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Fragmented Histories: 1798 and the Irish National Tale

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FRAGMENTED HISTORIES: 1798 AND THE IRISH NATIONAL TALE

by

Colleen Booker Halverson

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

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December 2012

ABSTRACT

FRAGMENTED HISTORIES: 1798 AND THE IRISH NATIONAL TALE

by

Colleen Booker Halverson

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012
Under the Supervision of Dr. José Lanfers

The 1798 rebellion radically transformed the social and political landscape of Ireland, but it would also have a dramatic impact on Anglo-Irish authors writing in its grim aftermath. Numerous critics have characterized the early Irish novel as “unstable” and suggest that the interruptions, the inverted, overlapping narratives, and the heteroglossia that pervade these novels are a by-product of these authors’ tumultuous times. These Anglo-Irish novels may appear as “unstable” texts, but their “instability,” I would argue, is a strategic maneuver, a critique of the idea of “stability” itself as it is presented through the “civilizing,” modernizing mission of imperialism. When the fighting ended and the paper war of the rising exploded in its wake, these authors became aware of two parallel but ultimately irreconcilable histories involving the rebellion: the dominant, “official” history as put forth by English and Ascendancy writers and the fractured, fragmented history of their memories. Their works do not just offer up an alternative view of the rising, but critique the very modes of historical representation that attempt to reconstruct it.

I begin in my first chapter by looking closely at three works of non-fiction by written after the rising and show how these authors construct the rising as a Catholic

conspiracy and in this way invents an Irish “Other” to the English that represents archaism, lawlessness, corruption, superstition, and backwardness. In chapter two, I argue that Maria Edgeworth complicates this gothic construction in her novel by troubling the discourse of the Catholic subaltern through the character Thady Quirk and Lady Geraldine. In chapter three, I show how Sydney Owenson resists dualistic constructions of Irishness that emerged after the rising and encourages indirect modes of resistance to break down the discourse surrounding Irish masculinity, and in chapter four I argue that Robert Maturin exploits the gothic construction of Irishness in *The Milesian Chief*, but troubles the emergence of a modern subject through the vampire figure in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Ultimately, these writers use 1798 to pull apart boundaries, explode dualistic thinking, and ultimately to question the way we construct cultural identity in the midst of a contested, incomplete, and contradictory history.

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For Aaron, Skye, and Colin

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Introduction

1798 and the Memory Crisis

The 1798 uprising was one of the most violent events in Irish history. While the surge of revolutionary fervor was quickly quelled by British forces, the aftershocks of the rising would be felt for generations. Historians estimate the death toll in the tens of thousands,¹ and political and economic suppressive measures after the rising devastated the country. When Maria Edgeworth returned to her home after the worst of the fighting of the rebellion was over, she wrote in a letter to her cousin, “The scenes we have gone through for some days past have succeeded one another like the pictures in a magic-lantern, and have scarcely left the impression of reality upon the mind. It all seems like a dream, a mixture of the ridiculous and the horrid” (62). For Edgeworth, nothing she could say could quite encompass the experience of revolution as the memory of the rising surfaced in her consciousness as flashes and fragments rather than a tidy narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.

The 1798 rebellion radically transformed the social and political landscape of Ireland, but it would also have a dramatic impact on Anglo-Irish authors writing in its grim aftermath. Numerous critics have characterized the early Irish novel as “unstable” and suggest that the interruptions, the inverted, overlapping narratives, and the heteroglossia that pervade these novels are a by-product of these authors’ tumultuous times. These Anglo-Irish novels may appear as “unstable” texts, but their “instability,” I would argue, is a strategic maneuver, a critique of the idea of “stability” itself as it is presented through the “civilizing,” modernizing mission of imperialism. When the

¹ For a more thorough discussion of casualties of the 1798 rebellion see Thomas Bartlett’s “Clemency and Compensation: the Treatment of Defeated Rebels and Suffering Loyalists After the 1798 Rebellion” in John Smyth’s *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s*, page 100.

fighting ended and the paper war of the rising exploded in its wake, these authors became aware of two parallel but ultimately irreconcilable histories involving the rebellion: the dominant, “official” history as put forth by English and Ascendancy writers and the fractured, fragmented history of their memories. Their works do not just offer up an alternative view of the rising, but critique the very modes of historical representation that attempt to reconstruct it.

Joep Leerssen notes how after the Act of Union (1801) the literature coming out of Ireland by Anglo-Irish writers specifically changed dramatically. Rather than being presented as speaking from a subject position of “we-the-Irish,” the Irish in these novels are written as an *object* of study (34). Leerssen argues that Anglo-Irish authors speak from a position of “auto-exoticism,” which he defines as “a mode of seeing, presenting, and representing oneself in one’s otherness” (37). For Leerssen, “explaining the Irish to the English” became *the* primary artistic mode for these authors in the wake of revolution and the subsequent Union with England. Where I depart from Leerssen, however, is in my argument that Anglo-Irish authors often constructed and engaged in this discourse ironically and with ambivalence towards English hegemony.

In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* Terry Eagleton remarks on Ireland’s distinctly unique literary tradition and the way in which the traditional realist novel never flourished there in the same way it did in Britain. Many of the reasons he gives for these differences are material in nature such as the breakdown of the country’s publishing industry and the increasing decline of a literate middle class, but for Eagleton the reasons for the lack of a strong realist tradition in the literature coming out of Ireland are most fundamentally cultural in nature. He writes,

Classical realism depends on the assumption that the world is story-shaped—that there is a well-formed narrative implicit in reality itself, which it is the task of such realism to represent. The disrupted course of Irish history is not easily read as a tale of evolutionary progress, a middle march from a lower to a higher state; and the Irish novel from Sterne to O’Brien is typically recursive and diffuse, launching one arbitrary narrative only to abort it for some other equally gratuitous tale, running several storylines simultaneously, ringing pedantically ingenious variations on the same few plot elements. (147)

While certainly England faced its own political and economic instability in the early nineteenth century, according to Eagleton, realism flourished there as an extension of a hegemonic, imperialistic ideology that mirrored a desire for unity and totalization. Irish literature of the nineteenth century reflects a deep ambivalence towards totalization if it does not turn its back on it altogether, and mirrors a historical narrative that is constantly in the process of being rewritten and revised. Where I depart from Eagleton is in his depiction of the ambivalence of Anglo-Irish authors as somehow pathological rather than as an intentional engagement with the many contradictions that make up imperialist discourse. He calls the Anglo-Irish a “schizoid social class,” who “on a good day could defend the people against Westminster, themselves against the people and the Crown against the British parliament, clamorously asserting a sovereignty they knew in their hearts to be nothing of the kind” (160). While much of Anglo-Irish writing in the post-rising era would exhibit these traits, I would argue that such internal contradictions reflect a much more “strategic” kind of political maneuvering, one that often reflected back in

on itself in order to examine the way in which social crises such as the 1798 rising are represented and remembered.

David Lloyd in *Nationalism and Minor Literature* also critiques the way in which Irish literature has been canonically demoted to “minor status” in its perceived “failure” to achieve the stability and totalization evidenced in “major” European novels. For Lloyd, “The totalizing drive of culture and its need of central standards demand that the essence of the human be seen as universal and that whatever deviates from that central archetype be seen as incompletely developed historically rather than as radically different” (17). Irish literature, particularly Irish literature in the nineteenth century, has been judged as not presenting a unified, “universal” subjectivity; thus, rather than being judged according to an alternative criterion that would question such imperialistic constructions, this literature has been relegated to minor status, and Irish writers have been sidelined to obscurity as “child-like” scribblers who never quite “matured” within the traditional canon. Lloyd’s study focuses on James Clarence Mangan, but he also mentions other Irish writers of the early nineteenth century, such as Thomas Moore, William Carleton, Samuel Ferguson, Thomas Davis, John and Michael Banim, Gerald Griffin, and J. J. Callanan whose work, “for all its ‘minor’ status, is engaged in the project of redefining Irish identity historically and psychologically as well as politically” (2). Notably missing from this list are women writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson whose work has traditionally been considered “minor” in terms of the male-dominated Irish literary canon. This absence might speak to the ambivalence of these women towards Irish nationalism, but might also suggest that Lloyd is constructing the body of Irish literature (“minor” or otherwise) on grounds that perpetuate a

masculinist narrative of literary canon formation. Edgeworth and Owenson could be included in the “minor” canon of Anglo-Irish writing in the early nineteenth century, but they also could be included in the female-centered discourse of *belles-lettres* and Minerva Press novels that dominated so much of the literary world in the “transatlantic space” of England, Ireland, and America at the time. In addition to belonging to that particularly female tradition, Edgeworth and Owenson might also be considered a part of the historical novel tradition, a tradition that includes many of the male Irish writers listed above. If the male writers referred to by Lloyd undertook the project of “redefining Irish identity,” we might ask in whose image and under what gender designation that “Irish identity” is being redefined. Through the medium of the historical novel, these women may be imagining the nation very differently, in that they might take “disruptions” within history as momentary opportunities to renegotiate ideas of citizenship, and their Irish “nationalism” might be indirect, convoluted, displaced, or strategic. Establishing a male-dominated “minor” Irish literature ignores the prolific outpourings of women writers in England, Ireland, and across the continent who were engaging in modes of writing very similar to those cited by Eagleton and overlooked here by Lloyd.

In *Anomalous States*, David Lloyd uses the term “crisis of representation” to explain the peculiar nature of the Irish novel in the early nineteenth century. Lloyd argues that we should not just be concerned with how a society produces such a novel as the realist novel, but how the realist novel works to *produce* a certain kind of society by intervening actively as a “hegemonic force” (133). A part of the project of the realist novel was to conform the “anomalous” individual into an ideal bourgeois subject “whether, as mostly for men, through labour or, as mostly for women, through love and

marriage” (134). Lloyd argues that in Ireland the middle class of the nineteenth century was actually the site of “maximum instability,” since it was politically contentious and furthermore difficult to define in the early nineteenth century, as social demographics and economies rapidly shifted. The bildungsroman construction, so dependent on the idea of the individual reconciling himself to the larger society, simply did not lend itself well to the Irish political landscape and its deeply embedded volatility. Lloyd writes, “Precisely the social class that for the English novel furnished representative figures through whom progressive reconciliation could be envisaged, in Ireland eludes such a representative function, appearing instead as a locus of unstable transitions, uncertain affiliations and social disequilibrium” (140). I would argue in this dissertation that the crisis of representation extends further beyond the instability of the Irish middle class and its inability to produce representative figures that would reconcile the individual to society. I see the authors I discuss in my dissertation as actively critiquing the modes of representation that serve hegemonic systems of power, including the realist novel and the bildungsroman.

While these critics would agree that the “unstable” Irish novel is a reflection of the problems in representing Irish history, this dissertation argues that the eruption of the 1798 rebellion actually engendered this crisis of representation in the nineteenth century and that the novelistic representations of 1798 are an attempt by Anglo-Irish authors to question the way in which our memory of the past is constructed, shaped, and disseminated. While previous critics see these novels of the early nineteenth century as pathological and a reflection of tumultuous times, I argue that certain Anglo-Irish writers were purposefully grappling with questions of representation, history, memory, and

identity in their works. In the aftermath of the rebellion, these writers were directly involved in exploring the questions that plagued what Richard Terdiman terms the “memory crisis”: a crisis of representation that emerged in post-Revolutionary France and swept across Europe in the years between 1789 and 1815. Terdiman historicizes the idea of “memory” and suggests that the nineteenth century experienced a disconnect from the mode of historical understanding and representation that had previously dominated society:

In this period, people experienced the insecurity of their culture’s involvement with its past, the perturbation of the link to their own inheritance, as what I want to term a “memory crisis”: a sense that their past had somehow evaded memory, that recollection had ceased to integrate with consciousness. In this memory crisis the very coherence of time and of subjectivity seemed disarticulated. (4)

What is significant about Terdiman’s work in relation to my project is that he suggests that early nineteenth-century writers were critically aware of the way in which revolution had altered their traditional sense of history as a “sense of time’s continuous flow” (5). Terdiman suggests that the great social upheavals of this revolutionary era disrupted the “organic connection with the past” (5) and prompted an entire discourse in the nineteenth century that centered on the question of memory and how it shapes our present. In other words, “The ‘long nineteenth century’ became a present whose self-conception was framed by a disciplined obsession with the past” (5).

Significant to this project is Terdiman’s argument that the consequence of the reproduction of memory is the idea that cultural memory is always a contested space, an

unstable discourse that in its instability allows for counterdiscourses to emerge from the margins. Hegemony functions through memory and an ideological remembering that reaffirms itself and its power over the other. Yet, according to Terdiman, such an exercise serves a “mnemonic function” (19) in that it recalls and restores that which it has not been able to subsume into its totalizing narrative. As Terdiman suggests, “Although memory sustains hegemony, it also subverts it through its capacity to recollect and to restore the alternative discourses the dominant would simply bleach out and forget. *Memory, then, is inherently contestatory*” (emphasis added 20). In the aftermath of the 1798 rising, the explosion in England of historical narratives about these bloody battles served to reaffirm English imperial dominance over Ireland, but in doing so also raised a spectre that could not quite be reconciled in the hegemonic discourse. The novelists I explore in my dissertation tease out these contradictions of memory and explore what dominant recollections of the rising leave out and why they do so. Rather than seeing the form these authors use to shape their novels as a symptom of their times, I see the novels emerging in Ireland’s “memory crisis” as modes of resistance.

The Anglo-Irish authors I discuss in my dissertation reflect something akin to a “mestiza/mestizo” consciousness in their novels—one that takes into account the contradictions and dualities of life in a political borderland where two cultures confront each other, clash, break apart, overlap, and tear asunder. The novels explored in this dissertation are not so much products of unstable minds in unstable surroundings, as they are strategic negotiations of a plethora of identities, genres, and modes of representation. Speaking of her own experience of life on the border between the United States and

Mexico, Gloria Anzaldúa discusses how her identity is contingent upon context and is often strategic in nature:

When not copping out, when we know we are more than nothing, we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry; *mestizo* when affirming both our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever own our Black) ancestry; Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the United States; *Raza* when referring to Chicanos; *tejanos* when we are Chicanos from Texas. (84)

Similarly, the Anglo-Irish novels of the post-1798 period discussed in my dissertation might reflect a certain “instability” but only because they had to take on several identities at once to negotiate a variety of cultural and political perspectives in post-1798 Ireland. For Anzaldúa, such a negotiation of identities allows for something new to emerge—a “third space” in which one can observe, question, and trouble dualistic thinking. She writes,

I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings. (182)

All three of the major writers I discuss in this dissertation are breaking apart the distinctions of “light” and “dark,” “Irish” and “English,” “Protestant” and “Catholic” in their works, and are engaging directly in the problems of representing the rising with all its contradictions, varying perspectives, and agendas. Similar to Anzaldúa, this kind of engagement can very much look like, to use her words, “an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work...a crazy dance” (66), but such narrative constructions are the product of these authors juggling several disparate identities at once, eluding direct confrontation to subtly take apart the strict dichotomies constructed around a calamitous event such as the uprising.

For example, Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) is one of those Anglo-Irish texts that at first glance seem to be indicative of the “instability” that Eagleton and Lloyd suggest is the defining factor of this literature. Containing endless footnotes and interruptions, *The Wild Irish Girl* certainly appears like the sort of “crazy dance” that Anzaldúa speaks of above, but I would argue that such textual acrobatics are strategic and exist to interfere with dualistic constructions of Irishness. The work is an epistolary novel written from the perspective of Horatio M—the son of an English lord who is banished to his father’s Irish estate to recover from his dissolute ways. On the western coast of Connaught he meets and enters into the society of an ancient Gaelic family, taking care to hide his identity as a descendant of the English ancestors who deposed them. Within the novel, Lord M—falls in love with Glorvina, the daughter of the ancient Irish king who “rules” there, and after several romantic twists their tumultuous relationship results in marriage. The novel thus follows the marriage plot so typical in the post-Union era where we see writers attempting to “unite” English and Irish

identities. As Lord M—learns about Irish culture and history through this family, Owenson interrupts his “lessons” to disrupt moments where there might be a temptation to slide into convenient dualistic thinking. In one scene, for instance, Lord M—becomes deeply involved in a discussion with a Catholic priest attached to the family in which he questions the priest’s claim that there exists a strong literacy legacy among the ancient Gaels. Lord M—simply cannot reconcile the Priest’s argument for an appreciation of Irish literary history with what Lord M-- calls the “barbarity of the present” (176). The Priest reproves him and says, “When you talk of our *barbarity*...you do not speak as you *feel*, but as you *hear*” (176). Lord M—admits that his prejudice is based upon the fact that he has been “taught” to see the Irish as “inferior beings” (176). The Priest agrees and says, “In your country it is usual to attach to that class of society of ours, a ferocious disposition amounting to barbarity; but this, with other calumnies, of national indolence, and obstinate ignorance, of want of principle, and want of faith, is unfounded and illiberal” (176). Here we can see Owenson using this conversation as a vehicle to refute popular constructions of Irishness so common in the post-1798 era that would frame the brutality of the rising as being strictly confined to the part of the Irish and as indicative of their inherent, biological character.

Lest the conversation slip into dualities of Ireland-as-victim and England-as-oppressor, Owenson inserts a lengthy footnote after this conversation that takes up at least two pages of text. In this footnote she equates the English colonization of Ireland with the Spanish Conquistadors’ oppression of the Incas. Engaging in questions as to who constructs history, she writes, how “the victorious *Spaniard* was insensible to the woes he had created, and called the resistance it gave birth to CRUELTY” (176). In

other words, as the writers of history, the Spanish had the power to call the Incas' retaliation against them an indication of their inherent "barbarism." Owenson suggests an alternative scenario:

But when *nature* is wounded through all her dearest ties, she must *turn* on the hand that stabs, and endeavor to wrest the poniard from the *grasp* that aims at the life-pulse of *her* heart. And this she will do in obedience to that immutable law, which blends the instinct of self-preservation with every atom of human existence. And for this in *less felicitous* times, when *oppression and sedition* succeeded alternately to each other, was the name, *Irishman*, blended with the horrid epithet of the cruel. (176)

Owenson defends the rebellion and complicates English attitudes towards the Irish, arguing that the Irish acted out of "self-preservation," and that the English erroneously call such an action "cruel" in spite of their own innumerable acts of barbarity imparted on the Irish.

Owenson further challenges essentialist arguments about inherent Irish barbarity by pointing out that racist constructions of the Irish as inherently "barbaric" are suspect given that County Wexford is home to a large enclave of "Catholic" English who settled there as part of the Norman invasion of 1171. The violence in this particular county during the 1798 rising became an "example" of sorts of how the Irish are not "civilized" enough to rule themselves, but Owenson turns that assumption back on its head by pointing out that the "Irish" in this region are really descended from the "English."

The events alluded to were the *atrocities* which chiefly occurred in the county of Wexford, and its adjoining, and confederate district. Wexford is

an English colony planted by Henry the second, where scarcely any feature of the original Irish character, or any trace of the Irish language is to be found. While in the *Barony of Forth*, not only the customs, manners, habits, and *costume*, of the ancient British settlers still prevail, but the ancient Celtic language has been preserved with infinitely less corruption than in any part of *Britain*, where it has been interwoven with the Saxon, Danish, and French languages. In fact here may be found a remnant of an ancient *British Colony*, more pure and unmixed, than in any other part of the world. And here were committed those barbarities, which have recently attached the epithet of cruel to the name of *Irishman!* (176-177)

Footnotes like the one in which Owenson presents this position, rather than being interruptions indicating some sort of anxious pathology, are actually used to constitute a strategic pause in which she unravels some of the dualistic constructions that pervaded post-rising writing. The “montage” that is the text of *The Wild Irish Girl* and Owenson’s footnotes suggests an awareness of the contradictions embedded in the reconstruction of the history of the rebellion, and she inserts the notes strategically in moments when the discussion of the rebellion threatens to lapse into dualism.

To contextualize Owenson’s work and the work of the other Anglo-Irish writers explored in this dissertation, I begin in my first chapter by looking closely at three works of non-fiction by English authors written after the rising: Richard Musgrave’s *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801), Edward Wakefield’s *Account of Ireland* (1812) and Anne Plumptre’s *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland During the Summer of 1814, and That of 1815* (1817). In chapter one, I show how Richard Musgrave constructs

the rising as a Catholic conspiracy and in this way invents an Irish “Other” to the English that represents archaism, lawlessness, corruption, superstition, and backwardness. These traits are in direct contradiction to a brand of Protestant Englishness that in Musgrave’s work stands for reason, logic, science and industry, and the rule of law. What makes Musgrave’s *Memoirs* significant is the way in which it serves a hegemonic function in that it justifies English imperialism as a force of modernization. Erasing the fact that much of the 1798 uprising was very much grounded in Enlightenment principles and emerged out of very “modern” ideals, Musgrave inscribes a “gothic” plot into the rising so that he can show England ultimately triumphing over a corrupt and archaic, that is Catholic, power. In Wakefield and Plumptre’s texts, I show how this erasure also creates a “hauntology” or a “ghosting effect” as the rising in their works is simultaneously recognized and disavowed. Both authors are unable to reconcile what they understand about the rising through the hegemonic discourse of knowledge that surrounds the rebellion with what they actually “see” before them during their respective tours of Ireland. The specters that emerge in texts about 1798 challenge the idea of a stable reality, and the ghosts that haunt this writing serve as a constant reminder of the fallacies embedded in the dominant “official” history.

I argue broadly that the Anglo-Irish novelists I address in my dissertation engage precisely in these contradictions and erasures about the rising by interrogating the ideological forces that create them and the form and construction of these totalizing narratives that marginalize and disavow alternative ways of knowing. In chapter two, I argue that Maria Edgeworth complicates this gothic construction in her novel by troubling the discourse of the Catholic subaltern through the character Thady Quirk. In

Castle Rackrent Edgeworth composes a multi-layered narrative that includes a first-person ancestral history told by an Irish peasant, an English editor who remarks on the narrator's endless eccentricities in an introduction, notes, and a glossary, and of course the "ghost" of Edgeworth, herself. By doing so, I argue that Edgeworth satirizes and critiques the idea of a totalizing narrative by forcing the reader to take into account a multiplicity of viewpoints and alternative readings of the history of the hopeless Rackrents. Furthermore, I argue that Edgeworth uses this novel to show how the English erroneously construct the Irish subaltern and the way in which they only see the Irish peasant they wish to see rather than the one that "actually" exists.

In chapter three, I show how Sydney Owenson resists dualistic constructions of Irishness that emerged after the rising and encourages indirect modes of resistance to break down the discourse surrounding Irish masculinity. Drawing from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Owenson utilizes female "Ariel" figures to show the Irish male "Caliban" characters in her novels how to delicately navigate the political minefield that is post-rising Ireland and to explore the many ways in which agency can be both complicit and transgressive in relationship to imperialism.

Finally, in chapter four I argue that Robert Maturin exploits the gothic construction of Irishness in *The Milesian Chief*, but troubles the emergence of a modern subject through the vampire figure in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. In this chapter I show how Maturin structures *Melmoth the Wanderer*, with its inverted stories resembling Russian nesting dolls, to critique totalizing historical narratives and institutionalized hegemonic power systems. I also examine the ways he inserts the 1798 uprising as a fragment that

“troubles” identity formation and dualistic constructions of power: English/Irish, Master/Slave, Perpetrator/Victim.

Ultimately, what ties these novels together is not just the Anglo-Irish label these writers share, but the way in which the 1798 uprising serves as a site where they explore issues concerning the complexities and contradictions embedded in historical narratives and where they can push against the rigid identities that inevitably emerge in times of war. In many ways, 1798 functions as a sort of “interrupter” in these novels and it flashes precisely in moments when storylines and characters seem too tidy, too seamless, too expected. These writers use 1798 to pull apart boundaries, explode dualistic thinking, and ultimately to question the way we construct cultural identity in the midst of a contested, incomplete, and contradictory history.

Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition: Sir Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland*, Irish Travel Writing, and the Emergence of Gothic Ireland

Richard Musgrave and the Catholic Other

"The 1798 rebellion was fought twice: once on the battlefields and then in the war of words which followed in those bloody footprints." --Kevin Whelan

*"Who fears to speak of '98?
Who blushes at the name?"*

--John Kells Ingram

How does an uprising inspired by the Enlightenment, carried out by members from a host of different religious and socioeconomic backgrounds with an incredibly diverse set of interests and aims, become a gothic text? How does a debate club become the scourge of Catholic hordes set upon destroying all light and reason in the western world? How did the Irish 1798 uprising become the event by which English imperialism would construct itself as a "civilizing force" rather than an occupying mission? In this chapter I examine three popular texts that emerged in the aftermath of the uprising that erase the Enlightenment principles that informed the rebellion in order to produce a hegemonic historical narrative that serves British imperial interests. The three texts I explore are Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801), Edward Wakefield's *Account of Ireland* (1812) and Anne Plumptre's *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland During the Summer of 1814, and That of 1815* (1817). I argue that Richard Musgrave constructs the rising as a Catholic conspiracy and in this way invents an Irish "Other" to the English that represents archaism, lawlessness, corruption,

superstition, and backwardness. These traits are in direct contradiction to a brand of Protestant Englishness that in Musgrave's work stands for reason, logic, science and industry, and the rule of law. In Wakefield and Plumptre's travel writing, I argue that the erasure of the complexities that informed the motivations for the uprising creates a "hauntology" or a "ghosting effect" as the rising in their works is simultaneously recognized and disavowed. Both authors are unable to reconcile what they understand about the rising through the hegemonic discourse of knowledge that surrounds the rebellion with what they actually "see" before them during their respective tours of Ireland. The specters that emerge in texts about 1798 challenge the idea of a stable reality, and the ghosts that haunt this writing serve as a constant reminder of the fallacies embedded in the dominant "official" history.

Immediately after the 1798 rebellion, various political camps reconstructed the rising to serve their own agendas. Pro-Unionists tended to deemphasize the issue of Catholic and United Irish culpability for the rebellion; instead, they tended to stress the instigations of violence on the part of loyalists in the Orange Order (Whelan 30). Although these attitudes would quickly turn cynical, in the beginning of the debate over union, pro-Unionists saw themselves as "liberal reformers," desiring to abolish the corrupt Ascendancy Parliament and establish Catholic emancipation (Ferris 5). On the other hand, anti-Unionists (die-hard Ascendancy loyalists) opposed union as it would undermine their power base and leave them "stranded" in a sea of Catholic discontent. By the 1750s Catholics far outnumbered Protestants in the country, and by 1831 Protestants represented only around 22 percent of the Dublin population (48). While authors such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis borrowed landscapes and characters

from the continent to embellish their novels and preach against aristocratic indulgence, Catholic superstition, and oppression, many English and Anglo-Irish writers found a gothic plot in the 1798 rising, using the rebellion to express their fears of a neighboring Catholic horde just waiting to overtake England. Fearing a loss of their power, members of the Irish Ascendancy would take up the “Catholic conspiracy” interpretation of 1798, seeing the rising as “the third triptych of 1641, 1690, and 1798” (Whelan 30). Anti-Unionists feared the incorporation of Catholics into the state and drew upon the “popish plot” scenario of 1798 in their propaganda war as a means to argue against Catholic Emancipation as part of the Union settlement (135).

This interpretation of the rising as a Catholic conspiracy was taken up by Sir Richard Musgrave in his very popular and widely read *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801). Musgrave’s *Memoirs* was an immediate “bestseller,” completely selling out in all three editions. Musgrave came from a minor gentry family in west Waterford, and although Munster did not play a major part in the 1798 uprising, it had seen its fair share of anti-colonial skirmishes (135). Musgrave began collecting materials for his book as early as July 1798, paying for many of his interviewees to travel and stay in Dublin while he worked on his book (135). As Whelan explains, many of the lines of questioning were specifically designed to “elicit testimony as damning as possible to the United Irishmen, and even more so to the Catholics” (136). As exemplified below, the questionnaire Musgrave submitted already seemed to have a foregone conclusion in mind:

1st When did the Defenders first appear there?

2nd Were they not exclusively of the popish religion?

3rd What seemed to have been their design?

4th When did they join with, and become subservient to, the United Irishmen?

5th Did the papists and Presbyterians ever cordially unite, and at what time, in the rebellion? (qtd. in Whelan 137)

As Whelan points out, Musgrave assumes that the Catholic Defenders were collectively at odds with the Enlightenment project of citizenship that the United Irishmen proposed. Musgrave continually insists that the United Irishmen and the Presbyterians had somehow been lured into the rebellion by the Catholic Defenders. According to Whelan, Musgrave supports “with dogged determination, the idea that the Protestant United Irishmen at the last moment invariably repented their involvement in the rebellion—that as the scales fell from their infatuated eyes, they realized they were being duped by the Catholics” (138). The theme of some specific party being “tricked” by another into rebellion (The Catholic Defenders by The United Irishmen, The United Irishmen by the French) is one that would continually emerge in popular texts at the time, a strategy that denied agency to the rebels and erased their immediate and local concerns.

To a great extent, Musgrave’s *Memoirs* reads like the gothic novels so popular at the time. As Musgrave narrates it, the rising is full of vengeful, blood-thirsty priests, harpy-like women, torture, licentiousness, and a complete breakdown of the rule of law. In the late eighteenth century gothic novel, Catholicism often comes to represent all that is antithetical to modernity, such as superstition, “idolatry,” and inquisitions. In the famous scene at the very beginning of Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*, worshippers shuffle

into the cathedral and only “very few” are interested in any sort of spiritual enlightenment; “and in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt” (11). At the heart of *The Monk* is the foundling Ambrosio who comes to symbolize all that is corrupt and tyrannical about the Catholic Church. Lewis spares no condemnation towards the rituals and accoutrements of Catholicism, implicating the monk Ambrosio in feelings of lust towards a painting of the Virgin Mary, homoerotic desires towards a fellow monk, fornication, Satanism, rape, murder, and incest. Another popular novel circulating during the time of the Irish uprising, Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also has a decidedly anti-Catholic undertone to its plot, with the evil Montoni, an Italian and a Catholic, incessantly making violent attempts to steal the estate of the trembling heroine Emily. Emily is French, but her ways and interests gesture towards a decidedly English mien. As Patrick R. O’Malley puts it in *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, “Although Radcliffe’s narrator describes the picturesque peasants as giving ‘a character to the scene entirely French’, it is England, and specifically Protestant England, that actually embodies the tranquil domesticity under siege by the Gothic progression of the novel” (34). Constantly endangered by the machinations of the scheming Montoni, Emily maintains her estate and her sexual purity against incredible odds. To quote O’Malley again, “*The Mysteries of Udolpho* puts into circulation a connection between, on the one hand, sexual and religious deviance and, on the other, a rhetoric of southern continental depravity that, by an implied contrast, suggests the purity of British Protestantism” (33).

Anti-Catholic sentiment was on the rise in the late eighteenth century. Take for example the Gordon Riots of 1780 when Lord Gordon led an estimated 60,000 people to protest on the steps of Parliament against The Papist Act (1778), which was the first in a series of Catholic Relief Acts. According to E. P. Thompson, “The riots were directed in the first place against Catholic chapels and the houses of wealthy Catholics” (72), and then later were directed specifically against prominent individuals in authority, most notably Lord Chief Justice Mansfield and the Archbishop of York who were believed to be Catholic sympathizers. The violence spread to the streets where mobs liberated the prisons and attacked the Bank. After one week of arson, vandalism, and looting the violence was quelled, leaving hundreds dead and thousands of pounds worth of damage (72). While E. P. Thompson is quick to point out that these riots are indicative of “a mixture of manipulated mob and revolutionary crowd,” they certainly display the high levels of anti-Catholic sentiment in England in the late eighteenth century and the ends to which the public will go to assert their English-Protestant identity in the face of religious and political upheaval.

O’Malley remarks that the Gordon riots had a “convulsive effect,” leading to a “relatively broad sympathy toward Roman Catholics and disinclination to militant Protestantism, at least for the next couple of decades” (17). However, this is certainly not true for writers of novels. O’Malley points out how the work of Anne Radcliffe, for example, does not “merely respond to the political winds of her time; it *invents* them even as it creates a useful language for anti-Catholic sentiment throughout the nineteenth century” (17). About Anne Radcliffe’s use of Catholic stereotypes in her gothic novels, Sir Walter Scott remarks, “She selected the new and powerful machinery afforded her by

the Popish religion, when established in its paramount superiority, and thereby had at her disposal monks, spies, dungeons, the mute obedience of the bigot, the dark and denominating spirit of the crafty priest,—all the thunders of the Vatican, and all the terrors of the Inquisition” (18). In essence, authors such as Lewis and Radcliffe were not so much inventing a Catholic Other as they were working to produce an idealized ”British” subjectivity.

In this literary climate Musgrave published his *Memoirs*, a text which feeds the insatiable desire in a British reading public to reaffirm a sense of Protestant Englishness in the midst of turbulent revolutions abroad. As Jim Smyth puts it,

Every aspect of the book, its argument and digressions, the structure of the narrative, the piling up of page after page of blood-stained detail, the value-charged language and strident invective, is calculated to serve as a warning that Catholics can never be trusted and that their demands must always be resisted (65).

Musgrave not only constructs the Irish Catholic as blood-thirsty, savage, and cunning, but does so in juxtaposition to the Protestant English who come to symbolize in his work all that is “modern” and “civilized.” As Jarlath Killeen explains, “The Catholic Church is essential to Protestant modernity as the repressed Other, and as such, the forces of attraction and repulsion govern Protestantism’s relation to it...The Catholic Church is not in any essential way the semiotic to modernity, but modernity—and especially Protestant modernity—*constructs* it as such” (20). In his writing Musgrave transforms the rising from a complex insurrection fueled by diverse interests and aims to a Manichean drama played out between the dark forces of the ancient, uncivilized world as

represented by the Irish Catholics and the forces of light and modernity as symbolized by the Protestants. Quite explicitly Musgrave expresses in the second volume of his *Memoirs* his “dream” of an Ireland devoid of the “superstition” and “ignorance” of Catholicism. Indeed, he exclaims, completely eradicating Catholicism is the only means by which Ireland may at last achieve peace:

Good God! will that day ever arrive, when a pure, a simple, a rational, and undefiled religion shall be established among the deluded natives of Ireland; when the clouds of superstition and ignorance, which so much obscure the human mind, shall be dispelled by religion and reason, those bright luminaries which the Deity has benignly afforded to erring man, to direct his wandering steps through the thorny paths of life, and to guide his feet in the ways of peace? (117)

This battle between “good” and “evil,” “light” and “dark,” pervades Musgrave’s narrative, most notably in his discussion of the insurrection as it occurred in the counties Mayo and Sligo.

