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Title: 'Isn't it your own country?': The stranger in nineteenth-century Irish literature

Date: 2004

Originally published in: Yearbook of English Studies

Example citation: Fegan, M. (2004). 'Isn't it your own country?': The stranger in nineteenth-century Irish literature. *Yearbook of English Studies*, 34, 31-45.

Version of item: Published version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/337189>

# 'Isn't it your own country?': The Stranger in Nineteenth-Century Irish Literature

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*Chester*

On his first day in Dublin in 1842, William Makepeace Thackeray was astonished at the announcement in the *Morning Register* of the consecration of the Bishop of Aureliopolis by the Pope. As he remarks in his *Irish Sketch Book*, published the following year: 'Such an announcement sounds quite strange in *English*, and in your own country as it were; or isn't it your own country?'<sup>1</sup> This is a provocative and disturbing question for the English traveller in Ireland, who is torn between a strong sense of possession and an even stronger sense of alienation. The Act of Union of 1801 ostensibly made England and Ireland one country, but in 1812 Edward Wakefield complained: 'We have descriptions and histories of the most distant part of the globe [...] but of Ireland, a country under our own government, we have little that is authentic.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the tendency of travellers in Ireland is to bring their experience of foreign parts to bear on this exotic place: the scenery resembles Spain, Switzerland, or Germany; Irish cabins are like Indian wigwams, Eskimo igloos, or Hottentot kraals — only worse; the people are similar to the Spanish, native Americans, Canadians, negro slaves, Lettes, Estonians, Finlanders, Russians, Hungarians — in fact, to any nation except the English. The English Quaker William Bennet, travelling in Ireland in 1847, the worst year of the Great Famine, has to remind his readers that this is happening to 'a people, not in the centre of Africa; the steppes of Asia, the backwoods of America, — not some newly-discovered tribe of South Australia, or among the Polynesian Indians, — not Hottentots, bushmen, or Esquimeaux, — neither Mahomedans nor Pagans, — but some millions of our own Christian nation at home'.<sup>3</sup> Ireland, for the English traveller, is uncanny precisely in Freud's use of the term (in his essay 'Das Unheimliche') as something secretly familiar which has undergone repression and returned from it; in fact, the English word 'uncanny' is an imprecise translation of the German *unheimlich*, which literally means

<sup>1</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), II, 155.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Constantia Maxwell, *The Stranger in Ireland from the Reign of Elizabeth to the Great Famine* (London: Cape, 1954), p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> *Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland* (London: Gilpin; Dublin: Curry, 1847), p. 138.

'unhomely'.<sup>4</sup> Ireland is both familiar and exotic, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, for the English traveller. The problem is further complicated for Thackeray by his familiarity with and rejection of Irishness in his personal life. He told the Irish nationalist Charles Gavan Duffy that he had 'lived a good deal among Irish people in London and elsewhere',<sup>5</sup> but the most potent manifestation of the *unheimlich* in Thackeray's personal life, the most repressed and 'unhomely' aspect, was home, and this was inextricably linked to his Irish experience. Thackeray was married to an Irishwoman, Isabella Shawe, the daughter of an army officer, whom he met in Paris. Four years into their marriage, and after the births of three children (following each of which Isabella Thackeray suffered what would now be recognized as severe postnatal depression) and the death of their infant daughter Jane, Isabella descended into madness. She did so in spectacular fashion: in September 1840, as the Thackerays travelled by steamship from London to Cork so that Thackeray could begin the tour he intended to write up as *The Irish Sketch Book*, Isabella twice tried to commit suicide by leaping into the sea. Not surprisingly, Thackeray was forced to abandon his tour to make arrangements for his wife; when Thackeray returned to Ireland in 1842, he had placed his wife in a Paris lunatic asylum. Thackeray's mad wife was an open secret in literary London, but not open enough to have reached Yorkshire; when Charlotte Brontë (herself half-Irish) dedicated to her hero Thackeray *Jane Eyre*, a novel which has at its heart the mad, racially other Bertha Rochester, Thackeray was further humiliated by the gossip suggesting 'Currer Bell' must be his mistress, and Bertha must represent the mad, racially other Isabella.

