling Parliament to task, but he still sees a significant portion of the welfare of Ireland as Britain's responsibility. He is in many ways the antithesis of the *sinn féin* (we ourselves) mentality exhibited in the work of Charles Kickham.[109]

(3) The Return of the "Living Past": Recontextualizing Violence in Kickham's *Knocknagow*

Even by the end of the nineteenth century, national tales were still being read and reviewed in reference to earlier works like *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*—critics were always looking for the next "Walter Scott of Ireland." In an 1879 review of *Knocknagow*, which was published that same year, a critic from the *Irish Monthly* ends

[109] I am here referencing the Irish phrase and not the political party.

with the lament: "Shall any romance writer ever arise, to do for Ireland some part of the grand work that Sir Walter Scott did for Scotland?" (555). It is true that *Knocknagow*, an immense doorstop of a novel running some 600 pages and Kickham's most popular work by far, is more a novel of conversation than of action, and while the reviewer notes that the bulk of the lengthy passages of conversations do not serve to simply take up space, but are rather "for the sake of throwing light on some phase of Irish character or Irish politics," he maintains that the reader of *Knocknagow* must share Kickham's own interest in quotidian peasant life to fully enjoy the novel (554). Still, we must concede that Kickham indeed did not do for Ireland what Scott did for Scotland: he created no iconic heroes, no sublime landscapes, and no great love stories. He wasn't especially gifted at plotting out narrative sequences, and the most moving of his scenes were a bit too Dickensian, even if Yeats listed Kickham as the only writer who could stand next to the "Celtic humour" of Carleton, placing *For the Old Land* (1886), Kickham's final novel, published four years after his death, alongside Carleton's beloved *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (xvi).[110]

In any case, the astounding popularity of *Knocknagow* cannot be disputed: it was the most frequently purchased and widely read Irish novel from the time it was published in 1879 through the first half of the twentieth century, and when supply of the novel was exhausted in 1970, publishers Gill and Macmillan produced a facsimile edition in 1978 (Comerford 209).[111] James Murphy speculates that the popularity of

[110] This reference to Kickham is made in Yeats's introduction to *Stories from Carleton* (1889).

[111] Kickham's other titles also performed very well in the Irish, English, and American markets. His first novel, *Sally Cavanagh; Or The Untenanted Graves* (1869), was republished as late as 1948, and *For the Old Land* was consistently in print from 1886

Knocknagow perhaps hinged on its method of tempering the suffering of the citizens of Knocknagow with happiness. This move, Murphy argues, allowed those who had fared well in the land war to "continue to see themselves as victims of oppression while also being a part of a contented and functioning society" (129). Political dissatisfaction was explored from within what Kickham imagined as an Irish community united against British colonial oppression. If this sounds like an overtly political strategy, that is because it is. Imbedded in nearly every inch of *Knocknagow*, from the characters themselves to the conversations and the embittered polemics of the narrator, is Kickham's staunch Fenian ideology. Far more propagandistic than the works of either Owenson or Carleton, Kickham's novel is a space of immense national friction in which imaginings of Irish national identity are distinctly separate from those of Britain. Where Carleton calls for Russell's refocused attention and aid, Kickham warns of the impending "day of retribution." It is evident that Kickham's County Tipperary, influenced by an ever-growing Irish reading public, especially among the Catholic majority following Emancipation and widespread political unrest, was a drastically different space than those of the national writers who preceded him.

Kickham's political activities and membership in the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) came to define his life, first as an activist and journalist, then as a political prisoner, and last as a novelist. He was indicted on charges of "high treason" and imprisoned from 1865 to 1869, during which time he wrote *Sally Cavanagh; Or,*

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to 1942. In terms of the actual Irish numbers of *Knocknagow*, it is difficult to tell due to the poor record keeping of the publisher, Duffy and Company, but R. V. Comerford estimates that around 100,000 copies of the novel were published in Ireland (209).

The Untenanted Graves (written in 1867, published in 1869).[112] The brutality he suffered as a political prisoner is referenced in a number of his works of fiction, either in introductory remarks or through a textual interruption by a narrator, and is also well-documented by friend and fellow IRB member Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in his memoir, *Irish Rebels in English Prisons: A Record of Prison Life* (1880).[113] The memoir is dedicated to the "Irish Convicted Felons, 1865-1870," and included is a list of all their names, sentences, and places of birth. There are 136 prisoners listed, 18 of whom were either sentenced to death or died in prison; Kickham is included in the dedication, along with William Philip Allen, Michael Larkin, and Michael O'Brien, the Manchester Martyrs (O'Donovan Rossa 1-4). Upon its publication, the work caused such outrage that it incited a formal Commission of Inquiry to inspect the treatment of political prisoners in English institutions. The *London Spectator* published an article following the Commission's official report stating that the Committee had found the case of O'Donovan Rossa's and other Fenian prisoners' allegations of torture against prison authorities to be proven and concluded that "at least one of those prisoners was treated with a degree of barbarity which it is grievous to contemplate" (vii).[114]

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[112] Kickham's arrest stemmed from his involvement as a journalist for the Fenian periodical the *Irish People*.

[113] O'Donovan Rossa is well-known for his dynamite campaign in which charges would be detonated near famous landmarks; he called the practice "skirmishing," and, though it caused an ideological rift between Fenian compatriots, it would remain a part of the Irish independence movement well into the twentieth century. Kickham was strongly averse to the kind of disorganized violence that characterized skirmishing, calling it "ignorant, stupid, and insane" (Comerford 183).

[114] The "barbarity" referenced by the *Spectator* article, which O'Donovan Rossa uses as a preface to his memoir, refers to his own treatment of being kept in solitary confinement for thirty-six days, his hands tightly shackled behind his back and fastened at the waist (iv). Following the inquest and a publicly supported Amnesty Campaign, Gladstone agreed to only a partial amnesty, releasing a mere forty-nine of the eighty-

Kickham's own mistreatment served to exacerbate his already poor health; a childhood gunpowder accident had left his vision irreparably damaged and he often used an ear trumpet to compensate for his diminished hearing. O'Donovan Rossa recounts that Kickham was chronically infirm, requiring frequent visits to the prison hospital, and notes a specific incident involving Kickham, which he admits "made [his] blood boil a little." Kickham was sent to the quarry for manual labor, even though he appeared with "running sores on his neck" and was "so weak he could hardly even stand"; while supporting himself on a rock he was physically forced into a standing position and reprimanded, and later when he was unable to march quickly enough as the prisoners filed back from the quarry, he was tackled and shoved to the end of the line.[115] A few weeks afterward, Kickham was transferred to Woking (143-4). During his testimony to the 1869 Commission, Kickham himself attests to being subjected to tortuous and humiliating treatment, including frequent strip searches. Kickham testifies, "About once a week I was stripped and made to stand naked in the middle of my cell, with my arms extended and my mouth open. This torture was carried out SO FAR on one occasion that in spite of the scorn I felt for my torturers, I was obliged to burst into tears" (McConville 177). In addition to these physical punishments, Fenian prisoners were forbidden to speak Irish to one another, or to write in the language, as it

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one imprisoned Fenians; of those released, the only leader was Kickham, who had been held at Woking Invalid Prison and was in a state of rapidly declining health (McConville 219).

[115] Sean McConville notes that performance during the required hours of hard labor was directly related to the distribution of privileges, dietary and otherwise, and while "the rule clearly stated that prisoners must be certified fit for labour," infirm inmates were "punished as if they had been deliberately idle at their work." Such was the case of Kickham, for whom his friends were known to smuggle cups of tea (170-1).

was considered "slang" (O'Donovan Rossa 143).[116] Such is the treatment that helped inform Kickham's fiction and greatly influenced the way he drew distinctions between concepts of criminality and patriotism.

As for *Knocknagow*, it exhibits a way of considering the colonial relationship between Ireland and Britain, and Ireland's own national identity within that relationship, that is in keeping with the changing political scene as Ireland moved closer to organized revolt. An extension of Kickham's Fenian principles, the text is particularly interesting in the way it explicates the act of violence and explores the contradictions with which it is so often associated, especially in a colonial context. For Kickham, who wanted to see the IRB as an organized army, there was a clear distinction between "honourable" military action and "terrorism," and he absolutely despised the growing prevalence of assassinations, violent plotting by secret societies, and other "crude" violence (Comerford 181).[117] We see evidence of this philosophy in his fiction. In a later preface to *Sally Cavanagh*, Kickham includes, "Our Protestant Compatriots—The Wild Justice of Revenge," an article he wrote upon returning home to Mullinahone, County Tipperary, following his release from Woking.[118] In it he

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[116] On the dedication page of *Sally Cavanagh*, which was written on convict paper, Kickham provides a footnote addressing prison censorship. The footnote states, "'The convict's writing is to be confined to the ruled lines on these two pages.' These words are printed at the head of a convict letter. The convict is also warned against 'slang phrases.'" No Irish words or references to Fenianism or prison rules were allowed.

[117] Comerford goes on to say that Kickham's delineation of violence here is rather naïve, especially as he was trying to play by rules of warfare with an organized force that did not yet exist, and of course Kickham's argument is arguable, to say the least. For our purposes of examining his national tale, however, a consideration of his views on violence is crucial.

[118] It is worth noting that in *Sally Cavanagh*, as well as in *Knocknagow* and other fictional works, Kickham takes a similar tack to Carleton in that he insists on the truth of his representations. He argues that the "delineations of national character" and the

distinguishes between the violence associated with assassination and that associated with military force; he writes,

> But can we do nothing to stay the rash hand of the tortured peasant? We can. Let us give him hope. Let us point to the western horizon, and tell him that there are Irish arms trained to do and ready to dare. Let us show him that he, too, can be a soldier of liberty—and the murderer's weapon will drop from his hand. Oh! it is a holy work, meriting the hearty 'God speed' of all good men. We repeat—*it is a holy work.* We can say so fearlessly, with our eyes lifted to the sky. (xxii)[119]

Such is the attitude that informs Kickham's national tale, helping to code the representational space of the Ireland presented in the sixty-seven chapters of *Knocknagow*. Therein he shows a cross-section of domestic, political, and religious life, explores the systematic problems and humanitarian consequences of land tenure, and tackles the problems of famine and emigration. These matters are always coded by violence; it is an inescapable constant in Kickham's Ireland.

In terms of imagining national identity within the space of *Knocknagow*, perhaps the most useful metaphor comes from the humble and kind Mat the Thrasher, quite likely Kickham's most loved character, who muses upon the immediate and

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"modes of thought and speech of a people" are absolutely authentic and taken from his own first-hand experience, especially in his home county of Tipperary, a place that had seen much violence and hardship during the mid- to late nineteenth century ("Our Protestant Compatriots" xvi).

[119] Though Kickham, who was raised a Catholic, became a staunch secularist in his later political life, his rhetoric here is reminiscent of that of O'Connell, whose strategy of intertwining religious identity (i.e. Catholic identity) and nationalist politics proved quite successful.

metaphorical importance of the constructions of past and present, and questions the designation of the present as "living" and the past as "dead." The narrator interjects, "We hold that the Past is the more living of the two, sometimes" (382). Such a conclusion is especially significant, as it directly follows a scene in which Mat's mother, Mrs. Donovan, recounts a deadly childhood confrontation with English soldiers during the 1798 rebellion.[120] The scene, which Kickham describes with almost relentless ferocity, shows Mrs. Donovan's brother being shot inside the door to his family home. The officer who fired the shot then demonstrates to his men how, in only one blow, to "sever the rebel head from the rebel carcass." After he decapitates the boy, who was only seventeen, he takes the head, "[flings] it on the ground, and [kicks] it like a football" (376). Kickham's depiction, while perhaps going too far in its macabre and hyperbolic details, serves as a warning against the Irish themselves not going far enough. It is a detailed look at what has been and what could be again: the "living" past, the past that *comes back*. Additionally, it serves as an example of "oppressive" violence, one that would seek to imagine Ireland as a colonized space, to contrast with Kickham's idea of "patriotic" violence, the kind necessary to preserve Irish ways of life and to more fully realize the goal of self-definition.