In this section, Musgrave describes how the rebellion began with a silent and secretive infiltration of Catholics parading as respectable, enlightened, industrious individuals seeking refuge from political discontent in the north. According to Musgrave, “They had also an apparent solemnity and sincerity in their manners, and shewed such attention to the duties of their religion, as not only procured them to esteem of person of their own persuasion, but excited the pity of protestants who considered them an innocent and persecuted people” (111). Musgrave describes how about a hundred families spread themselves across the western coast and for a while appeared as peaceful and

“industrious” members of society (111). Yet, he explains, it was soon discovered that these Catholics were merely hiding their secret political leanings and that in truth, “they were much addicted to speculate on politicks; that they held clubs and meetings, where newspapers, for which they subscribed, were constantly read; and that they were perfectly well versed in all the political subjects which were then the topicks of conversation” (111). Musgrave conflates the secretiveness of their clandestine political meetings with a cabalistic obsession, explaining in the same breath how along with their political activism “they also brought with them a number of strange and absurd prophecies, which they pretended were delivered by the ancient Irish bards and prophets, foretelling the wars and calamities which were shortly to take place in the country, and which were to prove nearly fatal to the catholicks” (112). Musgrave sees these prophecies as *the* major factor that incited the rebellion, stating how in them the Protestants were described as a “black army” who were “destined to commit those atrocities against the catholicks, and to furnish a pretext of massacring them, whenever an opportunity should present itself” (113). As Musgrave describes it, the Catholics “breathed nothing but death, bloodshed, and devastation, painted the rivers as running crimson with blood, and a pestilence raging through the country, occasioned by the effluvia of putrid carcasses, which remained unburied; with every other horror which a dreadful civil war produces” (113). For Musgrave the “superstitious,” mystic nature of the prophecies becomes self-fulfilling and connects well with the narrative of savage Catholics just waiting for something to trigger their inherent bloodlust. According to his narrative, the only force that could thwart the black magic of the Mayo and Sligo Catholics was the heroic efforts of the Orangemen:

It was in this critical state of things, that the spirit and promptitude of the Orangemen, alive to the interest of their country, and attached to that constitution for which their ancestors fought under king William, associated under the strongest bonds of loyalty and affection; and relying on the goodness of the cause in which they had embarked, they, without fear or restraint, hunted these traitors to their dens, developed their dark proceedings, and dragged them to punishment. By their well-timed and spirited exertions, they delivered that part of the kingdom from those horrors which were ready to burst upon the heads of the loyal inhabitants.

(113)

Certainly the Catholics would not see the Orangemen's acts in this light, but what is significant about this passage is the way in which the Orangemen are constructed as agents of the "constitution" or the "rule of law" rather than of the arbitrary rites of religion that Catholicism here represents. Musgrave describes the Catholics as an infestation of rats, their proceedings "dark," and it is the Orangemen in this case who bring their evil dealings into the "light." Not only that, they also prevent the "horrors" of the Catholic insurrection from spreading to the rest of the "kingdom."

Similar to Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, Musgrave's text highlights and attacks the religious authoritarianism of the priests involved in the rebellion and the blood-thirsty rebels that blindly follow them. What is significant to the *Memoirs* is the conflation of the "popish plot" with the ever-looming anxieties of French Jacobinism "infecting" the island with revolutionary fervor. In terms of the 1798 rising, these two camps—the Catholic establishment and the French Jacobins--were often mutually exclusive.

Although several priests would participate in the uprising, most notably Father Murphy from County Wexford, the Catholic Church's official stance on the rising was to dismiss its merits². However, as Smyth points out, for "ultra-Protestant, conservatives, the contradiction existed only on the deceptive surface. In the sinister hidden world of double-dealing and interchangeable conspirators imagined by such men, atheist subversives rubbed shoulders happily with Catholic priests" (63). It was much easier to construct a barbaric and cruel Catholic enemy than to view the instigators of the rising as enlightened United Irishmen.

We see this strange mixture of wild-eyed Jacobinism and gothic "popery" in several instances of Musgrave's account of the rising. What is interesting about Musgrave's account is his inconsistency, in that there is a contradiction between his emphasis on the rising as something "homegrown" and local to Ireland and his insistence that the rebellion was fueled by French Jacobins. In spite of his discussion of the inflamed political rhetoric that spurred revolution amongst the peasantry of Mayo and

²Note this statement from Maynooth College (a Catholic seminary) on May 30th, 1798: "We, the undersigned, his Majesty's most loyal subjects the Roman Catholics of Ireland, think it necessary at this moment publicly to declare our firm attachment to his Majesty's royal person, and to the constitution, under which we have the happiness to live; we feel, in common with the rest of his Majesty's subjects, the danger to which both are exposed from an implacable and enterprising enemy [the French] menacing invasion from abroad, and from the machinations of evil and disaffected men conspiring treason within his Majesty's kingdom" (from *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* by William Hamilton Maxwell and George Cruikshank 447).

Sligo, he concludes just pages later that the uprising was ultimately incited by the landing of the French:

The peasantry of the counties of Mayo and Sligo, (I mean of the Roman catholick persuasion,) are savage, ignorant, and superstitious; and though they were organized and sworn to assist the French on their landing, yet I am convinced that they would not have had spirit or resolution enough to rise in rebellion, if that event had not taken place, however well inclined they might have been. (114)

For Musgrave, the combination of “savage” Irish Catholics and French Jacobins creates the perfect recipe for transforming Ireland from a “modern” state ruled by (English) law and run by industry back to a “Dark Ages” of sorts where chaos reigns and no Protestant is safe. He describes the events of the rising in this area as such:

The rebels, armed and encouraged by the French, elated with their first success, and animated with a desire of vengeance, and the hope of plunder, entered sword in hand into the deserted abodes of the fugitive loyalists, where, not content with pillage and rapine, they, with the most savage barbarity, like the Goths of old sacrificed to wanton revenge every thing valuable, which art and science had formed and collected for the comfort and delight of the virtuous and intelligent; and in a few days defaced those ornaments and improvements which human industry had been raising for a century before. (115)

Rather than seeing the “civilizing” aspects of English colonization as instruments of oppression, Musgrave sees their dismantling as “evidence” for the desire on the part of

the Irish Catholics to destroy the “improvements” of the modern Protestant class. The Catholics, armed and incited by the French, are the “barbarians” whereas the Protestants are producers of “art” and “science.”

Nowhere is the distinction clearer than in Musgrave’s description of the Wexford Bridge massacre. He himself was not present on the scene, but received details about the massacre from “some respectable persons” (16). Musgrave often highlights the supposed “blessing” by the priests of the actions of the rebels, citing the nature of their flag as evidence: “we saw a body of rebels coming over the bridge, bearing a black flag, with a cross, and the letters MWS inscribed on it in white; which were supposed to mean murder without sin; and on the other side a red cross” (16). This flag, along with a priest “very busy distributing [drink]” (16) would preside over the massacre. Musgrave also makes a point about the crowd, saying, “The mob, consisting of more women than men, expressed their savage joy on the immolation of each of the victims, by loud huzzas” (17). While the events at Wexford were tragic and exceedingly violent, narratives such as Musgrave’s should hardly be seen, according to Whelan in *The Mighty Wave: The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford*, as “objective texts” (32). Musgrave’s *Memoirs* is very much a work of “fiction” and reflect a gothic literary tradition of anti-Catholic and anti-Jacobin feeling. By writing the gothic into 1798, and specifically writing a Catholic gothic into the events of 1798, Musgrave constructs a “dark” Ireland that is determinedly abject to “enlightened” England.

In spite of the fact that the 1798 uprising was very much rooted in forward-thinking Enlightenment principles, English and Anglo-Irish writers often write the rebellion as stemming from a pervasive and ancient grudge fueled by a corrupt and

cabalistic clergy. In effect, they strive to construct the Irish as pre-modern barbarians in order to establish their own sense of Englishness. Catholicism became an easy scapegoat for all things decidedly *not* English. Yet, these texts also contain a fair amount of ambivalence in their treatment of Catholicism. While on the one hand Catholicism represents tyranny, superstition, and ignorance, it also possesses a certain degree of fascination for these writers. In *The Castle of Otranto*, purported to be the “first” gothic novel, Horace Walpole writes that the narrative

was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with great success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. (9)

In a way, we can see gothic texts such as *The Castle of Otranto* as expressions of a crisis of modernity, which must constantly reaffirm itself by bringing up the “horrors” of the past. While modernity encourages writers to represent the world as it is “with a strict adherence to common life,” a residual nostalgia remains for the fantastical and the imaginative, for the elements of the world that defy logic and scientific explanation. Walpole’s preface to *The Castle of Otranto* gestures to an anxiety towards Protestant enthusiasm and the new secularism of the eighteenth century. As Robert Miles writes in “Europhobia: the Catholic Other in Horace Walpole and Charles Maturin,”

The hated figure of the Catholic other is a projection of a complex ambivalence, a process of abjection, arising out of the nationalist politics

of the home culture...[L]iterary otherness is not really about others; on the contrary, it signals something about ourselves, about the pressures involved in particular acts of identity formation. This results in a necessary adjustment to the claim that ‘British’ Gothic exhibits chronic anti-Catholicism. It does not. On the contrary, the Gothic cues us into some of the eighteenth-century sources of internal, Protestant, British unease. (86)

One of the greatest sources of this “unease” lies in the issue of legitimacy itself. Ironically, at a time when nationalism was on the rise, the literature of the eighteenth century reveals a great deal of anxiety towards inheritance, “true” identity, and legitimacy. According to Miles, “Catholic abjection signals unresolved anxieties attendant upon the Reformation’s fundamental challenge to authority. Once authority is placed in question, where does one draw the line? If authority is not lodged in genealogy—in immemorial continuity—where does it reside?” (92). In *The Castle of Otranto*, for instance, the plot essentially hinges on the fate of the usurper Manfred and his (failed) attempt to produce a male heir. Manfred’s ancestor murdered the “true” heir of Otranto, and his ghost haunts the castle, occasionally dropping giant helmets and body parts on poor unsuspecting victims as a reminder of Manfred’s illegitimacy. In the end, Theodore, the son of a monk, is found to be the true heir of Otranto and order is restored. While *Otranto* plays out anxiety towards the aftermath of the Reformation, the Ireland of the 1798 uprising becomes a “text” that haunts the growing surge of nationalism sweeping England and its production of English identity in the late eighteenth century.

This destabilization of English identity is further troubled by the inclusion of Ireland into the newly established “United Kingdom.” In this new configuration, Ireland becomes England’s uncanny double--*uncanny* in the sense that it is connected to England while at the same time it threatens to destroy it. Freud’s analysis of the term uncanny reveals its dual nature of being *das Heimliche*, or “homely” and *das Unheimliche*, or “un-home-like.” According to Freud, “This uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (Freud “The Uncanny”). As Ina Ferris explains,

Even if for most English subjects Ireland continued to be placed outside home space and the Irish remained foreign objects “over there,” it nonetheless was the case...that Ireland threatened the new body politic as an internal and implosive force. The “sister-kingdom” and “sister-island” (phrases insistently repeated in writing on Ireland) was now part of the body of the nation, but this “sister” strained the body politic and made it ill, proving herself a sister who was somehow not kin. (4)

Ireland’s status in the aftermath of the 1798 uprising as a part—*but not quite*--of England might explain Musgrave’s violent “abjection” of Ireland. According to Julia Kristeva in *Objects of Horror*, abjection is triggered by “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). Abjection derives from the violent confrontation of the breakdown of ideas between subject and object, self and other, and the abject is what keeps us from declaring a “coherent and independent identity to ourselves and others” (Hogle 7). As

Ireland entered into a so-called “Union” with England, the imperative of making “Englishness” distinctive from “Irishness” had a new sort of urgency for a writer such as Musgrave. What becomes especially troubling is the way in which Ireland’s borders achieve a new sort of fluidity that converge onto England’s; Ireland is both “inside” and “outside” and serves as an “in-between” space for Musgrave—neither a part of England, but not quite *not* a part of it either. In this kind of relationship, a binary opposition emerges where Ireland becomes the “dark place” anathema to all that Englishness, and particularly Protestant Englishness, represents. Musgrave “throws off” England’s own monstrous behavior in the rising by projecting it onto the Irish, and his insistence on the archaic in the Catholic conspiracy plot allows Musgrave to establish an idea of “normality” in terms of Englishness. Yet, that process of disavowal reveals a degree of cultural anxiety about the stability of ideas of Englishness and shows the level to which “nineteenth-century England is haunted by this structure of terror and fascination, by the fear (and sometimes the desire) that the strategies of literary and cultural displacement have failed, that the national walls built around the insular villa of Britain do not exclude the continental perversions of Catholicism and sexual deviance but contain them” (28). This anxiety towards the inclusion of “Catholic” Ireland into the Union would only continue to grow in the aftermath of the rising and express itself in many of the troubled narratives of the Irish tour.

“And Still Insists He Sees the Ghost...”: Hauntology and the Irish Tour

After the rising and the Act of Union that followed it, Ireland suddenly found itself to be an intense object of English study. Young gentlemen and tourists flocked to Ireland to write about and figure out this “peculiar” place in an effort, purportedly, to

“improve” its people. According to Ina Ferris, the Irish tour genre emerged as an attempt to reconcile the “instabilities” that confronted the English with the introduction of Ireland into the Union. She states, “Motivated by its civic concern, the tour was anxious in particular both to conciliate the Irish and to convince English policy makers to remove the discriminatory political and economic measures that obstructed full union” (19).

What emerges in the Irish tour, however, are texts that are hardly “conciliatory” in terms of the so-called “Irish experience,” and in several instances position themselves uneasily between the “official” history and the Irish people who bore witness to the events of the rising. These were “civic” missions, to be sure, but often writers struggled in their attempts at representing the past. On the one hand, they wrote with the sole purpose of “explaining” the Irish to the English in hopes of better relations. Yet at the same time their writings seem dead set on constructing Ireland as a “puzzle,” a “riddle” that is impossible to figure out. In keeping Ireland “mysterious” they are perpetuating its position as England’s Other—the “dark” island that must be explained, but is essentially perpetually “unknowable.” This insistence on continually presenting Ireland as essentially “mysterious” is made even more determined in representations of 1798.

In two popular travel narratives about Ireland, Edward Wakefield’s *Account of Ireland* (1812) and Anne Plumptre’s *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland During the Summer of 1814, and That of 1815* (1817), the uprising emerges as an “unutterable” conflict. Wakefield and Plumptre compose works that actively silence, repress, or completely “erase” the rising, and this erasure creates its own particular gothic, “ghosting” effect, or what Derrida in *Specters of Marx* would call a “hauntology.”

Playing off the French pronunciation of “ontology” or a branch of metaphysics that explores being and existence, hauntology may be explained in this way:

It is something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. (6)

The “ghosting effect” or “hauntology” refers to the way in which the specters of the “departed” confront the viewer with something that exists “outside” knowledge. As Pierre Macherey puts it, hauntology is “a science of ghosts, a science of what returns” (18). In his reading of *Specters of Marx*, Fredric Jameson focuses specifically on the concept of the specter and the idea of “spectrality.” For Jameson,

Spectrality is not difficult to circumscribe, as what makes the present waver: like the vibrations of a heat wave through which the massiveness of the object world--indeed of matter itself--now shimmers like a mirage. We tend to think that these moments correspond to mere personal or physical weakness--a dizzy spell, for example, a drop in psychic “niveau,” a temporary weakness in our grip on things: on that reality which is supposed to rebuke us by its changelessness, the “ensoi,” being, the other of consciousness, nature, “what is.” (38)

Spectrality challenges the belief in a stable reality--a material and tangible foundation upon which essential assumptions about being and experience can be established.

Spectrality, according to Jameson, is a useful term that describes a force that undermines

that foundation and "shakes our belief[s]" (38). If ontology promises to seek out and build upon the nature of being and existence, hauntology "is a ghostly echo if there ever was one, and serves to underscore the very uncertainties of the spectral itself, which promises nothing tangible in return; on which you cannot build; which cannot even be counted on to materialize when you want it to" (39). In the works of Wakefield and Plumptre, the victims of 1798 are often recognized at the same time they are disavowed. Because no one "dares to speak of 1798," the Irish exist outside "knowledge" for English travel writers, and both Wakefield and Plumptre are unable to reconcile what they "know" about the rising with what they "see" before them.

In Wakefield's *Account*, in the midst of a two-volume work that mostly devotes itself to matters concerning "Rural Economy," "Fuel," Fisheries" and so forth, he presents a chapter entitled "Rebellion in 1798: French Invasion in 1798." Wakefield enters the topic of 1798 with great trepidation, saying, "I shall not enter, farther than is necessary, into any minute detail. I seek not to revive tales of woe, to add to the pangs of misery; many still suffer by horrid recollections, and I should be the last person to tear the bandage from the unhealed wound, when it could not produce beneficial effect" (II 358). Reading through this chapter, though, it would seem that Wakefield is not so much concerned with reviving "misery" on the parts of the Irish as on the part of the English. When Wakefield speaks of an "unhealed wound," it does not seem to refer to the tens of thousands of Irish who died during the rebellion, but the battered conscience of the English, the militia in Ireland, and the Orangemen who so often instigated and perpetuated injustice and cruelty. What we see through Wakefield's text is a confrontation with the very nature of the British imperial mission. Wakefield's concept

of the English as harbingers of “civilization” begins to break down as we see him start to wonder who the real “barbarians” are—the English or the Irish.

Wakefield sees the causes of the 1798 uprising through a paternalistic lens when he explains how Ireland was an ideal incubator for the development and growth of French revolutionary ideals:

If many well meaning men, therefore, were so far misled, as to sanction by public approbation, the scenes which were passing in France, can it excite astonishment, that the Irish, a people ardent in their pursuits, accustomed to act without foresight, and to determine without reflection, should have become infatuated with the prevailing opinions of that period. In no country in the world, perhaps, was this new system so likely to find continuance as in Ireland; where the people, groaning under oppression of every kind, and irritated against their rulers, were ready to embrace any new order of things which they might think calculated to free them from their misfortunes, or even to afford a chance for a change in their favor.

(360)

For Wakefield, the 1798 uprising was a combination of the Irish “nature”—a tendency to act without foresight or reflection—and oppression by mysterious “rulers” who in this passage determinedly go unnamed. Add liberty, equality, and fraternity, and according to Wakefield one has the perfect storm for insurrection.

Very quickly, though, Wakefield’s portrayal of 1798 as the result of hot-tempered Irish Francophiles is troubled by his discussion of the Orangemen, an organization for which Wakefield can barely contain his disdain and antipathy. He points out the divisive

nature of the Orangemen in their conflation of “Protestantism” and “loyalty”: “Hence, in their address, they styled themselves, ‘We the Loyal and Protestant Association.’ *Loyalty* and *Protestantism* were arrogated to imply, that loyalty could not exist in another society” (361-2). He goes on to call the Orangemen “sycophants” and individuals “commanded by weak or corrupt men” (362). Similar to the rebels, it would seem that the Orangemen also suffer from a particular lack of self-reflection in their deeds, and Wakefield points out how “man, when ‘armed with a little brief authority,’ if the mind be not properly prepared for the trust, becomes a new being, and is seldom improved in his nature by the change” (364). For Wakefield, a little power is a dangerous thing, and he suggests that “in the intoxication of vanity, [the Orangeman] mistakes the dictates of passion for the suggestions of duty; and considers power unemployed as useless. Such seems to have been the case with too many of these defenders of the protestant faith: supposing persecution to be a support to the law, and oppression a just criterion of loyalty; they exercised a culpable and unremitting severity against the unfortunate victims who fell in their way” (364). Most significant about this section is Wakefield’s discussion of the Orangemen’s actions against the Catholic population in Ireland. He sees the Orangemen as not acting as “defenders” of the state, but as a foreign invading force:

The armed inhabitants of a country ought to be considered as its most natural defenders, and while they are recognised with an eye of satisfaction, should be treated with respect. But I am sorry to state, that this class in Ireland conducted themselves on the occasion to which I allude, not as citizens, armed to defend their country, but as military

bands, ravaging the territories of a foreign enemy; and they were certainly one great cause of bringing the affairs of the country to so terrible an issue. (364)

Wakefield's commentary reveals Ireland's ambiguous status as neither a colony nor a part of Britain. The Orangemen in this passage are both "defenders" of "their country," but also "foreign" invaders, calling into question who counts as a "citizen" in Ireland and who are the rightful "inheritors" of this nation. Rather than bringing peace to Ireland, Wakefield suggests that they are doing more to agitate the situation than rectify it. If Wakefield likens the Orangemen to an invading army, his discussion of the British Army is even more complicated in terms of the way this military force calls into question the aims of empire not just in Ireland but around the world.

Wakefield states, "Were the Corsican tyrant landed in England, with all his legions, they could not be eyed with more jealousy and rancorous hatred, than the army is by the Irish" (364). In the beginning of his text, Wakefield outlines the lack of self-reflection in the "Irish character," but this attitude seems to shift as he discusses the barbarity of the British Army. Similar to the Orangemen, the British Army becomes the "uncivilized" Other, and Wakefield paints them, albeit reluctantly, more as marauding bandits, murderers, and rapists than as harbingers of peace and civility. In discussing the events at Wexford, Wakefield can barely bring himself to talk about them, describing Wexford as a moment in history that "for the credit of humanity and the honour of the country, should be expunged from the annals of British history" (366). He goes on to explain,

Which ever side obtained the superiority, cruelties were exercised, at the mention of which, barbarians might shudder. To enumerate these atrocities, would only be presenting a catalogue of crimes which could not fail to shock the most insensible breast. I shall, therefore, spare the feelings of the reader and abstain from reviving scenes, the contemplation of which would not tend to increase our respect for the dignity of human nature, and which, therefore, I wish to be consigned to oblivion. (366)

And yet, even Wakefield himself cannot consign the events at Wexford “to oblivion.” In a curious footnote to this passage, Wakefield relates the events surrounding the military tribunal of a “Mr. Arthur of Limerick,” saying how he “cannot read [about it] without feelings of horror” (366). In a complete reversal of Musgrave’s take on the events surrounding 1798, Wakefield compares this tribunal as exceeding “any thing I ever read of in the Spanish Inquisition” (366). Of all the events that occurred at Wexford, it is curious that Wakefield would focus on a miscarriage of justice on the part of the British Army--almost as if the worst thing he could imagine is a breakdown of the rule of law.

According to Thomas Bartlett, “Mr. Arthur of Limerick” refers to Francis Arthur who was arrested and tried for treason for supposedly corresponding with the United Irishman Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The entire trial was built around fake evidence. The state’s chief witness, William Maume, claimed that he had carried a letter between Arthur and Fitzgerald, but upon questioning, it became apparent that Maume did not even know where Arthur lived. In spite of the deep inconsistencies in the case, “Arthur was pronounced guilty but ‘there not being sufficient proof to convict him capitally’ he was fined £ 5,000 and ordered to be transported for life” (Bartlett 108). Wakefield is deeply

troubled by the lack of justice involved in Arthur's trial, stating that "the administration which does not search out every man who was engaged in so wretched a conspiracy against the character, the property, and life, of an individual, ought not to enjoy the confidence of the public, or experience its support" (366). He goes further to make a commentary on the lack of justice in the colonies, stating, "If the act of indemnity screen such characters from punishment, England, ought not to send such men into an enemy's country, lest they should act to her foes as they had before treated her subjects" (366). Yet, it is important to note that Wakefield relegates this kind of commentary on the British Army to the margins of a footnote. It is not the *official* text here, but something that exists in the subconscious of the text, marginalized to the edge of the primary narrative.

Wakefield is determined to view the British Army as "peacemakers" in what he tends to paint as a "sectarian" feud in Ireland. He states, "thanks to the military of England, the destructive elements were restrained in consequence of their exertions, in which the severity of justice was tempered by humanity, comparative tranquility was restored, and the dreadful attempt to exterminate the catholics prevented" (367). However, Wakefield seems to forget that just moments before in his text, he had listed off just a few of the cruel actions on the part of the British Army in Ireland that "stained the name of Briton" (375). He briefly mentions the events at Scullabogue where several protestant men, women, and children were burned alive by rebels, but his horror seems directed more at the British Army and their actions at Enniscorthy where the British Army set fire to a hospital that housed ailing rebels. Wakefield describes it in these terms, "The army applied a lighted torch to the hospital at Enniscorthy, which was

crowded with unresisting and wounded enemies, and consigned them to a similar fate. The destruction of these helpless wretches, by a death the most horrid that can be conceived, seemed to afford heart-felt gratification to those fiends who reveled in the blood of their fellow creatures” (366). Wakefield also expresses deep anxiety about the way in which the military took part in outright murder and the confiscation and destruction of the property of Irish peasants. He quotes from the account of a protestant bishop who was present on the spot:

The regiments that came to their assistance, being all militia, seemed to think they had a right to take the property they had been the means of preserving, and to use it as their own whenever they stood in need of it. Their rapacity differed in no respect from that of the rebels, except that they seized upon things with somewhat less ceremony or excuse, and that His Majesty’s soldiers were incomparably superior to the Irish traitors in dexterity at stealing. (381)

In the face of this testimony, Wakefield confesses, “I cannot help blushing for my country” (381). Wakefield himself keeps his language about murders and thefts in the abstract, but he does provide a brief footnote, explaining, “I could relate accounts selected from a number, of military robberies committed by officers of rank, and murder, to obtain property” (375). He follows this up by saying, “Let those who doubt turn to the minute of Marquis Cornwallis, on the acquittal of lieutenant Hogg” (375). Wakefield again relegates this example of injustice on the part of the British Army to a footnote, and leaves figures such as “Lieutenant Hogg” to “haunt” the text.

The story of Lieutenant Hogg is a sad tale of injustice. While travelling to Arklow with two soldiers under his command, Lieutenant Hogg and his men came across a fairly well-dressed man. Assuming the man was Catholic, Hogg robbed him, brought him to a marl pit, and shot him. Unfortunately for Hogg, a peasant observed the entire scene, and friends of the murdered man, who turned out to be a protestant and an Orangeman, took up an inquest. *The History of the Late Grand Insurrection or Struggle for Liberty in Ireland* (1806) describes the event in detail:

Lieutenant Hogg and the two soldiers were arrested and tried by a Court Martial; the Lieutenant was acquitted, the soldiers were sentenced to be hung! When this iniquitous (iniquitous because partial) sentence was laid before Lord Cornwallis, he expressed the strongest indignation. The Lieutenant was placed out of the reach of justice, by the acquittal of the Court Martial; and Lord Cornwallis had nothing left but to express his strongest conviction of Lieutenant Hogg's guilt, and his disapprobation of the sentence that acquitted him. He gave orders that he should be broke; that he should be taken to the place of execution, and be placed under the gallows while the soldiers were hung. This was done. The first soldier that was to be executed, addressed himself to the Lieutenant in these words, 'You know very well that we are hung for what you have done; it was by your orders we killed the man; it was you who emptied his pockets; and you have at this moment got his watch in your possession.'"
(Emmett et al. 381-2)

Wakefield's use of footnotes to gesture to, but avoid personally involving himself in debates about the actions of military personnel in Ireland, reveals an unwillingness to implicate his fellow Englishmen. While Wakefield wants to hold onto the construction of the Irish rebels as passionate, unreflective people who "gave in" to the excesses of revolutionary zeal, he cannot help but make a plea for a new course of leadership for the empire later in the chapter. He states, "Let those statesmen, therefore, who have conceived notions of governing by terror, adopt more reasonable and just conduct...let them go to the school of humanity, instead of the cloisters of monkish superstition; and abandoning the odious maxims of Machiavellian politics, take as their guide, Him who preached the doctrine of peace and good will towards men" (377). For Wakefield, perhaps the greatest insult of all is to compare the English to the gothic villains of Catholicism.

Although Wakefield is resistant towards discussing the rebellion and only devotes one whole chapter to the event in the one thousand page tome, *The Edinburgh Review*, a widely circulated journal that heavily leaned towards social reform, takes considerable notice of the chapter and uses it to interrogate Wakefield's credibility as a virtual outsider, questioning his ability to speak on Irish subjects. The anonymous author begins the critique of this section by stating, "We shall now extract from him some passages relating to the causes and circumstances of the rebellion. Whether they be perfectly accurate, it is impossible for us to determine" (353). Much of the next section outlines many of the discussions of rebellion that I have noted above, but it ends with a scathing criticism of Wakefield's ignorance of Irish politics and his privileged position as a member of the upper classes. Most significantly, it reads the fruits of rebellion as

embedded in the very social fabric of Irish society. The critic inserts the following passage from Wakefield's *Account*, which I will quote at length:

In the month of June 1809, at the races at Carlow, I saw a poor man's cheek laid open by a stroke of a whip. He was standing in the midst of a crowd near the winning-post; the inhuman wretch who inflicted the wound was a gentleman of some rank in the county. The unhappy sufferer was standing in his way; and, without requesting him to move, he struck him with less ceremony than an English country squire would strike a dog. *But what astonished me more even than the deed, and what shows the difference between English and Irish feeling was, that not a murmur was heard nor hand raised in disapprobation;* but the surrounding spectators dispersed running different ways, like slaves terrified at the rod of the despot. I observed to a gentleman with whom I was in company how different a feeling would have actuated the populace in England. There, no man who lifts his hand unjustly is sheltered by his rank. The bystanders are always ready to espouse the cause of the injured, and would themselves inflict summary punishment even on a nobleman who should violate the laws of his country by such an aggression. "What," replied my friend, "would a man there dare to strike his superior?" "—Yes," said I, "and on his own estate in the midst of his tenantry." "But twenty magistrates of the county of Carlow are present. Will they not interpose?" "—Oh no," said he; "they will get into no quarrel with -----." The

conversation dropped, and I never felt so proud of being an Englishman (II 773-4).

For the critic in the *Edinburgh Review*, the problem of Wakefield's *Account* is his inability to read the rebellion on the level of the "everyday" and in the minor skirmishes and altercations between the Ascendancy and the tenantry that culminate and fester just underneath the surface. Wakefield projects the English social order onto Ireland, and as the critic points out, ignores and willfully clings to his ignorance of Ireland's long history of oppression, surveillance, and censorship at the hands of the British Empire. As the critic points out,

The pride of Mr Wakefield ought to have been converted into an opposite feeling, if he had recollected that laws imposed by an English colony, and now supported by English influence were the true source of the shocking outrage, and still more shocking patience which he had indignantly witnessed; and that even at this moment a powerful faction in England is contending to preserve the remnant of those laws, which keeps alive the spirit of tyranny and of servitude with as much zeal as was displayed by their ancestors in extorting the Great Charter, or resisting the Armada.

(355)

The critic questions Wakefield's sense of "Englishness" as something contingent and reflects on how the sense of pride Wakefield feels hides the awful truth of England's actions in Ireland. As the critic goes on to explain,

Ireland, we must say, is not the country where an Englishman is best entitled to be proud of the name. Balancing the virtues and vices of

nations, it is doubtless among the most honourable of national distinctions; and in almost every other region of the globe it may be avowed with pride—But in Ireland its honours are yet to be earned. (355)

Although this critic ignores the countless other instances of injustices inflicted upon English colonies abroad, this passage does highlight the way in which Ireland and the Irish uprising worked to destabilize ideas of Englishness in terms of rights and citizenship.

Ireland creates monsters; it has the power to take a perfectly “honorable” Englishman and turn him into a colonial tyrant. Ireland, as England’s uncanny “double” and great colonial experiment, places a mirror up to England, and as Homi K. Bhabha reminds us, “the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (126). If one stares into the “abyss,” or in this case the “mysterious” colonized Other, long enough, sometimes it stares back. The gaze from the colonized Other “reverses ‘in part’ the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man’s being through which he extends his sovereignty” (126-127). The Irish people are neither “this” nor “that” in Musgrave and Wakefield’s texts; they are “monstrous” at the same time that they are victims at the hands of monsters. For Bhabha, this is a result of the fracturing of “white” consciousness in the face of the endless contradictions of colonization. He writes that the colonized other “splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie, which reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated white body”

(92). Ireland and the “ghosts” of the rising expose an English identity that was rigorously in production at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but was dependent on the idea of cohesiveness and an illusion of Englishness that, like all ideologies, is without history.

As we can see by both Musgrave and Wakefield's narratives, what is unique about Ireland is the way in which both Catholicism and Protestantism serve as sites for the gothic. The inability to fully commit to one particular “villain” in terms of the rising derives from the difficulty of representing violence, both sanctioned and subaltern. As Luke Gibbons explains in his seminal text *Gaelic Gothic*, nineteenth-century texts in Ireland tend to raise questions "over who corresponds to what role in the Gothic genre, at least as it is manifested in the radical instability of colonial narratives in Ireland" (56). Often, Gibbons asserts, "The forces of light and reason--the Puritan bearers of righteousness--merge with the monsters of popish superstition they are persecuting" (57). According to Gibbons, this blurring of boundaries between Catholicism and puritanism has a distinct history that has its origins in David Hume's essay "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" (1741). For Hume, religious enthusiasm (i.e. puritanism) can be just as unsettling as Catholic "superstition," and he describes the religious enthusiast as a "fanatic madman" who "delivers himself over, blindly and without reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above. Hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of ENTHUSIASM" (Hume). Ultimately for Hume, enthusiasm is preferable to “popery” as he sees superstition as "an enemy to civil liberty, and enthusiasm a friend to it. As superstition groans under the dominion of priests, and enthusiasm is destructive of

all ecclesiastical power, this sufficiently accounts for the present observation. Not to mention, that enthusiasm, being the infirmity of bold and ambitious tempers, is naturally accompanied with a spirit of liberty; as superstition, on the contrary, renders men tame and abject, and fits them for slavery" (Hume).

