

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, using the Fenian *Irish People* and Ford's *Irish World* as brief case studies. The Irish in Australia and their press receive, however, relatively little attention in this chapter, completing their slow eclipse in the book after Chapter Two. It would have been interesting and helpful if McMahon could have offered some substantial analysis of Irish-Australian nationalism and journalism

after mid-century, particularly after the last of the leading Young Irelanders, Charles Gavan Duffy, emigrated there in 1856. At numerous points in the book, I was also left wondering how the experiences of Irish migrants in Canada compared or connected to those in the United States and Australia.

In total, McMahon's study demonstrates that nineteenth-century Irish global nationalism was an eminently flexible, multivalent discourse, operating simultaneously at the local, national, and global levels while championing a vision of ethnic solidarity and civic pluralism. The chief vehicle for exploring and contesting the various aspects of Irishness was a popular press that was thoroughly transnational in its outlook and distribution, creating in Mc-

Mahon's words "a borderless reading public" (181). As he also reveals, beginning with the *Nation* in the 1840s this international conversation was deeply concerned with issues of race and nation. The robust debates on the character and future of the Celtic race in America and Australia naturally involved their relationship with not just Anglo-Saxons, but also people of color. Although McMahon does recover some lost voices espousing racial equality in this period, on the whole he finds, as have others examining anti-imperial rhetoric in the Irish press, that Irish support for the rights and freedoms of nonwhite peoples were generally predicated on the ability of journalists to identify some parallel between their struggles and the

Irish fight for independence. The Irish were of course just the leading edge of a massive wave of European peoples washing on America's shores in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as the spread of modern global capitalism disrupted and refashioned one traditional society after another. But the influence of the Irish, perhaps, exceeds even their considerable numbers, as they gave the first real test of republican principles long taken for granted by a largely homogenous white America. By expanding the contours of citizenship as McMahon describes, they played a critical role in how their adopted country received and integrated those that followed them. •

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## 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 came to Ireland in great numbers from Asia, Africa, eastern Europe, and Brazil during the Celtic Tiger boom). In fact, Ireland has been multicultural for centuries. I am not simply referring to the fact that three major demographics have jostled for power on this island over the past four centuries (Irish Gaelic Catholics, "Anglo-Irish" Anglicans, and Ulster Scots Presbyterians) or even that, prior to that, the Gaels wrestled with the Tuatha Dé Danann, the Vikings, and the Normans/ "Old English." I am talking about the fact that, for centuries, small but important subcultures have existed in Ireland. Irish Jews, Irish Quakers, Palatine Germans, French Huguenots, and Irish Travellers (to name only a handful of groups) have played significant roles in the formation of the Ireland we know today, and most of these subcultures—with the obvious exception of Travellers, a distinct ethnic minority who first broke off from the settled Irish community centuries ago—can trace their roots to other countries. The presence of these groups within Ireland, together with the country's Diasporic ties to Britain, the Americas, and Australasia, prove that Ireland's history is much more "transnational" than is usually credited. Indeed, an awareness of cultural diversity within Ireland and of the island's longstanding ties to other nations (through emigration, inward migration, and sea trade) show that narrow conceptions of Irish identity propagated by "Irish-Irelanders" are wilfully and woefully ignorant, not to mention bigoted.

### Amanda Tucker and Moira E. Casey, Editors.

WHERE MOTLEY IS WORN:  
TRANSNATIONAL IRISH LITERATURES  
CORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. Hbk €39.

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 theories regarding Ireland's genetic and cultural ties to North Africa or overlook isolated historical figures such as Tony Small

(Lord Edward Fitzgerald's black servant and confidante), a perusal of important figures from Irish public life since the early twentieth century reveals that the Irish population has been racially diverse for much longer than is usually credited. Among those raised in Ireland prior to the arrival of the New Irish, we find politicians such as Éamon de Valera (half-Cuban) and Leo Varadkar (half-Indian), sports figures such as Paul McGrath (half-Nigerian) and Jason Sherlock (half-Chinese), and musicians such as Phil Lynott (half-Guayanese) and Samatha Mumba (half-Zambian). (On a less happy note, there is the racist verbal abuse that some of these figures have endured, and the appalling treatment suffered by mixed-race children in Irish orphanages during the mid-twentieth century, as highlighted in a recent story in the *Irish Times*.) Brendan Behan wrote about the Jews, Italians, Africans, Poles, and Latin Americans he met (or, in some cases, knew from childhood) in his native Dublin, and writers such as James Joyce, Frank O'Connor, and David Marcus produced literary works centrally featuring Irish Jewish characters (a number of whom intermarry with Irish Catholic and Irish Protestant characters).

