



RECONSIDERING GENDER AND NATIONALISM

REPRESENTATIONS OF
ENGLISH FEMALE CHARACTERS
IN LITERATURE OF THE GREAT
IRISH FAMINE, 1851-1870

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Summary

Over the last decades, scholars such as Margaret Kelleher, Lynn Innes, and Margu rite Corporaal have paid extensive critical attention to nineteenth-century literary and artistic depictions of the Famine as primarily dominated by Irish female images, and their work has placed great emphasis on recurring literary motifs in Famine literature, such as the depiction of female Irish starved bodies, mother and child images, and a dependence on the Irish female figure to convey the inexpressible reality of the horrors of the Famine. Little critical attention, however, has been paid to the portrayal of English female characters in Irish literature and art of the Famine. Even though an extensive body of work has been written about the representation of national stereotypes of the Irish in nineteenth-century English art and literature, little has been written about the depiction of the English in nineteenth-century Irish art and literature. The few articles and surveys that have been written about this subject are, in addition, often gender-biased and mostly examine representations of English male characters instead of female characters. This is quite striking, especially in light of nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Great Irish Famine (1845-1852), because even though the female characters in these works might seem relatively minor and flat, their presence tends to have a great impact on some of the most important plotlines and themes within these works.

This thesis aims to fill this gap by analysing the representation of English female characters in the literary works of Mary Anne Sadlier, Mrs. Hoare, Alice Nolan, and Edmund and Julia O’Ryan through the lens of postcolonial theory, gender and feminist theory, and Leerssen and Beller’s concept of imagology. The analysis of these works will reveal three very distinct patterns in literary depictions of English womanhood which strongly reflect the authors’ opinions on gender, class, and politics, and are very telling of the ways in which the national character of the English was portrayed in nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Famine. These representations are, moreover, linked to well-known and widely distributed nineteenth-century artistic depictions of national personifications, such as Sir John Tenniel’s rendering of Britannia, Hibernia, and Erin in *Punch Magazine*, to examine whether the authors of these novels were aware of the national rhetoric at the time and bought into the stereotypical national discourse, or instead sought to modify representations of national stereotypes and use them in their own ways. The analysis of these works will, in addition, also illustrate how the concept of national identity, in relation to Englishness and Irishness, can be related to themes of class, religion, and gender.

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1. INTRODUCTION: FAMINE, SILENCE, AND LITERATURE

Mrs Hampton was an English woman of limited education, and full of strong prejudice against ‘Ireland and the Irish’. Still, this was more the effect of an erroneous system of training, than of any natural antipathy to the Irish or any other people, for, on the whole, Mrs. Hampton was a good-natured, well-meaning woman, ready and willing ‘to do a good turn whenever it was required’ (Sadlier 267).

In 1853, Irish immigrant author Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903) wrote and published about the Great Irish Famine (1845-1852) for the first time in her novel *New Lights or Life in Galway: A Tale*. This novel proved to be one of Sadlier’s greatest achievements, going through at least eight editions in the 50 years that followed the publication of her work (Fanning 116). In *New Lights*, Sadlier describes the lives of Catholic Irish peasants living in a Connemara village near Lough Corrib during the period of the Irish Famine. Rather than illustrating the detailed horrors of the Famine like many of her contemporaries, Sadlier’s novel instead expresses a polemical attack on religious conversion prompted by the ‘bible-readers’ and ‘Jumpers’ in an effort to expose “the shameless conduct of the proselytiser” (Sadlier 248). In addition to these religious themes, Sadlier’s novel underlines the flaws of the system of land acquisition and absentee landlords in nineteenth-century Ireland, and explores tensions between different social classes and English and Irish national identities.

Even though Sadlier’s work is highly critical of the English involvement in the Famine, her representation of one of the novel’s main English female characters, Mrs Hampton, is surprisingly nuanced and refined. Sadlier describes Mrs Hampton as “an English woman of limited education, and full of strong prejudice against ‘Ireland and the Irish’”, but nevertheless acknowledges that “this was more the effect of an erroneous system of training, than of any natural antipathy to the Irish or any other people” (267), implying that instead of blaming Mrs Hampton for her misguided animosity towards the Irish, the larger social and political system that her character arguably embodies should instead be criticised. This particular quote in Sadlier’s novel elicits a number of very interesting and troubling questions: Where does this strong prejudice against the Irish stem from? What does this so-called ‘erroneous training’ entail? Why would Sadlier condone Mrs Hampton’s intolerant and biased behaviour? How are English female characters portrayed in other nineteenth-century Famine novels? What is Sadlier trying to express to her Irish-American audience? And how does this

representation relate to themes of nationality and gender?

In 1993, Lynn Innes attempted to answer very similar questions. In *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society 1880-1935*, Innes describes the long-lived tradition, both in Irish and British popular and critical discourse and art, of personifying Ireland as female and England as male. Innes, additionally, notes that in comparison to male writers, comparatively less attention has been paid to the role of nineteenth-century Irish women writers and how they defined and sought to shape “the conscience of the race” (Innes 3). Related to this observation, Innes raises the following questions: “How did women themselves respond to national personifications and that rhetoric? Did they endorse and adapt to them? Did they seek to modify them and use them in their own ways? [...] Did women see a conflict between nationalism and feminism?” (4). Even though Innes endeavours to answer these interesting questions, she mostly outlines different personifications of Ireland throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the very interesting questions raised in the introduction of her work remain largely unanswered.

Inspired by Sadlier’s representation of Mrs Hampton in *New Lights* (1853), and the points raised in Innes’ *Woman and Nation* (1993), this Master’s thesis will make an effort to answer the questions raised in this introduction by focusing on the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Great Irish Famine, from the period of 1851 to 1870. This first introductory chapter will introduce the subject of the Famine and Famine literature, discuss the scope and research question of this project, and outline the methodology and theoretical framework employed to conduct this study.

1.1. The Great Irish Famine: Causes and Political Implications

The Great Irish Famine of 1845-52 was a period of mass starvation, disease, and emigration in Ireland. During this Famine, approximately one million people died and roughly two million more emigrated from Ireland to the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. The cause of the Famine was a potato blight, which destroyed potato crops throughout Europe during the 1840s: “nothing in autumn was to be seen save black withered stalks, exhaling a strong offensive odour” (Hoare, “The Black Potatoes” 33). The blight caused a great deal of havoc across the continent, but the impact of the blight was especially atrocious in Ireland, as one third of the population was dependent on the potato because of social, economic, and political

reasons.¹

Apart from the blight, it is commonly believed that the British Corn laws, and the system of land acquisition and absentee landlords, also contributed to this disaster. The efforts of the British Government to relieve the Famine victims have often been considered to be inadequate and dissatisfactory.² Although Robert Peel, the Conservative Prime Minister, made an effort to provide relief to the starving Irish between 1845 and early 1846, by authorising the import of corn maize from the United States and introducing soup-kitchens, he nevertheless continued to allow the export of grain from Ireland to Great Britain. John Russell's Whig cabinet, which came to power in June 1846, continued Peel's export of corn. His *laissez-faire* attitude towards the plight of the Irish, however, meant that Peel's emphasis on relief efforts was re-directed to a reliance on Irish local resources. Charles Trevelyan, in charge with directing British government relief to the Famine victims, argued that the "judgement of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson, that calamity must not be too much mitigated [...] the real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people" (Trevelyan 97). These harsh words, to this day, have been considered to be highly controversial and emblematic of the inadequate and dissatisfactory efforts of the British government to provide relief for the starving Irish.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Trevelyan's narrative was later opposed by Irish nationalist John Mitchel³, who in his work *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* (1861), asserted that:

¹ For more information about the potato blight and the Irish dependence on the crop, see: Cormac Ó'Gráda. *The Great Irish Famine*. Cambridge UP, 1995., which examines the Famine from an economical perspective, and Peter Gray. "The European Food Crisis and the Relief of Irish famine, 1845-50." *When the Potato Failed: Causes and Effects of the 'Last' European Subsistence Crisis, 1845-1850*. Edited by Cormac Ó'Gráda et al., Brepols, 2007.

² In his "Review of Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine, 1845-1919*." David Lloyd, for instance, observes that "it remains uncertain whether the Famine was a watershed event, transforming drastically and irrevocably the future course of Irish history, or whether it merely confirmed tendencies towards a shrinking population, the consolidation of landholding, the demise of the Ascendancy, and so forth, that were in any case well under way" and suggests that "above all, the arguments continue to rage as to whether the Famine, as opposed to the subsistence crisis that the failure of the potato crop initiated, was the consequence of administrative ineptitude, genocidal intent, or the typical and longstanding ignorance of colonial power as to the nature and needs of its colony" (268). See: David Lloyd. "Review of Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine, 1845-1919*." *Nineteenth Century Literature*, vol. 59, no. 2, 2004, pp. 267-271.

³ Irish nationalist activist, author, political journalist, and leading member of both Young Ireland and the Irish Confederation. For more information about Mitchel see: Bryan P. McGovern. *John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist*. University of Tennessee Press, 2009.

The English, indeed, call that famine a ‘dispensation of Providence;’ and ascribe it entirely to the blight of the potatoes. But potatoes failed in like manner all over Europe; yet there was no famine save in Ireland.⁴ The British account of the matter, then, is first, a fraud – second, a blasphemy. The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine (Mitchel 219).

Mitchel, in other words, very strongly believed that Britain’s political economy, inadequate relief measures, and refusal to prohibit food exports from a country hit by famine and disaster, to be nothing but contrivances to exterminate the Irish people.

As Peter Gray rightly observes in his essay “The Great Famine in Irish and British historiographies, c. 1860-1914”, both Trevelyan and Mitchel’s words helped to shape the formative period in the historicisation of the Famine between the event itself and the outbreak of the First World War (Gray 39). Mitchel’s work, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* (1861), was widely circulated on both sides of the Atlantic, and although originally principally aimed at an American audience, reappeared a few years later recategorised as an Irish history (Gray 42).⁵ Mitchel’s *Last Conquest* was followed by *History of Ireland from the Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time* in 1868, written to exhibit “the naked truth concerning English domination since the Treaty of Limerick, as our fathers saw it, and felt it [...] and, further, to picture the still more destructive devastations perpetrated upon our country in this enlightened nineteenth-century” (Mitchel, “History” 5).

Both in *The Last Conquest* and *History of Ireland*, Mitchel clearly urged his reader to support war against Britain to redress past wrongdoings, and to free Ireland from her colonial oppressor, as Mitchel believed that: “while England lives and flourishes, Ireland must die a daily death, and suffer an endless martyrdom; and that if Irishmen are ever to enjoy the rights of human beings, the British empire must first perish” (“History”, 7). This was then, as Gray observed, “the interpretive schema within which Mitchel located the Famine – as one manifestation, albeit the most naked and ruthless in modern history, of an irreconcilable struggle for mastery and domination of Britain and its rulers over Ireland” (43). Mitchel, in that sense, used the horrors of the Famine as an instrument to underline and exemplify all that

⁴ Even though Mitchel asserted that Ireland was the only nation severely affected by famine at that time, this is certainly not true. Historical records and literary accounts demonstrate that the Finnish Famine of 1866–68 and the Highland Potato Famine of 1846-1856, for instance, were just as devastating as the nineteenth-century Potato Famine in Ireland.

⁵ For more information about the evolution of Mitchel’s *Last Conquest* see: John Mitchel. *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*. Edited by Patrick Maume, University College Dublin Press, 2005.

was wrong with “the dark record of English atrocity in Ireland” (Mitchel, “History” 7).

Although Mitchel may have purposefully treated the Famine as a tool in his scheme to urge the reader to support a war against Britain, his interpretation was embraced by both the nationalists in Ireland, and Irish immigrants in the United States and Canada who had been forced to leave their native land, and has even survived in Irish and Irish-American popular imagination to this day (Bexar 3). It is therefore perhaps also not surprising that Mitchel’s understanding of the Famine found its way into nineteenth-century Irish Famine literature, which as the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, means that in many of the analysed novels in this thesis, a similar anti-Britain and anti-English attitude can be observed. This, more than anything, makes nineteenth-century literature of the Great Irish Famine a very interesting and suitable platform to examine and explore notions of nationalism.

1.2. Relevance and Research Question

At this point, one might wonder how innovative and relevant the subject of this thesis is, considering the fact that role of the British during the Famine was, and still is, a highly controversial and contested point of critical and popular debate. Nevertheless, a thorough review of past and present Famine scholarship has revealed that virtually nothing has been written about the representation of English characters, and more specifically English female characters in nineteenth-century literature of the Famine. Although quite an extensive body of work has been written about the representation of Irish characters in nineteenth-century British literature⁶, very little had been written about the representation of English characters in Irish literature. Additionally, it must also be added that the very few articles and surveys that have been composed about the representation of English characters in Irish literature are surprisingly gender-biased and mostly include representations of male English characters. Menno Spiering’s survey of the English that is featured in Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller’s *Imagology* (2007), for instance, focuses primarily on the two best-known personifications of the English that exist in literature, namely “‘the gentleman’ and his uncultivated counterpart ‘John Bull’” (Spiering 145), and strikingly fails to mention any female authors or representations, thereby treating the concept of ‘Englishness’ as a

⁶ See for instance: L.P. Curtis. *Apes and Angels: Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, Smithsonian, 1977., and *Anglo-Saxons & Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*. Bridgeport UP, 1968., Michael de Nie. *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2004., and Sheridan Gilley. *English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900*. Allen and Unwin, 1978.

predominantly male construct.

Over the last decades, moreover, scholars such as Margaret Kelleher and Marguérite Corporaal have paid extensive critical attention to literary depictions of the Famine as primarily dominated by Irish female images, and their works have placed great emphasis on recurring literary motifs in Famine literature, such as the depiction of female Irish starved bodies, mother and child images, and a dependence on the Irish female figure to convey the inexpressible reality of the horrors of the Famine.⁷ Even though the figure of the Irishwoman in nineteenth-century literature of the Famine has, thus, been thoroughly analysed, little critical attention has been paid to the literary portrayal of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Famine.

This is quite striking, considering the fact that even though these English characters might seem relatively minor and flat, their presence tends to have a great impact on some of the most important plotlines and themes within these works, as the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate. In addition, in light of the aforementioned political implications of the Famine, the ways in which these English characters are portrayed could also reveal a great deal about the author's political opinions, and the general sentiment of the time in which these novels were written. It would, moreover, be very interesting to examine the similar and contrasting ways in which the national character of the English is portrayed in Irish literature, and how national identity relates to issues of gender.

To examine some of these notions, this thesis wishes to answer the following research questions: How are English female characters portrayed in the selected⁸ nineteenth-century

⁷ See for instance: Margaret Kelleher. *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* Cork UP, 1997., which outlines different representations of female Irish figures and questions what gives these particularly feminine images their affective power, and Marguerite Corporaal. "Memories of the Great Famine and Ethnic Identity in Novels by Victorian Irish Women Writers." *English Studies*, vol. 90, no. 2, 2009, pp.142-156, which demonstrates that "femininity generally plays a major part in Irish cultural representations of the Famine" (Corporaal 150), and suggests that gender plays an significant role in narratives of the Irish Famine, and should not be overlooked.

⁸ The nineteenth-century Famine novels that will be analysed are Mary Anne Sadlier's *New Lights, or, Life in Galway: A Tale* (1852) and *Bessy Conway; or, the Irish Girl in America* (1861), Alice Nolan's *The Byrnes of Glengoulah; A True Tale* (1868), and Edmund and Julia O'Ryan's *In Re-Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time* (1870). This thesis will, in addition, also borrow from a number of nineteenth-century short stories, such as Mrs Hoare's "Little Mary: A Tale of the Black Year" (1851) and "The Black Potatoes" (1851), Emily Lawless' "Famine Roads and Memories" (1898), and "After the Famine" (1898), and Rosa Mulholland's "The Hungry Death"(1891) to illustrate or emphasise certain points and to substantiate particular arguments.

Famine novels?⁹ Can certain parallels in terms of literary themes, tropes, modes, and narrative techniques be uncovered? And what do these representations reveal about the authors' opinions on the British involvement in one of Ireland's biggest disasters and the interplay between nationhood and gender?

1.3. "No Man's Land"¹⁰: The Importance of Making the Invisible Visible

Before analysing the aforementioned novels, the fact that the premise of this thesis contains two contentious and contested elements, namely the assumption that literature can be categorised by nationality, and the privileging of one gender over the other, might raise a few red essentialist flags, and needs to be briefly addressed.

As all great critics and authors know, excellent writing escapes categories and defies classification. Heather Ingman rightly observes that "in these days of deconstruction of gender roles it may seem naïve and even retrogressive to deal with women writers as a separate category" (2). Nevertheless, since the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish Famine literature has hitherto received little to no critical attention, such distinctions are in order. In addition, taking inspiration from Elaine Showalter's analysis of nineteenth-century female writers in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977), when women writers are studied as a group, recurrent patterns, motifs, images, themes, and images, which are almost impossible to perceive if women are discussed only in relation to male writers, may be uncovered (Showalter 11). This thesis, therefore, deliberately focuses on the representation of English female characters in the works of nineteenth-century Irish female authors.

The decision to solely focus on Irish Famine writing – instead of, for instance, comparing it to British Famine narratives – stems from the earlier observation that although quite an extensive body of work has been written about the representation of Irish characters in nineteenth-century British literature, very little has been written about the representation of English characters in nineteenth-century Irish literature. This thesis, therefore, hopes to

⁹ It is important to note that this thesis classifies 'Famine novels' and 'Famine literature' as novels and other forms of writing that are either set during the Famine period, or feature memories of the Famine. Following Lindsay Janssen's definition of Famine fiction as outlined in her dissertation titled *Famine Traces: Memory, Landscape, History and Identity in Irish and Irish-Diasporic Famine Fiction, 1871–9*, this thesis thus considers Famine novels and Famine literature as "a work of narrative fiction in which the memory of the Famine features, either as constitutive element of the narrative or as a referenced memory in that narrative" (Janssen 5).

¹⁰ This title of this section corresponds to the title of a section in Cliona Ó Gallchoir's *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*. Dublin UP, 2005, pp. 8.

contribute to this gap in research by offering an insight into the ways in which English female characters were portrayed in Irish Famine narratives.

Apart from this practical matter, it should also be observed that the division of literature by nationality, in addition, has helped to establish a strong tradition of Irish literature, from Jonathan Swift to Colum McCann. Important to note, however, is that within this substantial canon of male Irish writers, with perhaps the exception of Elizabeth Bowen or Maria Edgeworth, female Irish writers tend to get lost in what Clíona Ó Gallchoir so wittingly and accurately termed “no man’s land: the place of the Irish woman writer” (8). It is, for this exact reason, that it is important to review the work of women who, to put it very bluntly, have often been overshadowed by their male contemporaries. Even though the field of Irish women’s literary history has been emerging over the last decades with, for instance, the very recent publication of Ingman and Ó Gallchoir’s *A History of Modern Irish Women’s Literature* (2018), and women writers have long since entered the dominant literary sphere, the works of female Irish writers, especially from the nineteenth century, are often omitted from Irish literary history. This thesis, instead of examining the portrayal of English characters in, for instance, William Carleton’s *The Black Prophet* (1846), Anthony Trollope’s *Castle Richmond* (1860), or Liam O’Flaherty’s *Famine* (1937), therefore focuses its attention on the works of female authors which have often been forgotten and omitted from Irish literary history, in an effort to bring to light the interesting insights they have to offer.

So why do women writers tend to vanish from Irish literary history? In *Irish Literature in the Celtic Tiger Years: Gender, Bodies, Memory* (2011) Susan Cahill argues that women writers often engage with Irish history in a different way from male writers, and therefore do not fit into the dominant discourse. A similar point, more specifically in relation to nineteenth-century women’s writing, is made in *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women’s Prose* (2008) by Heidi Hansson, who argues that nineteenth-century female writing requires a vastly different approach from the standard, ideologically charged Irish critical context that consequently measures all writers against the aesthetic values of writers like Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett (Hansson 2). In addition to these points of critique, it could also be argued that many Irish literary histories and anthologies of the past have been written by men. Even though recent scholarship by for instance Sinéad Gleeson, who has been very vocal about the fact that “the gender imbalance in past Irish short story anthologies is so shocking” (qtd. in McVeigh), has largely corrected this gender inequality, it is evident from,

to give two noteworthy examples, VIDA statistics ¹¹ and Joanna Walsh's #readwomen campaign ¹² that visibility of female writing still remains an issue today.

This thesis will, therefore, focus on the writings of nineteenth-century female Irish authors, to determine how these talented, but often forgotten, women writers responded to questions of nationalism and gender, and to determine how they defined and sought to shape the consciousness of the Irish race. Before explaining the methods and theories that I have employed to examine these concepts, the following section will first readdress the common misconception in popular and critical discourse that the Irish Famine constituted a silence in Irish literature.

1.4. "Why One Must Be Made to Stand for the Many": Breaking 'The Silence' and the Importance of Famine Scholarship.

Instead of dwelling longer on an abstract view of the subject, let me relate a little narrative which may serve, in some slight measure, to illustrate the sufferings of the poor; and I trust, on their behalf, to awaken the efficient sympathy of our kind English and Scotch fellow-subjects (Hoare, "The Black Potatoes" 35).

"The Black Potatoes" written by Mrs Hoare and published in her short-story collection *Shamrock Leaves; or Tales and Sketches of Ireland* in 1851, tells the harrowing story of Jude Mahoney, a famishing mother forced to live by the roadside and to suffer the starvation of her children before collapsing and dying herself. Mrs Hoare's short story follows a common nineteenth-century narrative template, which might also be observed in the works of Irish

¹¹ VIDA is a non-profit feminist organisation that is mainly concerned with creation of transparency around the lack of gender equality in the literary landscape and the amplification of historically-marginalised voices, "including people of color; writers with disabilities; and queer, trans and gender nonconforming individuals" (VIDA). The VIDA Count, more specifically, highlights gender imbalances in publishing by analysing forms of genre, the number of female book reviewers, books reviewed by females, and journalistic by-lines to offer an accurate assessment of the publishing world. To give a very brief impression of the number of publications in 2017, "Unfortunately, the undeniable majority, 8 out of 15 publications, failed to publish enough women writers to make up even 40% of their publication's run in 2017: *Boston Review* (37.8%), *London Review of Books* (26.9%), *The New Yorker* (39.7%), *The Atlantic* (36.5%), *The Nation* (36.5%), *The Threepenny Review* (32.7%), and *The Times Literary Supplement* (35.9%)" (VIDA Count 2017 Report). For more information and statistics, see: Amy King and Sarah Clark. "The 2017 VIDA Count." *VIDA Women in Literary Arts*. 17 June 2018. <http://www.vidaweb.org/the-2017-vida-count/#Highlights>.

¹² For more information about the #ReadWomen campaign, see: Joanna Walsh. "Will #Readwomen2014 Change Our Sexist Reading Habits?" *The Guardian*, 20 Jan. 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2014/jan/20/read-women-2014-change-sexist-reading-habits>.

novelist and poet Emily Lawless (1845-1913), who was highly critical of British policy in Ireland, in which the story transcends from abstract contemplations about the Famine to a more detailed description of a particular group of famished characters.¹³ This is done, to “illustrate the sufferings of the poor [...] to awaken the efficient sympathy” (Hoare, “The Black Potatoes” 35), “to serve as even the tiniest pebble of a contribution to this tremendous national cairn” (Lawless 159). From these passages, we can clearly observe an unambiguous desire and motivation on behalf of these authors to voice the inexpressible horrors of the event through the form of a narrative, and to educate the audience about the disaster.

