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Irish Patriots and Scottish Adventurers: *The Irish Penny Journal, 1840-1*

Periodicals as a publishing genre stand at the intersection between the textual and the material side of literature. Through their study, it is possible to focus on crucial aspects of the relationship between authors, readers and publishers (Beetham 20). This essay examines an area that has as yet received little critical attention, popular weekly periodicals in 1840s Ireland. In particular, it concerns itself with the *Irish Penny Journal*, or *IPJ* for short, and with the public controversy that broke out between its proprietors, Robert Gunn and John Cameron, and Irish novelist John Banim.

In conversation with one of his friends, Banim had once remarked on the situation of literature in Ireland, stating that “we want a cheap periodical.” This journal, as well as more affordable, would have needed to be more “national” than the Unionist *Dublin University Magazine*, a monthly magazine aimed at an upper-middle-class readership, for Banim “too much devoted to party” (Murray 274). The announcement in April 1840 that publishers Robert Gunn and John Cameron were about to commence just such a periodical must have seemed the perfect answer to Banim’s wishes.

The IRISH PENNY JOURNAL will be in a great degree devoted to subjects connected with the history, literature, antiquities and general condition of Ireland, but it will not be devoted to such subjects exclusively... All subjects tending in the remotest degree to irritate or offend political or religious feelings will be rigidly abstained from, and every endeavour will be made to diffuse sentiments of benevolence and mutual good-will through all classes of the community. (“To Our Readers” *IPJ* 1: 8)

The *Irish Penny Journal* was to be a weekly journal consisting of eight quarto-sized pages, including one woodcut illustration on the first page. As the name implied, its cover price was set at one penny, which compared very favourably with the 2s 6d of the *Dublin University Magazine*. Penny publications such as the *IPJ* had been circulating within the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland since the early 1830s and had enjoyed a considerable degree of success, as the *IPJ* itself was ready to acknowledge. “England and Scotland abound with such cheap publications — for in London alone there are upwards of twenty weekly periodicals sold at one penny each” (“To Our Readers” *IPJ* 1:8). The frontrunner of the genre, the *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, had reached a peak circulation of 200,000 copies per week (Altick 335). Its successors in the 1850s and 1860s would surpass this figure many times over (Dalziel 23). Indeed, the penny weekly was later to be regarded as one of the publishing revolutions of the nineteenth century, granting access to printed matter to a far larger audience than had previously been possible (Anderson 11).

At least, that was the situation in Britain. In Ireland, the penny weekly format had made considerably less ground. In part, this was due to the smaller size of the Irish market. In Britain, the urban middle classes constituted the main marketplace for cheap periodicals (Altick 82). Of the over eight million people residing in Ireland in 1841, little more than one million inhabited towns of 2,000 people or more. The nine main cities, where most booksellers were concentrated, contained between themselves only half a million people. Even in urban centres, over one-third of the population lived in houses of only one room (Source: *Census of Ireland 1841*). Moreover, illiteracy was widespread across the country, especially among the female population (Ó Ciosáin 38). There were further distribution difficulties for cheap periodicals. Publications that contained news or comments upon them had to be printed on sheets of paper bearing a government stamp, at a cost of four pence each, or two pence in the case of Ireland (Wiener 4-5). Periodicals that did not contain news could be printed on unstamped paper, and were therefore much cheaper, but in return they could not travel in the post for free, as was the case with newspapers. They had to rely instead on a thinly-scattered network of booksellers for distribution.

These material difficulties were compounded by cultural ones. British penny magazines had succeeded in presenting their audiences with a common ground based on ideas and interests, and not on political ideologies (Bennett 249). The deep divisions running within Irish society prevented such an easy reconciliation in the name of “useful knowledge.” The situation in 1840 was such that, while some Irish readers certainly purchased British penny journals, all attempts at producing a home-grown specimen had met with little success. The longest-running Irish penny periodical had been the *Dublin Penny Journal*, which had lasted 4 years from 1832 to 1836. Its main competitor, the *Irish Penny Magazine*, had closed after only one year in 1834.