One might expect Thackeray to have buried his interest in Ireland after this traumatic experience, but it is resurrected in his books; he followed *The Irish Sketch Book* with a novel, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), his earliest full-length fictional production, set in eighteenth-century Ireland, and Irish characters and themes recur in his work. But much of what he wrote on Ireland was negative; *Barry Lyndon* vilifies the Irish squirearchy in the person of the arch-liar, criminal, womanizing Redmond Barry, while *The Irish Sketch Book* alienated Irish readers. Anthony Trollope tells the story of an Irish coachman who flourished a copy, crying 'You hate us, Mr Thackeray'; Thackeray replied: 'God help me, when all I ever loved was Irish!' The dividing line between love and hate, familiar and strange, home and unhomely, English and Irish, seems easily breached. Trollope himself spent almost twenty years in Ireland, began and ended his literary life preoccupied with Irish themes, and frequently returned to Irish settings and characters — his first and last

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *Sigmund Freud: Art and Literature*, ed. by Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Andrew Sanders's introduction to William Makepeace Thackeray, *Barry Lyndon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. vii.

novels, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and *The Landleaguers*, are sombre examinations of Irish agrarian violence. In spite of the fact that the years of Trollope's residence coincided with some of the most fraught in Irish history (the Repeal campaign, Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings and his trial and imprisonment for sedition, the abortive 1848 Rising after which many leading nationalists fled the country or were transported, the Great Famine, during which one million people died and another million emigrated), Trollope was extremely happy in Ireland, crediting the country with the transformation of his life and prospects: 'From the day on which I set my foot in Ireland all those evils went away from me. Since that time who has had a happier life than mine?'<sup>6</sup> He came to identify himself strongly with the Irish and, even after he returned to England, the bond remained unbroken: 'When I meet an Irishman abroad', he said, 'I always recognize in him more of a kinsman than I do in an Englishman.'<sup>7</sup> But, in a way, no matter how allied the Englishman feels personally to the Irish or Ireland, his responses seem structured and conditioned by two things: the need to align his opinion with those of fellow English travellers, and (something he has no control over) Irish perception of the Englishman as a stranger — in other words, his consciousness that even as he others the Irish, they are othering him in his turn. In the first edition of *The Nation*, the newspaper of the Young Ireland party, in October 1842, Charles Gavan Duffy called on Irishmen to scrutinize the English:

But we must open our eyes and look our domineering neighbour in the face — we must inspect him, and endeavour to discover what kind of a fellow he is. Not that we ought to do him injustice — not that we ought to run into opposite extremes — not, above all, that we ought to take universal England to be fairly represented by the disagreeable person who sometimes condescends to visit *Hireland* — a fat man, with his head in the clouds and his brains in his belly, looking the incarnation of self-importance, and saying, as plainly as plum-pudding countenance can speak — 'I am a Great Briton.' JOHN BULL is as much a better fellow than this animal, as he is worse than what our shameful sycophancy would make him.<sup>8</sup>

There was a huge demand for Irish travel narratives in the pre-Famine period; Thackeray had wanted to write an Italian travel book, but his publishers, Chapman and Hall, had ordered him to Ireland instead. This demand was not simply due to increased tourism in Ireland, though partly as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, added to the greater facility of travel provided by steamships and the expanding railways, travel in Ireland was becoming more attractive. The most cited reason for writing a travel narrative of Ireland was Irish poverty. Spurred on by the Act of Union, the government scrutinized Irish poverty obsessively, British newspapers were full of Irish distress and unrest, and journalists were sent to report from the scene,

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1883), 1, 80.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in N. John Hall, *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, 3 vols (Derry: Field Day and Faber, 1991), 1, 1249.

as if from a disaster zone. This contemporary obsession with the state of Ireland is not purely altruistic: it stems from the fear of a prosperous Protestant nation that the geographic and political proximity of a poor, populous Catholic country would prove a serious economic and social liability. As Thomas Carlyle remarked in his 1839 essay 'Chartism', the steamships that brought the middle-class pleasure-seekers to Ireland also encouraged more Irish migrant labourers to seek work in England, prompting fears that English workers would be undercut, and living standards would decline to the Irish level: perhaps Ireland would become uncomfortably *heimlich*.<sup>9</sup> The travel narrative in this period became a vehicle for the expression of British anxiety about Ireland.

There are several levels of racial definition going on in these narratives: first, poverty tends to be identified as a purely Irish phenomenon. Lord John Manners, travelling in Ireland in 1846, asserted that 'in no part of England, however out of the way, have I seen so much squalor and dreary discomfort as is to be seen within ten minutes' drive of the viceroy's lodge'.<sup>10</sup> Yet Manners, an advocate of factory reform, had toured the industrial districts of Lancashire with Disraeli and George Smythe two years previously, and must have witnessed horrendous conditions similar to those described in contemporary industrial novels, such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. Secondly, British travellers often define themselves as English, even when they are not: Thomas Campbell Foster, who like his fellow travellers in Ireland, Henry Inglis, Alexander Somerville, and Thomas Carlyle, was Scottish, wrote: 'Every Englishman, fresh from his own country, where almost every yard of it, through the length and breadth of the land, bears evidence of capital invested and of the application of intelligent industry, can scarcely avoid being filled with regret at seeing, as he traverses Ireland, so fine a country, so full of opportunities of improvement, so lamentably neglected.'<sup>11</sup> Englishness becomes less a badge of nationality and more a polar opposition to Irishness, which is everything these travellers want to reject. Thirdly, most travellers seem to agree that the Irish are a nation of liars. The reason they are in Ireland in the first place is because they cannot trust the Irish truthfully to represent the state of Ireland, and they need to witness it with their own eyes. Even then, they are unconvinced: the German traveller Johann Kohl wrote: 'Travellers in Ireland cannot speak too often of the extreme misery of the Irish poor, if it be only to confute those among the English who will not believe in the existence of this misery, and who even ridicule those who speak of it on the evidence of their own eyes.'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 'Chartism', in *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> *Notes of an Irish Tour* (London: Ollivier, 1849), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Campbell Foster, *Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846), p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> J. G. Kohl, *Ireland, Scotland, and England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1844), pp. 115–16.