Nevertheless, one of the most common misconceptions about the Great Irish Famine that most definitely needs to be addressed in this thesis, is the notion that despite the active debate of who or what caused the catastrophe, the Famine created a deafening silence in nineteenth-century Irish literature, and is markedly absent from much of Ireland’s canonical works (Schultz 24). In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (1995), Terry Eagleton famously pointed to the deficiency of literary material dealing with the Irish Famine prior to 1995 and argued that the horrible events of the Famine engendered a great silence in literature: “if the Famine stirred some to angry rhetoric, it would seem to have traumatized others into muteness [...] There is a handful of novels and a body of poems, but few truly distinguished works” (13). Eagleton’s plea for a realist depiction of the event received considerable attention from, for instance, contemporary Irish novelist Joseph O’Connor, who asserts to have written his novel *Star of the Sea* (2002) in reaction to Eagleton’s statements: “when I first read [Heathcliff and the Great Hunger], I felt it implicitly threw down a challenge” (163). Following O’Connor’s statement, Eagleton, in his review of O’Connor’s work in *The Guardian* in 2003, emphasised again that “the Irish famine of the 1840s was the greatest social catastrophe of 19th-century Europe, yet inspired surprisingly little imaginative writing”, while also acknowledging that “there is a powerful novel by Liam O’Flaherty and a starkly moving drama by the contemporary playwright Tom Murphy. But in

¹³ See for instance Lawless’ “Famine Roads and Memories” and “After Famine” in her collection *Traits and Confidences* (1898), in which Lawless first outlines the distressing effects the Famine has had on the Irish land and its people, before moving onto the specific story of Eleanor d’Arcy, a “a young girl ; well born, beautiful ; brought up in all the easy-going luxury of a large country-house ; reduced nevertheless to a state of destitution as complete as that of any nameless waif or stray in one of our cities ; dependent for her daily bread upon the charity of a couple of old servants; without a friend to inquire after her, or a soul to take the smallest interest in her future” who, having been abandoned by everyone, has to choose between “accepting the hand of a man who was not her equal in any sense of the word, and who, moreover, had only his own thews and sinews to depend upon, or — the workhouse” (Lawless 159-160).

both Yeats and Joyce it is no more than a dim resonance”, and even going as far as to state that “it is as though African-Americans were to maintain an embarrassed silence about the slave trade” (“Another Country”).

Even though renowned scholars in the field of Irish literature and Famine studies such as Margaret Kelleher, Melissa Fegan, Christopher Morash, and Marguérite Corporaal have long since proven that “the Famine proved a source of painful inspiration for literature from its inception until the present day” (Fegan 2) and have tried to finally put to rest the notion that the Famine engendered a silence in literature, Eagleton’s words still strongly resonate today. In June 2018, for instance, Bert Wright published a review of Paul Lynch’s novel *Grace* (2016) in *The Irish Times*, in which he followed Eagleton’s argument that “the culture had never produced a writer adequate to the scale of the event” and questioned whether it was perhaps “the inability to conceive such a cataclysm that stayed the writers’ pens for so long” (“Readers of Literary Fiction”). Nevertheless, one might question whether authors truly were unable to ‘conceive such a cataclysm’, or whether this pesterous misconception has simply found a way to fester itself permanently in popular discourse, especially when considering that between 1845 and 1921 well over a hundred novels and stories about the Famine were published in Ireland, Canada, and the US, many by bestselling authors such as Mary Anne Sadlier, L.T. Meade, and Patrick Sheehan. This, more than anything suggests that the Famine, instead of provoking a silence, incited a discussion in literature about what the Famine meant, what consequences the catastrophe had for Ireland, what the role the Irish and English people played during the Famine, and who might be blamed for Ireland’s greatest disaster.

Following Bert Wright’s recent review, it can be concluded that the impression that very little has been written about the Famine, or that the disaster had zero to no impact on Ireland’s literature is misguided, and needs to be reassessed. This thesis hopes to contribute to this debate by demonstrating that the selected novels, which were all written relatively shortly after the disaster, can all be read as examples of how literature was employed by women writers to address the horrors of the Famine, educate their British and (Irish) American audiences about the disaster, and, in similarity to John Mitchel, use the theme of the Famine as an instrument to address political concerns and to explore notions of gender and nationality.

1.5. Methods and Approaches: Imagology, Nationalism, and National Stereotypes

To examine the representation of English female characters in the aforementioned novels, this thesis will primarily make use of Leerssen and Beller's theory of imagology, as outlined in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters* (2007). The theory of imagology, originally developed in the discipline of comparative literature, focuses on the literary articulation of national stereotypes. More specifically, imagology studies how certain temperamental characteristics are stereotypically accredited to certain nationalities, resulting in the creation and discovery of certain 'ethnotypes', such as the backwards and drunk Irish, greedy Dutch, and passionate Hungarians.

Even though these ethnotypes have little to no empirical foundation, they nonetheless exercise an important influence on how humans view the world. This notion ties in with an earlier article by Leerssen, namely "Mimesis and Stereotype" (1991), in which Leerssen suggests that the public has a set of expectations surrounding the behaviour of certain types of national characters. A work of art is, therefore, only viewed as realistic or truthful if it lives up to these expectations, and affirms these stereotypes. This suggests that works of literature are not only influenced by the societal views of certain national stereotypes, but in a reciprocal fashion, also have the agency to alter or create shifts in the general perception of certain national stereotypes. Poets and authors, as will become apparent from the analysis of the nineteenth-century Famine novels, might therefore sometimes very consciously represent certain nationalities in a slightly different fashion to emphasise their own viewpoints and/or implicit political agendas.

This thesis will approach the usage of ethnotypes as part of "of a broader process in which economic, social and historical forces interact with cultural processes to produce a range of identities which may be taken up, rejected, opposed, or adapted for individual or group need" (Giles and Middleton 5). This means that in the specific case of the English, the representation of this ethnotype is not only a representation of what it means to be English, but also reflects a nexus of values, beliefs and attitudes that can be attributed to the Irish. Borrowing terms from postcolonial and psychoanalytic studies, the ways in which the Irish perceive 'the Other' (e.g. the English), in that sense is also a reflection of 'the Self' (e.g. the Irish). This thesis, therefore, will not only analyse the representation of English characters in the aforementioned novels in isolation, but also reflect on what these depictions reveal about what it means to be Irish. In chapter 2 of this thesis the construction of nations and national stereotypes, and its relation to literature will be further discussed. Chapter 3 and 4,

furthermore, will explore different nineteenth-century national representations of Ireland and England in relation to notions of colonialism and gender, to examine how both nations have been imagined in nineteenth-century literature and art.

Apart from Leerssen and Beller's *Imagology* (2007), this thesis will also frequently borrow methods and terms from postcolonial theory to examine notions of colonialism and imperialism, such as Edward Said's concept of 'othering' - e.g. to view or treat (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself- as expressed in his critically acclaimed *Orientalism* (1978)¹⁴; and Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community, e.g. the treatment of the nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.¹⁵ This thesis will, in addition, also rely on Gérard Genette's theory of 'focalisation'¹⁶, that is, the perspective from which the events in the novels are described and witnessed, and Mieke Bal's concept of the workings of 'narrative embedding'¹⁷, the manner in which the plot of a novel is constructed in terms of various narrative layers, in order to examine how the novels, which are often rather didactic and sentimental, encouraged and stimulated readerly engagement. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis will not only examine works of Famine fiction in relation to Mitchel's historiographies of the Famine, but will also analyse artistic nineteenth-century representations of England and Ireland, such as Sir John Tenniel's caricatures in *Punch Magazine*, as well as artistic renderings of other national personifications such as France's 'Marianne' and Germany's 'Germania'. In doing so, this thesis hopes to give an more inclusive and well-rounded impression of the cultural context and times in which the examined novels were written.

1.6. Structure

In order to examine and discuss the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Famine, this thesis will guide its readers through six analysis chapters, followed by an extensive conclusion. Succeeding the introduction, chapter two of

¹⁴ For more information about Said's concept of 'othering' see: Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. Penguin, 2003.

¹⁵ See: Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

¹⁶ Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell UP, 1983.

¹⁷ See: Mieke Bal. "The Laughing Mice: Or, on Focalisation." *Poetics Today*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1981, pp. 202-210.

this thesis will discuss and conceptualise the notion of nationalism and its relation to national stereotypes, and illustrate how this thesis will examine national stereotypes of the English following Leerssen and Beller's concept of imagology.

Before analysing the representations of English female characters, chapter three and four of this thesis, in addition, will examine literary and artistic nineteenth-century depictions of John Bull, Britannia, Hibernia, and Erin; national personifications of Ireland and England. This analysis will give more insight into the dominant discourse used in the nineteenth century to explore notions of Englishness and Irishness. Together with the findings from chapter two, this will form the theoretical and conceptual framework on which the analysis of the representation of female English characters in the selected nineteenth-century Famine novels is based.

The analysis of the novels has revealed three very distinct patterns in literary depictions of English womanhood which strongly reflect the authors' opinions on gender, class, and politics, and are very telling of the ways in which the national character of the English was portrayed in nineteenth-century Irish literature of the Famine. Following these uncovered motifs, chapter five, six, and seven have been structured by subject and classification, rather than on methodological groundings, because this allows for a fuller consideration of different representations of English female characters in the aforementioned novels. Chapter five of this thesis will examine the representation of the first classification, namely the stereotype of the spinster, in relation to themes of ethnicity, religion, and gender. Chapter six will, moreover, study the depiction of unmarried women in light of Victorian notions of class, gender, and religion. Chapter seven will, lastly, explore the portrayal of married women and widows in relation to themes of nationalism, colonialism, and gender.

These three analysis chapters together offer a variety of different representations of English female characters which will contribute to a more general understanding of how national stereotypes of England and Ireland, and notions of Englishness and Irishness, were perceived, constructed, and represented in nineteenth-century Irish Famine literature. The most important findings of this study will, finally, be discussed in chapter 8, which will, in addition, also offer suggestions for further research.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL STEREOTYPES

2.1. Defining Nationalism

Over the last decades, nationalism has become an increasingly popular theme in scholarly, as well as popular, debate. The concept “stretches across the academic spectrum” (Leith 22), drawing in various disciplines and areas of study. Especially in the wake of the Scottish Referendum and Brexit, the number of published works in Britain on various aspects of nationalism has been steadily rising.¹⁸ This recent popularity has led to a new form of discourse, in which the term nationalism has become an empty ‘buzz-word’, or is wrongly equated with notions of patriotism.¹⁹ In many cases, the term is used without precision, and the root of the concept; e.g. ‘the nation’, remains unquestioned and unexplored. To overcome this issue, the following sections will discuss and conceptualise the notion of nationalism and its relation to national stereotypes. Section 2.1.1. and 2.1.2. will determine how this thesis defines the concept of nationalism. Section 2.2.1. explores how nationalism relates to literature, and Section 2.2.2. will explain how this thesis will examine national stereotypes of the English following Leerssen and Beller’s concept of imagology. Altogether, this will form the theoretical and conceptual framework on which the analysis of the representation of female English characters in the nineteenth-century Famine novels is based.

2.1.1. *Theories of Nationalism: Primordialism and Modernism*

The construction of nationalism has been studied from many perspectives and through various disciplines. Historians, literary scholars, economists, psychologists, sociologists, and many

¹⁸ For examples of recent scholarly works on the concept of nationalism and British nationalism, see: Gordon G. Betts. *The Twilight of Britain: Cultural Nationalism, Multi-Culturalism and the Politics of Toleration*. Routledge, 2018., Astrid Swenson. “Historic Preservation, the State and Nationalism in Britain.” *Nation and Nationalism*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2018, pp. 43-64., and Georgios Varouxakis. “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism in Modern British Political Thought: Continuities and Discontinuities.” *Cosmopolitanism in Conflict*. Edited by D. Guseinova. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 147-178.

¹⁹ The concept of nationalism has often been perceived very negatively, both in critical and popular discourse. Scholars such as Kosterman and Feshbach have described nationalism as patriotism’s insidious evil twin, defining the former as “a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance” and the latter as “a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation” (Kosterman and Feshbach 271). Without further commenting on these issues, this study perceives the concept of nationalism as prioritising *unity* through cultural background, including language and heritage, whereas the concept of patriotism underlines the *love* for a nation, stressing its values and beliefs. For more information on the difference between nationalism and patriotism see, for instance, Tan Kok-Chor. *Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Patriotism*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

others have created different typologies and other frameworks to underline why and how the concept of nationalism should be studied. Even though most studies have agreed on the fact that nationalism, on a primitive and fundamental level, is concerned with the loyalty and devotion to a particular society or nation, the origin of nationalism remains a highly contested and heavily debated subject. Perspectives on the construction of nationalism generally fall under two strands, namely those who believe in a primordialist or traditionalist method, and those who believe in an instrumentalist or modernist approach. Primordialism is, as Leith has observed, “the oldest academic approach to the study of nationalism [...] due to the fact that it was initially *the* approach” (23). Primordialist scholars consider nations to be an implicit part of nature, and believe their existence to be *a priori*, suggesting that nationalism is the result of humans’ evolutionary tendency to gather and unite in groups. Many primordialist scholars, furthermore, believe that ethnicity and nationalism are intrinsically the same. According to these scholars, nationalism, therefore, did not come into existence during a certain period of time, as it was and always had been an intrinsic and unquestioned part of nature.

This train of thought has been strongly challenged by modernist scholars, such as Eller and Coughlan²⁰, who believe that ethnicity should be seen as a social construct of the self, undergoing constant change and reconsideration, and Brass²¹ who, quite radically, views ethnicity as the primary construct of the elite: “a process created in the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities” (16). Brass’ theory of nationalism and ethnicity, as outlined in *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (1991), is founded on two main principles: one, that ethnicity and nationalism are social and political constructs, and two that ethnicity and nationalism are modern phenomena intertwined with the activities of the modern state. Brass uses the concept of elite competition to reinforce his argument that both nationalism and ethnicity emerge from specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralising states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups. Nationalism, in the eyes of these modernists, therefore, is not a natural process, but came into existence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, alongside the formation of various societies and social classes.²²

²⁰ See: Jack Eller and Reed M. Coughlan. “The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic Attachments.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2010, pp. 183-202.

²¹ See: Paul R. Brass. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. Sage Publications, 1991.

²² In the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century, nationalism became a fully-fledged, widespread, and powerful concept. Following the Romantic spirit of individualism and identity, and the liberal ideology that a legitimate

This study rejects the main principles of primordialism, and prefers a more modernist approach. Nevertheless, this thesis acknowledges that the primal desire to be part of a group or community is part of human nature, even though nationalism should not be equated with ethnicity. That being said, this does not mean that nationalism is a natural construct, or that nationalism, as a concept rather than as a *feeling*, did not come into existence during a certain period of time. This study, therefore, will treat the concept of nationalism as a social construct that has come into existence, primarily, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, alongside other cultural, political, historical, and societal changes.²³

2.1.2. *Concepts and Definitions*

Following the emergence of new nationalist theories in the late-twentieth century, scholars from various disciplines have sought to define the concept of nationalism. As Joep Leerssen has rightly observed in “The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe” (2005), critics have found it exceedingly difficult to define the concept of nationalism in a way that includes and constitutes the various circumstances and settings in which the term can be employed. Philosopher and anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1925-1995) defined nationalism as “primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner 1), emphasising the importance of political ideologies in the construction of nationalism. Gellner’s former student, British historical sociologist Anthony Smith (1939-2016), very strongly believed in a distinction between ethnic and civic types of nationalism, and favoured the notion that nations have essential ethnic cores.²⁴ Although Smith agreed with modernist scholars that nationalism is in

state should be built on the desires of a people rather than on God or imperial domination, nationalism became intertwined with political desires for national independence or unification. As religious, economic, and social divisions became increasingly pronounced, many strong nationalist movements emerged, resulting in a global outburst of revolutions, uprisings, and civil wars. For more information about the development of nationalism and nation-building in nineteenth-century Europe, see: Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe.” in Balakrishnan, Gopal, ed. *Mapping the Nation*. Edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, Verso, 1999, pp. 78-97.

²³ The rise of the middle class, which led to more emphasis on democratic political theory and power, and the French Revolution (1789-1799), which underlined the inseparability of the nation and its people, for instance, inspired the emergence of modern nationalism. These social developments are often seen as one of the first moments in modern history in which political expression and nationalism truly became intertwined, and have inspired many other peoples and nations, such as the United Irishmen. See: David Aberbach. “Nationalism and the Hebrew Bible.” *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2005, pp. 223-242.

²⁴ During the second half of the twentieth century, scholars like Anthony Smith and Hans Kohn (1967) attempted to distinguish various forms of nationalism. One of the key distinctions in this debate was the difference between ‘ethnic’ and ‘civic’ nationalism. Civic nationalism was believed to have emerged from the French Revolution, and concerned itself with the connection between the state and its people. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, was believed to have emerged from (German) Romanticism and philosophy, and emphasized the “organic

essence a modern phenomenon, he continued to insist that nations have premodern and ethnic origins. Smith, therefore, defined the concept of the nation as “a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history” (17), and perceived the concept of nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’” (28), stressing the importance of autonomy, national unity, and national identity.

Even though Smith’s definition has become generally accepted among nationalist scholars, it does imply a form of nationalism that is intrinsically dependent on the nation and its political tendencies, without taking into consideration different cultural and social philosophies, literatures, and artistic movements that help to constitute national identity and nationalism. According to Leerssen, “political and sociological analyses of nationalism have tended to focus on modernization processes and public-sphere activism rather than on the rarefied and often nostalgic realms of philology, folklore, literature and traditionalism” (Leerssen 23). In addition, Leerssen, notes that “all parties tend to locate ‘culture’ outside the nationalist ideology, as the general, external ambience which was invoked or influenced; rather than analysing cultural rhetoric as an intrinsic part of, and commitment within, the nationalist project” (8). Leerssen, therefore, opts for an comparative analysis and typology of nationalism in which a nation’s cultural concerns are taken into consideration (4). Following Miroslav Hroch’s important work on cultural nationalism, Leerssen underlines the notion that cultural preoccupations are, in almost all cases, ahead of political events, suggesting that culture is not a passive reflection of nationalism, but rather a vital part of its construction.²⁵ Taking up an intermediary position between modernist and primordialist thought, Leerssen emphasises the short history, but nevertheless long term memory of nationalism. To illustrate this, Leerssen argues that any culture exists of a wide array of literary stereotypes and myths which, affected by Romantic historicism, have come to be misunderstood as traditional and

collectivity of the Volk as the fundamental body politic” (Leerssen, “Nationalism” in *Imagology*, 383). For more information about the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, and the different forms of nationalism that emerged from Europe during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, see: Joep Leerssen. “Nationalism.” *Imagology, The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*. Edited by Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 383-386.

²⁵ See Miroslav Hroch. “From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe.” *Mapping the Nation*. Edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, Verso, 1999, pp. 78-97.

long-lived ethnic continuities.²⁶

Following Leerssen's arguments on the inclusion of culture in the construction and definition of nationalism, this research project will stress the importance of both political and cultural phenomena in the construction of English and Irish identity and nationality. Drawing from the definitions of Smith, Gellner, and Leerssen, this study treats nationalism as a product of political, cultural, economic, social, and historical developments, and defines the concept of nationalism as the condition of the mind of a group of people, either living in a well-defined geographical area, or perceiving themselves to be part of a larger non-geographical and imagined community, sharing the same ideological, cultural, and political beliefs and values.²⁷

2.2. Nationalism, National Stereotypes, and Literature

2.2.1. *'The Decline of Literature Indicates the Decline of a Nation': Nationalism and Literature*

As Leerssen has pointed out, cultural expressions and instances of cultural activism, such as "the mention of an edition of folksongs or of a certain historical novel" (9) have been referred to in most analyses of nationalism, but these references are generally given as background information, or as a way of illustrating certain political or social developments and events (Leerssen 10). This is surprising, considering the fact that literature can be seen as a vehicle for the expression and circulation of nationalist ideas, and can also function as an agent in constructing national identity, as the next chapters of this thesis will illustrate.

Throughout time, poets, authors, critics, and philosophers have continuously expressed the importance of literature with regards to the nation. German literary critic Frederick Schlegel (1772-1829) believed that "literature is a comprehensive essence of the intellectual life of a nation"²⁸, suggesting that literature is at the core of a country's intellect. Schlegel's

²⁶ For more information about the influence of Romantic historicism on the construction and perception of nationalism, see: Joep Leerssen. "The Cultivation of Culture: Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe." Working Papers. *European Studies*, 2005.

²⁷ The idea that the concept of nationalism is related to the condition of the mind of a group of people is borrowed from Benedict Arnold's concept of 'imagined communities', in which he defines the concept of a nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that particular group. For more information see: Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.

²⁸ Quoted in: James R.A. Scott. *The Making of Literature*, Allied Publishers, 1988, page 196.

contemporary, German author and statesman Johann Wolfgang van Goethe (1749-1832), stated that “the decline of literature indicates the decline of a nation” (109), illustrating that the condition of a nation can be measured through the state of its literature. More than a hundred years later, American poet and critic Ezra Pound (1885-1972), similarly, claimed that “if a nation’s literature declines, the nation atrophies and decays” (32). All of these examples illustrate that literature and nationalism are closely connected, and that throughout time, literature has always been perceived as a vehicle for the expression and circulation of nationalist ideas.

In addition, as Sarah Corse demonstrated in her astounding analysis of nearly two hundred American and Canadian novels²⁹, national canon formation does not only occur alongside nation-building, but literature also plays a symbolic role in the construction of nationalism. Literature, thus, is not only a vehicle for the expression and circulation of nationalist thought but, reciprocally, also has the power to constitute nationalist canons and ideologies. In the case of the above mentioned examples, this does not only mean that these authors, poets, and critics, understood the importance of literature in relation to nationalism, but in addition, also inspired and helped to construct new canons and nationalist ideologies. An important example, in this case, would be the works of William Butler Yeats, which famously inspired Irish nationalists, such as Michael Collins and Padraig Pearse, to use violence in order to attain self-rule during the Easter Rising in 1916 (Mulcahey 19).

Thus, in order to explore a country’s nationalism at a certain period in time, one should not only look at political pamphlets, speeches, and other forms of socio-political discourse, but also analyse its poetry and literature. More specifically, in the case of this study, this suggests that when exploring gendered representations of Irishness and Englishness in nineteenth-century post-Famine Ireland, one must not only examine the historiographies, political pamphlets, demographic and economic figures, and other socio-political forms of discourse, but also look at the literature and narratives that helped to constitute these notions. In doing so, this research project does not only reflect upon the ways in which literature can articulate and spread nationalist beliefs and expressions, but also on the ways in which literature has helped to constitute and construct forms of nationalism, transmuting “informal vernacular/demotic practises into discrete elements in the structural systematics of a continent considered as a set of nations” (Leerssen 31).

²⁹ See: Sarah Corse. *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States*. Cambridge UP, 1996

2.2.2. *'Mental Images of the Other and ourselves': Imagology and National Stereotypes*

In *Woman and Nation In Irish Literature and Society 1880-1935*, C.L. Innes comments on the often neglected role of Irish women in the struggle for Irish identity and nationality in critical discourse, and observes that “Irish historians and literary scholars have given at best a passing mention to those women most actively involved in the political and literary movements, and have found it difficult to include them in their overall narratives of the nation” (3). Since female authors are often missing from these narratives, and the importance of their role in the formation of Irish nationality and identity is often overlooked or disregarded, the analysis of the nineteenth-century Famine novels in chapter 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis, will reveal how and to what extent Irish female writers, and their works, contributed to the construction of both English and Irish identity, nationalism, and national stereotypes.