In 1840, this vital segment of the Irish periodical market was therefore left devoid of Irish-based publications. Despite the difficulties highlighted above, this vacuum presented a definite market opportunity, which enterprising Dublin publishers Robert Gunn and John Cameron decided to exploit. The two had been for three years the proprietors of a newspaper, the *General Advertiser* (North 284-5), and launched the *Irish Penny Journal* on 4 July 1840. Posthumously, the *IPJ* was rated among the best efforts of the Irish periodical press, containing as it did “excellent work by O’Donovan, Carleton, Mrs S. C. Hall and many other writers” (Brown 66). Barbara Hayley called it “the last of the great penny magazines of this generation,” and praised its efforts in conveying Irish themes, commissioning new stories and staying clear of the minefield of politics and religion (102). Its history though was also quite short, and fraught with the conflict and controversy between its ideal objectives and the practical management of its resources that its dispute with Banim exemplifies.

Gunn and Cameron’s hopes of success rested on the belief that the Irish public would prefer an Irish-based and Irish-produced periodical to a British one. “A work of a more amusing character, and more essentially Irish, was therefore necessary; and such a work it is now intended to offer to the Public.” (“To Our Readers”, *IPJ* 1:8). In order to make their periodical truly Irish, Gunn and Cameron announced they were requesting contributions “from a great number of the most eminent literary and scientific writers of whom Ireland can boast” (“To Our Readers”, 1:8).

By 1840, John Banim had published several collections of poetry and prose. He was also the author of several plays, performed both in Dublin and London. His *Tales of the O'Hara Family*, written together with his brother Michael, had gained him a certain degree of fame (Boylan 11-2). As such, he would have made quite a desirable addition to the *IPJ*. Around the end of August 1840, Banim belatedly answered the first call for correspondents sent out by Gunn and Cameron in April:

Dear Sirs,

I much regretted that illness prevented me from replying as I should have heartily wished to have done to your letter of last April; and I have still at this date to repeat my regret, as I feel that every Irishman supposed capable of contributing to your new periodical ought to do so. Awaiting another and I trust not distant period to offer you something quite Irish and quite new, I find to my hand, however, a short Drama in two acts, "The Conscript's Sister", performed with indeed unlimited success...but never yet published; and should it suit you at the terms conceded to Mrs. Hall – namely, a guinea per column – I shall forward it upon receipt of a line from you to that effect. I do not now send it, as I take as granted that after the success of the drama on the stage, the question of fitness of such contribution for your Penny Journal may for the present be the only one between us ("Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism" 2).

Indeed, the two publishers questioned the suitability of the play in question in a letter dated August 21, two days after Banim's:

In answer to your proffer of the "Conscript's Sister", [we] have to say that we do not think it suitable for the columns of the Penny Journal, but even if it were, we would be very sorry to pay you a guinea a column for an old play, which has been patent to the public for years... For anything new, and which will be suitable, we shall, if it be first rate, pay as high a price as any one; and more can hardly be expected from the publishers of a work such as ours. ("Mr Banim and the Proprietors of the *Irish Penny Journal* (from the *General Advertiser*)" 1)

But their reply to the Kilkenny writer did not stop at such considerations. The whole of Banim's letter was the object of scathing criticism that soon spiralled beyond the

boundaries of the present situation, and laid bare Gunn and Cameron's thoughts on the Irish literary class in general:

When we commenced the Penny Journal, we certainly were foolish enough to suppose that "patriotism" – that is the word – might possibly induce some one Irishman to aid us with his pen in our arduous undertaking – not certainly gratuitously, but at a moderate rate. We have, however, already lived long enough to be undeceived. We have always, it is true, found Irishmen exceedingly loud in their professions of patriotism, and verbally very fervent in their hopes that every Irishman capable of contributing to the Penny Journal ought to aid us with their talents, and so forth. But we are constrained to say, that we have always found these loud professions coupled with an immediate demand for not only the highest price for their contributions, but a greedy desire to clutch as much as possible from those who, if not more patriotic in reality than themselves, have not had the disgusting hypocrisy to avow a feeling they do not possess. It is not the demand for remuneration, for it is but fair, but it is the inevitable profession of patriotism which is so offensive – that patriotism we find being bounded by their lips and our pockets. ("Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism" 2)

It would appear from this letter that Gunn and Cameron had embarked on a thorough recruiting campaign for their magazine, anxious to get well-known correspondents into the ranks of the *IPJ*. The publishers had probably begun by engaging the *Dublin Penny Journal's* former editor, George Petrie, to conduct their new periodical. Petrie was one of the foremost Irish scholars and artists of his time, the head of the Historical Department of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (Eagleton 128), and possessed moreover that expertise in the field of weekly periodicals that Gunn and Cameron were lacking. Gunn and Cameron, however, retained complete control over their property, as Petrie's conspicuous absence from the dispute with Banim suggests. Petrie seems to have been a subordinate, even if a respected one, throughout the history of the *IPJ*. He was however the ideal candidate to lend scholarly credibility to a genre, penny weeklies, that was still viewed with some suspicion by the cultured elites (James xii).