There is no doubt that many of these travellers encountered Irish people who lied to them, for a variety of reasons. Apart from a desire to fool the outsider, there were incentives for misleading the stranger; Robert Scally asserts that in the Irish situation, it was in a tenant's interest to keep his landlord in the dark about his financial affairs, and an element of caution was understandable and in a sense admirable: "Their means of resistance — conspiracy, pretense, foot-dragging, and obfuscation — were the only ones ordinarily available to them, "weapons of the weak" like those employed by defeated and colonized peoples everywhere."<sup>13</sup> Travellers were often mistaken for poor-law inspectors; again, a bit of flexibility with the truth could mean greater relief for the area, and in times of hardship this could lead to animosity: the *Illustrated London News* artist James Mahony was almost lynched by a group of women angry that he would not promise to get their husbands and sons jobs on the relief works. Perhaps they were right to be angry and anxious: the reports of Mahony and others on areas such as Skibbereen and Schull diverted relief to these areas, and it is likely that more remote areas not visited by British travellers fared worse during the Famine. Their nationality, status, and otherness gave an authenticity and power to their statements that the authentic Irish could not achieve. When the satirist Jacob Omnium, who wrote for *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle*, visited Ireland as agent for the British Association for the Relief of the Destitute Irish in 1847, he wrote to *The Times* detailing the misery he witnessed: 'I have found the naked bodies of women on the roadside. [...] I have met mothers carrying about dead infants in their arms until they were putrid, refusing to bury them, in the hope that the offensive sight might wring charity from the callous townspeople sufficient to protract for a while the lives of the other children at home.'<sup>14</sup> The following day, *The Times* praised Omnium's letter for its 'strong contrast with the generality of an account purely Irish'; in other words, even though Omnium's account matches up with reports from the Irish, the fact he is a detached outsider counts in his favour. But Omnium was not an outsider — he actually was 'purely Irish'; his real name was Matthew James Higgins, and he was born at Benown Castle, County Meath. And he was not the only Irish journalist working in the supposedly anti-Irish English press; indeed, given his name, James Mahony must have an Irish connection, though it is unclear from his reports. John Thadeus Delane, editor of *The Times* in the 1840s, when it was being lambasted for its racist attitudes to the Irish, was of Irish extraction, and *Punch's* chief cartoonist John Leech, who contributed damning indictments of O'Connell, Young Ireland, and Irish ingratitude, was Irish on his father's side. Thackeray, who was immersed in the world of London journalism, describes this milieu in

<sup>13</sup> *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, and Emigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1847, p. 6.

*Pendennis* (1848): ‘Many of our journals are officered by Irish gentlemen, and their gallant brigade does the penning among us, as their ancestors used to transact the fighting in Europe; and engage under many a flag, to be good friends when the battle is over.’<sup>15</sup> The Irish writer John Banim, who lived in London in the 1820s and contributed to a range of periodicals, confirms Thackeray’s impression: ‘Some of the editors, and sub-editors, of your daily press, a majority of its reporters, and a good many of the contributors to your periodicals, are Irishmen, mostly real Pats — I mean Papists, as you call them.’<sup>16</sup>