In order to do so, this study will make use of Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller's ground-breaking work *Imagology, The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey* (2007), which determines and describes how national stereotypes in literature can be thoroughly and successfully examined. This method of analysis has been termed ‘imagology’, and applies to the study of mental images of the Other and ourselves (Leerssen 14). *Imagology* gives a systematic overview of the literary and cultural construction and representation of certain national characters, including the Irish and English. In the chapter “Perception, Image, Imagology”, Beller paints a complex picture of how national stereotypes in literature are constructed. According to Beller, literature allows for characters to be reduced to a few distinct and noticeable character traits. When these traits become part of a larger group, such as a race or national people, they form national stereotypes. In this process, it becomes extremely hard to determine whether these stereotypes are based on actualities and truths, or derive from socially or culturally constructed images of the Other (Beller 7). Even though national stereotypes in literature are often perceived as amusing or comical, when these stereotypes become part of a larger canon of literature, they also have the power to spread destructive prejudices of a nation or culture. The main aim of the study of imagology, therefore, is to “describe the origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them” (Beller 12).

In similarity to Beller, Leerssen asserts that national stereotypes are primarily constructed, formulated, and disseminated through literature:

Literature (as well as more recent poetically ruled and fictional-narrative media, such as cinema or the comic strip) is a privileged genre for the dissemination of stereotypes, because it often works on the presupposition of a ‘suspension of disbelief’ and some (at least aesthetic) appreciative credit among the audience. Such factors continue to give an imagologist specialism within literary studies its *raison d’être* (27).

In “History and Method” Leerssen offers a comprehensive method on how the theory of imagology can be applied to literature. First, Leerssen stresses the subjectivity of national stereotypes, and emphasises that is not up to an imagologist to determine whether a particular national stereotype is false or true. Second, Leerssen underlines that “the imagologist’s frame of reference is a textual and intertextual one” and that “the nationality represented (the spectant) is silhouetted in the perspectival context of the representing text or discourse (spectant)” (27). Imagologists, therefore, often examine discourses in which both characterisations of the Other, as well as the Self, can be observed. In the case of this study, this means that not only the representation of the English (the Other), but also the representation of the Irish (the Self) in nineteenth-century Irish Famine literature will be examined, as the representation of the Self will also reflect upon the portrayal of the Other, and will help to explain how and why English female characters have been represented in a certain way.

In describing the methodology of imagology, Leerssen identifies four important steps that must be undertaken in the study of national stereotypes. The first step is to *establish the intertext of a national characterisation and or stereotyping as a trope, and to place it in a tradition*. Questions that need to be answered during this first step include: What is the tradition of the trope and is the background tradition passively or actively echoed, mocked, or ignored? The second step involves *the contextualising of the trope*; what sort of text is this, and what are the conventions of this particular genre of text? The third step involves *the historical contextualisation of the text itself*, as “literary texts cannot be interpreted in a timeless, aesthetic, never-never-land” (Leerssen, “Imagology” 26). Finally, the text’s *target audience and the possible reception and/or impact of these national tropes on the target audience* must be examined (Leerssen, “Imagology” 28).

This study will follow the four proposed steps outlined by Leerssen, and will analyse the tradition, trope, historical context, and target audience of the eight nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels. In order to examine these Irish Famine novels, the methods of symptomatic reading and close-reading will be employed. First, the novels will be read to get a general

understanding of how Irish and English national identities are stereotyped. Secondly, the novels will be dissected, examined, and colour-coded to uncover specific instances of national stereotyping, or the application of certain tropes. Special attention will be given to the different methods of stereotyping, which will either occur through setting, character description, or dialogue. These stereotypes will be compared to the national stereotypes described in Menno Spiering's survey of the English, and Joep Leerssen's contribution to the survey of the Irish, to see if and to what extent the stereotypes in the novels follow the traditional literary canon, or deviate from it. Finally, the different stereotypes of the English and the Irish will be linked to notions of nationalism, class, colonialism, and gender, to reveal and explain why these characters have been stereotyped in a certain way, and to examine how and to what extent these novels comment on the historically troubled relationship between England and Ireland.

3. REPRESENTATIONS OF ENGLAND AND ENGLISHNESS: JOHN BULL AND BRITANNIA

The rise of nineteenth-century nationalist literature was characterised by, amongst other things ³⁰, a new critical practise: the creation of manifestoes that aimed to determine how to create and cultivate a national literature. As Leerssen observed, Matthew Arnold's essay "On the Study of Celtic Literature", first delivered as a lecture series in 1867, is perhaps one of "the closest things England has to offer by way of a national-literary critical manifesto" (Leerssen, "Englishness" 63). Arnold's essay delineates an English literary agenda by discussing the often contradictory combination of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultural traditions within England's literary imagination. Arnold accordingly perceives the English literary tradition as consisting of both Saxon and Celtic sensibilities, and considers the works of 'the English greats', e.g. Shakespeare and Byron, to consist of both realism (ascribed to the Saxon), and a sense of natural magic (ascribed to the Celt):

Titanism as we see it in Byron,—what other European poetry possesses that like the English, and where do we get it from? The Celts, with their vehement reaction against the despotism of fact, with their sensuous nature, their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities, the Celts are the prime authors of this vein of piercing regret and passion,—of this *Titanism* in poetry (Arnold 126).

Rather than pleading for a purely ethnic 'English' nationalist tradition, Arnold rightly recognises that no such thing exists, and instead acknowledges that the "English spirit and its productions" (Arnold 361), too, have a mixed and diverse origin and nature.

Arnold's sentiment towards Englishness and English literature, might be explained by Leerssen's observation that in the nineteenth century, a previous sense of Britishness³¹,

³⁰ Those other elements being a rise of many 'national poets', whose ambition is to become the spokesperson of a nation, and a new literary historicism, "which sees the rootedness and growth of literature taking place, not in a cosmopolitan-universalist canon of 'literature-at large', but in nationally distinct traditions, each linked to its own language of expression" (Leerssen "Englishness", 63). For more information see: Joep Leerssen. "Englishness, Ethnicity, and Matthew Arnold." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2006, pp. 63-79.

³¹ This sense of Britishness, as Leerssen observes, was "shot through by religious and ethnic divisions between England, Scotland and Ireland, and to some extent Wales" after the 1801 Act of Union (Leerssen 65).

came to be overlaid by ethnic phraseology in the course of the nineteenth century, more precisely the opposition between Anglo-Saxon and Celtic and “ ‘Englishness’ was seen, not so much as a composite of subdued Anglo-Saxons and Norman-French conquerors, but as the conquering Germanic element within the British Isles: the offspring of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, as opposed to various non-English (‘Celtic’) aboriginals: Welsh, Highlanders and Irish” (65).

The construction of nineteenth-century Englishness, thus, can be said to have been based on its opposition to two Others: the older stereotyped counterpart of the “‘Norman yoke’ of feudalism and arbitrary monarchy” (Leerssen 65), and the ‘Celtics’. Interestingly, as Leerssen observes, when contrasted with the Normans, the English were perceived and portrayed as demotic and demonic natives, but when contrasted with Britain’s indigenous Celts, they were seen and depicted as strong, moral, and vigorous invaders ousting a primitive race of underdeveloped aboriginals (65), not just by outsiders, but also by themselves. This observation resonates with, for instance, Trevelyan’s statement during the Great Famine that “the real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the people” (Trevelyan 97), in which this perception of the allegedly virtuous and moral English ‘invader’ versus the ‘primitive race’ of the underdeveloped aboriginal’ becomes painfully clear. The English attitude towards the Celt, and this Saxon-Celtic opposition, has proven to be very interesting for this thesis, as it not only demonstrates that Irish nationalist literature and the construction of a sense of ‘Irishness’ was partially based upon its relation to the British colonial oppressor, as the previous chapter has determined, but also suggests that the establishment of a nineteenth-century English identity, in return, seems to have been largely based on its relation to ‘the indigenous Celt’.

Before analysing the aforementioned Famine novels to see how nineteenth-century female writers responded to representations of English and Irish characters, we should examine to what extent these female authors were aware of the personifications and national stereotypes of Ireland and England, and analyse whether they seemed to be receptive of the connections between gender, feminism, nationalism, and colonialism. This chapter will take Menno Spiering’s survey of the English in Leerssen and Beller’s *Imagology* as its starting point, and explore representations of the iconic English John Bull. Since, as observed in chapter 1 of this thesis, Spiering’s survey is noticeably gender-biased and only lists male representations of the English, this chapter will, in addition, also comment on literary and

artistic representations of Britannia, the only nineteenth-century female personification of England.

3.1. Representations of England and Englishness: John Bull

3.1.1. *Literary Depictions of John Bull and Englishness*

Following the survey in *Imagology*, it can be determined that two well-known personifications of the English exist in literature, namely “‘the gentleman’ and his uncultivated counterpart ‘John Bull’” (Spiering 145). The origin of the English ‘gentleman’ can be traced to the Medieval code of conduct of chivalry and knighthood, which was developed between 1170 and 1220. The ideals of English chivalric code of conduct were popularised in Medieval, especially Arthurian and Chaucerian, literature and transported across the globe via the translations and adaptations of key works such as Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. During the eighteenth century, the first images of the “beef-eating, ale-swilling John Bull” (Giles and Middleton 4) emerged. Nineteenth-century caricaturists such as John Leech and Sir John Tenniel were the conventional creators of John Bull as the character that we know today: a solid and square-shaped jovial and honest Englishman, sometimes depicted as wearing an Union Jack waistcoat, and with an English bulldog at his heel.

Bull’s first introduction to the British public, however, was not via cartoons or art but through literature. The character of John Bull was invented by the Scottish mathematician, physician, and occasional writer John Arbuthnot (1667- 1735) in a set of political pamphlets in which Bull featured as the protagonist. Arbuthnot’s five pamphlets (1712), widely distributed and collected and reprinted fifteen years later as *The History of John Bull*, were written in support of the leaders of the newly formed Tory ministry, St. John and Harley. Although the Tory party was badly divided, its members in 1712 all had one paramount purpose: bringing the ten-year-long War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) to an end, which had become a very costly war, and had created growing tensions between the British and their chief allies, the Emperor Joseph I and the Dutch.

Arbuthnot’s satirical pamphlets, in short, tell the story of John Bull, a country squire, who takes Philip Baboon to court over his inheritance of the late Lord Strutt’s estate. The story can be read as a satire of war with Spain (1701–1714), with the late Lord Strutt representing the childless King Charles II, Nicolas Frog representing the Dutch, Philip Baboon representing the House of Bourbon and King Louis XIV, and John Bull, obviously,

representing England.

Throughout the satire, John Bull, characterised as “ruddy and plump” looking, “with a pair of cheeks like a trumpeter” (Arbuthnot 78), is portrayed as a foolish, middle class Whig, “an honest plain-dealing Fellow, Cholerick, Bold, and of a very inconstant Temper” who does not want to be governed by others and is “very apt to quarrel with his friends, especially when they pretended to govern him” (Arbuthnot 78). This representation, undoubtedly, is the result of Arbuthnot’s own Tory convictions, which are further emphasised through the representations of John Bull’s relatives. His mother, for instance, is depicted as sober and discreet, representing the Church of England, and his headstrong sister Peg, who embodies Scotland, is portrayed as pale, malnourished, and poor, and frequently squabbling with her brother. Eventually, Peg marries a man named Jack, who, representing Presbyterianism, manages to tame her wild character. Ultimately, Arbuthnot’s portrayal of John Bull can be read as a negative representation of Whiggism. As Spiering observes, the John Bull that Arbuthnot envisioned was from a lower class, “easily angered and always ready to dust up his enemies” (146).

Many of the literary images of John Bull that followed were “the result of a process of contrastive self-definition” (Spiering 147) and John Bull characters often showed their Englishness “through their directness, love of freedom, and dislike of all things French” (Spiering 147). In addition to this newfound self-reflectiveness, the Jacobite Rebellions (1688-1746)³² helped to establish a Protestant core of English national identity.³³ This Protestant core could, for instance, be observed in Arbuthnot’s representation of John Bull as a man who shared a high regard for liberty and honesty. After the break with Catholicism, moreover, Protestants, according to Spiering, generally saw themselves as morally upright and guardians of the people’s freedom. These self-images, in addition, “became deeply ingrained after Queen Mary (1553-1558) attempted forcefully to reconvert her subjects to Catholicism. As she was married to a foreigner, the devoutly Catholic Philip of Spain,

³² The Jacobite Rebellions, also known as the Jacobite Risings or the War of the British Succession, were a series of wars and uprisings in Great Britain and Ireland that occurred between 1688 and 1746. The uprisings were aimed at returning James II of England and VII of Scotland, the last Catholic British monarch, and later his descendants of the House of Stuart, to the throne of Great Britain after they had been deposed by Parliament during the Glorious Revolution (1688). The movement was named after *Jacobus*, the Latin form of James.

³³ This ‘Protestant core’ found its origins in the English Reformation of the 1530s, which was characterised by strong Protestant morals, such as “the right to speak one’s mind, and one’s duty to speak the truth” (Spiering 147).

Catholics were soon assigned the role of the Other” (Spiering 147). The reign of Puritan dictator Cromwell (1653-1658), furthermore, further emphasised the sentiment that the English were the chosen people, designated to defend “God’s liberty in a perverted Europe” (Spiering 148). These historical events, however, also highlighted the fact that Englishness was not only contrasted with the Continental Other, such as the French and the Spanish, but also with other ethnotypes a lot closer to home, such as the Celts of Ireland, the Scots, and the Welsh.

3.1.2. Shifting Iconographies: The Transformation of John Bull

The wide circulation of the Arbuthnot’s satire fixed the character of John Bull as a popular personification in eighteenth-century political writings. Following Arbuthnot’s representation of John Bull, the eighteenth century saw a rise of political cartoons in which John Bull made frequent appearances. In a 1779 political cartoon titled “The Present State of Great Britain”, created by English artist John Phillips, (see Appendix, fig. 1), for instance, we can observe John Bull depicted as holding up a staff and a liberty cap, and dozing off while on duty. To John Bull’s right we can observe a Scotsman (characteristically wearing a kilt), who is trying to hold off a Frenchman. Simultaneously, a Dutchman is trying to pick Bull’s pocket, while a native American is reaching for the liberty cap. In light of the American War of Independence (1775-1783), Phillips’ cartoon can be read as a comment on England’s imperial decline: “beset by his enemies, protected only by buddy Scotland, England's pocket is picked by Holland, and while France is ward off, America craftily lifts England's liberty cap - though Scotland is doing his best to keep hold of the staff” (Rauser 166). In the view of this cartoonist, it therefore seems that “the Americans are making off with England's true liberty, and it is England's own fault for not being more vigilant in its protection” (Rauser 167).

Other cartoonists such as Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank portrayed the character of John Bull in similar ways, albeit in their own unique artistic styles, and used his character to attack national politics. While the representation of John Bull’s physical appearance often bore the mark of the individual artist, he still resurfaced time after time as the woeful wretch. The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) at the turn of the century, saw the rise of John Bull cartoons that were not just used to attack the British government, but to attack foreign governments as well. “Little Boney”, a cartoon by James Gillray, published in 1803, depicts a strong and sturdy looking shirtless John Bull in sailor’s pants standing in the English Channel, staring across the ocean at a caricature of Napoleon Bonaparte, who is hiding inside his castle in France (see Appendix, fig. 2). John Bull is calling Napoleon out to fight: “You’re

a`com`ing? You be d_nd! If you mean to invade us, why make such a rout? I say, Little Boney- why don't you come out? Yes, d_n ye, why don't you come out?"(qtd. in Gillray) . However, even though Napoleon is shouting "I am a`com`ing. "I am a`com`ing!!" he does not come out.

This comic was published shortly after the British declared war on France in 1803, and were preparing to fight Napoleon at sea. Napoleon is stereotypically depicted as a very short man, and is portrayed as a coward who does not dare to fight the British in open waters. John Bull, in contrast, is depicted as a triumphant bully, teasing and daring Napoleon to come out of his hiding place. In this particular cartoon, we can observe a depiction of John Bull that is radically different from John Philips's representation of Bull in his 1779 cartoon. Instead of being depicted as a sleepy and passive man that relies on the help of others, John Bull is represented as a feisty and bold man, determined to fight for what is his. In the context of the Napoleonic Wars, the character of John Bull was transformed from a dim-witted Whig into a national symbol of freedom, of loyalty to king and country, and of resistance to French aggression. Bull was thus no longer depicted as a woeful wretch, but rather as an ordinary Englishman in the street, who would fight Napoleon with his bare hands if necessary.

After the Napoleonic Wars, in the 1820s, renowned cartoonist John Doyle or H.B. dressed John Bull as a country squire, rather than as an unkempt lout (see Appendix, fig. 3). Doyle polished Bull's rough manners to make him more acceptable to middle-class Victorian tastes. Satire and satirical writing, as Muireann O'Cinneide observes, "was prevalent over the first half of the century", but "by the end of the 1840s, however, overly abusive or contentious writing was increasingly frowned upon; with earnestness ever more valued, the sardonic and ironic elements of satire enabled its critics to chastise satirists as lacking in both moral and aesthetic fiber" ("Satire"). John Bull's dress, manners, and arguably even his shape, therefore, increasingly came to represent the attitude of the ruling and middle classes, rather than the aforementioned anti-hero, patriot, or common man.

In the 1840s, John Leech and Sir John Tenniel, Leech's successor at *Punch*³⁴, finally,

³⁴ *Punch; or, The London Charivari* was a British weekly magazine of humour and satire established in 1841 by Henry Mayhew and Ebenezer Landells. The magazine ran from 1841 to 2002. Historically, the magazine was most influential in the 1840s and 1850s, when it helped to coin the term "cartoon" in its modern sense as a humorous illustration. Artists who published in *Punch* during these influential years included Charles Keene, John Leech, Richard Doyle, John Tenniel. The popular magazine satirised life in Britain, and charted the concerns, interests, and frustrations of the country. Over its one-hundred and sixty-one years, it published articles by renowned British authors such as William Thackeray (1811–1863), P. G. Wodehouse (1881–1975) and A. A. Milne (1882–1956). *Punch* was widely distributed and read in Britain, and has been highly influential in the establishment of nineteenth-century national stereotypes and personifications. For more information about *Punch*

established the character of John Bull, as we know him today: a successful country squire, garbed in a double-vested swallow-tail coat, riding breeches, gaiters, and boots. His watch dangling over his substantial belly, a symbol of middle-class order and prosperity (see Appendix, fig. 4).

3.2. Britannia: National Personification of England

Deeply grounded in a country's history and national heritage, symbols such as the graceful Britannia and the sturdy John Bull can reveal a great deal about a society's heritage, its myths, its ideologies, and the values commonly held by its people (Matthews 799). Until recently, most scholars considered these national symbols to be self-evident and unchanging popular icons, and often disregarded their broader historical contexts. This interpretation, however, fails to grasp the crucial role these national figures played in the development of nation-states and national and regional self-images and stereotypes. When examined as part of a visual chronicle, therefore, their transformation allows us to not only concentrate on the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth-century, but also enables us to trace shifts in public opinion and memory.

Even though Britannia can be said to be a British cultural icon and, as the following section will reveal, is one of the oldest national personifications of Britain, created way before John Bull ever set foot in Arbuthnot's satire, an analysis of her portrayal, historical context, and importance as a national personification of Britain is missing from Spiering's survey of the British and English. The following sections will, therefore, examine the origin and creation of Britannia as the national personification of Britain in relation to its broader historical context, and comment on the different existing artistic and literary representations of this national personification.

3.2.1. *The Origin and Transformation of Britannia*

Although John Bull, a product of popular vernacular culture is, historically speaking, relatively young, the origin of Britannia can be traced all the way back to Ancient Greece. Britannia was first used by the Romans on a first century AD coin³⁵ to celebrate their

and the many social and political cartoons that appeared in the magazine, see: "PUNCH Magazine Cartoon Archive.", *Punch Ltd.*, 2018, <https://www.punch.co.uk/>

³⁵ On one coin, for instance, Britannia is seen on the reverse side of the coin as the female personification of Hadrian's recently conquered island (Appendix, fig. 5). Britannia is depicted in profile, sitting defeatedly with her head in one hand, next to a small pile of rocks, possibly representing the wall the Romans built across the northern part of Britain. Britannia is wearing classical robes and her pose is very compliant, and passive, with her spear cradled in her left arm and her shield at rest. As Matthews noted, more than 1,500 years later, a woman

subjugation of the British Isles. After the Romans had left, she vanished from popular culture until the sixteenth century when she reappeared as a visual and literary symbol for British prosperity and empirical power.

In the late 1500s, Britannia's image became associated and conflated with the celebrated English queen Elizabeth I, and her idealized image as 'Gloriana'. Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser, in his allegorical epic poem "The Faerie Queene", first published in 1590, for instance, summarized the themes of patriotism, honour, and idealism in praise of his monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, who represented the theme of glory, hence the name Gloriana: "That greatest Gloriana to him gaue, / That greatest Glorious Queene of Faerie lond" (Canto 1, line 21-22). In Spenser's "The Faerie Queene", Gloriana expressed love and kindness for her people, while simultaneously guiding them through many difficult situations "and raising her young country to new levels of power and prestige" (Matthews 801). Spenser's representation of Queen Elizabeth seemed to have "elevated the ruler to a level above other mortals" (Matthews 803), and pointed the way for future authors and eulogists, who would conflate later English queens with Britannia, for instance during the reign of Queen Victoria in the nineteenth century (Matthews 803).

During the early 1600s, Britannia materialised as the visual image that, just slightly altered, survives to this day. Her noble spirit and values were invoked in emblematic books³⁶, cartographies³⁷, and in masques at the courts of the Stuarts, James I and Charles I. As Britain's empirical prestige and power began to grow, so began the emergence of satires aimed to ridicule the nation and all its glory. In similarity to Arbuthnot's John Bull, the character of Britannia was not only a symbol of Britain's sovereign powers, flourishing

in a very similar pose would become the accepted symbol of England, and later, Great Britain. The tendency and tradition to personify national and geographical territories and places as women can, thus, be traced all the way back to the earliest victories of Roman emperors.

³⁶ Britannia featured in *Minerva Britannia*, one of the first emblem books written in English, published by English author Henry Peacham (1576-1643) in 1603 (see fig. 6, Appendix). In Peacham's work, a confident Britannia is shown barefoot, dressed in drapery and an armoured breastplate, while confidently striding towards a ship, surrounded by a walled city, possibly London, in the background. As the text clearly states, the drawing is based on the old antique Roman model. The ship most likely symbolizes Britain's new maritime power, acquired under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

³⁷ Britannia graced the top of the title page of *Britain: or a Chorographical Description of the Flourishing Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland and the Islands Adjacent: From the earliest antiquity*, the first comprehensive topographical survey of England, written by William Camden (1551-1623) in 1607 (see fig. 7, Appendix). Britannia is shown as seated and in profile, wearing classical draperies, and her head is raised in pride. In the background, the sea and small ships can be observed, which can again be read in reference to Britain's maritime prosperity.

empire, prosperous economy, and world-wide ventures at sea, but also became an object of ridicule for Britain's greatest enemies in the seventeenth century. Dutch medals, for instance, were struck that portrayed Britannia in unflattering and insulting poses as part of their mid-seventeenth century campaign against England.³⁸

In contrast to this humorous Dutch satire, Britain's supporters treated Britannia quite differently. The English king Charles II, who came to the throne in 1660 after the Civil War and Commonwealth, for instance, had a medal struck with his image on the obverse and the head of Britannia on the reverse in, undoubtedly, conscious imitation of the Roman practice as outlined in the previous section (Appendix, fig. 9). This Britannia, as Matthews observed, was "no subservient provincial" (807), but rumoured to be based on Frances Teresa Stewart, the Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, one of King Charles II's favourite ladies. Britannia, in that sense, became part of the collective consciousness of Britain, not only through the efforts of cartographers and writers such as Spenser, Peacham, Camden, but also through the support of royal patrons such as Charles II. In addition to this royal support, a number of cultural movements and various historical incidents, such as the Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652-1784), the Treaty of Dover (1670), and technological changes in printing "would assure not only her survival but a spot in the hearts and minds of the English people" (Matthews 807). In the late 1700s, Britannia continued to personify the nation, although whether that nation was England or Britain depended largely on the subject and intent of the artist and the medium of publication. Generally, Britannia came to embody numerous virtues, particularly those associated with national and public life: honour, integrity, selflessness, candour, patriotism, and discipline.