The support of the middle classes was a necessity for the *IPJ*.

To give such work a reasonable prospect of success, it is indeed essential that it should be patronised by all classes; and an appeal is therefore confidently made to the high-minded and patriotic people of Ireland in its behalf, as without a very extensive circulation it could not be given at so low a price as would bring it within the reach of the poorer classes of the country, whose limited means would preclude the possibility of purchasing a dearer publication. (“To Our Readers” 1:8)

At first, Petrie, and by extent his publishers seemed well-equipped to face the challenging task of appealing to uncultured and cultured alike. Because of the decision to print an unstamped weekly, Gunn and Cameron’s periodical was forced to avoid politics and religion. While this was a serious restriction, it could also provide the *IPJ* with opportunities. “One of the primary objects our Journal was designed to effect [is] to make our country, and its people, without reference to sect or party, more intimately known than they had been previously, not only to strangers, but even to Irishmen themselves” (Petrie 193). The conductors of the *IPJ* must have hoped that an increased awareness of Irish history, geography and culture could form the basis for a common sense of Irishness, shared by Protestant and Catholic alike. Petrie indeed was to work on creating such an inclusive sense of nationality throughout his long career in art, music, and archaeology (Dunne 83). Overall, in its fifty-two issues the *IPJ* included forty-four articles on Irish topography, forty-two poems, twenty-three translations from the Irish language and forty-six short stories on Irish subjects. To these must be added some sixty articles on natural history, science and technology. Petrie was supported for the scholarly side of the *IPJ* by colleagues from the Ordnance Survey, such as John O’Donovan and James Clarence Mangan (both former contributors to the *Dublin Penny Journal*).

However, a successful cheap magazine needed more to engage the attention of its readers than descriptions of Irish monuments or learned translations. For this reason, Gunn and Cameron ensured the contributions of successful fiction writers such as Mrs Hall and William Carleton, and issued a wider call for contributions to Irish authors such as John Banim. What the duo must not have foreseen was the clash that occurred between two contrasting necessities: their desire to keep costs down and the near-starvation of many Irish writers. Gunn and Cameron had expected such circumstances

to combine in presenting them with several able correspondents, who would be willing to accept a modest fee for their work, as few other possibilities were open for Irish writers who wanted to publish in Ireland. Instead, the frequently impoverished writers requested to be paid the highest possible rate, as they had few other sources of income to rely upon.

The fact that Mrs. Hall's remuneration of a guinea per column had become public knowledge could only aggravate matters, as it became possible for writers to quantify how much the two publishers were willing to disburse. In comparison, the British penny journals of the 1840s and 1850s, with sales in the hundreds of thousands, paid their writers of serial novels amounts varying from ten shilling per number to five shilling per column (James 32-3). Gunn and Cameron's remuneration to Mrs. Hall was generous indeed, though perhaps justified by her fame as the author of *Lights and Shadows of Irish Life* (1838) and other short stories set in Ireland. For writers without her London connections, like Banim, patriotism and the pride of working for the betterment of Irish society could only account for so much in the eye of poverty, as even Petrie struggled with his finances for most of his life (Eagleton 128). Gunn and Cameron's plan had therefore backfired, much to their annoyance, as it appears from the final paragraph of their letter:

At the time we first wrote to you we were very desirous of obtaining your contributions, because we then thought that your name as an author and contributor would assist us in launching our little work successfully. We have now, however, found that its unparalleled progress has depended more upon our own efforts than upon the aid of others, and are therefore much more indifferent. If you had assisted us *then*, you would have obliged *us*; if you contribute *now*, it will be to oblige *yourself*.
(“Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism” 2)

Unfortunately for the researcher, Gunn and Cameron did not quantify what this “unparalleled progress” meant in terms of circulation, but it has to be assumed that at the time it fell within satisfactory, or at least encouraging, parameters, perhaps as high as the 10,000 copies their predecessor, the *Dublin Penny Journal*, had been able to sustain in the early 1830s (*Select Committee* 25). The two could therefore refuse

Banim's present contribution, and practically preclude any chance of a future relationship with the Kilkenny writer, without fears of damaging the prospects of the *IPJ*.

