

Men who did not exist? Irish tourists and the definition of a national elite

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The gradual democratization of travel in the nineteenth century initiated major shifts in a practice that, originating in the aristocratic tradition of the Grand Tour, had helped define social and cultural elites in the early modern period. The changes were most noticeable in Britain, where the expansion of the middle classes and the improvement of travel infrastructure multiplied the forms that tourism could take and made them accessible to ever greater numbers. Increasingly, complaints were made that the rising numbers of Britons travelling for leisure compromised the distinctive nature of the experience. A difference emerged in English writing between travel and tourism: while tourism was a 'mass' phenomenon, heavily commodified and branded with the stigma of inauthenticity, travel was an individual pursuit through which the better kind of tourists (for such they essentially remained) displayed their refined taste and social superiority. Sociologists write of how 'status distinctions then came to be drawn between different classes of traveller, but less between those who could and those who could not travel'.¹ At the same time, since travel was promoted as a means to social and cultural advancement, such distinctions constantly had to be readjusted: the 'authentic', superior experiences of 'travellers' were quickly imitated by 'tourists' who sought the badge of authenticity and thus compromised the elitist nature of 'travel'. The result is that 'tourism has become an exemplary cultural practice in modern liberal democracies, for it has evolved an appearance of being both popularly accessible and exclusive at once'.²

While analyses of nineteenth-century tourism have often drawn on British examples, they have remained silent about Irish tourists – significantly, the now substantial body of work on 'Irish tourism' and 'Irish travel writing' refers to foreign visitors to Ireland, not to Irish subjects who travel for leisure.³ The emergence of the

1 Quoted in James Buzard, *The beaten track: European tourism, literature and the ways to culture, 1800–1918* (Oxford, 1993), p. 81. **2** Buzard, *The beaten track*, p. 6. **3** See, among others, Melissa Fegan, 'The traveller's experience of Famine Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 9:3 (2001), 361–72; Glenn Hooper, *Travel writing and Ireland, 1760–1860: culture, history, politics* (London, 2005); Eric Zuelow, *Making Ireland Irish: tourism and national identity since the Irish Civil War* (Syracuse, 2009); Irene Furlong, *Irish tourism, 1880–1980* (Dublin, 2009); William H. Williams, *Tourism, landscape and the Irish character: British travel writers in pre-Famine Ireland* (Madison, WI, 2008); *Creating Irish tourism: the first century, 1750–1850* (London, 2010). While some of those studies pay attention to Irish tourists' experiences of Ireland, Irish tourists travelling abroad have so far remained under the scholarly radar.

'Ryanair generation' signalled contemporary Ireland's membership of the 'modern liberal democracies', where tourism is a common and defining experience, but the consensus in Irish tourism studies is that tourism remained marginal among the Irish population throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Little has changed since one historian of tourism wrote that

in Ireland . . . holidaymaking was confined to a relatively small minority of the population . . . until the middle of this [viz. the twentieth] century. Irish coastal resorts were to be the preserve of the Anglo-Irish rural and urban elite up to the First World War . . . For the ordinary people, a 'holiday' was an outing to a fair, a 'patron', perhaps a race meeting and a football or hurling match.⁴

This is taken to confirm the widespread view that Ireland 'was not a "modern" society on this count': 'the vast majority of people did not take holidays'.⁵ The present essay will not deny that, in numerical terms, tourism remained a minority pursuit among the wider population of nineteenth-century Ireland. It will, however, suggest that the phenomenon was more widespread and more varied than is usually recognized, and that we need to query any elision between tourists and Anglo-Irish elites. The evidence considered here is quantitatively limited and exclusively textual in nature, but it will hopefully draw attention both to other historical evidence that awaits analysis and to a broader corpus of hitherto neglected Irish writing.

The travel books, novels, newspaper articles, reviews and advertisements that will be discussed below all suggest that, in the decades that followed Catholic emancipation, tourism started taking hold as a cultural practice beyond the confines of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, whose notorious absenteeism was itself tied to the importance of foreign travel among the leisured classes of Western Europe. By becoming tourists, Irish Catholics translated their upward social mobility into a geographical mobility that confirmed their attainment to a higher social and cultural status. An analysis of nineteenth-century Irish tourism will thus complement recent studies that have highlighted the importance of Catholic elites in Victorian Ireland and their participation in lifestyles that were at least partly modelled on those of the British (upper) middle classes.⁶ As a historiographic enterprise, the recovery of those experiences is fraught with ideological implications, as Senia Pašeta points out in her own discussion of late-Victorian Catholic elites:

⁴ John Heuston, 'Kilkee: the origins and development of a west-coast resort' in Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin (eds), *Tourism in Ireland: a critical analysis* (Cork, 1993), pp 13–28 at pp 13, 16. ⁵ Michael Cronin and Barbara O'Connor, 'From gombeen to gubeen: tourism, identity and class in Ireland, 1949–1999' in Ray Ryan (ed.), *Writing in the Irish republic: literature, culture, politics, 1949–99* (New York, 2000). The essay is also available at <http://doras.dcu.ie/14969/1/gombeen-to-gubeen.pdf>. ⁶ See particularly Senia Pašeta, *Before the revolution: nationalism, social change and Ireland's Catholic elite, 1879–1912* (Cork, 1999); Stephanie Rains, *Commodity culture and social class in Dublin, 1850–1916* (Dublin, 2010); and the project on 'Consumer culture, advertising and literature in Ireland, 1848–1921' recently carried out at the universities of Durham and Sunderland.



The failure of this [Catholic] elite to assume important roles in the administration of twentieth-century Ireland has ensured that their experiences and assumptions have all but disappeared, they have become 'lost' through momentous political change and through the subsequent construction of modern Irish history.⁷

Putting those Catholic elites on the scholarly radar questions accounts of nineteenth-century Ireland as a pre-modern colony whose Catholic population were excluded from full participation in the democratic experiences increasingly granted to British subjects.

If such perceptions need revising, the blame should not exclusively be laid at the door of post-independence historians and propagandists. Even *before* independence, some Irish commentators played down the realities of Irish tourism. Recent scholarly views that only Anglo-Irish elites participated in tourism before the First World War are belied by texts written in the years preceding the conflict, but those very texts evince the same tendency to represent the democratization of Irish tourism as a comparatively recent phenomenon. In 1912, a columnist for the *Irish Independent* commented that

[t]he Irish people of recent years have entered into the holiday spirit as they never did before, and nowadays it is the rule rather than the exception to find *Irish tourists – from remote rural districts, too – penetrating into regions home and continental that were only a name to a past generation.*⁸

Writing a couple of years earlier about the apparently thriving resort of Youghal, another commentator mused: 'My acquaintance with Youghal goes back to the sixties and early seventies, when *English and Continental holidays were undreamt of except by the landlord class*'.⁹ While those early twentieth-century commentators describe Irish tourism as a common practice, they also imply that, in a recent past, travelling for leisure, and certainly travelling abroad, were the exclusive pursuit of the landowning ascendancy.

Such denials or forgettings spring from a mentality that arguably characterized even late twentieth-century Irish people's attitudes towards tourism. In one experiment, questionnaires about holidays were submitted to Irish citizens. The answers they produced prompted sociologist Michel Peillon to observe:

That [Irish] people . . . understate their actual participation in holidaymaking suggests the weak cultural basis of modernity itself and of the modern lifestyle practised: they have not been able to appropriate fully, in cultural terms, their actual patterns of behaviour . . . The strong anti-modernist leaning

⁷ Pařeta, *Before the revolution*, p. 1. ⁸ *Irish Independent*, 2 Aug. 1912. My emphasis. ⁹ *Irish Independent*, 17 July 1908. My emphasis.



which pervades Irish culture makes it difficult to acknowledge a practice deeply rooted in the modernity of Ireland. Holidays ... reveal one of the major tensions within Irish society.¹⁰

The analysis proposed below will contradict both recent and older perceptions about the absence of tourists among the broader Irish population in the nineteenth century. While helping to chart the experience of rising Catholic elites in post-emancipation Ireland, and painting a picture of Victorian Ireland as a 'modern' nation in the making, this essay will also draw attention to anti-modern elements that informed the very consciousness of those elites. Those elements can in turn explain why Irish debates about the nature of tourism were (and perhaps still are) conducted through terms that were markedly different from those that dominated Victorian travel writing in Britain.

Published in 1835 and based on her visit to Belgium, Lady Morgan's *The princess* is not just a novel about Continental liberalism and nationalism as well as a travel book, it is also a reflection on post-emancipation Ireland.¹¹ While many of Morgan's characters are English tourists (often modelled on real-life aristocrats and socialites), her travelling set also includes the Irish baronet Sir Ignatius Dogherty. A descendant of a Milesian family and, as his name indicates, of good Catholic stock, Sir Ignatius cuts a striking figure among Morgan's Continental tourists. Dressed in his bottle-green jacket,¹² he is a stage-Irish caricature of the post-emancipation social climber, whose very presence on the Continent asserts his new status. As an Irish tourist, Sir Ignatius often registers a sense of incongruity:

Hôtel de Belview, Brussels.