L. Perry Curtis traces the way that the Irish were simianized and Africanized in nineteenth-century comic art and elsewhere — Charles Kingsley famously registered his discomfort at the sight of ‘white chimpanzees’ in Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Curtis argues: ‘Most respectable Victorians believed in a natural opposition between an Anglo-Saxon “Us” and a Gaelic or Celtic “Them,” which was reinforced by the great religious divide between Protestantism and (Roman) Catholicism’ (p. xii). But given that many of those involved in constructing this dichotomy were themselves Irish, I would argue that it is also a case of a subtle negotiation of racial and class categories where the Anglo-Saxon does not always occupy the privileged position: the opposition between an Anglo-Irish ‘Us’ and a Gaelic or Celtic ‘Them’, or a Gaelic or Celtic ‘Us’ and Anglo-Irish ‘Them’; and also between a Gaelic, Celtic, and Anglo-Irish ‘Us’ and Anglo-Saxon ‘Them’. Indeed, many of the cartoons in *Punch*, rather than promoting the radical difference of English and Irish, instead promote the idea of family: *Punch*’s ‘Irish Cinderella’ even does so at the expense of England and Scotland. In several cartoons, the simianization of the Irish seems more to do with class or politics than race; an idealized Hibernia can be divorced from, even protected from her people (or a certain section of them). A survey of the year 1847 elicited admissions both of alterity and relationship from *The Times*: ‘It will be difficult to most of our readers to feel near akin with a class which at the best wallows in pigsties, and hugs the most brutish degradations. But when we take the sum of the British people, the “ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed” children of the Celt count with VICTORIA’S own children.’<sup>18</sup> For Irish journalists writing in England, the problem of identification must have been even more complex than that faced by the largely English middle-class readership of *The Times*.

This discomfort and loss of national identity can be seen in the travel narratives of Irish writers. Given their nationality, Irish travellers have to work even harder to prove their authenticity. Caesar Otway declared that as

<sup>15</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis*, ed. by John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 386.

<sup>16</sup> John Banim, *The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century: A Novel*, 3 vols (London: Colburn, 1828), III, 109.

<sup>17</sup> *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> *The Times*, 3 January 1848, p. 4.

a 'native' he was 'competent to afford information on subjects not exactly within the convenient reach of an American or Briton', but as a 'native', he was reluctant to adopt theories:

Why, if I were some English, American, or Continental tourist, who came to view our country through the coloured glasses of his own pre-conceived theory, I might have at once laid down the cause, and the cure for all this. But as I am a poor ignorant Irishman, who, of course, knows nothing of my own country, why I hesitate before I state the gnosis, the diagnosis, or remedy for this disease.<sup>19</sup>

However, Otway was not recognized as an Irishman by the people whose poverty he commented on. He described the Irish-speaking boatmen of Killery Bay as 'very much out of humour at being obliged to leave their potato planting to go rowing a pair of idle Sassenach [English] fools, as they evidently considered us to be' (*Tour in Connaught*, p. 273). Samuel and Anna Maria Hall, both Irish-born, were scolded by an irate Irishman in the Devil's Glen in Wicklow:

You foreyners pass through Ireland, and instead of keeping your eyes and ears open, you want to bring everything — leaping torrents, mountains, hills, and all — down to the level of your own flat country. You believe nothing, and want to understand everything. [...] You English want to understand all about Ireland, and yet you never understood an Irishman.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that one Irishman could not recognize another indicates the gulf between the classes in Ireland, and the possibility that upper-class Irish suffered culture shock as often as their English counterparts. This loss of national identity, the feeling of being least at home while at home, must have been profoundly disturbing for the Irish writer, who finds himself a stranger in his own land — particularly as that land has a habit of figuring the stranger as English. In his song 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old', Thomas Moore, acknowledged in the early nineteenth century as the Irish national poet, exhibits mid-century nostalgia for the pre-conquest era:

Let Erin remember the days of old,  
 Ere her faithless sons betray'd her;  
 When Malachi wore the collar of gold,  
 Which he won from her proud invader,  
 When her kings, with standard of green unfurl'd,  
 Led the Red-Branch Knights to danger; —  
 Ere the emerald gem of the western world  
 Was set in the crown of a stranger.<sup>21</sup>

For nineteenth-century Irish nationalists there was only one 'proud invader' to be ejected — the English. W. B. Yeats reflects the troping of the English

<sup>19</sup> Caesar Otway, *A Tour in Connaught* (Dublin: Curry, 1839), p. vi.; *Sketches in Erris and Tyrrawly* (Dublin: Curry, 1841), p. 315.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Carter Hall and Anna Maria Hall, *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character, &c.*, 3 vols (London: How, 1846), II, 248.

<sup>21</sup> 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old', *Field Day Anthology*, I, 1061.



as the stranger in his allegorical play *Cathleen Ni Hoolihan* (1902): Cathleen, a traditional personification of Ireland, calls young Irish men to help her reclaim her four beautiful green fields (symbolizing the four provinces of Ireland); when asked 'What was it put you astray', she answers 'Too many strangers in the house.'<sup>22</sup> Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*, aggravated by the Englishman Haines, who seems to be displacing him in his home and the affections of Buck Mulligan, echoes this: 'Gaptoothed Kathleen, her four beautiful green fields, the stranger in the house [...]. We feel in England. Penitent thief. Gone.'<sup>23</sup> But in the immediate post-Union period, Irish writers, preoccupied with their own identity, aware that in their metropolitan, English-speaking, English-governed world they are indeed strangers to both the English and the vast majority of the Irish, begin to reformulate and renegotiate their identity, reclaiming the figure of the Anglo-Irishman as the internal stranger by bringing him home.