Or so they thought. Gunn and Cameron had also not foreseen Banim's reaction to the harsh comments they had poured upon the whole of the Irish nation. After replying briefly to their missive, on 17th September Banim sent the correspondence to his friend Michael Staunton, the proprietor of the *Dublin Morning Register*, a liberal Dublin newspaper (Murray 276). The news was quickly picked up by Dublin's leading nationalist newspaper, the *Freeman's Journal*, who gave it ample space in the issue dated 22 September 1840. The *Freeman* columnist was incensed at the insult thrown upon the national character of Ireland, and from the very title, "Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism," revealed an important factor in the dispute. Gunn and Cameron, who lambasted the Irish writing class for their lack of patriotism, were not Irish, but Scottish. After labelling the *IPJ* "a new catch-penny publication", Freeman's proceeded to offer its support to Banim:

That Mr. Banim has acted properly, and as became his high character and position, no one can doubt. The insolent presumption – the overweening self-sufficiency – the ignorant brutality of these Scotch adventurers in the field of Irish literature deserved to be exposed, and Mr Banim is entitled to the thanks of every man careful of the character and jealous of the honour of his country – which has been foully maligned and gratuitously insulted – for enabling the Irish public to form a correct estimate of Messrs. Gunn and Cameron's claims and pretensions to Irish patronage. ("Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism" 2)

For a periodical bent on avoiding controversial subjects, the *IPJ* had landed itself in the middle of a dispute that could have far-reaching consequences in terms of how the public regarded the new publication. After printing the correspondence between the writer and the publishers, Freeman's questioned the motivation behind Gunn and Cameron's position and their appeal to "Irish patriotism." Freeman's could conceive "nothing more insolent – nothing more presumptuous – nothing more unjust – in short, nothing more false and calumnious" than the views "these Scotchmen" had

expressed on the character of the Irish people (“Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism” 2). The columnist rightly pointed out just how unwise this outburst had been for the prospects of a periodical that relied for its sales on the affection the Irish felt for their country. Now that the Scottish duo had laid bare their real opinion of their audience, their claim to “Irish patronage” sounded like no more than hollow, calculated hypocrisy. The two had committed one of the darkest sins a marketer could succumb to: they had been caught lying.

When Messrs. Gunn and Cameron commenced their first speculation in Dublin they took special care to conceal the contempt in which they held the Irish people. We were then “generous, high-minded, and patriotic;” we are now the reverse; our generosity was assumed in order that we might filch cash from the exchequer of the General Advertiser, and our patriotism but a cloak for that hypocrisy which has given such disgust to the generous and single-minded proprietors of the *Irish Penny Journal*. (“Scotch Thrift vs. Irish Patriotism” 2)

Thus concluded the first of the articles in Freeman’s, for the dispute was far from over. It was indeed the two proprietors who were the protagonists of the next round of the match. On September 25, Gunn and Cameron published an explanation of their conduct in the pages of their own newspaper, the *General Advertiser*. They also apparently sent it to the other Dublin dailies, asking them to include it in their pages as an act of justice to their conduct. *Freeman’s* obliged them on September 29, the *Dublin Evening Mail* on the following day. The latter dedicated a full column of its first page to the publishers’ defence, without adding any comments of their own. *Freeman’s* instead scrutinised the words of the Scottish duo, and found them once more wanting.

Gunn and Cameron began by admitting that “under momentary excitement and annoyance” they had “expressed themselves in a manner which upon calmer consideration they are willing to admit was more than perhaps the occasion demanded” (“To the Editor of the Freeman” 2). But this circuitous apology was to be the only admission of guilt throughout the whole of their defence, and was immediately undermined by the accusations they threw back at Banim, “for whatever

may be the faults of the proprietors of the Irish Penny Journal, they afford no excuse for an attempt to crush a national publication, to which scarcely any but Irishmen are contributors” (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2). It appears indeed from other evidence that Gunn and Cameron’s usual treatment of their correspondents was far more understanding than their curt reply to Banim. For example, Donegal poetess Frances Brown recalled in later years “the kindness and encouragement bestowed upon me by both the editor and the publishers” of the *IPJ*, who printed three of her poems and presented her with a bound volume of the *IPJ* (Browne xix). In their letter to the press, Gunn and Cameron tried to deflect the blows coming at them by transforming an attack on their persons into an effort to crush the *IPJ*, though why Banim, a patriotic Irish writer, and *Freeman*’s, the main nationalist daily newspaper, would want to undermine a truly “national” work was never explained.