MY DEAR CORNEY – You'll wonder greatly to hear from me in this outlandish place; and it is to my own intire amazement surely that I find myself in it ... when I asked for a bottle of Guinness' porter, which you'd think was known all over the wide world, it's a bottle of crusty port they brought me; and to this blessed hour I've not been able to make them understand me ... the Bellview is a fashionable place, and none of the great English will go nowhere else: although at first, sir, we got into a mighty nate little hotel, called the Tirelemont, for half the price. But my lady would go to the Bellview as soon as there was room ... *NB.* There's a power of Irish here, and a fortune might be made by setting up a raal [*sic*] Irish *Hibernian* hotel – and it would be a fine thing to be after making money instead of spinding it ...¹³

As a blundering tourist rather than a cultured traveller, Sir Ignatius is a recognizable type in British travel writing. Yet his nationality arguably outweighs class as a marker

¹⁰ Michel Peillon, 'The Irish on holidays: practice and symbolism' in Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin (eds), *Tourism in Ireland: a critical analysis* (Cork, 1993), pp 258–71 at pp 266, 270. ¹¹ Lady Morgan, *The princess, or the beguine* (3 vols, London, 1835). ¹² Morgan, *The princess*, i, p. 237. ¹³ *Ibid.*, ii, pp 134–44.

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of difference, and his words point forward to specific strands in the Irish imagination of tourism that will recur in this essay. While his wife is keen to imitate the British upper classes, Sir Ignatius retains his Irishness. His request for porter may typify him as a crass, ill-bred tourist who is unable to leave home behind while abroad (a standard theme in British critiques of tourism),¹⁴ but his disappointment at being served port – a very English drink – gives a subtle Irish nationalist twist to what would otherwise amount to class satire. His irrepressible practical sense betrays the utilitarian concerns of the *nouveau riche*. But Morgan's satire of this new tourist type also turns the tables on the fashionable English travellers as it exposes their essential snobbishness and their ultimately conventional upper-class tastes.¹⁵ The author's own sympathies appear divided between her own determination to shine among fashionable English sets and her keen sense of Irish difference, which made her wear the kind of green garments that Sir Ignatius also sports.¹⁶

Morgan's travelling stage-Irish baronet was probably more an exercise in speculation than the reflection of an actual trend. His excitement at finding out that there is 'a power of Irish here' is later qualified when he observes of the 'first Irish families on the road': 'maybe there wasn't oceans of them'.¹⁷ Morgan remains sceptical about the development of a travelling culture among the newly emancipated classes, but her novel raises an issue that is also taken up by two texts produced in the following decade. In 1837, Matthew O'Connor, a descendant of the kings of Connaught, published his *Picturesque and historical recollections during a tour through Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland*, and opened his preface as follows:

In the hope of inducing the richer classes of his countrymen to mix with the enlightened and polished nations of Europe, to see their manners and adopt their institutions, the writer has endeavoured to develop in the following pages the pleasures of a Continental tour, the facility and cheapness of travelling, and the amusements of some of the watering places in the south of Germany.¹⁸

O'Connor's 'richer classes' were a plural constituency that was no longer exclusively Anglo-Irish, Protestant and aristocratic. Ascendancy tourists had long mixed with foreign elites on the Continent and did not need O'Connor's advice: his book rather seems to target a new audience for whom the experience of foreign travel would be a novelty, and who were denominationally and politically diverse. Although he sometimes criticizes ecclesiastics, O'Connor frequently defends the Catholic religion

14 Buzard, *The beaten track*, p. 8. **15** This conventionality is attested by their adherence to the itineraries laid out by travel books. **16** On Morgan's notorious use of fashion to make political statements, see Julie Donovan, *Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan and the politics of style* (Palo Alto, CA, 2009). **17** Morgan, *The princess*, iii, p. 359. **18** Matthew O'Connor, *Picturesque and historical recollections during a tour through Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland in the summer of 1835* (London, 1837), p. i. O'Connor is mostly remembered for his *History of the Irish Catholics from the settlement in 1691* (Dublin, 1813).