As Gibbons points out, for Edmund Burke the problem with Protestant religious enthusiasm is that its fervor actually produced slavery-like conditions in Ireland. While Hume insists that the religious enthusiast's "fury is like that of thunder and tempest, which exhaust themselves in a little time, and leave the air more calm and serene than before" (Hume), Burke finds that the production of Protestant hegemony through violence destabilizes Ireland in ways that Catholicism does not. Gibbons states, "Instead of following the English example and letting 'time draw his oblivious veil over the unpleasant modes by which lordships and demesnes have been acquired,' the ideologues of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland succumb to the very forms of superstition they excoriate, and engage in triumphalist commemorations that all but release the ghosts of the past from their unquiet graves" (57-8). Gibbons quotes Burke at length:

One would not think that decorum, to say nothing of policy, would permit them to call up, by magic charms, the grounds, reasons, and principles of those terrible confiscatory and exterminatory periods. They would not set men upon calling from the quiet sleep of death any Samuel, to ask him by what act of arbitrary monarchs...by what fictitious tenures, invented to dispossess whole unoffending tribes and other chieftans! They would not conjure up the ghosts from the ruins of castles and churches to tell for what...the estates of the old Irish and gentry had been confiscated. They

would not wantonly call on those phantoms, to tell by what English acts of parliament, forced upon two reluctant kings, the lands of their country were put up to a mean auction in every goldsmith's shop in London; or chopped to pieces, and cut into rations, to pay the mercenary soldiery of a regicide usurper. They would not be so fond of titles under Cromwell, who, if he revenged an Irish rebellion against the sovereign authority of the parliament of England, had himself rebelled against the very parliament whose sovereignty he asserted full as much as the Irish nation, which he was sent to subdue and confiscate, could rebel against that parliament. (58)

Gibbons suggests that for Burke the "recurrent Protestant terror" is at fault for releasing the ghosts of the "Catholic/Gaelic order" (58). In this way, we can see the "ghosting effect" of insurrection, specifically 1798, to be a product of the Ascendancy's efforts towards hegemony, and we do see a "hauntology" at work here in the subjunctive mood of Burke's phrasing. The ghosts in Burke's speech suggest there always exists an alternative and a possibility for change. As David Lloyd explains, the ghost figure marks "a counter-modern effect of modernity that haunts the modernizing subject with an uncanny glimmer, that of an alternative track of human unfolding that is at once there and not there, of the present and of another time. And, as with all ghosts, that other time is not necessarily the past, but may intimate an only fitfully imaginable possible future" (43).

Published in 1817, Anne Plumptre's *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland During the Summer of 1814, and That of 1815* exhibits a blurring of temporality in which the past

becomes meshed with the possibility of future instability. Just as Wakefield's text reveals a degree of anxiety towards representing violence and explaining the events of 1798, Plumptre's narrative reflects the pervasive dis-ease that permeates the minds of travel writers in Ireland. As Ina Ferris puts it, "The post-Union Irish tour marks an important faltering in the self-possession of British civic discourse in the period. Its confidence by no means collapsed, but poise was tenuous and the generic mood typically one of discomfort" (24). In the summer of 1815, on her way from Limerick to the Rock of Cashel, Plumptre learns that the mail has been robbed, leaving one soldier dead. The attack was well-choreographed by between 20 and 50 men, but what was most alarming for Plumptre is that the men were not after money, but arms. She writes, "No attempt was made by the assailants to demand money; they demanded only the surrender of the arms. Such a story was not to be heard unmoved; no one could have heard it with indifference two hundred miles from the spot where it had happened, and two years after; but to think being then but a few miles from it, that I was the next morning to pass over it, that the affair had happened only two nights before, occasioned a feeling not to be described" (311). Plumptre is clearly disturbed and unable to find a language with which to articulate her feelings. She continues, "It was not apprehension for my own safety, I did not consider that as in any danger; I was not to travel by night; I had no arms to excite the desires of those unhappy wretches:--I know not what it was, but my mind was wholly untuned to thinking of any thing else; nothing was present to it but the idea of the shocking scene which had passed, and the inevitable consequences with which it must be attended" (311).

I would argue that for Plumptre, a part of her dis-ease is the way in which the ghosts of the rebellion and the continuing political instability in Ireland interfere with her “tourist’s gaze.” Her attempts at painting Ireland in terms of its antiquated beauty are thwarted by an unstable and violent present:

I came to Cashel to see the celebrated rock and the venerable remains of antiquity with which it is crowned, but could now see nothing except the increased sufferings which the country had prepared for itself; I became indifferent to every thing else, and I thought only of quitting scenes which seemed surrounded with nothing but gloom and horror. I saw the rock and the ruins at a little distance, as I entered the town, and as I quitted it they presented but new ideas of devastation, and I passed on. (311)

After hearing the story of the robbers, Plumptre resists playing the tourist primarily because the only thing she is capable of “seeing” after hearing about the armed insurrectionists is death, violence, and devastation. She sees Ireland not as a peaceful, picturesque landscape, but as a landscape on the brink of exploding with violence. As Ina Ferris explains, “Plumptre comes up against something that impinges on her consciousness but cannot be readily absorbed (named) by it, and her whole encounter is cast in terms of energies just below the surface themselves hard to read” (26). Having already decided to pass on, Plumptre seems to be suspended in indecision:

Yet for one moment I felt an impulse to stop the carriage and ascend the rock. The rain had ceased in the night, the morning was fine, the sun was shining upon the mouldering towers and turrets, and they assumed an air of magnificence which methought ought not to be passed by. The next

moment, however, the idea that though the heavens were bright and clear, all was gloom in the moral atmosphere, came too forcibly over my mind to be repelled, and I pursued my route. At present my feelings upon this occasion seem strange to me, they seemed so in a few hours after, but at the moment they were irresistible. I have often asked myself since, why I did not see the ruins of Cashel, --I could never answer the question satisfactorily. (312)

Again, Plumtre finds she is unable to articulate her reasons for not visiting the ruins. The Rock of Cashel is magnificent, but its presence is also intertwined with the current “moral atmosphere.” David Lloyd states,

Ruins that are the evacuated remnants of human activity dissolve back into natural forms in a landscape that is everywhere reduced to human domination and surveillance. As the actual and active presence of human agents is replaced by their inert residues, the historical narrative converges here with a tourist aesthetic that dissolves the violence of the past into the quasi-natural contours of a now pacified, picturesque landscape. The softened contours of masonry reduced to rubble, overgrown by vegetation and devoid of distinct military or cultic function, blend with those of a land emptied of people to erase the conflict. (13)

Generally, the ruin under the tourist’s gaze neutralizes the violence of the past as its historical narrative is eroded just like the very ground that surrounds it. Whatever story it has to tell is as silenced as the Irish men and women whose history has vanished with them into the grave. In Plumtre’s case, however, after hearing the rumors of

insurrection, the ruins suddenly have a history again and cannot be pushed back into the scenery.

The ruins also contain within themselves a “glimpse of militant rural Ireland” as they gesture towards a past that continues to extend into the present in spite of every means to erase it. The rock of Cashel is not *just* picturesque scenery, but in those moments after Plumptre hears about the stolen arms, it also becomes a reminder of the Kings of Munster and of the civilization that once dominated now colonized Ireland. David Lloyd in *Irish Times*, does not see the Irish ruin as a site of nostalgia. Instead, he sees the ruin as

the image of continuing violence or ruination that afflicts at once the present and the unsubsumed remnants of the past. If the work of modernity is in effect to obliterate both the memory and the present consciousness of its violence, and to naturalize progress as the self-evident form of human time, then the ruin stands as a kind of uneroded sill that both recalls destruction and comes into conjunction with the obstinate refusal in the present to accept that there are no alternatives...The ruins that dot the Irish landscape are the signs of alternative possibilities, of potentials in the past that have not been exhausted by or for the present.

(4)

For this section of Plumptre's travel narrative, the story of the armed insurrectionists coupled with the ruins of Ireland's past speak of alternative possibilities to the current modern trajectory of Irish history that seeks to place 1798 and other flashes of anti-colonial "discontinuities" swiftly in the past. While the tourist's gaze is intent on

calcifying the ruins in some far-gone mythological time, the "interruption" of that gaze by the insurrectionists reminds Plumptre that an alternative rhythm of Irish history persists beyond the English imperialist narrative of invasion and conquest. She can no longer gaze upon the ruins in fascination and wonder without seeing "gloom and horror" impeding upon the landscape.

Jameson remarks, "Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future they offer to prophesy) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us" (39). The erasure of the events of 1798 produces a hauntology that destabilizes hegemonic narratives of imperialism. The "ghosts" within these texts do not necessarily signify the *actual* events of the uprising or those who were involved in it, but reveal an unsettling of the status quo in terms of its troubled aftermath.

Chapter Two

Two Farthing Candles: Misreadings and Misalignments in

Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui*

“All who are governed by any species of fear are disposed to equivocation.”

--Maria Edgeworth in *Practical Education* (1798)

In the same year as the 1798 uprising, Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth³ published *Practical Education*--a collaborative project that set out to provide a distinct departure from previous educational models. Rather than just seeing education as something to be written upon the *tabula rasa* of students' minds or as a means through which the child's "true" inquisitive nature could be liberated, the Edgeworths sought to "adjudicate between the school of Locke and the school of Rousseau" (Butler 64), two of the leading educational philosophies at the time. According to Susan Manly in "Maria Edgeworth and the 'Light of Nature': Artifice, Autonomy, and Anti-Sectarianism in *Practical Education*" (1798), "Edgeworthian education ... was sociable, playful, and encouraged children to interrogate the assumptions and reasonings of those who were supposedly superiors" (146). The Edgeworths encouraged free thinking and inquisitiveness in their educational philosophy. Rather than relying on experience alone or an authoritarian prescriptive model, the Edgeworths felt strongly that education should be geared towards expanding a child's ability to think critically about the world. The Edgeworths' approach to education was met with great opposition and criticism primarily because they refused to construct a book that would provide stringent moralistic or

³ Henceforth referred to as RLE.

religious statements. As they wrote in their Preface, “We have no ambition to gain partizans, or to make proselytes” (152).

The Edgeworths set out to trouble the notion that education should be a strict regimental mental grooming of sorts rather than a liberatory exercise in free thinking. In her novels, too, Maria Edgeworth encouraged a philosophy of associationism while at the same time she asked readers to confront their own prejudices and assumptions about their experiences and the world around them. With an audience already predisposed to seeing the 1798 uprising in terms of black and white, orange and green, Edgeworth sets out in *Castle Rackrent* and *Ennui* to blur these boundaries, to confront binary thinking, and arrive at more complex “readings” of the rising.

The Edgeworth family’s social and political convictions meant that the summer of 1798 found them with few friends surrounding their estate in County Longford. Contrary to the usual status quo of absentee-landlordism and general attitude of exploitation and neglect towards the Irish tenantry, RLE made it his mission to enact on his estate what at the time were seriously radical reforms for an Anglo-Irishman of his class and upbringing. Even though, as Marilyn Butler reminds us, his changes were certainly “paternalistic” and there was “nothing egalitarian about any of his reforms” (86), yet, as Anglo-Irish landlords went in the late eighteenth century, RLE distinguished himself as an individual sympathetic to certain radical enlightenment principles with a genuine concern for his Irish tenants. He dismissed the estate’s middleman and ran the estate himself, he abolished the feudalistic practice of *duty work* and *duty fowl*, and even granted a *de facto tenant right* (a sort of pseudo-landownership) to tenants who made improvements upon their land (85). He was sympathetic to the aims of the French

Revolution (111), supported Catholic Relief efforts and abolishment of the Penal Laws (112), and very publicly chose Joseph Johnson—the same radical publisher of Godwin and Blake who was later persecuted for sedition for his support of the French Revolution—as the family publisher (124). As political tensions rose in Ireland in the late eighteenth century, RLE became increasingly critical of the local Orangemen Yeomanry, seeing them as “galloping about the country in all their new-made bravado [aggravating] the situation much more than the Defenders themselves” (137). RLE’s *Memoirs* highlight the way in which the Edgeworth family found themselves in a political no-man’s land as they neither found sympathy with their Loyalist neighbors, nor felt sympathy for the brewing insurrection. While the *Memoirs* were begun by RLE himself, Maria Edgeworth would eventually finish them, providing a unique insight into the harrowing events of the uprising. Fearing that violence between clashing Orangemen and Defenders would spill over to his otherwise peaceful family home, RLE organized his own militia, which contained both Catholics and Protestants, an act which was, as Maria Edgeworth remarked in her father’s *Memoirs*, “so unusual, and thought to be so hazardous a degree of liberality, that by some of an opposite party it was attributed to the worst motives” (*Memoirs* 211). RLE’s unwillingness to throw himself and his family into one distinctive “camp” during the uprising certainly made him a prime suspect for treasonous acts, but it was precisely this lack of partisanship that would become a theme in so many of Maria Edgeworth’s novels.

Distrust surrounding the Edgeworth family only grew after their home was spared from destruction during the rebellion, an act that “created jealousy and suspicion in the minds of many, who at this time saw every thing through the mist of party prejudice”

(223). A year earlier, the Edgeworths' housekeeper had lent money to a rebel leader. When the rebels came upon the Edgeworths' home, the leader felt sympathy for the family and instructed them that "not a soul should get leave to go into her master's house; not a twig should be touched, nor a leaf harmed" (222). Because the Edgeworth estate was not looted and burnt to the ground, many of their neighbors saw this as direct evidence that RLE, already suspect because of his reformist views, was working as a spy for France (Butler 138). When, during the uprising, the family took shelter at a nearby inn, Maria Edgeworth watched as a mob began to form at the steps of the courthouse wherein RLE was standing guard. The mob circulated around one individual who

pointing up to the top of the court-house, exclaimed, "*That* young Edgeworth ought to be dragged down from the top of that house."

Our housekeeper burst into the room, so much terrified she could hardly speak.

"My master, ma'am!—it is all against my master, the mob say they will tear him to pieces, if they catch hold of him. They say he's a traitor, that he illuminated the gaol to deliver it up to the French." (227)

Maria Edgeworth expresses her astonishment towards anyone who could misread her father's act as treason: "My father had literally but two farthing candles, by the light of which he had been reading the newspaper late the preceding night. These however were said to be signals for the enemy!" (227). When RLE returned to the inn to be united with his family, a mob assembled again and RLE received a dangerous blow to the head while being pelted by stones, bricks, and turf (230). In the end, RLE's life was spared, but these events left a life-long impression on his daughter. She concludes this chapter in her

father's *Memoirs* by stating, "He may be conceived to be a traitor, because he would not be a tyrant; he may be called a rebel, for offering to defend a loyal garrison; and may well nigh be torn to pieces by a mob, for having read the newspapers by two farthing candles" (238). The mob was so desperate to see the world along convenient party lines that they almost killed an innocent man. The strict binaries that framed the rising and its many complex players inform the kind of partisan thinking that Edgeworth would seek to unravel in her novels.

Just as Maria Edgeworth's father's actions were "misread" by an irrational mob as evidence of some grand political scheme, the characters in her novels are also often "misread" in binary terms, both by other characters within the novel and by the reading public. In relation to *Castle Rackrent*, I argue that the performative nature of Edgeworth's work satirizes the colonizer's impulse towards seeking out and constructing a subaltern consciousness or what Spivak terms the "subject-effect." In *In Other Worlds*, Spivak describes the subject-effect as follows:

that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ("text" in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language and so on. [...] Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. (204)

The English reader reading *Castle Rackrent* perceives the subjectivity of its narrator, Thady Quirk, as cohesive, but it is actually comprised of many "networks," strands of ideologies that are inherently heterogeneous and yet give the *appearance* of stability. In

Edgeworth's novel, the intentionality and motivation of the Irish subaltern character, Thady Quirk, remains in shadow and cannot be "spoken," but subaltern acts have a tendency to be subsumed into larger, "mythological" campaigns and ideologies. *Castle Rackrent* resists ideas of totality in its very structure as it contains three distinctive voices: Thady Quirk, the main narrator; an Editor, whose interjections and bumbling observations on Irish culture are meant to reflect an erroneous outsider's perspective; and of course the "ghost" of Edgeworth, herself, who haunts the novel disrupting any sense of linearity and cohesion. Edgeworth satirizes the colonizer's desire of unity and totality while at the same time commenting on the inherent heterogeneity of motivations that arise in a conflict such as the 1798 uprising. While many critics question where Thady's "loyalties" lie or assume that his actions are always motivated by partisan politics, I argue that Edgeworth purposefully misleads her readers into constructing orange and green binaries as a way of satirizing these tendencies. Disguising Thady as a "throwback" to some distant Gaelic past, Edgeworth sets up the reader to stereotype Thady and thus miss the moments in the narrative where his discourse enters the language of secular modernity and gloss over the flickers of a deep understanding of the complex capitalist economies that power his world. Instead of seeing Thady as loyal to one camp or another, I read Thady as loyal only to himself with his intentions (whether politically motivated or not) purposefully kept in shadow. Furthermore, in *Ennui* Edgeworth interrogates and critiques the way in which the *invention* of a "subaltern consciousness" actually produces certain genre constructions such as the historical, anecdotal narrative and what we might term today the "anthropological study," revealing the ways in which discourses of Irishness are manufactured and perpetuated by self-interested English writers who only

further serve an imperial mission. In *Lady Geraldine*, Edgeworth creates a character who reveals a resistance towards falling into the binaries created by these narratives and demands that her Irish brethren “be themselves” even in the face of a constrictive power apparatus.

Initially coined in Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, the term “subaltern” denotes individuals outside of the socioeconomic order who “by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a ‘State’” (52). Because the subaltern cannot be considered “unified” in terms of state formation, as Gramsci explains, “The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic” (54) in the sense that the subaltern can only be located outside of grand narratives of nationalism. In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak analyzes the Subaltern Studies Group led by Ranajit Guha and its efforts to uncover and give “voice” to the subaltern--the underrepresented and economically dispossessed in postcolonial India. Any attempt to “give” the subaltern collective speech presupposes a sense of solidarity among a heterogeneous population. In this way, Spivak says, to confront the subaltern “is not to represent them, but to learn to represent ourselves” (288). For Spivak, the idea of a collective identity amongst the subaltern is connected to a colonizing impulse towards totality and cultural mythology and does not take into account the heterogeneity of a colonized or otherwise marginalized and oppressed people.

A great deal of criticism has been built up around the discussion of the motivations behind *Castle Rackrent*’s narrator--the old and supposedly illiterate steward, Thady Quirk, “*Old Thady*” or, as he likes to call himself, “*Honest Thady*.” Thady tells the story of the Rackrent family who had changed their name (and, consequently, their

religion) from O'Shaughlin during the Cromwellian wars in order to maintain the estate, and he is the steadfast observer of a series of dissolute and corrupt landowners and many failed marriages. At the end of the novel, his son Jason, who has risen up the ranks to become a clever and ruthlessly shrewd lawyer, eventually buys out the debts of the last owner of Castle Rackrent. While it is true that the estate eventually falls into the hands of the Quirks, Thady is surprisingly ambivalent towards his son's usurping of the property. As Thady's attitude towards his son Jason's seizing of the estate suggests, not even the notion of "family" contains any sort of cultural solidarity.

James Newcomer in *Maria Edgeworth the Novelist* argues that Thady is actually working with his son Jason to destroy the Rackrent family, citing several moments in the novel where they work in tandem to orchestrate their demise. Newcomer claims, "Thady may not have planned that Jason displace the Rackrents, but the groundwork that Thady lays makes it possible for Jason to seize the opportunities that come his way" (147).

While there are moments that the father and son seem to be working as a team, I would argue that just as we cannot be sure why the Defenders joined the ranks of the United Irishmen during the 1798 uprising, we cannot be so sure of the exact motivations behind Thady's intentions and what *he* hopes to gain, as distinct from what the bourgeois man of business Jason Quirk hopes to obtain from the destruction of the Rackrents. In contrast to Newcomer, in her seminal biography on Maria Edgeworth, Marilyn Butler sees Thady as undyingly loyal to the Rackrent family. For her, "The source of comedy is the eccentricity and superficial inconsistency of his comments, which in fact follow logically from his loyalty to the Rackrents" (352). According to Butler, Edgeworth intended for her audience to reject Thady's obsequiousness "and supply the correct, the enlightened,

moral frame of reference” (Butler 358). Terry Eagleton suggests in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* that neither Edgeworth herself nor Thady quite know what they are doing in this narrative. On the one hand, he aligns Edgeworth with the “Editor” of the novel, suggesting that Edgeworth is the one “being taken for a ride” (167) by Thady’s conning and scheming. Rather than seeing all this “conning and scheming” as a part of Edgeworth’s larger project that includes commentary on the way in which we construct knowledge, Eagleton views Edgeworth as bereft of literary agency and it is her fictional characters that are controlling *her*. Eagleton hedges a little on the matter of Thady and suggests how on the other hand perhaps it is Thady who is not fully conscious of his own motivations. He argues that Thady is “not so much deceiving as self-deceived. Perhaps he *believes* that he loves his masters, but in fact does not; perhaps he is unconsciously working against them but unable to acknowledge this truth himself” (167). Instead of seeing Thady as delusional, we might instead read into the layers of his seemingly contradictory actions to explore motivations that are complex and informed by a deep ambivalence for the people he is hired to serve.

In her criticism of *Ennui*, Edgeworth’s only novel to deal directly with the 1798 uprising, Mitzi Myers sees the indirectness of Edgeworth’s re-telling not as a symptom of a fear to relive the past or as symptomatic of Anglo-Irish class anxiety, but as a concerted effort to analyze the ironies and contradictions of wartime through the domestic sphere. She writes, “Denying women the pen as well as the sword, masculinist commentary cannot understand domestic place as ironized textual space or decode home front defense as public sphere critique” (374). For Edgeworth, *not* writing about 1798 was a political choice in the same way writing about it was. As Myers explains, her decision not to

partake in the graphic, violent, and exceedingly inflammatory discourse surrounding the rising was a calculation on her part to avoid falling into one of two of the increasingly unwavering camps in the post-1798 years. For Myers, Edgeworth “refuses the inflammatory Orange and Green binarisms of contemporary mythologizers and their pornographic luxuriance in grisly reportage” (376). Mary Jean Corbett echoes Myers’ sentiments, calling for a reevaluation of Edgeworth criticism. In trying to align Edgeworth along party lines, we lose the richness and subtlety of her finely crafted satires of colonial Ireland. For Corbett, it is fine time we stop labeling Edgeworth as a conservative Unionist,

a view that shapes so many readings of her work by assuming a secure and stable relationship between the biographical facts of her life and the politic interests of her fictions. For in raising issues of interestedness and epistemology, Edgeworth breaks not only with the binary constructions of the historiographic tradition..., but also with the tradition of anti-Jacobin fiction with which her work has so often been associated: she substitutes for sectarian certainties a more complicated approach to representation, plot, and interpretation—one that postcolonial historians and critics of her fiction have been exceedingly slow to grasp. (322)

What I wish to do in my analysis of *Castle Rackrent* is to liberate Thady from these same binarisms. Instead of attempting to place Thady in an Orange or Green camp, I want to read the “silences” in *Castle Rackrent* in an attempt to tease out the heterogeneity of the colonized

Irish characters. As Spivak notes regarding the “silences” in a text, quoting Pierre Macherey,

What is important in a work is what it does not say. That is not the same as the careless notation “what it refuses to say,” although that would in itself be interesting: a method might be built on it, with the task of *measuring silences*, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But rather this, what the work *cannot* say is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence.

(286)

Recently, Jarlath Killeen has argued in *Gothic Ireland*, that Thady “is, in fact, loyal to both [the Rackrents and Jason] *at different narrative points*. While he is happy to see the anti-colonial usurpation of the Norman Castle take place through the O’Shaughlins, he does not wish to allow the forces of secular modernity to gain a foothold on the landscape” (201). Rather than consider Thady as being loyal to one or another “camp” in the novel, we must ask to what extent Thady is only loyal to himself. To what extent is that “loyalty” at certain moments to various belief systems a performance that hides a motivation to which we inherently do not have access?

For Killeen, Thady and his ilk represent “the last gasp of a pre-modern and Gothic landscape” (200) whereas Jason represents an upstart gentry “undermining the ‘underground gentry’ of the previous Catholic aristocrats” (200). While the subaltern by its very nature is outside the socioeconomic order, there are flashes in the novel where Thady reveals a much closer relationship to the language of modernity that his happy-go-lucky Irish performance belies. Instead of making this sharp distinction based on

religiosity and “pre-modern” Catholics and an emerging Catholic middle class, we might instead try to locate the modern in the older generation Thady represents. While it is true that Thady belongs to a familial line that flaunts their ancient Gaelic pedigree, he also reveals himself to be a shrewd businessman and to possess a cunning awareness of the law, leases, and the exchange of capital. In his discussion of the Catholic middle class emerging in Ireland in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Kevin Whelan remarks how “the family strategy of the traditional farm depended on a dual allegiance—to the ancestors of the past and the inheritors of the future” (29). While Thady the steward is certainly not a Catholic “big farmer,” he does possess certain affinities to this elusive Irish middle class figure. Rather than flagrantly displaying their wealth, these Catholic big farmers often disguised their affluence and

blended in a surprisingly inconspicuous way into the background. Their typically understated farmhouses could escape an unobservant eye. The hurrying traveller, passing rapidly through the roadside rattle-taggle of miserable cabins, was overwhelmed by images of poverty; he failed to notice the discreet world of the big farmer, embedded in the centre of their farms and insulated from the perimeter of poverty around them. (30-31)

Thady flies under the radar in a similar way. His appearance and proclaimed allegiance to the “old ways” serve to mask an individual who is quite capable of craftily maneuvering through the modern world, and who clearly has no reservations about exploiting his landlords’ prejudice against him as a bumbling old steward for his own ends. Thady is able to adeptly navigate both ancient feudal and secular modern economies, and to underestimate him or label him as “pre-modern” is to fall precisely into the kind of trap

that dupes the Editor, the “ignorant English reader” (*Castle Rackrent* 63), the fictional landlords in *Castle Rackrent*, and, indeed, the real-life landlords of the late eighteenth century into believing that they were surrounded by illiterate peasants rather than an emerging, increasingly business savvy, Irish middle class. If Edgeworth makes one thing clear in her father’s *Memoirs* about the rising, it is the cleverness by which the Irish can disguise themselves. Remarking on a secret subterranean system of tunnels in which a local defender would hide during raids, she declares,

How ingeniously cunning the lower Irish are in contriving concealments and modes of escape is well known in Ireland, to every one who has been out on any of these *rebel* or *defender* hunts.... Upon examination it was found, that from his garden to his house there had been practised a secret passage under ground: a large meal-chest in the kitchen had a false bottom, which lifted up and down at pleasure, to let him into his subterraneous dwelling” (210-211).

Indeed, nothing in Ireland is what it seems: a simple kitchen cupboard is a gateway to a secret underground hideout, and a simple, supposedly illiterate steward is also a shrewd businessman capable of overturning and destabilizing an *ancien regime*.

One of the most striking characteristics of Edgeworth’s writing is her insistence that to a great extent the lower classes of Ireland are “unknowable,” and she is at pains to point out the folly of anyone who makes an attempt to “know” and pin down this elusive group of people. In the preface to *Castle Rackrent* the Editor is intent upon undertaking a subaltern project similar to the ones that Guha and the Subaltern Studies group would encourage. The editor is critical of the “big man” approach to history, stating, “The

heroes of history are so decked out by the fine fancy of the professed historian; they talk in such measured prose, and act from such sublime or such diabolical motives, that few have sufficient taste, wickedness, or heroism, to sympathize in their fate” (61). The remedy, the Editor asserts, is to look to the “little man” and “secret memoirs, and private anecdotes” (61). While it is true that the anecdote has the power to supplant master narratives, in post-1798 Ireland, the “anecdote” was a genre that could be quite partisan, biased, and exceedingly problematic. The Editor declares, “The prevailing taste of the public for anecdote has been censured and ridiculed by critics who aspire to the character of superior wisdom: but if we consider it in a proper point of view, this taste is an incontestable proof of the good sense and profoundly philosophic temper of the present times” (61). Instead of reinforcing the subjective nature of first-hand accounts of history, I would argue that Edgeworth is poking a little fun at the egregious numbers of “anecdotal accounts” coming out of Ireland, especially those accounts related to the rising, and is expressing her distaste for writers such as Musgrave and the ways in which they capitalized on a culture they neither knew nor could ever completely understand as outsiders. While it is true that the focus on Thady’s narrative is a paradigm shift from the “big man approach” to history, his tale is one that requires meticulous close-reading and care. The “philosophic temper of the present times” towards memoir, confessions, and anecdotes should not subsume other forms of knowledge, for on close inspection Thady’s narrative is filled with sleights of hand, deception, and half-truths. To emphasize this point, Edgeworth is hyper-critical of the reading public’s taste for such writers, having the Editor declare,

The public often judiciously countenance those, who, without sagacity to discriminate character, without elegance of style to relieve the tediousness of narrative, without enlargement of mind to draw any conclusions from the facts they relate, simply pour forth anecdotes, and retail conversations, with all the minute prolixity of a gossip in a country town. (62)

Essentially she is suggesting that the public's desire for anecdotes is exceedingly troublesome in the sense that such accounts are often given without context, an awareness of historical and political factors, and any reflection on the deep-seated social issues they illuminate. Yet, even the feeble attempts by the Editor at performing such sort of critical work are undermined and made out to be ridiculous in several instances. In the end, any attempts at encapsulating the Irish are futile and fleeting. It was said that after reading *Castle Rackrent* King George III "rubbed his hands and said what what—I know something now of my Irish subjects" (Butler 359), but in reality the "ignorant English reader" merely walked away with only what he wanted to know and nothing more.

The Editor who claims to be providing explanatory notes of Thady's idioms is the most erroneous reader. One of the more blatant examples of a "misreading" of Irish culture on the part of the Editor is the fact that in the Preface he claims that Thady is illiterate even though there are many examples of Thady subtly betraying an ability to read in the narrative itself. Thady's performance of illiteracy is something he uses to his advantage at several points in the novel. His masters make poor assumptions about his education, and this allows Thady to gain access to various financial documents and collection letters. When Sir Kit, one of the dissolute inheritors of the Rackrent estate,

becomes embroiled in gambling debts, it is revealed that Thady has worked alongside his son Jason to take over Sir Kit's accounts:

At last, at Christmas, the agent wrote over to stop the drafts, for he could raise no more money on bond or mortgage, or from the tenants, or any how, nor had he any more to lend himself, and desired at the same time to decline the agency for the future, wishing Sir Kit his health and happiness, and the compliments of the season, *for I saw the letter before ever it was sealed when my son copied it.* (75, emphasis added)

Other moments in the novel reveal that Thady is a more astute and able reader than he has initially let on. For instance, he possesses an acute knowledge of Lady Skinflint's (the first lady of Castle Rackrent) clothing receipts: "My lady had her privy purse—and she had her weed ashes, and her sealing money upon the signing of all the leases, with something to buy gloves besides; and besides again often took money from the tenants, if offered properly, to speak for them to Sir Murtagh about abatements and renewals" (71). Obviously highly literate in the minute details of his masters' financial lives, Thady is often "accidentally" positioned in such a way as to closely observe monetary disputes such as those between Lady Skinflint and Sir Murtagh, her husband. As Thady tells us, in one fateful argument over an abatement, Sir Murtagh drops dead. Before the fight escalated, Thady relates how he was "within hearing of the door, and now I wish I had made bold to step in" (72). But even though Thady is well aware of Sir Murtagh's already poor health, he notably does not step in "and so it was, for Sir Murtagh in his passion broke a blood-vessel, and all the law in the land could do nothing in that case" (72). Thady knows enough about Lady Skinflint's finances to understand "she had a fine

jointure set upon her” (72), and because of this “took herself away to the great joy of the tenantry” (72).

Thady also seems to have an incredibly detailed knowledge of all of the debts accrued by the later inheritor of the estate, Sir Condy: debts that he accumulated from Thady’s son Jason. He bemoans the fact that his son Jason, a newly made attorney, would go after Sir Condy, but it almost seems as if Thady has been keeping score and maintaining careful inventory of all the bills Sir Condy owes all over town:

To cash lent, and to ditto, and to ditto, and to ditto, and oats, and bills paid at the milliner’s and linen draper’s, and many dresses for the fancy balls in Dublin for my lady, and all the bills to the workmen and tradesmen for the scenery of the theatre, and the chandler’s and grocer’s bills, and tailor’s besides butcher’s and baker’s, and . . . interest and compound interest was now mounted to a terrible deal on many other notes and bonds for money borrowed, and there was besides hush money to the sub-sheriff, and sheets upon sheets of old and new attorney’s bills, with heavy balances, *as per former account furnished*, brought forward with interest thereon. (106)

It progresses like this for another page or so, but the point is that Thady has a keen awareness of the language of money and debt, specifically his *masters’* money and debt. Thady simply could not possess this awareness without some access to written language. One can imagine that perhaps Thady, and his “real” Irish counterparts, may have relied on the ruse of illiteracy for personal advantage. It would seem that Thady has a better grasp of the complex nature of Sir Condy’s endless debts than Sir Condy himself:

but this I know, that when the evening came on the which Sir Condry had appointed to settle all with my son Jason, and when he comes into the parlour, and sees the sight of bills and load of papers all gathered on the great dining-table for him, he puts his hands before both his eyes, and cried out, ‘Merciful Jassus! what is it I see before me.’ (107)

Significantly, Sir Condry covers his eyes while claiming to “see.” This act is symbolic of the way in which landlords, especially absentee landlords, would claim to know what is “good” for the Irish and their Irish estates without actually “seeing” them or the reality of their crumbling conditions and fallow grounds. Far from being an ignorant old-world throwback, Thady is astutely aware of every debt, every bill, every cow, pig, and horse on the estate and it is his masters who are arguably trapped in a “pre-modern” *ancien regime* of aristocratic negligence.

These flashes of Thady’s cunning and economic wherewithal are *intentionally* muddled and buried in the narrative so as to be overlooked by the reader. Thady does not live in the land of myth and fancy, but is grounded in the ebb and flow of monetary exchange and material wealth. Beneath this comical, uneducated façade is an individual who is keenly aware of what composes modernity—capital, labor, the exchange of goods, debt, and inheritance.