In the Diaspora, the Irish willingness to mix with other peoples has led to the invention of tap dancing, bluegrass music, and Australian rules football. And the list of famous people who have expressed pride in their Irish ancestry includes many people who (in the estimation of Irish-Irelanders) do not "look Irish." Muhammed Ali, Billie Holiday, Che Guevara, Anthony Quinn, and Mariah Carey are only the most famous examples.

Thankfully, the scholars who have put together and contributed to *Where Motley is Worn: Transnational Irish Literatures*, a new essay collection from Cork University Press, are fully aware of these frequently ignored histories. The essays in this important and insightful volume amply demonstrate that Ireland's ties to other countries are profound and go back centuries.

Interestingly, editors Amanda Tucker and Moira E. Casey chose to place the essays in reverse chronological order, starting with essays on contemporary topics and then gradually moving back in time to the early eighteenth century. This arrange-

ment works because it places Ireland's contemporary struggles with questions of identity and citizenship front and center. Indeed, one of the most important reasons for remembering Ireland's frequently ignored "transnational" histories is that it gives us a deeper understanding of the country's enduringly problematic relationship with diversity. Such an improved understanding will help us figure out how to transform Ireland from a multicultural society (in which different groups—including Protestant communities resident in Ireland for centuries—are kept socially isolated from one another) to an intercultural society (in which dialogue and cultural exchange enrich all of the nation's constituent cultures, including the majority—culturally Gaelic Catholic—one).

After the Introduction, in which Tucker and Casey effectively define their terms and set out their objectives, there is a lively chapter from Nigerian-Irish playwright Bisi 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). Adigun notes that these adaptations have been of much greater interest to mainstream Irish audiences than the original plays he has written that simply reflect what life is like for Nigerian-Irish people. As Adigun recognizes—from bitter experience—"New Irish" playwrights struggle to interest mainstream Irish audiences in their subaltern subject matter. History shows that it takes time for newly-arrived migrant groups to produce writers who can pen popular works that simultaneously explain, critique, and celebrate their unique "hyphenated" subcultures—without exploiting their source material for laughs or cheap sympathy. However, as an important new anthology (*Staging Intercultural Ireland*, edited by Charlotte McIvor and Matthew Spangler) confirms, writers from Ireland's "hyphenated" subcultures are already striving to produce artistically ambitious works which reflect their communities—in the way that, for example, Eugene O'Neill's plays reveal truths about Irish-America or Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction captures the struggles of Indian-Americans. These initial efforts by "New Irish" writers have been, in many

cases, fascinating and, in all cases, very welcome.

After Adigun's contribution comes Mary McGlynn's chapter on representations of Latin America and Hispanic-Americans in Irish fiction since the mid-1990s. Her insightful analysis shows that the Latino characters are slowly marginalized in each text as the authors reveal that they are primarily interested in questions around Irish identity and in affirming "white" perspectives on upward social mobility. Abby Palko follows with a chapter on Kate McCafferty's historical novel, *Testimony of an Irish Slave Girl* (2003). Palko accurately assesses the book's strengths and weakness—and rightly 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 Pádraig 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 decriminalisation, Irish LGBTs had to make connections to international gay culture and rights initiatives, because their sexuality was often condemned or wilfully ignored at home.

Kelli Molloy's perceptive analysis of Julia O'Faolain's novel *Three Lovers* (1971) centers on a trope commonly found in twentieth-century Irish literature: the idea that 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 Bulfin's short story collection, *Tales of the Pampas* (1900). Like Bulfin himself, the unnamed Irish-Argentinean narrator of these stories feels an attraction to and (at times) a political sympathy with the Argentinean *gauchos*; however, he also frequently regards his Irish "whiteness" as superior to the "miscegenated" ancestry of the swarthier parts of the Argentinean population.

As the editors of this collection recog-

nize, one of the benefits of studying Irish history and literature in a more globally-minded way is that such an approach challenges our narrow-minded insistence on Ireland's cultural and historical uniqueness. In a fascinating chapter comparing Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) with Polish writer Maria Wirtemberska's *Malvina, or the Heart's Intuition* (1816), Katarzyna Bartoszyńska shows that Ireland's reluctance during the nineteenth century to fully embrace literary realism (and its desire to rehabilitate romance instead) was not unique: it found a parallel

in another colonized European country, Poland.

