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The forum for these conversations was of course the international Irish press, and McMahon examines in this chapter the continued exchanges between the burgeoning newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic including lights of the period such as the Ford’s Irish World as brief case studies. The Irish in the United States, even though not “mono-racial.” Even if we ignore the Irish, but perhaps, even consider, even those considerable numbers, as they gave the first test of republic principles long taken for granted by a largely homogenized white America. By expanding the contours of citizenship as McMahon describes, they played a crucial role in how their adopted country received and integrated those that followed them.

—University of West Georgia

The Transnational Connection, Irish Literature

BY DAVID CLARE

IT IS COMMONLY ASSERTED that multiculturalism has come to Ireland in the past twenty years with the arrival of the “New Irish” (those who have come from an array of peoples from Latin America and Hispanic-Americans, to Africa and African-Americans, to Asia and Asian-Americans). The Irish are aware of these trends, and are grappling with them. Immigration has been of much greater interest to the public “New Irish” writers have been, in many cases, fascinating and, in all cases, very well written. After Adigun’s contribution comes Mary McGlynn’s chapter on representations of Latin America and Hispanic-Americans in Irish literature. Her insightful analysis shows that the Latino characters are slowly marginalized in each text as the authors reveal that they are often cast as stereotypes or exotic Others, rather than as full-fledged members of the Irish identity and in affirming “white” perspectives on upward social mobility. Abhy Palka follows with a chapter on Kate McCafferty’s historical novel, Testimony of an Irish Slave Girl (2003). Palka accurately assesses the book’s strengths and weaknesses and points out that, historically, there were very significant differences between African slavery and Irish indentured servitude, contrary to certain implications in McCafferty’s novel.

The next chapter—Ed Madden’s on the “transnational” aspects of poems by the Irish gay writers Frank McGuinness, Cathal Ó Searcaigh, and Padraig Rooney—is one of the highlights of this volume. Madden’s close reading of poems is revelatory and deeply nuanced. And he rightly recognizes that the transnational impulses in works by these writers are related to the fact that, prior to a political great awakening, Irish gay audiences than the original plays he made connections to international gay culture and rights initiatives, because their sexuality was often condemned or willfully ignored by Irish society.

Kelli Molloy’s perceptive analysis of Julia O’Faolain’s novel Three Lovers (1971) centers on a trope commonly found in Irish literature: the “hostile foreigner.” And, as the editors of this collection recognize, an Irish Catholic person cannot achieve sexual liberation and cosmopolitanism simply by moving to a liberal and sophisticated foreign country. Volume editor Amanda Tucker follows with an outstanding chapter examining the contradictory views on race and nationality present in William Butler’s short story collection, Take a Trot of the Pampas (1909). Like Butler himself, the unnamed Irish-Argentinean narrator of these stories feels an attraction to and (at times) a political sympathy with the Argentine gauchos; however, he also frequently regards his Irish “whiteness” as superior to the “miscegenated” ancestry of the swartwari peoples of the South African Cape. For example, Eugene O’Neill’s plays reveal truths about Irish-America or Juham Lahiri’s fiction captures the struggles of Indian-Americans. These initial efforts by Adigun, in which he discusses his practice of adapting celebrated Irish plays to produce hybrid works which reflect the cultural mixing that migrants engage in, as they slowly take on certain Irish traits and values (while, of course, retaining traits and values associated with their “home” cultures).

Not only was Ireland not “mono-cultural” prior to the arrival of the “New Irish” (as is often lazily asserted), it was also not “mono-racial.” Even if we ignore the “New Irish,” those who were made up of people of color in the United States, even when simultaneously expressing sympathy for Aboriginal Australians and other non-white peoples under British rule. The forum for these conversations was of course the international Irish press, and McMahon examines in this chapter the continued exchanges between the burgeoning newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic including lights of the period such as the Ford’s Irish World as brief case studies. The Irish in the United States, even though not “mono-racial.” Even if we ignore the Irish, but perhaps, even consider, even those considerable numbers, as they gave the first test of republic principles long taken for granted by a largely homogenized white America. By expanding the contours of citizenship as McMahon describes, they played a crucial role in how their adopted country received and integrated those that followed them.

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The Transnational Connection, Irish Literature
By Annie Tindley

In 1845, John Mayne, land agent for Sir George Ralph Gore in King’s Country, attained the unwelcome position of being the first land agent to be murdered in that county during the Great Irish Famine. Although unwelcome, Mayne had not been unprepared; he knew very well that he was regarded with universal hatred by the tenants for his eviction and clearance policies, and he had long taken to carrying a percussion gun stick on all occasions when out on the estate. On 12 October 1845, this had not been enough to save him, and he was shot dead on a public road with several witnesses observing the crime, in what the local newspaper called, “one of the most dastardly and atrocious murders carried out in this blood-stained county” (136). No one was ever convicted of the murder.