against anti-popish slurs, and he makes several sympathetic references to the plight of Irish peasants, not least in his opening description of his journey from Dublin to Liverpool – recalling that ‘the fore-deck of the vessel . . . presented a scene of great misery – an image of our native country. Pigs, sheep, horned cattle, horses, women, children half naked, spalpeens (Irish labourers) in their thread-bare frieze garments, were so packed together that to move was utterly impossible.’¹⁹

The readership addressed by Thomas Davis in an 1844 essay on ‘Foreign travel’ in the *Nation* was probably similar to the one envisaged by O’Conor. ‘We lately strove to induce our wealthier countrymen to explore Ireland before they left her shores in search of the beautiful and curious’, Davis wrote, ‘there are some who had not waited for our call, but had dutifully grown up amid the sights and sounds of Ireland . . . and there are others not yet sufficiently educated to prize home excellence. To such, then, and to all our brethern and sisters going abroad, we have to say a friendly word’.²⁰ Given the readership of the *Nation* and the cross-denominational nature of Davis’ political agenda, the ‘wealthier countrymen’ he addressed were certainly not an all-ascendancy elite of Protestant landowners. In the immediate post-emancipation period, the Irish tourists envisaged by Morgan, O’Conor and Davis were all part of an elite whose identity was undergoing considerable transformation, but that remained implicitly defined as affluent and therefore exclusive. More importantly, it was explicitly defined as Irish. While wealthy Irish tourists had access to the many British travel books that were advertised in the Irish press,²¹ efforts were made in some quarters to make sure that Irish tourism would remain nationally distinctive. Irish elites had to be taught to behave differently from their British counterparts, even though the form of leisure they adopted made them join British tourists abroad.

The second half of the nineteenth century would see a steady rise in the number of Irish people participating in tourism. An exact quantification of the phenomenon falls outside the scope of this essay, but a study of Irish newspapers that were widely read among the rising Catholic middle classes suggests that the number of tourists in their midst had reached enough of a critical mass to make commercial sense. By the mid-1870s, the pages of the *Freeman’s Journal* in the run-up to the summer season included quasi weekly advertisements for various guidebooks and for Thomas Cook’s tickets, available from the firm’s Dublin offices on Dame Street. Cook was both commercially shrewd and ideologically unblinkered enough to adapt to Irish tastes by proposing Continental tours that left from Dublin and included Lourdes.²² Such tours remained relatively expensive: letters to newspapers proposed that the Catholic Church should organize a cheaper version for ‘[p]ersons unable to meet singly the expense of Cooke [sic]’.²³

¹⁹ O’Conor, *Picturesque and historical recollections*, p. 1. ²⁰ *The Nation*, 17 Aug. 1844.

²¹ For some early examples of such advertisements for itineraries ‘for Continental travellers’ and other ‘travellers’ guides’, available from C. Cumming and Co. in Dublin, see the *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 May 1819 and 12 Aug. 1828. ²² See, for instance, the *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 Aug. 1875. ²³ *Evening Telegraph*, 1 June 1885.



Irish tourists also flocked in their thousands to more secular destinations. Firms like Thomas Cook offered cheap tickets for international exhibitions.²⁴ At the time of the 1862 London exhibition, a Dublin publisher ran advertisements for ‘THE IRISH TOURIST’S GUIDE TO THE SIGHTS OF LONDON – A glance at EVERY OBJECT OF INTEREST ... and specially adapted to the GREAT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION’, priced at 3*d.* (by post 4*d.*).²⁵ When the exhibition was held in Paris in 1867, a Dublin correspondent of the *Anglo-Celt* sent the following report, where utilitarian considerations about the effects of Irish travel recur as ironic afterthought:

A sudden Parisian mania has set in among the citizens this week, and has already carried off thousands from the metropolis to the French capital. Judging from the *enormous efflux of tourists* that have left and are still leaving by every mail from Kingston to Holyhead, en route to Paris, *we are at least minus 2,000 people this week*; and looking at this in a monetary point of view, each individual represents a loss to the city in cash expenditure of £3 on the visit.²⁶

By 1884, crossing over to Holyhead seems to have been common enough to justify the publication of a Welsh guidebook for Irish travellers. James Roderick O’Flanagan, a well-to-do retired Catholic barrister, undertook the task after a trip to north Wales, where he had been disappointed to find that ‘no guidebook described the principality from the Irish side of the country, all gave the routes the other way’. O’Flanagan wrote his travelogue ‘to supply this deficiency’, but geographical orientation was not the only issue. O’Flanagan also argued that since ‘*many tourists, especially from Ireland, are Roman Catholics*, it is requisite they should know where to find Catholic Churches’.²⁷ The *Freeman’s Journal’s* review of *A trip to north Wales with my wife* hailed O’Flanagan as ‘the first Catholic who has written for Irish tourists’.²⁸ The claim is inaccurate, as O’Conor’s 1837 *Recollections* make clear, but it emphasizes that the well-off, cultured O’Flanagan was perceived as being a spokesman for his Irish co-religionists.