As was mentioned earlier, Britannia's transformation can best be understood in the larger historical context of nation-state building in early modern Europe when the monarch represented the state and the rulers of Europe's most powerful countries – e.g. Spain, France, the Netherlands, and England – were still the face of the nation, while simultaneously promoting their own roles, personal influence, and public persona. By the end of the seventeenth century, a new and different sense of national consciousness had started to

³⁸ A year after the end of the First Anglo-Dutch War, in 1655, the Dutch, who traditionally produced medals to commemorate their victories and revile their enemies, issued a medal aimed to mock the British (see fig. 8, Appendix). The Dutch depicted Britannia with a kneeling Oliver Cromwell by her side. Cromwell is depicted in a very dishonourable position, with his behind exposed to the French and Spanish ambassadors, "while they politely defer to each other as to whom will have the honor of approaching Cromwell's buttocks-no doubt with ribald intent" (Matthews 806).

emerge from the lower classes. As social conflict intensified, the educated were unable to impose the classical models on the populace, who turned increasingly to vernacular images, local folk heroes and heroines, and regional traditions to create their national symbols. While Britannia was still depicted on coins and medals in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, John Bull, her future concomitant and eventual replacement, came into existence, and her role as a semidivine Roman goddess began to change at the end of the eighteenth century. During the Georgian Era (1714- 1830), Georgian illustrators and caricaturists sometimes depicted her as being humiliated or assaulted by both friends and adversaries. In similarity to John Bull, in the period leading up to the American Revolutionary war, she became a particular target of the American supporters, but regained popularity during the Napoleonic wars (1798-1815).

3.2.2. Britannia in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, Britannia began to appear in magazine cartoons as a classical matriarch. By the end of her lengthy reign, Queen Victoria was often conflated or even confused with Britannia, who had become the symbol of imperialism and its implied virtues. As Matthews noted, the numerous societal changes that marked Britain's transformation from the Georgian to the Victorian era, and the Industrial Revolution, influenced every aspect of British society and culture, including the publishing world and, in particular, visual forms of expression:

The transition into the Victorian Age was fashioned through the changes in the printing industry and new styles and techniques of artists and illustrators. In an accelerating processes of technology, lithographs replaced engravings; series and multiples were prized over single prints and broadsheets; bookstores supplanted print shops; and periodicals, magazines, and daily newspapers drove out the small private press journals and weekly papers. In addition, the railroad enabled individuals, ideas, and publications to travel faster and farther. The tastes of viewers and buyers began to shift (Matthews 816).

Whereas, as explained in the previous sections, caricaturists and illustrators transformed John Bull from the simpleminded rustic into an English country squire in the 1820s and 30s, Britannia, shown as semi-divine, and often clad in Greek robes, was elevated to even higher moral planes, echoing her Roman origins. According to Matthews "such modifications were honed and formalized during the 1840s as a result, in part, of the growing popularity of

weekly magazines, especially the very successful humor publication *Punch*, which first appeared in 1841” (816). Thus, through the increasing popularity of weekly magazines such as *Punch*, which because of changes in the publishing world were widely circulated, the characters of John Bull and Britannia became universally recognised as national images, whose representations and roles varied in response to specific events and shifting political scenes.

So why then, did Britannia lose most of her attraction in British popular culture and memory towards the end of the nineteenth century? Again, looking at Britannia and John Bull in their larger historical context, although both Britannia and John Bull sometimes played similar roles and served parallel purposes as symbols of Britain and English empirical power and glory, their origin and cultural heritage were distinctly different. Britannia’s classical heritage would forever separate her from John Bull. Throughout her transformations, whether as a conflation with Queen Elizabeth through the image of ‘Gloriana’ in Spenser’s “Faerie Queene” or later appearing on the royal coins of Charles II, she remained intrinsically intertwined with associations, morals, and values of the ruling classes and not with those of the common British people. Britannia, therefore, was “destined to be always associated with lofty ideals” (Matthews 809). By contrast, as the previous sections have demonstrated, John Bull, the first vernacular image of England and Englishness, came from the people and personified many traits that the common Englishmen thought lay deep in their collective character: honest, jovial, generous, and detesting all things French.

Although the characters of John Bull and Britannia might have come to represent different social classes and symbolised different aspects of nineteenth-century British life, both figures evolved from early representations as their social functions in literature and art transformed over time. John Bull and Britannia both came to represent, albeit different sides of, British identity, and can be said to have been rooted in the rise of the nation-state and nationalism.

Before analysing the aforementioned novels to determine how English female characters were represented in nineteenth-century Famine literature, and determining whether these depictions tie in with the traditional national personifications of English, the following chapter will first explore different nineteenth-century literary and political representations of Ireland as female, and comment on the feminisation of Ireland in relation to notions of colonialism and gender. In doing so, this study will not only be able to examine how the Other

(the English) is represented in these novels, but might also be able to determine how these representations can be related to reflections of the Self (e.g. The Irish).

4. THE FEMINISATION OF IRELAND: THE AISLING, HIBERNIA, AND ERIN

Tho' the last glimpse of Erin with sorrow I see / Yet wherever thou art shall seem Erin
to me / In exile thy bosom shall still be my home / And thine eyes make my climate
wherever we roam (Moore 118).

In his portrayal of Ireland as female, Irish poet and songwriter Thomas Moore was in no way unique. In his songs and poems, Moore adopted a characterisation that not only frequently recurred in nineteenth-century English and Irish literature, poetry, and art, but could also be observed in English and Irish critical and political discourse and journalism. Matthew Arnold, for instance, noted in his lectures on Celtic literature that “the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, [has] something feminine in them” (Arnold 82) and George Meredith, in one of his private letters to Mrs Leslie Stephens, asserted that “the case with women resembles that of the Irish” (964). These examples all allude to the allegedly feminine qualities of the Irish or Celts as a race, and are often contrasted with representations of a male England.³⁹ This chapter will explore different nineteenth-century literary and political representations of Ireland as female, and comment on the feminisation of Ireland in relation to notions of colonialism and gender.

4.1. *Origins of Female Personifications: The Aisling*

The personification of Ireland as a woman, variously embodied as Shan van Vocht, Hibernia, Cathleen Ni Houlihan, or Mother Eire, has become “so common as to be rhetorically invisible” (Butler-Cullingford 1). Nevertheless, this personification is neither natural or archetypal, but has been brought into existence to serve a certain purpose and to provide symbolic meaning. Before diving into the different literary representations of Ireland and England, it is therefore important to understand how and when this unnatural construct came into existence, what meaning and purpose it might have served, to what extent it has influenced later representations of Ireland as female, and how it might be related to literary representations of England and notions of gender and colonialism. Following Leerssen’s methodology of imagology as outlined in chapter 2, section 2.2.2, it is therefore important to place nineteenth-century representations of Ireland as female within a larger tradition and historical context, and to analyse how these representations came into existence and to what

³⁹ For more examples of literary and political representations of Ireland as female, see: Lynn Innes. *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society 1880-1935*. University of Georgia Press, 1993, pp. 9-21.

extent they might have been influenced by other genres. This section, and the following sections, therefore, explore the origin of the literary and poetic representation of Ireland as female, and examine how the feminisation of Ireland has influenced later, and more specifically, nineteenth-century representations of Ireland as female.

Even though traces of mother figures or female goddesses such as Danu⁴⁰ can be found in Irish mythologies from as early as the eleventh century, it was not until the late-seventeenth and eighteenth century that Ireland itself became personified as female in Irish poetry. The origins of the feminisation of Ireland can be traced back to the Gaelic poetic genre of the *aisling*, which developed out of an earlier category of poetry that scholars have claimed to be akin to the French *reverdie* an old French poetic genre which celebrates the arrival of spring (Sfetcu 53). In an *aisling*, Ireland appears to the poet in a vision or dream in the form of a woman, often referred to as An Spéirbhean (the sky-woman), sometimes young and beautiful, sometimes old and haggard, pleading for rescue from the invaders, or less frequently, as a harlot collaborating with the enemy.

In many *aisling* poems, the current state of the Irish people is lamented, and the revival of their fortunes is predicted. Aogan O' Rathaille (1675-1729), one of the most well-known *aisling* poets, introduced the tradition of the political *aisling* with his eighteenth-century poem "Mac an Cheannuidhe" (The Merchant's son) in which the 'merchant's son' can either be interpreted as James III, son of the defeated King James II, or alternatively, as an allegory for the king of Spain, "from whom the Irish expected aid to shake off the Saxon yoke" (Walsh and Daly 14).⁴¹

In Aogan O' Rathaille's *aisling* "Gile na Gile" (Brightness of Brightness), moreover, the poet is visited by a beautiful maiden, who is spirited away to a realm of Irish legend "the fairy dwelling of Luachair", held captive by a "horned, malicious, croaking, yellow clown", and might only be saved by "the heroes come back across the main" (O'Rathaille 19-21). "Gile na Gile", in similarity to "Mac an Cheannuidhe", has a very clear political undertone, and seems to emphasise the distinction between the foreigners that have captivated the maiden (e.g. occupied Ireland), and the foreigners (e.g. the Scots) who might be able to save her.

⁴⁰ For more information about the mysterious mythological figure of Danu, see: Patricia Monaghan. *Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines: Volume I and II*. New World Library, 2014, or Morgan Daimler. *Pagan Portals – The Morrigan: Meeting the Great Queens*. John Hunt Publishing, 2014.

⁴¹ For more information about the discussion of the different interpretations of Aogan O' Rathaille's *aisling* poem "Mac an Cheannuidhe", see: Frank Shovlin. *Journey Westward: Joyce, Dubliners and the Literary Revival*. Liverpool UP, 2012, pp. 70-72.

Considering the political tensions of the time in which O’Rathaille lived, and the references to the Scots in this poem, it can be assumed that the poet in “Gile na Gile” is a supporter of the Jacobite cause under King James III, and hopes that the arrival of the monarch might restore Catholicism in Ireland.

The genre of the *aisling*, in addition to the representation of Ireland as female and the depictions of foreigners and outsiders, contains images and elements of (sexual) debasement, captivity, and violation, which are often contrasted with depictions of marriage and rightful suitors, as can be observed in the following excerpt from “Gile na Gile”:

By the captive I was bound fast a captive ;
 As I implored the Son of Mary to aid me, she bounded from me,
 [...] In the bondage of fetters they put me without much respite,
 While to my maiden clung a clumsy, lubberly clown.
 [...] How it ill became her to be united to an awkward, sorry churl,
 While the fairest thrice over of all the Scotie race
 'Was waiting to receive her as his beauteous bride (O’Rathaille 20).

These elements of violence, debasement, and captivity, as can be observed in the upcoming chapters, frequently return, both implicitly and explicitly, in nineteenth-century literary and artistic Irish and English representations of Ireland.

The genre of the *aisling*, thus, was the first documented poetic expression in which Ireland, as a nation, was represented as female. The *aisling* was, moreover, highly political, rallying the people against the invaders, and giving them hope that one day “the heroes come back across the main” (O’Rathaille 19-21) to save them from their oppressor.

4.2. Nineteenth-Century Representations of a Female Ireland

Unfortunately, as we now know, ‘the heroes’ never came. At the end of the eighteenth century, all elements of Irish military resistance were subdued by the more powerful British troops. The Irish Rebellion of 1798, for instance, was poorly organised, and resulted in the death of between 10,000-50,000 civilian and combatant deaths.⁴² The Act of Union (1801) at the start of the nineteenth century, united the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland (previously in personal union), to establish the United Kingdom of Great Britain and

⁴² For a more detailed discussion of the rebellion of 1798, see Thomas Bartlett. “Clemency and Compensation, The Treatment of Defeated Rebels and Suffering Loyalists after the 1798 Rebellion.” *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union, Ireland in the 1790s*. Edited by Jim Smyth, Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 100.

Ireland. The English crown secured complete control over Ireland, and it was not until 1922 that the Irish Free State was established.

Following the oppressive regime of Britain, rebellion and national sentiment arose once again. The genre of the *aisling* was dusted off, and new female political personifications of Ireland emerged. These personifications, as Wright has rightly observed, came in the guise of two sentimental figures, namely “the suffering maiden-in-distress” or “the proudly defiant spirit, maintaining dignity and virtue in the face of powerful oppression” (Wright 56). The following sections will analyse some of these personifications, and comment on their meaning and political significance.

4.2.1. Hibernia: Britannia’s Younger Sister

The national personification of Ireland, Hibernia, appeared in various drawings or cartoons during the nineteenth century. Hibernia is believed to have been of ancient origin, deriving from the Gaelic goddess Eriu. Hibernia has often been characterised as “a stately as well as sad and wise woman” with hair “long and dark, falling well down her back; her eyes were round and melancholy, set in a face of flawless symmetry” (Curtis 61). Interestingly, whereas the personifications of England (Britannia), France (Marianne), and Germany (Germania) are often represented as extravagant, strong warrior goddesses clothed in elegant armour, carrying weapons and shields, and protecting their people from the enemy (see Appendix, fig. 10 and 11), the personification of Ireland, Hibernia, is frequently represented as a helpless young beautiful woman, needing to be rescued (see Appendix, fig. 12: “The Fenian Pest” and fig. 13: “The Irish ‘Tempest’”).

Figure 14, entitled, “Two Forces”, drawn by caricaturist Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) which appeared in *Punch* on 29 October 1881, is a very representative example of the way in which Ireland was personified in the nineteenth century. In this drawing, Hibernia (Ireland) is depicted as a helpless, fair maiden. She is frightened by the wild, brute, primitive, and apish figure of an Irishman, whose unsophisticated hat reads the word ‘anarchy’. Hibernia is protected by the strong, proud, and masculine-looking Britannia (England), who carries a sword representing ‘the law’, and tramples the ‘Land League’ under her foot. Even though Hibernia’s costume is similar to that of Britannia, she does not carry a weapon, wears no shoes and helmet, and has long and wild, rather than neatly coifed, hair. Hibernia’s womanly figure, moreover, is not yet fully developed and she is at least thirty inches shorter than Britannia. Hibernia, in that sense, is portrayed as Britannia’s younger sister or cousin, or even as a child.

Typically, as Charteris-Black observed, “the ideological basis for using personification is either to arouse empathy for a social group, ideology or belief evaluated as heroic, or to arouse opposition towards a social group, ideology or belief that is evaluated as villainous” (Charteris-Black 41). This is done by associating social groups, ideologies and beliefs that are positively assessed with heroic human attributes, and by associating negatively evaluated social groups, ideas etc. with villainous characteristics (Charteris-Black 41). Following Charteris-Black’s definition of national personification, Tenniel’s cartoon “Two Forces” has several implications, and can be read in a number of ways. The first and most obvious reading of this cartoon is the implication that the only thing that can save Ireland from the animalistic and brutish Irishman, is the civilizing influence of English rule (represented by the engraved sword that Britannia carries, which states ‘the law’). In addition to this reading, it can also be added that Ireland needs to be protected from the uncivilised Irish nationalists (Fenians) who have set out to destroy the society that the English have built. The representation of these nationalists as ape-like and animalistic, moreover, implies that those who defy the English government are inhuman and barbarous, and way below any well-respected rank (including women) within society. The fact that the Irishman is depicted as holding a stone, instead of a sword, suggests that the Irish are too poor, ill-equipped, and unprepared to govern their own country. Finally, the representation of Hibernia’s adolescent body implies that Ireland, as a nation and as a society, is underdeveloped and in need of support and guidance. Tenniel’s “Two Forces”, therefore, is not merely a comical cartoon, but can also be read as a “complex cultural statement about the civilized and uncivilized, about who can and cannot, should and should not, rule in Ireland” (Richmond 22).

4.2.2. Erin: “*With Back Turn’t to Britain*”

Even though nationalist publications, such as the Land League and Parnell's United Ireland newspaper, did use the image of Hibernia at times, nineteenth-century nationalist publications generally subverted the pro-union depiction of a helpless Hibernia by instead personifying Ireland as Erin. Since the name Hibernia had become associated with notions of vulnerability, powerlessness, and incompetence, nationalist nineteenth-century artists and authors seemed to prefer to represent Ireland through the figure of Erin. Erin’s appearance resembles that of Hibernia. She is often depicted as a beautiful maiden, and like Hibernia, carries a harp, olive branch, or scroll instead of a weapon and shield like her British, German, and French counterparts, (see fig. 15, “A Terrible Record”). The figure of Erin, however, has not only appeared in many caricatures, but has also made several appearances in eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century nationalist poetry and literature. Although Erin might have been depicted as passive and melancholic in nationalist cartoons and caricatures, in nationalist literature, the figure of Erin was used to underline notions of virtue, honour, and integrity.

In James Porter's satire *Billy Bluff and the Squire* (1796), Erin, very much in style of the aisling, breaks through the sky to address her people and to drive the elite ascendancy out of Ireland: "The sky seemed to open near the western side, out of which came sailing through the air a beautiful Angel clad in robes of white: In her left hand she held a large flag, on which I could see written in letters of gold, 'THE GENIUS OF IRELAND.' In her right hand she held a branch of olive, which she waved round and round, at which all the people seemed filled with joy and began to smile" and she "spoke, with a voice exquisitely fine, that ravished my ears: 'THESE, said she, ARE ALL MY CHILDREN. This is the HILL OF UNION'" (Porter 23-24). Hibernia, in this fragment, is again depicted as a beautiful, fair maiden. In similarity to the caricatures in *Punch*, she carries olive branches and a flag instead of a weapon. In this particular passage, however, Hibernia is not helpless or fragile, and instead of needing guidance from Britannia, she herself drives the unwanted intruders from her home. This allegory undoubtedly fits in well with the vocation of the United Irishmen, who launched the Irish Rebellion of 1798 with the aim to end British monarchical rule, and to establish an independent and sovereign Irish republic.

In William Drennan's well-known poem "Erin", a similar sentiment can be observed. Instead of falling into the arms of Britannia, as could be observed in the caricatures from *Punch*, in this stanza Erin turns her back to Britain, and stands proudly on her own:

In her sun, in her soil, in her station, thrice blest,
With back turn'd to Britain, her face to the West,
Erin stands proudly insular, on her steep shore,
And strikes her high harp to the ocean's deep roar

Even though in the next stanzas Erin weeps for her people she demands her people to take noble action, without resorting to the immoral violence used by the British:

Arm of Erin! prove strong, but be gentle as brave,
And, uplifted to strike, still be ready to save;

Nor one feeling of vengeance presume to defile
The cause, or the men, of the EMERALD ISLE.⁴³

In this poem, Brennan very clearly sides with the national cause, and emphasises that God is on the side of the Irish: “God bless’d the green island, He saw it was good”.

4.3. Politics and Personifications: Conclusion

The above mentioned artistic and literary examples of Hibernia and Erin demonstrate that female personifications of Ireland come in the guise of two different figures, namely in the form of the suffering maiden-in-distress, as was the case in the *Punch* caricatures, or in the appearance of the proudly defiant spirit, maintaining dignity and virtue in the face of powerful oppression, as was the case in the Porter and Brennan’s work. The nineteenth-century personification of Ireland through the guise of Hibernia, or alternatively Erin, thus, in similarity to the *aisling*, was used to promote political ideology. Personifications were used to arouse empathy for a social group, ideology or belief evaluated as heroic, or to arouse opposition towards a social group, ideology or belief that is evaluated as villainous. Whereas, for instance, in the eyes of the unionists, Hibernia was a fair maiden that needed to be protected from the uncivilised Irishman, in the eyes of nationalists, Erin needed to free herself from the embrace of Britannia to proudly stand on her own.

It is important to note, however, that all of the above mentioned literary and artistic examples were created by males. This suggests that in the male gaze, Ireland is “at once pathetic and attractive, nationally powerless but erotically beautiful” (Wright 64). The representation of Ireland as female, therefore, has come to symbolize the virtue of the nationalist cause, as well as patriotic desire (Wright 64). Following this observation, the question that begs to be asked and answered is how women in return responded to this rhetoric and how they sought to define and modify representations of the nation.

The next chapters of this thesis, therefore, will analyse the aforementioned Famine novels, all written by female authors, to see how nineteenth-century female writers responded to male representations of English and Irish characters, to what extent these female authors were aware of the personifications and national stereotypes of Ireland and England, and to examine whether they seemed to be aware of the connections between gender, class, nationalism, and colonialism.

⁴³ See: William Drennan. “Erin.” *Fugitive Pieces, in Verse and Prose*. F.D. Finlay, 1815, p.1.

5. SPINSTERS, SAVAGES, AND ‘THE PATH OF THE LORD’

Drawing in her head, Miss Jemima Jenkins exclaimed, with a sigh: ‘I shall ask mistress to raise my wages. It is evident there is no chance of a society in such a wild place! I should die, I know I should, in one quarter’ (Nolan 34).

5.1. Introduction

As expressed in the introduction of this thesis, Margaret Kelleher’s critically acclaimed work on the feminisation of the Famine, has analysed and determined how and to what extent the nineteenth-century tradition of Irish Famine literature relied heavily on images of female Famine victims, recurring motifs of the prevalence of mother and child images, and the scrutiny of Irish women’s starved bodies, to express the largely ‘inexpressible’ reality of the Famine. Even though it can, indeed, be argued that famine is figured in the feminine, an analysis of the representation of English female characters is still missing from this large body of work. The following chapters will therefore examine the representation of English female characters and comment on its representation and meaning in relation to themes of nationalism, gender, class, and religion. Following Leerssen’s theory of imagology, the analysis of these English female characters will take into consideration the tradition to which these Famine narratives belong, contextualise the text historically, examine the audience for which it is intended, and will explore whether traditional representations of national personifications are passively or actively echoed, mocked, or ignored (Leerssen, “Imagology” 28).

This specific chapter will examine the representation of ‘the old spinster’; English female characters – usually unmarried and of advanced age- who despise the Irish Famine victims, perceive the Irish tenants as barbaric, alien, uncivilised, and animalistic, and find importance in safeguarding the religious and moral well-being of their Protestant families from the wicked ways and immoral influence of the Catholic tenants. The representation of the ‘old spinster’ will be linked to themes of religion, class, gender, and race.

5.2. The Byrnes of Glengoulah (1868): Animals, Savages, and the ‘Wild Place’ that is Ireland

Many of the analysed nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels in this thesis contain representations of English female characters who detest the Irish tenants, and view them as uncultured. *The Byrnes of Glengoulah: A True Tale*, written by Alice Nolan in 1868, can be

read as a primary example of a nineteenth-century Famine novel that deals with this kind of national stereotyping, and comments on the inaccuracy of this frequently observed characterisation of the Irish through the portrayal of the English, as will be further illustrated in this chapter. This section will therefore briefly introduce and summarise Nolan's novel, shortly comment on the different representations of English female characters, and zoom in on Nolan's representation of 'the old spinster' in relation to themes of religion, nationalism, gender, and class.

5.2.1. *An Introduction to Alice Nolan's The Byrnes of Glengoulah: A True Tale*

Alice Nolan's *The Byrnes of Glengoulah: A True Tale* appeared in the widely read nationalist *Irish Citizen*, published by John Mitchel between 22 February and 5 September 1868, and was later reprinted in *Wright American Fiction*. As was specified in the introduction, the works of John Mitchel (1860) constituted pioneering writings on the Great Famine and, despite his extreme views, heavily influenced popular and critical discourse at the time, and even to this day. It is, therefore, not surprising that Nolan's novel discusses and criticises themes of religious conversion, landlordism, nationalism, and class.

