EDITED BY

LIAM HARTE

The Oxford Handbook *of* MODERN IRISH FICTION

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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In memory of my parents, Tom (1929–2019) and Frankie (1930–2020)

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Editorial Note

Where known, the biographical dates of writers born on the island of Ireland, writers born elsewhere who settled in Ireland, and writers of Irish heritage born abroad are given in parentheses after their names occur in the main text of each chapter. The dates of significant Irish political, social, economic, and cultural events are also provided, where relevant. The publication dates of individual works of fiction cited in the main text of each chapter refer to a work's first appearance in book form.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

MODERN IRISH FICTION

Renewing the Art of the New

LIAM HARTE

IRELAND has, since the late nineteenth century, produced a roll call of distinguished literary novelists and short story writers whose collective contribution to world literature has been far out of proportion to the country's size and population. A summary listing extends from James Joyce (1882–1941), father of the international modernist revolution of the early twentieth century, through his immediate successors, Samuel Beckett (1906–89), Elizabeth Bowen (1899–1973), and Flann O'Brien (1911–66), whose formal and thematic choices bear the imprint of Joyce's towering example, to the more recent accomplishments of John McGahern (1934–2006), Edna O'Brien (1930–), John Banville (1945–), Roddy Doyle (1958–), Colm Tóibín (1955–), and Anne Enright (1962–), each of whom has enriched and extended the scope of what has been called 'the prime national art of Ireland'.[1] For much of the past century, critical practice struggled to keep pace with this sustained novelistic productivity, as evidenced by the fact that it was not until the late 1980s that the first synoptic history of the Irish novel appeared.[2] In fact, there has been, until recently, a paradoxical and inverse relationship between, on the one hand, the voluminous production of works of literary fiction by modern Irish novelists and short story writers of international stature and, on the other, the intermittent publication of critical scholarship appraising these texts. That this has now changed, to the point where there is a very sizeable number of scholars engaged in critical work on Irish fiction, means that the present is an opportune moment in which to produce an *Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Fiction*.

This *Handbook* collects, in one volume, thirty-four substantial new essays by leading experts on modern Irish prose fiction, a category that includes Irish-themed works by authors of Irish heritage who were born abroad and fiction by foreign-born authors

[1] Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber, 'Introduction', in Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber with Anne Mullin Burnham, *A Guide to Irish Fiction 1650–1900* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), xlix.

[2] James Cahalan, *The Irish Novel: A Critical History* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988).

domiciled in Ireland. By combining breadth with depth, each chapter aims to meet the needs of different categories of reader, from the undergraduate or graduate student in search of a secure grounding in a topic to the specialist looking for authoritative guidance. In addition to being a primary point of scholarly reference, the *Handbook* represents a collaborative attempt to conceptualize the field of modern Irish fiction studies in a way that poses subtle challenges to critical assumptions and stimulates fresh thinking and debate. The book's overarching aim is to provide a reliable and critically perceptive guide to the principal strands of modern Irish fiction as they have evolved in the English and Irish languages since the nineteenth century, a time frame that expands where required to facilitate discussion of literary trends, modes, and authors from earlier periods. Accompanying aims include the provision of instructive overviews, written from a variety of analytical perspectives, of modern Irish novelists' experiments and innovations in genre, form, and theme; critical assessments of the significance of individual writers' achievements and their contributions to the wider tradition; and examinations of the different historical circumstances that have fertilized and shaped the development of the Irish novel and short story, both in Ireland and beyond. While it would be foolhardy to aspire to inclusive coverage of a literary corpus that is as vast as it is diverse, it is my hope that this *Handbook* will fulfil its critical and intellectual objectives and in doing so inspire consequential new scholarship.

In pursuing its objectives, the *Handbook* builds on a number of recent monographs and essay collections that have reinvigorated the study of Irish fiction, chief among which is the magisterial two-volume *Cambridge History of Irish Literature* (2006), edited by Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary, which contains excellent scholarly essays that provide a thoroughgoing and robust contextualization of the tradition. The year 2006 also saw the publication of *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, edited by John Wilson Foster, which comprises fourteen cogent overviews of the history of Irish fiction from Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) to John Banville and beyond. A series of insightful and authoritative period-specific studies followed quickly in the wake of these publications. Among the most notable of these were Emer Nolan's *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (2007); Foster's *Irish Novels 1890–1940: New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (2008); James H. Murphy's *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age* (2011); Claire Connolly's *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790–1829* (2012); and George O'Brien's *The Irish Novel 1960–2010* (2012) and *The Irish Novel 1800–1910* (2015), each of which administered a powerful, disruptive stimulus to settled views of the Irish novelistic tradition.

To this shelf of distinguished works must be added Derek Hand's critically nuanced *A History of the Irish Novel* (2011), Heather Ingman's wide-ranging *Irish Women's Fiction from Edgeworth to Enright* (2013), and Ingman's much-needed *A History of the Irish Short Story* (2009), work on which topic has been further enriched by Elke D'hoker's *Irish Women Writers and the Modern Short Story* (2016). The impressive contents of the Oxford History of the Irish Book series have been valuably augmented by *A Guide to Irish Fiction 1650–1900* (2006), a superlative feat of bibliographic retrieval undertaken by Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber with Anne Mullin Burnham, which has transformed

understanding of pre-1900 Irish fiction by itemizing and providing commentaries on almost six thousand works by approximately fifteen hundred authors, with accompanying biographical notes. Among other things, these studies have enabled readers to appreciate anew the ways in which the Irish novel and short story—neither of them specifically native forms—have functioned as sites for the discussion and deconstruction of normative systems and as vehicles for the elaboration of alternative stories of becoming and belonging.

Inspired by such excellent scholarship, and working from the premise that there is no single interpretive framework or principle that makes modern Irish fiction comprehensible at once, this *Handbook* is organized around a select range of topics within a loose chronological framework. The nine sections that follow this one, each of which is introduced below, is designed to capture a sense of the heterogeneity and vitality of modern Irish fiction by combining coverage of key phases in its development with critical analyses of influential novelists, distinctive thematic and formal concerns, prominent literary trends and genres, and significant aesthetic agendas. The persistent influence of Ireland's political, social, and economic history on its novelists and short story writers dictates that the dynamic relationship between individual texts and their contexts is a governing concern of the volume. Although a minority of chapters focus on a major or particularly important novelist such as James Joyce or Elizabeth Bowen, contributors, on the whole, have been encouraged to write comparatively and diachronically wherever possible. Structuring the volume in this way is intended to make the experience of reading the *Handbook* stimulatingly varied rather than seamlessly linear, although I am conscious that my approach will not please all. Knowledgeable readers will doubtless imagine alternative ways of mapping the field, using different thematic and generic coordinates, and this is perhaps as it should be, since the ground of Irish fiction is subject to continual expansion and redefinition.

Like the adjacent terrain of the theory of the novel, the expansive domain of Irish prose fiction exists as 'a rich problematic rather than a monolithic idea'.[3] In it, all manner of flora flourish, from exotic fantasies and pungent satires at one end to displays of austere classicism and subdued realism at the other. As with any body of literature, the urge to search for nationally defining characteristics is irresistible, even though the process of their formation is still unfolding, and plenitude and diversity invariably complicate efforts to systematize. Of the many attempts to identify the essential qualities of Irish fiction, one of the most perceptive is that of a practitioner, the novelist and playwright Thomas Kilroy (1934–), who in 1972 made the following observation:

> At the centre of Irish fiction is the anecdote. The distinctive characteristic of our 'first' novel, *Castle Rackrent*, that which makes it what it is, is not so much its idea, revolutionary as that may be, as its imitation of a speaking voice engaged in the telling of a tale. The model will be exemplary for the reader who has read widely in Irish

[3] Dorothy J. Hale, 'General Introduction', in Dorothy J. Hale (ed.), *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900–2000* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 2.

> fiction: it is a voice heard over and over again, whatever its accent, a voice with a supreme confidence in its own histrionics, one that assumes with its audience a shared ownership of the told tale and all that this implies: a taste for anecdote, an unshakeable belief in the value of human action, a belief that life may be adequately encapsulated into stories that require no reference, no qualification, beyond their own selves.[4]

This incisive assessment only begins to tell the story, of course. The 'Hibernian Tale' Kilroy cites is a highly complex narrative delivered by an eccentric Irish Catholic narrator, Thady Quirk, an 'illiterate old steward' whose 'vernacular idiom' Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849), an English-born Anglo-Irish Protestant, ventriloquizes to satirize her own class.[5] In the process, she not only mediates Thady's monologue for the benefit of English readers by means of paratextual materials (preface, notes, glossary) prepared by a learned 'Editor' but also sanitizes and, at times, undermines and mocks him. By means of such mimicry and ambiguity, *Castle Rackrent* (1800) audaciously usurps expectations and denies readers the comforts of sincere disclosure and moral clarity. Nor was this the first occurrence in Irish fiction of a provocatively ironic narrative voice intent on exposing the constructed nature of the reality that the novel form purported to present; those fellow saboteurs of convention, Swift's Lemuel Gulliver and Laurence Sterne's (1713–68) Tristram Shandy, prove that Thady was, so to speak, no quirk.

The revolutionary force of these subversively parodic fictional creations lies in their ingenious elaboration of textual and interpretive cruxes that support multiple indeterminate readings. Anchored to varying degrees in the native Irish oral storytelling tradition, *Castle Rackrent*, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) artfully shatter the pretentions of Enlightenment modernity and the claims of its attendant literary form, the novel, to provide what Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)—arguably the first English novel—called 'a just History of Fact'.[6] 'Perhaps that is the Irish influence', observes Derek Hand of Sterne's masterpiece, 'a distrust of the medium itself—a playful attitude to it, mocking it—or taking the Mick out of it, gently alerting the reader to its limits and its impossibilities',[7] while at the same time loading it with profound insights into the infinite complexity of human consciousness and experience. These special truths would endure, as would the influence of these novelists' radical incredulity towards established representational modes. Among the grateful beneficiaries of their example was James Joyce, who acknowledged his debt to Sterne when explaining the genesis of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), arguably the most challenging work of fiction ever produced:

[4] Thomas Kilroy, 'Tellers of Tales', *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 March 1972, 301.

[5] Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, ed. George Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3, 4. The full title of Edgeworth's anonymously published novel is *Castle Rackrent, An Hibernian Tale Taken from Facts, and from the Manners of the Irish Squires, Before the Year 1782*.

[6] Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (London: W. Taylor, 1719), unpaginated preface.

[7] Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47–8.

> I might easily have written this story in the traditional manner.... Every novelist knows the recipe.... It is not very difficult to follow a simple, chronological scheme which the critics will understand.... But I, after all, am trying to tell the story of this Chapelizod family in a new way.... Time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes of my book.... Yet the elements are exactly what every novelist might use: man and woman, birth, childhood, night, sleep, marriage, prayer, death.... There is nothing paradoxical about this.... Only I am trying to build many planes of narrative with a single esthetic purpose.... Did you ever read Laurence Sterne...?[8]

If this tells us anything, it is that the novel, the literary genre with newness at its etymological core, continually renews itself by absorbing, dethroning, and transforming precedent. Or, in Wakean terms, each novel begins 'The seim anew.'[9]

Nineteenth-Century Contexts and Legacies

With such dynamics in mind, Part II of this *Handbook*, 'Nineteenth-Century Contexts and Legacies', lays the background for the volume as a whole by providing authoritative accounts of three key aspects of the pre-twentieth-century Irish novelistic tradition (fiction by Gothic, Catholic, and women writers respectively) that are important to understandings of what came after, including the fiction composed during the Irish Literary Revival, the value and significance of which is examined in Part III. It is appropriate that we should begin with a chapter devoted to Gothic fiction, an anti-realist form originating in the 1760s, if only because the very diffuseness of the Gothic mode (or form, or register, or subgenre—the terminology is a matter of scholarly debate[10]), which, it has been claimed, 'permeates virtually all Irish writing',[11] underlines the difficulty of establishing definitive temporal parameters that differentiate 'modern' Irish fiction from that which preceded it. Regarded by some critics as the defining fictional form of nineteenth-century Ireland, the predominantly Protestant predilection for writing 'supernatural fiction'[12] is one of the most marked and influential literary legacies of Ireland's colonial

[8] Eugene Jolas, 'My friend James Joyce', in *Eugene Jolas: Critical Writings, 1924–1951*, ed. Klaus H. Kiefer and Rainer Rumold (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 399. This essay originally appeared in the *Partisan Review* in March–April 1941.

[9] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, ed. Robbert-Jan Henkes, Erik Bindervoet, and Finn Fordham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 215: 23.

[10] See Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie, 'Introduction: De-limiting the Irish Gothic', in Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie (eds), *Irish Gothics: Genres, Forms, Modes, and Traditions, 1760–1890* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–12.

[11] Vera Kreilkamp, review of *The Gothic Family Romance* by Margot Gayle Backus, *Victorian Studies* 43, no. 4 (2001), 648.

[12] R. F. Foster, 'Protestant Magic: W. B. Yeats and the Spells of Irish History', in *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Penguin, 1995), 212–32.

history. Synonymous with transgression, transformation, and disruption, and replete with an excess of sentiment and subjectivity, Irish Gothic has been widely read as an expression of the fears and anxieties of a privileged but embattled social caste, the once-dominant Anglo-Irish elite, bearers of a literary imagination characterized as 'ineluctably haunted, cloven into duality by the cleavage in Irish society between expropriated and expropriators',[13] whose future became more and more uncertain as a lower middle-class Catholic ascendancy of strong farmers and shopkeepers emerged.[14] Hence the recurring preoccupation of this 'already in-between'[15] class with themes of fragmented identity, illegitimate inheritance, miscegenation, disputed land ownership, cursed families, and irresistible decline, in a lineage that stretches from the late eighteenth-century novels of Regina Maria Roche (1764–1845), through the *fin-de-siècle* supernaturalist fiction of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and Bram Stoker (1847–1912), to the modernist ghost stories of Elizabeth Bowen and beyond. In examining the cultural and political import of this spectral subgenre in Chapter Two, Jarlath Killeen highlights the ways in which Gothic novels function as 'weapons in an ideological attack on the representational politics of the "Celtic fringe"' in the hands of Anglican writers who were politically and intellectually committed to the modernization of a (mainly Catholic) culture long denigrated as intractably 'backward', impoverished, and anti-modern. The result, he argues, is an anti-Gothic Gothic aesthetic characterized by 'the authorial undermining of the form even as it is being perpetuated'.

Despite Irish Gothic being seen as a largely Protestant phenomenon, and notwithstanding its close association with anti-Catholic polemic, a strain of 'Catholic or Catholic-nationalist Gothic'[16] has been traced to the early nineteenth-century tales of John Banim (1798–1842), William Carleton (1794–1869), and James Clarence Mangan (1803–49).[17] This seam also extends in a forward direction. After the partition of the island in 1920 and the emergence of a partially independent Irish state in 1922, a number of novelists and short story writers of Catholic background turned to Gothic conventions for a variety of reasons, whether as a means of understanding inherited psychological wounds, contextualizing recurrent political violence, or interrogating the creation of national mythologies. Killeen identifies Frank O'Connor's (1903–66) short story, 'Guests of the Nation' (1931), as a pre-eminent example of Gothic tropes being used to amplify a post-revolutionary disillusionment with the betrayal of emancipatory

[13] Julian Moynihan, 'The Politics of Anglo-Irish Gothic: Maturin, Le Fanu and the Return of the Repressed', in Heinz Kosok (ed.), *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982), 48.