Glenn Reilly
The Irish Land Agent, 1830-60: The Case of King’s Country. Four Courts Press, 2015. £45.

This fascinating and important book sets out to uncover the complex social, economic and religious factors behind land agency in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, discover who these men were, and, as well as why they were universally hated, what impact this hatred and resistance had on Irish rural society during a time of change and catastrophe. As such, this book breaks new ground in a neglected—perhaps even taboo—area of study, both in Irish and British historiography. That this subject is relatively unexplored by historians is perhaps not surprising, given the unique position held by the agent in Irish history and popular collective memory, a position almost as unpopular as that of the landowner, particularly in the period considered by this excellent volume, which includes the catastrophe of the Great Irish Famine. Clearly, land agents in Ireland were in a precarious situation in either predicting or mitigating the effects of the potato blight on the many tenants they were tasked with looking after, and indeed, they were more often than not the instruments of the hated clearance policies that came into the wake of the blight. For this, they have never been forgiven—but this is a judgement fair, and can be nuanced.

This is one of the central questions addressed by Reilly’s book. The subject matter is so broad and demands so much by way of pioneering archival research that this book, to its credit, is self to a consideration of the patterns of activity in King’s County (modern Offaly). This is one of the most impressive aspects of the book; a glance at the bibliography will indicate to any reader the range of material consulted, not least the geographical range, given the significant cohort of absentee landowners in King’s Country, including the Bowes-Dowshire family. Although voluminous, estate records can be challenging for the historian, but what they demand in stamina and selectivity is amply repaid by the detailed and nuanced picture of the rural past that can be built upon them.

Reilly’s use and application of these sources is confident and assured, and the reader trusts they are in good hands. Chapters one and two give the reader a valuable understanding of the geographical context of King’s County, and the broader position of the land agent in Ireland in the early nineteenth century, as well as the range of property, policies and patterns of the market. Chapter three sets the agent’s position in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the shape of the estate management policies in Ireland, their role in the Irish land agent: the challenges and problems they faced before the Famine; agents and their role in Irish political life, with a fascinating look of how they operated the levers of change and power locally; and, lastly, agents and agricultural and industrial “improvement.” One of the most interesting insights of this study is the fact that violence against land agents was almost unique to Ireland, certainly in the core of the book and take us through the tragedy and catastrophe of the Great Irish Famine, how agents acted in a wide variety of circumstances, the political structure, the motivations were seemingly various—from local feuds, to political corruption, to the rejection of new estate policies such as rent increases or the policing of subdivision of land. However, the stereotype of a wronged, furious peasantry attacking the land agent is only partly correct; the middlemen, many of whom also came under pressure from new estate management policies, also had reason enough to desist the land agent.

Chapters six to eight form the emotional consequences of the Famine, but was already well entrenched in the pre-Famine period, with some agents surviving multiple attempts on their lives. The motivations were seemingly various—from local feuds, to political corruption, to the rejection of new estate policies such as rent increases or the policing of subdivision of land. However, the stereotype of a wronged, furious peasantry attacking the land agent is only partly correct; the middlemen, many of whom also came under pressure from new estate management policies, also had reason enough to desist the land agent.

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This is what makes this research so valuable, not just to historians of Ireland, but much further afield. Reilly’s analysis is startling; he is able to build a picture of these men working and living in King’s County, and the wider role and impact on the fortunes and fates of the landed agents were managing. As this chapter shows, in some cases this meant managed decline and extinction, as generational debt and economic atrophy spelled the end for some estates. Fascinatingly, some agents were able to sell through this wreckage and build their own landed empires, picking up estates for a song from the Incumbered Estates Court. Again, perhaps community memory of some agents is misplaced on the landed classes in Ireland, Scotland and further afield in England, to provide scholars with a rich contextual picture from which to make broader conclusions about the experience of the Irish land agents compared to, say, his lowland Scottish equivalent? How does his story fit into the wider debates about the decline and fall of the landed classes in the nineteenth century? And how far do his position and actions reflect the wider social, economic and political changes taking place in rural society across Europe?

Second, a key theme in the discussion of rural society in Ireland, and elsewhere, must be that of deference in social and class relations. Reilly touches upon this controv ersial issue briefly, and it might be misleadingly expanded upon. Although much of the picture uncovered in this volume confirms the unmitigated, unrest and resistance to landed power in rural Ireland, this was not the whole story. On some estates, land