Anglo-Irish literature is supposed to have begun with the Union, specifically with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*; but while it is true that Irish fiction, until the publication of Carleton's *Traits and Stories*, was published in London, as Joep Leerssen points out, there was a thriving market for Irish poetry, translation, and antiquarian work in Dublin even before the Union.<sup>24</sup> Pre-Union Irish literature can even register a remarkable self-confidence: in her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, published in 1798, Charlotte Brooke writes: 'The British Muse is not yet informed that she has an elder sister in this isle; let us introduce them to each other!'<sup>25</sup> While Brooke is suggesting that Britain could profit most by the relationship, Anglo-Irish fiction of the early nineteenth century agonizes about the best way to represent the Irish people in order to improve their standing with the English — it is a one-way introduction. The key problem is audience: if your novel is published in England, and the majority of your audience is English, it is imperative that you make your Irish characters attractive, authentic, and understandable, and that you avoid contention — alienating your core audience is not good for business. As a result of this need to placate and explain, Anglo-Irish novels in the post-Union period suffer a crisis of identity; loaded with long and detailed footnotes to explain and authenticate Irish customs, and to argue the case for an Irish civilization, in some cases the plot ceases to be important, and becomes the vehicle for the paratext. The author is distanced from the text and, by association, from their country; Leerssen argues: 'Nineteenth-century exotericism boils down to the paradoxical dissociation of the Irish author from his/her Irish subject-matter. The destinatory vector towards an

<sup>22</sup> *Cathleen ni Hoolihan*, in *W. B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 250.

<sup>23</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 177, 179.

<sup>24</sup> Joep Leerssen, 'On the Treatment of Irishness in Romantic Anglo-Irish Fiction', *Irish University Review*, 20.2 (1990), 251–63.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Leerssen, pp. 255–56.

English audience is so strong that the author no longer identifies with the country which is represented, but becomes an intermediary, an exteriorized, detached observer" (p. 258). Estranged and marginalized by their texts and audience, early-nineteenth-century Irish authors begin to question the benefits they reap from this relationship. Significantly, several novels in the post-Union period take the form of a travel narrative, and it is possible to see an evolution in the figure of the stranger from English, to Anglo-Irish, to Irish — from the colonizer coming to terms with his ancestors' colonialism, to the Anglo-Irish landlord taking responsibility for his land and tenants, to the Irishman embracing his national identity and forging his own national destiny.

Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan) literally forged her own national identity. Owenson's celebration of all things Celtic masked the fact that her authentic credentials were dubious: her mother was an English Protestant, and her father made a living playing a stage Irishman. Owenson submerged her Englishness, choosing to embrace her father's cultural nationalism; for Owenson, as for her heroine Glorvina, Irishness is identified only with those of Gaelic or Celtic origin: "She will frequently say, "O! such a one is a true Milesian!" — or, "he is a descendant of the English Irish;" — or, "they are new people — we hear nothing of them till the wars of Cromwell".<sup>26</sup> And yet, because *The Wild Irish Girl* was published five years after the Act of Union, and because Owenson evidently feared the true Milesians were dying away, she paradoxically advocates the destruction of this Gaelic world in the assimilation of English and Irish.

*The Wild Irish Girl* is told in a series of letters from the English hero, Horatio, to his friend, J. D. Horatio has been banished to his father's Irish estates for youthful follies, including a dalliance with a married woman and running up debts large enough to put him in prison. Horatio is a complete stranger to Ireland (in fact, his father is the first member of the family to have visited the Irish estates since the time of Cromwell) and his prejudice against the Irish is deeply ingrained: Ireland is 'a country against which I have a decided prejudice — which I suppose semi-barbarous, semi-civilized', and significantly, his preconceptions have been strengthened by reading travel literature: 'I remember, when I was a boy, meeting somewhere with the quaintly written travels of *Moryson* through Ireland [. . .]. Whenever the *Irish* were mentioned in my presence, an *Esquimaux* group circling round the fire which was to dress a dinner, or broil an enemy, was the image which presented itself to my mind' (pp. 10, 13). Bored in his isolation, Horatio wanders to his father's isolated lodge; there he learns that living in the vicinity with his beautiful daughter is a deposed Gaelic chieftain who calls himself the Prince of Inismore, and to his horror, Horatio learns that his ancestor, a Cromwellian general, had murdered the Prince's ancestor and seized his

<sup>26</sup> Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl*, ed. by Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 117.

land; the Prince now lives in isolation and poverty, resolutely refusing Horatio's father's attempts to befriend him, refusing even to hear that family's name. Horatio begins to ask himself some difficult questions about the legitimacy of his possession of the land: 'Oh! if this savage chief was generous and benevolent, as he is independent and spirited; if this daughter was amiable and intelligent, as she must be simple and unvitiated! But I dare not pursue the supposition. It is better as it is' (p. 43). The implication is that if the Prince and Glorvina turn out to be noble and civilized — as indeed they do — the land should be returned to them, but Owenson is at pains to avoid such a controversial issue, and when forced to the point, denies the necessity of a reappropriation of the land in a footnote: she claims that 'the *real* descendants of those whose estates were forfeited shortly after the English invasion, and during the reigns of James the First, Oliver Cromwell and William the Third [...] consider that "The property has now been so long vested in the hands of the present proprietors that the interests of justice and utility would be more offended by dispossessing them than they could be advanced by reinstating the original owners"' (p. 189).