In a somewhat more subtle strategy, Kickham also explores the complications of violence through the character of Grace Kiely. Like Carleton in *The Black Prophet*, Kickham significantly relies on his female characters to drive his narrative, and he gives voice to women from different levels of the peasantry, from the educated Mary Kearney

[120] The residue of the United Irishmen uprising marks many Irish national tales, and can be seen alluded to or explicitly dealt with in the works of Owenson, Carleton, Kickham and even in Bram Stoker, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

and Grace to the sympathetic invalid Norah Lahy and the laboring Bessy Morris and Peg Brady.[121] In the case of Grace Kiely, the daughter of a Republican country doctor, we are able to see Kickham's nationalist ideologies transposed onto a domestic space. To the surprise of her companions, Grace is willing and able to discuss local gossip and national politics with equal prowess. She has a great admiration for the poetry of Thomas Davis, the poet of the Young Ireland movement, and the politics of O'Connell, and gleefully sings songs gleaned from Gavan Duffy's nationalist publication, the *Nation*. In a conversation spurred on by the noisy gunfire of pheasant hunters on the grounds, Grace exclaims that she would be "delighted" if a real battle had been waged, as she "should like to bind up the wounds of some gallant young chief like Robert Emmet or Sir William Wallace." When chastised as "a rebel," Grace retorts, "But I do admire a hero. And who is so great a hero as the patriot who fights and bleeds for the land of his birth?" (102). The juxtapositioning of Robert Emmet and William Wallace is intriguing. Much as Owenson appropriates the authority of the Greeks and Egyptians in *The Wild Irish Girl*, Kickham seems to be using the legendary status of Wallace, a figure lauded by Scott, to add an almost mythical layer to Emmet, a more contemporary figure in the nationalist cause, whose political career and eventual execution are a testimony to the violent collision between Irish and British forces.

[121] Bessy Morris is, indirectly, the key to one of the scarce acknowledgements of the Famine, the setting of *Knocknagow*. While on a quest to find Bessy, Mat the Thrasher travels to America, where he meets Phil Lahy, who had emigrated from Knocknagow years before. Lahy references the national crisis of mass emigration and the disease-infested ships coffin ships that "are crossing the stormy Atlantic, dropping Irish corpses to the sharks along the way, and flinging tens of thousands of living skeletons onto the shores of this free country." He exemplifies the great anger on the part of many nationalist groups and warns that "a day of retribution will come" (592-3).

In terms of the examination of genre, this move is doubly interesting. While the connection of Wallace and Emmet serves to elevate the credibility of Kickham's nationalist agenda as we see it in *Knocknagow*, it simultaneously suggests a deliberate commentary on the generic conventions of the national tale. While Grace Kiely's admiration of celebrated revolutionaries speaks to a strong nationalist ideology, it also betrays a certain naiveté in terms of the realities of the violence that is an integral part of such beliefs. Again, we return to the push and pull between romanticism and realism. For Carleton, it is a more honest representation of national suffering to provide the vividness of sunken eyes and protruding bones; for Kickham, similarly, the graphic shedding of blood, stripped of romance, is necessary for an authentic look at the imaginings of Irish national identity. Thus, the glorified view of violence presented in romantic national tales like those of Scott is called into question.

Moreover, Grace's romantic notions take on even more significance as a commentary on early nineteenth-century constructions of national violence when we consider them alongside the peasants' conversations about exploitative landlords and agrarian violence, or alongside the character of Mick Brien, who is driven nearly to the brink of insanity following his eviction.[122] Mick, who along with his family has been turned out by his landlord, is an almost haunting presence in the narrative, sporadically

[122] In an extensive discussion of the system of land tenure, held in the local pub, laborers, farmers, and priests weigh the ethics of agrarian violence (mainly the murdering of landlords) against those of eviction. Phil Morris, a laborer, calls the murders "justice to punish the bloody robbers," and Hugh Kearney acknowledges that "there is no use in denying that the dread of assassination is the only protection the people have against extermination in this part of Ireland." The men are chastised by Father Hannigan, a local priest, but it is ultimately the dark conclusion of all that they never knew a good landlord or good agent to be shot (230). The men also discuss the desperate need of Irish manufactures (a touchstone of the Fenian movement).

appearing as the story progresses, a constant reminder of hunger and oppressive colonial systems, each time in a greater state of physical and mental decline.[123] When he finds a gun and, in his overwhelming hunger and desperation, contemplates murder, Kickham interrupts and again questions the ethical implications and corresponding punishments of violence. He assures the reader that it is not his intention to justify agrarian violence, but when he thinks upon Mick's hard life as a laborer and the "cheerful unquestioning surrender of the greater parts of the fruits of that toil to the irresponsible taskmaster to whose tender mercies the rulers of the land had handed him over body and soul" he finds it difficult to brand Mick a "murderer." As punctuation to this pitiful scene, Kickham refers to his own experience, writing that it would indeed be criminal to imprison Mick alongside "the human wild beasts with whom the writer of these pages was doomed to herd for years, and among whom at this hour Irishmen, whose only crime is the crime of loving their country, are wearing away their lives in the Convict Prisons of England" (395). Here, Kickham throws his own grievances in with those of his peasants and presents them in a way that is forceful, if also sentimental.

Similar moments of sentimentality are dispersed throughout the text, which, combined with the elements of stark violence and the mundane scenes of peasant life, help to make a rather bumpy narrative flow. In certain sections of *Knocknagow*, Kickham is clearly trying to harness the power of pathos mastered by his favorite writer, Dickens, but never quite manages to strike a balance between emotional appeal

[123] Mick, one of Kickham's most persistent stabs at emotional appeal, lives with his starving family in a roofless hut; when he appears he is coughing blood, nearly naked, and driven to distraction by his hunger.

and nationalist polemic. While it is easy to see the similarities between Kickham's frail Norah Lahy and Dickens's Little Nell or Tiny Tim, he provides a moment near the end of the novel that is perhaps more Dickensian than any his idol ever composed. Jemmy Hogan, a young laborer who was, along with his entire family, evicted from his home, revisits the spot where his little house used to stand before the bailiffs pulled it down with crowbars. Straining against his wooden leg, the result of an injury he sustained after attacking a bailiff during the eviction, the dogged Jemmy rolls a large stone to the place where he used to sit with his mother by the fire. Entranced, he sits next to the stone in an area that is now pastureland and, feeling the warmth from a sheep, imagines it is coming from the fire (623). If the vision of the lonely boy, wooden leg and all, is one that would be right at home in the world of Dickens, this is how Kickham intended it. In response to a review proclaiming that "*Knocknagow* was Dickens without his exaggeration and Thackeray without his bitterness," Kickham replied that "Dickens *with* his exaggeration is exactly what I would strive to be, the ideal at which I would aim but could never hope to get within leagues of" (my emphasis, Comerford 200). While the reviewer's point is understandable, it is difficult not to see Kickham's as well, as *Knocknagow* is at once painfully realistic and immensely hyperbolic. And while the novel has much to offer in terms of insight into peasant life and the problems facing Ireland as a nation, it is no *Oliver Twist*, or *The Old Curiosity Shop*, or *Bleak House*.

The particular interest of *Knocknagow*, though, is, at least for the purposes of our discussion, its place in the evolution of the national tale; and while Kickham may have been less adept at plot development than his more famous contemporaries, he was a voracious reader well aware of how generic conventions worked and how to

manipulate them. Like so many other Irish national tales, *Knocknagow* ends with several marriages, but instead of using the trope to make a point within the narrative, he comments on the trope itself. For example, one of the primary conflicts of the text is one in which Mat the Thrasher is wrongfully accused of robbery and later vindicated. Following the discovery of Mat's innocence and the subsequent resolution of the crisis, Grace exclaims that the saga could "be the subject of a drama or a novel," as it has "every requisite for it" (572). In a lengthy discussion of the literary possibilities of such a novel, Grace, Mary Kearney, and their beaus create an imaginary extravaganza, complete with a rugged landscape of cliffs and "roaring, raging, seething surges," a valiant rescue and whirlwind romance, and, perhaps "a shark or two" and "a mad bull on the way home, or something of that sort"; finally, Grace notes that the tale would end "at least with a couple of happy marriages" (572-3). The discussion of Kickham's protagonists verges on parody, gently mocking the conventions so commonly found in the tales of Scott or Owenson. By acknowledging these conventions, Kickham signals to the reader an awareness of generic tropes as literary devices and calls attention to the existence of the interpolated, parodic tale (the one invented by Grace and her friends) as a fictional construction. Additionally, the recognition and positioning of these devices signals a similar awareness on the part of Kickham's characters themselves (Grace even mentions "the readers" when imagining her tale). Therefore, Kickham is able, rather cleverly, to position *his* tale, the framing tale of the village of Knocknagow, as separate from Grace's invention and, seemingly illustrative of a more "authentic" experience. Thus, he again gestures toward realism, as opposed to romanticism, as a more accommodating area for the mid- to late-nineteenth-century national tale. This self-

referential strategy gives greater import to the nationalist content of the novel and emphasizes both Carleton's idea of the importance of literature in the imagining of national identity and the fluidity of representational space. Taken together, the national works of Kickham, Owenson, and Carleton evidence the myriad imaginings of Irish identity and how those imaginings develop over time in constant negotiation with generic form and with their varied readership.

Chapter Five

Rewriting Tradition: Fairy and Folk Fictions in the Nineteenth Century

(1) Tales of Folk and Fairy: The Politics of Collection

Up to this point we have examined the plasticity of genre and traced its development within myriad texts of the nineteenth century. For this final chapter, it seems only fitting that we explore a genre that is perhaps the most obviously inter-generic of the genres featured in this project, yet also one that, in many ways, returns to the beginning. The writing, collection, and compilation of folk and fairy fictions so prominent throughout the nineteenth century places a renewed emphasis on the power of ancient oral tradition, gesturing simultaneously toward a romantic nostalgia and a modern desire to imagine a contemporary culturo-national identity.[124] Throughout the century, though particularly from the mid 1840s onward, fairy and folk tales were very much a kind of political fiction, sounding a clear call to action or awareness, though the desired reactions often varied. Tales that had been told and retold, or collected and translated, were packaged and distributed with the aim of civilizing, indoctrinating, or otherwise educating the reading public. For the purposes of my argument, I will be discussing these tales according to the definitions set out by Jack Zipes in *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (1999).[125] He characterizes folk

[124] Though I will be referencing the folk and fairy tales of Andersen and the Grimm Brothers, I will primarily, for the purposes of this chapter, be focusing on the state of the genre in nineteenth-century England and Ireland.

[125] There has been much written on both the folk and fairy tale, and critics remain conflicted as to their particular parameters and relationship to one another. For the

tales as being set firmly in the oral tradition, and notes that they "contain wondrous and marvelous elements, have existed for thousands of years and were told largely by adults for adults"; additionally, these tales were "closely tied to the rituals, customs, and beliefs of tribes, communities, and trades" (2). The literary fairy tale is an offshoot from this folk tradition and also focuses on magical elements, but a defining characteristic of the fairy tale is that it both adapts and expands upon the folk tales of oral tradition. Zipes connects the fairy tale with the growing necessity to make the traditional oral tale relevant in modern day by shaping it to "standards of literacy and [making] it acceptable for diffusion in the public sphere" (2).[126] Straight away, we must acknowledge that these tales were not intended for children alone, but also or even primarily for adults, though this fact can sometimes be forgotten. Due to the perpetual bowdlerization of the fairy tale, contemporary audiences have come to think of the genre as the go-to literary fare for the young reader. Thanks to mass market, Disney-esque renderings and re-renderings of these traditional tales, the more "unsavory" themes have been extracted and replaced by the trumpeting of bourgeois socio-cultural norms, thus allowing children to enjoy these stories sans the rape, incest, murder, cannibalism, and other sundry atrocities that often accompany traditional folk and fairy tales.

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purpose of cohesion, I have chosen to use Zipes's definition, which also builds on the thirty-one components of the folk tale laid out in Vladimir Propp's famous 1968 study, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*. Throughout the chapter, I will often discuss the fairy and folk tale in conjunction with one another, as the writers I discuss utilize elements of both genres.