Sonja Lawrenson's chapter on imperial interrelations in Maria Edgeworth's *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802) includes brilliant and subtle analysis of the seemingly simple but actually complex short story "Little Dominick." Lawrenson (who is always excellent on Edgeworth) shows that the Longford author was well aware of the contradictions at the heart of the relationship between England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and between the United Kingdom and its colonial possessions

overseas.

The volume concludes with Andrew Kincaid's analysis of Irish works about pirates from the early eighteenth century. Kincaid shows that these pirate narratives emerge just as actual piracy around the Irish coast stops (or at least slows down), and he persuasively argues that the Irish pirate heroes from these works represent a subconscious reassertion of personal freedom and defiance of British law in the wake of the Act of Union.

In the end, if I have any quibble with

this volume, it is that a few of the contributors are overly harsh in their criticisms of writers and critics who, I believe, have the best of intentions when it comes to Irish multiculturalism/interculturalism (such as Roddy Doyle, Joseph O'Connor, and Declan Kiberd). This is a minor caveat, however, because this is an indisputably fine collection—and required reading for scholars interested in Ireland's longstanding "transnational" connections. •

—Moore Institute NUI Galway

## Tackling the Taboos

BY ANNIE TINDLEY,

**I**N 1845, JOHN MAYNE, land agent for Sir St. George Ralph Gore in King's County, 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 daring and atrocious murders carried out in this blood-stained county" (136). No one was ever convicted of the murder.

### Ciarán Reilly

*THE IRISH LAND AGENT, 1830-60:  
THE CASE OF KING'S COUNTY*  
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 unsuccessful 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 in the wake of the blight. For this, they have never been forgiven—but is this judgement fair, and can it 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 volume limits itself 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 County, including the Downshire 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 wider role and position of the land agent in Ireland in the early nineteenth century, as well as the fortunes of their employers—the great and small landlords, both resident and absentee—setting the scene for the rest of the volume. This highlights a wider point as to the value of this study; it focuses on a relatively neglected area of Ireland, rebalancing the weight of scholarly work on the west of the country with a different perspective. Indeed, one of the key themes that comes out of this book is the complexity of the picture, the lack of homogeneity and the danger in attempting to make generalizations about Irish rural society as a whole. Until research is completed into land agents in other parts of the country, we lack a full, comparative picture, and we must hope this volume will generate further studies in other localities.

Chapters three to five take us through the three great themes of the life and times of 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 not only a product of the desperate times 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 part of the picture; the middlemen, many of whom also came under pressure from new estate management policies, also had reasons enough to despise the land agent.

Chapters six to eight form the emotional



core of the book and take us through the tragedy and catastrophe of the Great Irish Famine, how agents reacted and how those reactions shaped the lives (and deaths) of thousands of ordinary people. As Reilly makes clear, sometimes agents were simply that: agents of their employers and tasked with carrying out particular policies. However, they were the men on the spot, advising sometimes absentee owners on the best course of action, and in chapter seven, we see this in detail, through Reilly's meticulous research in long-neglected archives, as he discusses the ever-contentious issue of eviction and clearance during the Famine. The so-called "broom syndrome" of agents keen to clear land of destitute and starving tenantry was certainly much in evidence in King's County, but those agents working and living in King's County were not entirely bereft of sympathy, and some worked hard to ameliorate the worst of the impact of the Famine, even if, in their own minds, this translated into convincing their employers to fund emigration packages.

Chapter seven completes the circle with an analysis of the murder of land agents in this period, a pattern of violence that is almost unique to Ireland, certainly in the

British, perhaps even the European context. 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 astonishing rural violence well before the Famine, although unsurprisingly, it spiked during those terrible years. The startling picture of agents accepting almost daily death threats and in some cases, escaping multiple attempts on their lives is beautifully drawn here, and aside from great history, is great writing too.

The last chapter considers the immediate aftermath of the Famine and its impact on the fortunes and fates of the landed estates 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 sift 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 making good on the suffering of others in this way has contributed to their reviled position in Irish history.

Three key themes emerge from this volume, at least for this reader, and are worth further discussion and research in other parts of Ireland, building on the sterling work done here by Reilly.

First, as well as the broader Irish experience of land agents, it is essential that further comparative work is done on the experiences, training, careers and philosophies of land agents in England, Wales, Scotland and further afield in Europe, to provide scholars with a rich contextual picture from which to make broader conclusions. How unusual was 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 any discussion of rural society in Ireland, and elsewhere, must be that of deference in social and class relations. Reilly touches upon this controversial issue briefly, and it might be usefully expanded upon. Although much of the picture uncovered in this volume confirms the unrest, violence and resistance to landed power in rural Ireland, this was not the whole story. On some estates, land