Horatio becomes obsessed by these remote Gaels, and determines to travel to their ruined castle incognito to catch a glimpse. He enters the territory symbolically on the anniversary of the day of the murder, and after an accident (he falls from a wall after straining to see Glorvina playing the harp) he finds himself a guest in the very castle 'where his ancestors bled under the uplifted sword of mine' (p. 42). Knowing that he cannot reveal his true identity, Horatio pretends to be Henry Mortimer, a travelling artist, and is invited to remain as Glorvina's tutor. Horatio comes under the spell of the exotic Gaels: whereas before he had mocked the pretensions of 'a simple rusticated girl, whose father calls himself a *prince*, with a *potatoe ridge* for his dominions!', he is later deeply annoyed to hear someone call the Prince Mr O'Melville, and vows never to allow anyone to call his Irish Princess Miss O'Melville. The story moves inevitably towards the marriage of the English stranger and the Irish princess, obviously symbolizing the recent Act of Union. But there is an impediment: Horatio's father has also been frequenting the castle incognito as an Irish rebel, and he has proposed and been accepted as Glorvina's husband. At a climactic scene at the altar, ending in the Prince's death, Horatio's father gives way to his son, and commends the future union not only of Glorvina and Horatio, but also of Ireland and England: 'Let the name of Inismore and M- be inseparably blended, and the distinctions of English and Irish, of protestant and catholic, for ever buried' (p. 250). While Owenson dutifully provides the happy ending, and symbolically returns the land to the Gaels through Glorvina's marriage, there are too many disturbing questions remaining for this to function as a soothing allegory of the Union. The feeble Prince dies at the revelation that he has been harbouring not one but two members of the family responsible for his ancestors' decline, and Glorvina, descending into temporary madness, asks

'Which of you murdered my father?' (p. 242). There is also the problem of the embodiment of Ireland in Glorvina; as Mary Jean Corbett argues: 'Locating the male protagonist on the side of the dominant national power, the marriage plot in these novels functions as an imperial family plot as well, constructing Ireland as a complementary but ever unequal partner in the family of Great Britain'.<sup>27</sup> The incestuousness of the love plot, with son acting as rival to father, is enhanced by the constant references to *Hamlet* throughout the novel. Perhaps most disturbing of all is that Horatio remains a stranger to the reader at the end of the novel: while the Irish have introduced themselves with all their might, we do not even know Horatio's real name — when his father says 'Let the name of Inismore and M- be inseparably blended', he is asking the impossible, because M- is unknown.

Like Owenson's, Maria Edgeworth's national identity is complicated. The child of Anglo-Irish parents, she was born in England, and lived there for the first fifteen years of her life, before moving with her father to the family estate at Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. Unlike Owenson, Edgeworth sees no need to overcompensate in embracing Irishness or romanticizing the Celts; instead, she celebrates the potential of the hybrid. Edgeworth's *The Absentee*, published in 1812, is self-consciously influenced by Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*; the hero, Lord Colambre, overcomes prejudices against the Irish he has learnt in England, and comes to love the country in the person of a woman, his cousin, Grace Nugent — significantly, 'Grace Nugent' is the title of a song by the seventeenth-century Irish harper Turlough Carolan, which Glorvina teaches to Horatio in *The Wild Irish Girl*. Like Owenson, Edgeworth is expecting an English audience, and footnotes Irish eccentricities accordingly. But the message is intended not for the English, but for Anglo-Irish absentees; Edgeworth is introducing the Irish to their own internal strangers. While Colambre passes for an Englishman, having been 'plunged into one of our great public schools',<sup>28</sup> his parents, Lord and Lady Clonbrony, certainly do not; Lady Clonbrony's attempts to pass for English are mocked not only by her acquaintances, but by the narrator. Colambre, born in Ireland but raised in England, seems to combine the best of both countries:

The sobriety of English good sense mixed most advantageously with Irish vivacity: English prudence governed, but did not extinguish, his Irish enthusiasm. But, in fact, English and Irish had not been invidiously contrasted in his mind: he had been so long resident in England, and so intimately connected with Englishmen, that he was not obvious to any of the commonplace ridicule thrown upon Hibernians; and he had lived with men who were too well informed and liberal to misjudge or depreciate a sister country. (p. 6)

<sup>27</sup> *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*, ed. by Heidi Thomson and Kim Walker (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 6.