Following the traditional nineteenth-century Famine narrative template, in which the story transcends from abstract contemplations about the Famine to a more detailed description of a particular group of famished characters, Nolan's work first describes the beautiful county of Wicklow, before zooming in on Anthony Byrne, his family and neighbours, and the livelihood of the community. Nevertheless, the depiction of this picturesque and cheerful community is short-lived and harshly interrupted by the pathetic phallacy of "clouds and storms" (12) which predict the coming of a great storm in the form of landlord and Anglican bishop Mr Biggs and his family. Indeed, the Byrnes, "the oldest family in Wicklow, barrin the O'Tools" (13), soon become plagued by the "many atrocities" (5) perpetrated by Mr Biggs, who refuses to sign a new lease for Toney Byrne, and continues to raise the rents "twenty-five percent" (49), even though the Byrnes family is well-respected within the community and "father and son, for years upon years held a lease for the life of the landlord, and there was a special request put in the body of it that the next landlord would continue the same" (44). Not only the Byrnes, but also the entire Wicklow community suffers greatly from Mr Biggs' selfish endeavours, and many of his tenants soon fall victim to his strict regime and evil attempts to grow his wealth in spite of the starving and suffering landholders, which is perceived by the tenants as "robbery of the most bare-faced kind" (55).

In terms of appearance, the character of Mr Biggs can be read as a classic John Bull

character. In correspondence to Arbuthnot's bad-tempered, stout, and ruddy-looking Bull, Mr Biggs is described as "a man of low stature" with "stealthy eyes, which feared to look you full in the face, excepting when worked upon by passion", "the mouth and chin of a mean receding character" and hair that was "lank, black, and hung low on the fore head" (Nolan 47). In resemblance to Arbuthnot's simple squire-Bull, Mr Biggs is depicted as "the very personification of the lowest English mechanic" (Nolan 47) with a Protestant heart and "spiritual authority" (128). He, in similarity to Arbuthnot's Bull, has a very inconsistent temper and is quick to quarrel when contradicted by his friends.

Although Mr Biggs is perceived by his household as "solemn", a "saint", and a "worldly-minded man" (Nolan 35), a closer analysis of his character reveals that, in contrast to Arbuthnot's John Bull, and other later representations of the character as outlined in chapter 3, Mr Biggs truly has a malicious and evil nature, and is, in fact, the embodiment of "mock humility and sanctimoniousness" (Nolan 47). When Mr. De Courcy, for instance, confronts Mr Biggs about the unnecessary raise of rents, Nolan, borrowing elements from the literary Gothic, depicts Mr Biggs as the Devil himself, whose "cheeks and forehead would turn black as night, and his lips become a livid white with rage" while "sardonic fire gleamed from his cat-like eyes" (87). Whereas the English characters in the novel, thus, believe Mr Biggs to be a stout, honest, devout, civil, and good-natured man, descriptions of the reverend given by the Irish characters, and Nolan herself, reveal that underneath Mr Biggs' layers of devotional pretence lies a rotten, narcissistic, and spiteful man.

After continuously raising the rents, and refusing to reinstate the lease of the Byrnes and many other tenant families, the situation in county Wicklow takes a very dark turn. The community holds the evil Mr Biggs responsible for "the wilful murder of the widow Cormac, the widow Hynes' child, and Peter, Mary and Bridget Flannigan, besides many, many others, too numerous to mention" (113) and sentences him to "to be executed at the earliest and best opportunity by someone of the present assembly allotted and sworn for the purpose" (113). This representation of Mr Biggs can, undoubtedly, be related to Nolan's observation that "many atrocities perpetrated by landlords within the last twenty-five years were almost unknown in America, even to Irish people who had emigrated before that period" (5). Nolan, therefore, makes it her personal mission to "to collect some of the skeletons of landed proprietors together, thrust them into one wolfs-hide [that of Mr Biggs], and hold the disgusting creature up for execration" (5). These words heavily resonate with Mitchel's work, who in his *Last Conquest* (1860), for instance, discusses the "execration upon our enemies"

(153), and refers to the English landlords as “creature(s) of the crown” (184).

This intertextual reference to Mitchel’s historiography can be read as a primary example of what Leerssen refers to as a “referential signification process of national stereotyping” (18). Following the theory of imagology, it can be observed that literary works that discuss national character tend to heavily rely on existing national reputations, instead of first-hand observations of reality. This results in a process of national standardising, in which stereotyping does not take place between text and reality, as commonly expected and believed, but between text and text. National stereotypes are, therefore, often intertextual constructs in which the conventions and practises derived from a pre-existing textual tradition may fully overshadow the experience of reality, suggesting that the historical force of national stereotypes lies more in their “recognition value” (Leerssen, “History” 17), than in their pretended truth value. This observation, moreover, ties in with an earlier article by Leerssen, namely “Mimesis and Stereotype” (1991), in which it is suggested that the public has a pre-determined set of expectations surrounding the behaviour of certain types of national characters, based on pre-existing texts. A text is, therefore, often only viewed as realistic or truthful if it lives up to these expectations, and affirms these stereotypes. This, ultimately, often results in the reader confusing this sense of familiarity with a sense of validity.

It will, unfortunately, be impossible to determine whether Nolan has been in direct contact with the English, or more specifically English landlords, since very little biographical information is available and the novel seems to have been largely directed at an American audience. However, it does seem that Nolan largely based her ethnotypes on previously existing textual evidence of the way in which the Irish (nationalists) perceived and depicted national stereotypes of the English. Nolan’s description of the English and the specific nouns and adjectives she uses, for instance, strongly resembles the language that Irish nationalist John Mitchel exerts in his *Last Conquest* (1860), and the introduction of her text clearly states that the novel was inspired by “a file of the Dublin Nation containing a full report of the trial and execution in February, 1846, at the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath, of Bryan Seery, for the murder of Sir Francis Hopkins, Bart.” (Nolan VII); yet another intertextual reference.

These findings suggest that Nolan must, at least to a certain extent, have been aware of the non-Irish stereotypical cultural representation of the English as nonconformist, robust, easily-offended, and no-nonsense. However, instead of echoing this stereotype, Nolan seems to consciously mock the ethnotype of the English by adding a benign undertone to the

character of Mr Biggs, which contradicts his supposedly honest, good-hearted, and plain-dealing character and strongly resonates with the popular discourse commonly used by nineteenth-century Irish nationalists.⁴⁴ This demonstrates, moreover, that literary products are not only influenced by the societal views of certain national stereotypes, but in a reciprocal fashion, also have the agency to alter or create shifts in the general perception of certain national stereotypes. Literary sources are, thus, “not merely a record of the ‘representation’ of a given nationality, but rather, [constitute] a cultural praxis articulating and even constructing that nationality” (Leerssen, “Mimesis” 269). Poets and authors such as Nolan, as the next sections will also demonstrate, might therefore sometimes very consciously represent certain nationalities in a slightly different fashion to emphasise their own viewpoints and/or implicit political agendas.

5.2.2. *‘The Young Spinsters’ and the Irish Savages*

Throughout Alice Nolan’s *The Byrnes*, there are several instances in which English female characters play an important role in relation to the plot of the novel. The English characters that feature in *The Byrnes* can be subdivided into two categories: spinsters and unmarried women. As mentioned before, this chapter will focus solely on the representation of the spinsters and an additional sub-category, which for the purpose of this thesis has been termed ‘the young spinsters’, which in itself can ironically, of course, be read as an oxymoron. The representation of unmarried women, embodied by, for instance, Nolan’s English character Clara Menville, will be discussed in chapter six, titled “Single Women as Social Mothers”.

Nolan first introduces her reader to a set of English female characters in chapter 5 of her novel, who can be classified as ‘young spinsters’. These so-called ‘young spinsters’ are the two English maids of the Misses Biggs, Mr Biggs’ old, unmarried, canktankerous, “spinster” (Nolan 56) sisters. Upon arrival to Glengoulah Castle, the young maids, Miss Jemima Jenkins – the Reverend’s mistress’ own maid- and Miss Amelia Hopkins, reflect upon the state of the manor, and express their, somewhat melodramatic concerns for the near-future:

⁴⁴ One of Nolan’s contemporaries, Irish nationalist Charles Joseph Kickham (1828-1882), for instance, wrote a very similar novel in 1869 titled *Sally Cavanagh, or the Untenanted Graves*, which he dedicated to his friend John O’Leary (23 July 1830 – 16 March 1907) another well-known Irish separatist and leading Fenian. In similarity to Nolan’s novel, the English in Kickham’s are in fact perfidious, puffed-up, cross-tempered, arrogant, of a mocking and quarrelsome disposition, and pitiless. The main English character, landlord Mr Oliver Grindem, in similarity to Mr Biggs, is portrayed as a Gothic villain or monster, immoral and sinful by nature, without any chances of being cured of his evil disposition.

‘La me! I verily believe we shall mope to death in this old castle, perched hon the top of the ‘ill; just look out of this winder, and see what a frightful ‘iglit we are.’ And the two young ladies gazed into the valley below, just at the point ‘where the bright waters meet.’ Then they cast their eyes on the opposite hills, covered with verdure, though it was the first week of December, and on the thousand waterfalls and silver streams—one of the most picturesquely beautiful scenes the eye of man could wish to repose on in this world. Drawing in her head, Miss Jemima Jenkins exclaimed, with a sigh: ‘I shall ask mistress to raise my wages. It is evident there is no chance of society in such a wild place! I should die, I know I should, in one quarter’ (56).

The maids are clearly unimpressed by the beautiful scenery, which in all its robust glory reminds them of a backwards wasteland, and although the women have only just arrived, and have not yet been in contact with any of the inhabitants of county Wicklow, they seem to already have made up their minds about the Irish tenantry through hearsay: “‘And I heard mistress tell master this morning,’ said Miss Jemima Jenkins, ‘that she didn’t see how she was ever a goin’ to live among such barbarous people’” (56). This theme reverberates throughout the novel, and many other instances can be found in which the Irish tenants are described as animalistic and uncultured by the English characters. Mr Biggs, for instance, refers to his tennants as “those creatures who are half savages by nature, and whose steps run after iniquity” (34). This rhetoric echoes that of Charles Trevelyan, who in his influential *The Irish Crisis* (1848), refers to the Irish tenure as “barbarous” (25) and discusses his ideas on how to spread “industry and civilization among men now sunk in indolence and almost barbarism” (33).

The ethnotype of the Irishman as an uncultured and animalistic figure corresponds with other nineteenth-century discourses of social Darwinism, in which the morality of subjects was established through physical and racial attributes. L.P Curtis’ iconic study *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (1968), illustrates how the treatment of the Irish and Irishness in popular nineteenth century print culture made explicit connections between bestiality, blackness, and Irishness. Curtis’ renowned work demonstrates that the Irish were perceived as a less well developed race, both socially and morally, in the nineteenth century. Curtis, moreover, analyses political cartoons from mid-to-late nineteenth-century British periodicals that discussed Irish issues. Throughout his analysis, Curtis emphasises the “gradual but unmistakable transformation of Paddy, the stereotypical Irish Celt of the mid-nineteenth century, from a drunken and relatively harmless peasant into a dangerous ape-man

or simianized agitator”(2). As Curtis’ work exemplifies, simianisation in cartoons began in the 1840s, thus around the same time as the Great Irish Famine (1845-1852), and became particularly prevalent when the violence of the Fenian campaigns of the 1860s brought the threat of social upheaval. Curtis argues that this shift reflected a growing sense of British superiority *vis-à-vis* the Irish, based on an increasingly racialised view of the latter that was supported by wider Victorian ideas about physiognomy, ethnology and Darwinism (Innes 15).

Building on Curtis’ work, Sheridan Gilley rightly observes in her essay “English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780–1900”, that British attitudes towards the Irish were a complex mixture of both positive and negative perceptions of their neighbours, and derived, more than anything, from shifting ideas about religion, class and political violence. Roy Foster, finally, in his collection *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (1993), endorses Gilley’s conclusions and underlines that British attitudes to the Irish were complex and shifting, and “a dislike of popery, peasants and political violence that was expressed in various ways at different times” (Foster). These observations suggest that nineteenth-century British representations of the Irish, thus, derived from what Leerssen has termed “a cultural difference”, or the sense in which the nation perceives itself to be different from the world (Leerssen, “History” 17).

The fact that Nolan used the theme of the Irish savage repeatedly throughout her novel suggests that she must have been aware of this common nineteenth-century stereotype of the Irish in British literature and art. Nevertheless, instead of following this popular discourse, Nolan seems to mock this stereotype by re-using the words herself in a humorous and derisive manner. In the passage, for instance, that follows the description of Miss Jenkins and Miss Hopkin’s melodramatic exclamations of wanting to ‘die’ after arriving at Glengoulah Castle, the narrator sarcastically remarks: “For the present we shall leave the afflicted inmates of Glengoulah Castle to the terrible calamities consequent upon a residence amongst a barbarous people, and see what the savage tenantry are about” (58-59). Moreover, when the “most upper servants” (74) of the Biggs household are sent to “the Popish mass house, in order to bring home the pith of Father O’Tool’s discourse regarding the schools” (74), or in other words, to spy on the Catholic tenants, Nolan sarcastically explains that “accordingly a well-filled hamper was fastened behind the carriage, and the party, nothing loth, commenced the sports of the day by inspecting the barbarous natives in their house of worship” (76).

In doing so, Nolan takes the words out of the mouths of the British, and transforms them into a counter-narrative, e.g. a narrative that arises from the vantage point of those who

have been historically marginalised.⁴⁵ The idea of a ‘counter’ in itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination, or in this case traditional and dominant discourse. A counter-narrative, in that sense, thus goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power, such as Trevelyan, are allowed and able to tell the stories of those placed in the margins. Thereby, the effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those that have been marginalised in the past. By re-telling their own stories, members of these marginalised communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives that truly present their realities. In this novel, Nolan wittily and consciously mocks the hegemonic discourse at the time, in which the Irish are perceived as barbarous, as was the case in Trevelyan’s work, while simultaneously demonstrating that these words have become meaningless in this new context, because when she uses them, they lose all of their original dominance and strength and become markers of sarcasm and ridicule.

In addition to the establishment of this counter-narrative which challenges and ridicules the hegemonic discourse, Nolan’s novel also suggests that instead of the Irish, the English are, in fact, immoral and uncivilised. This becomes apparent in the novel when, for instance, the English ‘young spinster’ maids, Miss Amelia Hopkins and Miss Jemima, discuss the male household staff. After having complained about the fact that “the coachman, footman, and two grooms are all married men”, which is of course “perfectly unbearable !” (34), Miss Amelia Hopkins exclaims that she is “goin’ to see if I can’t make some impression on the ‘art of Mr. Jones, the ‘ed butler. I’ve singled him out as my game, so see you don’t look at him”(35). Miss Jemima seems highly offended by this comment and “with a contemptuous toss of her head, which made all the pink ribbons in her fancy cap flutter for five seconds” exclaims that “ I think mistress’s own maid may look ‘igher. I aint got such low tastes, I can assure you, ‘Opkins; and if I do amuse myself a talkin’ to Mr. Thompson, master’s valet, it is only till I can find society capable of appreciating me.” (35). The suggestion that Miss Amelia has poor taste in men, and that Miss Jemima Jenkins is of a higher social class than Miss Amelia because of her position within the household rubs Miss Amelia the wrong way:

"Well done, my lady Pimlico," cried Miss Amelia, mimicking the voice of her friend Jenkins,— "Well, I never! So we're puttin' on hairs, are we ? He, he, he. My heyes!

⁴⁵ For more information about the concept of the counter-narrative in relation to the construction of national identities and nation-states, see: Homi K. Bhabha. “Introduction: Narrating the Nation.” *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, 2000, pp. 1-7.

wont I have in the servants' 'all to-night. I suppose we'll begin to get religion too, like master, and turn up the wites of our heyees and sing psalms" — and the tantalizing young lady began to sing in a nasal tone: Oh! there's a 'appy land, far, far away."(36).

However, before the argument could escalate, “the bell of Miss Biggs's dressing-room rang furiously, and at the same moment the sickly step of the Rev. mistress was heard ascending the stairs, which caused the instantaneous cessation of the hymn” (37). From this passage, it can be observed that the maids are less pious and moral than they pretend to be. They bicker about the men they ‘have singled out as their game’ although they have no real intentions of marrying them, but rather see their flirtations as forms of amusement until they can find society that is capable of appreciating them.

This type of frivolous and immoral behaviour was unheard of and considered to be extremely unladylike during the Victorian Era. By the standard of ‘the Angel in the House’⁴⁶, women were, instead, supposed to be “immensely sympathetic, immensely charming, utterly unselfish”, excelling in “the difficult arts of family life” while catering to “the wishes of others” (Woolf 1346). Women’s purity, above else, was to remain “her chief beauty” (Woolf 1346). Although Woolf remarked that “killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (46), it seems that Nolan might have had a different motive for representing the English female characters in this manner. Rather than making a feminist statement about men’s unrealistic expectations of the role of women in Victorian society, it seems that in *The Byrnes*, Nolan deliberately engages with dominant nineteenth-century national stereotypes associated with Englishness and Irishness to comment on the political tensions between England and Ireland. Whereas Tenniel’s cartoon “Two Forces”⁴⁷, for instance, implies that the only thing that can save Ireland from the animalistic Irishman is the civilising influence of English rule, Nolan’s depiction demonstrates that it is, in fact, the English who are uncivilised and bring destruction, immoral behaviour, and barbarism to Irish society.

The ‘young spinsters’, in addition, make crude jokes about the Irish tenantry, although, arguably, their position on the social ladder might not be that far off from those that they frequently make fun off. When, the Biggs household, for instance, attends a Catholic

⁴⁶ For more information about the representation of ‘The Angel in the House’, see: Natasha Moore. *Victorian Poetry and Modern Life*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 29., and Virginia Woolf. “The Professions of Women.” *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. Edited by Gilbert et al. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1346.

⁴⁷ For the analysis of Tenniel’s “Two Forces”, see chapter 4.2.1. of this thesis.

mass, the maids, including Miss Amelia Hopkins and Miss Jemima Jenkins, “were nearly in convulsions of laughter at the costume of the peasantry” (76). Although the elder unnamed matron of the Biggs house tries to make the younger ladies understand that “we must not forget the big gulf of difference as lies 'atween us, seein' 'ow we 'ad the hadwantage of residin' from birth in a civilized country, while these here poor creeturs never seen nothink but barbarism.” (77), this is to no avail. Beckey, one of the younger maids, for instance, exclaims that “I can't help a larfin' to save my life. Just look at that old 'oman 'oldin on be'ind the man on 'orse back, with a beaver bonnet and cloth mantle of a 'ot day in Hawgust; if she wouldn't make a dog larf I'll never say nothink again.” (78), while another maid “had been gracefully occupied during this conversation in stuffing a cambric handkerchief into her mouth” (76), which does not testify of a lot poise, grace, and class either. Their Cockney accents, characterised amongst other things by the dropping of the /h/ in “old 'oman 'oldin on be'ind the man on 'orse back” and “'ow we 'ad the hadwantage”, the replacement of /ŋ/ with /n/ in “residin” and “larfin”, and “the use of double negatives in “never say nothink”, in addition, reveals that although the women may laugh at the poor Irish tenantry, and pretend to better off, they come from a very similar working class background. Finally, although they pretend to be very pious and religious in order to please Reverant Biggs, in their private corners they admit that they “don't care if he is so religious, I aint — and so I just intend to do as little work as ever I can” (35).

This representation is in stark contrast with the Irish women in the novel, who, much in line with the Irish national personification of Erin, are represented as virtuous, honourable, and upright. Whereas Miss Jemima Jenkins is described as “too hicy cold to an 'art what hadores you.” (35), Mrs Byrne is described as possessing the “warmest and kindest heart in the world” (12). Her daughters, in addition, are described as “a hard-working, gentle-tempered, and unobtrusively industrious” (12). The same goes for Mrs Margin, the wife of Jacob Margin, the corrupt land agent hired after Mr De Courcey's resignation. Whereas her husband is described as a “hoary old miscreant” who “was both dreaded and detested by every one of his poorer neighbors”, Mrs Margin is depicted as an angel: “a more kind-hearted being never breathed the breath of life, or one more full of sympathy for the suffering poor” (87). Going against the wishes of her husband,

this good woman was ever on the watch when her husband's back was turned to see what amount of relief she could distribute. Often would she hide away in a closet the wife of some poor cottier on Jab's unexpected return, and on letting her out through

the back gate she would slip a fine cut of bacon under her cloak, in addition to the well-filled bag of meal slung across her shoulder. The fiercer the wind blew or the more incessant the down-pouring rain, the more surely was the excellent Mrs. Margin to be seen straining her eyes through the window-panes, and ever and anon darting out in the storm to look up and down the road, hoping to catch a glimpse of her dear poor, and most lovingly would she take the shivering hands and lead the drenched forms to the warm kitchen hearth (87).

Mrs Margin, moreover, albeit unknowingly, even saves the life of her husband, when he is sentenced to death:

At a subsequent period, when the people, driven to distraction, formed a secret society, old "Jab" was tried by one of their tribunals and condemned to die for his atrocious robberies and wholesale murders of the poor. A silence for many minutes reigned in that rough assembly, until one gaunt-looking man, with a blackened face and hollow voice, proposed that the sentence should be reversed "for the sake of his wife, the best and kindest woman that ever lived." (87).

In this particular instance, the kindness and goodness of Mrs Margin's heart thus outweighs the awful crimes of her husband, even if this means that "the world was for a while longer cursed by the old miscreant" (87). These representations, in contrast to those of the 'young spinster' English characters, underline the virtuous and moral nature of the Irish, and emphasise the barbarous and immoral conduct of the English.

5.2.3. Hair Symbolism in Nolan's *The Byrnes*.

The comments made by, particularly, Miss Jenkins and Miss Hopkins, do not only suggest that the English maids perceive the Irish as a 'barbarous people', but it is also the first, proper introduction to Mr Biggs' wife and his sisters, and their view of the tenantry. The following section will analyse the representations of these English characters and comment on their meaning in relation to context and time in which *The Byrnes* was written.

One of the most mysterious characters in Nolan's *The Byrnes* is Mrs Biggs' wife, who remains unnamed and is never directly introduced to the reader, and remains a very passive character throughout the novel. The reader, nevertheless, does learn that she is a very "quare made woman" with "the very figure of a broomstick", and a "nose, chin and elbows like raziers" (Nolan 69). This representation of a very fragile and sickly Mrs Biggs, who is said to

be “half the time dyin’, and must have all kinds of attention from momin’ till night undoubtedly” (Nolan 69), is in stark contrast with the common nineteenth-century representation of the strong and healthy Britannia, who was depicted as graceful, noble, glorious, statuesque, proud, and sometimes even muscular and masculine-looking, in, for instance, Tenniel’s cartoon “Two Forces”. Interestingly, Mrs Biggs’ appearance, and in particular her hair, is compared “to the joyous nature of the pretty, blooming [...] dutiful and respectful” (203) golden curled Winifred Byrne, Toney Byrne’s youngest daughter: “She [Mrs Biggs] has quare dead-lookin’ hair, and not as much of it on her whole head as Miss Winny there — God bless the colleen — has in one of them locks that hangs over her laughin’ eye” (69). During the Victorian era, women’s hair, particularly when it was golden, both in paintings and literature, became a symbol of sexuality and wealth. Golden hair, as Gitter observed, “was the obvious and ideal vehicle for expressing their notorious-and ambivalent-fascination both with money and with female sexual power” (936).

In *The Byrnes*, however, hair seems to symbolise the outward sign of a character’s inner self – e.g. a reflection of his or her true character. Winnie Byrne, for instance, is depicted as an innocent, virtuous, hard-working, honest, and pretty young girl. Although she is faced with many hardships throughout her life, such as the wrongful conviction and death of her husband Bryan Dempsey (whose character was based on the account of Bryan Seery’s trial, January 20th, 1846), she never loses her faith and angel-like qualities. Her golden coloured hair therefore never fades throughout the novel, and can be read as a metaphor for an aureole or bower. Although Mrs Biggs is in England for most part of the story, and she is only briefly given a voice at the end of the novel when she blames Mr Margin for her husband’s unpopularity amongst his tenants, it seems that her character is tainted by her husband’s wrongdoings and her impartiality towards his misconduct. Her dead-looking and scarce hair, therefore, seems to symbolise her own passive and ‘dead’ behaviour and dispassionate emotions towards the plea of the famished Irish tenants. Her partial baldness, moreover, may also hint at her inability to conceive children, which is in stark contrast to Winnie Byrne, who has given birth to five healthy and strong kids.