Edgeworth highlights Thady’s performance on the first page of the narrative by having him mention the “long great coat” he wears. The Editor leaves a footnote describing the Irish mantle, quoting Spenser’s pathological anxiety towards the long flowing cloak, which was once a staple in the Irish wardrobe. Spenser writes how the mantle is “a fit house for an outlaw, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloak for a thief”

(65). This footnote casts a shadow on Thady's character, implying that he is hiding something behind his foolish and good-humored countenance. What seems to truly bother Spenser, though, is the way in which the mantle does not fall into one category of dress or utility, but seems chameleon-like in its qualities: "When it raineth, it is his pent-house; when it bloweth, it is his tent; when it freezeth it is his tabernacle. In summer he can wear it loose; in winter he can wrap it close; at all times he can use it; never heavy, never cumbersome" (66). The mantle, like Thady's dumb Irishman act, is a cloak and is useful for several applications. Thady is not just playing for one team, or striving for one singular outcome with his performance. His motivations remain intentionally "cloaked" in the novel, and our "misreadings" of his intentions by consolidating them into one or another political "camp" are precisely the sort of trap Edgeworth may be setting for us.

In many ways, the muddled and elusive nature of Thady's actions reflects the heterogeneity of agrarian uprisings such as those perpetrated by The Whiteboys that were taking place in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Although many of these groups and affiliations were later subsumed and consolidated into the bourgeois nationalist rhetoric of the United Irishmen movement, their beginnings were much more centered on more immediate economic changes or long-standing land, rent, and wage grievances. The Whiteboys are one such example of a subaltern group that protested against numerous issues such as enclosure and tithes. Their means of protest were clandestine and destructive: they operated by "tearing down—or 'levelling'—fences, hedges, and walls, by filling in ditches and digging up pasture, and by maiming or 'houghing' cattle" (34). While their acts would later become symbolic of anti-colonial sentiment, it is important to note that, according to Smyth, "The Whiteboys sought to regulate the local economy.

Whiteboyism was informed by a vision of social justice—Thompson’s ‘moral economy’—not social revolution. Pre-famine agrarian protest movements were what social scientists call ‘reactive’. Their motives were conservative, or backward-looking, their aims limited, their tactics pragmatic” (43). There are several examples where Thady confronts his masters on rent issues, specifically. In describing Sir Murtagh, who married a member of the Skinflint family, and his tenure as master of Castle Rackrent, Thady reveals an awareness of the distinct social injustice that defines Sir Murtagh’s relationship with his tenants. Sir Murtagh and his miserly wife abuse their status as landowners, forcing their tenants to provide them with “duty fowls, and duty turkeys, and duty geese” (69). As our Editor explains, “In many leases in Ireland, tenants were *formerly* bound to supply an inordinate quantity of poultry to their landlords” (127). The emphasis on *formerly* is important here in that Sir Murtagh reveals a strident adherence to the written law rather than the looser, unspoken understandings between master and tenant such as the use of the commons, for example.

Sir Murtagh does eventually get his comeuppance after he digs up a fairy mound and subsequently begins coughing blood and eventually dies. As Thady emphasizes, Sir Murtagh in his pursuit of the word of law in his endless land contracts, lawsuits and trials, forgets the law of the word, or the unspoken social contract within agrarian Irish society. Thady tells us, “[Sir Murtagh] dug up a fairy mound against my advice, and had no luck afterwards. Though a learned man in the law, he was a little too incredulous in other matters” (71). In the endnote attached to the reference to the fairy mound, the Editor emphasizes the subterranean and secretive nature of the fairies:

The country people in Ireland certainly *had* great admiration mixed with reverence, if not dread, of fairies. They believed that beneath these fairy-mounts were spacious subterraneous palaces inhabited by *the good people*, who must not on any account be disturbed. When the wind raises a little eddy of dust upon the road, the poor people believe that it is raised by the fairies, that it is a sign that they are journeying from one of the fairies' mounts to another, and they say to the fairies, or to the dust as it passes, 'God speed ye, gentlemen; God speed ye.' (130)

For Joep Leerssen, the presence of fairies in the Anglo-Irish novel is often a veiled reference to the "restless" colonized natives. In William Allingham's poem "The Fairies" Leerssen perceives a deep-seated anxiety towards these little people who live in the wild, just beyond the margins of society:

Up the airy mountain,
 Down the rushy glen,
 We daren't go a-hunting
 For fear of little men.
 Wee folk, good folk,
 Trooping all together,
 Green jacket, red cap
 And white owl's feather! (165)

As Leerssen explains, "Allingham is not only echoing a popular superstition at this point, he follows the centuries-old discourse of the master race as it exorcizes some twinges of uneasiness in its ascendancy, by associating subdued aboriginals with imaginary fantasy-

beings—both of them marginalized beyond the pale of normal, well-ordered life, beyond the pale of reality” (166). Indeed, as Susan B. Egenolf notes in “Maria Edgeworth in Blackface: *Castle Rackrent* and the Irish Rebellion of 1798,” fairies or “good folk” were often used as euphemisms for restless Irish natives and insurgents. She states, “To level a fairy-mound is not only to risk the displeasure of ‘*the good people,*’ but also to destroy a potential lookout and warning station essential to protect the ‘natives of Ireland’ from invaders” (856). Disrupting a fairy mound is tantamount to breaking apart the very social weave of the local indigenous people, and folk tales abound concerning the mysterious sticky end hapless Anglo-Irish landlords often face when they defy the local code. As Angela Bourke explains, these mounds, “are sights of avoidance, overgrown and undisturbed, metaphors for areas of silence and circumvention in the social life of the communities which tell stories about them. They are places out of place; their time is out of time” (569). In Thady’s narrative, Sir Murtagh’s death in the wake of the dismantling of the fairy mound serves as a “lesson” of sorts to explain a karmic relationship between negligent landlord and an angry, exploited land and people.

Just as Thady is somehow always at the center of his masters’ failed colonizing efforts, he is also the center of each failed marriage in the novel. As Jane Elizabeth Dougherty argues, “The Act of Union was consistently depicted as a marriage, with England as the groom and Ireland as the bride, a metaphor which appeared not only in cartoons and popular entertainments, but also in pamphlet literature and parliamentary speeches of the period” (202). Thady’s dismantling of these marriages is reflective of larger underground movements that worked to destroy the coerced “marriage” between England and Ireland. When Sir Kit brings home a wealthy “jewess” as his bride, Thady

plays up his funny Irishman act, almost, it would seem, to antagonize Sir Kit and emasculate him in his wife's eyes. In one key scene where Sir Kit and his bride are walking along the demesne, the woman begins to ridicule the countryside, taking particular offense at the bog, stating, "It's a very ugly prospect, my dear" (77). Sir Kit becomes annoyed with her criticism, and Thady steps in *supposedly* to mitigate the tension between them. After Sir Kit's new wife insults the small trees at the edge of the bog, Thady starts in:

They are very well grown for their age, and you'll not see the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin at-all-at-all through the screen, when once the leaves come out. But, my lady, you must not quarrel with any part or parcel of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin, for you don't know how many hundred years that same bit of bog has been in the family; we would not part with the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin upon no account at all; it cost the late Sir Murtagh two hundred good pounds to defend his title to it and boundaries against the O'Leary's who cut a road through it. (78)

Thady's monologue reduces the lady to hysterics: "she fell to laughing like one out of their right mind, and made me say the name of the bog over for her to get it by heart, a dozen times—then she must ask me how to spell it, and what was the meaning of it in English" (78). I would argue that there is something performative in Thady's description of the bog, for instead of easing the tension between Sir Kit and his new wife, he seems to intentionally escalate it, egging the lady on to purposefully annoy his master and turn him against her because he feels so humiliated. Thady states that Sir Kit stood by "whistling all the while; I verily believed she laid the corner stone of all her future

misfortunes at that very instant; but I said no more, only looked at Sir Kit” (78). In addition to deriding the Rackrent estate, Sir Kit’s bride also mocks him by denying him her wealth, surely the very thing that spurred him to marry her. As Sir Kit’s manservant tells Thady, “She has thousands of English pounds concealed in diamonds about her, which she as good as promised to give up to my master before he married, but now she won’t part with any of them, and she must take the consequences” (78). While it is Sir Kit who insists on eating pork at every meal out of spite towards his Jewish bride, it is Thady who actually delivers a pig to Sir Kit’s table. In disgust, Sir Kit’s wife finally “shut herself up on her room” (79), and as Thady tells us, “My master said she might stay there, with an oath: and to make sure of her, he turned the key in the door, and kept it ever after in his pocket” (79). In the end, Sir Kit’s wife becomes a commodity, and Thady refuses to interfere with her unjust imprisonment because her very presence—locked up and secluded—insures a sort of guarantee on the estate. She is literally deposited into the crumbling Rackrent property, a security that could be put forth to creditors once the dust has settled and the fast times of Sir Kit and his gambling and philandering ways have ended, as they inevitably do, with a duel.

No one interferes on the bride’s behalf until Sir Kit’s death, and then “all the gentlemen within twenty miles of us came in a body, as it were, to set my lady at liberty, and to protest against her confinement, which they now for the first time understood was against her consent” (82). All throughout this time, Thady remains a passive observer and never speaks a word in this woman’s defense. Yet, after Sir Kit’s death, he suddenly becomes very interested in her, saying,

Had she meant to make any stay in Ireland, I stood a great chance of being a great favourite with her; for when she found I understood the weathercock, she was always finding some pretence to be talking to me, and asking me which way the wind blew, and was it likely, did I think, to continue fair in England. But when I saw she had made up her mind to spend the rest of her days upon her own income and jewels in England, I considered her quite as a foreigner, and not at all any longer a part of the family. (83)

In these subtle moments we can see that Thady may not be a Gaelic avenger nor is he necessarily the obsequious colonized subject who has internalized his subordinate status. As the widow suggests, Thady “knows the way of the weathercock,” and inquires about “which way the wind blew.” Thady only cares about this woman when the possibility arises that she might remain in Ireland and therefore he could potentially gain access to her wealth. His loyalties are as shifting as the bogs upon which Castle Rackrent is built, and after she finally quits the estate, he notably turns on her again, saying how “it was a shame for her, being [Sir Kit’s] wife, not to show more duty and to have given it up when he condescended to ask so often for such a bit of a trifle in his distresses, especially when he all along made it no secret he married for money” (21). Clearly, Thady’s ideas of “family” and “marriage,” at least where the Rackrents are concerned, are not sacred, and in fact are contingent only upon money and personal advancement.

Similarly, when Sir Condy, the gentleman who inherits Castle Rackrent after Sir Kit’s death, has to choose between the wealthy heiress Isabella and the poor, but beautiful, Judy M’Quirk, Thady once again steps in to sabotage any chance of happiness

Sir Condy might have. One evening after quite a bit of drink, Sir Condy decides to flip a coin to determine which one of these women he will marry. The coin in itself symbolizes the way in which one woman may be just as good as the other, and indeed blurs the boundaries between them. As Thady relates the scene, Sir Condy declares,

“I’m come to a determination upon the spot”; with that he swore such a terrible oath, as made me cross myself; “and by this book,” said he, snatching up my ballad book, mistaking it for my prayer book, which lay in the window, “and by this book,” says he, “and by all the books that ever were shut and opened, it’s come to a toss-up with me, and I’ll stand or fall by the toss” (89).

This passage is a play of signification between sacred/profane doubles, and things in this scene are not necessarily as they appear. While Sir Condy does make an “oath,” his vow is certainly not of the sacred kind. The “oath” is actually a swear word that makes Thady “cross himself”—an act which is in itself a sacred kind of vow. Sir Condy *thinks* he picks up a prayer book, but he only holds in his hand just an ordinary ballad book. While holding up the book may signify a solemn oath, he never *actually* swears by it. Indeed, Sir Condy suggests that perhaps any book could serve his purposes just as well as he utters “and by all the books that ever were shut and opened, it’s come to a toss-up with me” (89). If Sir Condy stands by anything, it is the arbitrary, double-sided nature of the coin that can decide one’s fate one way or the other. Thady states, “it was plain to see his heart was for poor Judy” (89), but the coin ends up favoring Isabella, leaving Sir Condy heartbroken.

I would argue further that the idea of the “oath” has a particular historical weight in the larger context of this novel. Thady remarks, “Now, though as easy a man, you would think, as any in the wide world, there was no such thing as making him unsay one of these sorts of vows which he had learned to reverence when young, as I well remember teaching him to toss up for bog-berries on my knee” (90). Here, the Editor interjects with this footnote:

It has been maliciously and unjustly hinted, that the lower classes of the people in Ireland pay but little regard to oaths; yet it is certain that some oaths have great power over their minds. Sometimes they swear they will be revenged on some of their neighbours; this is an oath that they are never known to break. But, what is infinitely more extraordinary and unaccountable, they sometimes make and keep a vow against whiskey; those vows are usually limited to a short time. (90)

Indeed, oaths and oath-taking were a crucial aspect of secret societies such as The Whiteboys and later The United Irishmen. Interestingly enough, oath-taking, and not acts of destruction, became the central theme of the Whiteboy act and insurrection act of 1796 (Smyth 44). Yet, Jim Smyth notes in *Men of No Property* the difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of these oaths. He writes,

William Farrell of Carlow recalled that after they had taken the United Irishman’s oath, “the people were as merry as crickets, for every man that joined it as soon as he got the signs and passwords, thought there was some magic in it that would make them happy the rest of the day.” The

United Irishman, James Hope, was more skeptical, and more succinct.

“Oaths,” he observed, will “never bind rogues.” (44)

Similar to what the Editor in *Castle Rackrent* suggests, the oaths the Whiteboys made to one another ranged from being “true and faithful to each other” to “not to drink any liquor whatsoever whilst on duty” (43). In playing with ideas of the sacred and the profane, this scene suggests that the rite of the “oath” only possesses the magical quality that the takers bestow upon it, and even something like marriage becomes another empty ritual based on nothing more than the flip of a coin and a ballad book. The performative nature of these speech acts, then, resembles the performative nature of Thady’s words.

At the end of the novel, Sir Condy and Lady Isabella’s marriage inevitably dissolves due to financial distress. In the climactic squabble that leads to their separation, Thady positions himself to spy on the troubled couple and again we see a play on doubles where various objects become stand-ins for the actual thing. Appearing to repair a window, Thady remarks how the door on their chamber had no lock and he could hear “all that was saying within” (102). In a rage, Isabella decides to move back home to her family, and Thady quickly resumes his quirky Irishman act by wiping a window seat down with his wig—an act that our Editor misreads and “clarifies” by explaining,

wigs were formerly used instead of brooms in Ireland, for sweeping or dusting tables, stairs &c.... It must be acknowledged that these men are not in any sort of danger of catching cold by taking off their wigs occasionally, because they usually have fine crops of hair growing under their wigs. The wigs are often yellow, and the hair which appears from

beneath them black; the wigs are usually too small, and are raised up by the hair beneath, or by the ears of the wearers (104).

The wig serves as a disguise here, for not only does it fool Sir Condy, it also confounds the Editor who also buys the story, misreading an act of espionage for a cultural quirk.

The Editor claims “he doubted the fact, till he saw a labourer of the old school sweep down a flight of stairs with his wig; he afterwards put it on his head again with the utmost composure, and said, ‘Oh, please your honour, it’s never a bit worse’” (104). Indeed, as the footnote reveals, while the wig might disguise a surreptitious servant caught in the act of “cleaning,” it does little to disguise the actual hair sticking out in black tufts beneath.

The wig, like the quirky Irishman act, is a gesture meant to confound and confuse rather than fully disguise the wearer. The wig in this scene operates in a similar fashion as

Henry Louis Gates’s theory of “Signifyin’” in African American literature:

Thinking about the black concept of Signifyin(g) is a bit like stumbling unaware into a hall of mirrors: the sign itself appears to be doubled, at the very least, and (re)doubled upon ever closer examination. It is not the sign itself, however, which has multiplied. If orientation prevails over madness, we soon realize that only the signifier has been doubled and (re)doubled, a signifier in this instance that is silent, a “sound-image” as Saussure defines the signifier, but a “sound-image” *sans* the sound. (44-45)

The wig is reflective of Thady’s entire narrative which could be considered an act of “signifyin’.” The narrative exists to distract and confuse the reader rather than serve as a stable source of “meaning.” Similarly, the wig serves a multiplicity of purposes--as hair covering, as duster, as disguise, as an “act”--to such an extent that its original intent is

lost in all its doubling. Using his masters' low estimation of him as an illiterate peasant and their willingness to believe the most absurd of anthropological explanations, Thady, just like his real hair, is, in essence, able to "hide in plain sight."

Thady's hovering also allows him to be privy to another exchange, but this time it is an exchange of land and inheritance. Sir Condy quickly composes a memorandum, which Thady signs as a witness, stating that Thady will be the heir to the Rackrent estate when Sir Condy is gone. In spite of Sir Condy's mounting debts, he adds to this memorandum his intentions towards Isabella, saying, "your lady should have a clear five hundred a year jointure off the estate afore any of my debts are paid" (105). Thady plays the modest servant: "'Oh, please your honour,' says I, 'I can't expect to live to see that time, being now upwards of fourscore years of age, and you a young man, and likely to continue so, by the help of God'" (105). Thady's protestations possess a double meaning in the sense that we are not quite sure if by "that time" he meant by the time Sir Condy passes on or by the time he pays off his debts. In this manner, he is able to be both rude and obsequious at the same time. In spite of this doubleness, it becomes clear that Thady has no desire to share his "inheritance" with Lady Isabella. One key example is the unfortunate "accident" that befell Lady Isabella on her way to her family home in Mount Juliet's town. As Thady tells it,

The next morning my lady and Mrs Jane set out for Mount Juliet's town in the jaunting car: many wondered at my lady's choosing to go away, considering all things, upon the jaunting car, as if it were only a party of pleasure; *but they did not know, till I told them, that the coach was all broke in the journey down, and no other vehicle but the car to be had;*

besides, my lady's friends were to send their coach to meet her at the cross roads; so it was all done very proper. (106, emphasis mine)

Thady knows that the jaunting car is not a feasible vehicle for the journey to Mount Juliet's town, and furthermore, *he* is the only one to claim that the coach was "all broke." Sure enough, the jaunting car does not make the trip to Lady Isabella's home. While not said outright, I believe that the unfortunate "accident" that befalls Lady Isabella is instigated by Thady and is a part of a plot to maintain his own interests. Judy M'Quirk—Thady's relative and the jilted former lover of Sir Condy—is the one who relates the story to Thady, saying, "The jaunting car it was that ran away with her" and that she saw it "standing in the middle of the road, and with the two wheels off and tattered" (114).

According to Judy,

the horse took fright at a carrion that lay across the road, and so ran away with the

jaunting car, and my lady Rackrent and her maid screaming, and the horse ran with them against a car that was coming from the fair, with the boy asleep on it, and the lady's petticoat hanging out of the jaunting car caught, and she was dragged I can't tell you how far upon the road, and it all broken up with the stones just going to be pounded, and one of the road-makers, with his sledge-hammer in his hand, stops the horse at the last; but my lady Rackrent was all kilt and smashed" (114).

While this scene has all the appearance of an accident—the horse *was* frightened, Lady Isabella's petticoat caught on the wheel, and there just *happened* to be a new road being laid—it is important to note how flimsy the jaunting car actually was as opposed to the

closed, sturdy coach, which, for whatever reason, was not available to transport Lady Isabella back home. Notably, when confronted by Sir Condy about the details of the accident, Judy says sarcastically, “She’ll never ride no more on her jaunting car...for it has been the death of her, sure enough” (115).

While Isabella does not indeed die, Sir Condy meets his fateful end after a long night of exuberant drinking. Significantly, Thady is the person who sends him over the edge after Sir Condy asks him to fill his drinking horn (a legendary horn belonging to his esteemed ancestor, Sir Patrick): “And so, wishing his honour success, I did; but I filled it, little thinking of what would befall him. He swallows it down, and drops like one shot. We lifts him up, and he was speechless, and quite black in the face” (120). After Sir Condy passes on, the debate over Lady Isabella’s jointure ensues. As Thady tells it, “Some say it is worth nothing, others again say it may do; others say, Jason won’t have the lands at any rate. Many wishes it so: for my part, I’m tired wishing for any thing in this world, after all I’ve seen in it—but I’ll say nothing; it would be a folly to be getting myself ill-will in my old age” (121). Thady is ambivalent towards his son’s procurement of the Rackrent estate, and notably remarks how he is “tired” of wishing for anything at all, revealing that he indeed had some sort of intentions and desires throughout this narrative. He quickly hushes himself, hinting how even after all is said and done he must maintain his “act” lest he fall further from the good graces of those in power. Thady’s own story and his own hand in the plot remain in shadow and he maintains his innocence in the whole affair, saying, “For where’s the use of telling lies about the things which every body knows as well as I do?”

If in *Castle Rackrent* readers are misled into seeing Thady as standing for one or another political “camp,” in *Ennui* Edgeworth further explores the ways in which “readers” of rebellion and the Irish people in general misunderstand intentions and motivations in the fog of war. *Ennui* is a novel that attempts to narrate the 1798 uprising through the eyes of the bored, over-indulged English landowner, Lord Glenthorn. Suffering from ennui, Lord Glenthorn drifts through various hapless adventures and wearying exploits until his life in England falls into complete disarray and desolation. After a chance encounter with his former nurse, Glenthorn, an absentee-landlord, pledges to return to Ireland to see after his estates. From the very beginning Glenthorn’s motivations to travel to Ireland are primarily derived from his own selfish desires, namely that he is simply “tired of England, and wanted to see something new, even if it were to be worse than what I had seen before” (169). Glenthorn hides this reason under much more noble motivations, professing to his friends that it is his “duty” to visit his estates, but in a sarcastic aside notes, “Duties often spring up to our view at a convenient opportunity...when people are determined upon any action, they seldom fail to find arguments capable of convincing them that their resolution is reasonable. Mixed motives govern the conduct of half mankind” (169). Later in the novel when open rebellion throws the Irish countryside into turmoil, Glenthorn again sees his ennui as the reason for his involvement: “All my passions were roused, and my mind and body kept in continual activity. I was either galloping, or haranguing, or fearing, or hoping, or fighting; and so long as it was said that I could not sleep in my bed, I slept remarkably well, and never had so good an appetite as when I was in hourly danger of having nothing to eat” (247). His neighbors, however, interpret Glenthorn’s actions as being in support of the rebels

and they charge him with being a “trimmer or a traitor” (247). As for the rebels, Glenthorn explains,

The disaffected themselves, as I afterwards found, really believed, that, as I had not begun by persecuting the poor, I must be a favourer of the rebels; and all that I did to bring the guilty to justice, they thought was only to give a *colour to the thing*, til the proper moment should come for my declaring myself. Of this absurd and perverse mode of judging I had not the slightest conception; and I only laughed when it was hinted to me. My treating the matter so lightly confirmed suspicion on both sides. At this time all object were so magnified and distorted by the mist of prejudice, that no inexperienced eye could judge of their real proportions. Neither party could believe the simple truth, that my tardiness to act arose from the habitual *inertia* of my mind and body. (247)

Similar to the ways in which RLE’s actions were regarded as partisan, Glenthorn’s actions are erroneously interpreted by his neighbors and tenantry, who view them as either a reflection of outright rebellion or loyalty to the Ascendancy depending on what “side” they found themselves on in the wake of the uprising. Edgeworth reveals the way in which the uprising spurred two very distinct, but polar opposite narratives that forced the Irish population to define themselves in dichotomous ways. However, Edgeworth implies that under closer scrutiny individual motivations are much more complicated, deeply personal, and only politicized “after the fact.” It is easy to see the ways in which Edgeworth herself, as an unmarried woman with a hyphenated identity of “Anglo-Irish,” was alienated by both Irish nationalism and the loyalist movement—both of which

offered a vision of the nation that allowed little inclusion for women. As Corbett asserts, “Featuring instability and uncertainty as the conditions under which she plots and interprets the revolutionary ideas of the Rebellion, Edgeworth’s narrative strategies constitute, in the idiom of fiction, traces of histories otherwise unwritten” (322). For Edgeworth, histories of the rebellion cannot quite encompass the personal dramas that may motivate someone to take up arms against the state or adversely to quell a rebellion.

In *Ennui* the inability of “official” histories to recognize and document otherwise marginal voices is illustrated through the character of Lady Geraldine and her criticism of her visiting cousin Lord Craiglethorpe. A member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, Lady Geraldine possesses a confidence that comes with a sense of entitlement, but Edgeworth also describes her as having inherited certain “Irish” traits: “She was not ill-natured, yet careless to whom she gave offence, provided she produced amusement; and in this she seldom failed; for, in her conversation, there was much of the raciness of Irish wit, and the oddity of Irish humour” (205). Craiglethorpe, on the other hand, is characterized as notably English and Glenthorn observes him as “very stiff, cold, and *high*. His manners were in the extreme of English reserve, and his ill-bred show of contempt for the Irish was sufficient provocation and justification of Lady Geraldine’s ridicule” (209). Lady Geraldine is so exasperated with her stodgy cousin that she finds fault in every minutia of Craiglethorpe’s actions: “Even his ways of sitting and standing provoke me, they are so self-sufficient. Have you observed how he stands at the fire? Oh, the caricature of ‘*the English fire-side*’ outdone!” (209). In many ways Craiglethorpe is described as a sort of imperial invader, sitting, much to Lady Geraldine’s disdainful eye, in “magisterial silence, throwing a gloom upon all conversation” (210). Finding insult in Craiglethorpe’s

turgid manner and clouded observations of Ireland, Lady Geraldine rises to the occasion to defend her homeland:

“For the honour of my country...I am determined to make this man talk, and he shall say all that I know he thinks of us poor Irish savages. If he would but speak, one could answer him: if he would find fault, one might defend: if he would laugh, one might perhaps laugh again: but here he comes to hospitable, open-hearted Ireland; eats as well as he can in his own country; drinks better than he can in his own country; sleeps as well as he can in his own country; accepts all our kindness without a word or a look of thanks, and seems the whole to think that ‘Born for his use, we live but to oblige him.’ There he is at this instant: look at him, walking in the park, with his note-book in his hand, setting down our faults, and conning them by rote” (210).

As Lady Geraldine says, Craiglethorpe’s air of imperial entitlement reveals itself in the way in which he affects to exploit Ireland and the Irish people. Lady Geraldine has feelings of national sentiment as shown by her declaration that she will defend the “honour of [her] country,” but she defends it with humor and satire, turning the tables on the imperialistic Craiglethorpe by performing the very stereotype he projects onto the Irish.

It comes to light that Craiglethorpe “means to write a book, a great book, upon Ireland” (210). Lady Geraldine is violently disgusted by this endeavor, exclaiming,

“He! With his means of acquiring information!...Pouring from one great man’s house to another, what can he see or know of the manners of any

rank of people but of the class of gentry, which in England and Ireland is much the same? As to the lower classes, I don't think he ever speaks to them; or, if he does, what good can it do him? For he can't understand their modes of expression, nor they his: if he inquire about a matter of fact, I defy him to get the truth out of them, if they don't wish to tell it; and, for some reason or other, they will, nine times to ten, not wish to tell it to an Englishman. There is not a man, woman, or child, in any cabin in Ireland, who would not have wit and *cuteness* enough to make my lard [*sic*] believe just what they please." (211)

Similar to the Editor in *Castle Rackrent*, Craiglethorpe is unable to truly "see" the Irish people, but to a greater extent this passage speaks to the inability for the subaltern, namely the Irish peasant in this case, to "speak" in the genre of the Irish tour or the anthropological study, given the expectations already embedded in the discourse. What transpires, then, is a performance, which is precisely what Lady Geraldine gives to her cousin later in the chapter:

Lady Geraldine...continued to supply [Lord Craiglethorpe], either directly or indirectly, by some of her confederates, with the most absurd anecdotes, incredible *facts*, stale jests, and blunders, such as were never made by true-born Irishmen; all which my Lord Craiglethorpe took down with an industrious sobriety, at which the spectators could scarcely refrain from laughing. Sometimes he would pause and exclaim, "A capital anecdote! A curious fact! May I give you my authority? May I quote your ladyship?"

“Yes, if you’ll pay me a compliment in the preface,” whispered Lady Geraldine, “and now, dear cousin, do go upstairs and *put it all out in ink.*”

When she had dispatched the noble author, her ladyship indulged her laughter. “But now,” cried she, “only imagine a set of sober English readers studying my cousin Craiglethorpe’s *New View of Ireland*, and swallowing all the nonsense it will contain!” (211-12)

What is significant about this passage is the offer from Lord Craiglethorpe to give Lady Geraldine “his authority,” implying that within the discourse of so-called Irish “knowledge” she has very little, if any. In this instance, Lady Geraldine gains access to the male sphere of discourse not necessarily in order to educate the English, but to play a tremendous joke on them. Through her “performance” of an “insider Irish person” (which she knowingly is not), she commands the English readership to believe what she wants them to believe, acting *through* a patriarchal discourse to subvert their status.

In another key scene featuring Lady Geraldine’s sharp wit, Edgeworth illustrates how one can defy imperialism without falling into tired binarisms. As the ideological lines between nations narrowed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept of a hybrid “Anglo-Irish” identity became more and more nebulous. Neither “English” nor “Irish,” the Anglo-Irish figure inhabited a veritable no-man’s land in this literature. Yet, far from fearing this “non-identity,” Lady Geraldine sees its liberatory possibilities and at every turn attempts to undermine these hard and fast stereotypes. Her resistance toward strong national identities is also feministic in the sense that she openly resents that what is dictated as “proper” female behavior is often constructed around

stringent nationalistic lines. For her, daring to be “oneself” is a battle cry that is two-fold because it eschews not just prescribed national identities, but gender identities as well.

Later in the novel, Glenthorn relates to his readers how Irish society became obsessed with two visiting English ladies of fashion, Mrs. Norton and Lady Hauton, who are otherwise of no significance in their home country. Glenthorn explains how he had never met them in the higher circles in London and how they were “persons of no consequence and of no marked character in their own country” (222). In spite of this fact, though, the two ladies made “a prodigious *sensation* when they came over to Ireland, and turned the heads of half Dublin by the extravagance of their dress, the impertinence of their airs, and the audacity of their conduct” (222). Similar to Lord Craiglethorpe’s imperialist hold on the party at Ormsby Villa, Mrs. Norton and Lady Hauton shape and control the very nature of the discourse in the household as all discussion revolves around their whims and desires. Glenthorn tells us that the entire party “worshipped them” except Lady Geraldine who refused to join in the “admiration” of the two visitors (223).

In one scene Mrs. Norton and Lady Hauton have just quit the room after dictating to the other ladies of the party the “ideal” patterns for fashionable dress and enveloping everyone in a discussion of a recent divorce scandal in England. Lady Geraldine looks upon the party with “an air of magnanimous disdain” (223), and waltzes over to the ladies poring over dress patterns declaring,

Go on, my friends; go on, and prosper; beg and borrow all the patterns and precedents you can collect of the newest fashions of folly and vice. Make haste, make haste; they don’t reach our remote island fast enough. We Irish might live in innocence half a century longer, if you didn’t expedite

the progress of profligacy; we might escape the plague that rages in neighbouring countries, if we didn't, without any quarantine, and with open arms, welcome every *suspected* stranger; if we didn't encourage the importation of whole bales of tainted fineries, that will spread the contagion from Dublin to Cork and from Cork to Galway!" (223).

Lady Geraldine is disgusted by the way in which her friends so quickly follow the "patterns and precedents" of these English invaders, seeing their influence as a "plague" that spreads contagion. Miss Ormsby attempts to check Lady Geraldine, saying, "How severe your ladyship is; and all only for one's asking for a pattern!" (223). In response to this outcry, Mrs. O'Connor tellingly quips, "That Lady Geraldine is too proud to take pattern from any body" (223).

To this, Lady Geraldine sarcastically reaffirms to the party that she is happy to "abase" herself and take these ladies to task at schooling herself "to heighten [her] charms and preserve [her] reputation" (224). Most significantly, Lady Geraldine assures them, she must change her language:

"So far, so good, for my looks; but now for my language. I must reform my barbarous language, and learn from Mrs Norton, with her pretty accommodating voice, to call an intrigue *an arrangement*, and a crim. con. *an affair in Doctor's Commons, or that business before the Lords*" (224).

From Mrs. Norton, Lady Geraldine reflects, she must learn how, "with the assistance of a Humane-society, to save a half-drowned reputation. It is, I understand, the glory of one class of fashionable females, to seem worse than they are; and of another class the

privilege, to be worse than they seem” (224). Above the clamor and outcry of the party in defense or reprobation of the two ladies, Lady Geraldine exclaims in exasperation,

“I have no enmity to these ladies; I only despise them, or, rather, their follies and their faults. It is not the sinner, but the sin we should reprobate. O! my dear countrywomen,” cried Lady Geraldine, with increasing animation of countenance and manner—“O! my dear countrywomen, let us never stoop to admire and imitate these second-hand airs and graces, follies and vices. Let us dare to be ourselves!” (225)

Seeking to settle the matter, Lady Geraldine turns to Lord Glenthorn who had been sitting in the corner the whole time observing the scene, and asks him if Mrs. Norton and Lady Hauton were very well known in England. Glenthorn answers that he had never heard of the two ladies, and with that missive, “The faces of the company changed. Thus, in a few seconds, the empire of Lady Hauton and of Mrs. Norton seemed shaken to the foundation, and never recovered from this shock” (225). Lady Geraldine can uproot empires not through violence, but by daring her countrywomen to be “themselves.” Using humor and sarcasm, she reveals the troubling roles imperialist scripts create, and instead of imitating Mrs. Norton and Lady Hauton, she encourages the women around her to break out of these “patterns” and speak their own minds.

According to Mitzi Myers, “The ideological dichotomies that conventionally distinguish the active from the home front, war from peace, are simultaneously sexual and political, aligning the militarist and the masculinist and identifying the feminine with

peace, life, and the domestic enclave” (373). For Myers, the woman writer is rendered “speechless” in the nation at war, but for her, “Denying women the pen as well as the sword, masculinist commentary cannot understand domestic place as ironized textual space or decode home front defense as public sphere critique” (374). On June 20, 1798, Maria Edgeworth wrote to her Aunt Sophy, “I am going on in the old way, writing stories. I cannot be a captain of dragoons, and sitting with my hands before me would not make any of us one degree safer” (56). While Edgeworth may have been writing on the sidelines, the scenes set in the drawing rooms and the great halls of decaying Ascendancy estates she penned reveal that revolution *does* lie in these domestic spaces. Yet for her, writing in that place where the political meets the personal, the two hostile parties that clashed in the summer of 1798 are far more nuanced and go way beyond shades of orange and green.