[14] See, for example, the chapter entitled 'Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel' in Terry Eagleton's *Heathcliff and the Great Famine: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), 145–225.

[15] John Paul Riquelme, 'Toward a History of Gothic and Modernism: Dark Modernity from Bram Stoker to Samuel Beckett', *Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000), 591.

[16] Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 126.

[17] See Richard Haslam, '"Broad Farce and Thrilling Tragedy": Mangan's Fiction and Irish Gothic', *Éire-Ireland* 41, nos. 3–4 (2006), 215–44 and 'Maturin's Catholic Heirs: Expanding the Limits of Irish Gothic', in Morin and Gillespie (eds), *Irish Gothics*, 113–29. See also Luke Gibbons, *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture* (Galway: Arlen House, 2004).

nationalist ideals. For later novelists, it is not only the ghosts of the colonial past that trouble and shape their fictions. The culpability of the postcolonial nation-state itself for victimizing its most vulnerable citizens is a notable theme of recent neo-Gothic renditions of destructive personal pasts, some of which dramatize the return of repressed histories to rupture the fabric of the national historical narrative. The intimate harm perpetrated by agents of authoritarian political and religious dogmas is harrowingly laid bare in the work of Patrick McCabe (1955–) and Eimear McBride (1976–), both of whom Killeen discusses. In contrast to O'Connor's realist recreation of the spiritually disfiguring effects of retributive violence in a time of war, McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) and McBride's A *Girl is a Half-formed Thing* (2013) exhibit a striking narrative experimentalism when evoking the enduring effects of familial and institutional abuse and deprivation, many of whose victims were hidden in plain sight. In these and other recent novels that incorporate neo-Gothic elements, language and form are made to serve immersive ends as authors seek to connect readers to the visceral experience of trauma, while simultaneously revealing the extent to which the cast aside remain constitutive, uncanny presences in the Irish cultural imaginary, akin to what Freud called 'that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar'.[18] Far from being anti-realist, contemporary Irish usages of the Gothic mode testify to its efficacy as a heightened form of social and psychological realism, a means of affording readers a more intense engagement with intensely troubled states of mind.

The retrieval of works of Gothic fiction from a position of marginality to a more central place in the Irish literary canon has been one of the notable critical developments of the past thirty years or so. With increased scholarly attention has come a more discriminating understanding of this distinctive field of fiction, as exemplified by Siobhán Kilfeather's conceptualization of the Gothic as 'an extra dimension apparent in many works of Irish fiction',[19] Joe Cleary's critique of 'the tendency to isolate Ascendancy Gothic as *the* defining nineteenth-century Irish alternative to English realism',[20] and Christina Morin and Niall Gillespie's reframing of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish Gothic as multi-generic and cross-sectarian.[21] The malleability of the Gothic mode is instantiated by the fiction of Charlotte Riddell (1832–1906), the Carrickfergus-born novelist whose 1867 short story, 'Hertford O'Donnell's Warning', provides a point of departure in Chapter Three for Gerardine Meaney's mapping of the affinities and continuities between Victorianism and modernism in works by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish women writers. This story is one of several by Riddell that feature supernatural plots, a strand of her work that complemented her pioneering social realist novels set in the

[18] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 123–4.

[19] Siobhán Kilfeather, 'The Gothic Novel', in John Wilson Foster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86.

[20] Joe Cleary, 'The Nineteenth-Century Irish Novel: Notes and Speculations on Literary Historiography', in Jacqueline Belanger (ed.), *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Facts and Fictions* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 204. Original emphasis.

[21] Morin and Gillespie, 'Introduction: De-limiting the Irish Gothic', 1–12.

burgeoning milieu of London commerce and finance. Many of these stories are haunted house narratives that revolve around the nexus of gender, wealth, property ownership, and the paranormal, such as those collected in her *Weird Stories* (1882), which was preceded by four Gothic novellas penned by Riddell in the 1870s. Riddell's ghost stories were intended to instruct as well as entertain; she was one of a number of late Victorian women writers who reworked Gothic conventions to air ethical concerns about social and economic inequalities, using 'the ghost story as a way to critique the economic problems in both the impoverished streets and wealthy ancestral homes of England, as well as to shine a light on the emotional grievances existing behind closed doors'.[22] Unlike other Victorian practitioners of ghost fiction, Riddell's supernatural tales refuse to subordinate the social to the sensational to achieve their ghostly effects.

Riddell is one of a significant cohort of once-popular Irish novelists of the Victorian and Edwardian eras—others include L. T. Meade (pseudonym of Elizabeth Thomasina Toulmin Smith, 1844–1914), Sarah Grand (pseudonym of Frances Clarke McFall, 1854–1943), M. E. Francis (pseudonym of Mary E. Sweetman, 1859–1930), and Katherine Cecil Thurston (1875–1911)—who until recently have been occluded in literary histories and surveys. Many were female, of middle-class origin, and prolific producers of generically varied popular fictions, including romances, country house novels, social problem novels, science fiction mysteries, novels about the Land War of 1879–82, and New Woman fiction that critiqued patriarchal norms and culturally defined gender roles. As Meaney observes, the recuperation of these neglected voices 'subverts a teleological construction of Irish literary history as a long march towards modernism'. Their restoration to the canon also modifies accounts of the nineteenth-century Irish novelistic tradition that centre on the limitations of social realism in a country marked by uneven socio-economic development, and illuminates the expansive creativity of novelists in the period between the end of the Famine and the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922.

The fact that Riddell forged her literary career in England—she moved to London with her widowed mother in 1855 and remained there until her death—makes her doubly exemplary of this largely female line for, as Meaney goes on to note, the experience of migration was a central feature of many of these novelists' careers, albeit one that meant that 'they were often excluded from Irish literary histories because they were seen not only to write for a non-Irish audience, but also to be concerned more with issues of women's education and experiences than with debates about Irish national literature'.[23]

[22] Melissa Edmundson, 'The "Uncomfortable Houses" of Charlotte Riddell and Margaret Oliphant', *Gothic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010), 52.

[23] Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Literary Absentees: Irish Women Authors in Nineteenth-Century England', in Belanger (ed.), *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century*, 168. The changing commercial realities of post-Union publishing were a key factor in the relocation of generations of nineteenth-century Irish novelists to London. As David Goldie succinctly states, 'In the 1830s Irish titles were as likely to be published in Dublin as in London; by the 1890s London was publishing eight Irish titles to every one published in Dublin'. 'Scottish, Irish, and Welsh Fiction in the Late Nineteenth Century', in Patrick Parrinder and Andrzej Gąsiorek (eds), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume 4: The Reinvention of the British and Irish Novel 1880–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 166.

The recalibration of the critical lenses to take fuller account of overlooked or unknown spheres of Irish literary activity and influence in England during the long nineteenth century has retrained eyes on the cross-cultural affinities and national inter-relationships that cut across the colonial binaries of centre and periphery, metropole and margin.[24] The opening up of such archipelagic and transnational perspectives has also given fresh visibility to novels that provide access to a gendered history too often obscured by the male-dominated Literary Revival, thus enabling, in Meaney's words, 'new modes of imagining what it is to be a woman, a writer, a migrant moving between countries and classes'.

That expatriate Irish women novelists were not the only group cast into shadow by the towering achievements of the Revival generation is attested by James H. Murphy in his discussion of Catholic fiction written between the 1870s and 1920s in Chapter Four. Although the fictional practice of contemporary Irish novelists is manifestly different from that of their late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century predecessors, Murphy identifies a thematic continuity between them. Shame and anger at the country's socio-cultural belatedness and underdevelopment, he argues, are the creative stimuli that link novels by writers such as Gerald O'Donovan (1871–1942), William Patrick Ryan (1867–1942), and, to an extent, James Joyce to those by the post-Joycean generation of Edna O'Brien and John McGahern. In the work of the earlier of these generations, such emotions find expression in plots and scenarios that dramatize the struggle between the forces of conservatism and liberalism for the soul of the nascent nation.

The chief object of these Catholic intelligentsia novelists' disdain in the decades prior to 1922 was the stultified torpor of a society seen as being increasingly dominated by clerical, rural, and authoritarian mindsets, whose puritanical Catholicism impeded modernization in the eyes of activist-writers such as O'Donovan and Ryan. We therefore encounter in these novelists' autobiographically inflected works variations on the figure of the defeated social reformer whose progressive ideals gain little traction in a provincial society in thrall to vested interests represented by the triumvirate of priest, shopkeeper, and strong farmer. Other novels, such as *Children of the Dead End* (1914) by Patrick MacGill (1890–1963) and *The Valley of the Squinting Windows* (1918) by Brinsley MacNamara (1890–1963), exposed the grinding poverty, economic exploitation, religious hypocrisy, and moral judgementalism that lurked beneath pastoral façades, thereby drawing the wrath of those who regarded rural communities as the spiritual centre of the nation-in-waiting. The abrasive realism of such works does not tell the whole story, however, as Murphy goes on to highlight in his discussion of works by Edward MacLysaght (1887–1986), Aodh de Blácam (1890–1951), and Eimar O'Duffy (1893–1935) that offer a more nuanced account of a Catholic culture that, for all its many shortcomings, is portrayed as being preferable to the Anglicized alternative promoted by the politically dominant partner in the Union with Britain.

[24] The extensive research that informs John Wilson Foster's *Irish Novels 1890–1940: New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and James H. Murphy's *Irish Novelists and the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) has been complemented by Tina O'Toole's *The New Irish Woman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and Whitney Standlee's *'Power to Observe': Irish Women Novelists in Britain, 1890–1916* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015).

In his preface to the first American edition of *The Valley of the Squinting Windows*, MacNamara looked back to the fiction of William Carleton, Gerald Griffin (1803–40), Samuel Lover (1797–1868), Charles Lever (1806–72), and Charles J. Kickham (1828–82), and concluded that 'somehow between them, between those who wrote to degrade us and those who have idealized us, the real Irishman did not come to be set down. From its fiction, reality was absent, as from most other aspects of Irish life.'[25] In seeking to contextualize what he regarded as a new receptivity on the part of the novel-reading public to a faults-and-all realism in post-Rising Ireland, MacNamara was rehearsing a familiar refrain of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish fiction writers, one that Carleton himself invoked when he declared that his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830–33) was written 'neither to distort his countrymen into demons, nor to enshrine them as suffering innocents and saints—but to exhibit them as they really are'.[26] The challenge to classic realism was a shared preoccupation of the two literary-cultural movements that dominated the intellectual climate in which MacNamara wrote, Irish revivalism and international modernism, neither of whose adherents felt beholden to verisimilitude but rather endeavoured to create their own versions of reality. Earlier conceptions of these broadly coeval movements as antithetical have been revised by recent scholarship that has identified synergies between them, as well as bringing to light the wide diversity of viewpoints and multivalent tensions that energized each of these cultural phenomena.[27] Rather than disambiguate them, therefore, I consider it more productive to bring revivalism and modernism into critical proximity in Part III of this volume and approach them as overlapping, dialectically entwined movements that produced highly differentiated bodies of writing that were at once distinctive and mutually nurturing components of an ambitious project of national regeneration that stretched from the 1880s to the 1930s.

Irish Revivalism and Irish Modernism

The place that the Literary Revival occupies in Irish cultural history is neither simple nor settled. For some, it is a celebration of the ancient Irish past; for others, an elitist appropriation of indigenous culture by scions of a class on the verge of cultural eclipse, who 'turned to literature to forge in new circumstances identities that were no longer

[25] Brinsley MacNamara, 'Prefatory Note', in *The Valley of the Squinting Windows* (New York: Brentano's, 1919), x.

[26] William Carleton, 'Preface', in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (Dublin: William Curry, Jnr. and Co., 1830), vol. 1, ix.

[27] For a useful account of the development of the critical debate, see Rónán McDonald, 'The Irish Revival and Modernism', in Joe Cleary (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 51–62. See also *Irish University Review. Special Issue: New Perspectives on the Irish Literary Revival* 33, no. 1 (2003) and *Irish Studies Review. Special Issue: Remapping Irish Modernism* 26, no. 3 (2018).

secured in material and social realities'.[28] Yet neither explanation fully satisfies our need to understand a movement that embraces a broad spectrum of beliefs and ideologies concerning Ireland and the Irish nation. Far from naïve nostalgia for a pre-colonial past, the Revival, like modernism at large, produces a dynamic sense of the past in the present. As Joe Cleary points out, modernism and revivalism shared a similar impetus: 'to reject the immediate past as almost wholly compromised; to create a new art that would find its rightful place not in the degraded present but in some renovated future of a transformed nation or a new era'.[29] Newness in art, of course, is historically specific, taking different forms and meanings in different times and places. Accentuating the self-conscious rejection of literary precedent runs the risk of making modernism and revivalism seem *ex nihilo* phenomena, thus obscuring their subtle Victorian rootlets. We are perhaps too accustomed to associating the 'shock of the new' with the 'radical breaks and unprecedented innovations'[30] of avant-garde high modernism (after all, realism in fiction was itself once a revolutionary phenomenon). Considered on their own terms, the 1880s and 1890s were no less electrifying creative epochs, not least in the liberation from stylistic constraint offered by a cluster of *fin-de-siècle* artistic trends, notably impressionism, naturalism, and aestheticism, that redefined the novel's status as an art form and expanded its scope and purpose in myriad directions.[31]

Arguably, the Irish novelist whose imagination was most energized by these beckoning possibilities was George Moore (1852–1933). Moore's overriding aesthetic quest was for a means of expressing that which eluded the conventions of mid-Victorian realism: the deeper, more intense levels of consciousness, the shifting desires and unruly instincts of the unconscious mind. It was a search that would lead this most mercurial of novelists from the Zolaesque naturalism of *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), the frankness of which brought him into direct confrontation with the English circulating-library system, to the psychological realism of *The Lake* (1905), in which he sought to give expression to 'that vague, undefinable, yet intensely real life that lies beneath our consciousness, that life which knows, wills and perceives without help from us'.[32] Through his focus on gender and sexuality, Moore explored his abiding interest in the struggles of individuals to understand and create their own lives within the restraints and obligations of the larger society. Despite setting most of his novels in England, the site of the only viable future for many of his protagonists, he has been characterized by the most recent historian of the Irish novel as 'the writer haunting Irish prose fiction, and specifically the Irish novel,

[28] Adrian Frazier, 'Irish Modernisms, 1880–1930', in Foster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, 121.

[29] Joe Cleary, 'Introduction', in Cleary (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism*, 11.