This sickening representation does, however, not only apply to the representation of the English Mrs Biggs, but also to, for instance, the Irish Mrs Cormac, whose hair “becomes blanched” (191), although she is still very young, after she is seduced by Mr Biggs’ sisters to have her virtuous daughter Nora converted to Protestantism in exchange for a simple meal. Again, we can observe that as soon as Mrs Cormac’s character becomes tainted when she

turns her back on her religion, her hair loses its vitality as well. A similar comparison can be made between Father Esmond and Reverend Biggs. Whereas the Catholic, venerable, high-spirited, warm-hearted, and kind Father Esmond, is described as a “livin’ saint” (68), with “long flowing snow-white hair” (44), the diabolical Protestant Mr Biggs, on the other hand, has hair that is “lank, black, and hung low on the forehead” (81). Not only does Father Esmond’s hair, obviously, represents his age, but it can also be read as a token of his true faith, bright personality, pure nature, and kind heart. Mr Biggs’ lank and black hair, in contrast, symbolises his evil nature, and might also be read as a foreshadowing of the aggression, despair, death, and grief that his ominous presence will soon bring to the beautiful county of Wicklow. These examples, more than anything, demonstrate that in *The Byrnes* hair comes to represent physical as well as emotional strength and virility, and can therefore be read as a direct representation of a character’s true nature. Following these observations, it can thus be concluded that even though the reader is never properly introduced to Mrs Biggs, the state of her hair, and the lack thereof, reveals that her heart is most likely just as black as that of her husband.⁴⁸

5.2.4. ‘The Old Spinsters’: The Wicked Biggs Sisters and “The Path of the Lord”

The blanched hair of Mrs Cormac brings us to the representation of Mr Biggs’ two old spinster sisters, who as mentioned earlier, make it their personal mission to convert the Catholic Irish tenants to Protestantism and can therefore be blamed for Mrs Cormac’s dire fate. Before diving into the analysis of Mrs Biggs’ sisters, it must first briefly be determined what a ‘spinster’ is and in what tradition this stereotype can traditionally be placed.

Before the industrial age, the term ‘spinster’ commonly referred to women who worked as spinners to earn their own living, but soon evolved into a synonym for women who were usually long past their “sell-by date” for marriage, and thus had to earn their keep in the parental home by spinning. Nevertheless, as Berend observes, this ‘spinster-existence’ was not necessarily a negative profession, as

middle-class spinsters, as well as their married peers, took ideals of love and marriage very seriously, and [...] spinsterhood was indeed often a consequence of their adherence to those ideals [...] They remained unmarried not because of individual shortcomings but because they didn’t find the one ‘who could be all things to the heart’ (64).

⁴⁸ For more information about the symbolism of hair during the Victorian era, see for instance: Galia Ofek. *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ashgate, 2009.

The word ‘spinster’, however, was given a derogatory secondary definition at the end of the nineteenth century, in which the term became associated with the negative portrayal of the ‘old maid’. In the nineteenth century, both English and Irish popular discourse positively supported cultural constructions of womanhood as being associated with marriage and motherhood; “a context in which singlehood and the opposition between woman identity and single identity are problematic” (Byrne 16). This can, indeed, be observed in, for instance, *The Byrnes*, in which the identity of many of the positively portrayed female Irish characters becomes equated with marriage and motherhood. Mrs Byrne, for instance, is introduced as Toney’s “bustling, good-natured little wife” (Nolan 7), the kind-hearted Mrs Margin is depicted as “the very reverse of himself [Mr Margin]” (Nolan 160), the newly-wedded Winnie Byrne is praised for always being “neat and tidy in her person and house” (Nolan 249), and the phrase “all the world and his wife” (Nolan 30), is frequently uttered by the narrator throughout the novel. Since positive and powerful counternarratives were largely absent from this dominant discourse, singlehood became disparaged and stigmatised, constraining the identity possibilities for all women (Nolan 16). This ultimately resulted in the stereotype of the spinster as a comic, grotesque, ugly, dull woman, or as an alienated misfit who displays a pitiful prudery and who is incapable of a human connection due to her “failure” to achieve a relationship with a man (Auerbach 111).

Although in the late nineteenth century, when the first wave of feminism began to spread widely across Europe and America, the traditionally negative term ‘spinster’ was adopted by feminist activists as part of a political strategy targeted against the tyrannical, male-dominated marriage institution and mandatory heterosexuality (Hamilton 37), this does not seem to be the case in Nolan’s *The Byrnes*. Rather than adopting this feminist outlook, Nolan’s novel echoes dominant discourse and utilises the stereotype of the spinster to underline the evil nature of the English landlord classes.

Even though Nolan’s spinster sisters are said to be “dressed so grand” with “such airs about them, and spake so fine” Nolan (66), they are nevertheless the spitting image of their brother, “small, black, and mane lookin’” (Nolan 67). The reader, moreover, soon discovers that the sisters do not only resemble their brother in terms of appearance, but also possess the same benign and spiteful character traits. This becomes apparent when Mr Biggs builds a Protestant schoolhouse and church, and appoints his two sisters as teachers, since both ladies are unmarried, and “will require some useful occupation” (Nolan 60). To promote the new school, the Misses Biggs “called in their carriage at all the laborers’ cottages, to ascertain the

number of children in each, and to bear to the hitherto benighted parents the joyful intelligence that “they would soon have an opportunity of having their children educated, as their considerate landlord, ever anxious for their welfare, both here and hereafter, had actually built a school-house for their use” (Nolan 123). Not surprisingly, the spinsters soon discover that “not one single parent prepared to rejoice at the good fortune in store for them” (Nolan 123). Unable to understand that they cannot not simply impose the Protestant religion on the Catholic tenants, Miss Rachael expressed her dissatisfaction by declaring that “she never met such unthankful people in her life. It was her positive conviction they were not a bit pleased to have such a splendid chance to educate their children. She would not be surprised now if they would prefer keeping them at home, or sending them to those old villages with the odious names” (Nolan 123). Rather than finding fault in their own approach, “both sisters laughed contemptuously at such schools, ‘where the pupils are taught nothing but to worship the Virgin Mary, and adore images’” (Nolan 123).

When the school officially opened, only three pupils attended the classes – all Protestant. Soon, “a formal and very stiff note was received by Mr. De Courcy from the Rev. Samuel Wilson Biggs, ordering Mr. De C. to notify the tenantry that his reverence required each and every one of them to send their children to his school, and he would take no excuse” (Nolan 148). Interestingly, as Haskell observes, the term spinster almost functioned “as a scare word, a stereotype that served to embrace and isolate a group of women of vastly different dispositions, talents, situations, but whose common bond – never having become half of a pair – was enough to throw into question the rules and presumed priorities on which society was founded (Haskell 18). The term, thus, did not only bring about a variety of negative connotations during the nineteenth-century, but was also used to spread fear in an attempt to convince women to stay true to their predestined childbearing responsibility to family and society. To keep this fear alive, spinsters were therefore also commonly associated with witchcraft and demonic practices.⁴⁹

Although the Misses Biggs are not directly referred to as witches but rather as “wretches” (Nolan 149), their ominous presence strongly resembles that of, for instance, the eighteenth-century legend of Black Annis, also known as Black Agnes or Black Anna; a dark-

⁴⁹ This connection between single women and witchcraft can be traced to early European folk traditions, in which witches were often depicted as women whose abilities and activities extended beyond childbearing and nursing into knowledge of healing, herbs or midwifery. For more information about the link between spinsters and witches, see: Martha Weigle. *Spiders and Spinsters: Women and Mythology*. University of New Mexico, 1982

faced witch with iron claws and a taste for human flesh (especially children)⁵⁰. In similarity to Black Annis, who is said to venture out to look for unsuspecting children to eat, the Biggs sisters frequently set out to convince the Irish Catholic parents and especially their children to convert to Protestantism by offering them rent money and other forms of relief during the Famine. Resembling the legend of Black Annis, the tenants and their children tremble with anxiety and fear when they hear the spinster sisters approaching. Some characters seemed to “turn pale” (Nolan 128) and their children would shake “from head to foot” and cower behind their parents “like a terrified fawn” (Nolan 128). The appearance of the spinster sister, thus, “barring their rich dresses, was by no means prepossessing ; but were they as beautiful as Venus, it would be all the same to the Glengoulah tenantry” as “the bare sight of them brought heavy grief to many a once happy hearth” (Nolan 129).

Although Father Esmond tries to refrain his flock from falling prey to the evil practices of the Biggs’s sister, the situation in county Wicklow grows more dire at the height of the potato Famine, and many of the tenants are soon persuaded to convert their children, and work for Mr Biggs in exchange for big sums of money: “in one instance a father and his son were offered £4; and another man with two sons was offered £6. Those who have seen the bitter poverty of the poor laborers in Ireland can justly estimate the fortitude and even heroism necessary to refuse such a temptation” (193). The wicked ways of the spinster sisters leads to a lot of (religious) tension within the community, even resulting in Mr De Courcy, a Protestant himself, resigning his agency out of respect for the tenants, and disgust for Mr Biggs:

I am really burning with shame, Father Esmond, as a Protestant, to think such things can be done with impunity by one of our ministers, and we are silent, both press and people. If we only heard of one individual Protestant being persecuted in a Catholic country, what bursts of eloquence would come daily from our press! What vast indignation meetings would be held! what fine speeches made, and flourishing correspondence carried on between the British envoy and the secretary of state! I am thoroughly disgusted with such flagrant injustice. There is no fair play for my Catholic fellow-country- man — I see that very plainly — no liberty of conscience for him. Acts of barbarous cruelty are perpetrated daily upon simple, unoffending people

⁵⁰ For more information about different representations of Black Annis see, for instance, John Gatehouse. *Man-Monsters and Animal Horrors*. Penguin, 2014., and Theresa Bane. *Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology*. Macfarland, 2013.

merely because they are Catholics. And men — otherwise honorable members of society — are content to shrug their shoulders and wash their hands of it. It sickens me to the soul to see it. (152).

Here, we can, again, note the suggestion that instead of the Irish tenants, it is the English landlord and his spinster sisters that are barbarous and uncivilised. The Misses Biggs, moreover, are extremely insensitive and disrespectful to the hardships of the Irish tenants, and show no remorse or mercy when, for instance, Toney Byrne's youngest son dies: "About a year or two after this, just as school opened one vacation, the three boys took the scarlet fever, and the youngest died [...] 'a just judgment upon his parents,' the Bible-readers and the Misses Biggs said, 'for keeping him from the knowledge of the Lord.'" (180). Strikingly, rather than being heartbroken by the death of their Benjamin, the Byrnes "deemed it a mark of the tenderest love of their dear Father in Heaven to take the gentle child to His bosom, and thus deprive the voracious Biggs of a prey he intended to devour" (181). This passage, more than anything, demonstrates that the Biggs' household had made life in Wicklow so unbearable that its people would rather die than end up in the clutches of the malicious reverend and his diabolical sisters.

5.3. Old Spinsters, Wealth, and Marriage in *In Re-Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time* (1870)

In Re Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time, written by siblings Edmund⁵¹ and Julia O'Ryan, was published by Thomas Richardson and Son in 1870. Although *In Re Garland* received raving reviews in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century and was praised for its detailed and organic depiction of the Irish farming class⁵², the novel seems to have since largely lost its appeal. Nevertheless, *In Re Garland* contains many interesting English and

⁵¹ Although Edmund O'Ryan is clearly not a female Irish writer, the fact that he has written this novel with his sister, and the conclusion that this nineteenth-century Famine novel contains many English female characters, makes *In Re Garland* a suitable novel to discuss in this thesis. Although it cannot be determined which parts of the novel have been written by Edmund, and which parts by Julia, it would not have been surprising if Edmund's name was merely added to the novel to attract more readers, as nineteenth-century authoresses were liable to be looked on with prejudice. These are, however, mere speculations that cannot be proven.

⁵² A critic reviewing *In Re Garland* in the *Irish Monthly* in 1873, for instance, commented on the authors' ability to portray the "conversation and customs of Irish people" in all its "completeness and naturalness" (313). These words were echoed in 1919 by Stephen Brown, who, in his *Ireland in Fiction* (1919), concluded that the novel showed "intimate knowledge of Munster ways of speech and thought among the farming and lower classes" and that the O'Ryan's demonstrated "good taste and strong faith in the people and in the people's faith" (Brown 219). For more information see: "Review of *In Re Garland*." *Irish Monthly*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1873, pp. 313.

Irish characters and its sense of completeness and naturalness gives great insight into nineteenth-century Irish rural life. The novel, in addition, contains many themes related to religion, class, nationality, and gender, and should therefore not be overlooked in this thesis. The following sections will therefore briefly introduce and summarise Edmund and Julia O’Ryan’s novel, shortly comment on the different representations of English female characters, and zoom in on the O’Ryans’ representation of ‘the old spinster’.

5.3.1. *In Re Garland: An Introduction*

Although relatively little biographical information concerning Julia and Edmund O’Ryan is available, we do know that Edmund was born in 1824 or 1825 and died in Youghal in 1903, at the age of 78 (Corporaal, “Recollecting Hunger” 215). He was, moreover, said to be a doctor and wrote for *The Tablet*, *The Lamp*, *The Nation*, and other journals (Brown 219). Julia O’Ryan’s date of birth is unknown, but it is believed that she died in 1887 (Corporaal, “Recollecting Hunger” 215). Edmund’s “partner in literary work” contributed verse and stories to the New York journal *Catholic World*, *Chamber’s Journal*, and *The Irish Monthly* (Brown 219). Although the siblings originally seemed to want to remain anonymous, and signed their work as written by “one of the authors of “In Re Garland””⁵³ (Corporaal, “Recollecting Hunger” 219), their anonymity did not last long, as Julia signed her name to her poem “My Twa Luves” in *The Irish Monthly* in 1874. Even though it is very difficult to find more details about the personal lives of the siblings, the journals in which they published do reveal that they were most likely of Irish Catholic descent and had close ties to the United States, and their professions suggests that they, most likely, belonged to the Irish middle-class.

In Re Garland’s first chapters are set in Farrenstown, just before the Great Irish Famine (1845-52) and tell the tale of a homeless Irish girl named Sally Landy. Sally, as it turns out, was a maid at the Garland house, and has given birth to the illegitimate daughter of English Squire Richard Garland. Richard Garland had initially promised to marry Sally: “many a time he said he'd marry me; that he didn't care for fine ladies to spend his money; that he knew I was a good housekeeper an', a decent father an' mother's child” (O’Ryan 20). It seems, however, that Richard’s mother would not have it: “he told me she made him make her a solemn promise on her dying bed to do his best to marry a respectable [...] virtuous

⁵³ See, for example the two short stories, published in volume 1 of the *Irish Monthly* in 1873, titled “Nancy Hutch and her Three Troubles” (pp. 223-232), which was signed by “J.O.R”, and “The Uses of Hope, and the Pleasures of Adversity” (pp. 286-88), which was attributed to “one of the writers of In Re Garland”.

woman as soon as decency would allow after she was gone”(22-23). Sally, being but a simple Irish maid, and having had intercourse with Richard before marriage, is clearly not the virtuous and respectable wife Mrs Garland had envisioned, and Sally is soon put out on the streets with her baby, her reputation ruined.

To make up for all of this, Richard vows to give Sally fifty pounds, which she goes to collect with the village idiot Billy, one of the few characters in the novel that still cares for Sally after she has fallen from grace. After cashing the cheque, Sally flees to London to start a new life and is never heard of again, which, as Corporaal et al. argue can be read as an example of “a dire fate in diaspora” (“Recollecting Hunger” 216). Sally, with the encouraging words and help of Billy, leaves her daughter with farmer Connor Kennedy and his wife who raise the child as their own. The child, now named Mary Kennedy, grows up to become a very strong, witty, kind-hearted, and sensible woman. Mary becomes aware that her biological father is Richard Garland, when “an angry brat one day addressed to her a taunt that gave her an insight of her true social position” (72) at her writing-school, but the other children in her class, undoubtedly jealous, remind Mary that she was never truly wanted by her biological parents, and ensure that she stays humble.

Although Richard Garland, at the beginning of the novel, is portrayed as a Victorian gentleman – a well-mannered family man of noble descent with good morals and values – a closer analysis of his character reveals that he is, in fact, depicted as a stereotypical ‘rake’. The term ‘rake’, deriving from the word ‘rakehell’, meaning ‘hellraiser’ typically referred to a man who was habituated to immoral conduct, particularly womanising. Originally, during the English Restoration Period (1660-1688) and the reign of Charles II and his “Merry Gang” of courtiers, rakes were portrayed as sexually irresistible, carefree, and witty aristocrats. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, however, the attractive life of the rake took a different turn, and the character of the rake became the symbol of immoral behaviour, in which his typical fate was prison, venereal disease, or, in the case of William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1732–34), insanity in Bedlam. In similarity to Richard Garland, a rake stereotypically wasted his (often inherited) fortune on women, gambling, drink, and song, incurring lavish debts in the process. A rake, moreover, was also frequently characterised as a ‘cad’: an immoral and callous man who seduces a young woman and impregnates her before leaving, coldly breaking her heart, and often leaving her in social or financial ruin, as was the case with Sally Landy.

Important to note, however, is that the negative connotations attached to the use of the

term ‘spinster’, in for instance Nolan’s *The Byrnes*, do not seem to be transferred in the same way to the term ‘bachelor’ or ‘rake’ when applied to an unmarried man, such as Mr Garland. Even though the authors of the novel make it very clear that his rakish existence is very empty, lonely, and loveless:

Still he was not what one would call a happy man — far from it. He had no one, not one to love or be loved by. His dependants, he believed, 'did not care a rush for him.' His most familiar intimates were hardly friends (77)

His rakish behaviour is, nevertheless, redeemed by the fact that Richard Garland has been deeply damaged by the rejection of the only woman he may have truly loved, and has lost all faith in the beauty and power of marriage and love:

Jilted by the lady of his aspirations, (if not of his love,) who at the date of Sally Landy's disappearance from the scene, had received his attentions with encouragement, and had, in fact, well-nigh accepted his proposals when herself captured rapidly by a dashing dragoon, he had retired disgusted from the matrimonial field to pursue his career as a bachelor (O’Ryan 77).

Whereas the spinster maids in *The Byrnes* are, thus, ridiculed for their innate immoral and lavish behaviour, Mr Garland’s rakish existence seems to be attributed to a series of incidental unfortunate events that have negatively affected his character.

The second and final part of the novel deals with the Famine and post-Famine period or ‘the transition time’ and outlines the hardships that follow the disaster. Whereas other nineteenth-century Famine novels tend to primarily outline the devastating effects the Famine has had on the Irish working classes, in *In Re Garland* the upper classes are also greatly affected. Richard Garland, for instance, is financially ruined by the Famine and his rather unwise lifestyle and, finally, his estate is encumbered under the Encumbered Estate Court⁵⁴, an act of the British Parliament in 1849 to facilitate the sale of Irish estates whose owners, because of the Great Famine, were unable to meet their obligations. Interestingly, although Richard Garland has never been very kind to his tenants, the Irish farmers become aware of the squire’s poverty and try to help him by offering food and clothes. As word spreads around

⁵⁴ For more information about Encumbered Estates Court, see for instance: W.T.H. *The Encumbered Estates of Ireland. [By W. T. H. Reprinted from the “Daily News” of Aug. and Sept. 1850.]* British Library, 2014., and Padraig G. Lane. “The Impact of the Encumbered Estates Court upon the Landlords of Galway and Mayo.” *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 38, 1982, pp. 45-58., and

that Richard Garland will soon lose the roof over his head, Connor Kennedy arranges for the landlord to live with his biological daughter Mary Kennedy and her husband John Meaney, and their two children. Although Richard Garland is initially very cold and distant towards his family, as he has never really learned how to love and be loved, he soon grows very fond of Mary and her children, although he never has the courage, and perhaps has also never learnt how, to express his love for them.

Soon after Richard Garland has moved into the Meaney household, Connor Kennedy grows very ill and dies unexpectedly. This scene is followed by one of the most devastating passages in the novel. Upon hearing about the death of her adoptive parent, Mary exclaims: “Oh father, father!” (212), and for a quick second, Richard Garland believes that his daughter, who has continued to call him ‘sir’ throughout the novel, is calling out his name. His heart, for a moment, is filled with warmth as he approaches his daughter, but soon grows cold after he realises that she is not even looking in his direction, and was calling out for Connor Kennedy, the brave man who had taken care of her as if she was his own. It seems that Richard Garland’s heart truly breaks, and not long after the former landlord and gentleman dies at the age of 65. Although his daughter and grandson shed a few tears, he sadly “left behind nobody who truly regretted him” (218), emphasising that his former scandalous and corrupt behaviour has left him unwanted by the ones he adored. This suggests that the most terrible form poverty is not the loss of one’s social standing, wealth, and estate, but the loneliness that stems from the feeling of being unappreciated and unloved.

In Re Garland presents a fascinating narrative filled with examples of female compassion and strength in the post-Famine era. Nevertheless, despite the novel’s relatively uplifting ending, it also carries a negative undertone. Mary, for instance, loses her connection with the Kennedy family after the death of Connor Kennedy, and becomes a stranger to her adoptive mother. Richard Garland and Mary, although living together, never really form a strong bond, and when Richard Garland eventually dies, his life, in contrast to Connor Kennedy, is not extensively mourned. *In Re Garland*, thus, as Fegan observes in *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845-1919* (2002) depicts a post-Famine “disjointed society, changed utterly” (230), in which lives have been altered irreversibly, the characters can “no longer be unambiguously happy” (Corporaal, “Recollecting Hunger” 216), and the future of the country and its people is uncertain and obscure.

5.3.2. *In Re Garland: Old Spinsters, Wealth, and Marriage*

Edmund and Julia O’Ryan’s *In Re Garland*, in similarity to Alice Nolan’s *The Byrnes*,

contains English female characters that can be categorised as ‘the Old spinster’. Although the English female characters in the O’Ryans’ novel are not as strongly prejudiced and resentful towards the Irish tenants as in Nolan’s work, they nevertheless do not feel at home in Farrenstown. Primary examples of such English characters, would be Miss Harriet Starling of Castlevew and her mother.

After Mr Garland’s wild rakish lifestyle has started to take its toll and the squire is in financial trouble, Richard Garland realises “there is nothing for it but to take another friend's advice, and stop the gap with a little girl's fortune” (113). Seeing marriage as a very practical arrangement, he becomes engaged to the English Miss Harriet Starling of Castlevew, “a lady with whom he had become slightly acquainted whilst paying his addresses to another in Sally Landy's time” (13). Although Miss Starling of Castlevew is described as “no longer so young as she might be” (113) underlining her former spinster-status, she “was just the person to accept his offer in a spirit kindred to that in which it was made” (113). To become Mrs. Garland of Cuilraike, “Miss Starling of Castlevew was willing to risk or sacrifice something, although not so much as her suitor had at starting counted on” as “she, or her friends for her, conditioned for the settling on herself of a considerable part of her fortune” (114). Still, Mr. Garland pushed on with the affair: “time pressed; and he knew that the very name of manning money staves off the countless small claims that, otherwise, when a man is going down, hurry in to down with him” (114). Luckily for Richard Garland, his marriage to Miss Starling of Castlevew “served him as a new lease of credit upon minor matters; and so left him free to meet as best he might those major ones which like time and tide wait on no man or woman either.” (114-115). Although, for a moment, Richard Garland seems to be saved from financial despair, the Famine suddenly throws a spanner in the works:

He might eventually have righted his position, suffering no worse than a narrowing of means through perhaps another half-dozen years, had not the famine come upon him as upon many equally unprepared to meet that time of trial. It made a gap in his rent roll, before which, face to face with his creditors, he sat down in despair (116).