[126] The literary fairy tale, for Zipes, is also closely connected with the dissemination of bourgeois values and the concept of moral education.

Disney, however, does not deserve all the blame. The modification and sanitization of traditional folk and fairy tales can be traced back to the work of much earlier sources, namely those who did the most to popularize the genre, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm.[127] Sailing on the momentum of the Romantic nationalist movement in Germany and its aim to recover and re-present remnants of past folk culture, the Grimms first published in 1812 their *Kinder –und Hausmarchen*, or "Children's and Household Tales," which relied on a more empirical, "field-based authenticity"; their approach proved immensely influential and quickly spread throughout Europe and on to England, where by the 1820s publishers were issuing scores of folk titles for popular and scholarly consumption (Schacker 2-3). As for the Grimms, they saw themselves, as Zipes aptly puts it, as "bourgeois missionaries," continuously tailoring their tales over the course of seven editions to fit the moral expectations of the German middle class, transforming them from stories aimed at adults to ones aimed at children, and issued their *Erziehungsbuch*, or "educational book," in 1819 (Zipes 62).[128] The Grimms' collection of fairy tales included what are now some of the best-known traditional stories, such as *Little Red Cap, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty,* and *Rumpelstiltskin*. Additionally, the brothers included more explicit cautionary tales, like *The Girl Without Hands,* which tells of a girl whose hands are severed by her father, who has made a pact with the devil, only to have them regrow again due to her steadfast faith in God, and

[127] The field of study of the European fairy tale, and of the Grimm Brothers in particular, is vast. Here, my intention is only to position the work of the Grimms as a kind of point of origin from which to build my discussion of England and Ireland.
[128] Additionally, Zipes argues that though it is commonly assumed that the Grimms collected and translated tales gleaned from the peasantry, they actually collected their material from "petit bourgeois or educated middle-class people, who had already introduced bourgeois notions into their versions" (61).

The Willful Child, the story of a girl who disobeys her mother and, in punishment from God, is stricken down with illness and death.

This exaltation of bourgeois morality proved immensely popular with Victorian readers and writers, and the success of the Grimms' collections gave rise to a boom in the production of texts with fairy and folk elements, extolling religious or humanistic virtues like personal contentment, good manners, prescribed gender performance, and restrained, heterosexual love. For scholars and readers alike, Victorian Britain has become one of the quintessential eras for the genre, seeing the publication of such now-canonical works as Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (1863), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), George McDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and, near the close of the century, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). Such works are certainly indebted to the Grimm Brothers, as well as to other European writers, like Hans Christian Andersen, but they are also part of a trend put into motion in part by antiquarian collectors of folklore, like Thomas Crofton Croker and Sir William and Lady Wilde. Their collections of Irish fairy and folk legends provided for nineteenth-century readers what was seemingly at the time a more "genuine" and "romantic" glimpse at the oral tradition: ancient knowledge gathered from the peasantry, the Other beyond the pale, far removed both temporally and culturally from an industrial and modernized England. The work of Croker and the Wildes serves as a useful starting point from which to examine the import of fairy and folk tales as a forum for imagining and reimagining national identity and Irish political history. These tales allowed both writers and collectors to engage with past

constructions of national identity and to unpack the myriad meanings and complications of "Irishness."[129]

The fascination with the collection of folk and fairy lore in Ireland is one that lasted throughout much of the nineteenth century. The primary motivations of collectors were often either anthropological or nationalist, or sometimes a bit of both. In the case of Thomas Crofton Croker, whose *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825) was one of the first field-based studies of its time in either Britain or Ireland, the motivation to collect and preserve traditional Irish folk knowledge was primarily anthropological, though the style and format of the book were clearly designed to entertain as well.[130] The text of *Fairy Legends* grew out of the material Croker had gathered for his earlier work, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824), which I discuss in Chapter Four. Capitalizing on the growing British fascination with the "unfamiliar" or "exotic," Croker's volume is part scholarly study and part Grimms-style fairy tale, replete with detailed engravings by the well-known Irish artist and illustrator W. H. Brooke, depicting fairies riding upon the backs of butterflies and dancing wildly around mushrooms.[131] Upon its publication in 1825, the book was so popular that the first volume was translated into German by the Grimm

[129] Within my discussion of how writers and collectors use traditional tales to explore national identity, I will examine the ways that these writers use knowledge of and access to these tales to imagine a specific kind of Irish "authenticity." The most explicit case of this search for "true" Irishness, or a "Celtic consciousness," perhaps resides with Yeats and the Revivalists in the cultural nationalist movement, as I will discuss.

[130] In an article written for the *Bookman* in October of 1895, Yeats included *Fairy Legends* in his list of the "Best Irish Books" under the category of "Folklore and Legend." Also included were Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1867) and Douglas Hyde's *Beside the Fire* (1890) (Frayne 386).

[131] W. H. Brooke is cousin to writer Charlotte Brooke, whose translations of ancient Irish poetry are used within Croker's text.

brothers; Sir Walter Scott was prompted to initiate an "enthusiastic correspondence" with Croker over "fairylore items," and soon the two met face-to-face in London (Dorson 45).[132] Croker's collection of twenty-seven tales is classified into five categories, *The Shefro* (fairies), *The Cluricaune* (the leprechaun), *The Banshee* (the wailing death spirit), *The Phooka* (a goblin trickster), and *Thierna Na Oge*, or Tír na nÓg (the land of eternal youth), and includes such popular Irish legends as *The Legend of Knockgrafton* and *The Legend of O'Donoghue*, both of which have been collected and published many times since. What is perhaps more interesting in terms of the presentation of *Fairy Legends*, however, is the way Croker endeavors to steer his reader's interpretation of the material presented in the text toward a very specific imagining of Irishness.

Much like Maria Edgeworth in *Castle Rackrent*, and in keeping with the approach in his own *Researches in the South of Ireland,* Croker is careful to establish early on a distance from the material of *Fairy Legends*, and he maintains this separation throughout the text.[133] Through his choice of editorial comments, epigraphs, and epilogue, Croker exudes a colonialist tone, calling attention to the fact that these tales are of the peasantry, and not of those who would read his book. He begins the first section, *the Shefro,* with an epigraph from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which immediately serves to put the Irish tales in an English context and which can also been seen as an

[132] In a letter Scott wrote to Croker on April 27, 1825, Scott commented on the similarities between Irish and Scottish lore, noting the Irish-specific Cluricaune (leprechaun) and Banshee as exceptions, and took pleasure in telling Croker of supposed fairy sightings in Scotland. Croker was evidently pleased with this shared interest and correspondence, as he dedicated the second volume of *Fairy Legends* to Scott (Dorson 48).

[133] Croker even quotes a section from *Castle Rackrent* (Edgeworth's editorial commentary regarding Parnell and his knowledge of fairy lore) in one of his footnotes.

attempt to add credibility to the material by counteracting the "low" (the tales of the peasantry) with the "high" (Milton's religious epic).[134] Additionally, he uses untranslated Latin and copious footnotes, many of which go on for multiple pages. They include passages from tales in both the original Irish Gaelic and the English translation, excerpts from folk music, and references to Shakespeare and Spencer to serve as a point of understanding for his middle and upper-class readers. All this is not to say that Croker refuses to acknowledge the importance of oral tradition. In *The Brewery of Egg-Shells,* he acknowledges in a footnote that he "regrets that he is unable to retain the rich vein of comic interest in the foregoing tale, as related to him by Mrs. Phillips, to whose manner of narration it may perhaps be ascribed" (71). Though it is vital for Croker to keep a distance, both as an antiquarian and as an Irishman who has taken great pains to separate himself from his native countrymen and women, it is also important that he do his best to acknowledge these fairy tales as "told tales," and to establish a kind of "folk authenticity" to accompany his field-based approach. Yet even with this acknowledgement, the footnote still sets him apart from Mrs. Phillips and the other sources of folk material contained in *Fairy Legends*. Croker, "the writer," is unable to retain the unique "voice" of his source because he is not a part of that community. He makes almost no attempt at dialect, and rarely does the voice of the "narrator" differ from the voice of the "editor."

A defining characteristic of Croker's work is that he always positions himself as an outsider, the disinterested collector tasked with presenting what he sees as the

[134] The epilogue reads, "Fairy Elves/Whose midnight revels, by a forest side/Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,/ Or dreams he sees, while over head the moon/ Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth/ Wheels her pale course" (Croker B).

"national superstitions" of Ireland to a wider, English-speaking audience.[135] This persona, however, is at times no match for the colonialist attitudes that pervade Croker's work. At the end of the volume, he concludes by writing,

> When rational education shall be diffused among the misguided peasantry of Ireland, the belief in such supernatural beings must disappear in that country, as it has done in England, and these 'shadowy tribes' will only live in books. The Compiler is therefore not without hope that this little Volume, which delivers the legends faithfully as they have been collected from the mouths of the peasantry, may be regarded with feelings of interest (362).

Thus, Croker positions his collection of fairy tales much as the Grimm Brothers presented theirs: as a book of education. The primary difference, of course, is that where the Grimms used the fairy stories themselves to drive home bourgeois morality and religiosity, Croker uses them as a platform from which he may teach his readers to be good colonial subjects. The "rational education" to which Croker refers is an English Protestant education, one free of the superstition and mysticism associated with Catholicism and the "misguided" Irish peasantry, who, with a declining native language and fading folk traditions, are eerily reflected by the "shadowy tribes" of the stories. Ultimately, the educational goal of *Fairy Legends* is not to teach that the tales themselves are wrongheaded, but rather to teach that those who believe them are, that

[135] This method of maintaining a critical distance is common in early nineteenth-century antiquarian work, as we can see in Croker and Sydney Owenson, and to a certain extent in the work of Lady Wilde as well. Later, with the work of Yeats and other Irish collectors at the end of the century, the association becomes a bit more communal, though still somewhat strained, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

those who are a part of the community who preserve these folk beliefs and oral traditions are "misguided" and in need of assistance from a stronger, more "civilized" authority. It is this notion, Jennifer Schacker argues, that narrows the divide between adult and child readers, allowing each reader, regardless of age, to "think himself or herself into the dominant culture"—they are allied with Croker in a position of colonial power (57).[136]

In his influential work *British Folklorists: A History* (1968), Richard Dorson praises Croker's method of combining an educational, antiquarian edge with a more narrative style, noting that his presentation of the tales in *Fairy Legends* "achieves a three-dimensional vividness" (47). For Dorson, Croker manages to package the lore in a way palatable to his readers (i.e., framing it as a Grimms-like collection of fairy tales), while still managing to more or less preserve the integrity of the tales as they were told to him. This achievement is a far cry from what Dorson condemns as "literary folklorism," in which collectors would add literary flourishes or their own phraseology or emphases to the stories, thus resulting in a "diluted" or "blurred" rendering of the original tale (92). To make his case, he cites the example of Irish novelist Samuel Lover, notorious for his frequent use of the "stage Irishman" in his *Legends and Stories of Ireland* (1831), choosing to classify him as an "adapter" of fairy and folk tales, as opposed to a "collector" or "antiquarian."[137] Though Lover, like Croker, claimed to have gathered his stories from local peasants (the "village crone and mountain guide")

[136] It should also be noted that in addition to the "story" part of the text and the illustrations, which are clearly an appeal to children, there also exist rather complex linguistic discussions and literary allusions (often in the footnotes and other supporting sections of the text) that are clearly geared toward a more mature reader.
[137] Dorson also criticizes, as Zipes does, the Grimms' repeated revision and rewriting of their tales.

and to have traveled to the "western wilds of Ireland" to collect his material, Dorson asserts that there is little of the oral tale left in Lover's transmission (101). Coming as he does from the position of a historian, it is easy to sympathize with Dorson's argument, and he certainly touches on a lightning rod of an issue for mid-and late nineteenth-century collectors of folklore—the problem of authenticity.

