Introduction

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In the twenty-first century, when we are all Europeans now, 'our Europositivity is being put to the test'.[1] Europe as a cultural idea, and the European Union as a political entity, are so vast that they are beyond the sympathetic comprehension of many Europeans. Nations, by contrast, seem to offer a knowable and traditional sense of commonality. And yet Europe underwrites our rights, and our belief in rights, and still maintains a working model of relative peace, and even prosperity, within its boundaries. This mixture of trepidation at the sheer scale of Europe, along with a belief in its capacity to shed a universalist light on our local difficulties, is not new. It is a long-developing legacy stemming from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and it parallels the possibilities and disappointments which are characteristic of what Europe meant in nineteenth-century Ireland. Over the course of the nineteenth century in Ireland, Europe was many things (often simultaneously): a place of exotic or cosmopolitan attractions; an influence to be resisted; an extended classroom for the arts and politics; a theatre of war; a crucible of ideas. The essays collected in this volume are testament to the diverse ways in which the reality and the idea of Europe helped form Ireland and Irishness in the nineteenth century. The effects which Europe had on Ireland in the period range from the most broadly ideological (as in the development of the very idea of nationalism, outlined in Alan O'Day's essay), to the micro-histories of individual lives (as described in Patrick Maume's and Matthew Potter's contributions). In each instance, the reality of what Europe is, is washed in the colours of what Ireland might become.

European travellers criss-crossed nineteenth-century Ireland, always passing Irish people moving in the opposite direction. Paschal Grousset's *Ireland's disease: the English in Ireland* (1887), for example, brings Ireland and Europe together in a logical tactic of cultural politics, dismissing the troublesome 'English', who lie conceptually and geographical in the way. Not many years later (in 1893), Edith Somerville and Martin Ross were bemoaning 'a singularly detestable journey'[2] to London, as they headed off jauntily to experience the wine-growing industry of the Médoc at sometimes tipsy first hand. Rural France, for Somerville and Ross, was populated by individuals and types who existed in a world that was a twisted and erratic version of County Cork. London, and England more generally, lie annoyingly in-between, a 'headachy' obstacle to be negotiated before reaching the excitement of the 'Continent' and its half-recognized customs.

1 Jean Baudrillard, 'Holy Europe' in *New Left Review*, 33 (2005), 24. 2 E.Œ. Somerville and Martin Ross, *In the vine country* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 14.

Such Continental travels, literal or imaginative, were occasions when Ireland was to be remembered from afar and thought of anew. Lucy McDiarmid's sparkling account of 'Irish men and French food' traces a gustatory line of Franco-Irish interchange from Tone to Wilde in which the Irish body consumes Europe, symbolically undertaking 'routes of exchange', as McDiarmid calls them. And throughout the nineteenth century Irish culture absorbed 'Europe' into its body politic in ways which liberated ideas and the forms which they took. Leon Litvack details the European shapes which emerge in a fresh examination of Maclise's painting, while Mary S. Pierse describes the to and fro of images and words which nestle in the intertexts of George Moore's writings. As these essays emphasize, we should never assume that European art and literature is merely an influence on Irish artists, because the dynamic involved in such influence is multi-layered and reciprocal. James Clarence Mangan's is a good case in point. His poems and 'translations' have their own idiosyncratic 'routes of exchange' with European poetry and history – his 'Song of the Albanian', for example, written in 1847, displaces anxiety about a 'Gaunt Famine' and allows for a melancholic celebration of the 'few heroic souls' which death leaves behind 'to wrest/Their birthright from the Turk!'[3] Europe's extremities here act as a conduit for Mangan's rage at the effects of the Famine in Ireland, as well as coming at a time when Young Ireland looked to the small nations of Europe as hints of what a different, freer Ireland might look like.

If Mangan's 'translations' from the German are sometimes versions of the German in the loosest of senses, then this only signifies the freedom and the intellectual space which such interaction was capable of producing. In this kind of literary arena, Irish writers found many modes of being European, while testing their own 'positivity'. So Siobhán Kilfeather makes a compelling case which suggests that the Banims shaped their fictional Ireland through their German reading, while Jason King reveals how Charles Lever is able to use a trope of the 'raparee' to configure Ireland as a transitory and unsettled European nation and Asier Altuna-García de Salazar's reading of Alicia Le Fanu's fiction is another example of such cross-Continental creativity. The literary conjunction of Ireland and Europe in the nineteenth century is not, then, all on the level of hopeful analogy or productive influence. The 'routes of exchange' bring anxiety as well as sustenance. So Arthur Broomfield, in his essay on Maria Edgeworth, suggests that Paris, and all that is associated with it, operates in a disruptive textual fashion, in which the logos at the centre of authoritative language is unsettled by a kind of linguistic and cultural untranslatability. Mary Burke's account of Synge's Parisian days reveals that a comparative European experience underlies the repetitively nomadic imagination of Synge's writing.

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3 James Clarence Mangan, 'Song of the Albanian', in Jacques Chuto, Rudolf Patrick Holzapfel, Peter van de Kamp and Ellen Shannon-Mangan (eds), *Selected poems of James Clarence Mangan* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), pp 272–4.

Entwined with the formal and aesthetic cross-Continental traffic which traverses Ireland Europe in the nineteenth century is an exchange of ideas which takes place at a textual and intellectual level. As Paddy Lyons shows, Ireland was capable of being used as a European test-case for new endeavours which were essentially about extending and controlling the intellectual franchise through reading. Gary K. Peatling and Andreas Hüther uncover German interests in Ireland which initially seem to be contained within Germany's sphere of cultural influence but which eventually and inevitably spill over into Ireland. One of the great debts which any academic writing on Ireland owes to Europe is the scholarly fascination with Ireland held for the French and German philologists of the nineteenth century. Ernest Renan's rapture at the 'nobility' of the Celtic races was based on a belief in their separateness ('Never has a human family lived more apart from the world, and been purer from all admixture').[4] The irony is that his interest and that of others like him was part of the complex matrix of dialogue and inter-change at all levels which took place between Ireland and Europe in the nineteenth century. Where Renan wishes to see a pure culture cut off from the ills of over-civilized Europe, he himself is taking part in disproving his own assumptions. And as the essays in this volume show, between Ireland and Europe there is not an 'impassable barrier against external influences';[5] instead there are tangled 'routes of exchange', many of them seen here for the first time, and all of them telling us more about Ireland's historical, and contemporary, Europeanness.

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4 Ernest Renan, 'From "The poetry of the Celtic races"', in Mark Storey (ed.), *Poetry and Ireland since 1800: a source book* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 55. **5** Renan, 'From "The poetry of the Celtic races"', p. 55.