To make matters worse, at the height of the squire's troubles, Miss Starling “re-claimed her ante-matrimonial freedom, and (to use her own words) ‘returned home’” (117).

After returning to England, Miss Starling’s mother explains to her acquaintances that Richard Garland “took up those desperate acceptances for bachelor friends and got himself into such a peck of troubles ! what poor Harriet never could go through” and that “he is in the

country, looking after, matters. I don't know how it will be with them" (118). Even if Mr Garland's financial troubles were to improve in the future, Miss Starling's mother claims that "she came home to us so knocked up that we could not think of letting her go back again", and that they "cannot help blaming him greatly" (118). And so, the alliance ended, and with the withdrawal of the name and the marriage settlement, "there passed from the squire the last resource by means of which he might have held on through a transition time" (118). Although Richard Garland, "from the date of Mrs. Starling-Garland's quitting Cuilraike heard little news of, and none from her", he nevertheless, realises that "that he neither could get money from the lady, nor any longer make her the representative of money" and the separation, therefore "to say truth, rather eased than irked him" (121).

The representation of Miss Starlight and her mother resembles the depiction of Nolan's Misses Biggs. Although Mr Biggs's sisters seem to feel a much stronger resentment towards the Irish tenants, Miss Starlight, in similarity, is of relatively old age, in terms of Victorian standards, when she finally marries Mr Biggs. Her mother's distaste for the Irish and her conviction to never let her daughter go back to the savage country, moreover, resonates with the Misses Biggs' opinion that the Irish are a race of "ignorant peasants" (Nolan 127). Important to note, nevertheless, is that the English female characters in *In Re Garland*, except for the brief above-outlined passage in which Miss Starlight's mother expresses her discontent towards Mr Garland's misconduct, have been given no voice, and do not speak throughout the novel. The English female characters are, thus, merely introduced through descriptions of the omniscient narrator, or through dialogues between other predominantly Irish characters.

This has some very interesting implications for the narrative, and raises a couple of important questions related to issues of focalisation (through which character or narrator the reader experiences the events) and narrative embedding (the way in which the plot is constructed in terms of various narrative layers)⁵⁵, as the fact that the English female characters in the novel have no distinct voice, undoubtedly has an effect on the reader, and the reader's ability to engage with the subject matter and certain characters. Although Lindsay Janssen, in her dissertation titled *Famine Traces*, impressively demonstrates that, especially in

⁵⁵ For more information about focalisation and narrative embedding see: Mieke Bal. "The Laughing Mice: Or, on Focalisation." *Poetics Today*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1982, pp. 202–10., and "Narration and Focalization." *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. Volume I: Major Issues in Narrative Theory*. Edited by Mieke Bal, Routledge, 2004, pp. 263–96.

relation to victimhood, the crossing of layers of focalisation leads to a “diminishment of the observer role” (312), and the narrative experientiality of images of hunger, and fever victims becomes enhanced when the reader witnesses them through the eyes of the protagonist, the exact opposite can be said for the way in which the English characters are represented in *In Re Garland*.

All the analysed novels in this thesis, invite (varying degrees of) identification with and compassion for the poor Irish tenants on behalf of the reader, and almost always advocate political messages. Nevertheless, the fact that the English characters are solely introduced through dialogue, narratological descriptions, and hearsay, makes it exceedingly difficult for the reader to identify with these particular characters, or feel any form of emotion towards them. This creates a barrier between the reader and the English female characters, and causes a form of social distancing in which the gap between the Self (the audience) and the Other (the English female characters) becomes increasingly difficult to bridge. The reader is, therefore, unable to feel any sympathy towards the English female characters, as their presence becomes more factual and distant, and is thereby unconsciously tricked into feeling more compassion towards the Irish characters. Although it is impossible to determine whether Julia and Edmund O’Ryan have strategically and deliberately placed their English female characters in this minor position, or whether they simply did not believe these characters to be of any great relevance to the plot of the novel, the fact that the English female characters in the novel are not given a voice, nevertheless, creates a stereotypical Famine narrative in which the plight of the starving Irish, as theorised and expected, is heavily foregrounded.

Moreover, although Nolan’s novel contains very distinct binary oppositions – e.g. virtuous and immoral, landlord and tenant, upper-class and lower-class, Irish and English, Protestant and Catholic, in *In Re Garland*, more dualistic and contrasting representations of male English characters can be observed. Throughout the novel, a constant negotiation between good and evil takes place, and binary oppositions become blurred following this process. The English characters are not represented as purely evil like in, for instance, Nolan’s *The Byrnes* or Kickham’s *Sally Cavanagh* ⁵⁶, but are portrayed as having feelings, and being capable of showing remorse and love. Although, for instance, not all of Mr Garland’s actions are honourable, the description of his deep financial ruin, social decline, and inherent loneliness makes it impossible for the reader to solely view his character as immoral or evil.

⁵⁶ See footnote 44 of this chapter.

The same, moreover, can be said for the description of Miss Starlight of Castlevew's mother, who is not exactly soft-spoken about the Irish tenants. Nonetheless, the reader understands that her prejudice against the Irish and the community of Farrenstown is most likely the result of Richard Garland's rakish behaviour, and stems from her desire to have nothing but the best for her precious daughter.

In contrast to *The Byrnes*, Julia and Edmund O'Ryan's novel, furthermore, can be read as a nuanced narrative that expresses sympathy, not only towards the working classes, but also towards the upper classes, who also have to bear the suffering of the Famine. Whereas, parallel to Mitchel's *Last Conquest* (1860), many (nationalist) nineteenth-century Irish Famine narratives solely focus on the plight of the starving Irish, *In Re Garland* describes the decline of the once wealthy squire Richard Garland, who, as has been determined earlier, finds himself in such heavy debts in the aftermath of the Famine, that his furniture and estate are confiscated. When Richard Garland is in financial ruin and forced to live with his illegitimate daughter Mary, who has become the adoptive child of a simple Irish farmer, his character becomes a symbol of the downfall of the Ascendency and the subversion of social hierarchies. This observation will be further discussed in chapter seven of this thesis. Whereas the characters of the English Biggs' household in Nolan's *The Byrnes* are represented as diabolical, evil creatures, the English in *In Re Garland*, thus, present far more human and relatable qualities. *In Re-Garland*, therefore, can be read as a novel that laments 'the transition time' and comments on social anxieties, the decline of the landed classes, and their social degeneration during and after the Famine.

6. SINGLE WOMEN AS SOCIAL MOTHERS

Clara's eyes filled with tears and her heart with a new emotion. She resolved to leave no exertion untried to create a new order of things on her uncle's estate, and to begin by hunting up Norah next day and providing everything for her comfort (Nolan 228).

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis has examined the negative representation of English female characters through the stereotype of the spinster. The analysis of these characters has revealed that unlike their male equivalent (e.g. the bachelor or rake), spinster- women were viewed as a threat to nineteenth-century Irish culture and society which centred heavily around marriage, procreation, and religion. Following a long-lived tradition in which women have been recognised, not as subjects with their own identity, but have instead “been reduced to symbols of the nation” (Meaney 203), these spinster characters, moreover, came to be equated with England and Englishness, and were thus used by the authors of these novels to comment on nineteenth-century political tensions between England and Ireland.

The following chapter will examine the representation of young marriageable English female characters (often landladies or family members of the English landlord) who side with the Irish tenants and subvert gender roles by going against the patriarch ruling over domestic and public spheres. These characters, in addition, almost always convert to Catholicism as a final act of resistance and rebellion, ultimately freeing themselves from their oppressor; either in the form of a male family member or the expectations and confinements of their (predominantly male) society. The analysis of these characters, in contrast to the representation of the spinster, will reveal that the novels examined in this thesis tend to depict English unmarried female characters as one of two extremes, namely either as social outcasts and sinners, as in the case of the spinsters, or as ‘social mothers’ and religious devotees.

6.2. Clara Menville: Breaking Thresholds and Creating ‘A New Order of Things’

Although Nolan’s *The Byrnes* is rather critical of the English and their involvement in the Irish question and contains many negative representations of both male and female English characters, the novel, interestingly, also contains a positive depiction of a young English woman, through the character of Mr Biggs’ niece Clara Menville. The following sections will comment on the representation of Clara Menville in relation to other English and Irish

characters in the novel, and examine the depiction of her character in relation to themes of class, religion, and gender.

6.2.1. *Ideologies of Womanhood in Victorian England and Ireland*

Before examining the representation of Clara Menville in *The Byrnes*, the most prevalent ideologies of womanhood in the Victorian era need to be briefly discussed, as this will undoubtedly have had an influence on the way in which female characters were represented in nineteenth-century literature.

Evidence from the analysis of many nineteenth-century publications concerning notions of womanhood has revealed that Victorians became increasingly engaged in a significant debate about the responsibilities, roles, and rights of women after the 1840s.⁵⁷ The assumptions related to women's 'nature' informed and fuelled these debates and was often contrasted with the roles ascribed to men. This "Woman Question" (Langland 382), was not merely a matter of idle discussion, but generated by religious doubts and historical circumstances, was perceived as a "genuine question" (Langland 382), which, by the 1860s, had become "one of the most important questions of the day" (Helsing et al. 11). Coventry Patmore's *The Angel of the House* (1854-62), Sarah Lewis' *Woman's Mission* (1839), and John Ruskin's "Of Queen's Gardens" (1865), for instance, articulated the differences between feminine and masculine natures, and explored woman's special role as "the moral regenerator of mankind" (Langland 382).

From these postulations of a woman's nature, four distinct but related myths about women came into existence that fed the Victorian imagination. Borrowing terms from Helsing et al., these myths of womanhood could best be categorised as A) the Angel in the House, B) the Angel out of the House, C) the Female Saviour, and D) the rather unpopular belief that the nature of men and women was equal, which was "so much at odds with the widespread interest in women's special nature [that] it seems to have played a smaller role in the public debate" (Helsing et al. 14). The Angel of the House, as exemplified in chapter 5 of this thesis, can best be categorised as loving and self-sacrificing, providing continuity and moral strength in a fast-changing society. By the standard of 'the Angel in the House', women were supposed to be "immensely sympathetic, immensely charming, utterly unselfish",

⁵⁷ See, for instance: Isabella Beeton's manual titled *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1851), *Practical Housekeeping; or, the duties of a home-wife* (1867) by Mrs. Frederick Pedley, and the influential *From Kitchen to Garret* by Jane Ellen Panton, which went through 11 editions in a decade.

excelling in “the difficult arts of family life” while catering to “the wishes of others” (Woolf 1346). The Angel out of the House, however, extended her care beyond her domestic sphere and catered “to the needs of the world at large through philanthropy and social service” (Helsing et al. 14). The Female Saviour, finally, could be described as “a radical version of the angelic ideal” (Helsing et al. 15), which combined a woman’s distinctive angelic natures with claims for more leadership in the world; “a female saviour leading the way to a fuller humanity and ushering a new era of community and love” (Helsing et al. 14). It is important to note that all these myths “postulate woman’s moral efficacy in the world at the same time as they limit her sphere for action in that world” (Langland 382). These stereotypes, thus, encouraged women to enact certain roles, while simultaneously setting the boundaries of what they could and could not do. This, undoubtedly, resulted in an ideology that established unequal power relations between men and women in the political and economic sphere, and glorified women’s role in the ‘moral’ and domestic sphere.

In similarity to these English stereotypes, nineteenth-century Irish constructs of femininity also disempowered Irish women and provided unhelpful and constraining standards to live by. Nineteenth-century cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness, as was exemplified in chapter four of this thesis, were often equated with womanhood and femininity, and constructed in contrast to England and Englishness:

Whether personified as a young woman violated by the colonial English, or as a mother, wife or sister weeping over her murdered menfolk [...] Ireland was ever a woman (Kearns 443).

Fixed constructs of gender, and especially femininity, thus, have always been central to Irish cultural and literary productions, especially in relation to themes of nationalism and colonialism. As outlined in chapter four of this thesis, the tradition of personifying Ireland as female can be traced back to eighteenth-century Gaelic poetry, in which Ireland was often constructed as a woman victimized by a colonising English male. Following this poetic tradition, two distinct but related myths about women came into existence that fed the Irish Victorian imagination. These myths of Irish womanhood could best be categorised as the figure of Mother Ireland, and the character of the Irish Colleen.

According to Bronwen Walter, “the icon of the family, apparently representing interdependence and unity, has remained dominant in Irish society” (9). Despite the undeniable “patriarchal imperatives of Irish nationalism and Catholicism” (Mooney 231), the

central figure of this family is the mother. Geraldine Meaney has suggested that from the beginning the way in which Irish women were represented was intimately connected with the way Ireland itself was perceived (152). Mother Ireland, therefore, may be represented as both nurturing yet also suffering, reflecting Ireland's troubling relations with England. Although the image of the Mother was primarily created by men, women too have produced representations of Mother Ireland. The significance of the representation of Mother Ireland is, therefore, not unitary but multiple (Loftus 44), heavily relying on the different contexts in which the character of the Mother appears.⁵⁸

The Irish Colleen figure, in addition, can be described as a beautiful young woman, usually with long red or dark hair, often barefooted and dressed in traditional clothes. Although her character is lively and caring, she may at times also display a fiery temper. Most importantly, the Colleen character is chaste and innocent. In nineteenth-century (Famine and post-Famine) literature, the Irish Colleen often symbolised the simple, dignified, rural peasantry, and was constructed in response to increasing urbanisation and industrialisation. In similarity to the character of Mother Ireland, the figure of the Irish Colleen appeared in many different contexts and served both colonial and nationalist discourses. Within the context of colonialism, the image of the chaste, beautiful, peasant girl represented a civilising influence, "a more acceptable 'other' than the constructed images of lazy and feckless Irish men" (Mooney 231). For Irish nationalists, on the other hand, the Colleen's connections to the Irish landscape and to traditional crafts, such as basket-weaving and wool-spinning, suggested a strong historical past and pointed to toward the idyllic future of a free and self-sufficient Ireland.

The Devotional Revolution⁵⁹ of the mid-nineteenth century resulted in a third ideal of Irish femininity, namely that of the Virgin Mary, and established constructs of masculinity and femininity which reflected Catholic doctrine. Women came to be represented as passive

⁵⁸ For more information see: Elizabeth Butler-Cullingford. "Thinking of Her as Ireland." *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry*. Syracuse UP, 1996, pp. 55-72., which outlines examples of different representations of Mother Ireland in, for instance, the works of O'Rathaille, Seamus Heaney, and William Butler Yeats.

⁵⁹ The "Devotional Revolution" is a term coined by the American historian Emmet Larkin in 1972 to describe a sudden and dramatic transformation of popular religious practice in Ireland in the period from 1850 to 1875. In "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75" Larkin argued that up to the 1840s, there was only a small but perceptible change and increase in devotional practices in Ireland. The effects of the Famine, and the efforts made by Archbishop Paul Cullen (1803-1878), however, turned "the great mass of the Irish people" into practising Catholics, which "they have uniquely and essentially remained both at home and abroad down to the present day" (Larkin 625). For more information, see: Emmet Larkin. "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 77, no. 3, 1972, pp. 625-652.

embodiments of Irish virtue, impersonating traits of piety, holiness, and humbleness. The character of Virgin Mary, moreover, instructed women on the importance of trust and perseverance. Sexuality and gender became equated with nationalism, and the example of Virgin Mary led to Catholic social teaching in which the Irish nation was defined in opposition to England, “the sexually loose woman was not only shocking, she was seen as anti-Irish or foreign” (Ingman 7), as exemplified by the depiction of Miss Jemima Jenkins and Miss Amelia Hopkins, the English spinster maids in Nolan’s *The Byrnes*.

These stereotypes of female behaviour, according to Boland, persisted in Irish literature far into the twentieth century, and “long after it was necessary, Irish poetry had continued to trade in the exhausted fictions of the nation, had allowed these fictions to edit ideas of womanhood” (Boland 137). This feminising of the nation thus produced a nationalising of women which ignored their desires, leaving no space for the consideration of their distinctive needs (Cullingford 62). In similarity to the aforementioned English stereotypes, these Irish constructs of femininity thus disempowered women and provided unhelpful and constraining standards to live by: “the personification of Ireland as ‘woman’ and ‘mother’ necessitated that the purity of that image was maintained on all levels (Cairns and Richards 77).

6.2.2. *Introducing Clara Menville*

Whereas, as has been determined in the previous chapter, Nolan’s English spinster characters failed to adhere to these nineteenth-century myths of womanhood, and were therefore perceived as evil and unladylike, the character of Clara Menville does adhere to Victorian standards. Her character, as the following sections will demonstrate, can be categorised as a combination of the stereotypes of the Angel in *and* out of the House, who, at the end of the novel, transcends these categories and becomes a Female Saviour.

The character of Clara Menville is introduced to the reader during the second half of the novel, in chapter seventeen. Around this time in the plot, most of the damage in county Wicklow has already been done: the new Protestant school has been built, Mr Biggs has raised the rents and refuses to extend the lease of Toney Byrne, many tenants are starving and/or have been evicted from their homes, and the spinster sisters are trying to lure the Irish children and their parents into joining their church. The introduction of Clara’s character, therefore, can be perceived as a breath of fresh air, which lightens the mood and brings hope and joy to, not only county Wicklow, but also to the reader.

Clara, her sister, and several other unspecified guests join the Biggs' household during the festive season. The sisters are "the daughters of Sir Harold Menville, of Menville Hall, Middlesex, and their mother was sister to her reverend ladyship" (213). Clara's sister, "the elder of those girls, though a very estimable young lady, was a stately beauty, and a good deal more worldly than her sister" (Nolan 209). Clara, by contrast, "was a laughter-loving, mischievous young brunette, all impulse, and with a heart brim-full of merriment and kindly feelings" (Nolan 209). In contrast to the English old maids who heavily complained that "it is evident there is no chance of a society in such a wild place!" (Nolan 34), the Menville sisters "were enchanted with the lovely scenery, even though the charming hills were covered with snow, and the swollen Ovoca stole darkly and silently along through the leafless groves" (210). Moreover, instead of remaining within the dark walls of Glengoulah Castle, the Menville sisters set out to explore the countryside, and "there was a dash of romance about their excursions up the mountains that pleased their fancy, and the picturesque costume of the peasantry set them into ecstasies, especially Clara" (210). The reader is, thus, immediately informed that this young English woman is nothing like the other female residents of Glengoulah Castle.

The description of Clara's character, moreover, strongly resembles that of beautiful and chaste peasant girl Winnie Byrne, who can be classified as an Irish Colleen Figure. In similarity to Clara, Winnie is initially described as "smaller figure, with a remarkably pretty face, in which drollery and roguery were the leading characteristics" (12) and who would need her father to "shield her from her mother's anger when some piece of work allotted to her would be found untouched, or when she had played some prank on the old schoolmaster" (12). Clara, like Winnie Byrne, finds great pleasure in tormenting her family members, especially the spinster sisters, who forbid the young women from conversing with the Irish tenants without their presence. Clara, therefore, "vowed revenge" (213), and never ceased to tantalise "the spinster sisters" (213):

She would irreverently sing snatches of hymns through her nose ; quote all the passages she could hunt up in the Bible which condemned women preachers, and recount for their edification the number of their aristocratic friends in England who had of late embraced Catholicism, and wish she had courage enough to follow their example, as she certainly would before long ; not that she had really ever bothered herself on a subject so serious, but just for mischief (213-214).

Although this mischievous behaviour is, undeniably, somewhat childish, boyish, and unladylike, the fact that Clara specifically targets the repellent spinster sisters, and that her character resembles that of Winnie Byrne, one of the best-liked characters in the novel, makes up for this naughty behaviour and creates a rather comical effect, which only enhances her playful, fun-loving, and charismatic character.

One of the questions that follows from this observation is why these dualistic representations of English female characters (e.g. the spinster and the maiden) can co-exist in one novel, which undeniably has a very noticeable nationalist and anti-British undertone. The parallels between Winnie and Clara's characters may, however, provide an answer to this question. The depiction of Clara's character namely seems to suggest that one of the reasons that she, unlike the other English female characters, is portrayed in such a positive fashion, can be attributed to the fact that her personality contains character traits (e.g. passionate, humorous, warm, imaginative, strong-minded, hospitable, sharp-witted, adventurous, and kind-hearted) that the Irish would traditionally ascribe to their own national character instead to that of the English. This thus suggests that Clara's nature is inherently more Irish than English, making her character far more likeable in the eyes of the author and her readership. This sharp contrast between her character and that of the spinsters can therefore be read as a narrative technique employed by the author of the novel to further emphasise the heinous disposition of the other English characters.

On a macrolevel, moreover, the similarities between Clara and Winnie's character might also be read as a comment on the political tensions between England and Ireland. In the previous chapter of this thesis, it had already been determined that Nolan must have, to a certain extent, been aware of the nineteenth-century stereotype of the 'Irish savage', as she very consciously seemed to use nouns and adjectives used in dominant nineteenth-century discourse, such as 'barbarous', 'savage', and 'animals', to create a counter-narrative in which she mocked this national ethnotype and underlined the notion that the English were, in fact, the savages. Taking this previous observation into consideration, the agreeable representation of Clara's character seems to further emphasise this point by demonstrating that the Irish nature is more favourable, and that instead of educating the 'savage animal', the English might instead benefit from learning more about Irish tradition and culture. This point seems to be further foregrounded by the narrator's observation that upon questioning the children in the village on different subjects, the Menville sisters

were surprised at the quick intelligence of their replies, as well as their respectful and polite demeanour. They confessed to each other the superiority in this respect of the Irish peasantry over those of their own country; and could not help contrasting the difference in the mode of education, and the happy looks of the children, with their uncle's false and forced system (239-40).

The usage of the term 'superiority' in this particular passage is very intriguing, as this fragment does not only underline the notion that the stereotype of the 'Irish Savage' is unsound and misleading, and that the Irish do not need to be educated by the English, but it can also, again, be read as another narrative technique to mock dominant discourse associated with this particular ethnotype of the Irish.

In his very influential *The Irish Crisis* (1848), Trevelyan defended the relief efforts he directed, and even went as far as to declare (prematurely, as we now know), that those efforts had helped to end the Famine. Trevelyan, moreover, claimed that government action was insignificant compared to the long-range benefits of the Famine itself, "the very handiwork of Providence" (Brantlinger): "posterity will trace up to that famine the commencement of a salutary revolution in the habits of a nation [...] and will acknowledge that On this, as on many other occasions, Supreme Wisdom has educed permanent good out of transient evil" (Trevelyan 4). Trevelyan's perspective and the hegemonic English public opinion, thus, asserted that the Famine could be attributed to the bad national 'habits' of the Irish: "poverty, idleness, sex, potatoes, whisky" (Brantlinger) and the Irish "selfish, perverse and turbulent character" (Trevelyan 5).

By claiming that the 'moral evil' and 'innate perverse character' of the Irish had caused the Famine, Trevelyan invoked themes of race, rather than notions of economics and politics, which would have been far more appropriate in his position. This stereotype came to dominate public and private discourse, and was echoed in many other publications around the time of the Famine. The *London Times*, for instance, often compared the bread- and meat-eating English to the potatophagous Irish (Brantlinger). Reverend Charles Kingsley, for instance, wrote that "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw [...] to see white chimpanzees is dreadful" (236), and Robert Knox, in his *The Races of Men* (1850), claimed that those who attributed the Famine to the Catholic faith were wrong for failing to recognise the importance of race. Following this dominant discourse, the British often perceived the Irish as an inferior race, and soothed and flattered themselves, in the words of John Mitchel, "with the belief that they are the 'superior race'" (Mitchel 18). Following these observations,

Nolan's usage of the term 'superiority' can thus, again, be seen as a method to very skilfully mock dominant discourse associated with the stereotype of the 'Irish Savage'. By ascribing the term 'superiority' to the Irish peasants instead of to the English landed classes, Nolan, thus, creates a counter-narrative in which dominant discourse is disputed, and the reader is invited to see the Irish peasants in a different light.