Yet when this Anglo-Irishman visits his own country, his first tutors on the real Irish are in fact English: the evil Lady Dashfort, who wants to denigrate the Irish (and in particular Colambre's cousin, Grace Nugent) in order to marry Colambre to her daughter Isabel and settle both in England, and the good Sir James Brooke whose long acquaintance with Ireland makes him want to save Colambre 'from the common error of travellers — the deducing general conclusion from a few particular cases, or arguing from exceptions, as if they were rules' (p. 78). Colambre also receives an authentically Irish perspective from the Gaelic Count O'Halloran, although this well-educated, well-travelled Irishman is notably keen on English-Irish assimilation. Colambre, travelling incognito, exposes the malevolence of his father's Irish agents, the O'Garraghtys, and arrives back in London in time to save his tenants from eviction. But the real focus of the plot is the projected union of Colambre with Grace Nugent. It is her influence that links Colambre and the Clonbrons to Ireland; when Colambre is forced to rethink his marriage with Grace, this also involves a rejection of Ireland: 'He had looked forward to the idea of marrying and settling in Ireland, and then every thing in the country was interesting to him; but since he had forbidden himself to think of a union with Miss Nugent, his mind had lost its object and its spring' (p. 124). Colambre is forced to reject Grace because doubts have been raised in his mind by Lady Dashfort about the legitimacy of Grace's birth. Colambre cannot bring himself to trust a woman whose mother has behaved badly, and this need for assurances about female fidelity is confirmed by the Count's insistence that a man should always look not only to the mother but to the whole female line. Colambre can guarantee his own union only if he can ensure that of Grace's parents — this is symbolic of the political Union and its legitimacy. Trollope does the same thing in *Castle Richmond*, when the question of whether Lady Fitzgerald has married bigamously or not threatens not only the unity of the family but the possession of their Irish estate. Of course, it ends happily; Count O'Halloran happens to know that Grace's father and mother were secretly married, having been present at the father's death-bed confession, and when it is discovered that Sir James Brooke happens to have the marriage certificate, all is well — Grace is reconciled to her rich grandfather, Colambre can marry her, and the whole family can return to live in Ireland. There is a further twist, however. Grace turns out not to be Irish at all: her real name is Grace Reynolds, both parents were English, and her only connection is her Anglo-Irish step-father — she is not even Colambre's cousin. Edgeworth can be seen to be reworking the allegory of union begun in *The Wild Irish Girl*, but this time the fact that the male partner is on the Irish side suggests greater equality. The mere Irish are given the last word, as the novel ends with Larry Brady writing to summon his brother Pat home from London, but the focus of the novel is the union of those in power — Anglo-Irish and English.

Unlike Owenson and Edgeworth, John Banim had no problem with authenticating his Irishness. A son of the rising Irish Catholic middle-class, Banim was one of the first generation to receive an education the penal laws had denied to all but Irish Protestants. He was also a committed nationalist, a supporter of Daniel O'Connell, and a key figure in the early-nineteenth-century Irish literary revival – he and his brother Michael, in their 'Tales by the O'Hara Family', helped pave the way for Carleton's peasant tales. But just as Edgeworth rewrites Owenson's allegory as a lesson to absentee Anglo-Irish landlords, Banim rewrites Edgeworth in his 1828 novel *The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century*. Banim's hero, Gerald Blount, is forced to choose between 'the triple inheritance of Irish, Anglo-Irish, and English'.<sup>29</sup> The son of the Anglo-Irish Lord Clangore, Gerald was born and educated in England; unlike Colambre, he is deeply affected by prejudice against the Irish both at his public school and later at Cambridge. His only experience of Irish people is with those who reject their Irishness to become 'English-Irish', or those who perpetrate drunken riots in Irish slums in St Giles and Holborn; as a result, Gerald refuses even to visit Ireland, and rejects the title Anglo-Irish: 'I wish to become English, purely English, in all my habits and notions' (1, 48). But his Irishness seems ingrained; he uses Irish phrases and lapses into brogue (for which his elder brother rebukes him) even though he has never been to Ireland; and during the terrible and ill-informed speeches on Ireland at the Cambridge Union, his Irish blood rebels: 'Perhaps, spite of himself, his Irish blood preponderated over its English admixture, when, for a moment, he accused the speech of some haughty indifference to a thorough intimacy with the subject, growing out of too-English contempt for Ireland and an over-readiness to believe in national infallibility' (1, 92). Gerald becomes a parliamentary secretary, but is disillusioned to see that the government has no intention of passing Catholic Emancipation. In the meantime, his sister Augusta has been living with an Irish family, the Knightlys, and in spite of Gerald's disapproval of the Knightlys, particularly of their wild daughter Rhoda, Augusta returns to Ireland with them, in the intention of reviving her father's estate. Gerald becomes involved with a married Anglo-Irish woman, and barely escapes being murdered by her husband. He is challenged to a duel by Captain Stanhope, a relative of the injured husband's family; Stanhope is reported to be mortally wounded, and Gerald is forced to flee to France. While there, he meets an enigmatic woman whose identity and nationality are unclear; long before Gerald, the reader knows this is the grown-up Rhoda Knightly, and the novel appears to take the same pattern as *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The Absentee*, with the hero drawn to Ireland and her people through the woman who embodies her best qualities. While attempting to return to England