Here, it is clear that Dorson is tightly holding on to some presupposition of "native authenticity" and seems to ignore the fact that change and modification are inherent certainties in oral tradition. To completely buy Dorson's criticism of those he finds guilty of literary folklorism (the Grimms, Lover, Lady Wilde) would be to fall into the trap of believing that there is in existence a "pure" or "original" version of these folk and fairy tales, which is in direct opposition to the most basic tenets of oral tradition. On the other hand, while Dorson may be going a bit too far in asserting that literary folklorism could bring down the entire genre of the traditional tale and ensure that these oral stories are forever lost, the rational call for preservation is certainly there. How wide a task does a collector have when presenting these tales? Is it the collector/writer's responsibility to simply relay, or is it her or his obligation to endeavor to elicit an emotional response from the reader, whether it be terror or delight, as is so often the objective when presenting a fairy tale? The problems of "authenticity," or rather of competing imaginings of "authenticity" and differing notions of authorial responsibility, are evident throughout numerous nineteenth-century collections of folk fictions, and the rise of cultural nationalism at the end of the century only added to this anxiety of identification. This tension is easily observable in Yeats's early collections and in his projects with his long-time collaborator, Lady Gregory.

Yeats was very much interested in uncovering "truths" and making connections between an emerging Irish literary tradition and the nation's ancient oral culture. As Declan Kiberd notes, Yeats's notion of culture was based on "his conviction that real culture was a shedding of knowledge and illusions rather than an accretion of them," a conviction also shared by other writers of this era, such as Oscar Wilde (453).[138] However, it seems that Yeats the Historian came second to Yeats the Literary Man, and he often championed a more creative presentation of traditional tales. For instance, when Alfred T. Nutt, an influential Celtic folklorist and editor of the *Folk-lore Journal*, wrote a review criticizing Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends* and the colorful style she employed therein, Yeats wrote a letter defending her and "the more imaginative retelling of folktales in contrast to the scientific approach," of which Nutt and his journal were the prime examples (Frayne 118-9).[139] Yeats also took issue with the approach of fellow folklorist, founder of the Gaelic League, and future first president of Ireland Douglas Hyde. Being an Irish language scholar, Hyde did much in the way of cultural preservation by gathering and publishing collections of traditional Irish songs, poems, and tales, often publishing the Irish language text alongside the English one. For Yeats, though, Hyde's approach was more akin to austere scholarship than creative production, and he saw him as "too little an artist to finish fragmentary folk tales" (Frayne 119). Nevertheless, Yeats and Hyde maintained a good relationship, regularly

[138] In *Irish Classics*, Kiberd recounts an early meeting between Yeats and Wilde, who was then at the height of his career. For the young Yeats, Wilde was the apotheosis of confidence and style, and he remembers that he "never before heard a man talking with perfect sentences…as if he had written them overnight with labour, and yet all spontaneous." Once Yeats noticed Wilde's heavy perspiration at the dinner table, however, he realized that being Oscar Wilde was quite a lot of work after all (440-1).
[139] Yeats's defense of Lady Wilde was published in the *Academy* in 1890.

contributing to one another's work, and Yeats included Hyde's *Beside the Fire* as one of his "best Irish books."

While it is true that Yeats saw a strong connection between creative production and the preservation and development of national cultural identity, a distinct anxiety of identification is evident in his earlier works. This anxiety speaks to class-based tensions present in nineteenth-century Ireland, but it also helps to propel a major strategic narrative transition from writers like Croker. For instance, in *The Celtic Twilight*, which was first published in 1893, Yeats follows the customary convention of many folklorists: he endeavors to lend credibility to the folk and fairy tales he is presenting, and to himself as one worthy of the responsibility of such a presentation, by naming a "native" source. In other words, Yeats leans on the peasantry to provide him with a bucolic kind of "street cred." He writes, "Many of the tales in this book were told me by one Paddy Flynn, a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare, which is, he was wont to say, 'the most gentle'—whereby he meant faery—'place in the whole of County Sligo'" (4). Yeats goes on to note that Paddy was "a great teller of tales, and unlike our common romancers, knew how to empty heaven, hell, and purgatory, faeryland and earth, to people his stories. He did not live in a shrunken world, but knew of no less ample circumstance than did Homer himself" (6). Thus, Paddy Flynn becomes vitally important to Yeats's project, situated outside English literary tradition, but also elevated above it.[140] He is from the western part of Ireland, which is, in contrast to the cultivated east, often associated with

[140] It is also important that Yeats repeatedly refers to his personal, friendly interactions with Paddy: "I" saw him sleeping under the hedge, "I" saw the sadness in his eyes, and so forth, thus intertwining his own experiences with those of Paddy.

the retention of Irish folk customs and stories, and he lives in a dilapidated cabin.[141] For Yeats's readers, the level of believability would likely not be the same had the tales come from a fat old man sitting by a fire, feet propped up, in a western big house. Clearly class is intrinsically linked to credibility, but so is a particular imagining of Irishness. For Yeats, the native Irishman is, as Seamus Deane puts it, part of a "spiritual aristocracy," one in possession of a very particular, esoteric knowledge (Irish folk knowledge) to which other writers and collectors must adapt if they are to engage with it (116). And if Paddy's pedigree is not convincing enough, there is also the comparison to "Homer himself." As I have already discussed in Chapter Four in my discussion of Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*, comparing native Irish culture to that of the ancient Greeks proved a successful way to add weight to Irish folk tales and figures by placing them in the classical tradition, while also providing English and Anglo-Irish readers with a familiar frame of reference through which to consume the unfamiliar or "foreign" material.

Yeats's desire to invoke Paddy's authority in *The Celtic Twilight* also speaks to the more implicit fear of cultural exclusion, to the awareness on the part of Yeats that he is in many ways an outsider, apart from the community to which these tales belong, and

[141] The setting of western Ireland would become a primary feature of Revivalist fiction, poetry, and drama. More often than not, the plays featured at the Abbey dealt with the west, which was portrayed as the cradle of "authentic" Irishness. Yeats's and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) focuses on a western village during the events of 1798. J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), which caused riots when it premiered at the Abbey, is set in County Mayo, and his *Riders to the Sea* is set in the Aran islands, where he made his summer home. Even George Bernard Shaw's monster, four-act play, *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), which Yeats refused to produce due to its length and rejection of cultural nationalism, places the majority of the action in the fictional western village of Rosscullen.

that he needs Paddy as a point of entry into that community.[142] Just one year before the publication of *The Celtic Twilight,* Yeats made an even more overt attempt to position himself as an inside man. In *Irish Fairy Tales*, published in 1892 and illustrated by his brother, Jack, Yeats presents a collection of folk and fairy tales, the majority of them contributed by prominent Irish writers, folklorists, and scholars. He takes "Seanchan the Bard and the King of the Cats" from Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends,* which in his introduction he calls "the most poetical and ample collection of Irish folklore yet published" (8). Yeats also includes tales from Croker, William Carleton, Lover, Hyde, Dr. P. W. Joyce, Standish O' Grady, and Gerald Griffin. To boost his own credibility in terms of general folk knowledge, and to emphasize his notion that access to such knowledge is important for nationalist purposes, Yeats calls upon the authority of peasant woman Biddy Hart. Yeats describes his multiple attempts to extract information about the fairies from Biddy Hart, and her reluctance to share her stories with him. He writes,

> For a long time she would give me no answer but 'I always mind my own affairs and they always mind theirs.' A little talk about my great grandfather who lived all his life in the valley below, and a few words to remind her how I myself was often under her roof when but seven or eight years old loosened her tongue, however. It would be less dangerous at any rate to talk to me of the fairies than it would be to tell

[142] In *Inventing Ireland,* Kiberd argues, in regard to Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge, that "[i]n emphasizing locality, [these writers] were deliberately aligning themselves with the Gaelic bardic tradition of *dinnsheanchas* (knowledge of lore and places). Yet there was something strained about their maneuver, as Synge conceded in describing himself as a mere 'interloper' among the islanders of Aran" (107).

> some ‘Towrow’ of them, as she contemptuously called English tourists, for I had lived under the shadow of their own hillsides. (1-2)

Yeats’s tactic here is important in three ways, the first and most obvious being, as we have already discussed, the establishment of credibility by naming Biddy Hart as his source. Secondly, Yeats makes the all-important move of cementing himself into Biddy Hart’s community—he is no tourist. He is careful to note his familial link to the specific geographic region, Sligo, in which Biddy Hart lives (and thus to the folklore associated with that region), and his personal connection to Biddy Hart herself. Thus, he presents Irish folk knowledge and specialized knowledge as privileged information to which he, as a fellow Irish person, is privy. Finally, Yeats uses his identity, his “Irishness” as he himself has constructed it, to separate himself from the English, the “Towrows.” He is explicit about the fact that he sees himself as in opposition to colonial power, taking and collecting knowledge that belongs only to Ireland, and that cannot be accessed or appropriated (at least not sufficiently) by an outsider.[143] This strategy marks a point of departure from the approach of Croker, who works just as hard to set himself apart from his subject as Yeats does to place himself alongside it. Croker is an outsider looking in, the somewhat-impartial observer. As for Yeats, his motivation is not anthropological, but political, and establishing solid connections between himself and the Irish community within a shared Celtic consciousness is essential to his cultural nationalist agenda.

[143] Again, Yeats’s repeated reference to his insider status speaks to his underlying anxiety that he may not be as close as he would like to his “ideal” national identity.

Lady Gregory employs a technique similar to that of Yeats. In her collection, *Cuchulain of Muirthemni* (1902), for which Yeats supplied the preface, she includes a dedication to "The People of Kiltartan."[144] Therein, she begins by establishing her project as one of service to Ireland, a necessary recovery and preservation of folk history.[145] She writes that "although you have not to go far to get stories of Finn and Goll and Oisin from any old person in the place, there is very little of the history of Cuchulain and his friends left in the memory of the people, but only that they were brave men and good fighters, and that Deirdre was beautiful" (v). Immediately, she argues the usefulness of the book while also providing validation of these histories: these stories are worth saving, and she has done it for the people of Ireland. Much as Yeats writes of Biddy Hart and Paddy Flynn, she reminds her readers that she was raised on Irish folk tales told to her by Mary Sheridan, her Irish nurse. She also marks the importance of the preservation of the Irish language, noting, "My friend and your friend the *Craoibhin Aoibhin* has put Irish of to-day on some of these stories that I have set in order, for I am sure you will like to have the history of the heroes of Ireland told in the language of Ireland" (vi).[146] The same uneasiness we find in Yeats is to be found in Lady Gregory; there is always the desire for justification, to prove one's mettle. Yet,

[144] Kiltartan is the barony in Galway in which Lady Gregory lived. Yeats was a frequent visitor to her home there.

[145] Rarely one to abandon an argument, Yeats returns to the idea of literary folklorism in the preface of *Cuchulain of Muirthemni*. There he writes that Lady Gregory could have stripped down the tales to as clean a translation as possible until only the "bare stories" were left. But, he adds, "a book of that kind would never have called up the past, or stirred the imagination of a painter or a poet, and would be as little thought of in a few years as if it had been a popular novel" (ix).

[146] *Craoibhin Aoibhin* is the pseudonym of Douglas Hyde, who was already well known as a serious scholar and champion of the Irish language.

undoubtedly, the work of Yeats, Lady Gregory, and others late into the Revival did immeasurable good for the preservation and recovery of Irish folk and fairy tales.

In considering the history of the presentation and collection of folktales, it is important to keep one main concern in mind: the writing and presentation of folk and fairy stories are almost always political actions and are imbued with significant rhetorical power.[147] From the Grimms to Croker, Yeats, and Lady Gregory, writers and collectors exhibit an awareness of this matter and present their work accordingly. It is the combination of this political element with traditional folk and fairy tale conventions, I argue, that makes the traditional tale accessible and relevant to both young and mature readers.[148] In turn, acknowledging the political import of traditional tales can also contribute to a recognition that more overtly fictionalized works (i.e., works that play on conventions often found in fairy or folk tales, but that might be original inventions in themselves) still retain in some respect the residue of nationalism, and should be evaluated in that context, by readers of all ages. Taking all this into account, in the remainder of this chapter I will be exploring the genre of literary folk and fairy tales, primarily in the form of short stories, and tracking the ways in which writers like Stoker, Wilde, and later, Edmund Downey incorporate conventions associated with the traditional tale and also with the collection of these tales. In regard to Downey in particular, whose work I have made my primary case study, I will make connections to the myriad political influences surrounding him, including Yeats and Charles Gavan

[147] While I will go on to discuss the folk and fairy tale in the context of Irish national identity, I am here using "political" in its broadest sense.