Gunn and Cameron then stated that Banim’s proposal of his play *The Conscript’s Sister* was “an insult to their common sense,” and being accompanied by a request “for the highest rate of remuneration,” that it fully justified their impression that the Kilkenny writer was motivated by greed, and not by patriotism. It is true that, just days before his letter to Gunn and Cameron, Banim had successfully published one of his plays, *Sylla: A Tragedy*, in the Dublin nationalist monthly, *The Citizen* (July-August 1840). However, a fifty-page monthly magazine operated under far different constraints from those of an eight-page penny weekly, where Banim’s play would have stretched to cover too much of its limited space. This fact leads to speculate that Banim was unaware of the different publishing genre Gunn and Cameron were promoting, or to suppose that he was truly attempting to reap as high a dividend as possible from his literary efforts. Despite these mitigating factors, Gunn and Cameron’s reaction to the offer still appears out of proportion even to a modern-day examiner. *Freeman*’s indeed believed the two had no excuse for “conduct coarse and unfeeling as regards the individual [Banim, who was quite ill at the time], and unjust and ungenerous as regards the Irish people – conduct which no set of circumstances could palliate” (“Mr Banim and the Proprietors of the *Irish Penny Journal*” 2).

Whatever the opinion of *Freeman's*, Gunn and Cameron admitted they held such views in no regard. The two deemed as “quite unworthy of notice” any comments coming from that “portion of the Dublin press who have never lent the slightest aid to the progress of the Irish Penny Journal” (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2). In particular, they refuted the claim that their being Scottish constituted a serious impediment to their professions of interest in the improvement of the Irish people. To them, “the manner in which they have expended, and continue to expend, their capital in Ireland, is sufficient to show that they are solicitous for the general welfare of the country, and regard themselves as identified with its commercial and literary interests” (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2). It is worth noting that *IPJ* editor George Petrie, whose Irishness was never called into question throughout the dispute, was the son of Scottish parents as well, though he regarded himself throughout his life as profoundly Irish (Stokes 1-2; 395). From a business point of view, Gunn and Cameron’s claim to adoptive Irish nationality had a certain credibility, but in the politically-charged climate of the time, the publishers’ statement amounted to challenging the very notion of Irishness they and Petrie were constructing in their periodical.

To further reinforce their assertion of interest in Ireland, Gunn and Cameron provided a more detailed outlook on their operation in Dublin, of great interest for book historians. They had “given employment to upwards of seventy persons, the entire of whom, with three exceptions, are Irishmen,” and they had paid more than fifty pounds a month “for literary contributions alone,” or over £600 a year (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2). It was no surprise with these costs that the periodical “has not been productive of any pecuniary advantage to themselves” (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2). Assuming standard discounts to retailers, who normally paid eight or nine pence for twelve issues, the *IPJ* would have needed to sell over 4,000 copies per week just to recoup these costs (King 87-8). Other production expenses, such as printing and paper, were likely to be even higher than those for contributors. The proprietor of the *Dublin Penny Journal* during 1833-1836, Philip Dixon Hardy, estimated as at least £30 a week the cost of printing, engraving and boarding 10,000 weekly copies (*Select Committee* 70). The weekly production costs for the *IPJ* may have been lower, due for example to the presence of fewer illustrations, but sales of

about 10,000 would still have been necessary to recoup total weekly expenses of just £30. The “unparalleled progress” trumpeted in a private letter to Banim was scaled down to a merely promising start in the public article to *Freeman's*. Despite this heavy admission, Gunn and Cameron declared they had faith in the *IPJ* and in the Irish public. The periodical had already offered its audience “proof of its intrinsic nationality, and of its claims to national support.” The publishers trusted their readers not to

lend themselves to the efforts of any individuals in their impotent attempt to crush a work so conducted...without a better cause for their hostility than that its proprietors were ‘Scotch adventurers’, or the somewhat more rational ground of censure that they had written a hasty and inconsiderate *private* [authors’ emphasis] letter to a literary gentleman. (“To the Editor of the *Freeman*” 2)