[30] Chris Baldick, *The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 10: The Modern Movement: 1910–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

[31] For a lucid guide to theoretical debate about the novel in late nineteenth-century England, see Jesse Matz, 'Impressionism, Naturalism, and Aestheticism: Novel Theory, 1880–1914', in Parrinder and Gąsiorek (eds), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume 4*, 539–54. See also Adam Parkes, *A Sense of Shock: The Impact of Impressionism on Modern British and Irish Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[32] George Moore, 'Since the Elizabethans', *Cosmopolis* 4 (1896), 57.

during the Revival period.'[33] He has also had his credentials as the co-father (with Joyce) of Irish modernism reaffirmed by his biographer, Adrian Frazier, who states that 'The fictions of Yeats, Wilde, Bram Stoker, Somerville and Ross and James Stephens exhibit one or two aspects of modernist style; Moore's novels have the full complement.'[34] This latter view is endorsed by Elizabeth Grubgeld, who in Chapter Five characterizes Moore's fiction as being foundational for Irish modernism. She contends that Moore drew on his deep reading of Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and other continental writers to transform the scope and subject matter of the Irish novel, 'pushing it beyond political melodrama, retellings of folklore, and the Anglo-Irish Gothic'. His efforts to render the unconscious through experimentation in narrative voice and structural framing, Grubgeld suggests, coupled with his bold adaptations of medieval tales that deviated from cultural nationalist orthodoxy, serve to demonstrate Moore's significance as Ireland's first modernist novelist.

In addition to being a promiscuous, if passionate, embracer of diverse modes of artistic expression, George Moore was a novelist of many fictional methods, the common thread of which was his zeal for literary authenticity. His preoccupation with making the English novel more responsive to the social and political realities of a fast-evolving modern milieu, and to the apprehension of these realities by the inner reality of the mind, inspired him to pioneer fresh approaches to the art of novelistic storytelling, approaches that include a subtle self-consciousness about the act of storytelling itself, as Grubgeld notes. In the early 1900s, the prose fiction of the Irish Revival became the beneficiary of Moore's narrative innovations when he forsook a London of 'empty materialism' to take a prominent role in the 'literary and national adventure' then unfolding in Dublin, hoping to unite the tributaries of cosmopolitanism and regionalism.[35] Keen to devote his energy to the new school of creative writing that was being nurtured by W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) and his fellow instigators of cultural renaissance, the returned novelist regenerated conceptions of fictional realism with *The Untilled Field* (1903), his collection of thirteen interlinked stories that became the foundational text of the modern Irish short story tradition and served as a generative template for Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914).

In Chapter Six, Gregory Castle reads these two seminal instalments in Ireland's moral history, with their shared theme of social and cultural inertia, alongside works by Shan F. Bullock (1865–1935), Emily Lawless (1845–1913), and Yeats himself, as exemplars of a hybrid form of Revival realism that sought to resignify Irish culture and summon up a more progressive vision of futurity. Working from a strongly naturalist standpoint, these authors articulate a chief concern of the Revival—the representation of the past and its orientation towards 'coming times'—and, in the process, challenge the conventions of both realism and idealism. Revival realisms, Castle argues, do not seek to revive an idealized past in the name of the Irish nation. Rather, they strategically repurpose the past as part of a critical reflection on that nation and its uncertain future.

[33] Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel*, 127. Original emphasis.
[34] Frazier, 'Irish Modernisms, 1880–1930', 114.
[35] George Moore, *Hail and Farewell*, ed. Richard Allen Cave (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1985), 222, 235.

The interpenetration of fictional modes produced by the confluence of revivalist and modernist impulses and discourses noted by Castle underlines the difficulty of seeking to confine Irish novelists of this era to singular categories of writing. As Rónán McDonald reminds us, 'it was the intensity of the clash between the modern and the non-modern elements in Irish society that stimulated both revivalist and modernist projects alike',[36] and it is this same intensity that accounts for the intermixing of styles that distinguishes novelists' departures from the protocols of realism during and after the Revival. In Chapter Seven, this theme of generic and stylistic hybridity is taken up by Gregory Dobbins in his discussion of the representational ethos of James Stephens (1880–1950) and Eimar O'Duffy, whose fiction he locates within 'a distinct trajectory in twentieth-century Irish prose that falls somewhere between modernism and realism but presents something different'. The name Dobbins gives to these novelists' incorporation of fabulist elements into ostensibly naturalist depictions of contemporary realities is magic naturalism, a mode constituted at the conjunction of the modern medium of the novel and the archaic convention of the oral tale. For both Stephens and O'Duffy, the blending of the modern and the mythological served a dual purpose. Ideologically, their magic naturalist fictions sought to re-route the energies of cultural nationalism towards socially progressive ends, into the creation of a new kind of community. At the same time, Dobbins argues, they mounted a challenge to 'the developmental trajectory of the Irish novel by introducing a different narrative mode, sourced in the fantastic and centred on the scene of storytelling, that stresses the degree to which the seemingly "natural" consequences of modernity demand at the very least an imaginative response that exceeds the ideological limits of conventional realist logic'. The result is a specifically Irish version of modernism that has a place for radical political positions concerning capitalism, gender, sexuality, and the transition from colonial subjection to postcolonial sovereignty.

The distinctive character of Irish—and international—modernism was indelibly reconfigured by the linguistic exuberance and profane, anarchic energy unleashed by James Joyce's experimental rupturing of the novel genre. In making 'the activity of thought... the central concern and the determining influence on the form'[37] of *Ulysses*, the master document of the modernist movement, Joyce effected 'a yoking of ancient saga to modern novel',[38] thus showing himself to be as adept a raider of tradition as any cultural revivalist. Yet the intense particularity of Joyce's demystifying realism and the mock-heroic inflections of his avant-garde aesthetics were inimical to the sincere Celtic romanticism that was the revivalists' lodestar. As a socialist-minded cosmopolitan Dubliner who spoke no Irish, the question of Joyce's 'belonging' to the Irish Revival and the cultural and political constructions of Irishness that it fostered has vexed generations of critics and readers alike, not least because the very culture he avowedly turned

[36] McDonald, 'The Irish Revival and Modernism', 58.

[37] Seamus Deane, 'Joyce and Stephen: The Provincial Intellectual', in *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880–1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 76.

[38] Declan Kiberd, 'Introduction', in James Joyce, *Ulysses: Annotated Students' Edition*, ed. Declan Kiberd (London: Penguin, 1992), xxv.

his back on never ceased to be the engine of his art and the focus of his reflections. There is no doubt that Joyce, whose elevated place in the pantheon is unassailable and whose vast, enduring influence surfaces in several essays in this volume, could be stinging in his critiques of the Revival's ideological deficiencies and scornful of the monocular pretentions of some of its leading figures, as exemplified by his satirical portraits of them in the first and ninth chapters of *Ulysses*. Religion, class, and culture played important roles in Joyce's alienation, the Catholic nationalist in him seeing the Anglo-Irish-led Revival as the latest manifestation of a Protestant intelligentsia staking 'its monopolizing claim on Irish culture, to define the national culture, as it had done since the seventeenth century'.[39] His antipathy was also fuelled by personal slights and disappointments, such as his omission from George Russell's (1867–1935) poetry anthology, *New Songs, a Lyric Selection* (1904), and, more woundingly, the protracted failure of the revivalist publishing house, Maunsel and Company, to publish *Dubliners* for fear of causing offence.

Yet Joyce's repudiation of the Revival was by no means absolute, nor were his artistic formation and innovations in form, technique, and subject matter untouched by its influence. The invective of his 1904 broadside, 'The Holy Office', in which he, 'unafraid, / Unfellowed, friendless and alone', distanced himself from 'The shamblings of that motley crew',[40] among whom he numbered Yeats, Russell, and J. M. Synge (1871–1909), was tempered by later expressions of shared artistic purpose, as in a letter of 1912: 'I am one of the writers of this generation who are perhaps creating at last a conscience in the soul of this wretched race.'[41] And while he held fast to his conviction that an aesthetic of uncompromising realism was essential to reveal the cultural and spiritual predicament of 'the most belated race in Europe',[42] as Emer Nolan points out, 'Joyce's forward-looking modernism, so concerned with consumption and excess, can never entirely be divorced from the supposedly regressive, nostalgic impulses that gave rise to other forms of revivalist writing.'[43]

In Chapter Eight, Sam Slote approaches *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* through the prism of Joyce's complex and contested relationship to literary revivalism. Characterizing him as 'an Irish writer translated elsewhere, effecting, *pace* Pound, a dialogue between the parochial and the cosmopolitan', Slote situates Joyce's experimental challenge to the traditional plot-driven novel within the intellectual and artistic debates involving those of his peers who sought to reinvigorate the nation's culture. Slote pays particular attention to the views expressed by George Sigerson in his address to the first

[39] Len Platt, *Joyce and the Anglo-Irish: A Study of Joyce and the Literary Revival* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 13.

[40] James Joyce, 'The Holy Office', in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 152.

[41] James Joyce, *Letters*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), vol. 2, 311. Quoted in Clare Hutton, 'The Irish Revival', in John McCourt (ed.), *James Joyce in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 196.

[42] James Joyce, 'The Day of the Rabblement', in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 50.

[43] Emer Nolan, 'Modernism and the Irish Revival', in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 166.

meeting of the Irish Literary Society in 1892, in which he eulogized the distinctly hybrid nature of the country's literary heritage and urged that it be evaluated on its intrinsic artistic merits. Slote identifies in Sigerson's hypothesis a pre-echo of Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the novel genre as 'a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized',[44] which chimes in turn with Joyce's ludic method in *Ulysses*, his self-described 'chaffering allincluding most farraginous chronicle',[45] and the *Wake*. Joyce's exuberant assault on conventional literary English in *Ulysses* led the writer and critic Shane Leslie to liken the results to 'an attempted Clerkenwell explosion in the well-guarded, well-built, classical prison of English literature'.[46] Slote contends that such literary Fenianism is the means by which Joyce becomes Ireland's Shakespeare, revaluing both the nation and the bard in the process. Joyce's poetics of transvaluation extend to the novel form itself, his infusions of Hiberno-English inventiveness transforming it into a genre uniquely capable of orchestrating a seemingly limitless number of styles, idioms, and perspectives. Yet, as Slote shows, there are limits to Joyce's heteroglossia in *Ulysses*, while the very elasticity of this concept is tested to breaking point in the *Wake*.

One of the passages in *Ulysses* that features in Slote's discussion stages an encounter that is freighted with historical and cultural symbolism. It is a scene that rehearses themes that govern Joyce's entire oeuvre and reverberate through the fiction of his immediate heirs: the crisis of subjectivity under colonialism, the quest for a language and form in which to decolonize the mind and give literary expression to the Irish experience. It occurs in the opening 'Telemachus' episode when a 'poor old woman'[47] delivers milk to the Martello tower in Sandycove where Stephen Dedalus, Buck Mulligan, and Haines, a visiting Englishman and Gaelic enthusiast, are breakfasting. Assuming that he is the presence of a native speaker because of her menial status, Haines addresses the woman in Irish, a language she does not speak. Her timorous remark—'I'm told it's a grand language by them that knows'[48]—sharpens Joyce's satirization of Haines and the revivalism to which he is in thrall, while at the same time underscoring the milkwoman's loss of linguistic and cultural heritage as a subject of empire. That her dispossession is also Stephen's has previously been established by his conversation with the English Jesuit priest and university dean about the meaning of the word 'tundish' in the final section of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), which crystallizes Stephen's linguistic subordination and acute self-consciousness about his capacity, as an Irish artist manqué, to become the author of his own story. The pressing divergences that are borne in upon him during this encounter—his feeling like a foreigner in his first language, his sense of being

[44] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262.

[45] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 554.

[46] Quoted in Andrew Gibson, *James Joyce* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 65.

[47] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 15.

[48] Ibid., 16.

unmothered by a mother tongue he has never known—are the consequences of colonialism felt upon the pulse:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home*, *Christ*, *ale*, *master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot write or speak these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language.[49]

For Joyce as for Stephen, his autobiographical alter ego, one possible response to this humiliating predicament was to pursue authentic self-expression in the usurped ancestral language. That Joyce instead embraced his fractured linguistic inheritance and found a freedom to remake the canonical English novel by dismantling 'd'anglas landadge'[50] attests both to his scepticism towards the ideology of cultural revival and to the absence of a modern prose literature in the Irish language to which he might turn for stylistic models. A host of interrelated factors, including the rupture of colonialism, the lack of access to printing presses, the absence of an extensive readership, and the limited exposure of Irish-speakers to higher education, inhibited the emergence of the novel in Irish, such that no work of Irish-language prose fiction appeared in print during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[51] The early 1800s brought forth a small quantity of fiction, but the second half of the nineteenth century is 'a complete blank, in terms of prose writing of any kind',[52] up until the advent, around the time of Joyce's birth in 1882, of the language revival movement, from which emerged the first recognized novel in Irish, *Séadna* (1904), by Peadar Ó Laoghaire (Peter O'Leary, 1839–1920). Yet even as this work was being read and reviewed, Gaelic revivalists were engaged in lively debate about the appropriate language in which a modern literary Irish should be written. Whereas many traditionalists advocated the value of the folktale as a model, more progressive-minded practitioners, including Ó Laoghaire and Pádraig Pearse (1879–1916), argued that new writing should be based on *caint na ndaoine* (the speech of the people), the idiom and vocabulary of contemporary native speakers of Irish, and be receptive to outside influences and innovations.[53] So while modernist novelists elsewhere were purposely undermining the normative conventions of nineteenth-century realist fiction,

[49] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Seamus Deane (London: Penguin, 1992), 205. For a deft analysis of the linguistic predicament of Irish writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Barry McCrea, 'Style and Idiom', in Cleary (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism*, 63–73.

[50] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 485.

[51] Cathal G. Ó Háinle, 'The Novel Frustrated: Seventeenth- to Nineteenth-Century Fiction in Irish', in Cathal G. Ó Háinle and Donald E. Meek (eds), *Unity in Diversity: Studies in Irish and Scottish Gaelic Language, Literature and History* (Dublin: School of Irish, Trinity College Dublin, 2004), 138.

[52] Ibid., 127.

[53] For an authoritative account of these debates, see Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921: Ideology and Innovation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), especially chapter two.

their Irish-language counterparts faced more fundamental challenges, as novelist and critic Alan Titley (1947–) explains:

> The writer of Irish had more than two hundred years of desert to cross, with only the chatter of his neighbours in his ears for guidance. Most writers in this first generation of the Revival had never read a book in Irish until they reached adulthood. It was this fashioning anew that gave literature in Irish its particular flavour: the fact that every novelist had not only to create a story and people it with characters, but had also to 'create' the language itself.[54]

These circumstances help contextualize the slow and fitful emergence of modernism in Irish-language fiction in the early twentieth century, which Brian Ó Conchubhair surveys in Chapter Nine. As he explains, an incipient Irish-language modernism was further arrested in the years after 1922, when 'the demands of cultural nation-building and language learners' needs, as well as literary and linguistic reconstruction, took precedence over innovation and experimentation'. Ó Conchubhair shows how the authors of landmark texts such as Pádraic Ó Conaire's (1882–1928) *Deoraíocht* (Exile, 1910) and Seosamh Mac Grianna's (1900–90) memoir-cum-fictionalized autobiography, *Mo Bhealach Féin* (My Own Route, 1940), eschewed the homely idioms of archaic literary forms in order to give expression to the complex subjectivities wrought by the experience of modernity, whether on outlying western islands or in the tenebrous backstreets of Dublin and London. One of the hallmarks of these attempts to break free from what Ó Conaire described as 'the false Gaelicism that has sprouted in our own time'[55] is a generic instability that pitches these works into an intermediate zone between fiction and autobiography, their formal hybridity reflecting the quintessentially modernist belief that established conventions were no longer sufficient to capture breakdown and vulnerability or accommodate the prevailing dislocations of mind, body, and spirit.