Chapter Three

Owenson's Ariels: The "Education" of Caliban in *The O'Donnell* and *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*

Sydney Owenson was born in a tempest—or so the story goes. Owenson was fond of creating fictions out of her own life, and her birth was no exception. She claims to have been born on Christmas Day on a mailboat during a stormy passage from England to Ireland. The daughter of an itinerant Irish actor and an English Methodist mother, she came into this world inhabiting the boundary between two contentious nations, which was certainly a fitting beginning for a life and career that would be spent traversing these two worlds. Forced into writing to help support her indebted father and frail younger sister, Owenson shot to wealth and fame with the success of *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). In a very short time she went from penniless governess to wildly popular novelist who captivated Dublin and London with her own "wild Irish girl" exploits. As one of her biographers writes in 1862,

She sang well and played well, both on the piano and the harp—she danced like a fairy (an Irish fairy be it understood), she was very graceful, and if the testimony of the many men who fell in love with her may be believed, she was beautiful. She could tell stories, especially Irish stories, with a spirit and drollery that was irresistible....From her most tender years she had been produced in society and encouraged to produce herself; she had the power to amuse everybody....From the very nature of her

position she was, to a certain degree, an adventuress, for she had nothing, and no one to depend upon, but herself. (Owenson 283)

Owenson was always keenly self-aware of her own caricature and had few qualms about playing “the wild Irish girl” for her many aristocratic patrons who used her name interchangeably with the name of one of her heroines, Glorvina. Visiting Lady Cork in London, Owenson reflects,

I found myself pounced on a sort of rustic seat...I was treated “en princesse” and denied the civilised privileges of sofa or chair, which were not in character with the habits of a ‘wild Irish girl.’ So there I sat, the lioness of the night, exhibited and shown off like ‘the beautiful hyena that never was tamed’ of Exeter Change, looking almost as wild and feeling quite as savage! (87)

Beyond her performance of Irish stereotypes, Owenson was a staunch and vocal supporter of Irish causes such as Catholic Emancipation and the end of absentee landlordism and double tithes at a time when it was dangerous to do so (Campbell 3). According to Mary Campbell, “Habeas Corpus had been suspended when the Act of Union passed. The government, therefore, had a free hand to deal with anyone who got out of line, and Irish publishers were thoroughly emasculated by a system of bribes and threats” (60). As a young girl she saw her own father ruined when the government shut down his theatre because of his overt and unapologetic expression of nationalist sympathies (Campbell 31). After the 1798 rising, Owenson struggled to publish *The Wild Irish Girl* when her original publisher in London panicked, saying, “The sentiments enunciated...are too strong opposed to the English interest in Ireland” (63). Rumor had it

that one of her biggest and most malicious critics, John Wilson Croker, was paid by Dublin Castle to pan her work and publicly degrade her character (72). Unlike her father and several Irish male writers at the time, Owenson never faced outright persecution for her vociferous views on Ireland; indeed, she seemed to have thrived *because* of her strong national sympathies rather than in spite of them.

Throughout her literary career Owenson was a wildly famous and sought after author. Entire industries in Dublin were built around “the cult of Glorvina” as women flooded the shops of Dublin to get their own red mantles and golden bodkins (Campbell 71). She was even befriended by the key persecutor of members of the 1798 uprising and architect to the Act of Union (1801), Lord Castlereagh. After the success of *The Wild Irish Girl*, Owenson came under the influence and protection of the powerful Abercorn family, and they and Castlereagh found her nationalist sentiments endearing and amusing. Campbell writes, “It was entertaining for them, in the safety of their own stronghold, to profess tolerance for their ‘little rebel.’ Castlereagh’s favourite comment was ‘No one cares for Ireland but Miss Owenson and I’” (107). They both shared a deep love of music, and Owenson took advantage of this connection to impart her political opinions onto him and engage him into rigorous nationalist debate. In the company of the small, playful, pixie-like Owenson, Castlereagh must have felt an opportunity to revel in the radicalism that he so vehemently fought to suppress in his political life. He was such a fan of her work that he provided her his own carriage so that she could meet with a publisher about her book *The Missionary* and stood over her shoulder while she signed the contract for the novel (*Lady Morgan’s Memoirs* 424). While this seems an incredibly unlikely friendship, Owenson used her fame and popularity amongst the aristocracy to

effect social change from within. As the “Glorvina” of *The Wild Irish Girl* matured into a self-sufficient, cosmopolitan young woman of the world, her novels similarly began to portray strong female heroines who function as negotiators of English imperial power rather than outright agitators against colonial oppression.

A product of growing up in the theatre, Owenson could and did shift roles seamlessly dependent on her company and circumstances. Her novels are filled with disguises, theatricals, performances, masquerades, and pageants, and she often gives a nod to foremost playwrights such as Shakespeare, most notably to *The Tempest* which hinges on a “colonial” plot fueled by narratives of power, domination, betrayal, and disguise. I argue that in *The O’Donnel* (1814) and *The O’Briens and the O’Flahertys* (1827) Owenson’s own “Ariels” work to extricate the male Irish characters or the “Calibans” in these novels from an imperialist discourse that labels their nationalist speech as aggressive, rebellious, and violent. Through what Kum Kum Sangari terms “indirect agency,” Owenson and her wily Irish heroines are able to fight colonial oppression in ways that their male counterparts cannot, and these female characters encourage the Irishmen in these novels to work “behind the scenes” to seek liberation from England rather than engage in outright rebellion.

Owenson’s heroines use every means at their disposal to undermine English imperial hegemony, but they do so “indirectly” by using disguise, subterfuge, and humor. Kum Kum Sangari defines “indirect agency” as agency which is

ascribed to, conferred upon, and delegated to women within patriarchal structures, characteristically functions through “feminized” agential modes

such as convolution, disguise, displacement, deflection, surrogacy, or manipulation, and signals some degree of consent to patriarchies. (365)

The concept of “indirect agency” is key to understanding how a penniless Irish girl who grew up in Dublin’s theatre scene could develop into a titled authoress who hobnobbed with the *crème de la crème* of Regency England and yet whose work was banned in several European countries for inciting revolution. At first glance, Owenson seems a host of contradictions. As Campbell writes, “Her public life and social career in many ways seem to run counter to the sentiments expressed so strongly in her work. She can be accused of social climbing, of sycophancy to the English aristocracy—one who danced a jig in the drawing rooms of the oppressor” (4). Owenson was always in disguise. Ever the thrifty one, she made her own clothes and donned Glorvina’s red mantle to the day she died. Under this cloak of Irish romanticism, she could disperse her agency through a variety of channels without censure. What is often so troubling about Owenson is the degree to which she engaged directly with the architects and purveyors of British imperialism and easily embraced other kinds of entrenched patriarchal systems as they existed in the early nineteenth century; yet, at the same time she openly professed “radical” views concerning the Irish question and issues of gender equity. As Sangari argues, “Women’s implication in the ‘contractual’, consensual elements of a patriarchy not only puts them in a contradictory relation with that patriarchy itself, but also tends to situate their social agency in fairly contradictory fashion as both complicit and transgressive” (374). Sydney Owenson was passionate about Ireland, yet her actions and the company she kept often seem to belie her professed radical opinions. However, as Sangari suggests, Owenson’s seemingly contradictory views might actually be a kind of

“indirect agency” at work as she attempts to transform the mechanism of British imperialism from the inside out, promoting Catholic Emancipation and a more autonomous, independent Ireland.

To maintain her popularity and allow more readers to have access to her views on Ireland, Owenson willingly consented to a variety of stereotypes reflecting the patriarchal structures that informed her world. The various roles she would play in her life ranged from the wild and untamed “Irish colleen” to “the Lady Morgan,” a defenseless gentlewoman of high society. She was keenly aware of how necessary social affect was for her cause. When her friend and confidante Alicia Le Fanu warned her “against becoming too rarified a bluestocking” (52), Owenson replied, “I entirely agree with you that *some women* in attaining that intellectual acquisition which excites admiration and reverence forfeit their (oh, how much more valuable) claims on the affection of the heart...I must tell you, my dear madam, I am ambitious, far, far, beyond the line of laudable emulation, perhaps beyond the power of being happy. Yet the strongest point of my ambition is to be every inch a woman” (52). For Owenson, her femininity and consent to patriarchy and her brand of performative “Irishness” allowed her to engage in a radical political discourse that would have otherwise been closed to her.

For instance, when John Wilson Croker attacked Owenson for “attempting to vitiate mankind” and “undermine morality by sophistry” (qtd. in Campbell 72), it was Croker himself who came under fire for “ungentlemanly” conduct. As Joseph Atkinson, a popular playwright at the time, wrote

Snakes in the grass may hiss and critics hector,

But she’s a woman, and you’ll all protect her. (Campbell 75).

After Owenson published *France*—a book of travel writing based on her observations of the country—her critics lambasted her, accusing her “of every crime from bad spelling to comforting the enemies of France, her own country and the civilised world” (Campbell 154). One reviewer, anonymous but dripping with the vitriol characteristic of Croker, listed off his objections to the work with disdain and disgust: “Bad Taste—Bombast and Nonsense—Blunders—Ignorance of the French Language and manners—General Ignorance—Jacobinism—Falsehood—Licentiousness and Impiety” (qtd. in Campbell 154). The reviewer only fueled the popularity of the book and the Irish and English reading public flocked to Owenson’s defense. Lord Byron, a huge fan of Owenson whose *Ida of Athens* is purported to have inspired him to travel to Greece to fight the Turks, wrote to John Murray

What cruel work on Lady Morgan! You should recollect that she is a woman; though to be sure they are now and then very provoking; still as authoresses they can do no great harm, and I think it is a pity so much good invective should have been laid out upon her when there is such a fine field of us Jacobin gentlemen for you to work upon. It is perhaps as bitter critique as ever was written! (154)

Byron’s suggestion that there are enough “Jacobin gentlemen” available for Croker to abuse reveals the way in which he is perhaps a little insulted by all the attention Owenson is stealing from himself and his contemporaries. He states that authoresses can “do no great harm,” and yet obviously Owenson was indirectly shaping the discourse surrounding the Irish question by bringing up issues such as Catholic Emancipation, disinheritance and disenfranchisement as a direct result of British imperial policy, the

social and economic effects of absentee-landlordism, and the suppression of Irish trade and industry in her novels.

While her beliefs about Catholic Emancipation were radical for her time, her national tales are much more nuanced and at times even conciliatory towards British imperialism. In her analysis of Owenson's national tales, Julia M. Wright states, "The national tale was not written to mobilize laborers but to energize 'the politics of conciliation' among the middle and upper classes: the national tale tends not to speak with the disenfranchised, but for them, negotiating uneasily between advocacy and alienation" ("The Nation Begins to Form" 939). In this way Owenson's novels about uprisings resist casting England and Ireland into clear-cut literary molds of "hero" and "villain" and they are certainly not masculinist tales of heroism and national martyrdom. Instead, they engage much more with nuance, the myriad shades of grey in the fog of war, and, with female heroines at the helm, explore the many ways in which agency can be both complicit and transgressive in relationship to imperialism. Her journey towards writing her 1814 novel *The O'Donnel*, for instance, reveals a writer who cares passionately about Ireland, but fears the social and political repercussions of outright dissent. For Owenson, explicit and heated criticisms of British imperial policy would result in her being blackballed from the very aristocratic society she wished to influence through her works. While her novels professed strong liberal opinions, she also did not want to be responsible for inciting open rebellion. She would dance this fine line with the publication of *The O'Donnel*, a novel that in many ways serves as an "instruction manual" for indirect agency in the face of overwhelming oppression.

Inspired by the success of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, Owenson became obsessed with researching for a new book on the life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, otherwise known as "Red Hugh" O'Donnell, who was the chief of the O'Donnells from 1592-1602. His life was truly epic: he was imprisoned in a Dublin jail for piracy, escaped on foot to his father's stronghold at Ballyshannon in what is now County Donegal, and fought in an alliance with the Spanish to overthrow the English in Sligo and Connacht. He was ultimately betrayed and poisoned at the Spanish court and his body was buried in the bowels of a Franciscan monastery which has now completely vanished (Boylan 260). Owenson's intention was to write an Irish romance that would celebrate this legendary Irish figure, but the subject matter proved too disturbing, too bloody, and ultimately too controversial for her perceived audience. In the preface of her novel, she writes:

Having determined upon taking Ireland as my theme, I sought in its records and chronicles for the ground-work of a story, and the character of an hero. The romantic adventures, and unsubdued valor of O'DONNELL *the Red*, Chief of Tirconnel, in the reign of Elizabeth, promised at the first glance all I wished, and seemed happily adapted to my purpose. I had already advanced as far as the second volume of my MS and had expended much time and labor in arduous research and dry study, when I found it necessary to forgo my original plan. The character of my sex, no less than my own feelings, urged me, in touching those parts of Irish history which were connected with my tale, to turn them to the purposes of conciliation, and to incorporate the leaven of favorable opinion with that heavy mass of bitter prejudice, which writers, both grave and trifling, have

delighted to raise against my country. But when I fondly thought to send forth a dove bearing the olive of peace, I found I was on the point of flinging an arrow winged with discord. I *had* hoped, as far as *my feeble efforts could go*, to extenuate the errors attributed to Ireland, by an exposition of their causes, drawn from historic facts; but I found that, like the spirit in *Macbeth*, I should at the same moment hold up a glass to my countrymen, reflecting but *too* many fearful images,

To “*shew their eyes and grieve their hearts*”

for I discovered, far beyond my expectation, that I had fallen upon ‘evil men and evil days,’ and that, in proceeding, I must raise a veil which ought never to be drawn, and renew the memory of events which the interests of humanity require to be for ever buried in oblivion. (ix-xi)

Desiring to be conciliatory rather than inflammatory, Owenson abandoned O’Donnell’s history because of its extreme violence and because it did not allow for nuance in the telling. Significantly, she blames much of her decision on the “character of [her] sex,” which drove her to “send forth a dove bearing the olive of peace” rather than write a potentially provocative text about colonial injustice and Irish backlash. She ultimately feared that the violence on the part of the Irish in the annals of the O’Donnell’s story would do more to hurt her cause than help it as she would only be perpetuating a tired stereotype that “sanctioned” British rule over the unruly Irish. Owenson abandoned the project and instead decided to write a novel about “Red Hugh” O’Donnell’s hapless descendant, Roderick O’Donnel

Owenson focuses her efforts towards writing on “more modern and more liberal times” (xii) and opens her novel with a group of English tourists traveling through the north of Ireland. In tow is the dowdy governess Charlotte O’Halloran (a nod to the famous Irish antiquarians Charlotte Brooke and Sylvester O’Halloran) who later in the novel becomes the vivacious Duchess of Belmont after marrying a rich widower (without consummating that marriage). When we meet O’Donnell it is clear that he has fallen on hard times with the majority of his estate having been gambled away by his degenerate father. Fearing an attack by The Whiteboys, the English tourists take up sanctuary in his rundown house and there learn the sad story of O’Donnell’s ancient ancestors. In this scene in the middle of the novel, Owenson presents the remnants of her original plan in the form of a series of “fragments” which tell the unfortunate tale of Hugh Roe O’Donnell. O’Donnell’s servant McRory places the fragments in the hands of Lady Singleton who reads them without affect. Later, O’Donnell tells the party of English tourists gathered at his home that the fragments were written by an aging kinsman and are “rather a loose abridgement, than just a translation; exhibiting the want of connection so frequently obvious in the last efforts of declining intellect; when all links of association hold feebly together, when the mind only recovers itself by starts, and imagination, if not wholly extinguished, sends forth but brief and sudden sparks from its decaying fires” (47-48). In other words, the violent and bloody history of Red Hugh O’Donnell cannot be completely verified in this account and was most likely the imaginative ramblings of an old man based loosely on a far distant and misty history. The manuscript is incomplete, fragmented, and thus lacks a certain credibility. The history of O’Donnell lies squarely in

the past and exists as a mere “ghost text” in this novel that readers may or may not choose to take seriously.

While O’Donnel cuts an impressive figure, readers would be hard-pressed to find a great national hero like Red Hugh in this novel. Owenson’s aim seems to be to “tame” O’Donnel’s passionate inclinations rather than fuel them to a revolutionary pitch. She uses the changeable figure of Charlotte O’Halloran (later Lady Belmont) to teach O’Donnel how to navigate the complex politics of post-1798 Ireland. While O’Donnel does “win back” his land, it is not through his own blood, sweat and tears, but through Lady Belmont who purchases it for him after they marry with her fortune won only by an auspicious previous marriage. The bizarre moral of the tale seems to be that if you are male, you need to learn to “play the game” and work towards peaceful reconciliation with your oppressors; if you are female, you should use your charms and wit to marry well so you can “buy back” the nation. With his passions somewhat quelled, O’Donnel resigns himself to an attitude of peaceful reconciliation towards England as the best means to achieve sovereignty. Towards the end of the novel Owenson writes,

to the loss of inheritance, torn from its ancient possessors and the *forfeit of an opinion*, by the transient tyranny of a temporary penal statute, *which brought down heaven to divide the earth*, breathing its unholy mandate alike in defiance of the law of God and of man, he felt it difficult to submit without repining...he yet gave no utterance to vain and unavailing regret: he respected peace and better order of *existing things* and he was well aware that a spirit of *accommodation and conciliation in all parties* would

prove the surest, safest, and speediest means of union and *prosperity to the whole*” (III 275).

In this passage, Owenson sends a veiled message that reconciliation and accommodation will better achieve Catholic emancipation rather than open rebellion. Owenson concedes to Union, but for the “union” to work, it will require *all* parties, both Irish and English, to come together peacefully and achieve mutual “prosperity” through respecting one another’s differences.

While O’Donnel is pleased to have the land of his ancestors back in his possession, his joy is clouded by feelings of emasculation and a certain degree of hopelessness towards his inability to achieve his ends independently without the indirect agency of his clever and vivacious social climbing wife.

It was not without emotion...that he hung once more the sword of O’Donnel the Red, which he had re-purchased, over the mantle-piece of the domestic hearth; while his faithful Irish wolf-dog lay at his feet...

Yet still, over these joyous emotions, some feeling of melancholy would at times throw its shadow.

He was willing to owe his best felicity to the hand of love; but he would have wished to have obtained the re-possession of his rights by means more consonant to the spirit of the gentleman, the dignity of the man, and the general interests of his country. (III 307).

Owenson’s novel makes clear that in post 1798, post Union Ireland, this is, unfortunately, the best an Irishman can do for himself in the current political climate. At the very end of the novel, his servant hints that perhaps one day “if it was *God’s will*, there is no rayson

in life why he shouldn't be a great parliament man" (III 332) with the Duchess, now O'Donnel's wife, happily agreeing. The message is clear: use whatever available channels to create political change, but do not resort to violence as it will only add more credibility to the crippling stereotypes that the English impose upon Irish masculinity.

In *The O'Briens and The O'Flahertys* Owenson does choose to set the action during a more recent uprising—the 1798 uprising—but her novel reflects much more about her feelings on the cause of Catholic Emancipation than it does the bloody rebellion of days gone by. Headed by Daniel O'Connell, Catholic Emancipation was quickly gaining ground politically while Owenson was writing *The O'Briens*. While Owenson and her husband Charles Morgan were some of the founding members of the movement towards Catholic Emancipation in Ireland, Owenson would eventually become jaded with O'Connell's politics and ambivalent towards his overall message. In her *Memoirs*, Owenson writes, "O'Connell wants back to the days of Brian Boru, himself to be the king with a crown of emerald shamrocks, a train of yellow velvet, and a mantle of Irish tabbnet, a scepter in one hand and a cross in the other, and the people crying 'Long live king O'Connell'" (qtd. in Wright "The Nation" 944). Owenson fears a brand of nationalism that is embedded in a romanticized pre-colonial past and suggests in her novel that this stance is ultimately self-destructive. According to Wright,

Morgan's protagonists in *The O'Briens* promote a brand of nationalism specific to the United Irishmen while devaluing, and even mocking, the idealization of the Irish past. In representing the United Irishmen and the years before their uprising, Morgan suggests the illusoriness and destructiveness of a nationalism that harks back to the pre-colonial

condition rather than forward to a constitutional, modern state, as well as complicates that vision as utopian. The novel is ultimately pessimistic: the colonial past which both nationalisms repudiate remains inescapable.

(“The Nation” 940)

Within *The O’Briens* Owenson presents another strong Irish male figure whose passions towards Ireland eventually disperse through indirect channels. Murrogh O’Brien is a young college student at Trinity University when he becomes embroiled in the politics surrounding the events of 1798. When the novel opens, his father has essentially bankrupted the family through endless litigation to win back their rightful estate in Connacht. Murrogh’s love of Ireland and his innate rebelliousness frequently get him into trouble, and it is often up to the heroine Beavoin O’Flaherty to find a way to get him out of it. He goes to prison for inciting a riot; is expelled from Trinity for writing seditious pamphlets; joins The United Irishmen; and almost commits adultery; but at every turn Beavoin works behind the scene to manipulate events in Murrogh’s favor. While this is certainly a novel about 1798, the actual violence of the uprising is mentioned almost as an afterthought with the hero Murrogh O’Brien an unconscious prisoner for the worst of the fighting. The United Irishmen ultimately come off as misguided dreamers and the Catholic peasantry as the oppressed hordes that resort to disorganized violence as soon as their colonial fetters begin to fray in the turmoil. Owenson’s ambivalence towards the Catholic peasantry in the 1798 uprising reveals her fears towards O’Connell’s movement as Catholic Emancipation gained steam in the late 1820s. She longs for the people of Ireland to be liberated, but she does not want a return to a pre-colonial condition. Furthermore, she wants Catholic Emancipation to succeed

through legal channels and fears that such antiquarian nationalism could lead to factionalism and violence. As Wright claims, Owenson's conciliatory national tales "[invite] slow, steady change under the direction of an elite—evolution rather than revolution" (940). After the 1798 uprising, Murrough and Beavoin both flee Ireland and become key players in Napoleon's court; yet, even here Murrough cannot escape tumultuous party politics and it is rumored that he is about to lose his position because he and Beavoin are "active members" in the "constitutional party" that is defying Napoleon. While we are left not knowing the fates of Murrough and Beavoin, Owenson's novel suggests that working within the political framework and "using the master's tools," is far preferable to being involved with secret societies and rabble-rousing.

Owenson writes in her *Memoirs* how "Shakespeare, Handel, Carolan the Irish bard...were the three Dii Majorum Gentium of our household altars" (22). Owenson's allusions to *The Tempest*, with its themes of usurpation, betrayal, magic, disguise, and doubling, hold great critical weight when placed in the Irish context. In both *The O'Donnell* and *The O'Briens* Owenson sets up an Ariel/Caliban dichotomy to illustrate the ways in which the colonial subject must utilize indirect agency to avoid the trap of what Retamar terms "the dialectic of Caliban." Similar to Owenson's novels, *The Tempest* is very much a play about uprisings and the various ways in which power and agency shift dependent on context. Betrayed by his brother Antonio, Prospero, the main character of *The Tempest*, is stripped of his title of Duke of Milan and is exiled with his daughter Miranda. They are shipwrecked onto a mysterious island ruled by the witch Sycorax. Prospero, a scholar of magic himself, kills Sycorax, frees the sprite Ariel from Sycorax's spell, and enslaves Sycorax's son Caliban. The play opens with a great storm

which Prospero summoned in order to shipwreck and bring to the island the King of Naples and his entourage, including Prospero's scheming brother, and the King of Naples' son Ferdinand. As the action unfolds on the island, *The Tempest* explores the nature of servitude and betrayal by overlapping numerous acts of attempted overthrowing of power. First, we have a description of Antonio's betrayal of Prospero and his grab of power from his brother; then, Caliban describes in vivid detail his enslavement by Prospero; later in the play, Antonio and Sebastian, the King of Naples' brother, almost slay the King of Naples while he sleeps; and finally, Caliban and his new-found Neapolitan friends Stephano and Trinculo try to kill Prospero. All these latter acts of betrayal are thwarted by the elusive sprite Ariel who uses his (or her)⁴ own magic to manipulate events and warn his master Prospero of these ill intentions. Even though Prospero holds a certain magical power over the island, Ariel is able to move through time and space on the fairy's own terms and utilize his unique gifts to disrupt the plots of these power-hungry characters. While it is unclear where Ariel has attained his powers, Prospero's magic seems to derive exclusively from his books, which possess a profound significance for the monster Caliban. While plotting to take Prospero's life, he informs Stephano and Trinculo,

...Remember,

First to possess his books; for without them

He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command: they all do hate him

⁴ Ariel's gender is fairly ambiguous in the play, but Ariel is referred to at one point as a "he." However, according to Katherine Steele Brokaw in "Ariel's Liberty," "Ariel was a 'coveted female role' from the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth century" (24). I think a part of Ariel's appeal to Owenson is his fluidity in terms of gender.

As rootedly as I. Burn but his books. (III. ii. 14)

Prospero's power comes exclusively from *written language*, to which Caliban and the other enslaved spirits of the island have no access. And yet, it is this language controlled, utilized, and manipulated exclusively by Prospero that shapes the reality in which these magical creatures must live—even on their own native island. Indeed, “reality” on the island in *The Tempest* seems ever-shifting and elusive. At one point toward the end of the play, Gonzalo, the old counselor, exclaims to Prospero that he is not sure whether or not to believe his existence. Prospero replies,

You do yet taste

Some subtleties o' the isle, that will not let you

Believe things certain. (V. i. 20)

This sense of “un-reality” is underscored by the many references to dreams in the play, most famously Prospero's speech, “We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep” (IV. i. 17).

The critical history of *The Tempest* is certainly vast, but in recent years has come to be dominated by a primarily postcolonial reading that sees Caliban as some variant of an enslaved subaltern imperial subject, Ariel as the “mulatto” or “mestize” imperial go-between, and Prospero as their domineering master. Yet, sympathy for Prospero's enslaved islanders can be traced back to the Romantic era. True to form, Samuel Taylor Coleridge sees Caliban as a child of nature: “a noble being: a man in the sense of imagination, all the images he utters are drawn from nature, & all are highly poetical” (quoted in Vaughn 103). Responding to Coleridge's lecture, William Hazlitt in an 1818 article in *The Yellow Dwarf* is perhaps one of the first critics to see Caliban in a political

light, “arguing he, not Prospero, was the legitimate ruler of the island. The Neapolitans, he charged, were usurpers” (Vaughn 104). The Romantics did not emphasize Caliban’s “barbarism,” but his innate nobility and, in a sense, his class status. Caliban is *not* the subaltern because he has a pedigree and a clear genealogical claim to the island. Furthermore, he is educated, and thus he can “speak” and draw from the language of a traditional western education.

Similarly, Owenson makes clear distinctions between the landless poor Irish and the disinherited, but highly educated Irish “aristocracy” in her novels. Both O’Donnel and O’Brien have a sort of “stage-Irishman” foil who serves to highlight their own gentility as Irishmen and thus the injustice of their disinheritance. In *The O’Donnel* Owenson introduces her readers to the character McRory who possesses boundless loyalty towards his master, and in *The O’Briens* Shane sacrifices his own life to save the protagonist Murrogh. In many ways these illiterate subaltern Irish characters emphasize Owenson’s belief that Ireland could only be liberated by an educated Irish elite and not the masses who would come to listen to the great orator O’Connell, for instance. Caliban, because of his genealogy and formal education, is the rightful master of the island. In the same way, O’Donnel and Murrogh declare no desire to dismantle the established aristocratic relationship of master and tenant, but wish only to infiltrate it and assume their rightful place within it.

Ariel’s critical history is as various as it is ambivalent. José Enrique Rodó saw Ariel as the ideal symbol of South America, and he famously argues in his 1900 essay entitled “Ariel” that this character

embodies the mastery of reason and of sentiment over the baser impulses of unreason. He is the generous zeal, the lofty and disinterested motive in action, the spirituality of civilization, and the vivacity and grace of the intelligence--the ideal end to which human selection aspires; that superman in whom has disappeared, under the persistent chisel of life, the stubborn trace of the *Caliban*, symbol of sensuality and stupidity. (4)

Rodó sees Ariel as symbolic of a “civilized” human ideal that has “bred out” the residues of its barbaric and ignorant Caliban-like qualities. In his seminal work on Latin-American literature, Roberto Fernández Retamar argues that Rodó’s construction of Ariel as symbolic of South America is false as it privileges Western ways of “knowing” at the expense of indigenous knowledge. Retamar sees Ariel purely in terms of “the intellectual,” and as he writes in his essay on Caliban, “[Ariel] can choose between serving Prospero...at which he is apparently unusually adept but for whom he is nothing more than a timorous slave, or allying himself with Caliban in his struggle for freedom” (39).

Recent scholarship on the Ariel figure has become much more nuanced and has come to see Ariel as a symbol for the anti-essentialist nature of colonized spaces. Writing about the Ariel figure in a Caribbean context, Holger Henke argues that Ariel is an “elusive, ghostlike, creative, spirit-force, who—albeit his master’s instrument—nevertheless moves the unfolding plot of power, subordination, and revelation by the way of his otherworldly and intangible, invisible hand” (47). As a “sprite” whose essence is as changeable as the wind, Ariel is the personification of the Caribbean with its mix of cultures and ethnicities. In this way, Ariel reflects the view “that nature and objects are

not necessarily what they seem, that they do not readily reveal their true nature (essence), or at least that they may represent different essences at different times” (37). Ariel’s changeability and fluidity allow the sprite to exist “just around the heads of the colonial intruder but operating well below the radar of his/her sight/consciousness” (47). While Ariel takes on a human form in the play, his “true” form is unknown and unseen, and thus he is able to function just beyond the purview of his master. Similarly, Bryan Reynolds and Ayanna Thompson argue in *Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future* that the Ariel figure “most exemplifies the play’s subtextual indeterminacy, and works to produce both incoherent and coherent discourses within and beyond the play. The sylph’s gender, sexuality, humanity, birth, origin, and future existence all evade exact terms within the play” (190). As an ambiguous and indeterminate figure, Ariel cuts across boundaries of space and time and does not have to follow the “normal” rules that guide and construct our “official” realities. For Reynolds and Donald Hedrick writing in *Shakespeare Without Class*, Ariel could be viewed as occupying a “transversal territory,” which invites characters to

deviate from the hierarchalizing assemblages—whether vertical or horizontal—of any organizational social structure. Its transversal power inspires multiplicities of conjunctions and disjunctions within official territory, and may even motivate the production of a counterculture, which is to say a subculture that actively and intentionally challenges official culture. (19)

For Owenson, the Ariel-esque heroines in her works can defy the status quo precisely because they are so indeterminate in terms of class, gender, nationality, and

even at times in their very appearance. As Reynolds and Hedrick suggest, this indeterminacy allows for the possible emergence of a subculture that can subvert the dominant regime. When Beavoin in disguise confronts O'Brien about his membership in The United Irishmen, he states that because of her gender, she could not be a member of such a secret club, to which she replies, "Women have been members of societies, quite as secret, and much more discreet" (III 139). The secret society Beavoin speaks of is her own very secretive, but exceedingly liberal, abbey that seeks to "enlighten" the young women of Ireland. As Beavoin explains it, her abbey is intended to "improve the female members of [her] persecuted sect; to take them out of the hands of vulgar bigotry,--to refine, to liberalize" (IV 260). She champions the strong matriarchal legacy of previous orders, describing how "from the *petites maîtresses* of the Faubourg St. Germain, to the powerful superiors of Italian convents, Jesuitism has always borrowed its agency from female arts, and female subtlety" (IV 256). She functions under the auspices of Catholicism, but only to exert her own liberal agenda. Furthermore, because she works "underground" in cultivating the minds of young Irishwomen, she insinuates throughout the novel that her work has much greater effect on the state of Ireland than these masculinist "secret" societies that bar women from their ranks.

Owenson's heroines also occupy a "transversal" space and shift seamlessly between various borders of national identity, class, and culture. Charlotte O'Halloran's father is Irish, but she was raised in Italy "living entirely among clever men, and left to educate herself, as it pleased Heaven, she was at once the most naïve and clever little creature in the world" (II chap viii). Charlotte puts on numerous disguises throughout the novel as a sort of "survival mechanism" in the face of great adversity. Her performance

is such a natural extension of her personality that O'Donnell often wonders who the real Charlotte O'Halloran is. When O'Donnell first meets Charlotte he sees her "short clumsy cloak and deep straw bonnet, which gave her the air of a little Red Riding-hood, or a Dutch toy" (I 147) and he is simply unimpressed by her as a person. This "dowdy governess disguise" serves her well in the company of the snobby English tourists as they tend to ignore her unless they require some sort of entertainment at her expense.

Owenson writes,

All governesses are interesting by presumptive right, yet Miss O'Halloran had so wholly neglected her privilege, that Lady Singleton had as little to fear from her attractions, as to expect from her resistance: she had, however, a youthfulness of appearance, which is sometimes deemed beauty in itself: but this juvenile air was counteracted by an inertness and indolence of motion, which is deemed peculiar to senility. The abruptness of her manner, might perhaps, under the influence of prepossession, have passed for naiveté, had it not always been followed by a certain vacancy of countenance, which changed the promised charm into an actual defect, while her smiles, which were "few and far between," alone threw a ray of intelligence over her features and seemed to struggle with their own acuteness, lest they should shame the stupor of her vacant eye. (I 34-35)

Charlotte's face and her manner are described as constantly fluctuating and a part of her disguise is her cunning way of eluding all labels and categories.