[148] Though common conventions of fairy and folk tales are familiar to most readers, I should note that I am referring to elements of the fantastic (talking animals, mythical creatures, supernatural powers), moral or national allegory, social or religious themes, the romanticization of childhood, and so forth.

Duffy, and trace the ways Downey uses his "humorous stories" to simultaneously explore and mock particular imaginings of Irishness, many at the heart of the early Revival, and modes of representing Irish history and political agency.

(2) Wilde and Stoker: Translating Conflict and Culture

One of the primary functions of folklore, argues Michael Patrick Gillespie, is that it "represents the rudimentary values and fundamental conflicts of the culture" (44). This argument returns us to the idea that folk and fairy tales are essentially political fictions. In the mid-nineteenth century, especially in Britain, there was a desire to counteract mass industrialization and a rapidly changing social landscape through a return to a more Romantic, playful literary space.[149] Among the late Victorians especially, the genre of fairy tales allowed writers and readers of all ages to experiment with transgressing social, gender, or religious boundaries, or with formulating new ones, from a safe, fictional "other world" (Zipes 133). Part and parcel of this experimentation is the desire to explore the potential for social reform, as evident in one of Wilde's earliest works, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales,* which was published in London in May of 1888. Though the collection, which also includes "The Nightingale and the Rose," "The Selfish Giant," "The Devoted Friend," and "The Remarkable Rocket," was published three years after the birth of Wilde's first son, Cyril, it is doubtful that Wilde was imagining his young son as his targeted reader. The story that would become "The Happy Prince" actually has its origins at Cambridge and came to

[149] We see this identification with the Romantics in Yeats as well, especially in his earlier work.

be when Wilde invented a tale to entertain a group of students; the story received such a favorable response, Wilde decided to record it, and the next day a group of students gathered at the train station to bid him farewell, "cluster[ing] round his carriage window as he kept up a stream of epigrams, timed to culminate as the train drew out of the station" (Ellman 253). This point of origin is important to keep in mind when trying to pinpoint Wilde's audience for his fairy tales. Additionally, Wilde himself states that his ideal readership includes a range of ages. In an 1888 letter to George Herbert Kersey, Wilde writes, "I am very pleased you like my stories. They are studies in prose, put for Romance's sake into fanciful form: meant partly for children, and partly for those who have kept the childlike faculties of wonder and joy, and who find simplicity in a subtle strangeness" (Zipes 135). It is clear that there are individual elements associated with childhood to which Wilde's tales appeal, namely a kind of innocence and wonder, but there is also a rather satirical edge that serves as a critique of the Victorian morality so often elevated in other nineteenth-century fairy tales, a ready example of which is Charles Kingsley's immensely popular tale *The Water Babies*.

The narrative of "The Happy Prince" centers on the gilded, bejeweled statue of the Prince, who from his elevated place can see the entire city, and on a small swallow, who alights on the Prince's shoulder during a pause in his winter migration to Egypt. As the tale progresses, the Prince identifies people in need of help, the working poor, and bids the swallow to deliver to them pieces of himself (his gold leaf skin, the ruby from his sword hilt, his sapphire eyes) until he is stripped down to nothing but his lead foundation. Ultimately, though a small number of people has been saved by the generosity of the Prince and the sacrifice of the swallow, who has delayed his migration

to deliver this aid, both the statue, who is reviled by the citizens for his "shabby" state, and the bird are thrown dead into the dust-heap. In this rather pessimistic tale, Wilde addresses what he sees as one of the foremost conflicts of Victorian culture: the ever-widening divide between rich and poor. Though the swallow and the Happy Prince are transported to heaven at the end of the tale and are designated by God as "the two most precious things in the city," the themes of mass suffering and societal indifference overshadow any fairy-tale ending. It is clear "The Happy Prince" is influenced by the work of Hans Christian Andersen (there is even a "little match girl" character in the tale), and Andersen's influence can also be seen in Wilde's follow-up to *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), but Wilde does not conform to the generic conventions upheld by Andersen, whose stories often speak to a sense of prescribed order (either societal or natural) and the benefits that inevitably follow hard work. In fact, Wilde in effect positions his tale as a kind of dark companion to the tales of Andersen, championing the plight of the working poor but also sharply satirizing Victorian notions of charity and civility. " 'Dear little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'you tell me of marvelous things, but more marvelous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery" (19). Wilde's tale begs the reader to question not only her or his own role in society, but also the very tenets upon which that society is constructed, and thus he takes a form traditionally established as a civilizing mission and inverts it, making it a deprogramming one instead.[150] Still, in a

[150] Wilde uses this technique of inversion again in "The Fisherman and His Soul" from *A House of Pomegranates*. There, he draws heavily upon Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," which centers around a mermaid who falls in love with a mortal and must make a sacrifice to obtain a soul. In Wilde's tale, the protagonist, a fisherman, falls in

piece that employs the framework of the fairy tale, this kind of progressive social critique could prove a rather bitter pill, as exhibited by some of the mixed reviews at the time of the collection's publication.[151]

Noting a seeming disconnect between the more "traditional" fairy tales of Andersen and those of Wilde, one critic argued, "Children do not care for satire, and the dominant spirit of these stories is satire—a bitter satire differing widely from that of Hans Andersen" (Markey 76). Other critics were quicker to realize the multiple possible modes of reading Wilde's tales, one of them noting in the *Literary World* in December of 1888 that "[a]mong the books adapted alike to young and old it would be difficult to match for charm of style or beauty of sentiment this collection of exquisite tales by Oscar Wilde." The reviewer, who clearly delights in the collection's satirical bent, goes on to write,

> Rarely have the virtues and failings of poor humanity been touched with a gentler hand than in the legends of "The Happy Prince" and "The Selfish Giant;" rarely has false amity been more keenly satirized than in the story of "The Devoted Friend;" every lover should read "The Nightingale and the Rose;" and how many self-important people we know to whom we would like to commend a careful perusal of "The Remarkable Rocket."(119)

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love with a mermaid and must therefore reject his soul to be able to achieve happiness and love.

[151] Ever the aesthete, Walter Pater praised Wilde's tales, calling "The Selfish Giant" "perfect in its kind" and saying that the entire collection was written in "pure English" (Ellman 282).

If reviews like this are any indication, Wilde was surely giving voice to concerns already present within the Victorian sphere, and his fairy tales can be seen as a darkly whimsical translation of these cultural conflicts. Since Wilde had spent the majority of his adult years in London, had published in London, and had taken great pains to establish himself as a fixture of the London social scene, it is not surprising that Wilde produced fairy tales and other fictions that dealt with issues of concern to nineteenth-century England (industry, exploitation of the working poor, materialism, manners and propriety, Protestantism, and so forth). Though some critics have endeavored to connect Wilde, however tenuously, to Irish national identity, I would argue that there is precious little to go on in his fairy tales, no matter how allegorically one reads them. For a more fruitful examination of how the fairy tale can be used to translate national conflicts, we had best turn from Wilde to his acquaintance, Bram Stoker.

Though Stoker is better known for his gothic fictions, it seems appropriate that some of his earliest creative work was in the genre of the fairy tale, a forum that happily welcomes the collision of terror and enchantment. His collection of stories, *Under the Sunset*, was published late in 1881 in London by Samson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, though the official date of publication is 1882, and is comprised mainly of stories Stoker had written previously, for various journals and other publications in Ireland and England. As a whole, the collection seems to retain the moral center of the traditional fairy tale: in almost every story there is a lesson to be learned, and good often prevails over evil. In contrast to Wilde's, Stoker's narratorial voice is much more moralizing, even employing religious rhetoric at times, and there is little room to question the ideological mechanisms informing the moral base of the stories. The eight

tales in *Under the Sunset* work in conjunction with one another, each telling a different story happening within the same location, the Country Under the Sunset. In the first tale, entitled simply "Under the Sunset," Stoker describes the country that will anchor his collection. He positions it as a kind of dream space, beautiful and full of wonder, but also full of unrest. This world, he writes, is parallel to our own world: "They talk the same language as we do ourselves. They do not know that they are different from us; and we do not know that we are different from them. When they come to us in their dreams we do not know they are strangers; and when we go to their Country in our dreams we seem to be at home" (2). Throughout the first tale, Stoker establishes the Country Under the Sunset in the context of "our" actual world, in contemporary time and space. "We" can only access it through dreams—"our" dreams. Therefore this "other" Country is formed and interpreted according to the cultural and social codes of Stoker and his readers; its points of departure from these norms provide opportunities for narratorial critique.[152]

Upon further examination of "Under the Sunset," Stoker's obsession with land, as both metaphor and plot device, comes to the fore. As he describes the topography of the Country Under the Sunset, it becomes evident that the villages are laid out in a feudal pattern, with a castle at the center, the houses of nobility surrounding it, and the peasantry outside, the houses becoming "smaller and smaller as they get further" (5). The space immediately surrounding the houses is ordered and pleasant, consisting of gardens, fountains, and carefully manicured trees. Just beyond the village, however, the

[152] Stoker does much to establish the "otherness" of the Country Under the Sunset by continually employing "us/them" terminology and repeatedly referring to "sin" as the primary factor distinguishing "that world" from "our world."

land is wild, dark, and dangerous; there "wild animals and all cruel things have their home" (5). Thus far, Stoker makes good use of classic fairy-tale tropes: the castle and the king, the magical land far, far away, the savage forest surrounding the civilized center, order equated with "good" and the unfamiliar/unknown with "evil," and so forth. Stoker goes on to emphasize the mystery and terror surrounding this fringe space, writing that no one knows what kinds of creatures dwell in this place of "bogs and fens and deep shaky morasses, and thick jungles" (5). For Stoker, this "uncivilized" other place is even of another time, of the ancient past, and he links this space to folk history by suggesting that giants are said to still exist and dwell in this shadowy region.