After the Revival, in Joyce's Wake

In his determination to break with time-honoured folk idioms and refusal to succumb to 'the nativist myth of a rural Gaelic utopia he knew to be nonexistent',[56] Pádraic Ó Conaire anticipated the artistic agendas of Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1906–70) and Flann O'Brien, both of whom deplored 'the hypocrisy of those who would celebrate the symbolic value of Gaeltacht life while turning a blind eye to its destruction', as Louis de Paor notes in his comparative analysis of their fiction in Chapter Ten, which begins Part IV of this *Handbook*. Unlike many of the most accomplished Irish modernists, Ó Cadhain and O'Brien possessed a detailed scholarly knowledge of the Irish language and its

[54] Alan Titley, 'The Novel in Irish', in Foster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, 173.
[55] Quoted in O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921*, 108.
[56] Ibid., 136.

particular narrative traditions, which leant additional authority to their expansion of the range and scope of Irish-language fiction beyond the nativist folkloric aesthetic endorsed by cultural nationalists. Their relationship with the language and its oral and written literatures is central to their literary experiments and critical engagements with the inherited uses of narrative style, form, and technique. The scathing critique of state bureaucracies in their fiction and journalism derives from direct experience of the Irish civil service and from the disillusion of a post-revolutionary generation that witnessed the collapse of cultural and political idealism in the aftermath of the establishment of a new Irish state in 1922. While O'Brien, who wrote in English and Irish under multiple pseudonyms, was at the height of his achievements between 1939 and 1945, Ó Cadhain was interned in the Curragh military prison as a result of his subversive activities with the IRA. His time in 'Ireland's Siberia' had a transformative impact on his writing, which moved from a form of socialist realism, influenced by Maxim Gorky, to a more satirical style, tending towards surrealism and fantasy and invigorated by a strong current of sardonic anti-pastoralism. As de Paor shows, formal experiment in both Ó Cadhain and O'Brien owes as much to the particular circumstances of Irish culture, politics, and language in the middle decades of the twentieth century as it does to European modernism and postmodernism, although these latter critical frames remain central to an appreciation of these two writers' respective achievements in prose fiction.

Whether categorized as late modernists, postcolonial modernists, or postmodernists *avant la lettre*, O'Brien and Ó Cadhain are key transitional figures in the passage from modernism to postmodernism in Irish- and English-language fiction. Absurdist techniques, a riotous linguistic playfulness, a Rabelaisian delight in skewering cant, and a fierce hostility towards the idealized vision of rural and Irish-speaking communities promoted by orthodox nationalism distinguish their artfully subversive tours de force. O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) is a dissonant amalgam of myth and 'blather',[57] to use one of the author's favourite expressions, while Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* (Graveyard Clay, 1949) is a novel that is literally all talk, uttered by corpses who in reality cannot speak. These two novelists were joined in their deconstructive enterprise by Samuel Beckett who, despite his different social, religious, and cultural origins, worked, like O'Brien, athwart two languages to produce a fiction that interrogates narrative process and negates any authoritative source of meaning, while sustaining a complicated relationship with the Irish Revival and with Joyce, in whose imposing shadow Beckett came to artistic maturity.

As Joyce's friend and sometime amanuensis in late 1920s Paris during the long gestation of *Finnegans Wake*, Beckett directly entered the sphere of influence of his surrogate literary father. Later, after Joyce's death in 1941, Beckett would commit the necessary act of filial estrangement by choosing to write prose fiction and drama in French, while retaining a deep indebtedness to, and abiding admiration for, his mentor's 'heroic work,

[57] In the mid-1930s, O'Brien was the moving force behind a short-lived humorous magazine of this name. See Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1998), 72–4.

heroic being'.[58] Beckett crystallized the defining distinction between his own aesthetic and that of his older compatriot when he explained: 'we are diametrically opposed because Joyce was a synthesizer, he wanted to put everything, the whole of human culture, into one or two books, and I am an analyser. I take away all the accidentals because I want to come down to the bedrock of the essentials, the archetypal.'[59] His trilogy of novels, *Molloy* (published in French in 1951; in English in 1955), *Malone Dies* (1951; 1958), and *The Unnamable* (1953; 1959), exemplifies this subtractive method. The first of these is sustained by a plot and some characters; the second contracts to an immobilized protagonist discharging his deathbed soliloquy in a confined space; the third, to an unplaceable disembodied voice. Beckett's artifice-stripping fiction thus extends to narrators and characters the Joycean injunction that the artist be 'refined out of existence'.[60] History and culture are also blotted out; whereas Stephen Dedalus's linguistic entrapment is finely contextual, the Unnamable's possession by compulsive utterance is radically denuded of all historical and geographical specificity:

> It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know, it's round that I must revolve, of that I must speak, with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine, since there is no one but me, or if there are others, to whom it might belong, they have never come near me.[61]

Yet, like Joyce, whom he characterized as a 'biologist in words',[62] Beckett's *déraciné* ear remained attuned to literary and political developments in the country from which he was self-exiled and with which he carried on a fraught long-distance dialogue. Whereas for most of his lifetime Beckett was commonly regarded as an accentless author, unconscriptable to national canons and unencumbered by ties to place—a view encouraged by his own declaration that 'The artist who stakes his being is from nowhere, has no kith'[63]—the decades since his death in 1989 have witnessed his gradual absorption into an expanded Irish literary pantheon, a process aided by a reappraisal of his relationship to Irish writing that does not seek to deny the challenges to assimilation his oeuvre presents.[64] As Emilie Morin puts it, 'reviewing the forms of displacement, erasure and negation surrounding Beckett's representations of Ireland brings to light a paradox central

[58] Quoted in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 105.

[59] Samuel Beckett to Martin Esslin, quoted in James and Elizabeth Knowlson (eds), *Beckett Remembering, Remembering Beckett: Uncollected Interviews with Samuel Beckett and Memories of Those Who Knew Him* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 47–8.

[60] Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 233.

[61] Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, in *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: Picador, 1979), 281.

[62] Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writing and a Dramatic Fragment*, ed. Ruby Cohn (London: John Calder, 1983), 31.

[63] Ibid., 149.

[64] For informed analyses of Beckett's relationship to Irish literature, see Seán Kennedy, 'Irish Literature', in Anthony Uhlmann (ed.), *Beckett in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 205–17 and Emilie Morin, *Samuel Beckett and the Problem of Irishness* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

to his writing, namely that its apparent autonomy from an Irish context finds articulation only in relation to its residual attachment to Irish culture and history'.[65]

However, as Sinéad Mooney observes in Chapter Eleven, Beckett's Irish recuperation has been primarily driven by a renewed attention to the Irish dimensions of his plays, which perennially overshadow his achievements in prose fiction. Mooney shows how Beckett's particular brand of modernism was shaped in important ways by his formative encounter with Joyce and by his reading of the literature of the Revival, despite his scalding criticisms of its guiding ideology. She contends that the Irish traces left lingering with intent in Beckett's oeuvre have a conceptual significance insofar as they determine the ways in which meaning is produced and challenged, and inform the processes that allow the questioning of identity via an oblique but unabating engagement with Ireland and ideas of the nation. As well as considering the various understandings of Irish modernism that have accommodated Beckett's fiction, Mooney pays close attention to his persistent engagement, via criticism, translation, and pastiche, with Joyce's fiction. She also examines Beckett's career-long self-definition as a specialist in ignorance and impotence, whose work offered a self-impoverished flipside to Joyce's protean expansiveness. The outsiders, exiles, and refugees who are Beckett's disintegrating narrators are read in terms of their sins against narrative orthodoxy, their assaults against discourse being situated in the context of specifically Irish post-independence cultural anxieties. Beckett's transgressive approach to the practice of translation forms a key part of these assaults, which are most strikingly exemplified by his 1950s trilogy, a work that, Mooney argues, 'constructs out of an acute sense of futility and a deep distrust of the word a *via negativa* which nonetheless allows a faltering on of the novel'.

Such faltering on can also be applied to the fate, in post-partition Ireland, of the prosperous Protestant class and culture from which Beckett came. Maud Ellmann, in her study of another of this class, Beckett's contemporary, Elizabeth Bowen, reads the closing words of *The Unnamable*—'I can't go on, I'll go on'[66]—as an epitaph to the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, whose hostility to Irish sovereignty placed them in a vulnerable position after the end of British rule in 1922.[67] There is no better evocation of the death-in-life condition of this colonial caste than Bowen's second novel, *The Last September* (1929). Set in Cork in 1920 during the War of Independence or Anglo-Irish War (1919–21), the novel elegizes the doom-laden last days of Sir Richard and Lady Naylor and their insular social circle, whose entombed fate is sealed long before the burning by republican militants of Danielstown, the country manor that is the novel's most enigmatic presence. Once read primarily as a novelist of manners in the tradition of Jane Austen and Henry James, Bowen has in recent years been reassessed in relation to her Gothic affinities with predecessors such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–73) and re-evaluated as a key figure in the development of the Irish novel after Joyce and in the evolution of

[65] Morin, *Samuel Beckett and the Problem of Irishness*, 3.
[66] Beckett, *The Unnamable*, 382.
[67] Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 15.

twentieth-century fiction more broadly. This is not to say that her mastery of social comedy or the Victorian Gothic genre has been critically downgraded but rather that there is now a growing understanding of the way Bowen's work adds nuance to different genealogies of Irish and international prose fiction through her complex relationship to modernist precepts and textual practices. While her realist inheritance is evident in her formal conservatism and liking for tightly constructed plotlines, her modernist responsiveness to significant changes in personal and social life takes diverse forms, including her 'awareness of the fluidity of sexual identity';[68] her 'hallucinatory treatment of objects';[69] her 'merging of surrealist techniques with an Anglo-Irish Gothic tradition';[70] and her dissolution of 'the very grounds of "character", what it is to "be" a person, to "have" an identity, to be real or fictional'.[71]

In Chapter Twelve, Allan Hepburn examines another manifestation of Bowen's modernist sensibility, her subtle use of narrative obliquity, which he identifies as a signature of her short story style. Over the course of her career, Bowen published approximately one hundred short stories. At the same time, she was a constant reader of other writers' stories and a close observer of developments in short story technique by Irish, British, and American contemporaries. In reviews and essays, Bowen often commented on the art of the short story, with an emphasis on visual clarity, style, and situation. Hepburn shows how Bowen's comments, although unsystematic, comprise a poetics of the short story. Drawing on archival research, he contends that her most concerted and comprehensive thinking about the form appears in unpublished notebooks that she kept for an undergraduate class taught at Vassar College in New York between February and May 1960. With examples drawn from a range of international modernist writers, Bowen offered insight in these notebooks into the formal, poetic, dramatic, reportorial, and uncanny elements of the short story form. She also devoted attention to the imprint of nationality in stories by three of her Irish contemporaries, Frank O'Connor, Seán O'Faoláin (1900–91), and Mary Lavin (1912–96), asking her students to consider whether these writers impress their Irishness on short fiction through dialogue, outlook, idiom, unconscious judgements, or other clues. Hepburn goes on to explore how in her own short stories, few of which are set in Ireland, Bowen works out an aesthetics of oblique representation of Irish history, which, he argues, she confronts with 'a tactic of indirection and diversion' that 'allows repressed material to assert itself by other means than the frontal'.

Although critical reappraisals of Bowen as a (late) modernist outstrip postcolonial readings of her fiction, her recurring engagement with the legacies of Ireland's history of colonial occupation and subjugation marks her out as a bedfellow of Joyce as much as she

[68] Heather Ingman, *Irish Women's Fiction from Edgeworth to Enright* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 87.

[69] Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen*, xi.

[70] Keri Walsh, 'Elizabeth Bowen: Surrealist', *Éire-Ireland* 42, nos. 3–4 (2007), 129.

[71] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), xvii. See also the essays in *Textual Practice. Special Issue: Elizabeth Bowen and Textual Modernity* 27, no. 1 (2013).

is one of Virginia Woolf. Her Joycean affinities are arguably most evident in her persistent interest in one of the most enduring of these legacies, betrayal in its multiple forms. Bowen's acutely perceptive treatment of this theme in works such as *The Heat of the Day* (1949) gains an added frisson from our knowing that she had first-hand experience of covert political activism during the Second World War, when she wrote secret reports on events in neutral Ireland for the British government. Bowen's clandestine activities would doubtless have intrigued Joyce, who observed that 'in Ireland, just at the crucial moment, an informer appears'.[72] Ever since Richard Ellmann established betrayal as a core feature of Joyce's life and art in his monumental 1959 biography, critics have probed the novelist's exploration of this theme in its political, historical, psychological, sexual, and linguistic dimensions. In Chapter Thirteen, Gerry Smyth traces the emergence of betrayal as a defining preoccupation in Joyce's early work, with particular reference to *Dubliners*, the signal achievement of which, he asserts, lies in Joyce's 'astonishingly nuanced management of private and public realms, and his insight into the ways and the extent to which these realms have thoroughly converged, with betrayal—of self by self, and of citizen by nation—the linking factor throughout'. Smyth goes on to track the evolving afterlife of public and private betrayal in subsequent Irish fiction, finding in short stories by Elizabeth Bowen, Frank O'Connor, Edna O'Brien, Bernard MacLaverty (1942–), Colm Tóibín, and Anne Enright ample evidence to support his thesis that betrayal is 'a radical deconstructive act in relation to the binary principles upon which any society, including that of modern Ireland, is built: male/female, public/private, active/passive'.

All of the writers Smyth discusses are distinguished exponents of the short story, which established such a rich lineage in Ireland during the twentieth century that it came to be seen as 'the quintessential Irish literary genre', as Heather Ingman notes in Chapter Fourteen. Ingman's subject is 'the curious phenomenon of three Irish writers who, internationally successful in the short story genre, fell short in the novel form'. The writers in question—Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faoláin, and Mary Lavin—were in the vanguard of those who found the modern short story to be the medium most suited to capturing the mediocrity of the post-revolutionary state-building era, a time when, in O'Faoláin's view, 'patriotism became infected by chauvinism and true religious feeling by what most Irish writers after 1921 tended to call "puritanism" '.[73] As practitioner and theorist of the shorter form, O'Connor's influence was extensive and would endure beyond his death in 1966, particularly on creative writing programmes in the United States, where his *The Lonely Voice* (1962) 'has enjoyed a glorious afterlife as the definitive study of the modern short story for aspirant writers and the professionals who teach them'.[74] If O'Faoláin's *The Short Story* (1948) rather lacks this level of institutional cachet, it may be because it has been overshadowed by the polemical force of the wide-ranging cultural criticism that established him as the most astringent of the first generation of

[72] James Joyce, 'Fenianism: The Last Fenian', in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, 138.