When O'Donnell travels to England on his way to join the Austrian army, he meets Charlotte O'Halloran again at the aristocratic home of Lady Llanberis (a stand-in

for Lady Abercorn, Owenson's own rich patron). At this point in the novel, she is no longer the dowdy governess who drudgingly followed the English tourists through Northern Ireland, but the effervescent Duchess of Belmont. O'Donnel cannot quite pinpoint the nature of her character and she seems to transcend all readily available labels in terms of class, personality, and gender roles. To O'Donnel, she is all performance—style with some elusive substance amidst all her “seeming”:

He was therefore struck by the variety and transition of expression, which flitted across the face, he now contemplated; and though he could still trace there Miss O'Halloran's features, yet he was puzzled to guess, what magic had lent them the soul by which they were now animated. Was it love? was it the influence of rank, fortune, and fashion, and conscious power, and high consideration? or was it *all acting*, all “false seeming?” But in this case, which was the actress, the governess, or the Duchess; or was there some third character, superior to both, which assumed and discarded either, according to the circumstances and exigency of the moment? (II 235-236)

Similarly, Beavoin O'Flaherty, the heroine of *The O'Briens*, possesses an elusive identity not only in terms of nationality, but also in regard to her interactions with other characters in the novel. Just as Charlotte O'Halloran will put on a disguise to serve “the exigency of the moment,” Beavoin will go to great lengths to hide her “true” self in her dealings with the Catholic Church, Irish politics, and O'Brien himself. For Beavoin, maintaining a disguise is imperative if she is to do her work as an Abbess and as an educator of women in liberal ideas. Beavoin's mother was an Italian nun who was

seduced by the late Count O'Flaherty—a friend to Murrogh O'Brien's father. Murrogh and Beavoin had the same foster mother, but were separated after her father's death. Her mother sacrificed Beavoin “to the Virgin as an expiatory offering on the altars she had violated” (III 250). Raised in the church in Italy, Beavoin was directed to be Murrogh's guardian as he is supposedly a part of an ancient prophecy to save Ireland from English rule. She tells O'Brien, “‘my spiriting’ was employed to rescue from the dangers of that world, one marked out by ancient prophecy to be the savior of his country, and the restorer of the rights and creeds of his forefathers” (III 257). Liberal-minded, enlightened Beavoin finds the prophecy foolish, but falls in love with Murrogh and attempts to save him from the illusions of both romantic antiquarian nationalism and romantic illicit entanglements. As Beavoin tells Murrogh,

Brought up to propagate dogmas, I soon arrived at facts; and the veil dropped,—and for ever. Educated for the purpose of obtaining an influence over the minds of others, I obtained a mastery even over those for whose service and secret views I was instructed. I have become their directing spirit, not their slave; and I wield the power and influence they have given me, for purposes directly opposed to their intentions (III 254).

Throughout the novel, Beavoin takes on many extraordinary disguises to save Murrogh from his various romantic entanglements—be they national or erotic. Similar to Charlotte O'Halloran, Beavoin's true identity remains continuously elusive, and in this way she is able to avoid political and religious categories and thus persecution from both the Catholic Church and the State. As Wright states in “National Erotics and Political Theory in Morgan's *The O'Briens*,” “Part of [Beavoin's] power arises...from her

invisibility to a public sphere that stresses national figures—champions, orators, and revolutionaries who hand out constitutions in front of adoring crowds. She is instead a ‘spirit,’ a nun, a veiled woman, a ‘mask’; without her body on erotic display...she can act independently within both the church and Irish society” (238). Indeed, both of these women resist an ostentatious show of their bodies and their appearance is ever-shifting and changeable. In this way, these “hybrid heroines” offer an alternative model for the eroticized female figure in Irish literature—the Cathleen ni Houlihan who requires “rescuing” by a strong, hyper-masculine Irish hero. In Owenson’s novels it is her female characters who do the majority of the “rescuing” and offer up “protection” to their male Irish counterparts.

Owenson’s fluid, Ariel-esque heroines resist a stable narrative of Irishness and their hybrid identities and fluid appearances (and disappearances) reveal a disinclination on Owenson’s part to centralize and define a certain “Irish” national spirit and write that spirit on the objectified female body. As Ina Ferris suggests,

This hyper-hybridity establishes the national heroine as precisely not a pure whole (an integral being) but as someone willing to live in and among parts. To live-in-the-partial in this sense is not so much to be *outside* a particular cultural discourse or category as not to be fully *within* any single discourse or category. (84)

Owenson’s heroines’ hybrid identities and fluid presence within these novels remind readers of the inherent complexity of Irish identity and their sprite-like “invisibility” allows them to cut across the stringent lines of discourse that so often define Irish politics.

Unlike Ariel's fluid identity, Caliban has, as Reynolds and Thompson point out, "a clearly identified gender, sexuality, family lineage, and physicality" (190). What is more, *The Tempest* takes strides to underline how Caliban's language has been given to him by the authoritarian Prospero. After a lengthy exchange in which Caliban accuses Prospero of taking over the island and enslaving its inhabitants, the former exclaims,

You taught me language; and my profit on't

Is, I know how to curse; the red plague rid you,

For learning me your language! (I. ii 5)

The only language available to Caliban is that which has been inflicted upon him by the imperialist Prospero, and the only positive aspect of learning the master's language is that he is able to curse and accuse Prospero of his cruel injustice. For Retamar, this is what he terms "the dialectic of Caliban." Writing in the South American context, he explains the exchange in this way:

To offend us they call us *mambí*, they call us *black*; but we reclaim as a mark of glory the honor of considering ourselves descendants of the *mambi*, descendants of the rebel, runaway, *independentista* black—*never* descendants of the slave holder. Nevertheless, Prospero, as we well know, taught his language to Caliban, and consequently, gave him a name. But is this his true name? (16)

As Retamar suggests, the colonial subject, like Caliban, is stuck in the discourse of the imperialist. They call us what they see as a derogatory name—we choose to "own" that name and wear it with pride. Yet, in spite of this act of defiance, the imperialist still controls and polices the discourse. Retamar does suggest, however, that Caliban has a

name, a secret name, and thus a subject position independent of Prospero. Caliban's awareness of himself and his own island becomes evident in Act II, scene ii where he describes in vivid detail the natural wonders of his native home:

I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;
 And I with my long nails will dig thee pig nuts;
 Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
 To snare the nimble marmoset; I'll bring thee
 To clustering filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee
 Young scamels from the rock. (II. ii 12)

Beyond Prospero, Caliban possesses a consciousness that is in tune with the land. Far beyond the "stupidity" of Rodó's accusations, his words have a beauty and a sensitivity that is all of his own design and individual perspective. Stephen Greenblatt in *Learning to Curse* reminds us that while the play insists that we prefer another world view, "we cannot make [Caliban's] vanish into silence" (31).

In *The O'Donnell* and *The O'Briens*, Owenson uses her "Ariel" figures to "teach" the native male Irish "Calibans" of the novels to navigate post 1798 Irish politics and surreptitiously break the dialectic that is dictated by the ruling aristocracy. This "education" begins in *The O'Donnell* with Charlotte O'Halloran's unique use of laughter to dispel false constructions of Irishness. Reflecting Bakhtin's theories of the carnivalesque, Charlotte's outbursts in the face of the haughty English tourists are a momentary suspension of the "official" reality, and her laughter is the sort that "[resists] praise, flattery, hypocrisy. This laughing truth [degrades] power" (Bakhtin 92). As an oppressed and put upon governess, Charlotte O'Halloran will often break through her

“performance” of the quiet, indolent governess with laughter to disrupt the action or dialogue of the supercilious English tourists whom she has the “privilege” of accompanying on a tour of Ireland. Owenson explains, “Her conduct was distinguished by a reserve almost amounting to sullenness, and yet she had the habit of bursting into an abrupt laugh, whenever circumstances called upon her risible faculties: this she did, *‘not wisely, but too well,’* for her laugh, though always ill-timed, was ever well-directed” (I 36). In the opening pages of the novel, Charlotte’s laughter often arises when one of the tourists makes some absurd stereotypical remark about the native Irish. For instance, in a conversation about the recent Irish uprising and the presence of rebels in the countryside, one traveler tells a ridiculous anecdote about an English landowner who hired a piper as a source of protection as he traveled through Ireland.

[The English landowner] engaged a celebrated piper and made him play the whole way before him in the Dickey-box, wishing to try conciliation, and being well aware that the lower Irish are addicted to music, and those sort of idle things—and—

Here Mr. Dexter was interrupted by Miss O’Halloran’s bursting into a violent fit of laughter, in which she was joined by every one at the table, except Lady Singleton; for Mr. Dexter, not to be discountenanced by any event, joined the laughers himself, until, observing the displeasure of Lady Singleton’s countenance, he abruptly composed his own, and with great gravity asked her to take wine. (I 51).

Charlotte’s strategy is to use laughter to disrupt this tale and in doing so, making the company laugh at the teller—Mr. Dexter—and not the Irish of his story. In another

scene, the English tourists ask Charlotte to give them “a little of her brogue and her buffa” and beg her to relate the myth of the Giant’s Causeway:

“Come Miss O’Halloran,” said Lady Singleton, dictatorially, “You may once in a way *fair l’agreable*.”

“Miss O’Halloran will be *too* happy to obey your Ladyship, I am sure,” said Mr. Dexter. “Courage, Miss O’Halloran, there are none by but friends.” (I 70)

Charlotte knows that in reality she has no true friends amongst the company and that they only wish to use her for their own shallow entertainment. She ignores them, quietly “rinsing the cups and arranging the tea table” (I 71). To goad her, one of the gentlemen makes an attempt to mock her Italian background:

“Or if,” continued the Colonel, “the *Muse of Erin* be impropriety to our vows, would Miss O’Halloran but invoke the *Muse of Arno* in our favor, and we would give up Fin-ma-cool willingly for ‘La Virgenalia’ or ‘the Nina.’” (I 70)

Refusing to be their performing monkey, Charlotte O’Halloran uses a kind of carnivalesque comedic move to detract her harassers:

[Charlotte] suddenly raised her head, and opened two large eyes on the Colonel with a look of such stupid amazement, that he involuntarily started back, and a general laugh at his expense disturbed for the moment at least the vein of his humor. (I 71)

Rather than expose herself to ridicule before the gentry, Charlotte O’Halloran disrupts the entire performance and turns the laughter on those who would make a mockery out of her

heritage and background. As Bakhtin writes, “laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts” (92). She emerges victorious from the scene and resists stereotypes imposed by the English who desire to hem her in and define her with broad strokes.

Later in the novel when the tourists meet up with O’Donnel, he momentarily becomes the source of amusement for them, but Charlotte takes it upon herself to “teach” him how to resist the performance of their desirable brand of Irishness. In this scene, O’Donnel invites the English company on a short pleasure-cruise in his boat. Seeing a perilous hemp bridge suspended from a lonely and desolate cliff, the Colonel mentions, “How very unlucky...that no accommodating fisherman places himself there for *le bien du spectacle*” (I 224). One of the ladies of the party, Lady Florence, flirts with O’Donnel and begs him to ascend the rocks to fulfill her desire for such a glimpse. She states,

“I should infinitely prefer,” said Lady Florence, “seeing a picturesque figure upon that wonderful bridge to the finest spectacle of the opera. I should not suppose,” added her ladyship, turning her soft eyes on the stranger, “that there now exists a man, who, to gratify a woman’s wishes, would place himself in so perilous a situation; and yet one reads of such things in the old legends and romances. *L’ame paladin* of a *preux chevalier* would not have refused such a test of implicit obedience to his liege lady: but the days of chivalry are over” (I 225).

Impressed by O'Donnel's tragic story and attractive features, Lady Florence wants him to play the role of romantic Irish hero and potentially put himself in mortal peril to fulfill her bizarre touristic impulse. Just as O'Donnel is about to leap from the boat,

his arm was suddenly arrested, and a voice murmured in his ear, 'You are going to *risk* your life, and to be laughed at for your weakness.' '*Laughed at!*' he repeated in a tone of astonishment as he turned round. The only person near him however was the governess, and surprise for a moment so wholly overcame him, that he remained motionless. (I 227).

O'Donnel is completely paralyzed by Charlotte O'Halloran's intervention. Immediately following her interference, the boat almost violently tips over, revealing the "imminent danger to the passengers" (I 225). Charlotte O'Halloran undoubtedly saved O'Donnel's life, but even more so she saved him from becoming a "spectacle" to the English tourists. When he confronts Charlotte later, he asks her,

"Upon what grounds you accused me of weakness a little time back, and for what reason you supposed I should be laughed at?"

"You were going to do a foolish thing to gratify a foolish person," she returned with equal abruptness: "when people do so, I think they are generally laughed at; don't you?" (I 231)

Charlotte's desire was not just to save his life, but to ensure that he resist the impulse to play into the stereotypes constructed by the English tourists—in this case, "the romantic Irish figure." Laughter is decidedly *her* weapon, and she refuses to allow it to be used against her or her Irish brethren.

Later in the novel, when O'Donnel has become the "pet Irishman" to Lady Llanberis in London and marriage has transformed Charlotte O'Halloran into a wealthy (and now widowed) Duchess, she intervenes in his affairs again to save him from portraying certain behaviors in front of the English that would only reinforce unfair stereotypes of the Irish. In one scene, O'Donnel's servant, Mc Rory, bumbles into the drawing room to complain about his unfair treatment by the English servants of the house. The English aristocrats encourage Mc Rory out of sport, and Mc Rory "occupied a place, which heroes, orators, actors, jugglers, minister, and dancing dogs had all in succession occupied before" (chapter ix). Furious, and more embarrassed for his servant than for himself, O'Donnel moves to intercede, "when he was arrested by a hand, a voice, and the words '*courage*, or you are lost.' It was the same hand, the same voice, which had arrested his steps at Carrick-a-rede" (II 239). When O'Donnel confronts her later as to why she interfered between him and his servant, she tells him,

Had you betrayed your annoyance at Mc Rory's abrupt appearance, you would have given the Mr. Carlisles a subject for mimicry, and the rest of the party no favourable impression of your tact, as it was. WE have the laugh on OUR side, for you know, 'I too am an Athenian.' Mc Rory had, as I guessed he would, '*un grand succès*,' and you had the amusing spectacle of seeing bon-ton frivolity exhibited in all its idleness and vacuity, without being in the least involved in the absurdities of your servant, who, after all, was far from being the most ridiculous personage in the scene (II 271)

Charlotte takes O'Donnel out of "the play" and urges him to repress his temper and stay any interference which would only add fuel to the fire and provide material for the English aristocrats to make an imbecile out of him. As Charlotte informs him, "We are at best but *the fashion*: we are for a time shewn about, and followed and gazed at; and we exhibit and are exhibited" (III 71). The best these Irish characters can do is refuse to be part of this game of manners and resist the social traps that are laid before them in order to pigeon-hole them as objectified Irish "characters." Charlotte thus teaches O'Donnel how to break down the discourse of "Irishness" that the English inevitably control, and in doing so offers O'Donnel her "protection." O'Donnel reflects, "How kindly she has acted by me, and yet how lightly she seems to think of me; still tendering me her *protection*, suspecting my weakness, and exhibiting her own strength!" (II 272).

This discussion of Charlotte's "protection" continues throughout the novel and emerges again after a key scene where Charlotte spills tea on her dress to interrupt a potential argument between O'Donnel and another guest of Lady Llanberis, Lord Charles, over Irish antiquities. Insulted by Lord Charles, O'Donnel wishes to leave Lady Llanberis' home at once, but Charlotte "commands" him to remain:

"Indeed!" returned O'Donnel with animation: "then you *shall* be obeyed. But remember, that to command obedience is to imply protection; and that in ours, as in all bonds of allegiance, the sovereign and the subject stand respectively committed."

"Well, well," said the Duchess, moving towards the door, "I will *protect* you, if *that be all*: but," she added, turning suddenly round, "I must do it in future at a cheaper rate, than I did last night, for really I

cannot afford a white satin gown in your defence, every time you mount your griffin as the champion of your country, and cry ‘Hola there— O’Donnel for Ireland, against St. George of England!’” (II 59)

In Owenson’s novels, the “Ariels” are the “heroes” of the story, offering their “protection” to their Irish male counterparts; but their protection is warning against flagrant displays of Irish nationalism when they are ridiculed and abused by the English, and they urge these men to maintain their passion in order to work “behind the scenes” to effect social and political change.

In one of the final scenes in *The O’Briens*, Murrough O’Brien makes a key distinction between himself and the beautiful Beavoin O’Flaherty. Throughout all of O’Brien’s adventures leading up to the 1798 rebellion--his expulsion from Trinity College for writing seditious pamphlets, his imprisonment in Dublin Castle for supposedly inciting a riot, and even his near entanglement with the dashing Lady Knocklofty--Beavoin O’Flaherty has been present at every turn, helping O’Brien and quietly manipulating events in his favor. Although connected with the Catholic Church and devoted to her own convent, Beavoin is clearly anti-Jesuit and anti-clerical and in possession of a strong liberal mind. Similar to Ariel’s maneuverings in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Beavoin negotiates patriarchal power on several religious, political, and social fronts. A product of the Jesuits’ rigorous education, she emerges ambivalent towards her superiors and empowered to influence events as she sees fit. Although intrigued by Beavoin’s power and ability to manipulate others, O’Brien cannot help but see himself playing “Caliban” to Beavoin’s “Ariel,” saying, “The Ariel appointed to watch over the ‘shallow monster,’ by the pious Prospero of the Jesuit society, has acted

much as her prototype did; and amused her own superior intelligence, while she played with the weakness and folly of the subject committed to her power” (266). Although Murrogh is entangled with the heroic United Irishmen, he is decidedly *not* the hero of this story. For Owenson, “heroism” is not defined as masculinist martyrdom for Ireland, but living to die another day, working with the system in order to break it down.

One of the hurdles these male characters face in Owenson’s novels is that the English often read their strength and masculinity as threatening to the status quo. Both O’Donnel and Murrogh cut dashing figures and are every inch the traditional “hero,” but for Owenson, this is precisely what makes them so “dangerous” to the work of liberating Ireland. They are military men, both serving abroad in foreign wars, and both bear the yoke of myths and prophecies that name them as the “liberators” of Ireland. A part of Owenson’s project in these novels is to deconstruct these sorts of superstitions and suppress their romantic inclinations and thus turn her “Calibans” into enlightened figures who can enact change through constitutional channels. One of the challenges both characters face is the way in which their attentions to the opposite sex are treated as somehow threatening to the imperial mission. Their romantic advances towards Englishwomen enrage their English male protectors, and for Owenson this kind of incitement is extremely problematic in that it provides fodder for the Englishmen to paint these Irish male characters as “barbaric” or at the very least “opportunistic.”

What makes O’Donnel potentially threatening to the gentry is an overt masculinity that sets him in sharp opposition to his English counterparts. His words and “curses” against English injustice potentially set him up for engaging in the “dialectic of Caliban,” but the English mark his rugged good looks and mannerisms as something

hyper-masculine and even dangerously hyper-sexual. This construction consistently sends O'Donnell and later Murrough O'Brien to dance on perilous precipices where they face the wrath of an insecure English masculinity that feels threatened by the hypermasculinity projected onto these Irish male characters. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Prospero singles out Caliban's supposed hyper-sexuality as part of the reason why he enslaves Caliban. After Caliban curses Prospero for binding him into cruel servitude, Prospero denies his accusations, saying he only locked him up after he attempted to rape his daughter:

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child. (I.ii. 5)

Caliban's response to Prospero is telling as it plays on the ultimate fears of the colonizer—the stealing of women, the comingling of bloodlines, and the propagation of the colonized. Caliban replies,

“O ho, O ho!—would it had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans. (I. ii. 5)

In Owenson's novels, the English aristocracy is warm and welcoming to the idea of having a “pet Irishman” for their amusement until he shows signs of affection towards one of their female members. Any time one of these male characters makes advances

towards an English woman, those advances are curiously interpreted as a weakness not just of their gender, but of their constructed “Irishness.”

Owenson’s “Ariels” attempt to check O’Donnel and O’Brien’s romantic impulses knowing that their sexuality would only be used against them as proof of their Irish “savagery.” As tall, handsome, military men, both O’Donnel and O’Brien cut dashing figures, but their masculinity only becomes dangerous when it is under the gaze of the English who expect their Irish to be obsequious, weak, and servile—not strong, worldly gentlemen. Whenever O’Brien and O’Donnel express romantic feelings for Englishwomen, their feelings fall prey to a dialectic that paints those emotions as threatening and “ungentlemanly.” For instance, in *The O’Donnel* Charlotte, now the Duchess, brings to O’Donnel’s attention that his affection for the Lady Llanberis may be misperceived as the work of a “rascal” and an “Irish fortune-hunter” of sorts. While O’Donnel has been completely oblivious to how his behavior is being translated by the English aristocracy in his company, Charlotte takes pains to warn him how he needs to take care and protect his character. She even references Shakespeare’s Caliban as an ironic reminder of his lack of self-awareness in his dangerous social environment amongst the English aristocracy. O’Donnel admits,

“I believe I have *of late perceived* nothing, but have dreamed away existence, and lived independent of perception.”

“And is that a gracious mode of being?” asked the Duchess, smiling, and leaning her arm on the mantelpiece.

“In my instance,” he returned, “It is more gracious than either safe or lasting; for from such dreaming I shall be too soon obliged to awaken.”

“But why not try then to *sleep* and dream again like *Caliban*?”

“When such efforts are made, the reverse of our desires too frequently occurs; and the former bright illusion is only followed up by some frightful catastrophe. I thought,” he added, with another involuntary sigh,” that *I* at least had *done with dreaming!*...” (III 93-94).

The Duchess refers to a line in *The Tempest* from Act III, scene ii, where Caliban and his two new comrades Trinculo and Stephano are drunkenly conspiring to kill Prospero.

Caliban has promised Stephano that if he slays the sorcerer Prospero he will become king of the island and hence attain Miranda, Prospero’s daughter, for his wife. Ariel overhears their plans and while invisible makes mischief for the conspirators, shouting out, “Thou liest, thou canst not,” when they discuss how they will “knock a nail in his head.” Ariel’s invisible, disembodied voice confuses Stephano and Trinculo and they began attacking one another, each thinking the other had insulted him. Ariel continues the confusion by playing music and scares the two Neapolitans. Caliban intercedes and tells them,

The isle is full of noises,
 Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices,
 That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked,
 I cried to dream again. (III. ii.130–138)

By referencing this passage of *The Tempest* Charlotte is likening herself to the Ariel in Shakespeare's play who through music and subtle whispers "wakes up" Caliban from his dreams of riches that seemingly fall from the sky. After his confrontation with Charlotte, O'Donnell realizes that "it was not impossible that he might even be considered as a mere *Irish fortune-hunter* by the whole society of Longlands. His irritable and oversensitive feelings took the alarm: he bitterly lamented the weakness which had led him on, from day to day, to prolong his visit, after the eclairsissement which had taken place between him and Lady Llanberis" (III 104). Lady Llanberis's admirer Lord Charles becomes so incensed with jealousy towards O'Donnell that Lord Charles insults O'Donnell's honor, denying his status as a *gentleman*, which results in the two dueling. Even though O'Donnell wins the duel and Lord Charles is merely wounded, the incident in Owenson's novel serves as a "moral" lesson of sorts warning strapping young Irishmen not to mess around with genteel English ladies lest they end up wrangling with their so-called male "protectors."

Similarly, in *The O'Briens*, Murrough O'Brien learns he must tread carefully around Anglo-Irish ladies of the gentry, namely the strikingly beautiful, and, incidentally, *married* Lady Knocklofty, lest his sexuality becomes the focus of derision and slander. In one key scene in the third volume, O'Brien attends a masked ball held by the Knockloftys. At the ball, O'Brien is confronted by a mysterious figure whom we later learn is his Ariel-esque female "guardian" Beavoin O'Flaherty.

"I came not here to hurt, but to save you," said the mask, in a deep and
much affected voice.

“Indeed,” said O’Brien, “I thank you at least for the intention.
May I beg

to know from what danger?”

“From the commission of a perilous fault, and of a deadly sin.

“And they are—“

“Unavailing conspiracy and criminal love.” (III 159).

For Beavoin, O’Brien’s romantic entanglement is just as dangerous as his sworn vow to The United Irishmen and she seeks to steer him clear of both associations. Her concerns are justified as we see in a clandestine meeting where Lady Knocklofty informs O’Brien that shadowy rumors about his service in the Austrian army in particular concerning “ungentlemanly conduct” have recently emerged. Seeing O’Brien as a rival and threatened by his masculinity, Lord Knocklofty invents a rumor that he challenged a superior officer to a duel while in the service of the Austrian Army. Lady Knocklofty informs him,

It is right I should tell you (for perhaps you are not aware) how deeply you have been calumniated by our side of the house. I do not allude alone to heresy and schism, atheism and sedition; but there is rumour that you were dismissed by your regiment under circumstances which render it a delicate matter for military men to cultivate your acquaintance. (IV 134)

O’Brien later proves these rumors to be unfounded and false, but the damage to his character is irreparable and O’Brien describes it as “the blackest and most libelous calumny that the wickedness of party ever invented, to wring the feelings, and blast the reputation of its victim” (IV 135). Later in the novel, a letter from the Prince de Ligne reveals that O’Brien only challenged the officer to the duel because the superior officer

was prejudiced against O'Brien's status as an Irishman and thus insulted him by treating him on the same level as his subaltern officers⁵ (IV 137-8). The letter insinuates that O'Brien was morally in the right, but afoul of military discipline, making it "a delicate matter" to extend his friendship to military men. Ultimately, what the scene reveals is that O'Brien's pride and his inability to allow for his good name and status as a gentleman to be besmirched is an affront to the patriarchal order of the English/Anglo-Irish aristocracy who cannot tolerate an Irishman who refuses to "toe the line." O'Brien's ultimate offense of standing up to authority causes him to become an outcast to high society, if he had ever belonged at all. Ironically, O'Brien and O'Donnell must prove their status as gentlemen by fighting duels, yet those duels are precisely what undermine them as gentlemen. Neither male character can really do *anything* without it being misperceived as symptomatic of some sort of flagrant, hyper-masculine Irishness that threatens to subvert the social order of things. Their romantic entanglements with English or Anglo-Irish women are inevitably entangled with Irish politics revealing how their sexuality is "read" as transgressive. According to Julia M. Wright, "O'Brien's failure to effect even a minimal change in Irish politics stands as a critique of gallantry, of a national-masculine performance guided by spectacle and desire rather than theory—the heroic pose of a champion rather than the well-considered action of a liberal" (239). Both Charlotte and Beavoin work their behind-the-scenes machinations and take great pains to maintain the characters of their Irish male counterparts lest they fall victim to the dialectic of Caliban that ensnares them in the destructive discourse that frames Irish masculinity as dangerous and ultimately threatening to the social order.

⁵ I extend my thanks to Dr. Julia M. Wright for her assistance with this section of the novel.

In *The O'Briens*, Murrogh O'Brien, like Caliban, carelessly speaks out or "curses" against injustice and as a result faces persecution. The pamphlet he wrote and then circulated

was full of truths that were libels, and of general observations, personally applicable to certain obnoxious individuals in the council and the senate, whom popular imagination had already marked out for popular reprobation. It was honest and injudicious, and eminently perilous to the fearless writer; who in the uncompromising probity of youth, saw only the end, and was careless of the means (as they affected himself,) by which that end was to be attained" (III 217-8)

When he speaks of "truths" they become "libels" in the English purview. His statements enter into the dialectic of Caliban in which he cannot speak out against the state for fear of being labeled a liar and "injudicious." Owenson tacitly suggests it would have been better had O'Brien remained silent and worked behind the scenes through constitutional means to liberate Ireland rather than draw undue attention to himself by composing inciting, inflammatory pamphlets. Rather than seeing O'Brien's act as brave, Owenson marks it as foolish and a product of his naïve youthfulness. By speaking out against English oppression, O'Brien becomes immediately marked as a rebel and a United Irishman even though his involvement in the secret society was fairly marginal at best. Similar to the Caliban figure, O'Brien uses the "master's language" to curse but in doing so enters into a dangerous dialectic which singles him out as violent, seditious, and mutinous. Owenson is quick to point out that O'Brien's pamphlet was a "careless" creation lacking in foresight and wisdom. Lady Knocklofty later insinuates that the ideas

that informed secret societies such as The United Irishmen were instigated by foreigners and did not emanate from an “authentic” Irish place. In one clandestine meeting, she informs O’Brien, “The libel...involves you in the proceedings of men [The United Irishmen], who are the dupes and victims of hired instigators, and spies” (IV 313). So even though O’Brien’s pamphlet marks him as a rebel and as a “dangerous” individual, in the discourse of the uprising he is also a “dupe” and a “victim” of those people, namely the French, who would seek to create chaos in Ireland for political gain. Even in his “cursing” of the English, he cannot claim authorship in the truest sense of the word because, according to the English, these ideas have been imported and appropriated from the French by the Irish. O’Brien reflects the inherent contradiction of imperialism which sees colonized subjects as both treacherous and dangerously threatening, but at the same time weak and stupid. Homi K. Bhabha discusses the way in which “The Black” in imperialist discourse “is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child...he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar” (82). The Irishman in post-1798 often falls into this trap of representation and is incapable of escaping the peculiar dialectic that is so inevitably paralyzing for Owenson’s male characters. As Stuart Hall suggests in “The Spectacle of the Other,” individuals marked by some sort of “difference” from the majority “are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes—good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be *both things at the same time!*” (326). Lady

Knocklofty and her ilk find it impossible to believe that the Irish themselves would have specific, regional grievances and the uprising must be as a result of foreign instigators. Rather than see fault in their own oppressive practices, they blame the rebellion on outside agitators, revealing how for someone like O'Brien it is impossible to "speak" in the discourse of anti-imperialist sentiment.

While Owenson's Ariels use performance, laughter, and disguise to manipulate stringent constructions of Irishness, there is very little evidence in these novels of the hope and possibility of ever radically breaking the fetters that bind the people of Ireland. In *The O'Briens* Beavoin O'Flaherty gives Murrogh this bleak summary of conditions in Ireland for men:

To be born an Irishman is a dark destiny at the best; the last that the wise would contend with, or the proud encounter.—Here, indeed, as every where, mediocrity is safe; dullness is its own protection, and insensibility its own shield: but genius and feeling, the pride, the hope, the ambition of patriotism, the bitter indignation which spurns at oppression, the generous sympathy which ranges itself on the side of the oppressed,—if there are lands where such virtues thrive and flourish, and force forward the cause of human happiness, Ireland is not one of them. (IV 244)

For Beavoin, Ireland is not a place for heroes in the traditional sense, but it can contain figures like herself who work with the system to slowly enact political change. Even though the novel was written in 1827 with Catholic Emancipation on the horizon, for Owenson, it probably very likely did seem as if the hold the English had over the Irish was as irrevocable as it was unjust. However, far from bemoaning the virtual

enslavement of Ireland, Owenson constructs unique heroines who do what many of their male counterparts are not able to do—find ways to overturn the Anglo-centric discourse of Irishness through humor, disguise, and subterfuge. Instead of following the male heroic pursuits of taking up arms or being a “captain of dragoons,” as Maria Edgeworth once put it in a letter to her aunt about the rising, Owenson’s Ariels work behind the scenes to move events in their favor, quietly chipping away at the colonizer’s tight fist. Too often novels about the rising are read in black and white terms of pro-Union, anti-Union, pro-rebel, or pro-loyalist, but these dichotomies conceal the endless shades of gray of, to use Sangari’s term, “the politics of the possible.”

Chapter Four

The Irish Uncanny: The Return of the Repressed in Charles Robert Maturin's *The Milesian Chief* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*

In *On the Concept of History*, Walter Benjamin makes reference to a painting by Paul Klee entitled "Angelus Novus." Within the painting is an angel who stares at a great atrocity that has just taken place. Benjamin notes how

his face is turned toward the past. Where *we* see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment...to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm. (IX)

Benjamin offers up the figure of the Angel of History to articulate the way in which historical narratives are constructed to mirror totalizing ideologies and thus marginalize those catastrophic moments that do not quite fit into the view of history as "progress." In Charles Robert Maturin's *The Milesian Chief* (1812), the idea of "progress" is symbolized by the recurrent theme of uncontrollable, seemingly overwhelming forces

that repress a restless native culture and define these indigenous cultures by a “mythical,” but fetishized, past. As Maturin constructs it, the story of Irish history is how England suppressed the Irish and made way for the emergence of modern, albeit colonized, Ireland. In his later work *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Maturin’s vision of modernization is a troubled one and he reflects his ambivalence towards modernity and institutionalized systems of oppression through the alienated figure of the vampire. Cursed by a Faustian bargain, neither living nor dead, neither here nor there, Melmoth wanders the Earth in search of lost souls, ultimately being shipwrecked off the coast of his native Ireland to face the very horrors of history that brought him into being. For Maturin, the catastrophic fragments of Irish history such as the Cromwellian Wars and the 1798 uprising are at constant tension with the totalizing narratives of modernization or “progress,” and these fragments emerge as uncanny moments and figures that are, to quote David Lloyd, “recalcitrant to capitalist logic” (4). *Melmoth* begins with a dying patriarch--in the liminal space just before the transference of capital from one son of the cursed Melmoths to another. Before the decaying Wicklow estate can fall into the younger John Melmoth’s hands, the story of his ill-fated ancestor whose demonic rise began in the aftermath of the Cromwellian wars must be told and his spirit exorcised. Yet, as the broken, fragmented, interrupted narrative suggests, such “tellings” refuse totalization, and even when the vampire Melmoth is swallowed by the Irish Sea, a fragment of himself remains as a reminder of what history cannot contain. Instead of presenting a historical narrative as a linear sequence of events sweeping forward into the future, Maturin’s *Melmoth* pulls readers back to those catastrophic moments in Irish

history in order to, as Benjamin suggests, “awaken the dead” and disrupt the modern push towards “progress.”