The defence of an explicitly Catholic Irish identity became a growing theme with the development of tourism among the middle classes in late nineteenth-century Ireland. O’Flanagan’s preface states that ‘the guidebooks published have all been written by those who are unacquainted with the Catholic religion, and either omit this information, or, in some cases, mention the Catholic Church in offensive

²⁴ Buzard, *The beaten track*, p. 63. International exhibitions were a particularly democratic new form of tourism, since they brought the world within reach of fee-paying visitors. See Angela Schwarz, “‘Come to the fair’: transgressing boundaries in World’s Fairs tourism’ in Eric Zuelow (ed.), *Touring beyond the nation: a transnational approach to European tourism history* (Farnham, 2011), pp 79–100. ²⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 Aug. 1862. My emphasis. ²⁶ *The Anglo-Celt*, 10 Aug. 1867. My emphases. ²⁷ James Roderick O’Flanagan, *Through north Wales with my wife: an Arcadian tour* (London, 1884), p. vii. My emphasis. ²⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 17 Oct. 1884.



terms²⁹ – another flaw of British travel books that he proposes to remedy.³⁰ A correspondent for the *Freeman's Journal* ended his account of Lourdes by countering insinuations about Bernadette de Soubirou found in British guidebooks:

I cannot close this little sketch [of Lourdes] without calling attention to a passage in 'Murray's Guide'. It says: – 'The girl subsequently became insane, and is or was taken care of by the Ursuline nuns at Nevers'. To use the words of a well-informed gentleman here – 'It is a calumny – it is a lie' . . . However, I suppose it is one of the marks of the Catholic Church to have everything connected with it calumniated.³¹

Irish Catholic tourists abroad were regularly called upon to defend their faith; they were also expected to bear their national identity in mind. Anglocentric analyses of travel writing stress how 'superior' travellers could only claim to rise above mere touristic attitudes by shedding their national identities and immersing themselves in foreign environments.³² Irish travellers, on the other hand, were encouraged to think of home when abroad. O'Connor's *Picturesque and historical recollections* already included many anecdotes about exiled Irish soldiers, priests and monks: 'The historical reminiscences as connected with [the author's] native country will be uninteresting to many, but to such as feel a sympathy for the misfortunes of a generous nation they will not be felt tiresome or obtrusive'.³³ More assertively, Thomas Davis had sent out Irish travellers abroad with the advice to seek out places of Irish interest, highlighting that some readers

may delight in following the tracks of the Irish saints, from Iona of the Culdees to Luxieu and Boia (founded by Columbanus), and St Gall, founded by an Irishman of that name . . . Our military history could also receive much illustration from Irish travellers going with some previous knowledge and studying the traditions and ground, and using the libraries in the neighbourhood of those places where Irishmen fought.³⁴

The exhortation to Irish tourists to consider themselves as nationalist pilgrims is most clearly present in Eugene Davis' *Souvenirs of Irish footprints over Europe* (1888), which defies any distinction between travel writing and popular history.³⁵ The Continent's chief interest, for Eugene Davis, lies in its Irish associations: 'I do not envy the Irishmen [*sic*] who can step for the first time on French soil without feeling his

29 O'Flanagan, *Through north Wales with my wife*, p. vii. **30** On Protestant hostility towards Catholicism in nineteenth-century British travel accounts, see Marjorie Morgan, *National identities and travel in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke, 2001), especially pp 93–100. **31** *Freeman's Journal*, 15 July 1875. **32** Buzard, *The beaten track*, p. 8. **33** O'Connor, *Recollections*, p. i. **34** *The Nation*, 17 Aug. 1844. **35** On Davis' *Souvenirs* as a 'nationalist' travel guide, see Raphaël Ingelbien, 'Defining the Irish tourist abroad: *Souvenirs of Irish footprints over Europe* (1888)', *New Hibernia Review*, 14.2 (2010), 102–17.