[73] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Fifty Years of Irish Writing', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 51, no. 201 (1962), 96.

[74] Adrian Hunter, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105.

post-independence intellectuals, wager of a 'moral war'[75] against the unremittingly doctrinaire forces that restricted freedom of thought and expression, even though he, like O'Connor, respected the nationalist idealism that inspired the revolution.[76]

In their respective pronouncements on the short story, O'Faoláin and O'Connor linked its flourishing in Ireland to cultural deficiencies to which they were especially attuned as postcolonial writers and former combatants in the independence struggle, as around them a 'sectarian, utilitarian (the two nearly always go together), vulgar and provincial'[77] society took shape, in which the Catholic and nationalist puritanism that so dismayed O'Faoláin was institutionalized in the draconian censorship of books and films from the 1920s onwards. O'Faoláin argued that 'the more firmly organized a country is the less room there is for the short-story, for the intimate close-up, the odd slant, or the unique comment',[78] and attributed the genre's popularity to the fact that 'Irish life in our period does not supply the *dramatis personae* . . . without which dramatic themes for the novel are missing.'[79] O'Connor's argument in *The Lonely Voice* relies upon a similar genre-based distinction, the novel being for him an inherently communal form nurtured by 'normal' or 'civilized' societies (terms he stopped short of defining), whereas 'the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community—romantic, individualist, and intransigent', the preserve of 'submerged population groups'.[80] Mary Lavin, for her part, viewed the short story as 'a powerful medium for the discovery of truth', particularly as far as the emotional lives of Irish women were concerned, and objected to its being characterized as a minor form: 'At its greatest it magnifies life in much the same way that a snow flake under a microscope or a smear under a slide is seen to have an immensely complex design.'[81] Lavin's sustained exploration of the enigmatic complexities of solitary lives and human affections makes nationalist concerns an oblique presence in her fiction. This made her perspectives 'too exclusively feminine'[82] for O'Connor's liking, although he and O'Faoláin share her thematic interest in the nature of loneliness and states of inner exile.

O'Faoláin, O'Connor, and Lavin were also united by their adherence to a realist aesthetic when confronted by 'the difficulties of writing in a country where the policeman and the priest are in a perpetual glow of satisfaction'.[83] Each interpreted and practised literary realism according to their lights, and evolved their respective styles by absorbing the influences of a gallery of exemplars, Ivan Turgenev, Henry James, Anton

[75] Seán O'Faoláin, *Vive Moi! An Autobiography* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993), 181.

[76] Paul Delaney, *Seán O'Faoláin: Literature, Inheritance and the 1930s* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 27.

[77] Frank O'Connor, 'The Future of Irish Literature', *Horizon* 5, no. 25 (1942), 61.

[78] Sean O'Faolain, 'The Secret of the Short Story', *United Nations World* 3 (1949), 37–8; quoted in Charles E. May (ed.), *Short Story Theories* (Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976), 245.

[79] O'Faoláin, 'Fifty Years of Irish Writing', 102.

[80] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House Publishing, 2004), 17, 20.

[81] Maurice Harmon, 'From Conversations with Mary Lavin', *Irish University Review* 27, no. 2 (1997), 288.

[82] O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice*, 196.

[83] O'Faoláin, 'Fifty Years of Irish Writing', 103.

Chekhov, Guy de Maupassant, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield among them. None of the three were unalloyed realists, however, not even O'Connor, whose unswerving affinity for the oral storytelling mode and corresponding antipathy towards the values and techniques of experimental modernism were deep set.[84] While recent reappraisals of O'Faoláin's and Lavin's engagements with the thematics of international modernism have contributed to a wider recognition that Irish fiction continued to develop in diverse and interrelated directions after Joyce,[85] it remains the case nonetheless that modernist experimentalism was confined to a small minority of Irish novelists in the period between the 1930s and the 1960s, when, as Terence Brown observes, 'disillusioned, post-revolutionary literary Ireland seems to have thrown out the Modernist baby with the Romantic bathwater of the Literary Revival'.[86]

The size of this minority shrinks to miniscule proportions when one looks across the border at the fiction produced in the new Northern Ireland, which Norman Vance surveys in Chapter Fifteen. As Vance notes, 'in general Ulster fiction has tended to favour more or less conventional realism, with an unspoken assumption that experimental narrative technique and the lessons of modernism belong somewhere else', although he cautions against equating mimetic realism with unquestioning forms of art. The institutional, intellectual, and artistic conditions in which Northern Irish novelists worked were markedly different from those that obtained south of the border. Although a high proportion of Ulster writers and intellectuals were prominent in the Irish Revival, the hegemony of unionist culture in the North inhibited attempts to forge distinctive modes of Irish writing, and the cultural vibrancy generated by the Revival did not energize Ulster as sustainedly as it did other parts of Ireland.[87] As Richard Kirkland explains:

> When compared to the monumental cultural achievements of the movement in the South, the Revival in the North was fragile in its existence and uncertain in its aims. If the Irish Revival proper takes its place as part of an independence narrative, its role having been to provide canonical texts upon which assertions of national

[84] For O'Connor's responses to literary modernism, see Carol Taaffe, 'Coloured Balloons: Frank O'Connor on Irish Modernism', in Hilary Lennon (ed.), *Frank O'Connor: Critical Essays* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 205–17.

[85] See, for example, Mark Quigley, *Empire's Wake: Postcolonial Irish Writing and the Politics of Modern Literary Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 65–121; Anne Fogarty, 'Discontinuities: *Tales from Bective Bridge* and the Modernist Short Story', in Elke D'hoker (ed.), *Mary Lavin* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 49–64; Delaney, *Seán O'Faoláin: Literature, Inheritance and the 1930s*, 1–39.

[86] Terence Brown, 'Ireland, Modernism and the 1930s', in *The Literature of Ireland: Culture and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99.

[87] P. J. Mathews, 'Theatre and Activism 1900–1916', in Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 59. An early acknowledgement of northern difference was sounded in the 1904 manifesto of the Ulster Literary Theatre, which spoke in terms of 'the Ulster and the Leinster schools' of drama, the talent of the former being 'more satiric than poetic'. 'Manifesto of the Ulster Literary Theatre', quoted in Declan Kiberd and P. J. Mathews (eds), *Handbook of the Irish Revival: An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writings 1891–1922* (Dublin: Abbey Theatre Press, 2015), 94.

> cultural autonomy could be guaranteed, the Northern Revival, in contrast, found itself hopelessly compromised by the very different narrative of partition in 1920, an event which ran counter to all the activity of the Revival and one to which it seemingly had no answer. Perhaps it is for this reason that . . . when we search for its cultural achievements, we find sporadic and often inconclusive activity that ultimately collapses into a post-partition despair.[88]

So whereas leading novelists in the Irish Free State set about demythologizing the Revival-inspired rural imaginary and critiquing the tenacious conservatism of the new social order, much Ulster fiction from 1920 onwards was concerned with exploring regional distinctiveness (geographical and social) and multiple identities (urban and rural) with varying degrees of celebration, irony, or edginess. Underlying the problematic of regional identity in a state where the unionist governing elite held political power for fifty-one unbroken years until 1972 was the intractable reality of sectarianism, the by-product of what Sam Hanna Bell (1909–90) in 1951 characterized as the province's 'antique conflict, resolved long ago in Western Europe—the conflict of religious dogmas, encrusted with loyalties, prejudices, and racial aspirations'.[89] In such a polarized society, where history was 'still warm from the hands of zealots',[90] the individual's search for meaning and fulfilment, as depicted in the fiction of Bell, Janet McNeill (1907–94), Brian Moore (1921–99), and others, was, as Vance shows, often inseparable from the larger crisis of political identity that would tilt the province into full-scale civil conflict in the late 1960s.

Fiction in the Modernizing Republic and the Troubled North

In Part V, 'Fiction in the Modernizing Republic and the Troubled North', critical attention shifts to the achievement of three major novelists from the Republic—John McGahern, Edna O'Brien, and John Banville, the last two of whom continue to publish critically acclaimed work—and to fiction by Northern Irish women writers composed during and after the Troubles, the eruption of which forced writers to re-evaluate their aesthetic choices and ideological suppositions. Born in the early 1930s and therefore lacking direct experience of the political turmoil that attended the foundation of the state, O'Brien and McGahern began their publishing careers in the early 1960s at a time when the Republic was embarking on a process of modernization that was at once belated, accelerated, and highly uneven in its effects. If, as Seamus Deane argues, 'the entity called Ireland had

[88] Richard Kirkland, *Cathal O'Byrne and the Northern Revival in Ireland, 1890–1960* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 3.

[89] Sam Hanna Bell, 'A Banderol: An Introduction', in Sam Hanna Bell, Nesca A. Robb, and John Hewitt (eds), *The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium* (London: Harrap, 1951), 14.

[90] Ibid., 17.

somehow failed to appear'[91] in the fiction of the Revival novelists or in that of their immediate heirs, then the essence of that entity proved no less resistant to complex articulation for the first generation of post-independence novelists, whether it was a 1950s Ireland that, in McGahern's view, was 'a theocracy in all but name'[92] or its 1980s successor, a place of 'rampant individualism and localism dominating a vague, fragmented, often purely time-serving, national identity'.[93] In their attempts to render the manifold effects of the intellectually stifling atmosphere in which they came of age, McGahern and O'Brien both looked to Joyce as their lodestar. From him they derived artistic confidence and authority as young writers, McGahern responding powerfully to the dispassionate exactitude of *Dubliners*, O'Brien to *Ulysses*' taboo-breaking evocation of women's sexual and emotional lives. Yet neither writer relied solely on the instrument of Joycean realism 'to tear away the cloak of hypocrisy, the lies and cant that passed for truth'[94] in the poverty-stricken and Church-dominated rural locales that are the settings of their early novels. As critics have noted, O'Brien's searing realism 'is but a thin veneer covering an underlying symbolic structure, which dramatizes recurrent psychic patterns and processes',[95] while 'Mimetic tendencies are frequently formally complicated by symbolic or allegorical structures beneath the surface of McGahern's work.'[96]

The mythic patterning of mundane experience and the revelation of the emblematic through the particular are signal features of O'Brien's *The Country Girls* trilogy (1960–64) and McGahern's *The Dark* (1965), the furious Irish reception of which had punitive personal consequences for both writers. These seminal *Bildungsromane* established a predominant theme of their respective oeuvres: the individual's painful psychological struggle to break free from the limiting scripts of gender and sexuality in a repressive culture of shame and fear, to live according to the dictates of character rather than convention. In Chapter Sixteen, Jane Elizabeth Dougherty examines Edna O'Brien's representation of the toll this complicated emotional labour takes on the inner lives of youthful female protagonists who are by turns needy and bold. Dougherty's analysis of the dynamics of Irish female belatedness in O'Brien's work, career, and critical reception develops the hypothesis that her fictions 'present female characters whose maturation is in some way belated—repetitive, ambiguous, inconclusive—as a result of a profoundly disempowering iconicity that the culture foists upon them'. She goes on to show how the textual interchange between O'Brien and Joyce is more subtle than many critics have allowed, arguing that O'Brien's interweaving of his work with hers 'often functions not

[91] Deane, *Strange Country*, 163.

[92] John McGahern, *Memoir* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 210.

[93] John McGahern, '*Dubliners*', in *Love of the World: Essays*, ed. Stanley van der Ziel (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 200.

[94] Mike Murphy, 'Edna O'Brien', in Clíodhna Ní Anluain (ed.), *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation with Mike Murphy* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000), 208.

[95] Elke D'hoker, *Irish Women Writers and the Modern Short Story* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 147.

[96] Aaron Kelly, *Twentieth-Century Irish Literature: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 128.

merely as homage but also as critique, not only of Joyce but of male-authored fiction of female maturation more generally'.

The patriarchal paradigm of masculine power that O'Brien indicts in her fiction is also a foremost concern of McGahern's novels and short stories. Although the obstacles O'Brien's female characters must overcome to achieve a measure of self-worth in a structurally misogynistic society are more intractable than those faced by McGahern's male protagonists, the latter's victimization by the normative ideologies of gender is shown to have profound consequences for their identities and behaviour as youths and men. The damaged masculinities that populate his fiction are stark testaments to the degradations inflicted by the moralities of a hide-bound, censorious society, of which he wrote in 1991:

> The old fear of famine was confused with terror of damnation. The confusion and guilt and plain ignorance that surrounded sex turned men and women into exploiters and adversaries. Amid all this, the sad lusting after respectability, sugar-coated with sanctimoniousness and held together by a thin binding of religious doctrine and ceremony, combined to form a very dark and explosive force that, generally, went inwards.[97]

In Chapter Seventeen, Frank Shovlin traces the development of McGahern's critique of this failed state, finding that the novelist moved from scornful reproof to a kind of 'entente with Ireland', insofar as 'the jaundiced, sometimes embittered, portrait of the country found in the early fiction is replaced with something approaching acceptance, even sometimes admiration' in his final novel, *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (2002).

Despite being one of the most garlanded of contemporary novelists, John Banville's work has never quite fitted within a strictly Irish cultural framework, least of all within the lineage of realist fiction. While his artful prose is replete with Joycean and Beckettian traces, it eschews explicit engagement with the social, emotional, and ideological constraints that agitate the imaginations of Enda O'Brien, John McGahern, and other Irish novelists of the later twentieth century. Banville chooses instead to cultivate 'a special kind of persona, that of a "man of letters" who discriminates strongly between competing definitions of "great" art, a writer who uses interviews and reviews to proclaim the gospel of an art without attitude'.[98] Just as Banville himself has repeatedly resisted attempts to house his novels within the confines of a national tradition, many critics prefer to consider his fiction as late modernist or postmodernist in character, or as an Irish example of European counter-realism.[99] In Chapter Eighteen, Neil Murphy traverses several of these critical frames while arguing that Banville's work is, above all, a complex, embedded

[97] John McGahern, 'Introduction to *The Power of Darkness* [1991]', in *Love of the World*, 281–2.

[98] Joseph McMinn, 'Versions of Banville: Versions of Modernism', in Liam Harte and Michael Parker (eds), *Contemporary Irish Fiction: Themes, Tropes, Theories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 79.

[99] Banville has been particularly well served by his Irish critics. See, for example, Joseph McMinn, *The Supreme Fictions of John Banville* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Derek Hand, *John Banville: Exploring Fictions* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2002); John Kenny, *John Banville* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009); Mark O'Connell, *John Banville's Narcissistic Fictions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Neil Murphy, *John Banville* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2018).

discourse about the significance of art and the aesthetic pursuit of beauty, the defining feature of which is 'an extremely sophisticated form of self-reflexive novelistic practice'.