<sup>29</sup> John Kelly, introduction to *The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century*, p. [11].

from France, Gerald is shipwrecked on the Irish coast and rescued by the disguised Rhoda. Terrified that he is surrounded by the savage Irish, Gerald escapes to Dublin and the society of his Anglo-Irish friends, who are exposed as hypocritical and cruel. Significantly, Gerald is taught to suspect the Anglo-Irish by his English friend Mr Gunning. When the Anglo-Irish landlord Sir John complains about the changes since the end of the penal laws ('The son of a fellow whom, thirty or forty years ago, you might have paid with a horse-whipping, or with setting your dogs at his heels, if he presumed to teaze you with a complaint of high rent [...] the son of that same fellow will now threaten to indict you for a common assault at the quarter-sessions, when you only lay your whip across his shoulders'), Gunning replies: "The slave! Does he not knock you clean down?" (II, 267). In Mr Gunning, Banim is emphasizing to his English audience that his target is not the English but the sycophantic Anglo-Irish, who have no pride in their own nationality; Gunning even takes up residence in Ireland as a landlord.

Gerald is drawn towards his ancestral estate and, like Horatio and Colambre, is exposed to the misery caused by absenteeism. The key difference, however, is that Banim confronts head-on the problem Owenson and Edgeworth evade -- Irish violence. The Anglo-Irish are being terrorized by 'Captain Rock', the mythical figure whose signature was appended to any threatening note sent to Irish landlords; Gerald, his friend Flood, and Gunning are captured by a group of Rockites lying in wait to murder an outsider who is coming to claim land one of them has been evicted from. They also plan to murder the land agent. Gerald has to pretend to be a stranger to save his own life, as the discovery he is the hated absentee landlord would not abate the fury of Captain Rock. Inevitably, it all ends happily; the coachman Michael Farrell, whom Gerald had previously helped and advised, turns out to be the local Captain Rock, and delivers them to safety. At this point, the reader anticipates the end of Gerald's journey, the reunion with Rhoda, and their future marriage, symbolizing the union of Irish and Anglo-Irish. But Banim subverts this: while Gerald is reunited with Rhoda, the goal of this stranger's journey is not merely a better understanding of the Irish, but a recognition of his own Irishness, including his own violence: the most important meeting at his ancestral home turns out to be with Captain Stanhope, the man Gerald believed he had mortally wounded in a duel, who is in fact Knightly's son and Augusta's fiancé. Gerald is forced to recognize that the 'civilized' violence of the duel is no more morally right than the agrarian violence of Captain Rock, and that his own violence has been directed against a man who is not only his own countryman, but also his own family. The novel ends inconclusively: we are told that Gerald 'married a mere Irishwoman, and since then continues to live in Ireland, as a mere Irishman', but whether that marriage is with Rhoda or not is no longer important: whereas for Owenson and Edgeworth, the union of the lovers at the end of the novel ratifies hybridity and the legislative Union, Banim rejects this

disjunctive conjunction, arguing that the only future for the Anglo-Irish was to cut the ties with England and embrace Ireland. As Knightly tells Gerald: 'Since we plainly see that Ireland cannot be made English, suppose we just allow her to make herself what she is every day becoming in spite of us -- Irish?' (III, 118).

While Irish writers remained reliant on the English market, the evolution of the stranger shows the English being displaced both as heroes and ideal readers of Anglo-Irish fiction. Edgeworth and Banim admit that the key problem in post-Union Ireland is not England's relationship with Ireland but the estrangement of the disparate groups within Ireland itself. While Owenson presents her version of an essential, Celtic Irishness, Banim argues that Irishness is a state of mind, a familiarity with and a loyalty to the country and all her people. For the nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish, even more than the English traveller, Ireland is miserable, famine-stricken, savage, violent, and uncomfortably familiar. Like the speaker of Seamus Heaney's 'The Tollund Man', they feel 'lost, | Unhappy, and at home'.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber, 1990), pp. 31-32.