heart throb faster, or without finding himself carried back in fancy to a past that speaks so eloquently on his countrymen's military prowess under the Bourbon flag'.³⁶ When press commentators described the sights of Italy, they sometimes readily assumed that Irish tourists would be guided by a love of Old Erin: 'Irish visitors to Genoa invariably look for the house in which the great man [O'Connell] died . . . Irish travellers [to Lucca] will look for the church of St Frediano, a prince of their country, who became bishop of Lucca.'³⁷

Thomas Davis had not only set out a cultural nationalist programme for Irish tourists: in his brand of nationalism, Irish cultural specificity was not an end in itself, but rather a means of cementing national cohesiveness for a further goal, viz. the modernization of Ireland. After listing the antiquarian pursuits in which Irish travellers could indulge, he explained that he 'would not limit men to the study of the past':

Our agriculture is defective, and our tenures are abominable. It were well worth the attention of the travelling members of the Irish Agricultural Society to bring home accurate written accounts of the tenures of land, the breeds of cattle, draining, rotation, crops, manures and farm-houses, from Belgium or Norway, Tuscany or Prussia. Our mineral resources and water-power are unused. A collection of models or drawings, or descriptions of the mining, quarrying and hydraulic works of Germany, England or France might be found most useful for the Irish capitalist who made it, and for his country which so needs instruction.³⁸

Davis' utilitarian message is echoed in O'Flanagan's 1884 Welsh guidebook, where the author pauses in his admiration for local tourist facilities to bemoan the lack of equivalents in Ireland, and to suggest their introduction: 'I have often regretted the absence from our Irish watering-places of these attractions to visitors which enliven English and Continental watering-places . . . This would pay in the end, and induce fewer Irishmen to seek strange fields and Welsh bathing'.³⁹ This would become a prominent theme in attempts to develop an Irish tourist industry, first led by Cook's Dublin agent Frederick W. Crossley and the Irish Tourist Association.⁴⁰

In the context of the present discussion, it is especially telling that O'Flanagan's economic espionage focuses on tourism itself, rather than other types of activities. While Thomas Davis' cultural nationalist message to Irish tourists started a lasting tradition in Irish travel writing, his ambition to modernize Ireland by developing its agriculture and industry fade as a motif as the century unfolds. This does not only reflect gradual improvements (in Ireland's agriculture in particular) which made such

³⁶ Eugene Davis, *Souvenirs of Irish footprints over Europe*, ed. Owen McGee (Dublin, 2006), p. 77. The text originally appeared in the *Evening Telegraph* in 1888. ³⁷ *Irish Monthly*, Mar. 1899. ³⁸ *The Nation*, 17 Aug. 1844. ³⁹ O'Flanagan, *Through north Wales with my wife*, pp 100–1. ⁴⁰ See Irene Furlong, 'Frederick W. Crossley: Irish turn-of-the-century tourism pioneer', *Irish History: a Research Yearbook*, 2 (2003), 162–76.



calls for modernization less urgent. It also testifies to a growing anti-modernism within Irish nationalist ranks, where some had little time for Thomas Davis' utopian vision of an Ireland where 'our bogs must have become turf-factories ... our coal must move a thousand engines, our rivers ten thousand wheels'.⁴¹ Such visions accord little with O'Flanagan's Arcadian pastoral, or with the spiritual idealism of the Irish exiles described in Eugene Davis' *Souvenirs*: 'these Irishmen of past generations had such a large amount of what may be called spirituality in their systems that they very often sacrificed the material or practical to the ideal'.⁴² As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Irish elites mostly pursued advancement through liberal professions and education rather than business careers.⁴³ The main trends in their travel writing partly reflect that development, but they also signal that discourses on Irish nationality were increasingly dominated by a critique of English materialism and utilitarianism.⁴⁴ A rejection of utilitarian considerations was of course also a defining feature of Anglo-American travel writing in the period, where the scenes that were depicted had 'no connection with the prosaic modern concerns of usefulness and rational organization that structure life in the home society'.⁴⁵ In the case of Irish travel writers, however, what was rejected was not the routine of economic life at home, but a modern utilitarianism that was identified with England.