In contrasting Maturin’s earlier work with his later apocalyptic visions in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, we see a “dialectic of enlightenment” emerging where the promises of modernity and “progress” reveal themselves to be troubled visions, filled with violence and horror. According to John Jervis in *Transgressing the Modern* the project of modernity, particularly in the colonial context, has always required a denunciation of the past at the same time it reconstructs it to define the present. He states, “The imperial adventure has indeed been central to the development of the modern West, which has always sought to validate itself through an encounter with those it can define as ‘primitive,’ thereby confirming the superiority of its essential attributes of ‘civilization’ and ‘rationality’; and has, in turn, often projected unacceptable facets of itself, so that what is not recognized in itself can be denounced in another” (58). As I will show in *The Milesian Chief*, the suppression of the “primitive” Irish and their rebellion becomes a fatalistic inevitability in the face of imperialistic forces bent on “civilizing” what Maturin constructs as an irrational, wild, premodern, native culture. However, Maturin’s push for the modernization of native cultures emerges as a troubled enterprise in his later works and he is critical of progressive narratives that produce a totalizing vision of history. As David Harvey suggests in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, a modern world that only looks forward to the future “can have no respect for its own past, let alone that of any pre-modern social order” (11). According to Harvey, what we are left with in such an atmosphere of transitoriness is a lack of “historical continuity” (11) and he suggests, “If there is any meaning to history, then that meaning has to be

discovered and defined within the maelstrom of change, a maelstrom that affects the terms of discussion as well as whatever it is being discussed. Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself” (12).

In *Melmoth the Wanderer* the story of the vampiric wanderer is told through a series of fragmented stories, ruptures, interruptions, and digressions, reflecting a modern break with history that at the same time cannot quite put the ghosts of the past to rest. Melmoth the wanderer himself is very much a “modern figure”—not just in the sense of the embodied capitalist metaphor of a figure who bargains with the devil for an extended life and magical powers, but in his reflection of the modern tendency towards “creative destruction,” by which the modern has to destroy the “old” world to create the new, an attitude, argues Harvey, that is best reflected in the character of Faust. In Goethe’s *Faust*, we see “an epic hero prepared to destroy religious myths, traditional values, and customary ways of life in order to build a brave new world out of the ashes of the old” (16). While ultimately a tragic figure, Faust, like Melmoth, “forces himself and everyone else (even Mephistopheles) to extremes of organization, pain, and exhaustion in order to master nature and create a new landscape, a sublime spiritual achievement that contains the potentiality for human liberation from want and need” (16). In Melmoth’s desire for domination of nature and time and space, he ultimately condemns himself to what Horkheimer and Adorno term “a nightmare condition of self-domination” (13).

Maturin was born in 1780 into a prominent and wealthy Anglo-Irish family, and from the very beginning it was assumed that he would fulfill the role of “gentleman

clergyman” as his ancestors had before him. While he did work as a curate in the Anglican church of St. Peter’s in Dublin for most of his life, he did so with a great amount of ambivalence towards his assumed role. For reasons unknown, Maturin’s father fell out of favor with the Anglican church and the family was thrown into stark poverty. A bit of a dandy and noted for his flamboyant personality, Maturin, much like Sydney Owenson, took great pains to fuel the mythologies that built up around his life. All this suggests, according to Lougy, “an attempt to shield himself against the destructive effects of poverty and against the disparity between his once high expectations and the starkness of his actual circumstances” (15). Indeed, his family’s fall from grace was perhaps the impetus for many of his radical views, especially in regards to organized religion. Losing his “status,” Maturin always found himself in a social “no-man’s-land” belonging neither to the Ascendancy nor the native Irish population. Outside of these labels, he found a position where he could radically critique the systems that confine humanity and repress our complex natures. As Robert Lougy writes in his biography of Maturin, “In the problems he writes of and in the conflict between his heart and head where the question of Ireland is concerned, we can see his sense of personal estrangement as an Irishman, and this estrangement is reflected in many of his major Irish characters who are drawn by the past but must find their role in the present” (86).

Maturin was a man who literally suffered for his art and as his notoriety as a gothic novelist rose, his role in the Anglican Church floundered and he suffered economically throughout his life. Ever a fickle friend, Maturin’s fame, which he had banked so much on after the success of his play *Bertram*, wavered after a series of disastrous literary failures. This coupled with a tendency towards extravagance pushed

his family to the brink of starvation. His composition of *Melmoth* was a race against time, and a last gasp attempt at saving his family from complete financial ruin. As Clarence Mangan said of Maturin:

He—in his own dark way—understood many people; but nobody understood him in *any* way. And therefore it was that he, this man of the highest genius, Charles Robert Maturin, lived unappreciated—and died unsympathized with, uncared for, unenquired after—and not only forgotten, because he had never been thought about” (87).

In both *The Milesian Chief* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin presents characters that, much like himself, exist outside the social structures that begot them. Alienated and alone, impoverished and at times literally starving to death, they are essential wanderers, belonging nowhere and ultimately with no one. In *The Milesian Chief*, alienation comes in the form of dispossession, forbidden love, conflicting loyalties, and even gender confusion. *Melmoth the Wanderer*, likewise, combines similar themes with those of madness, religious fanaticism, and the undead. His characters are isolated and alone in dungeons, in caves, on the moors, in subterranean tunnels, and closets—they are literally pushed to the proverbial edge by systems that mean to keep and control them, if not outright annihilate them. In his preface to *The Milesian Chief*, Maturin states, “If I possess any talent it is that of darkening the gloomy, and of deepening the sad; of painting life in extreme, and representing those struggles of passion when the soul trembles on the verge of the unlawful and the unhallowed” (iv-v). Indeed, Maturin’s works reveal characters that are pressed to the extreme by overwhelming forces beyond their control, whether it be overwhelming passion or the sweeping tides of rebellion.

Often pitting the individual against omnipresent systems of power such as imperialism and the Spanish Inquisition, Maturin also reveals the way in which such institutions marginalize difference and demonize those who would resist these forces of oppression.

Placing *The Milesian Chief* in the midst of a fictional rebellion much like the 1798 uprising allowed Maturin to explore these themes of social alienation in an atmosphere of partisan political constructs and strict sexual and gender confines. The story follows the fate of Armida Fitzalban—a half Italian, half English cosmopolitan woman endowed with great beauty and talents. She travels to Ireland with her father who has purchased an estate in Connacht from a ruined Milesian family. Armida falls desperately in love with the herculean hero Connal O’Morven, the grandson of the ancient Milesian chief who previously owned the estate. Connal has sworn to his deranged grandfather that he will lead a rebellion even though he knows the uprising is doomed to fail. Connal organizes the rebels and by all appearances fights hard against the British soldiers who are sent to strike down the rebellion, but he is ultimately a reluctant hero. Not only is his brother Desmond one of these British soldiers, but his ambivalence towards Irish independence and his fatalistic views towards imperialism reveal Connal without agency to make choices about his own destiny. The events surrounding the rebellion shatter the Irish peasantry, leaving a wake of apocalyptic horror that nearly drives Connal to madness as he sees himself as responsible for the failed rebellion. Despite his efforts to seek a pardon for his men, he is sentenced to death and the novel ends much like a Shakespearian tragedy with a great accumulation of dead bodies—Connal and his brother Desmond are shot dead by firing squad, Armida poisons herself and expires over their

corpses, and Armida's hidden sister goes mad and becomes emaciated with grief over losing her unborn child.

In the final scene of the novel Armida's prosaic middle class Irish friend Rosine visits their final resting place and sits under an ash-tree near their graves. Throughout the novel Rosine primarily functions as a go-between and chaperone to Armida, but she also serves as a foil to the heroine's unbound passions. Originally named "Rose St. Austin," Armida immediately renames her "Rosine" upon meeting her, and as Rose's distant relation notes in a letter to another local lady of society this act is only the first of a series of distasteful transformations: "Miss Fitzalban has changed her plain name already into Rosine; next she will proceed to change something else, her plain appearance into one of those naked antiques she is so fond of, or her plain bible principles into those wicked infidel notions she got abroad" (79). At the end of the novel, Rosine maintains her "romantic" name, but she has seemed to have put the stuff of Irish legends to rest as she visits the graves of her lost comrades:

The thoughts that visit her there elevate her heart, while they fill her eyes with tears; and she feels that even grief, refined by the consciousness of futurity, is beyond all the joys of mortality. When the darkness warns her home, she casts her eye as she departs on the simple inscription placed by St. Austin on the grave of Connal, "Thou sleepest, but we do not forget thee." (IV 204-5)

The heroes of Irish history are all underground preserved only by Rosine's fleeting memories. For Maturin, *The Milesian Chief* is about laying Irish history and its heroes

to rest to make way for a new civilization that cannot contain these sorts of epic figures. The new Ireland—as Maturin imagines it here—is filled with people of Rosine’s ilk: middle class, practical, sensible, and content with the new world order of imperialism. Within the scene Rosine is walking forward while she glances back, and the graves of Connal and Armida serve as constant reminders of a past that “sleeps,” but is always threatening to awaken again.

The sense of social instability in the face of partisan politics is emphasized by the queer relationship between Desmond, Connal’s brother who is a soldier in the English regiment sent to put down the rebellion, and Endymion, Armida’s half-“sister” who, due to issues concerning inheritance, was raised as a boy. Not only was Endymion raised “in disguise,” but she was raised to see herself as a male. When she falls in love with Desmond, the latter is thrown into a state of panic by his own conflicted feelings towards Endymion—feelings which mirror his own ambivalence towards the Irish rebels whom he must fight against as a soldier in the British army.

“Oh that sensation,” cried Endymion, “how often I feel it in your presence: at some moments, at the present, it almost deprives me of breath, of sense: it is a delight that makes me sick and giddy: the Italians, before an earthquake, have a sensation for which there is no name; such is the sensation I feel in your presence, that I could throw myself into your arms and weep, if you would let me.”

“Stop, stop,” said Desmond, “talk this language no more: if the sight of each other be thus intoxicating, thus ruinous, let us part, and see each other no more.”

Endymion wept.

“Oh torture me no more with this fantastic fondness,” said Desmond, “so unlike what we ought to feel for each other: this female fastidiousness I cannot bear. I wish to love you like a younger brother; you treat me with the caprice of a mistress. Endymion, I cannot endure this. Never did I feel before these wild, these maddening sensations. I know not what you have done with me; what strange influence you have obtained over me, but it is an influence that I must fly from to preserve my reason, my life.” (I 168-9)

According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, homosexual panic is “the most private, psychologized form in which many twentieth-century men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail” (*Between Men* 89). She uses the term to illustrate the response to the way in which the nineteenth century consolidated and solidified its definitions of sexuality and how the heterosexual male or closeted homosexual male must negotiate “the treacherous middle stretch of the modern homosocial continuum” (“The Beast...” 188). In many ways “the middle ground” that Sedgwick speaks of in terms of the homosocial continuum offers a useful parallel to the ambiguous status of Irish nationhood in the tumultuous years after the 1798 rising. The feelings that Endymion compares to those sensed “before an earthquake” gesture to a momentary stasis that defies categorization or labeling immediately before a cataclysmic event like an uprising which would bring national labels—such as “England” and “Ireland”—to crisis.

Desmond's fractured cultural identity as both Irish and yet a soldier in the British army is mirrored here in his conflicted passion for Endymion. The "panic" that sets in when he is faced with that kind of love reflects the way in which "an earthquake" – the unstoppable force Desmond is seeking to evade because it would create madness and death – can destroy and then redefine new boundaries of self and "Other," male and female in the case of the lovers, Irish and English in the case of an uprising. As David Lloyd suggests,

With differing degrees of self-reflection, historians narrate history as the history of its own end, in the reconciliation and resolution of contradiction, finding closure predominantly in an orderly civil society and reformed state or occasionally in post-revolutionary socialism. In either case, history is written from the perspective of and with the aim of producing a non-contradictory subject. In doing so, history constitutes and differentiates the developed and the undeveloped, the civil and the savage, the rational and the irrational, the orderly and the violent. (17)

This queering of the rising in *The Milesian Chief* and the love that Desmond and Endymion share and the "unspeakable" feelings that pass between them is a kind of resistance to this sort of historical ordering. The nameless sensation Endymion expresses that exists in the moment just "before an earthquake" is similar to the kind of blurring of boundaries that occurred before the 1798 uprising—a breakdown of social distinctions that allowed for Catholics, Protestants, Presbyterians, men, women, landowners and peasants to commingle and share in a common, yet variant and multi-faceted, cause. In this sense, Desmond's resistance to Endymion speaks to an "impossible union" between

these diverse groups, mirroring Connal's reticence towards the success of a rebellion and the viability of an independent Ireland. Post-rising narratives such as Richard Musgrave's had to consolidate these identities, creating distinctions between these social classes in order to tell a gothic story of the rising as one instigated by a pre-modern "primitive" Irish Catholic horde—an uncivilized mob that is "on the way out."

This consolidation of diverse Irish identities is evident in *The Milesian Chief* in the way Maturin reveals an Ireland where the past remains visible even if it no longer has any meaning. Even in his Preface Maturin describes Ireland as a mythical place where the last residues of a barbaric medieval world still linger. He writes, "I have chosen my own country for the scene, because I believe it the only country on earth, where, from the strange existing opposition of religion, politics, and manners, the extremes of refinement and barbarism are united, and the most wild and incredible situations of romantic story are hourly passing modern eyes" (V). It is a country in ruins with only occasional reminders of its past glory jutting through the landscape, but even these are slowly being eroded and forgotten. As Armida and Connal wander through a small outcropping of ruins, Connal reflects on how time has shrouded the past greatness of Ireland's ancient kings, and he sees himself as only biding his time until he, too, becomes a part of the crumbling monuments fading into the earth:

"The nameless ruins," said he, "which are supposed to commemorate greatness now unknown, and virtues that have no other memorial; ruins amid which fancy sits down at leisure to dream of what its tenants might have been; such may suggest an abstract and indefinite melancholy—a melancholy without passion, and without remembrance." His voice

trembled as he added, “But here is a local genius: a spirit of eloquence and mortality seems to have taken up his residence between the living and the dead, and to interpret to one the language of the other. I feel who lies below: every step I take awakes the memory of him on whose tomb I tread, and every hour seems weary till I lie down with them, and are forgotten” (I 187).

For Connal the ruins can suggest not just past greatness, but an alternative future of “what might have been” and, perhaps, could be again. In this way, they trouble a historical narrative shaped towards ideas of “progress” as they serve as continual reminders of different modes of being in the present. As Lloyd suggests, “The ruins that dot the Irish landscape are the signs of alternative possibilities, of potentials in the past that have not been exhausted by or for the present” (*Irish Times* 4). For Connal, his experience among the ruins is not that of the passive tourist, but he sees himself as a “local genius” and the ruins are a part of his very being as he “feels” the dead buried below. He is already existing between “the living and the dead” and kicks up ghosts with every step he takes. Like the ruins of past ages his body will eventually lie down with them and both will return to the soil with their stories forgotten.

When asked to tell a heroic story of Ireland’s past, Connal stubbornly remains silent and chooses not to use the ruins as a backdrop for some sublime tale. For him, the history of the ruined families of Ireland can only be recorded by “silence”—an absence or lack reflected in the “multifarious remnants of the disappeared” (Lloyd 11). Connal says, “Silence is all that dust demands from me: silence suits the memory of those whose lot is ambition without fame let the last of their race bestow on them all he asks for

himself—silence and oblivion” (Maturin I 188). The ruins only further emphasize Connal’s age—the premodern Ireland of myth—is over, but Connal’s silence serves another purpose in that it resists the tendency towards a totalizing historical narrative. By “speaking” of Ireland’s past he would only underscore the ways in which these glory days are finished and a new regime called “progress” is taking over. What remains for Connal is “silence and oblivion,” which is perhaps the only way to escape the narrative of progression that characterizes modernity in this novel. According to David Lloyd,

Ruins mark the foregone stages of a passage from the savage’s primitive embeddedness in nature to the full emergence of human rationality, expressed in the orderly organization of the land for production or in the complexity of advanced civic relations. Their at times barely perceptible jutting into the present is no more than the sign of an unequivocal pastness, of a being on the very vanishing point of historical time, lodged in inertness in relation to the present and, by the same token, one with the inertia of a landscape defined by its subordination to human ends. (13)

The presence of the ruins in the novel serves as a reminder of the destruction of past civilizations and the cultivation of the land to serve the modern world. Later in the novel when Connal is betrayed by Brennan, his best friend, the latter leads Armida to see Connal’s grandfather with the intent to kill her, and points out old ruins of past treachery and murder. He calls attention to a place where a holy man was murdered by thieves in his solitary cave and a mother who killed her child and later went insane, spending the rest of her days digging the child’s “grave.” When Armida becomes reluctant to proceed and tries to escape, Brennan tells her:

“Not so fast, fair lady; we are not through the glen yet; we must pass the ruined hut where a son murdered his own father: it has been deserted ever since, except by the damned spirits that howl there at midnight. Shall we join them?” (III 153).

Brennan and Armida’s walk through the ruins foreshadows Brennan’s betrayal and the attempted murder of Armida as his story becomes the story reflected in the landscape, but the ruins that surround them also suggest a space where past and present converge and blur the boundaries of reality. The idea that they could join these spirits and become a part of the ruins suggests the ease with which these characters can transition from the present into a purgatorial “pastness.”

Connal O’Morven, himself, is a bit of a relic and exists in this kind of purgatorial pastness. He is described as “the last” of the Milesians—“a fallen race” (II 78)—and sees himself as an individual on “whose single head the accumulated evils of past ages have fallen, who, stunned by the crash, is looking round, not how to escape, but how to perish with dignity” (II 78). He is waiting for his race to die out and even his last stand against British imperial forces is a half-hearted effort that seems doomed from the start. Indeed, he is imprisoned in the past not just because of his anachronistic ancient Irish dress and his face that resembles “the bust of a classic hero” (I 128), but by his grandfather who draws him into a rebellion that only serves as a reprisal of past failed uprisings.

According to Connal, his grandfather closed himself up in his tower and “listened to the tales of his bards and the songs of his harpers” until “madness began to ferment in his mind; he conceived the frantic idea of wresting Ireland from the English hand” (III 29-30). Although initially inspired to organize rebel forces, Connal eventually relinquishes

his grandfather's dream of a liberated Ireland, admitting later to Armida how, "I found, when my brain cooled, that it was impossible for Ireland to subsist as an independent country; impossible for her to exist without dependence on the continental powers, or a connexion with England" (III 52).

Connal sees the rebellion as doomed to fail and himself within it as a lone figure trying, but ultimately failing, to stop the rushing tide of unstoppable imperial forces. For him, failure is not just an inevitability, but an imperative:

Victory is almost hopeless, and even victory must be at length succeeded by defeat. We are too few to subdue a country; we are too numerous to escape from it: neither resistance nor submission can avail us: we may fall slowly, we may fall bravely, but fall we must. (IV 70)

Part of the problem for Connal is that this uprising blossomed from ancient feuds that are still being fought within the mind of his rapidly aging and deteriorating grandfather. Connal leads the rebellion out of loyalty to his elder, but it is clear to him that the writing is on the wall and he can only trudge along while fatalistically viewing the impending rebellion as a foolish enterprise in the face of the changing forces moving Ireland out of the past and into a colonized future. The grandfather's rootedness in the past becomes evident in one particular scene where he is convinced that Armida is Queen Elizabeth and attempts to murder her. The grandfather violently turns on Armida and sees her as the usurper who has disenfranchised him and his Irish brethren:

"You are the Queen of England: the false daughter of the heretic Henry. You have dispossessed me of my rightful dominion:--I am a prince, as you

are, though I am chained down in this cave. See the fetters with which you have loaded me,” he cried, tearing up handfuls of the straw on which he lay: “I lie here in misery and famine, while you and your father revel in my castle: but now I will have my revenge.” (III 158).

Connal rescues Armida from this murderous fate, but he cannot save either of them from the unstoppable forces that are destroying the ancient ways of life to make way for a more modern Ireland. The world that Connal and his ancestors have known is quickly shrinking leaving him only one tiny barren spot of land in an overthrown, colonized country:

“All around me,” said [Connal], “was mine, as far as the moon lights those broken shores; as far as you can see those isles like silver buds in the green floating field of ocean, all was mine; and that castle, whose towers are reflected in the wave that breaks at your feet, was the seat of my ancestors; the palaces of princes, whose view only bounded their territory: that ruined hovel on the left is my residence now, and that dark speck of land behind, without tree or shrub on it, is all my land: the territory of O’Morven has shrunk to that spot” (155-6).

The image of a dissolving, disappearing Ireland runs throughout the novel, emphasizing the way in which social change is inevitable in the face of English domination. In one scene where Connal and Armida stroll through an outcropping of ancient ruins, Connal relates the story of the “Benshi” who calls to the ancient families of Ireland upon their death:

In Irish mythology every family is supposed to be attended by a visionary being, whose office is to predict the calamity or death of its members. She appears as an old woman sitting on the grave, or wandering near the house of the devoted family, and pouring out a stream of melancholy sound, half musical, half moaning, to summons the wanderer home. Her song is peculiar to Irish modulation, that can combine melody with the wildest tones of grief and passion. Such is the tale of the Benshi; it is, like her own music, pleasant and mournful to the soul. Men love to have the discovery of the other world softened to their minds, and never was the curtain of futurity drawn by so gentle a hand. (I 177).

The Benshi ushers a shift from one plane to another, a movement towards “futurity” that is inescapable, and it seems that in this novel the rebels are already a part of this great flight even before the uprising begins. Observing the Irish peasants as they organize their rebellion, Armida notes how “they appear like spirits moving to the land where all things are forgotten” (vol. 3 90). Faced with an impending sense of doom, Connal sees himself as yet one more fallen man in a history of fallen men all moving towards oblivion. He ponders,

What am I, and those who must fall with me, compared with the generations that have flowed away: as we approach death, we are lost to the idea of the divine immensity, and our own existence, proud as we are, ceases to have importance in our eyes. Why should not I suffer, when the good have suffered; why should I not fall, when the brave have fallen: we

are insects struggling in the flood of time; it passes on, and our struggles do not even create a dimple in its tide. (IV 75).

Armida, observing the Irish rebels, sees them as already dead and describes them marching “like spirits moving to the land where all things are forgotten” (III 90). After the uprising when Connal is wandering through the Irish countryside fleeing from English soldiers, he hears a mournful sound that seems to rise up from the earth and call to him from beyond the grave:

As he hurried on with a beating heart, the roar of the ocean burst on his ear, and the wind rushing through this narrow pass seemed to swell to a storm the accents of horror and death he had lately heard rose on the gale, as if the spirits of those that had fallen were ascending on its wings in their flight to eternity. (IV 116).

The uprising hastens the end of an era and in his novels Maturin constructs the rebellion as a shift in time where the ancient ways are “taking flight,” moving on, and ascending into some lost, forgotten place.

While contemporaries of Maturin might utilize the English cosmopolitan hero/heroine as a vehicle to unite Ireland with England, Maturin shows the dangers inherent in too great an involvement with Ireland’s romantic past by the way in which Armida’s initial “rational,” cosmopolitan modernity is dissolved by her immersion in Ireland. As she falls in love with the romantic hero Connal, she reflects how she is “a woman overcome by passion and destiny: I am embarked in a wreck, yet I do not cast one look toward the shore” (II 139). All her rationality breaks apart as she is immersed in

the Irish culture in Connacht and she loses all sense of linear time and finds herself consumed by something akin to Freud's "oceanic feeling." As Freud characterizes it, oceanic feeling is a sort of "sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded" (11). Such feelings are connected to the ways in which enlightenment notions of "the self" may break down in periods of crisis "in which parts of a person's own body, even portions of his own mental life—his perceptions, thoughts, and feelings-- , appear alien to him and as not belonging to his ego" (13). Armida, who is all "ego" and prides herself on her endless lists of accomplishments, loses her mooring in Ireland, and her loss of self in her obsessive love for Connal symbolizes the way in which identity becomes unstable and disintegrates in the liminal space of rebellion. She tells Rosine, "There is no difference between day and night to me, between storm and calm...it is all the same, or will be soon" (II 148). As Armida's love for Connal only becomes more desperate, Rosine remarks on the changes that have overtaken her. She writes in a letter to her father:

Can this be Armida: that mind, whose powers might have enlightened or governed society is prostrated and broken; that form, whose undulations might have suggested ideas to a creating spirit for the inmates of a new ethereal world of beauty, lies convulsed and distorted before me: and that voice whose resources once tasked the art of harmony to find difficulties for, can only utter screams of despair and agony. (IV 108)

All of Armida's cultivated accomplishments break and dissipate and the more time she spends in Ireland, the greater her madness grows, leaving her a broken woman and a shell of her former self. She is a reversal of Tasso's Armida who keeps her Christian crusader-

hero lover Rinaldo prisoner in her enchanted garden until two of his fellow crusaders come to rescue him by placing a shield before his face and he is made to remember who he really is. A prisoner in Ireland and of her own desperate love for Connal, Armida's sense of self and her agency dissolve in the tumultuous events surrounding Connal's uprising.

Maturin emphasizes the idea of an old Ireland imploding on itself with repeated displays of hunger and references to cannibalism. Throughout the novel, both Armida and Connal come across images of hunger in various peasants' hovels, which underscore the idea of an Ireland that is just on the verge of disappearing. When Connal is wandering through the countryside after the failed rebellion, himself wounded and nearly starved to death, he happens on an old woman who welcomes him into her home with the promise of nourishment:

“Yes, yes, I have food enough—enough for you and me: come in, come in, and let us enjoy it together.”

Connal followed her into the cabin. On a heap of straw lay the body of a young man, whom Connal remembered to have fallen beside him in the engagement of the preceding day.

“There, there,” said the woman, with the eloquence of despair, pointing to the corpse, “there he lies: you have laid him there. There is the feast I promised you: you may devour him yourself, for that is all you have left me to give you. There, gnaw his bones, but leave his heart to his

mother.” And with a yell of agony, she threw herself on the body. (IV
120)

Scenes of famine in Irish literature often serve to dissolve the boundaries between subject and object, between spectator and victim, as they confront us with the extreme limits of human suffering, dissolving what it even means to “be” human.

Confronting readers with these images of desperate hunger, Maturin underscores the way in which the Irish have been pushed to the ultimate threshold of humanity—a “dissolving boundary”—where we see “culture” here return to “nature.” Lloyd suggests, “The terror of the witness of famine lies profoundly in what the spectacle of the skeletal, starving human reveals about the very minimum of humanity itself, the moment in which the human becomes the living dead, the mortal already beyond this world, and yet continues to interpellate us as a subject, in our subjecthood” (53). Starvation forces the onlooker to confront his or her own subjectivity and experience a dissolving boundary of “culture into nature, of self into other” (53). Connal’s rebellion was the cause of this hunger and expedites this shift from civilization to a dark alterity. The implied cannibalism suggests a movement towards implosion, where all that is left for the Irish to do is feed on themselves until they, too, retreat back into oblivion.

In *Melmoth the Wanderer* hunger is also a recurrent theme and symbolizes the shift of bodies pushed to the edge of alterity. In one scene we are told of two monks who were punished by the Church for engaging in a love affair. One of the lovers had been forced by his family to take the cloth, and the other was actually a woman who had disguised herself as a monk to be with him. They slowly starve to death, and in doing so become soulless, monstrous beings only bent on survival. Maturin writes:

All the horrible and loathsome excruciations of famine had been undergone; the disunion of every tie of the heart, of passion, of nature, had commenced. In the agonies of their famished sickness they loathed each other,--they could have cursed each other, if they had had breath to curse. It was on the fourth night that I heard the shriek of the wretched female,--her lover, in the agony of hunger, had fastened his teeth in her shoulder;--that bosom on which he had so often luxuriated, became a meal to him now. (236)

Indeed, *Melmoth the Wanderer* explores the very nature of humanity pushed the brink of extreme suffering, and according to Julia M. Wright, “This is the locus of the gothic horror of Maturin’s novel, namely, the possibility that anyone who is starved will be driven to cannibalism, and the degree to which starvation is produced by institutions over which individuals have little or no control” (90). The novel centers on a Faustian vampire-like figure who wanders the Earth searching for some wretched being willing to assume the mantle of Melmoth’s half-life in exchange for relief from torture or hunger. He seeks out the incarcerated, the weak, and the starving in order to escape his self-imposed curse, but in spite of many close calls, Melmoth’s offer of this bargain is always rejected and he is doomed to spend eternity in Hell. Written under strained financial circumstances and at a time when Maturin’s own family literally lived on the brink of starvation, *Melmoth the Wanderer* is a novel that explores themes such as the alienation of the individual in the midst of crushing institutions and the way in which totalizing histories neglect the horrors of the past. If the *Milesian Chief* heralds the dawn of

modernity, Maturin troubles this vision of the future with Melmoth—a character who embodies all the anxieties of the so-called “civilized” world.

In contrast to *The Milesian Chief* which portrays a linear temporality that embodies “progress,” Maturin constructs *Melmoth the Wanderer* as a series of stories within stories. The novel begins with the death of The Wanderer’s descendant—a parsimonious Anglo-Irish landowner who has exploited his estate and its inhabitants to the brink of utter desolation--and his nephew’s journey to the ancestral home to claim his inheritance. It is at the decaying, dilapidated Melmoth mansion in County Wicklow that John Melmoth learns of his wayward ancestor of the same name and his mysterious curse from Biddy Brannigan, the ancient “wise woman” of the neighborhood, described as “a withered Sybil, who prolonged her squalid existence by practicing on the fears, the ignorance, and the sufferings of beings as miserable as herself” (12). John Melmoth the elder’s story is one that comes out of the violence of the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland and the later parceling out of Irish lands to the victors.

The first of the Melmoths, she says, who settled in Ireland, was an officer in Cromwell’s army, who obtained a grant of lands, the confiscated property of an Irish family attached to the royal cause. The elder brother of this man was one who had travelled abroad, and resided so long on the Continent, that his family had lost all recollection of him. Their memory was not stimulated by their affection, for there were strange reports concerning the traveller. He was said to be...”a gentleman profited in strange concealments.” (29)

At the end of her tale, Biddy Brannigan describes the way in which Melmoth the Traveller remained unchanged and suspended in time; she testifies that, when he visited the house before his death, he

was still without a hair on his head changed, or a muscle in his frame contracted;--that she had seen those that had seen him, and would confirm their evidence by oath if necessary;--that he was never heard to speak, seen to partake of food, or known to enter any dwelling but that of his family;--and finally, that she herself believed that his late appearance boded no good either to the living or the dead. (30)

According to Margot Backus, “Biddy Brannigan is the only one who can tell Melmoth the story of his family’s history. Her immersion in the Irish oral tradition renders her largely impervious to hegemonic revisions of history. She thus retains access to historical narratives that are repressed within (but intimately concern) the Anglo-Irish domestic sphere” (113).

Biddy Brannigan’s story is significant because it sets the theme for a novel that explores the way in which stories are told and the way in which all narratives are shaped by the teller. Many of the narratives in this novel are passed orally and even when stories are told via written text, Maturin finds ways to reveal the unreliability of this medium, making “gaps” and indecipherable sections explicit in his novel. For instance, from his uncle’s will John Melmoth becomes aware of an aging manuscript that contains the history of a gentleman by the name of Stanton who became obsessed with Melmoth the Wanderer and was eventually incarcerated in an insane asylum because of his perceived delusions about the vampire figure. Maturin writes, “The manuscript was discoloured,

obliterated and mutilated beyond any that had ever before exercised the patience of a reader” (32). There are literal gaps in the manuscript marked by asterisk (*); at other times, for example when Stanton is just about to describe the specter of Melmoth, omissions in the text are indicated by John Melmoth’s own commentary:

The stranger, slowly turning round, and disclosing a countenance which—
(Here the manuscript was illegible for a few lines), said in English—(A
long hiatus followed here, and the next passage that was legible, though it
proved to be a continuation of the narrative, was but a fragment). (35)

Similar to the ruins in *The Milesian Chief*, the manuscripts in this novel all seem on the verge of disintegration and only raise more questions in terms of what is missing rather than provide the answers that John Melmoth seeks about the frightful nature of his ancestors. The account itself also forms a kind of fragment. By leaving his story in a forgotten closet deep in the heart of the Melmoth estate, Stanton “seems, in fact, to have acted like men, who, in distress at sea, intrust their letters and dispatches to a bottle sealed, and commit it to the waves” (66). The story has a desperate, boundless quality—without context or anchor it pushes the limits of the imagination and only by some chance encounter does it not slip into the oblivion of history.

The long oral narrative entitled “The Spaniards Tale” dominates most of the novel and reflects this infinite, limitless quality. Like a room of mirrors, characters within “The Spaniards Tale” will tell stories, and those characters will tell stories, and those characters, and so forth, always drawing attention to the very instability of narrative itself and the ways in which, at least in this novel, “the center cannot hold.” During John Melmoth’s visit to the estate, a horrible storm shipwrecks a Spanish galley on the shore,

and the only survivor is a man by the name of Monçada. John Melmoth rushes to the edge of the sea to help with the rescue effort, but he is quickly swallowed up by the churning of the waves, an experience that foreshadows the sense of limitlessness that *The Spaniard's Tale* will come to represent for him:

He did not feel the instantaneous giddiness of his fall, but as he sunk he felt the splash, he heard the roar. He was engulfed, then for a moment thrown to the surface. He struggled with nothing to grasp at. He sunk with a vague thought, that if he could reach the bottom, if he could arrive at anything solid, he was safe. (75)

Yet, later when Melmoth and Monçada have been saved and the Spaniard settles into his tale, it becomes clear that the young Melmoth will never find that safe, “solid” place on which to orient himself. Monçada recounts how he barely escaped the Spanish Inquisition and describes his tragic life and the proposition put forth to him by the Wanderer to exchange his soul for extended life and extraordinary powers. At times, Monçada struggles with the telling of his story, always on the verge of fainting or passing out from either fright, sorrow, or sheer physical exhaustion: “He began—hesitated—stopped; tried in vain to arrange his ideas, or rather his language” (81). John Melmoth also struggles as a listener in the way he tries to organize and make sense of the narrative, even physically trying to “grasp” the story: “A deep and sickening agitation shook his frame; and in the long pause that preceded the narrative of the Spaniard, the beating of his heart was audible to him. He rose, and attempted to arrest the narration by a motion of his hand” (82). In both descriptions, the story of the Wanderer seems beyond both teller and listener, out of control, fleeting, barely audible and hardly logical.