The mystery and terror running through "Under the Sunset," though, are also tinged with judgment, as Stoker places the unfamiliar, the folkish, outside of religion and thus designates it as sinful. He personifies "Diseases and Plagues" that are carried on the "wicked wind" and spread throughout the land and writes, "Others say that Famine lives there in the marshes, and that he stalks out when men are wicked—so wicked that the Spirits who guard the land are weeping so bitterly that they do not see him pass" (6). Given all this, it is nearly impossible not to see clear parallels between the Country Under the Sunset and nineteenth-century Ireland. Though Stoker does not explicitly state the connection, it is easy to see his early fascination with the idea that land is saturated with political, social, and national importance, and his personification of Famine, Plague, and Disease that creep out of the bogs to punish the sins of the people is an interesting precursor to the Shifting Bog of his first novel, *The Snake's*

Pass, a work concretely set in the west of Ireland, and Stoker's only novel explicitly set in his home country.[153]

If we are to read the fairy tales included in *Under the Sunset* in an Irish context, the relentless moralizing that runs throughout the collection speaks to a rather sinister argument, yet one that was all-too-present in nineteenth-century economic theory: that famine and fever were divine retribution, sent by God to punish the people of Ireland for their sinful, rebellious ways.[154] In his discussion of "The Invisible Giant," the third tale in the collection, in which the Land is terrorized by an ominous, creeping "Giant," Chris Morash notes that since Stoker refers to the menace as "the great shadowy Giant Plague," he is cueing his reader to evaluate the tale allegorically, as the "Giant" is not actually a giant, but a "second-level signifier for disease" (105). This is not necessarily a stretch, as fairy tales are often meant to be read allegorically. That the "Giant" is to be read as "plague" also makes sense, as "The Invisible Giant" was likely influenced by Charlotte Stoker's experiences with famine and fever during her youth in Sligo.[155] Charlotte was born one year after the famine of 1817 and left a detailed account of the events of the cholera epidemic that swept through Sligo in 1832 when she was only fourteen; her account of these horrible days is thought to have been an influence on the setting for *Dracula* and is also a likely inspiration for "The Invisible Giant" (Murray 12). In her meticulous records, Charlotte recounts numerous terrifying incidents of human fear and human cruelty during the cholera epidemic. People were buried alive, out of fear that they would contaminate others; in one instance a priest was tasked with

[153] I discuss the significance of the Shifting Bog and *The Snake's Pass* at length in Chapter Two.
[154] I also discuss this idea at length in Chapter Four.
[155] Bram Stoker's mother.

guarding a fever hospital, "armed with a horsewhip, to prevent patients being dragged out and buried before they were dead." In another instance, a man found his wife, very much alive, while searching a mound of corpses. Throughout her retelling of these horrors, Charlotte maintains a religious tone, comparing Sligo to "Sodom" and referring to the epidemic as "God's hand" (Murray 12).[156] This knowledge of Charlotte's religious rhetoric provides an interesting lens through which to view her son's moralizing in *Under the Sunset.*

In the text of "The Invisible Giant," the Giant/plague is pictured as a kind of ghostly force. When Zaya, the child protagonist of the tale, initially sees it, it is described as "shrouded in a great misty robe that covered it, fading away into the air so that she could only see the face and the grim, spectral hands. The Form was so mighty that the city below it seemed like a child's toy" (51). Within the narrative space of Stoker's fairy tales, the entire environment is troubled: the bogs and forests shelter lurking Famine and Plague, and even the air itself is contaminated, ever threatening to bring down misery upon the Land. The difference between the giants of the bog, who are, in this space, presumably real, and the metaphorical, invisible "Giant," however, is a rather interesting one. As I have already noted, many of the tales included in *Under the Sunset* were previously published in other venues. What would become "The Invisible Giant" was originally published in 1880 in the *Dublin Mail*, under the title "The Spectre of Doom." The story is the same, yet in the transition from journal to

[156] In his biography of Stoker, *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker*, Paul Murray notes that famine was seen by some evangelicals as a "providential visitation, sent to bring Ireland into a higher state of social and moral organisation through a necessary measure of pain." He adds that it was also the view of some "ultra-Protestants" that God was wreaking vengeance for the toleration of Roman Catholicism, doling out punishment over the 1829 Emancipation of Catholics in Ireland (12).

children's book, the "Spectre" becomes a "Giant."[157] Both figures, when read in the context of Ireland, speak to history. Ancient Irish folklore (and the larger area of Celtic folklore) is full of giants, the most famous being Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool), that are closely linked with the construction of the Irish nation and of Irish national identity, so immediately the figure of the giant references folk history as well as political history.[158] The figure of the Spectre speaks to history as well, but to a conflicted past; the Spectre is a ghostly revenant, simultaneously representative of past and present.[159] The Invisible Giant haunts the Land; as it moves through the country and into the city, the people cannot see it, but are struck dead all the same—and this event occurs again and again. This notion is significant in an Ireland that had, for most of Stoker's life, been steadily defined by famine, disease, and political unrest. In terms of genre, too, Stoker's structure is intriguing in the context of Ireland, as he combines folk figures, signifiers of the culturo-historical epicenter of Ireland (or, at least, of popular imaginings of Ireland), with the civilizing mission of the fairy tale, thus suggesting that the people and the land of Ireland are both in desperate need of reform.

To return to the importance of the Land itself, which is the overarching element tying together all the stories in *Under the Sunset*, we must keep in mind the context in which Stoker wrote the stories and compiled the collection. The book was published in late 1881, just two years after the establishment of the Land League, and many of the

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[157] The folk figure of the Giant also replaced the Spectre of the original story, presumably to widen the story's appeal to a range of younger readers.

[158] The Fenian Brotherhood, the nationalist organization I discuss in my examination of the work of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Charles Kickham, takes its name from Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna (a band of Celtic warriors), who are seen as symbols of Irish power and endurance.

[159] I discuss haunting at greater length in Chapter Two, in my examination of Jacques Derrida's concept of "Hauntology."

stories, like "The Invisible Giant," were written and published prior to 1881. By the time *Under the Sunset* actually appeared on bookstall shelves in London, the Land Wars were in full swing back in Ireland, and land-centric political rhetoric was at its height. Stoker's own ambivalence regarding the political future of the nation of Ireland, common to many Anglo-Irish writers and intellectuals who found themselves in a precarious position in terms of national identification and often exhibited a hesitance to draw ideological borders between England and Ireland, seeps through in the content of the tales.[160] "The Invisible Giant," for instance, begins with the narrator's nostalgic and judgmental assessment of the past and present state of "the Land." Stoker writes that the Land "had sadly changed indeed" and "no longer was there perfect peace" (45). As he continues, Stoker's ambivalence toward the plight of the rich and the poor becomes apparent.[161] He writes,

> People had become more selfish and more greedy, and had tried to grasp all they could for themselves. There were some very rich and there were many very poor. Most of the beautiful gardens were laid waste. Houses had grown up close round the palace; and in some of these dwelt many persons who could only afford to pay for part of a house (45).

From this passage it is difficult to determine exactly who is to blame for the degradation of the Land. Who are the "greedy" and "selfish" ones to whom Stoker is referring? There is a clear construction of an imbalanced economic system, with the few wealthy

[160] See my discussion of Stoker's position as a "philosophical Home Ruler" in Chapter Two.
[161] In the context of Ireland, this concern with the divide between rich and poor also gestures toward the growing tensions within landlord/tenant interactions.

on top and the many poor below, but there is also an almost wistful tone of regret that runs through the passage. The degradation of the beautiful, manicured gardens Stoker describes in the first story and the encroachment of the other houses onto the old palace grounds speaks to a kind of chaos that can follow a significant imbalance of power, and references the agrarian violence that was rapidly spreading throughout rural Ireland. Ultimately, the disruption to the "perfect peace" of the Land betrays Stoker's own conservatism and his fear of what an emancipated Ireland might look like.[162] For Stoker, at least in the narrative space of *Under the Sunset*, the Land can only manifest itself in two forms: the perfect idealized space that can exist only in dreams, and the chaotic plague-ravaged space slowly decaying in its own rebellious sinfulness.

Like Wilde and other writers publishing in England for a primarily British audience, Stoker utilizes the form of the fairy tale to offer a politically charged commentary from a vantage point distanced from the space of charged national debate. As a collection for children, the book received quite a favorable response, with reviewers sure to note the broader appeal of the stories. On November 12, 1881, just after the release of *Under the Sunset*, the *Spectator* wrote that the "literary charm" of Stoker's collection would appeal to an adult readership, "while the hearts of the small readers of the chronicles of that beautiful, angel-guarded 'Country Under the Sunset' will surely respond to the touch of Prince Zaphir and Princess Bluebell" (Senf 44). The reviewer praises the "beautifully printed" volume, which is "tastefully bound in white

[162] This idea of "perfect peace" is also evident in the later works of Yeats and Lady Gregory, and indeed in the formulation of cultural nationalism, as they imagined it. If perfect peace is maintained by emphasizing common cultural ground, then everyone can ignore the economic and political, areas that would either exclude people like Yeats and Lady Gregory or force them to "choose sides" in terms of defining their own national identity and political allegiance.

vellum, with red-and-gold lettering and edges," and compares the tales within it to those of the nineteenth century's favorite exemplar, Hans Christian Andersen (Senf 44). The writers at *Punch* agreed that the book was indeed "pretty to look at," but noted that it was "rather too goody-goody" and might be "somewhat over the heads of those who are only three feet and a half high" (Senf 46).[163] Indeed, the layered interpretative possibilities of the fairy tale, and the notion that these stories were simultaneously evocative of adult literariness and childhood whimsy, remained difficult for many nineteenth-century reviewers to reconcile.

(3) Edmund Downey and the Manipulation of Genre: Rethinking Power Narratives and the Notion of Cultural Nationalism

In comparison to the tales of Wilde or Stoker, the work of Edmund Downey (1856-1937) is far more explicit in terms of his address of Ireland, though he enjoys only a miniscule fraction of the notoriety of either of the aforementioned writers. This is likely due to the fact that his works, which mainly consist of folk and fairy tales and "humorous stories," tend to get lost among those of other early Revivalists, and just could not compete with the growing celebrity of the young Yeats.[164] His non-fiction

[163] The reviewer, under the guise of a "Special Child-Critic," suggests that the "goody-goody" tone of the collection is due to the religiously tinged moralizing that permeates most of the stories, exclaiming, "One of the stories reminds me of David and Goliath…and there's not very much to laugh at" (Senf 46).

[164] This is not to say that Downey had a limited range as a writer. He later wrote novels and even wrote a play based on William Carleton's *Fardorougha, the Miser*. Unfortunately, his appeals to get the play produced, first to producer Charlie Sullivan and then to actor Shiel Barry, who died on March 13, 1897, proved fruitless. Writing of his final attempt to have Barry review the manuscript, which Barry had been carrying

work, *Charles Lever: His Life and his Letters* (1906), a two-volume biography of the writer published by Downey's own firm, is perhaps better known to contemporary audiences. Downey, who wrote under the pseudonym of F. M. Allen as well as his own name, was born in a Catholic family and educated at The Catholic University School and St. John's College in Waterford, where his father was a shipbroker (Sutherland 196).[165] At the age of 22, Downey went to London and quickly succeeded in the publishing industry there, becoming a partner in the firm of Ward and Downey. After enjoying a long career as a publisher and a writer, he retired from Ward and Downey in 1890 and in 1894 started up the firm Downey and Co., which devoted a significant amount of energy to the publication of "Irish books," including editions of Sidney Owenson's *O'Donnell*, Maria Edgeworth's *Ormond*, Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More*, and Gerald Griffin's *The Collegians* (Brown 91, 320).[166] His memoir, *Twenty Years Ago* (1905), recounts his life in London as an employee at *Tinsley's Magazine* and his time as an aspiring writer in what he affectionately calls "Bohemia on the Strand."[167]

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around with him on tour for over a year, Downey laments, "The next news I heard of Shiel Barry was that he was mortally ill. My manuscript eventually came back to me unread, and it lies to this day in some half-forgotten corner of my manuscript cupboard" (*Twenty Years Ago* 236-7).

[165] Through watching his father, Downey gained an impressive base of knowledge of seafaring and of sailors; he used this knowledge as inspiration for his book of sea stories, *Anchor Watch Yarns* (1884).

[166] In 1906, shortly after his return to Ireland, he took possession of the *Waterford News*. Downey remained in Waterford until his death in 1937.

[167] In a chapter entitled "My Spare Moments" in *Twenty Years Ago*, Downey notes that George Moore writes in his *Confessions of a Young Man* that Downey's spare moments were consumed with the day-to-day business chores of *Tinsley's Magazine*, like looking after manuscripts and overseeing the matters of printing and binding. Downey takes issue with this and states that his "spare moments" were always occupied with "literary" pursuits, either reading or writing. "I cannot remember to have indulged in any reading or writing on my own account in the Tinsley office," Downey writes, "my duties absorbing my time up to six or seven o'clock. In fact, I led a double life" (273).