Murphy presents the case that Banville's fiction is an elaborate, coded account of his relationship with art in general, while also focusing on the deeply self-referential art-world that his novels create. In order to demonstrate how Banville's work has consistently sought to explore the relationship between the mysteries of aesthetic experience and the nature of being, Murphy examines his early engagements with metafiction in *Long Lankin* (1970), *Nightspawn* (1971), and *Birchwood* (1973); his erection of a complex set of scientific-artistic parallels in the science tetralogy of novels, *Doctor Copernicus* (1976), *Kepler* (1981), *The Newton Letter: An Interlude* (1982), and *Mefisto* (1986); his overt consideration of art in his Frames trilogy, which comprises *The Book of Evidence* (1989), *Ghosts* (1993), and *Athena* (1995); and his relentless fascination with the relationship between art and being in his post-2000 fiction, most notably in the Man Booker Prize-winning *The Sea* (2005), in which 'Banvillean narrative perspective becomes radically shaped and influenced by visual art'. In tracing a developmental trajectory across Banville's major novels, Murphy also shows how his primary aesthetic fascination finds expression in his translations of Heinrich von Kleist's plays and in the crime novels of Banville's alter ego, Benjamin Black.

The commitment to art over rhetoric that John Banville fastidiously maintains in his fiction could all too easily strike novelists in post-1969 Northern Ireland as an enviable, southern luxury. The perception of the North as a stagnant backwater that history had bypassed, 'a society characterized—in fiction as in everyday speech—as morbidly immutable',[100] was shattered by the recrudescence of political violence at the end of the 1960s. At a stroke, questions of nationhood, identity, territory, and displacement, and the role of the artist in their cultural negotiation, acquired a charged urgency. The aesthetic and ethical dilemmas presented by the horrors of sectarian killing elicited such a large and heterogeneous body of novelistic responses, encompassing romance plots, black farces, and feminist critiques, that by the 1980s Northern Ireland was arguably the world's most narrativized region, having become a fecund spawning ground for the so-called Troubles thriller, a subgenre that for the most part peddled risible stereotypes and perpetuated a reactionary view of the conflict as inherently irresolvable.[101] This generic diversity was not matched by formal inventiveness, however, at least not until the emergence of a younger generation of novelists in the late 1980s and early 1990s, some of whom were keen to harness the playful, ironic strategies of postmodernism to challenge engrained sectarian ideologies. However, Elmer Kennedy-Andrews rightly counsels against overestimating 'the transformative effect of postmodernism since most Troubles fiction, even that written in the '80s and '90s (with certain notable exceptions),

[100] Glenn Patterson, 'I am a Northern Irish Novelist', in Ian A. Bell (ed.), *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 151.

[101] For a study of this literary phenomenon, see Aaron Kelly, *The Thriller and Northern Ireland since 1969: Utterly Resigned Terror* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

continues to adhere to a basically Realist aesthetic, though often incorporating elements of postmodernist style'.[102]

Much of the fiction examined by Caroline Magennis in Chapter Nineteen conforms to this pattern. She analyses works composed by Northern Irish women novelists and short story writers during two specific periods—the early-to-mid 1980s and the decade from 2006 to 2016—to ascertain how different generations of writers depict the impact of violence and brutality on women's bodies and minds. Magennis's findings temper expectations that the landmark changes that occurred in the political sphere in the interval between these two periods might be replicated in the realm of private experience. Soberingly, women's victimization by 'the intermeshed codes of patriarchy, misogyny, violent sectarianism, and the military response of the British state', which is such a persistent concern of writers such as Linda Anderson (1949–), Una Woods, Brenda Murphy (1954–), and Anne Devlin (1951–) in their 1980s fiction, cannot be confined to that particular historical moment. Rather, as Magennis demonstrates, similar concerns resurface in the twenty-first-century narratives of Bernie McGill (1967–), Lucy Caldwell (1981–), and Jan Carson (1980–), thus proving that 'the coercive force of patriarchal values and attitudes remains strong. And while the Troubles may be over, women's experience of male-dominated public spaces is still characterized by fear and trepidation.'

Irish Genre Fiction

The *Handbook*'s broadly chronological pattern is interrupted in Part VI, where the focus shifts to Irish crime fiction, science fiction, and children's fiction, categories of writing that, although historically under-considered and often dismissed as frivolous or unserious, include many works of impressive narrative and linguistic complexity. In gathering these chapters under the homogenizing rubric of 'genre fiction', I do so with caveats and reservations. It cannot go unnoticed that the category of 'literary' fiction is itself a genre, not all of whose practitioners axiomatically produce work of high quality, as is sometimes assumed. Nor should we forget John Frow's observation that genre is 'a universal dimension of textuality'[103] or John Mullan's point that 'Types of fiction do not constitute some set of pigeonholes into one of which every novel must fit. Sometimes only parts of a novel belong to a special type of writing.'[104] I am mindful, too, that by grouping these chapters in a discrete section I risk perpetuating the perceived ghettoization of these particular types of fiction, analysis of which is often confined to specialist collections and journals. Quarantining is not my intention, however, any more than it is the objective of the chapter authors. To the contrary, their analyses remind us of how porous are

[102] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Fiction and the Northern Ireland Troubles since 1969: (De-)constructing the North* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 9.

[103] John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

[104] John Mullan, *How Novels Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108.

the divisions between different categories of fiction, at the same time as they deepen understandings of Irish fiction's diversity and the dynamic interactions between its component strands. So while this section's coverage extends at times to formulaic works that would fail traditional tests of 'literariness' and invite critical condescension,[105] it also features authors who, in reimagining aspects of the Irish past and present through a hypothetical or counterfactual lens, often imbue their writing with a stylistic sophistication and seriousness of purpose that engages readers at a deep intellectual level.

The popularity of contemporary Irish crime and mystery fiction is well recognized. Dubbed 'emerald *noir*' by some, this populous category, which feeds off the social disruption, greed, and corruption that attended Ireland's recent boom-and-bust economic development, embraces a wide variety of narrative types, from forensic thrillers and police procedurals to historical who-dunnits and even Gaelic *noir*. Crime narratives have long been part of Irish writing, however, as Ian Campbell Ross demonstrates in Chapter Twenty. From the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth, novelists and short story writers, including Gerald Griffin, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Oscar Wilde, and Patrick Pearse, contributed to the emerging genre of crime fiction, as, after 1922, did Liam O'Flaherty (1897–1984) and Frank O'Connor. Yet these writers and their work have generally been subsumed into broader histories of Irish literature, while popular and influential crime writers such as L. T. Meade, M. McDonnell Bodkin (1850–1933), and Freeman Wills Crofts (1879–1957) have, conversely, been incorporated into assessments of 'English' crime fiction, their Irish identity ignored. A similar fate befell successors such as L. A. G. Strong (1896–1958) and Nicholas Blake, the pseudonym of Cecil Day-Lewis (1904–72). Only towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, with the emergence of internationally acclaimed crime writers such as Ken Bruen (1951–), John Connolly (1968–), and Tana French (1973–), did notable commercial success stimulate critical engagement with Irish crime fiction as a distinctive body of writing. An engagement with the phenomenon of the Celtic Tiger, along with a prescient alertness to the Tiger's imminent demise, has been much noted by critics, boom-time Ireland having 'reproduced the social conditions that created crime fiction as a mass genre'.[106] This, however, as Ross shows, is but one feature of fiction more broadly characterized by remarkable thematic and stylistic flexibility and by varied geographical and chronological settings, in Ireland and beyond.

A comparable heterogeneity characterizes the rarely acknowledged seam of Irish fiction that deals in the narration of imaginative and speculative alternative worlds, many of which are set in the future. Jack Fennell's wide-ranging survey of this neglected tradition in Chapter Twenty-One begins with an argument for re-labelling Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Samuel Madden's (1686–1765) *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century* (1733) as works of science fiction, after which he traces the impact of events from the Act

[105] For a recent example of the controversy that remarks about genre fiction can provoke, see Martin Doyle, 'Crime writers mystified by Colm Tóibín's criticism', *Irish Times*, 23 July 2019.

[106] Fintan O'Toole, 'From Chandler to the "Playboy" to the contemporary crime wave', *Irish Times*, 21 November 2009, 9.

of Union in 1800 to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 on the alternative-world scenarios of novelists including Fitz-James O'Brien (1828–62), Robert Cromie (1855–1907), Charlotte McManus (1853–1944), and Art Ó Riain (1893–1968), the last of whom wrote under the pseudonym Barra Ó Caochlaigh. Insisting that 'the best science fiction does not dwell on technological gewgaws for their own sake but rather exploits their potential to address contemporary themes and concerns', Fennell charts the dominant anxieties that are registered by these authors, from the attenuation of the British Empire in unionist-inflected works to fears of a British recolonization of independent Ireland in those of a nationalist hue. More contemporary political and cultural concerns inform dystopian novels such as *The Bray House* (1990) by Eilís Ní Dhuibhne (1954–), *Dark Paradise* (1991) by Catherine Brophy (1941–), and *City of Bohane* (2011) by Kevin Barry (1969–), all of which fall within Fennell's purview. And just as Ross finds that much Irish crime fiction appropriates and Hibernicizes the styles and techniques of American hard-boiled detective fiction, Fennell concludes that Irish science fiction has largely 'limited itself to tackling Anglo-American tropes from an "authentically" Irish standpoint'.

Whereas the genres of science fiction and crime fiction still struggle to gain critical esteem, children's literature has in recent years become an established part of literary culture, a respected discipline within academia, and an essential component of a national literature. Significant strides have been made since the late 1990s in exploring the variety and complexity of modern Irish fiction for children and in elucidating the cultural contexts of its production.[107] A key contextual feature was highlighted by Emer O'Sullivan in 1997 when she noted that 'There is scarcely another European literature whose level of involvement in the production of reading matter for its young was so slight as Ireland's until the 1980s. Before then children's literature was almost exclusively imported, Irish children's reading material almost entirely British.'[108] The implications of this situation for the kinds of works read by Irish children, and the impact of the belated development of a native children's books industry, are among the topics addressed by Pádraic Whyte in Chapter Twenty-Two, in the course of his analysis of changing representations of home, land, and family life in touchstone works of Irish fiction for children and young readers since the late nineteenth century. Whyte first examines how the contrasting domestic spaces of the Big House and the peasant cottage act as pivotal sites for the promulgation and contestation of imperialist and nationalist ideologies in works by notable children's authors including L. T. Meade, Padraic Colum (1881–1972), Patricia Lynch (1898–1972), Maura Laverty (1907–66), and Eilís Dillon (1920–94). His focus then shifts to post-1970 works to determine how they utilize the motif of home to mediate the splintering of conventional family structures and the intrusion of malign forces that have made the recent experience of childhood in Ireland precarious and, for some, deeply traumatic. What emerges strongly from Whyte's analysis is how, far from being a sealed-off realm of

[107] See, for example, Valerie Coughlan and Keith O'Sullivan (eds), *Irish Children's Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Contemporary Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011); Nancy Watson, *The Politics and Poetics of Irish Children's Literature* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).

[108] Emer O'Sullivan, 'The Development of Modern Children's Literature in Late Twentieth-Century Ireland', *Signal* 81 (1996), 192.

innocence, childhood in Irish children's fiction has been continually framed and reframed by prevailing cultural discourses and ideological currents.

Fact into Fiction, Fiction into Film

Part VII, 'Fact into Fiction, Fiction into Film', is concerned with the complex relation between history and its representation, with particular reference to the issues in play when Irish historical events are textualized in fictional narratives and fictional texts adapted for cinema and television. Chapters Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four are respectively concerned with novelists' literary imagining of two convulsive interconnected episodes in the nation's past, the Great Famine of the 1840s and the 1916 Easter Rising, both of which ushered in new social orders. As the commemorative activities surrounding the sesquicentennial of the Famine in 1995 and the centenary of the Rising in 2016 attested, these seismic events still possess richly ambivalent political and cultural afterlives, both in Ireland and in its British and North American diaspora.

Recent scholarship on literary expressions of the Famine has decisively overturned the durable identification of the calamity with novelistic silence.[109] As Marguérite Corporaal explains, although this national trauma was believed by many nineteenth-century writers to be 'too distressing to address explicitly' and 'unrepresentable in several respects',[110] this did not prevent a substantial corpus of Famine fiction taking shape from the mid-1840s onwards. This still-expanding corpus, which extends from Victorian-era novels that aspire to historically accurate representations of the Famine to texts influenced by the postmodern aesthetics of the so-called new historical fiction, is the subject of Melissa Fegan's critical scrutiny in Chapter Twenty-Three.[111] Fegan considers Irish novelists' persistent return to Famine themes and the different kinds of political agendas and cultural questions the reimagining of the catastrophe has attracted, from authors who thematized it while it was still a living memory to more recent novelists who examine the conjunction of the Great Hunger with other historical events and time frames. Her argument that 'Famine fiction frequently emerges at moments of conflict or change in the present' is most clearly demonstrated by the amount of post-Celtic Tiger fiction that invokes the cataclysm of the 1840s to express 'long-lasting fears about the precariousness of Irish modernity'.

[109] Notable works include Christopher Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845–1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); and Marguérite Corporaal, *Relocated Memories: The Great Famine in Irish and Diaspora Fiction, 1846–1870* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2017).

[110] Corporaal, *Relocated Memories*, 9.

[111] For a discussion of new historical fiction, see Martha T. Rozett, *Constructing a World: Shakespeare's England and the New Historical Fiction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 1–26.

Whereas the Famine was long thought to be the great aporia of modern Irish literature, the Easter Rising has suffered the opposite fate. 'The whole event has been remorselessly textualized', claimed Declan Kiberd in 1995, 'for it—more than any of its individual protagonists—became an instantaneous martyr to literature.'[112] This is an argument that, as John Brannigan points out, 'alludes not just to the transformation of the Rising into theatre, poetry, spectacle, narrative and myth but also to the already textual nature of the Rising itself', its having been 'pieced together from the texts of ancient Irish folklore and mythology' to become 'the great, shocking text of Irish modernism'.[113] The transformation of the Rising into fiction is the theme taken up in Chapter Twenty-Four by Laura O'Connor, for whom it is of significant critical import that the most prominent literature of 1916 is not fiction but rather poetry and plays. These genres exerted a formative influence on the ideological underpinnings of the Rising, and, as Yeats's 'Easter, 1916' cannily anticipates, the symbolic capital of the 'poets' rebellion' secured a privileged role for poetry and drama in subsequent commemorative literature. By contrast, to depict the Rising as 'fictional', and by extension to take artistic licence with historical fact, risks censure for distorting or denying the historicity of the week-long rebellion and questioning the authority of 'history' as we know it. O'Connor explores this hazardous terrain by contextualizing 1916 fiction in relation to 'the Story of Ireland', a term adopted by historian Roy Foster to depict a master narrative of Irish historiography. Drawing on a wide gamut of Irish- and non-Irish-authored works, from those written soon after the Rising, before the event became indelibly coloured by Civil War politics, to recent millennial fiction, O'Connor traces the ways in which both the cultural memory of the insurrection and 'the Story of Ireland' have been shaped and reshaped in a continuous dialogue with fictional and factual approaches.