Within Monçada's narrative is embedded "The Indians Tale," which is a story involving Melmoth that was written by Adonijah—a Spanish Jew who lives in a subterranean hiding place beneath the city of Madrid. Monçada actually transcribes Adonijah's tale in his own hand, but within that tale even more stories unfold such as "The Tale of the Guzman's Family"—a story of an unfortunate family that slowly starves to the brink of death—and "The Lovers Tale" about two ill-fated lovers betrayed by their Calvinist relatives. Finally in that story is embedded a clergyman's tale of Melmoth's satanic beginnings. Like Russian nesting dolls, one narrative opens up to another and to another. In this way, according to Victor Sage,

History is present in the novel, painfully present, but it is not represented as a steadily cumulative process with linear narrative as its point of overlap...the novel is a juxtaposition—really a confrontation and polemical repetition—between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, rather than a cumulative process of development from one to other. (xix)

The boundaries of the narratives are themselves extremely fragile, as when John Melmoth interrupts Monçada's narrative when the latter, in his description of The Indians Tale, mentions the Englishman Stanton: "Hold!" said Melmoth; "what name have you mentioned?" "Have patience with me, Senhor," said Monçada, who did not like interruption" (332). In one moment, Melmoth's "Hold!" collapses three narratives—The Indians Tale, The Spaniards Tale, and the novel itself—and shifts them across time and space to make them parallel to Stanton's story. As Joseph Lew argues, "In one sentence, Maturin brutally recapitulates the entire series of frames we have traversed" (184).

Instead of presenting history in a continuous fashion, Maturin presents history as a series of juxtapositions, as something spiraling back upon itself, for as Monçada tells John Melmoth, “We are all beads on the same string” (332).

Footnotes are another means by which Maturin compresses and juxtaposes historical events, as when he connects the violence of 1798 to the fictional events in his novel. In one scene that Monçada relates, a mob reacts violently to an official of the Inquisition whom they know to be a famous murderer. Outraged that the Catholic Church would place a parricide in a position of power, the crowd presses forward violently and mercilessly beats the man to death:

They dashed him to the earth—tore him up again—flung him into the air—tossed him from hand to hand as a bull gores the howling mastiff with horns right and left. Bloody, defaced, blackened with earth, and battered with stones, he struggled and roared among them, till a loud cry announced the hope of a termination to a scene alike horrible to humanity, and disgraceful to civilization...Dragged from the mud and stones, they dashed a mangled lump of flesh right against the door of the house where I was. With his tongue hanging from his lacerated mouth, like that of a bated bull; with one eye torn from the socket, and dangling on his bloody cheek; with a fracture in every limb, and a wound for every pore, he still howled for “life—life—life—mercy!” till a stone, aimed by some pitying hand, struck him down. (283)

All law and order break down in this scene, and the crowd attacks any soldier who attempts to wrest the Inquisition official to safety. The fragmentation of the official’s

body is reflected in the fragmentation of law and order, and as the boundaries of his body bleed and tear apart in the face of the maddened crowd, so do we see how extreme, overwhelming violence on the part of the masses can push the boundaries of the human capacity for suffering. The eruption of violence and the fragmentation of the official's body is reflected in the fragmentation of the narrative that follows where subjectivities become displaced and Irish history, particularly the history of 1798 and the later 1803 rebellion, crash into the novel to illustrate a non-linear vision of history.

After the mob has sated its thirst for blood, a soldier bravely rides forward to survey the scene: "The officer who headed the troop dashed his horse's hoofs into a bloody formless mass, and demanded, 'Where was the victim?' He was answered, 'Beneath your horse's feet,' and they departed" (284). To this passage, Maturin appends a footnote linking the fictional violence of his tale to the *actual* violence that took place during the uprising. He informs his readers, "This circumstance occurred in Ireland in 1797, after the murder of the unfortunate Dr. Hamilton. The officer was answered on inquiring what was that heap of mud at his horse's feet,--'The man you came for.'" (284). According to Breandán Mac Suibhne, "Hamilton had been targeted for assassination on account of his unusually vigorous efforts to disarm United Irishmen in his own parish: at a time when wealthy loyalists were quitting their residences across north Donegal and moving into Derry, he had established a yeomanry corps, detained several prominent republicans and withstood a siege at his glebe house" (101). Mac Suibhne depicts Maturin's portrayal of Dr. Hamilton's death as an example of "Protestant martyrdom" (101), but I would argue that Maturin's juxtaposition of the fictional and the actual murder says more about his ambivalence towards the institutions, their officials, and the

mobs that attempt to overthrow them. After all, the parricide that the crowd beat to oblivion in the novel was the same character that betrayed Monçada in his failed attempt to escape the monastery and the clutches of the Inquisition and then killed his brother in the process. The juxtaposition of murdered Catholic official/Protestant agent of the colonial state also breaks down religious demarcations of Catholic/Protestant to reveal how beneath the façade of a professed religion exist corruption, greed, and murder. The boundaries between heroes and villains, “martyrs” and persecutors fragment and bleed together as Monçada’s own subjectivity disintegrates and he becomes both the perpetrator of violence and its victim:

While witnessing this horrible execution, I felt all the effects vulgarly ascribed to fascination. I shuddered at the first movement—the dull and deep whisper among the crowd...I echoed the wild shouts of the multitude with a kind of savage instinct. I bounded—I clasped my hands for a moment—then I echoed the screams of the thing that seemed no longer to live, but still could scream; and I screamed aloud and wildly for life—life—and mercy! (284)

Instead of reading this scene as one of “Protestant martyrdom,” I argue that Maturin is drawing relationships between the evisceration of this corrupted Inquisitor and the real and violent demise of Dr. Hamilton in order to explore how uprisings produce what Richard Terdiman calls a “memory crisis”—or the way in which “any revolution, any rapid alteration of the givens of the present places a society’s connection with history under pressure” (3). In the memory crisis, Terdiman argues, “The very coherence of time and of subjectivity seemed disarticulated” (4). In these few pages of *Melmoth* we flash

from a mob scene in Inquisitorial Spain to revolutionary Ireland—from one bloody, fragmented, wailing mass of flesh to another body dashed to the cobblestones—from the perspective of the enraged mob, to the mind of the victim himself. In this instance, Maturin is not just reflecting upon how humans suffer under waves of unstoppable violence and within shifting historical forces they cannot begin to completely fathom or control, but also suggests that the nature of their suffering is hard to articulate without redrawing an “official,” “institutionalized” narrative that favors one perspective over another—one person’s suffering over another.

This uncanny moment where Monçada’s subjectivity fragments relates to Freud’s concept of “the double” and the way in which categories of self and other break down in moments of extreme crisis. The relation between doubles

is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits of vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (Freud)

As Freud suggests, uncanny moments derive from the sensation of the subject seeing himself as the other and experiencing the fragmentation of his unified notion of “self” and the dissolving of the boundaries of identity. This doubling also occurs in the repetition of moments of emergency in time—where the repressive past converges on the present. For John Jervis, the uncanny is fundamentally a “modern experience” as it is

grounded in Enlightenment constructions of “the self,” and its fragmentation is symptomatic of what continuously haunts supposedly “stable” formations:

In trying to know itself *as* itself, the self engages in this uncanny game of doubling and haunting, reflexively unable to capture the experience of selfhood, experiences as such, in its immediacy and plenitude: there is always a remainder, a residue, a shadow, represented, in displaced form, though the vagaries of “representation” itself. This in turn runs parallel to the impossibility of project as realization, the Enlightenment project of the modern, whether as a social dynamic or refracted through the projects of our lives: it must always be haunted by its own darkness. (39)

This “doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self” occurs again as Monçada recalls the breakdown of his subjectivity when, observing the mob tear apart the body of the Inquisition official, he becomes both the bloodied, eviscerated body of the victim and the vicious crowd: “I fell grasping by the bars of the window, and mimicking, in my horrid trance, the shouts of the multitude, and the yell of the devoted. I actually for a moment believed myself the object of their cruelty. The drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims” (285). Maturin once more juxtaposes this fictional scene with a scene from Irish history by inserting this footnote:

In the year 1803, when Emmett’s [*sic*] insurrection broke out in Dublin—(*the fact* from which this account is drawn was related to me by an eye-witness)—Lord Kilwarden, in passing through Thomas Street, was dragged from his carriage, and murdered in the most horrid manner. Pike after pike was thrust through his body, till at last he was *nailed to a door*,

and called out to his murderers to ‘put him out of his pain.’ At this moment, a shoemaker, who lodged in the garret of an opposite house, was drawn to the window by the horrible cries he heard. He stood at the window, gasping with horror, his wife attempting vainly to drag him away. He saw the last blow struck—he heard the last groan uttered, as the sufferer cried, ‘put me out of pain,’ while sixty pikes were thrusting at him. The man stood at his window as if nailed to it; and when dragged from it, became—*an idiot for life*. (285).

The shoemaker’s sense of self divides in the face of extreme violence, and instead of just remaining its observer, a member of the “audience,” he also becomes its victim, unable to speak again. Placing these two scenes alongside each other, Maturin details an image of extreme crisis where, as in starvation, the human body is pushed to the limits of its capacity for physical suffering and reveals the way in which a linear, progressive history cannot encompass such atrocity. These are moments of cultural trauma that a society just cannot “get over,” but replays over and over again in flashes. The “idiot for life” is the figure suspended in time who, unlike the Angel of History in the painting by Klee, lingers forever in that single moment of that event horizon where humanity shatters against waves of overwhelming, unstoppable violence.

The vampire Melmoth also serves as a figure suspended in time and a reminder of the violence of capitalist logic. For Margot Backus, Melmoth stands as a symbol of the capitalist symbolic contract, or “the devil’s compact,” which is “the social convention that enables the radical transformation of the money-owner into capitalist and the possessor of labor power into worker” (31). In Chapter VI of *Capital* in the section

entitled “The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power,” Marx details the way in which the worker enters into a compact with the capitalist wherein he legitimizes his own subservience and enslavement. Instead of the relationship between money-owner and worker open and laid bare and “in full view of everyone” (279), we enter into a “hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there hangs the notice ‘No admittance except on business’” (280). According to Backus, in this scenario, “The worker is ‘always already’ consumed, whereas the capitalist is ‘always already’ the rightful, transhistorical owner of surplus value. In attempting to secure his biological existence, as Marx shows, the laborer is forced to exchange away everything he (for Marx, always a man) has in a single stroke” (32). As Marx explains, the relationship becomes one of “master” and “servant,” but a servant who must sacrifice all for the sake of entering into the labor exchange: “He who was previously the money-owner now strides out in front as a capitalist; the possessor of labor-power follows as his worker. The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect—but a tanning” (32). As Backus explains it, Marx’s discussion reveals the way in which “The capitalist is empowered through the anticipated consumption of the worker’s vitality. Capital, in this equation, is seen as transhistorical vampiric force capable of consuming limitless numbers of lives. Conversely, those who are, within the capitalist economy, placed in a position such that they must barter away their very bodies and lives in return for a biological existence which is parsimoniously handed back to them in judicious increments, have no choice but to empower the force that consumes them through the ceaseless contribution of their own labor” (32).

Melmoth the Traveller clearly deals in “trade,” and throughout the novel attempts to sell all the false promises of capitalism—freedom, long life, and power—to his would-be victims. In “The Indians Tale,” Melmoth attempts to seduce and overpower a young Spanish woman who had been shipwrecked on an “island in the Indian sea, not many leagues from the mouth of the Hoogly” (302) while on a journey to meet her father who worked as a merchant in India. Immalee, who will later come to be named “Isadora” when she is reunited with her family, is a small nymph-like woman whom the natives on the mainland worship as a goddess, and Melmoth’s arrival on the island echoes a kind of colonial enterprise. As Lew argues:

We learn very little about how or why he has been cursed, but the clichés which spring to mind (to sell one’s soul, to make a deal with the devil) all suggest a contract or trade; the devil, in other words, engages in commerce unscrupulously... In a strange parody of the growth of the British Empire in India, Immalee’s island presence will be an unforeseen by-product of East Indian trade. Maturin hints, in fact, that The Wanderer may be released from his curse only if he finds someone who will “trade” places with him. (180)

As the embodiment of capitalism, Melmoth is the ultimate modern figure—thrust into existence by the colonial atrocities of Cromwell, he is a “wanderer” without a nation or a fixed identity, coercing others into his half-life existence. Obsessed with spoiling Immalee’s “native” innocence, he initiates her both sexually and economically into the modern world of corruption and greed. In one remarkable passage, he details the darkness that colonialism wreaks on the world:

There came on the European vessels full of the passions and crimes of another world,--of its sateless cupidity, remorseless cruelty, its intelligence, all awake and ministrant in the cause of its evil passions, and its very refinement operating as a stimulant to more inventive indulgence, and more systemized vice. He saw them approach to traffic for 'gold, and silver, and the souls of men;' to grasp, with breathless rapacity, the gems and precious produce of those luxuriant climates, and deny the inhabitants the rice that supported their inoffensive existence; --to discharge the load of their crimes, their lust and their avarice, and after ravaging the land, and plundering the natives, depart, leaving behind them famine, despair, and execration; and bearing with them back to Europe, blasted constitutions, inflamed passions, ulcerated hearts, and consciences that could not endure the extinction of a light in their sleeping apartment. (334)

India here is a loosely veiled code for The Wanderer's own native Ireland, and as Wright notes,

"This imperialist taint is closely identified with the Wanderer's damnation: at the climactic conclusion of his tale, the Wanderer transforms a priest's command, 'go, cursing and to curse,' into the reply, 'I go conquering and to conquer'" (676).

At the close of Monçada's narrative, Melmoth the Wanderer appears to Monçada and Melmoth in order to tell his own story, for, as he says, "Who can tell so well of Melmoth the Wanderer as himself, now that he is about to resign that existence which has been the object of terror and wonder to the world?" (599). Up until this point, Melmoth the elder's tale has been told by others, and it would seem that just as we are going to

receive the one authoritative narrative, Melmoth hesitates and requests of the gentlemen present, “Let me, if possible, obtain an hour’s repose. Aye, repose—sleep!” (602). We never do read Melmoth’s own account, but instead Maturin provides a fragment entitled “The Wanderer’s Dream.” In this section, Maturin describes Melmoth’s dream in which the Wanderer “stood on the summit of a precipice, whose downward height no eye could have measured, but for the fearful waves of a fiery ocean that lashed, and blazed, and roared at its bottom, sending its burning spray far up, so as to drench the dreamer with its sulphurous rain” (602). As Melmoth the Wanderer expresses to his descendant John upon returning home, his “wanderings are over!” (601) and a new era is dawning, one that cannot contain the vampire and the burden of history he carries. As the walking personification of a violent “fragment” it seems that Melmoth is compelled to be consumed by this ocean in order to join others who are cursed and suffering, for each wave “was freighted with a soul, that rose on the burning wave in torturing hope, burst on the rock in despair, added its eternal shriek to the roar of that fiery ocean, and sunk to rise again—in vain, and—forever!” (602). Melmoth stands at the edge of this vast and overpowering ocean of history that ultimately consumes him.

In this dream, Melmoth sees two hands both emerging from the dark ocean. One hand “held him as in sport on the ridge of that infernal precipice” (602), symbolizing his suspension in time, now about to come to an end as he is about to lapse into history. The other hand points to “time” as symbolized by a large dial-plate “fixed on the top of that precipice, and which the flashes of that ocean of fire made fearfully conspicuous” (603). Melmoth’s time on earth, which he has spent wandering across nations and cultures feeding on the misfortunate, has come to an end, and Maturin writes, “He saw the

mysterious single hand revolve—he saw it reach the appointed period of 150 years” (603). Melmoth falls off the precipice and enters the fiery ocean and as the waves crash around him, he attempts to reach out at the visions of various characters who have told his story: “He grasped at them successively; --first Stanton—then Walberg—Elinor Mortimer—Isidora—Monçada—all passed him,—to each he seemed in his slumber to cling in order to break his fall—all ascended the precipice” (603). These figures all represent the fragmentary narratives which make up Melmoth’s life, and he clings to them in an effort to save himself from the fiery ocean that would consume him and thus totalize his narrative into a large history of “progress” and modernization. They rise up, “ascending” the precipice, as if to release the fragments and transgressions that cannot be contained within the larger, totalizing narrative symbolized by the waves that threaten to swallow him. The last thing Melmoth sees is a giant clock, tolling his passage and descent into Hell: “His last despairing reverted glance was fixed on the clock of eternity—the upraised black arm seemed to push forward the hand—it arrived at its period—he fell—he sunk—he blazed—he shrieked!” (603). The clock chimes and Melmoth is lost to the waves.

At the end of the novel, John Melmoth and Monçada wake up and seeing the Wanderer gone, they seek him out by the sea:

Melmoth and Monçada gained at last the summit of the rock. The ocean was beneath—the wide, waste, engulfing ocean! On a crag beneath them, something hung as floating to the blast. Melmoth clambered down and caught it. It was the handkerchief which the Wanderer had worn

about his neck the preceding night—that was the last trace of the
Wanderer! (606)

Melmoth's disappearance signals a shift for both Melmoth and Monçada who have been trapped in this gothic fragmentary narrative that is so resistant to modern logic of science and progress. Yet, as Wright suggests, "Maturin refuses the moral closure of English gothic novels. While the surface of the novel, the Wanderer-as-demonic-agent plot, is resolved, its recurring subtext of colonial seizure and disinheritance, of familial violence and cannibalism, strains against resolution or absolution" (101). In this way, the uncanny figure of Melmoth resists ideas of a history that "evolves" towards a modern ideal that suppresses superstition. As Freud suggests, "We—or our primitive forefathers—once believed that these possibilities [magic, monsters, and so forth] were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation" (Freud). Even at the very end of the novel, we are not sure whether or not Melmoth has completely disappeared, and we are left with one last "fragment" of his being—a lost, lonely handkerchief dancing upon the rocks by the wide, endless ocean.

Nina Auerbach famously writes, "Vampires can go everywhere *but* home" (17). Melmoth is certainly the exception to this rule in that he returns to Ireland when his wandering is done and his time on Earth has expired. This modern, cosmopolitan figure that can traverse time and space, who seeks the souls of the suffering in exchange for his own cursed existence, comes home precisely at the moment when the usurped, exploited wealth transfers to the latest member of a long line of Ascendancy rulers. He returns as

an “interruption” in the process and a reminder of what has been forgotten to history. With Ireland’s heroes underground, the 1798 uprising cast to the marginal space of footnotes, and the embodiment of enlightenment’s promise and colonialism’s inherent corruption cast to the waves, the storm of progress sweeps the gaze forward, leaving only small traces of what has been lost.

Afterword

In a famous scene in the “Nestor” episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus’s employer Mr. Deasy embarks on a longwinded lecture on Irish history in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Mr. Deasy assumes Stephen Dedalus is a fenian (an Irish nationalist), and in his anxiety defends the virtues of the British Empire and praises the role of the Protestant organization the Orangemen.

Mr. Deasy stared sternly for some moments over the mantelpiece at the shapely bulk of a man in tartan filibegs: Albert Edward, Prince of Wales.

--You think me an old fogey and an old tory, his thoughtful voice said. I saw three generations since O’Connell’s time. I remember the famine. Do you know that the orange lodges agitated for repeal of the union twenty years before O’Connell did or before the prelates of your communion denounced him as a demagogue? You fenians forget some things.

Glorious, pious and immortal memory. The lodge of Diamond in Armagh the splendid behung with corpses of papishes. Hoarse, masked and armed, the planters’ covenant. The black north and true blue bible. Croppies lie down. (31)

For Mr. Deasy, history is linear, demarcated by dates and generations. For Stephen Dedalus, however, the history of the Orangemen comes to him in a flash of violence.⁶ In

⁶ What Stephen is most likely recalling is the famous Battle of the Diamond that occurred in North Armagh in 1795. According to Jim Smyth in *Men of No Property*, this battle is significant for the effect it had in terms of “further discrediting the ascendancy in catholic eyes and further swelling the ranks of the Defenders and United Irishmen” (110). The Battle of the Diamond was a culmination of tensions between the Defenders (Irish Catholics, respectively), and the Peep O’Day Boys (Protestants who would later become the Orangemen). The Defenders were badly beaten in this conflict, suffering between seventeen and forty-eight casualties (111). The conflict was followed by a general campaign of violence against

his mind, the history of rebellion is a hodge-podge of images and sound, including a famous anti-rebel song, “Croppies Lie Down.” While Mr. Deasy’s story of Ireland in the nineteenth century is spoken aloud and is thus the “official version,” Stephen Dedalus’ version remains subterranean, expressed only in his head. It emerges in the text as a marginal note intended to destabilize Mr. Deasy’s indefatigable attitude of English superiority and illustrates the way in which the literary afterlife of the 1798 uprising emerges in moments of political surety in order to deconstruct and complicate dogged determinism on both the part of the loyalist and the nationalist.

As Ferris explains, the novels of the 1798 uprising do not just speak of the rising, but *summon* it and do so in order to “enforce a present demand” (139). In the early nineteenth century, this kind of summoning of the “forgotten” became increasingly problematic for British public discourse, specifically for the emergence of “history” as a clearly defined genre. As Ferris explains, “Irish writing on the past raised in an embarrassing way the problem of historical knowledge—its purpose, its validity, its norms—at a moment when the discipline was beginning to establish itself as a modern knowledge genre devoted to impersonal and rational protocols” (139). With its complexities, localized grudges, transatlantic themes of liberation, strange alliances and widening divisions, 1798 calls into question the hegemony of historical narratives and the leading assumptions of history as a discipline. The 1798 uprising is an event with “blurred boundaries” (138), so much so that even historically Cornwallis “found it difficult to proclaim an end” to the rising as insurrections and minor rebellions erupted well into the subsequent year (139).

Catholics in the north: “At least one church was burned down and catholic homes and property—looms, webs, and yarn—were destroyed” (111). The most significant aspect of the conflict was a mass exodus of Catholic refugees from the North, with at least 4,000 refugees resettling in the Connacht region alone.

The ending point of this dissertation falls at the eve of Catholic Emancipation (1829) and the transformation of Irish public consciousness as influenced by Daniel O’Connell and his ability to rally the people and consolidate a collective vision of a liberated Ireland. As Catholics in Ireland united to fight for emancipation, individuals such as Sydney Owenson became increasingly unsettled in the midst of a nationalism that could not quite encompass a hyphenated, hybrid figure like herself. Sensing a shift in public attitudes as to what counted as an “Irish” novel, she writes in *The Book of the Boudoir* (1829), “Among the multitudinous effects of catholic emancipation, I do not hesitate to predict a change in the character of Irish authorship” (Ferris 153). Ferris sees this prediction as an extension of Owenson’s over-arching ambivalence towards the trend of Irish politics in the late 1820s and the way in which she increasingly felt as if she no longer “belonged” in O’Connell’s Ireland. Ferris writes, “Owenson knew well enough that the conjunction of politics and fiction that had sanctioned her own form of female civic authorship was the function of a very specific historical contingency. (153).

Whatever the label “Irish” had become in 1829, Owenson knew that she was far removed from the wide-eyed young woman who played the harp and wrote *The Wild Irish Girl* decades previously and that public tastes had squared against the kind of complex and troubled nationalism that her works represented.

Yet, what is remarkable about the literary symbolism of 1798 in later periods is that it often emerges as an event that complicates and opens up history rather than pulls it back into a polemic. For instance, Seamus Heaney’s sonnet “Requiem for the Croppies” and many of his poems about 1798 in his book *North* use the rising as a vehicle to explore the many layers of diverse interests that inform nationalist feeling. In the midst

of The Troubles and the deeply sectarian divides that tore apart Northern Ireland, Heaney “summons” 1798 and all its ghosts to bring to the foreground a moment in time where Protestants and Catholics fought together for the cause of liberty. Written from the perspective of a dead rebel or “croppy,” the entire poem possesses a “haunted” quality which insists itself onto the present. Most significantly is the way in which the barley the soldiers carry in their pockets during the rebellion springs from the mass grave where they rest: “They buried us without shroud or coffin/And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.” Some might see the symbolism of this kind of resurrection as indicative of a kind of pure and relentless nationalism that refuses to die, but I see the barley growing from the grave as a metaphor for a kind of nationalism that is always transforming and contingent, one that is shaped by the passage of time.

In Brian Friel’s *Translations* the 1798 uprising emerges as a “flash” that calls historical memory into question. The events of the play take place in a hedge-school in the fictional town of Baile Beag (Ballybeg) in County Donegal in the summer of 1833. The play dramatizes the British Ordnance Survey conducted that year and the attempt of the British to create an official map of Ireland. As the Schoolmaster Hugh looks around the stage in the final scene, he remarks how it is not “the literal past, the ‘facts’ of history that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language” (445). Similar to what I think is at the heart of Heaney’s “Requiem,” Hugh tells his son Owen that “we must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilize” (445). For Hugh, history shifts in each retelling and to claim otherwise results in a case of cultural stagnation. As Owen exits, Hugh calls to him to “take care, Owen. To remember

everything is a form of madness” (445). As if to illustrate his point, Hugh begins a soliloquy in which he attempts to recall the events of 1798:

The road to Sligo. A spring morning. 1798. Going into battle. Do you remember James? Two young gallants with pikes across their shoulders and the *Aeneid* in their pockets. Everything seemed to find definition that spring—a congruence, a miraculous matching of hope and past and present and possibility. Striding across the fresh, green land. The rhythms of perception heightened. The whole enterprise of consciousness accelerated. We were gods that morning, James. (445)

Hugh and Jimmy (James) march 23 miles only to end up in a pub in which they “got homesick for Athens, just like Ulysses (445). As Hugh describes it, their “*pietas*... was for older, quieter things” (445-6). He describes how they abandoned the rising, and toasting Jimmy he finishes his speech saying, “My friend, confusion is not an ignoble condition” (446). That confusion that Hugh possessed in his youth, deciding whether or not to fight in the rising, and the confusion he has towards his own foggy memory of this event is precisely how 1798 enters into literary discourse as an “interruptor” of official, hegemonic history. Friel also presents 1798 to comment obliquely on the entrenched positions adopted by the sectarian parties in the Northern Irish Troubles in order to complicate and unravel that particular historical trajectory. The echo of 1798 does not shut the conversation down, but opens up a space for marginal histories to emerge and for envisioning different possibilities for the future. By troubling the way we shape the past, the ghost of 1798 in the present offers up a way of reimagining the complex politics that

shape Ireland and a way of retelling its history that breathes life into an otherwise “fossilized” narrative.

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Education

- Dec. 2012** **PhD in English**
 University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee (UWM)
- May 2004** **MA in English-Literature, with distinction**
 Northern Arizona University (NAU) Flagstaff, AZ
- May 2002** **BA in English** with a minor in Philosophy
 Texas State University (TSU) San Marcos, TX

Research Interests

Irish Literature, Composition and Literacy, British Literature, Postcolonial Literature and Theory, Feminist Literature and Theory,

Online University Teaching Experience

- Spring 2010** **English 102, College Research and Writing, UWM**
 Taught online using Desire to Learn Software (D2L)
 Facilitated online discussion forums, peer-editing sessions, and source evaluation
 Instructed students on online researching strategies
- Spring 2010** **English 263: Introduction to the Novel: The Irish Tradition, UWM**
 Taught online using Desire to Learn Software (D2L) and Blogger
 Facilitated online discussion forums
 Encouraged students to integrate web-based content into their literary analyses

University Teaching Experience

- Fall 2008-09** **Introduction to the Novel: The Gothic, UWM**
 Taught fundamentals of the modern novel, focusing on close-reading strategies
 Facilitated class discussion, individual and group presentations
 Conducted online discussions on blogger
- Spring 2009** **English 306: Survey of Irish Literature, UWM**
 Taught a diverse collection of texts from the Irish literary canon
 Facilitated class discussion, individual and group presentations

Conducted online discussions on blogger

- 2007-present English 102: College Research and Writing, UWM**
Teach the fundamentals of college research, focusing on inquiry-based research
Help students navigate resources in the modern library such as databases, online catalogs, and internet sources
Instruct students on source evaluation, close reading, and critical analysis
Encourage a revision-based curriculum, culminating in a 10 page scholarly research paper
- 2005-07 English 101: Critical Reading and Writing, UWM**
Teach students the fundamentals of academic writing
Develop student's critical thinking skills, emphasizing close reading and analysis
Encourage a revision-based curriculum, culminating in a final portfolio highlighting student's best work
- Spring 2005 Music 485C Instructor, NAU**
Guide music students through the writing process of a 20 page research paper
Instruct research strategies, outlining, documenting sources, revision
- 2004-present Full-Time Instructor, NAU**
3/3 load-Freshman Composition
Peer-editing and writing process oriented instruction.
Technology and lab-based instruction
- 2002-2004 Freshman Composition (Graduate Asst.), NAU**
Peer-editing and writing process oriented instruction.
Technology and lab-based instruction

University Administrative Experience

- 2008-2009 English 102 College Research and Writing Mentor, UWM**
Mentored incoming graduate students on improving strategies for teaching English 102
- 2004-2005 Writing Center Co-Director, NAU**
Trained and supervised new tutors
Hired and trained administrative assistants
Organized on-line tutoring program
- 2004-2005 Writing Center Writing Workshop Series Administrator, NAU**
Pioneered workshop series
Created various workshops that focus specifically on writing issues

- 2004 Graduate Assistant Orientation Facilitator, NAU**
 Helped organize orientation schedule
 Created workshops for orientation

University Tutoring Experience

- 2002-2004 Writing Tutor, Northern Arizona University**
- 2002-2004 English 100 Tutor, Northern Arizona University**
- 2000-2002 Writing Tutor, Texas State University**

K-12 Teaching Experience

- 2004 WYVEA Conversation Partner, Northern Arizona University**
 Acted as an English conversation partner for young Chinese students
 Prepared activities and games for Chinese students
- 2004 Upward Bound Program, Northern Arizona University**
 Taught eight sections
 Prepared underprivileged high school students for the English section of the ACT
- 2002 Grammar, Reading, and Composition Instructor, San Marcos High School**
 Tutored “at-risk” students in grammar, reading comprehension, and composition in order to improve their standardized test scores

Committees and Service

- 2010-present Online Learning Curriculum and Instruction Committee, UWM**
 Develop curriculum for online freshman composition courses
 Discuss and implement cutting-edge scholarship in the field of online learning
 Explore and implement new technologies for successful online learning
- 2006-2008 Graduate Student Representative for Literary Studies (Plan A). UWM**
 Designed a literary studies mentor program
 Organized brown-bag discussions pertaining to Literary Studies
 Created panel discussions hosted by graduate students to showcase work
- 2005-present Literary Studies Committee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**
- 2006-2009 Milwaukee Irish Fest Summer School. Literature Instructor.**
 Milwaukee, WI.

- 2002-2003** **Electronic Reserve Coordinator for English 105**, Northern Arizona University
- 2003-2005** **Irish Folk Musician**, Northern Arizona Irish Foundation
- 2003-2005** **Volunteer**, Northern Arizona Irish Foundation, 2003-present
- 2002-2003** **Poetry Reader-Referee**, *Thin Air*
- 1998-2002** **Coordinator**, San Marcos Poetry Reading Series

Publications

“What’s Luck Got to Do With It: Reading the East in Maria Edgeworth’s ‘Murad the Unlucky.’” *The Looking Glass*. January 2006.

“That I Could Take You.” *Plainsongs* 23:2 (Winter 2003). (poem).

“Genomes” “The Lives of the Saints” “A Night for Lear” *Persona*. (2002). (poetry).

Presentations/Panels

“There and Back Again: ‘Fissured Isles,’ Peripheral Subjects, and the Search for ‘Home’ in Regina Maria Roche’s *The Children of the Abbey*.” Midwest American Conference for Irish Studies. Saint Paul, MN, October 2008.

“The Genealogy of Guilt and the Horrors of Inheritance in Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* and Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*.” American Conference for Irish Studies. Davenport, IA. April 2008.

“‘Shot through the Buzzom’: Nationalist Appropriation and Female Agency in Sean O’Casey’s *Shadow of a Gunman*.” The International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures. Dublin, Ireland. July 2007.

“Everything I Needed to Know about Empire I Learned at Rugby: The Bloomsbury Group and the Dismantling of Boy Culture.” MMLA, Chicago, IL. November 2006.

“Representations of Traveller People in Marina Carr’s *Portia Coughlan* and *By the Bog of the Cats*...” American Conference for Irish Studies, St. Louis, MO. April 2006. March 2006.

“Forbidden Words and Domestic Interjections: Reading the Letter-Burning Ritual in Gaskell’s *Cranford*.” Midwest Conference on Literature, Language, and Media. De Kalb, IL.

“Hollywood Orchids: Intellectual Property Rights and Cultural Imperialism in *The Orchid Thief* and *Adaptation*.” Popular Culture Association. San Diego, CA. March 2005.

“What’s Luck Got to Do With It?: Reading the East in Maria Edgeworth’s ‘Murad the Unlucky.’” Children’s Literature Association. Fresno, CA. June 2004.

“Under My Cloak, a Fig for the King: Authorship and Authority in Three Renaissance Texts.” Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Tempe, AZ . February 2004.

Workshops

“Negotiating Power in the Freshman Composition Classroom.” University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Rhetoric and Composition Professional Development Series, Spring 2006.

“The University Writing Center and Minimalist Tutoring.” NAU, Graduate Instructor Orientation, co-presented with Mairin Barney, Fall 2004.

“Summary, Synthesis, Rhetorical Analysis, and Argument: Fun and Exciting Ways to Teach the Most Boring Subjects.” NAU, Graduate Instructor Orientation, co-presented with Mairin Barney, Fall 2004

“Approaches to Teaching Major Essay Assignments.” NAU, Graduate Instructor Orientation, co-presented with Will Davis, Fall 2004.

“Role of Group Work in English 105.” NAU, Graduate Instructor Orientation, co-presented with Mairin Barney, Fall 2003.

Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

Teaching Excellence Award. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. May 2008.

IASIL Student Scholarship. Travel Award. The International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures. July 2007, €500.

Chancellor’s Award, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, AY 2005-2006, \$15,000

Teaching Assistantship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, English Department, AY 2005-present.

Graduate Assistantship, Northern Arizona University, English Department, 2002—2004, \$10,000 per annum.

Travel Award, Northern Arizona University, English Department, 2005, \$100

Graduate Assistantship, Northern Arizona University, English Department, 2002—
2004, \$10,000 per annum

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week Award for Poetry, Texas State
University, 2002

Gates-Thomas Award for Poetry, Texas State University, 2000

Memberships

American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS)
Modern Languages Association
Sigma Tau Delta