In terms of his personal politics, Downey can certainly be identified as one interested in matters of Irish nationalism, and in literary nationalism in particular.[168] He was involved with the Southwark Literary Club in London and with the Irish Literary Society, both important organizations in terms of the early move toward the establishment of an Irish national literature, and was closely connected with key figures of the early movement, such as T. W. Rolleston, Charles Gavan Duffy, Francis Fahy, and John Augustus O'Shea. Downey's involvement in the establishment of the Irish Literary Society in London, as well as in the various side projects of its members, provides a useful lens through which to view his creative works. Following the fizzling of the Pan-Celtic Society, whose interests were intellectual as well as political Home Rule, and the establishment of the National Literary Society in Dublin, membership in the Irish Literary Society proved a good fit for Downey, who was elected to the general committee for the organization, along with D. J. O'Donoghue, Fahy, J. A. O'Shea, Yeats, C. G. Duffy (who was elected president), and others (Ryan 58). The tenets of the society, and indeed those that would come to greatly influence Downey's own fiction, were lofty.[169] As a collective, the Irish Literary Society in its earliest form ultimately sought "to seek out the treasures of the present—crushed, neglected, or dormant as they

[168] In *Twenty Years Ago*, Downey comments on the Irish national custom of the "wearin' of the green" on St. Patrick's Day, which he did even though he was living in London at the time. He writes, "Writing to his brother in 1824, Gerald Griffin speaks of walking through Hyde Park with John Banim on St. Patrick's Day, both novelists valiantly wearing shamrock in their hats—'even under the eye of John Bull.' Times are changed!" (40). Downy also recounts a humorous anecdote in which Tinsley, who ridicules Downey for wearing his shamrocks, decides to don them himself in the spirit of the day, declaring, "There…no one can say I'm bigoted," only to angrily remove them when an Irish charwoman mistakes him for one of her own countrymen (41).

[169] This influence, as I will discuss later in the chapter, seems to be in a rather inverse way, as the philosophy informing much of Downey's work runs counter to the cultural nationalism espoused by many of his nationalist contemporaries.

too often lie—and touch them with the magic of the poet's art or the romanticist's charming" (Ryan 58).[170] So, with the guidelines of the group established, the members went about the process of recruiting all the Irish talent, both fresh and long established, to be found in London. In *The Irish Literary Revival: Its History, Pioneers and Possibilities*, his 1893 tell-all on the various organizations and individuals associated with the movement, William Patrick Ryan notes that Wilde was suggested as a potential member of the Irish Literary Society, in reference to which proposal an acquaintance of his, who was present at the meeting, assured the group that Wilde "would certainly put off the matter with a quip or a paradox, which, however, would be a good one, and worthy of being entered in the minute-book."[171] It happened, however, that Wilde did in fact become a member of the society, as did his brother William (119).

As for this personal role in supporting the Irish Literary Society of London, Downey would, in addition to his work as a committee member, participate in readings

[170] The more practical goals of the organization revolved around such things as the hosting of lectures on topics of Irish interest (both political and cultural), readings by Irish writers, the general support of the Irish artistic community in London, and the continuation of the work of the Young Ireland movement.

[171] Upon its publication, Ryan's book proved quite controversial among some members of the literary societies he discusses, especially in regard to his comments on the failed Irish Publishing Company scheme, which owed its collapse in large part to a contentious, very public dispute, both in person and in print, between Duffy and Yeats. In a letter to Downey written on April 22, 1894, Rolleston criticizes Ryan's book, exclaiming, "I really hardly see how it could have been worse. He does not know all, but he has told pretty nearly all he does know." He goes on to note that Ryan, who had been privy to confidential discussions about the publishing scheme, had "flagrantly violated" that confidence. Rolleston's anger is likely enhanced by the added embarrassment of having unwittingly supplied Ryan with a photograph of Duffy, which Ryan then used for the book. Duffy, Rolleston writes, was completely against Ryan's writing of the history, and "certainly did not furnish his photograph for it. I did, before I knew of Sir C.'s objections, and certainly not anticipating that Ryan would put into the book information on subjects on which his lips would have been sealed if he had any sense of honor" (Edmund Downey Papers, National Library of Ireland).

hosted by the club, giving a reading of his first collection of stories, *Through Green Glasses* (1887), at the inaugural meeting on Wednesday, November 30th, 1887. On the flier for the event, which was emblazoned with a harp, Downey, who gave the reading free of charge, was billed second under a soiree that was to happen one week before. In a letter to Downey going over organizational details, Fahy suggests that Downey read his favorite stories from the book, "The Siege of Don Isle," "The Escape of James the Second," and "Portlaw to Paradise." Fahy writes, "You would have time for three, and we could give you a rest by ramming a song or two from our members in between—that is if you thought it would not look ill." Additionally, Fahy sent along with the letter one of his own poems, "Petticoats Down to their Knees," which he wrote under his pen name, *DREOILIN*.[172] Indeed, *Through Green Glasses* proved to be a popular and critical success, appearing in bookstalls in England, Ireland, and America. The book was lauded as an unapologetically "Irish book" in its depiction of the local brogue, humor, and particularities of the Waterford peasant, embodied expertly in the character of Dan Banim, the teller of the tales included in the collection.[173] *Through Green Glasses* proved so successful, in fact, that Downey went on to publish two more volumes of Dan Banim stories: *From the Green Bag* (1889) and *Green as Grass* (1892). Of Downey himself, Ryan remarks that he is "one of the most Irish" of the writers new upon the scene, whose "full knowledge of the people" allows him to effortlessly capture

[172] *Dreoilin* is Irish for "wren." As Downey was active in the Irish artistic community, as well as a successful publisher, people would often send him samples of their own creative work, both published and unpublished.
[173] In a letter written to congratulate him on the success of *Through Green Glasses*, Downey's fellow member of the Irish Literary Society, writer, and friend, Mrs. Frances Cashel Hoey, calls the book "clever," adding that it is "perhaps too clever for the British public" (Edmund Downey Papers, National Library of Ireland).

"[t]he brogue, the characteristic twists and turns of expression, the happy-go-lucky airiness, [and] the droll imaginativeness of local life" (89). Reviewers from all political persuasions compared Downey to Mark Twain, and he counted William Gladstone himself as a fan. Over the course of an extended correspondence with Downey, the Rev. Michael P. O'Hickey of Waterford, who was compiling a biographical series on Waterford writers and poets, praises Downey's presentation of the Munster brogue, writing, "It seems to me that outside your books and Kickham's tales the brogue of our native province, or anything better than a wretched parody of it, is not to be found in Irish literature" (22). O'Hickey also encourages Downey to tackle the genre of the novel, arguing that "good Irish novels are not too numerous—novels well-constructed and faithfully portraying Irish life and Irish ways, the lights and shades of Irish character" (32).[174]

In terms of genre, *Through Green Glasses*, like all the Dan Banim stories, is rather a mixed bag, employing elements of the folk tale, ancient Irish legend, and real historical events and fashioning them into a mélange of hyperbole and anachronism that left reviewers and publishers unsure how to categorize the work.[175] In some forums it

[174] W. P. Ryan also expresses faith in Downey's ability to write a great Irish novel, writing, "I have no doubt that given a real reading public in Ireland, and a fair field for a genuine Irish novelist, the author of "Through Green Glasses" might give us Irish fiction of a kind that would agitate readers and critics for a long time to come" (88-9).

[175] The style of Downey's Dan Banim stories is quite akin to the work of later writers like Flann O'Brien, who in their fiction incorporate established historic or literary characters (or a somewhat recognizable version of them) into anachronistic or reimagined narratives, often satirizing these "original" narratives by explicitly mocking their structure. In O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), Fionn mac Cumhaill and mad King Sweeney of Irish legend appear as part of a student's writing assignment. Downey's Dan Banim stories feature a version of Cromwell (called "Crummle") who says "begor" and is rather thick-headed and an impoverished Caesar who is worried the city will turn off his water.

was reviewed as children's literature; in some it was simply called a "humorous book," signaling that the collection could be openly enjoyed by adults as well as children while also acknowledging its "irreverence." The *Nation*, C. G. Duffy's nationalist paper, gave the collection, unsurprisingly, a most favorable review, but noted that the book "belongs to an order by itself."[176] For the *Nation,* it wasn't genuinely a novel or collection of short stories, and the reviewer asserts that, while *Through Green Glasses* is "largely historical," its version of events is "the strangest perversion of generally accepted historical circumstances, and is founded on the most extravagant conception of historical personages" (*Through Green Glasses* A1). But it is within this apparent "perversion" of historical events, I would like to suggest, that the Dan Banim tales become imbued with political meaning.

One primary way in which the Dan Banim stories are particularly interesting in terms of a nationalist agenda is that they illustrate that narratives of oppression can be rewritten or reinterpreted, and that the agency to reimagine these narratives can and does shift between colonizer and colonized. This notion, I argue, contributes to the theme running throughout *Through Green Glasses*, *From the Green Bag,* and *Green as Grass*: that Ireland can and must construct its own national narratives. By emphasizing the importance of storytelling, as he does by presenting all the tales in Dan's voice and with Dan's mannerisms and asides, and also by playing on the characteristics and

[176] Downey and Duffy maintained a solid working (and seemingly friendly) relationship until Duffy's death in 1903. After his death, Duffy's daughter, Susan, wrote to Downey saying she knew his name from his correspondence with her father and asking if he could place some of her writing in any publications. She adds, "As my father has left a large family, the younger members of which are still at school, and as there is only a small pension for us, it is necessary that such of us as can, should endeavor to add to our income." She also tells Downey that she is able to translate books from French to English, should he need that particular service.

expectations associated with the folk tale, Downey reveals history as a story in itself, with multiple possible interpretations, and therefore as something that can be rewritten, or taken back, so to speak. For example, all three collections consist of "established" national narratives, primarily those chronicling acts of colonialism either in general or specific to Ireland, that Downey has rewritten to showcase voices of the oppressed by shifting the balance of power to a new agent.[177]

In "Andy Merrigan's Great Discovery," the first tale in *through Green Glasses*, Dan Banim spins an alternate history of the "discovery" of America, in which the land is discovered by an Irish fisherman from Cork.[178] Dan describes Andy as a dark and dangerous man, "wud long black hair fallin' over his showldhers, an' eyes that burned undher his brown like fires of coal," and adds that "[t]here wor some whispers that Andy was a pirate king in saycrit, an' others said 'twas a wrecker he was an' that his fires wor often seen on the coast of Clare" (5-6). Much as in the story of Columbus's conquest of America, Andy gains the support of a royal patron to fund his journey, only this time, instead of the Spanish Ferdinand and Isabella, it is the King Cormac of Munster who lives near the Rock of Cashel. Upon his arrival in the New World, Andy meets a population of Native Americans, led by the King of New York, and Andy repeatedly uses racialist terms to describe them, referring to the King and his subjects as "niggers" and "Red Injuns." Ultimately, Andy ends up teaching the Native Americans English, converting them to Christianity, clothing them in the European style of dress, and buying their land out from under them. He eventually sells "Amerriga," the land

[177] I use the term "established" here to refer to narratives that are part of a dominant politico-cultural sphere, and generally considered to be "true" or authoritative by those within that sphere.

[178] Dan states that Andy's journey takes place generations before that of Columbus.

christened after Andy Merrigan himself, to King Cormac for Griffith's Valuation.[179] In this first tale, in which Downey positions Ireland in a position of power, the narrative satirizes British colonial practices by representing the imposition of the English language, Griffith's valuation, and the racialist rhetoric frequently employed in the British denigration of the native populations of Ireland, Africa, and India. Additionally, this narrative conveys Downey's distaste for the idea of mass Irish emigration to and organization in America, which was becoming more and more popular with people looking for financial stability or to establish a viable nationalist community away from British reach, as among some members of the Fenian movement.[180] Ultimately, Andy is drowned for his troubles, going down in a shipwreck.