The reshaping of fictional texts for the screen is the subject of Kevin Rockett's analysis in Chapter Twenty-Five, in which he addresses defining aspects of the adaptation of Irish literary fiction during the past century. From the single-reel historical drama, *Rory O'More* (1911), to the Oscar-nominated *Brooklyn* (2015), Irish fiction has supplied national and international cinema with a plethora of well-crafted stories that have become the basis for critically and commercially successful films. Cinema has in turn inspired successive generations of Irish novelists—several of whom have written specifically for the large or small screen—and provided them with a variety of narrative techniques and structuring devices. Indeed, a recurring debate within Irish film studies centres on whether literature has featured *too* prominently in the output of Irish cinema at the expense of original screenplays.

Yet Ireland is not unique in the influence literary fiction has on its cinematic profile. What perhaps distinguishes the canon of Irish literary cinema is the frequency with which such adaptations have engaged with key historical, social, and cultural processes.

[112] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 213.

[113] John Brannigan, '"The Battle for the GPO": Literary Revisionism in Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* and Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys*', in Munira H. Mutran and Laura P. Z. Izarra (eds), *Kaleidoscopic Views of Ireland* (São Paulo: Humanitas/FFLCH/USP, 2003), 118–19.

Whether it was the cinematic recasting of the Famine on the eve of the War of Independence (*Knocknagow*, 1918) or the diverse reflections on that conflict in subsequent films (*Guests of the Nation* and *The Informer*, both 1935), adaptations have contributed to often uncomfortable national debates. The shift from grand historical epics to more intimate, psychologically explorative narratives is a feature of adaptations from the 1960s onwards, as exemplified by the filmed versions, in 1964 and 1983 respectively, of Enda O'Brien's *The Lonely Girl* (1962) and *The Country Girls* (1960). Film has also inserted itself into many novels, from the influence of cinematic form on Joyce's *Ulysses*, to the erotic adventures in a Dublin cinema of Liam O'Flaherty's Mr Gilhooley in his 1926 novel of that name, to the role Cold War science fiction films play in the psychological unravelling of Francie Brady in Neil Jordan's 1997 adaptation of Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*. As Rockett demonstrates, the image of Ireland on screen cannot be separated from its fictional canon, while many novels are unimaginable without the cinema, which, we should remember, was itself regarded as a form of writing by its earliest practitioners and audiences.[114]

Crossings and Crosscurrents

Processes of adaptation and transference are also central to the chapters in Part VIII, 'Crossings and Crosscurrents', which interrogate the connections between collective and individual forms of identity and experiences of migrancy and transnationalism. The writer Blake Morrison's observation that 'To "belong" in Ireland is to leave'[115] pithily encapsulates the deeply engrained importance of migration and diaspora to Irish culture, society, and self-understanding across many centuries. Wherever we fix the pin on the map we find evidence of upheaval and dispersal, both before and after the nation-defining decade of the Famine and its mass migrations, right up to the cultural reclamation of Ireland's worldwide diasporic communities in the 1990s, which coincided with the Republic becoming a country of net immigration by the turn of the millennium. Joyce himself stands before us as the archetype of the restless artist in exile, advocate and exemplar of the view that emigration can be a portal to greater understanding of one's self and one's homeland. This is crystallized towards the end of *A Portrait*, when Stephen Dedalus records in his diary a conversation he had with his friend Davin shortly before he himself departed Dublin. In it, Stephen cryptically notes that truth is better grasped at a distance, thus placing premium value on the sharpened perspectives that geographical dislocation bestows: '*3 April*: Met Davin at the cigar shop opposite Findlater's

[114] David Trotter and Andrew Shail, 'Cinema and the Novel', in Parrinder and Gąsiorek (eds), *The Oxford History of the Novel in English, Volume 4*, 372.

[115] Blake Morrison, *Things My Mother Never Told Me* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002), 71.

church. He was in a black sweater and had a hurleystick. Asked me was it true I was going away and why. Told him the shortest way to Tara is via Holyhead.'[116]

Whereas the link between voluntary expatriation and creative insight was central to Joyce's self-mythologization, those writers who have had exile foisted upon them by economic privation have often drawn inspiration from the all-too-real anguish and alienation engendered by the ruptures of displacement, while others have fashioned protagonists who revel in their escape from the trammels of social and religious conformism at home. The importance of place of settlement, social class, gender, and generational specificity to the types of emigration narrative writers create is attested by the significant variations that characterize the bodies of fiction produced in different parts of 'our greater Ireland beyond the sea'.[117] For example, the phenomenon of 'ethnicity as liberating doubleness' that Charles Fanning identifies as being 'one of the most valuable accomplishments of contemporary Irish-American writers'[118] is a much less prominent feature of the fiction of Irish and Irish-descended writers in contemporary Britain, a good deal of which expresses a diasporic sensibility akin to that described by the British-based Caribbean-born intellectual Stuart Hall, who spoke of 'belonging to more than one world, of being both "here" and "there", of thinking about "there" from "here" and vice versa; of being "at home"—but never wholly—in both places, neither fundamentally the same, nor totally different'.[119]

In Chapter Twenty-Six, Tony Murray examines the ways in which novelists and short story writers have mediated what has historically been the most politically problematic of all Irish emigrant journeys, the crossing to England. One measure (and legacy) of this difficult history is the absence of an accepted designation for the body of fiction that Murray discusses. Whereas the terms 'Irish-American' and 'Irish-Australian' have long since achieved normalized usage, the questionable legitimacy of 'Irish-English' and 'Irish-British' as literary or cultural categories is habitually signalled by the use of quotation marks. As Eamonn Hughes has noted, this semantic crux derives from the countries' acrimonious history and has 'led to a sense that "Irish-Britain" is not and may never be a satisfactory label in the way that "Black-British" or "Asian-British" are, even if only for pragmatic reasons'.[120] This terminological deficit has been compounded by the critical neglect, until very recently, of a fictional corpus that contains a wide spectrum of literary styles and sensibilities, and includes many works that explore emigrants' literal and metaphorical search for accommodation.[121] In his analysis of two centuries of

[116] Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 273.

[117] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 427.

[118] Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America: 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 378.

[119] Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Penguin, 2017), 140.

[120] Eamonn Hughes, '"Lancelot's Position": The Fiction of Irish-Britain', in A. Robert Lee (ed.), *Other Britain, Other British: Contemporary Multicultural Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 143.

[121] Murray's *London Irish Fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and Identity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) is one of two recent monographs that have begun to address this neglect, the other being Whitney Standlee's aforementioned *'Power to Observe': Irish Women Novelists in Britain, 1890–1916*.

fiction by English-domiciled writers of Irish birth and descent, Murray tracks a line of development from 'work with a predominantly public-facing and sometimes didactic motivation', such as that written by Maria Edgeworth and other early nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish novelists, to contemporary migration-themed novels by Edna O'Brien, Leland Bardwell (1922–2016), and Eimear McBride that are 'primarily inward-looking and psychological in complexion'. In mapping the evolution of this tradition through to the present day, Murray notes the emergence of recent novels that, by addressing the experience of mixed-race Irishness in multicultural English cities, chart a fresh course within the subgenre of Irish multigenerational fiction.

A different web of cultural, political, and linguistic interactions within the British and Irish archipelago forms the backdrop for Stefanie Lehner's discussion of shifting cross-currents in contemporary Irish and Scottish fiction in Chapter Twenty-Seven. The confluence of several interrelated developments in recent decades informs this chapter's rationale: the increasing interest in the historical, political, and economic synergies between Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland; the evolving devolutionary political frameworks in Northern Ireland and Scotland since the late 1990s; the rise of Irish-Scottish studies as a distinct inter-discipline (itself a devolutionary act); the ongoing application of archipelagic paradigms to cultural practices on these islands; and, last but not least, the remarkable literary renaissance that has occurred in Ireland and Scotland since the late 1980s, particularly in the area of prose fiction. Whereas contemporary Scottish culture has been commonly seen as a surrogate for political autonomy, recent Irish and Northern Irish literature has been framed against debates about how to deal with troublesome national and local histories. At the same time, all three polities have witnessed the renegotiation of presiding constructions of national culture under the pressure of far-reaching constitutional, political, and socio-economic change. Lehner argues that the work of the post-1980 generations of Irish, Northern Irish, and Scottish novelists addresses concerns that transgress and exceed national borders and forge provocative cross-border affiliations. Interpreting devolution not only as a function of territorial politics but as 'a process of transition that concerns the personal spaces in Scotland and both parts of Ireland', she provides detailed readings of nine indicative works of Irish and Scottish fiction that 'establish *affiliations* that counter their *filiative* containment within national paradigms'.

Like their emigrant cousins in Britain, cultural definition for Irish Americans has long been a problematic affair, the narrative representation of which has produced a distinctive set of enduring characteristics in Irish-American fiction, a corpus that, despite its variousness and vibrancy, is too often ignored within the field of Irish literary studies. As a contribution to redressing this neglect, Sally Barr Ebest in Chapter Twenty-Eight examines one particular seam of this tradition, post-war Irish-American domestic novels, the most notable characteristics of which are 'an overwhelming desire for assimilation on the part of their protagonists, a move away from religious and clerical themes, and a growing preoccupation with sex and sexuality as it pertains to the rights of women and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people, and the wrongs perpetrated against them'. Ebest's chapter serves as a corrective to categorizations of

Irish-American literature that have had the effect of excluding from the canon female-authored novels about private lives, whose characters are often Catholic women. A less schematic approach, such as Ebest adopts, reveals a more fluid picture. Although some of the best-known novels by Irish-American male writers have focused on themes of violence, war, and masculinity, an equal number of lesser-known works recount stories of intimate relationships, sexual longing, and family dysfunction. Similarly, while the majority of female writers choose domestic settings, their novels often include scenes of turbulence and conflict as well. Gender difference notwithstanding, Ebest argues that Irish-American domestic fiction by, among others, Maeve Brennan (1917–93), Mary McCarthy (1912–89), and Alice McDermott (1953–), 'paint realistic portraits of their ethnic communities, debunk the myth of the sainted matriarch, commiserate with their self-immolated daughters, and reveal the ways in which marginalized groups and individuals have been silenced by society, politics, and religion'.

Whereas Ebest seeks to modify the critical lens through which the fiction of Irish America is viewed, Sinéad Moynihan argues for a more radical revisioning of the domain of Irish transnational fiction in Chapter Twenty-Nine. Taking her bearings from the emergent field of transatlantic literary studies, Moynihan purposefully sets out 'to dislodge Irish America as the dominant referent in discussions of Irish transnationalism and investigate a substantial tradition that positions Spain as an important space in the Irish transnational imagination'. She does this by teasing out the network of textual and thematic reverberations between three novels in particular: *Mary Lavelle* (1936) by Kate O'Brien (1897–1974), *No More Than Human* (1944) by Maura Laverty, and Colm Tóibín's *Brooklyn* (2009). In addition to paying close attention to these novels' explicit engagements with cis-Atlantic geography, Moynihan productively draws on recent work in queer diaspora studies to interrogate the connections between national identity, migration, gender, and sexuality in each text. If, as Anne-Marie Fortier claims, queer configurations of home as a site that is 'always in the making, endlessly deferred' suggest 'a radical discomfiture of the idea of "home" as a space of coherence and continuity',[122] then, as Moynihan shows, Irish transnational fictions of Spain encourage readers to rethink the heteronormative 'grand narrative' of Irish, and Irish-American, literary and cultural relations.

Contemporary Irish Fiction

In seeking to map developments in Irish fictional practice over the past three decades or so, Part IX of this *Handbook*, 'Contemporary Irish Fiction', critically examines the role of the novel and short story in mediating the accelerated changes that have taken place across the island under the pressures of intersecting local and global forces. As such, the

[122] Anne-Marie Fortier, 'Queer Diasporas', in Diane Richardson and Steven Seidman (eds), *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (London: Sage, 2002), 189.

section is shadowed by the problem that Peter Boxall identifies as besetting 'all efforts to capture the contemporary: that is, that the time we are living through is very difficult to bring into focus, and often only becomes legible in retrospect'.[123] Not that this temporal limitation has deterred scholars and commentators from producing a plethora of analyses of the nature, meaning, and impact of the multifaceted changes in the cultures and societies of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland since the early 1990s, to which the chapters assembled here contribute.

Certain social and political developments necessarily feature prominently in each contributor's analysis. Critical appraisals of this era have already taken shape around two phenomena that have assumed epochal status because they have materially altered the course of subsequent history: the Republic's emergence as one of the most globalized counties in the world by the early 2000s and the North's transition from a thirty-year civil conflict to a negotiated political settlement. The epicentre of the economic resurgence that transfigured Irish society (albeit unevenly) in the period between the mid-1990s and 2008 was Dublin. Here, in Joyce's great word-city, the boom-fuelled material, behavioural, and attitudinal changes were experienced in concentrated form. Yet this was only the latest 'new' Dublin to be recast and remoulded by precipitous change, and it, like its predecessors, presented novelists with potent representational challenges and opportunities. In Chapter Thirty, Derek Hand argues that 'The inherent instability and malleability of the novel form made it a particularly suitable vehicle for capturing this moment of transformation, ambivalence, and contradiction, and for giving expression to the anxieties that perplexed many Dubliners during this unprecedented period in the history of their city and country.' He examines how novelists including Roddy Doyle, Paul Murray (1975–), Deirdre Madden (1960–), and Anne Enright refracted the shifting social and spatial contours of the capital during and after the years of economic expansion, finding in their work a deconstructive energy that replaces 'monolithic views of the city's history and its meaning' with visions of Dublin as a plural, fluid space, 'a work in progress where the evolving combinations of the local and global present fresh challenges to those who live and work there'.

The certainty with which one can date the start of the calamitous financial crisis that abruptly silenced the Celtic Tiger's roar—the spotlight falls on a 'panicked all-night meeting'[124] of 29–30 September 2008, at which the government was forced to agree to a multi-billion euro recapitalization of the insolvent domestic banking sector—is harder to replicate when it comes to identifying when exactly Northern Ireland became a 'post-conflict' society. This may seem ironic, given that the Troubles were formally ended by an international peace treaty signed in Belfast on Good Friday, April 1998 and ratified by simultaneous referenda in both parts of Ireland in May. Yet the single worst incident in

[123] Peter Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

[124] Blanaid Clarke and Niamh Hardiman, 'Ireland: Crisis in the Irish Banking System', in Suzanne J. Konzelmann and Marc Fovargue-Davies (eds), *Banking Systems in the Crisis: The Faces of Liberal Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 107.

the history of the conflict occurred within three months of these watershed developments, when twenty-nine people were killed by a bomb in Omagh, County Tyrone planted by dissident republicans opposed to the accord. This and subsequent, less barbarous events tempered sanguine narratives of radical socio-political transformation and suggested instead that the inertia of protracted conflict would be replaced by the dynamics of protracted transition.

A sensitivity towards such complexities informs Fiona McCann's survey in Chapter Thirty-One of Northern Irish fiction published in or after 1998, a body of writing that, as she acknowledges, calls into question the accuracy of the designation 'post-Troubles', given that all of her chosen authors 'engage to some extent with the violent past and its ongoing legacies in a still deeply divided society'. Drawing on the theories of French philosopher Jacques Rancière, McCann investigates the means by which long- and short-form fiction by four Northern Irish writers (Glenn Patterson (1961–), Anna Burns (1962–), Mark Mulholland, and Jan Carson) and one from the border town of Clones (Patrick McCabe) exploit a range of 'dissensual' approaches to interrupt and disrupt established ways of seeing Northern society, whether by unsettling entrenched patterns of division or undercutting fixed assumptions about identity. The challenge facing these and other novelists of the post-Troubles (and imminently post-Brexit) dispensation is to imagine, without descending into blunt polemic, alternative narratives of belonging amid the stark, continuing realities of religious sectarianism and systemic social inequality.