The writings considered above give a normative definition of Irish Catholic elites' participation in tourism. The fact that such guidelines were issued from within Ireland does not mean that they were always adhered to – in fact, those texts occasionally betray an anxiety that Irish tourists might not be different from their English counterparts. Eugene Davis thus blasted the cruder kind of Continental tourist as follows: 'Every man of *the English, American and, I fear I must add, Irish, tourist type* is not satisfied with himself while in Rome until he has profanely carved the outlines of his obscure name on the broken pillars of the Forum or on the walls of the Colosseum'.⁴⁶ Irish tourists did not only read Irish travel advice, they could also read the guidebooks issued by English publishers, which immersed tourists and readers in an upmarket commodity culture. The more mainstream and inclusive Catholic newspapers did not necessarily frown on such publications. After extolling the merits of a new book on Switzerland published by a Leicester firm, the reviewer for the *Freeman's Journal* recommended it to seasoned Irish tourists:

Those of our readers who are acquainted with the Messrs Bickers' 'Rome', 'Rhine' and 'Italy' will regard this as a strong form of praise in regard of the

⁴¹ *The Nation*, 17 Aug. 1844. ⁴² Eugene Davis, *Souvenirs of Irish footprints over Europe*, p. 179. ⁴³ See Pašeta, *Before the revolution*, esp. pp 31, 96. ⁴⁴ For an analysis of Thomas Davis' economic thought as part of a 'discourse of improvement' that was rejected by later cultural nationalists, see Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the fiction of improvement* (Oxford, 2006). For an analysis of the continuities between Eugene Davis and late nineteenth-century anti-utilitarian critiques of earlier nationalist thought, see Ingelbien, 'Defining the Irish tourist abroad', 114–15. ⁴⁵ Buzard, *The beaten track*, p. 181. ⁴⁶ Eugene Davis, *Souvenirs of Irish footprints over Europe*, p. 34. My emphasis.



'Switzerland'. We mean it as such, and we have no doubt that to the numerous Irish tourists to whom the Alpine scenery is familiar, our estimate will be justified by a moderately careful perusal of the book ... It will, no doubt, be a favourite amongst the presentation volumes of the approaching Christmas season, and a handsomer Christmas book no one desires.⁴⁷

For more radical nationalists, however, fears that Irish tourists might give in to an English bourgeois commodity culture reflected a broader anxiety that newly affluent Catholic elites might 'become entwined in a British middle-class culture which stressed the virtues of respectability, professional advancement and social refinement'.⁴⁸

Another way of safeguarding the identity of the Irish tourist was to keep him at home. The promotion of internal tourism at the expense of foreign travel was another staple theme of Victorian Irish travel writing – and its very recurrence suggests that the message was not always heeded.⁴⁹ In 1849, the *Nenagh Guardian* observed: 'It has been truly said that the Irish tourist too often prefers exploring the beauties of other lands to those of his own ... beauty lies at his feet, but he would rather go a distance to behold it'.⁵⁰ In 1855, the *Nation* promoted internal tourism through the figure of Jack Beausir:

Jack is a fierce nationalist ... Jack says: 'Killarney whips Como or Constance hollow – hollow by Jove ... no Mont Blanc for me. Why Chamouni is an outlet of London. Every detestable dialect in England is there. Here a Yorkshire squire roars at his groom; there a cockney slangs a chamber maid, occasionally lit up by a mellifluous Galway brogue. It's cursedly common that gadding abroad ... Why are we blind to the beauties within a few perches of us? By Jove, sir, there are a thousand beauties within a few miles of Dublin – aye, in the very city itself – that we pass unconsciously'.⁵¹

From a nationalist point of view, Irish internal tourism combined the utilitarian advantage of keeping Irish wealth in Ireland with the cultural added value of making Irish people discover their own country. While probably best known through Miss Ivors' rebuke to Gabriel Conroy in Joyce's 'The Dead', the reproach to the Catholic Irish tourist abroad actually has a much longer history than is often assumed.⁵² Miss

⁴⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 Nov. 1878. ⁴⁸ Pašeta, *Before the revolution*, p. 3. ⁴⁹ Heuston's generalizations about nineteenth-century Irish tourists are not just based on an exclusive focus on Kilkee and its Anglo-Irish patrons, they may also be skewed by his neglect of Irish tourism abroad. New Catholic elites may well have preferred foreign tourism, for reasons ranging from emulation of British models to a wish to visit places like Lourdes or Rome. ⁵⁰ *Nenagh Guardian*, 10 Oct. 1849. ⁵¹ *The Nation*, 17 Nov. 1855. ⁵² Spurgeon Thompson has suggested that 'Joyce's likely model for Miss Ivors is, in fact, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, the radical women's suffragist and republican. Sheehy-Skeffington joined the board of the ITA [Irish Tourist Association] in 1927 ... Her influence on the board almost