But their profession of love and attention for Ireland failed to persuade the editors of *Freeman's*. The insults they had levelled at the national character of Ireland were too grievous to be washed away by such a half-hearted defence. Even within the confines of a private letter, *Freeman's* believed that Gunn and Cameron had shown none of that “worldly wisdom and prudent regard to consequences” that every good “Scotchman” (and every good publisher) normally possessed. The article wisely concluded that the whole affair had shown how untenable Gunn and Cameron’s position actually was:

That Messrs Gunn and Cameron acted very foolishly in going out of their way to offer an insult to a man of whom Ireland has good reason to be proud, seems to be the general opinion, but that they are acting even more foolishly in continuing to squander their capital on such unproductive speculations – and merely, as it would seem, because they are anxious to benefit a people and a country for whom they entertain such sovereign contempt – strikes us as exceedingly absurd. (“Mr Banim and the Proprietors of the *Irish Penny Journal*” 2)

Gunn and Cameron obviously had more than philanthropic goals in mind, and this kind of public debate on the validity of the *IPJ* almost certainly damaged the reputation of the fledgling magazine. Even if this unexpected notoriety could have

attracted some new customers, it is likely that the “high-minded” would have become even more disinclined to lend their support to a humble publication that was making no obvious effort to deserve it. While *Freeman’s* was not the highest-selling newspaper in Ireland at the time, it nonetheless purchased between 15,000 and 20,000 newspaper stamps each month between April and June 1840, and could therefore count on an audience that numbered in the tens of thousands (*Newspaper Stamps* 8). Moreover, when compared to other, more militant nationalist papers like *The Pilot*, it attracted exactly the kind of moderate nationalist reader who could have found the *IPJ* consonant with his point of view (Brown 36). The fact that such readers were first exposed to the existence of the *IPJ* under controversial circumstances could have seriously biased their impressions of the new periodical.

There is further circumstantial evidence that the Banim affair had serious repercussions for the *IPJ*. Writing to Petrie shortly after the articles on the controversy had appeared in the press, contributor and teacher Robert Armstrong mentioned with alarm “a hostile feeling against the Journal...I hope it may not have any serious results” (Armstrong to Petrie, 1 October 1840). Unfortunately for the *IPJ*, this bad publicity came at the most inappropriate moment of its life-cycle, when the novelty factor had probably worn off, and it was time to consolidate its hold on the readership.

The precise impact of the controversy cannot be quantified, but it finds confirmation in the pages of the only Irish competitor the *IPJ* had to face, the *Irish Penny Magazine*, a reprint of the short-lived 1833 periodical, originally conducted by Samuel Lover (Hayley 102). While reproducing the entire fifty-two issues from the 1833 stereotypes, the new proprietors introduced a modified version of the “Address” to the readers that concluded the first issue. In it, they underlined the fact that Ireland had “as yet no National Magazine... Truly, she has a “Penny Journal”, and far be it from us to depreciate the spirited efforts of its Conductors” (“Address” 1: 8). Nevertheless, they believed that the *IPJ* was not suited to “the great mass of the Irish People”. The reprint of the *Irish Penny Magazine* would instead provide the Irish readers with “the National – the truly IRISH Magazine” (“Address” 1: 8). The snide reference to the “conductors” of the *IPJ* proved once more that Petrie’s position in the periodical was

far more marginal than his title of editor implied. Together with the repeated references to Irishness, the article suggested that Gunn and Cameron's remarks on the greed of the Irish had not passed unobserved. The proprietors of the *Irish Penny Magazine* felt that they could capitalise on the perceived "foreign" nature of their competitor, and proceeded to advertise their own, proven connections with the national soil.

When these factors are considered, it is not surprising that the *IPJ* struggled to sell in Ireland. It would seem that even if the Irish were not patriotic enough to write solely for the good of their country, they certainly would not buy a periodical whose owners had vilified their national character. The greatest irony lies in the fact that the magazine's editor, Petrie, was indeed patriotic and high-minded, "moved by a paramount desire to benefit the community – without regard to private interest." (Armstrong to Petrie, 1 October 1840) His efforts though were in vain. By its own admission, the *IPJ* sold two-thirds of its copies in Britain, not in Ireland ("To Our Readers" 52: 416). It closed in July 1841 after completing only one year in print. Its brief life is an example of the complex negotiations that take place around texts between those who write, those who publish and those who read. The study of these dynamics is essential to the understanding of Irish writing in this, and indeed in any, period of Irish literary history.

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