The struggle against the stigmatization of homosexuality and gay people in Irish society has forced many contemporary gay and lesbian writers to voice criticisms and critiques that are no less dissensual than those expressed in the works discussed by McCann. Although homosexual themes and homoerotic desires have long inhabited the Irish novel, albeit often in oblique and liminal ways, it was not until the closing years of the twentieth century that fictional representations of same-sex desire began to proliferate, many of them written by gay-identified authors. After the decriminalization of male homosexuality in the Irish Republic in 1993, and the consolidation of the lesbian and gay movement that had been taking shape since the 1970s, a new generation of avowedly queer authors emerged to create a distinctively Irish strain of the lesbian and gay novel, the evolution of which Michael G. Cronin tracks in Chapter Thirty-Two.

Cronin's analysis centres on two plot types, the temporal and the spatial, the first of which is the more common and takes several forms. One is the coming-out novel, in which the arc of the narrative usually follows the contours of individual biography. Among the examples Cronin discusses are works by Tom Lennon, Mary Dorcey (1950–), Emma Donoghue (1969–), and Jarlath Gregory (1978–). A second form, exemplified in fiction by Colm Tóibín and Keith Ridgway (1965–), positions lesbian and gay characters within a generational family narrative that is woven into the national narrative. In addition, authors such as Donoghue, Jamie O'Neill (1962–), and Denis Kehoe (1978–) use the historical romance genre to imaginatively create an archaeology of same-sex desires.

Cronin's survey concludes with an examination of novels by Ridgway, Micheál Ó Conghaile (1962–), and Barry McCrea (1974–), whose plots are organized spatially rather than temporally and are notable for their incorporation of non-realist tropes within a realist frame. His analysis demonstrates how contemporary Irish gay and lesbian fiction provides an imaginative space in which to reflect on the diversity of queer identities and experiences, while at the same time grappling with the unfulfilled promise of sexual freedom in the time of late capitalism. At its best, Cronin argues, this fictional strand illuminates a utopian desire to create a transformed future, a desire that the present generation calls queer and which an earlier one called liberation.

The inclusion in Cronin's chapter of Micheál Ó Conghaile's debut novel, *Sna Fir* (Among Men, 1999), which delves into the experiences of a young gay man from the Connemara Gaeltacht, serves as a reminder that the transformative journey undertaken by Irish queer fiction in recent decades bears similarities to that taken by fiction in the Irish language. A willingness on the part of Irish-language novelists to engage with sexual and social topics formerly considered taboo was already in evidence by the time Ó Conghaile published his first gay-themed short story in the late 1980s, which, he recalled, was met with 'outrage in certain sections of society which referred to it as *brocamas* or dirt. Ireland and Conamara have come a long way since then, of course, but not without pain and suffering.'[125] In Chapter Thirty-Three, Pádraig Ó Siadhail takes stock of the distance travelled during this period by the novel in Irish, which he deems to be 'as heterogeneous in its genres, themes, narrative styles, and settings as its equivalents in world literature', despite the challenges of writing in an endangered language with a small readership and declining literacy standards.

Ó Siadhail begins by examining the contrasting fortunes of novelists who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, notably Breandán Ó hEithir (1930–90) and Séamas Mac Annaidh (1961–), who sought to escape the shadow of Máirtín Ó Cadhain, whose death in 1970 deprived Irish-language fiction of its most accomplished voice. Noting that 'a central feature of contemporary fiction in Irish is the issue of language itself', he goes on to discuss the work of Pádraig Standún (1946–) and Alan Titley, leading exponents of the two main strands of modern fiction in Irish, the popular and the literary. The achievement of writers who have worked athwart these strands, such as Diarmaid Ó Gráinne (1950–2013) and Pádraic Breathnach (1942–), is also considered, as are other recent trends, including the appearance of the popular Gaelic *noir* subgenre; the emergence of the transnational novel, whose exponents include Ó Siadhail himself; the paucity of Irish-language comic fiction; the relative scarcity of women novelists; the rise to prominence of the historical novel; and the evolution of experimental Irish-language fiction. Given that there have been, in Ó Siadhail's words, 'almost as many Irish-language novels published in the last quarter century as in the previous 100 years', unevenness of quality is to be expected. Yet this creative bourgeoning also signifies that the Irish-language novel is on 'as tentatively

[125] Cited in Pádraig Ó Siadhail, 'Odd Man Out: Micheál Ó Conghaile and Contemporary Irish Language Queer Prose', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies. Special Issue: Queering Ireland* 36, no. 1 (2010), 144–5.

secure a footing as any lesser-used language can hope to be in order to cater to its diverse readership'.

Unsurprisingly, certain of the trends and themes that Cronin and Ó Siadhail identify as integral to the development of contemporary queer and Irish-language fiction reappear in Susan Cahill's survey in Chapter Thirty-Four of twenty-first-century fiction by writers from the Republic. In a period marked by 'an extraordinary renaissance in Irish fiction, featuring novels that are stylistically experimental, ethically engaged, and pointed in their social, cultural, and political critiques', the impetus towards diversification and democratization has been pronounced. Novelists' determination to envision a more pluralist and humane vision of Irish society has, Cahill argues, led to a growing desire 'to make room for the marginalized, the silenced, the alienated, and the discriminated against, including those whose voices and experiences have been elided from standard accounts of the nation's past'. While the revisioning of the master narratives of national history is neither a new nor a uniquely Irish phenomenon—Boxall notes that the post-war English novel 'has returned obsessively to the question of the mutability of the past'[126]—novelists' larger project of engendering a fresh collective self-understanding in a time of previously unimaginable change has produced distinctive fictional responses to acute crises, from Donal Ryan's (1977–) evocation of the devastating human cost of the post-2008 economic recession in *The Spinning Heart* (2012) to the humane environmentalism of Sara Baume's (1984-) *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* (2015). Cahill is especially appreciative of the achievements of post-millennial Irish women novelists, particularly those whose feminism has powered some of the most stinging critiques of the inequities of neoliberal capitalism and inspired them to articulate previously hidden aspects of women's experience.

Critical Evaluations

This *Handbook* concludes with an evaluation by Eve Patten of the role and significance of the Irish novelist as critic and anthologist over the past century. From Katharine Tynan (1859–1931) to Anne Enright, Irish novelists and short story writers have used the acts of literary criticism and anthology compiling to serve various ends, whether it be to proclaim an artistic credo, assemble a literary inheritance, stake out an aesthetic position, intervene in cultural debate, or contribute to the making and unmaking of literary reputations. Yet one has only to browse the essays and reviews of Elizabeth Bowen or John McGahern, for instance, to appreciate that literary criticism is also, more fundamentally, 'a creative activity in its own right—a writer's way of describing how other writers handle language and what it is that makes them unique'.[127] Novelists' evaluative

[126] Boxall, *Twenty-First-Century Fiction*, 46.
[127] Al Alvarez, *The Writer's Voice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 10.

discriminations as critics and anthologists are therefore not only revealing of their literary politics but also cast light on their own practice as writers.

Alert to these contexts, and attentive to the intersecting vectors of literary inheritance and theoretical subtext, Patten examines the ways in which writers have positioned themselves, through the content of their fiction and critical writing, in relation to Irish traditions of the novel and the short story, particularly the problematic social realist tradition. Her focus falls on two countervailing trends in the literary-critical discourse: on one side, a long-standing 'strategic scepticism towards the novel tradition, even as that tradition flourished on an international stage', and on the other, 'the positive consolidation of an Irish fictional lineage' spearheaded by the publication of influential anthologies of Irish fiction in 1993 and 1999 by Dermot Bolger (1959–) and Colm Tóibín respectively. Patten postulates that while each editor pursued a distinctive agenda—Bolger advancing the cause of a new urban realist aesthetic, Tóibín foregrounding novelists' capacity to work creatively with domestic and cosmopolitan influences—the combined effect of their interventions has been to refocus attention on the Irish novel's dynamic responsiveness to changing conditions and place the Irish novelist 'firmly at the political and cultural vanguard of the changing nation'.

By reminding us of the novel's protean character and inherent ability to accommodate a seemingly limitless plurality of voices, perspectives, and experiences, Eve Patten's concluding remarks obliquely echo those made by Thomas Kilroy almost fifty years ago, when he said of the two novelists who interested him most at that time, Aidan Higgins (1927–2015) and John Banville, that 'Their achievement, whatever its merits, is a kind of freedom for the future. And the future is open.'[128] Now as then, all we can hazard with any certainty about the future is that its unknowable possibilities will stimulate Irish novelists, yet again, to renew the art of the new and distinguish themselves in a literary form that, as Mikhail Bakhtin insisted, has always been fortified by the disparate and capricious energies of the contemporary moment: 'The novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing. The novelist is drawn toward everything that is not yet completed.'[129] It is entirely conceivable that many, if not most, of Ireland's future novelists and short story writers will continue to find in inherited fictional modes an effective means of posing fundamental questions about truth, identity, and existence that reach across generations. It is no less plausible that others will wish to unseat convention or seek out alternative ways of approaching through language the mysteries of the inconclusive present and the unquiet past. As I conclude this essay in July 2019, recent examples of these differing approaches lie on my desk. I select two from the pile, both published inside the last

[128] Kilroy, 'Tellers of Tales', 302.
[129] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 27.

twelve months, and briefly consider what they might portend for the future of Irish fiction.

Sally Rooney's (1991–) multi-award-winning second novel, *Normal People* (2018), explores the individual psychologies and fluctuating relationship of two young millennials who come of age in post-boom Ireland. This same cultural moment forms the backdrop to *This Hostel Life* (2018), a slim volume of short stories by Nigerian-born Melatu Uche Okorie (1975–), who arrived in Ireland as an asylum seeker in 2006. These stories, which provide snapshots of the Irish lives of immigrant African women, are framed, in a manner that recalls *Castle Rackrent*, by an author's preface and a contextualizing essay by a legal scholar. *Normal People* bears many of the hallmarks of conventional realism, including a traditional narrative form, transparent prose, and linear third-person narration by a voice that offers searching character insights—qualities that would not be out of place in a Victorian realist classic. Indeed, Rooney signals her literary orientation through an epigraph from George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), which brings with it a tacit assurance that *Normal People* will not attempt to alter conceptions of what a novel is or how it achieves its effects but will rather draw instructive inspiration from canonical antecedents. By contrast, Okorie's title story displays a striking linguistic inventiveness. A polyphony of voices, previously unheard in the Irish short story, speak a patois that blends African dialects with standard and colloquial English, thus plunging the reader into a milieu that Frank O'Connor would readily recognize as that of a 'submerged population group': asylum seekers confined within the Republic's Direct Provision system. Despite its strong tang of authenticity, the author has explained that her characters' idiom 'is a completely made up one', created from 'a mixture of Englishes'.[130] Expressing themselves in this invented tongue, Okorie's asylum seekers speak powerfully of the legal injustices and intimate humiliations they must endure, screened from public view, in a twenty-first-century Ireland that likes to think of itself as liberal and progressive.

The acclaim afforded *Normal People* has consolidated Sally Rooney's meteoric rise to the status of 'the first great millennial author', a 'Salinger for the Snapchat generation', a 'Jane Austen for the precariat'.[131] The significance of Melatu Uche Okorie's work is also beginning to be recognized, albeit on a more modest scale; certainly, the publication of *This Hostel Life* marks an important milestone in the emergence of a black Irish fiction.[132] As contrasting examples of how contemporary authors appropriate and adapt fictional forms and generic conventions to accommodate the telling of new and untold stories, *Normal People* and *This Hostel Life* suggest two of the many possible trajectories of the Irish novel and short story in the twenty-first century and beyond. We cannot

[130] Sara Martín-Ruiz, 'Melatu Okorie: An Introduction to her Work and a Conversation with the Author', *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 28, no. 2 (2017), 181.

[131] Sian Cain, 'At last, a gifted literary voice for a generation', *Guardian*, 5 September 2018, 5.

[132] In addition to attracting praise from Sebastian Barry, Roddy Doyle, and others, *This Hostel Life* was shortlisted for a 2018 Irish Book Award in the Newcomer of the Year category.

second-guess the future, but if history is any guide, we might reasonably expect Irish fiction in the coming years to be characterized by an enlivening panorama of meditations on cultural change and shifts in personal and social identity; the posing of newly disruptive questions about the perplexities of nationality, gender, sexuality, religious belief, and other markers of difference; the display of powerful moral insights into the fluctuating psychic rhythms of life in Ireland and elsewhere; an ever-widening diversity of theme and subject matter; greater formal, linguistic, and stylistic adventurousness in both traditional and electronic formats—and a constant capacity to surprise as well as to delight.

PART II

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONTEXTS AND LEGACIES

CHAPTER 2

IRISH GOTHIC FICTION

JARLATH KILLEEN

In 1887, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) tried to give the Gothic a decent send off in his amusing short story, 'The Canterville Ghost'. The plot concerns the misadventures of Sir Simon de Canterville who has haunted Canterville Chase since 1584 and has a proud reputation as a great spectral performer. At one point he nostalgically recalls his many triumphs on the phantasmal stage over a 'brilliant and uninterrupted career of three hundred years', reminiscing with 'the enthusiastic egotism of the true artist' about 'his last appearance as "Red Reuben, or the Strangled Babe", his *début* as "Gaunt Gideon, the Blood-sucker of Bexley Moor", and the *furore* he had excited one lovely June evening by merely playing ninepins with his own bones upon the lawn-tennis ground'.[1] Sir Simon is a kind of one-man Gothic show, able to perform the standard monsters of the tradition (the ghost, the vampire, the animated skeleton, the poltergeist) with the aplomb of a ham actor. However, while he was certainly effective enough in his time, he is apparently completely out of date at the end of the nineteenth century. So outmoded is Sir Simon, and the genre he represents, that when the Chase is purchased by the American Otis family they do not believe he could possibly exist.

Ghosts had been banished before, of course, declared impossible at the time of the Reformation, which, as Peter Marshall explains, was 'virtually predicated on an absolute rejection of the assumption that had granted space to ghosts and ghost stories in medieval Christianity',[2] with the reformers insisting that after death souls went either to heaven or hell, and did not hang around to pester the living. Ghosts, in short, were something believed in only by the feebleminded and the superstitious—code words for Catholics. While the Otises are indeed Episcopalians, though, they dismiss ghosts on pragmatic rather than theological grounds. As Mr Otis explains when purchasing the Chase, 'I come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can

[1] Oscar Wilde, 'The Canterville Ghost', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Volume VIII: The Short Fiction*, ed. Ian Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87.

[2] Peter Marshall, 'The Ghost Story in Post-Reformation England', in Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Anne Stevens (eds), *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 20.