Ivors, we should remember, does not criticize Gabriel for his snobbishness, palpable though it is. Instead, her criticism of Gabriel's Continental trips springs from her view that they are an English pastime – a form of leisure that typifies a 'West Briton'.⁵³

For the *Nation's* Jack, what was 'cursedly common' about foreign travel was not the fact that the lower orders were impinging on the pursuits of the upper classes, but the fact that it was English – and that it tempted Irishmen, apparently as far away as Galway, to ape English ways. The *Nation's* denunciations of the 'staring, bawling Britons' who toured Europe with Thomas Cook⁵⁴ were not so different from the scorn poured on Cook's 'low-bred, vulgar and ridiculous' excursionists by a Unionist class warrior like Charles Lever, the one Victorian Irish travel writer who most easily fits into Anglocentric analyses of travel writing:

some enterprising and unscrupulous man has devised the project of conducting some forty or fifty persons, irrespective of age or sex, from London to Naples and back for a fixed sum . . . all the details of the road or the inn, the playhouse, the gallery or the museum will be carefully attended by this providential personage, whose name assuredly ought to be Barnum!⁵⁵

But whereas Lever's critiques of modern tourism, published in exclusive organs like *Blackwood's* and the *Dublin University Magazine*, were informed by a snobbish disdain for the aspiring British middle classes, the *Nation's* strictures reflected its anti-English nationalism. The Yorkshire squire and the London Cockney were equally despicable; if he wanted to avoid being confused with them, the Irish tourist's easiest option was to stay in Ireland. His own class identity was barely an issue; his national credentials, on the other hand, were the main object of contention.

* * *

This survey of nineteenth-century Irish attitudes to the emergence of Irish tourism yields several hypotheses. One is that the Irish Catholic middle classes engaged in touristic activities in ever greater numbers: despite its greater geographical distance from the centres of Continental tourism, its poorer infrastructure and the different make-up and condition of its rising middle classes, Ireland clearly joined Britain in sending more and more tourists on the paths of home and Continental travel. Any

certainly helped to pressure the publication to step up the internal tourism campaign': see "'Not only beef, but beauty . . .': tourism, dependency and the postcolonial Irish state, 1925–30' in Michael Cronin and Barbara O'Connor (eds), *Irish tourism: image, culture and identity* (Bristol, 2003), p. 275. The nationalist encouragement to stay at home is much older than what Thompson envisages, leaving Miss Ivors a potentially more over-determined figure. **53** *The essential James Joyce*, ed. Harry Levin (London, 1977), p. 149. **54** *The Nation*, 4 May 1872. **55** Quoted in Buzard, *The beaten track*, pp 60–1.





quantification of the participation rate in tourism will require further work, but even a limited study of Irish travel writing already puts paid to the idea that tourism remained an ascendancy pastime in Victorian Ireland: rising Catholic elites were clearly an important new contingent. The ideological significance of this neglected phenomenon is also worth stressing: while Irish tourists had the opportunity to model their behaviour on British practices, they were often invited to shun British attitudes and to adopt distinctively Irish ways of travelling. Comparative investigations can perhaps determine if the idiosyncrasies of Irish travel writing have equivalents in the travel literature produced by other peripheral nations whose modernity was likewise problematic.⁵⁶ In any case, the Irish distinctiveness charted in this essay was promoted with such insistence that it cut across or supplanted the class-based distinctions that informed nineteenth-century British travel writing. To the extent that it applies at all, the distinction between (refined) travellers and (crass) tourists that is a staple of Anglocentric travel writing is largely replaced by a distinction between nationally aware Irish tourists and degenerate (West) Britons. Not only did an essentially 'national' understanding of tourism obscure the still inevitably class-bound nature of travel, it also allowed anti-modern strains to colour what was an essentially modern experience. The new elites of nineteenth-century Ireland were afforded ways to think of themselves as first and foremost *Irish* elites who were synecdochically synonymous with the rest of (Catholic) Ireland, and whose experiences were not compromised by the taint of (British) modernity. If later generations managed to forget about nineteenth-century Irish tourists, they were partly helped to do so by the reluctance of Victorian Ireland's new elites to fully take part in what is commonly defined as the modern touristic experience.

56 See, for instance, Gayle R. Nunley, *Scripted geographies: travel writings by nineteenth-century Spanish authors* (Cranbury, 2007). Nunley suggests that Spain's economic backwardness and its uncertain place between the West and the Orient produced 'dilemmas of modernity' for Spanish travel writers (p. 19); these could be compared to Ireland's.