Another story in the collection, "The Wonderful Escape of James the Second," is a retelling of the escape of James following the Battle of the Boyne and centers around the deposed monarch and Jimmy Murphy, a tollbooth operator who helps him make his escape to France (oddly enough, by concealing him in a barrel of pickled pork).[181] Here, we can see a recurring strategy common to most of Dan's tales which speaks to a conflict characteristic to nineteenth-century Ireland: the collision of the Irish and English languages. In the world of Dan Banim, and hence that of Downey, the Irish language is often employed to put the native speaker at a particular advantage by

[179] I discuss Griffith's Valuation in Chapter Three.
[180] A clear argument against Irish emigration is also present in Downey's fairy tale, *The Little Green Man* (1895), in which a young son is persuaded by a leprechaun to give up participation in the California gold rush to return home and preserve the Irish family unit. This argument also speaks to Downey's involvement in the Irish Literary Society, which placed great value on furthering Irish creative and political endeavor from within Ireland itself.
[181] The simultaneous existence of things like tollbooths and trains alongside figures like James II, Ulysses, and Cromwell is a mainstay of Dan's tales, an odd temporal convergence that is a great source of the tales' humor.

confusing or mocking the non-native listener, a humorous turn that would also have greater political implications for both English and Irish readers. For instance, when Jimmy mutteringly refers to James II as "Dirty Shamus," James demands that he clarify himself. "*Naboclish!"* is Jimmy's response, which James asks him to translate, as he is "a poor hand at the Irish."[182] Jimmy replies that he has indeed heard that to be true and adds, "It manes God save the King"; James II takes comfort in this while the reader is able to recognize Jimmy's mockery of James, and to see the exchange as a tiny act of rebellion (84). A similar scene occurs in "Garry Baldwin and the Pope" in *From the Green Bag*. While Garry, who is based on the historical figure of Garibaldi, is having pints with the Pope, whom he has recently kidnapped, he exclaims, "*Slauntha*!" as they both take their first sips.[183] "The same to you, an' many of 'em!" is the Pope's response, which alerts Garry to the fact that the Pope has no idea of what he has said. When he mentions that the Pope doesn't understand much about the Irish, the Pope responds, "Divil a bit!" (94). For Dan, the teller of these tales, the Irish language is an important signifier of national identity; those who can speak it, and those who can understand it, are privileged, while those who cannot are at a loss.[184] And it is also worth noting that the two individuals missing out on the joke are both authority figures immensely meaningful in an Irish context: the King and the Pope. This shift of power

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[182] *Naboclish* translates roughly to "never mind" or "forget about it."
[183] *Sláinte*, here spoken in Dan's brogue, means "health" and is a common toast in Ireland. It is an abbreviated form of *Sláinte mhaith* ("good health").
[184] Downey also has fun with Dan's English throughout the three volumes. For instance, in "The Siege of Troy" in *From the Green Bag*, a tale of Ulysses and Penelope that also happens to include Napoleon, Penelope is referred to phonetically, as "Peneloap." In "Garry Baldwin and the Pope," Dan repeatedly mentions the Pope's "invoice," as opposed to "envoy." Such details serve to achieve humorous effect, but they also remind the reader that these tales are *told* tales, thus speaking to the significance of the oral tradition.

in language, though only implicit and designed for the purposes of humor, leans toward the idea of Irish separatism and suggests the possibility of reimagining Ireland's relationship to Britain.

That Downey uses folk elements and humor to frame his stories, and that they include children as part of the reading audience, frees him in many ways from the burden of (perceived) authenticity. Unlike a writer like Carleton, widely recognized as the authority on the depiction of the Irish peasantry, Downey's jarring juxtapositioning of Irish mythical figures (leprechauns, pookahs, and banshees), figures from classical myth ("Uly" and "Peneloap"), and historical figures (Napoleon, Strongbow, Caesar, James II) assures his audience that his stories cannot be held to the same standard of verisimilitude, or the same expected reader response, as other stories of the peasantry—they are simply "good fun." This genre bending allows Downey to do with history as he does with genre, manipulating it in such a manner as to strategically yet explicitly propel a nationalist agenda, putting the power in the hands of Ireland while everyone else laughs along. In this seemingly jumbled up mess of fact and fable, there is much to speak to Downey's imagining of his homeland.

In his discussion of Ireland's slow trudge from a post-Famine society to a modern one, Seamus Deane writes of the need either to pretend the trauma of the past didn't exist or to make peace with it by mythologizing that "past" Ireland and placing it within the manageable, interpretable space of legend. He writes,

> The rupture between the traditional and the modern culture could then be dramatized as the characteristic national experience, with neither loss of

> the old nor the entry into the new complete. That transitional condition was understood to be one of incoherence, caught between two languages, Irish and English, two land systems, also Irish and English, two civilizations, one vivacious and wild, the other organized and dull. If the national character were to be preserved, it must be seen as surviving this rupture, despite all the attendant damage. (51)

For Deane, the need to address this conflict, to somehow put familiar, identifiable representation to it, characterizes Irish writing in the last half of the nineteenth century.[185] One way of interpreting this "transitional condition" of incoherence, and hence of writing about a reimagined, evolving Ireland, is to manipulate genre, as Downey does, to reflect a nation in the collision zone of past and present, moving forward, yet still clinging to past signifiers of national identity. Downey's tales perform like pieces of a puzzle, bringing together pieces of folk culture and fairy lore, ancient legend and historical events, English and Irish language, and colonialism and rebellion; and yet the product, once assembled, is conflicted, incoherent. The added element of humor to these Irish tales serves simultaneously to acknowledge this state of social/cultural/political conflict and to present an alternative method of examining established conceptions of colonial power. By humorously satirizing the colonial conquests of Ireland's past, or the act of colonial conquest itself, Downey works to defang the event, to detract from its power, therefore making more plausible the notion that Ireland can first find its bearings within this space of rupture, and then move forward to write its own national narratives.

[185] Deane identifies the work of James Clarence Mangan as his prime example.

Thus, as Downey builds upon the genre of the popular tale, the "moral" becomes more actively politicized. Where typical Victorian fairy tales sought to employ their narratives as a moral tool, to help propel the "civilizing mission" by praising the virtues of Christian religion and bourgeois cultural norms, Downey's Dan Banim stories shift the defining factor of the tale from the moral to the progressive. The civilizing mission, in Downey's hands, becomes the education of empowered nationalists, both young and old. This decisive shift does seem to place Downey's work outside the more romantic goals of the Irish Literary Society, which rely on an idealized past, as well as those of his more conservative colleague, Duffy.

In "What Irishmen May Do for Irish Literature," a lecture given by Duffy to the Irish Literary Society in London, and also what turned out to be the final lecture of his life, Duffy enumerates the myriad ways Irish writers can contribute to the establishment of a strong national literature.[186] For Duffy, who was at this time seventy-six years of age, the famine had done much to wipe out the literary progress made by writers like J. S. LeFanu, Thomas Moore, and John Banim, and the minds of young readers of the late nineteenth century were in great danger of "becoming debased, perhaps depraved, by battening on the garbage of literature" (4). This "garbage literature" referenced by Duffy, mainly consisting of detective and sensational fiction and translations of "vile originals" from France, must be combatted, he says, by the production of a better model of literature, one that will encourage the virtues of "purity, piety, and simplicity" (4). He goes on to argue the transformative power of literature by stating that "good books are the salt of life. They make us wiser, manlier, more honest, and what is less than any

[186] Duffy delivered this lecture on July 23, 1892. Among those in attendance were Maud Gonne, Downey, Rolleston, and D. J. O'Donoghue.

of these, more prosperous. It is not the least of their merits that good books make good men and patriotic citizens" (6). These "good books" for Duffy were historical in nature, not mere textbooks, but rather vivid biographies and sketches which allow depictions of "model Irishmen" to teach by example; this kind of book would "familiarize [the Irish community] with men, which the Celt loves better than systems of policies" (8). Though Duffy's concepts are clearly a bit stodgy, they are, at the heart, quite similar to those championed by his frequent adversary, Yeats. Both subscribe to the idea of reviving a solid, historical narrative to serve as an exemplar of Irish national character, which relies on the idea of a clean, linear past. For Duffy, this narrative was provided by the Young Ireland movement; for Yeats, it was folk history and lore of the peasantry.

For Downey, however, no such narratives exist. In his stories, history is just that—a story, one that exists in the mind of the storyteller and that can be adjusted, tweaked, and otherwise altered at will to accommodate historical crisis or rupture. There is no essential "truth" to be discovered there. Therefore, it becomes Downey's *process*, perhaps more than Downey's *product*, that most strongly speaks to his imagining of Irish national identity. His product, the humorous tale, is important in that the humor serves to somewhat diminish the aura of colonial power, but the process (the actual construction of the tales that serves to educate, entertain, and embolden) is where the real nationalist import lies.

Any examination of Downey's process, as it is exhibited in the Dan Banim tales, necessitates a look at the character of Dan Banim himself. Though Dan's own personal experience is sometimes the focus of the tales he tells, he is more often the narrator of his own versions of such traditional stories as Strongbow's invasion of Ireland ("The

Last King of Leinster" in *Green as Grass*) and Cromwell's attack on Dunhill Castle in Waterford ("The Siege of Don Isle" in *Through Green Glasses*).[187] Each story he tells bears his own mannerisms and patterns of speech, and all his characters, no matter if they be Irish, English, or ancient Roman, say "begor."[188] In the introduction to *Through Green Glasses*, an editorial voice, presumably Downey's, insists that the tales collected in the book were told him by Dan, "a little old man whose mind was a storehouse of strange legendary lore" who had "contrived to pick up in some way a peculiar collection of quasi-historical facts and fables" (1).[189] The editor goes on to add that "[c]hronology had no meaning and no terrors for Dan. To him the early Milesians, St. Patrick, Brian the Brave, Cromwell, and even 'the great Bonypart' were, practically speaking, contemporaneous" (3). Even though Downey notes numerous characteristics that would seemingly disqualify Dan as any kind of authoritative voice, he lauds the simplicity, lucidity, and honest brogue of Dan's storytelling. This kind of approach seems a clear send-up of works like Croker's *Fairy Legends*, in which Croker employs an editorial voice to distance himself from the collected tales and to denounce the folk beliefs contained in his book as primitive or "misguided." Perhaps more fascinating,

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[187] "The Last King of Leinster" is based on the legend of Dervorgilla and her betrayal of Ireland in the 12th century. Traditionally, Dervorgilla is held up as a scapegoat, whose betrayal of her husband, and subsequent elopement with King Dermot MacMurrough led to the Norman invasion of Ireland. In Downey's tale, Dervorgilla has a minimal role, and the greater focus is on the relationship between Dermot and Strongbow. In "The Last King of Leinster," it is Strongbow himself who is parodied and given the blame. He is portrayed as one in love with slaughter, in contrast to Dermot, who has gotten in over his head. Before the siege on Waterford, Dermot asks Strongbow if he has had enough of murdering, and he replies, "In for a penny in for a pound, ould boy…Twill be all the same in a hundhred years!" (40).

[188] An expression similar to the English "by God!" This expression is also seen in nineteenth-century Irish writing as "begorrah" and "begorra."

[189] The metaphor of the peasant mind as a "storehouse" of folk knowledge is a common one, and can be seen in the works of Carleton and Yeats.

though, is the way Downey's treatment of Dan plays off of nineteenth-century folklorists' reliance on the idea of peasant "authority" or "authenticity" and the common practice of attaching these peasant figures to their collections for the purpose of lending the work a greater degree of credibility. Hence, Dan serves a dual function within the tales. What he *says*, which is culturo-historical rupture personified, serves to mock colonial power, whether it be specific to Britain or not, and to weaken the aura of that control by infusing it with humor. What he *is*, which is essentially a famous liar, fabricator, and exaggerator, is an answer to those who would essentialize or romanticize the Irish peasantry, attaching to them some kind of "spiritual" or cultural authority simply because they are peasants.

If folk tales are meant to translate cultural conflict, perhaps the conflict within Downey's tales is not just between colonizer and colonized, or in negotiating historical rupture, but also between conflicting constructions of Irishness within Ireland itself. A major effect of Downey's Dan Banim tales is that they work to sever the connection between the peasantry and the idea of "true" or "genuine" Irishness. Where earlier writers like Lady Wilde and Croker, and later writers like Yeats and Lady Gregory, would look back to excavate the glories and myths of an ancient Irish past, hoping to somehow uncover a unifying cultural Irish identity, Downey completely mocks these myths (or, more specifically, the expectations of truth surrounding them) by reconstructing them in a way that is incoherent and humorous, thus signaling the necessity of reimagining ways of thinking about Irish national identity. Just as his tales speak to the potential of Ireland to construct its own national narratives, the character of Dan Banim speaks to the idea that these new national narratives need not necessarily be

based on past imaginings of Irishness. Rather, ways of imagining Irish identity and Irish nation must evolve along with the changing political landscape as Ireland inches toward the twentieth century.

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