6.2.3. Clara Menville: From Boyish Rascal to Angel out of the House and Female Saviour

Although the previous section has demonstrated that Clara's initial introduction to the reader has some very interesting implications, her character, moreover, undergoes a great and noticeable transformation, from the mischievous and boyish rascal that the reader is first introduced to, to the Angel out of the House and Female Saviour. This transformation is due to a life-altering event on Christmas eve that shapes many of the characters in the novel, including Clara Menville, and is very important to its plot and major themes. This section will outline Clara's transformation and comment on its meaning in relation to themes of class, religion, and gender.

Although Clara is first introduced as a rowdy troublemaker who is fixed on tormenting her spinster aunts, her character changes drastically from the moment she encounters the starving Irish peasantry. One of the key elements that sets Clara apart from the other characters in the novel, is the fact that she is described as entering the cabins of the starving people of Wicklow: "She loved to go into the farmhouses and cottages and converse with the inmates, - especially the children" (213). The Irish soon discover that "she was of a different stamp from the Biggs tribe" (213) and inform Clara about "the many visits paid to them by the Misses Biggs to draw them from their faith" (213). After complaining to her aunt, "hoping she would put a stop to it; but finding out she was a party in the scheme", Clara is "forbidden to visit any more Irish cottages" (213). Although Clara's visits to the peasants' cabins might seem insignificant, since her aunts have also been making regular visits to the tenants to 'draw them from their faith', the fact that Clara is described as entering the cabins, instead of remaining on the doorstep like the Biggs' sisters, has some very interesting implications. Clara, namely, does not only literally, but also metaphorically crosses the threshold by entering the cabins of the starving Irish.

Descriptions and images of thresholds are a recurring theme in nineteenth-century Irish literature and witness accounts of the Famine. In Lord Dufferin and G.F. Boyle's travel narrative titled *Narrative of a Journey from Oxford to Skibbereen during the Year of the Irish*

Famine (1874), for instance, two Englishmen are described as standing “on the threshold” to survey a starving “woman [...] crouching, drawing her only solace from their scanty warmth; she was suffering from diarrhoea” (31). Because the witnesses in these narratives refrain from entering the cabins of the starving Irish, the threshold becomes a physical marker that abstains both the witness and the reader from any identification with the deprivations that are concealed inside the cabin. The threshold, thus, functions as a boundary that keeps “disturbing, dehumanizing situations at a remove from the narrative consciousness” (Corporaal, “Relocated Memories” 88). This makes it exceedingly less difficult for the reader to regard the Famine victim as ‘Other’, as the threshold creates a “narrative barrier” (Corporaal, “Relocated Memories” 88) which further emphasises the fact that the victim and spectator belong to different ethnicities and social classes, and increases the distance between the reader and its subject. In other narratives and witness accounts of the Famine in which the threshold is crossed, the narrator quite often refrains from describing the horrible events within the cabin walls. This narrative pattern can be ascribed to an effect that David Lloyd in his collection *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* (2008), has characterised as the “indigent sublime”: the inability of witnesses of the Great Famine to describe human trauma as its fearful realities cannot be adequately represented. The thresholds in these narratives may not only be read as physical markers but, additionally, also often symbolise the barrier between natural and unnatural, human and inhuman, spectator and subject, and Self and Other.

In Nolan’s *The Byrnes*, the threshold, however, does not only function as a barrier between the aforementioned categories, but it is also a symbol of Clara’s state of being and her journey towards maturity. When Clara crosses the threshold and enters the cabins of the Irish peasantry, she is not only introduced to characters of an entirely different social class, but the threshold also symbolises the mental boundaries that she has to overcome that exceed her imagination, and that are in stark contrast with the Victorian roles ascribed to someone of her social standing. By entering the cabins and conversing with the peasants, Clara deliberately goes against the wishes of her family.

Clara’s crossing of the threshold, moreover, marks the moment in which her character transforms from the boyish rascal into the Angel out of the House. When Clara first arrives in Ireland, she does not have an insider’s perspective on the dire situation in Wicklow, nor does she have an understanding of what it means to be ill, starving, and poor. She is young and foolish, and primarily occupies herself with song, dance, and laughter. The moment she enters

the cabins, however, she gains insight into the moral depravity of her family, the troubling relations between Mr Biggs and his tenants, and is confronted with an entirely new religion (Catholicism), which as it turns out, is not as immoral as her aunts claim it to be. She, moreover, realises that unlike dominant discourse in England, the peasants are, in fact, intelligent and of high moral standing. These revelations force Clara to quickly grow-up and face the realities of life, and spark her interest in philanthropy and social service. The moment Clara crosses the threshold, her character, outlook on life, and moral compass is, thus, irreversibly and forever changed. It, moreover, makes the reader wonder whether the fate of Mr Biggs and his sisters could have been different, had they crossed the threshold and entered the cabins of the peasants as well.

Nolan's novel, like many other nineteenth-century works of Famine fiction, borrows extensively from the Gothic mode. The symbolisation of barriers (such as thresholds) may also be ascribed to this tradition. In *The Literature of Terror* (1980), David Punter discusses elements of the Gothic, and clarifies that barriers (such as thresholds) often symbolise an exploration of sociological and psychological boundaries between fantasy and reality, and social acceptance versus taboo. Thresholds in Gothic fiction, moreover, have often come to represent transgression of social norms, social entrapment, and the fear of merging with the Other (DeLamotte 59).

Another Gothic element that is frequently used in literature of the Famine, and consequently also in Nolan's *The Byrnes*, is the narrative technique of pathetic fallacy.⁶⁰ Throughout the novel, the weather in Wicklow mirrors the well-being of its tenants, and their emotions are projected onto the surroundings and nature. This is also the case in one of the most important scenes of the novel when, on Christmas eve, Mr Biggs and his English guests have gathered around the fireplace, while outside "the wind roared up the chimneys, crashed furiously against the heavy stone casements, and ran tearing and tumbling along the battlements as if meditating the destruction of the whole building" (Nolan 214). The castle, moreover, is described as being "rocked to its foundations" (216), when a blinding flash of forked lightning, followed instantaneously by a tremendous crash of thunder, strikes the Biggs' residence, making "the high-born guests turn and shiver with fear" (216). Interestingly, "another clap and crash on the battlements" is depicted as splitting "the flag-staff through the centre" and tearing "the Union Jack in shreds" (216), undoubtedly signifying that the growing

⁶⁰ For more information about the concept of the pathetic fallacy, see: John Ruskin. *Modern Painters*. Smith, Elder, 1873., in which the term is conceptualised and used for the first time.

tensions between the English and Irish characters in the novel would soon reach their boiling point.

This description, undoubtedly inspired by the Gothic tradition, foreshadows the arrival of an unexpected, vengeful guest. Indeed, suddenly the door is flung open, and “a slight girlish form with bare and bleeding feet, dressed in a long white gown” is seen standing “on its threshold” (Nolan 217). Bearing resemblance to what Nolan describes as “an apparition” and “an unearthly looking being” (217), it is young Norah Cormac who has come to confront Mr Biggs, “the wretch who had robbed her of home, kindred, and reason” (218). Mr Biggs, as it turns out, is responsible for her mother’s death, as he has vengefully put her out on the streets after she refused to have her daughter convert to Protestantism. Norah, instigated by the spirit of her deceased mother, has therefore come to invade the castle to seek justice for her poor, deceased mother.

In contrast to Clara’s crossing of the threshold, Norah’s entering of the castle seems to symbolise transgression of social norms and the fear of merging with the Other. The characters’ reactions to Norah Cormac’s entrance vary enormously. While the English ladies all tremble in fear, and refrain from interacting with the poor girl, Clara is the only character prepared to approach Norah, “her heart touched with pity” (318). Here, we can, again, observe Clara’s willingness to engage with ‘the indigent sublime’. The concept of ‘the indigent sublime’ does not only refer to the supposed irrepresentability associated with trauma and death, but also suggests an almost aesthetic experience which is “rooted in an apprehension of the insistent duality of human being, at once subordinate to and transcendent of nature and mortality” (Lloyd 161). The spectacle of the Famine victim forces the viewer to “the threshold of humanity”: “the sill that divides the human and the nonhuman, or, rather, to the boundary that marks the division between the human and the nonhuman within the human” (Lloyd 163). The Famine, thus, dissolves the boundaries between subject and object, and thereby challenges not only the connections between nature and culture, but also the relationship between human and non-human. In the case of the indigent sublime, however rather than strengthening the subject, which Immanuel Kant ⁶¹ suggests results from a subject’s encounter

⁶¹ The term ‘sublime’ is used to refer to natural objects and experiences that inspire a kind of awed terror through sheer immensity. The sublime was considered to be a satisfying and aesthetic experience, either, as for Edmund Burke, through virtue of the pleasurable nature of the terror that it arouses, or, as for Kant, in virtue of its intimation of a capacity of the mind to apprehend the limitless or indeterminable. For more information about Kant’s conceptualisation of the sublime, see: Immanuel Kant. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. University of California Press, 2004.

with the sublime, the *indigent* sublime forces the subject to recognise “the precariousness of subjecthood itself” (Lloyd 52).⁶²

While the castle’s threshold is meant to function as a boundary that keeps disturbing, dehumanising situations at a remove, when Norah crosses this threshold, the boundaries become blurred, almost physically forcing the characters in the novel to interact with the indigent Other. Whereas the other English characters all draw back to the corners of the room to re-establish a new physical and mental border between this Other and the Self, Clara very consciously breaks this boundary when she crosses the room to approach Norah. The dissolution of this boundary, as Lloyd observes, is not a moment of identification, or a moment “of recognizing the subject in another as equivalent to or in identity with the subject in oneself” (163). Rather, the blurring of these boundaries creates a situation that resembles this moment of identification, while simultaneously also establishing a moment of non-recognition of the subject in the Other, which results in panic, fear, and dread (Lloyd 163), emotions undoubtedly felt by the other characters in the room.

Although Clara may never be able to truly understand the hardships of Norah Cormac, she is nevertheless brave and kind enough to overcome this initial sensation of fear and panic in an effort to help Norah. By crossing this ‘threshold of humanity’, moreover, she creates a new space in which other characters are also enabled and encouraged to engage with the indigent Other. Although the other English ladies were, initially, quite horrified when Clara approached the unearthly-looking being, when they see Clara interact with Norah and realise how young the poor girl is, they “began to revive, and her pitiable condition excited their commiseration” (Nolan 218). Although these characters, including Clara, might never be able to fully understand Norah, the fact that they are, momentarily willing to interact with the indigent Other suggests that some form of reconciliation between the starving Irish peasant, and the English landlord class, is perhaps possible. When Clara crosses the threshold, she, thus, sets an example for the other English female characters, while simultaneously enforcing her new role as a leader.

Clara’s behaviour greatly threatens Mr Biggs’ position, who is not only well-aware

⁶² It is therefore, perhaps, not entirely surprising that narratives and witness accounts of the Famine frequently invoke images of animals to describe the Famine victims, “as the spectator seeks to distance the victim from humanity, even when extending sympathy” (Lloyd 164). Similarly, it can also be argued that literature of the Famine might frequently invoke images of female or child victims as these figures perhaps already occupy an ambiguous position between nature and culture, and as Kelleher points out, may not only function as objects for pity and compassion, but might also be subject to *a priori* distancing on behalf of the often cultured male spectator (in contrast to women and babies) (Lloyd 164).

that his past wrongdoings are about to be exposed by poor Norah, but also senses that his leadership and role as the patriarch is being threatened. He, therefore, signals to the servants “to carry Norah off at once” (218). Although Clara tries to intervene, assuring Mr Biggs that she will redirect Norah to the servants’ kitchen, where she can receive warm clothes and something to eat, Mr Biggs’ nevertheless pushes Norah back into the wild storm, and very quickly locks the door. Mr Biggs, thus, quite literally thrusts the indigent Other across the threshold in an attempt to avoid being confronted with the panic and fear that results from an encounter with ‘the indigent sublime’. Clara, the only guest worried about Norah’s well-being, begs her family members to let her go after “the poor idiot child”⁶³ (219), but is stopped by her aunt, one of Mr Biggs’ spinster sisters, who orders Clara to go to her room, exclaiming that she has “made a sufficient fool” (218) of herself and embarrassed her family in front of their guests.

In the night that follows these haunting events, the guests are abruptly awakened by a “low mournful cry”, which “bounded like nothing they had ever heard before; half like the howl of a dog, and half like a human shriek” (Nolan 226).⁶⁴ Interestingly, this piercing scream is followed by a faint voice, undoubtedly that of Norah Cormac, slowly singing: “now all my sorrows he will heal. My sins he’ll take away. For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas day” (226). This scene has some interesting implications for Clara’s character. It seems that not only Jesus Christ, but also Clara Menville the ‘Female Saviour’ is metaphorically born on Christmas day. In similarity to biblical representations of Jesus, Clara unselfishly tries to extend kindness to Norah (and other Irish tenants), and sets the example for the remaining English female guests. Although Clara is of a different nationality, religion, and class, she nevertheless helps the injured Norah, who she has been instructed and taught to hate. The parallel between Jesus and Clara is not only underlined by Norah’s song, which recalls the day that Christ was born, but also by Clara’s recollection of a hymn she once heard while attending a Catholic midnight mass with “friends of high rank (who had become converts)” (227), which “fell from the lips of angels through the golden clouds of morn eighteen hundred years ago” (226).

⁶³ The word ‘idiot’ in this quote refers to Norah’s learning disabilities and low IQ, which is explained earlier on in Nolan’s novel (see page 192). It is not, in any way, meant as an insult to poor Norah Cormac, but rather used as a way of emphasising the direness of her situation, as she is not only orphaned and put out on the streets, but also physically and mentally not stable enough to look after herself.

⁶⁴ Please note that, as suggested earlier, Nolan invokes images of animals to describe the Famine victims in this particular passage, emphasising the inhuman quality of the indigent Other and the inability to identify with the Famine victim (in this particular case Norah Cormac).

Following these nightly contemplations, “Clara’s eyes filled with tears and her heart with a new emotion. She resolved to leave no exertion untried to create a new order of things on her uncle’s estate, and to begin by hunting up Norah next day and providing everything for her comfort” (228). This particular passage, and the horrifying events that occurred right before Clara was sent to bed, seem to mark the moment her character transcends from the Angel out of the House, to the stereotype of the Female Saviour. Becoming “a radical version of the angelic ideal” (Helsing et al. 15), Clara seems determined to lead the way to a fuller humanity by ushering in a new era of community and love. In the passage that follows, Clara has a peaceful dream in which she envisions Norah singing among “a troop of Angels” (229) that descend to heaven: “her face was now radiant as the sun, and a wreath of glory rested on her long dark hair” (229). This particular scene in *The Byrnes* creates a sense of closure, as the comforting image of Norah descending to heaven suggests that she can now finally be at peace.

Unfortunately, the next morning, Clara discovers that poor Norah has been found frozen to death on the steps of the castle. The fact that Norah has died “on the threshold” (233) of Glengoulah Castle cannot only be read as a retaliating act on behalf of Norah - as a way of pointing the finger directly at Mr Biggs and exposing his malicious actions - but it, moreover, also seems to further emphasise and symbolise that the indigent Other was unsuccessful in accessing not only the physical, but also mental space of the subject. This is further emphasised by the fact that although Clara is greatly affected by the discovery of Norah’s dead body, her uncle’s inability to engage with the indigent object makes it exceedingly less difficult for him to remain impartial and insensitive to the whole situation. Mr Biggs denies his involvement in this “foul wrong-doing” (234) for the fear of a “dreaded inquest” that will expose “all his long catalogue of extortions and persecutions” (235). This “frigid indifference” provoked Clara “beyond endurance” (233).

The fact that Clara is a woman, moreover, limits her actions in this time of crisis, as she is not allowed to, for instance, carry Norah’s lifeless body inside, leaving her powerless and frustrated. Clara therefore decides to stand up to the patriarch by testifying against her uncle. Although Clara’s testimony is heard, a verdict is returned of “death caused by exposure to the cold and wet”(237) and Norah Cormac is given a proper burial ceremony.⁶⁵ Although

⁶⁵ Funerals, funeral rituals, and wakes played an important role in nineteenth-century Catholic Irish society and were therefore often depicted in nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels. Due to the staggering number of deaths between 1845 and 1849, many Famine victims and their families were robbed of their funeral rites, and the dead were buried in mass-graves, bereaving them of their dignity and identity. The fact that Norah Cormac was,

this might not have been the desired outcome, Mr Biggs' biggest fears have come true and his dirty laundry is put out on the streets for everyone, including his high-born guests, to see, thereby ruining his reputation and tearing away "his assumed mask of sanctity" (235). Soon after these events, Clara returns to England, where she converts to Catholicism and eventually devotes her life to her new-found religion by becoming a nun. As a final act of resistance and rebellion against the patriarch, and as a constant reminder of all the sorrow and pain her Protestant Bishop uncle has caused, Clara becomes "sister Norah of the Presentation convent" (337). In that sense, Clara did not only cross the threshold of the peasants' cabins, but also the threshold of sectarianism.

6.3. Philanthropy, Religion, and Class in Sadlier's *New Lights*, or, *Life in Galway: A Tale*

Although Mary Anne Sadlier's didactic and conservative Catholic novels nowadays seem to have lost their appeal, her work was immensely popular in the nineteenth century, with many of her novels going through multiple editions in fifty years. Mary Anne Sadlier (Madden), born on December 30, 1820, in Cootehill, County Cavan, has been described as "the most prolific and influential writer of the Famine generation" (Fanning 114). Having published around sixty works and eighteen novels between 1850 and 1870, and her work being "evidently read to pieces" (Thorp 99), Sadlier was one of the first important Irish-American female voices. In her works, catering to a large and nostalgic Irish immigrant audience, Sadlier addressed themes of emigration, the Great Irish Famine, Catholicism and anti-Catholicism, and domestic life. It is therefore not surprising that Sadlier's body of work is often perceived as essential for "understanding the experience of the Famine immigrants and the conservative Catholic ideology by which many of them lived" (Fanning 114) and demands special attention when examining female Famine narratives of the nineteenth century.

After the death of her father Francis, a well-to-do Irish merchant, the twenty-four year old Mary Anne emigrated to Montreal before the Famine in 1844, where she met and married James Sadlier in 1846. James Sadlier, also from Ireland, had emigrated to New York City in 1832 with his brother Denis, where they founded D. & J. Sadlier.⁶⁶ *New Lights* proved to be

nevertheless, given a proper burial paid for by the Biggs' family, can therefore be read as a sign of deep respect towards Norah Cormac and her mother, and may also be seen as a form of retaliation against Mr Biggs, who quite literally has to pay for his crimes.

⁶⁶ A publishing house that would live on to survive the First and Second World War, the Great Depression, and the decline of the printing industry, and is still known as the oldest family-owned publishing company in the United States, currently specialising in educational programmes and books.

one of Sadlier's greatest achievements, going through at least eight editions in the 50 years that followed the publication of her work (Fanning 116).

In *New Lights*, Sadlier describes the lives of Catholic Irish peasants living in a Connemara village during the period of the Irish Famine. Rather than illustrating the detailed horrors of the Famine like many of her contemporaries, Sadlier's novel instead expresses a polemical attack on religious conversion prompted by the 'bible-readers' and 'Jumpers' in an effort to expose "the shameless conduct of the proselytiser" (Sadlier 248). In addition to these religious themes, Sadlier's novel underlines the flaws of the system of land acquisition and (absentee) landlords in nineteenth-century Ireland and explores tensions between different social classes and English and Irish national identities.

Although many of Sadlier's novels, like *Bessy Conway* (1861) can be categorised as Irish-American narratives in which the United States is represented as a land of vice which ultimately tests the faith of Irish immigrants⁶⁷, *New Lights* is situated in an exclusively Irish setting. The novel, set during the Famine, focuses on the tensions between the heartless English landlord Mr Ousely and his Catholic tenantry. Mr Ousely advocates the proselytization of his Catholic tenants and evicts the poor O'Daly family because they refuse to renounce their faith in exchange for bread. As one of the earliest known Famine novels, which prefigured numerous later fictional representations of the crisis (Corporaal and Cusack par.16), *New Lights* represents Catholicism not only as a beacon of hope, but also as an expression of imperial defiance in times of starvation.

Although Sadlier's *New Lights* (1853) is different to Nolan's *The Byrnes* (1868) in terms of its narrative techniques, plot, and most importantly tone (which is highly didactic and polemical in Sadlier's case), many parallels between Nolan's representation of Clara Menville, and Sadlier's depiction of the English Eleanor Ousely can be drawn. The next section will therefore examine the representation of Eleanor Ousely in relation to themes of class, philanthropy, and religion, and comment on the depiction of this character in relation to other Irish and English characters.

⁶⁷ Sadlier's *Bessy Conway* (1861), focuses on the adventures of a young Irish woman (Bessy) who sails out on an emigrant ship to work as a domestic servant in New York. In America, Bessy is exposed to temptations such as alcohol and dances. The other Irish emigrant girls that Bessy encounters in her employers' households, moreover, refuse to go to Mass and are often pressured into converting to Protestantism by their mistresses, who, for instance, command them to join their families in prayer. Bessy, nevertheless, stays true to her Catholic faith by standing up to her Protestant employer Mrs Hibbard. Bessy is eventually rewarded for her piety and manages to find a well-paid position in the Catholic home of Mrs Walters. After several years in America, she returns to Ireland at the height of the Famine, just in time to rescue her family with her savings.

6.3.1. Eleanor Ousely: Philanthropy, Class, and “Those Old Ascendency Glasses”

When first introduced to the reader, Sadlier’s Eleanor Ousely is the perfect example of attractive maidenliness and an Angel in the House. She is depicted as a beautiful, thoughtful, “very lovely girl” (84) who devotes most of her time to feminine occupations such as drawing and reading, and is described as “the only being who could really influence Harrington Ousely” (84). The spitting image of Britannia⁶⁸, Eleanor has “dark radiant eyes, and a purely Grecian face, thoughtful and intelligent in expression”, “hair of the darkest shade of auburn”, and her “figure was slight and graceful and her stature considerably above the middle size” (84). Eleanor, undoubtedly, is represented as the ideal Victorian English woman; “a ‘domestic deity’ who ‘radiates morality’ as she tries to make her father aware of his selfishness and lack of empathy” (Corporaal, “Relocated Memories” 151). Eleanor Ousely, in similarity to Clara Menville, undergoes a noticeable transformation, from the embodiment of English maidenliness and Angel in the House to the Angel out of the House and Female Saviour. Unlike Clara Menville, however, as this section will outline, Eleanor’s transformation is relatively short-lived, and comes to full circle when she returns to her position as Angel in the House at the end of the novel.

Although Eleanor initially is “reigning sovereign over her father’s affections” (95), the Famine and the efforts made by the Protestant proselytizers drives a wedge between father and daughter. In similarity to Nolan’s Mr Biggs, Mr Ousely, a John Bull-type character, is depicted as a stout, choleric, indifferent, bad-tempered landlord, who supports the efforts of the Protestant missionaries to convert the starving Catholic tenants in return for food. Depicted as vultures, waiting for their prey to be near-death before relentlessly striking, the Protestant Jumpers⁶⁹ single out the most starved and desperate tenants, especially women and children, in an attempt to convert them. When poor Katty Boyce’ children are ‘abducted’ on their way to Catholic school, and brought to the Protestant schoolhouse instead, the community is outraged, and Eleanor Ousely cannot help but to side with the Irish tenants. Now exposed to the wrongdoings of her father, Eleanor starts to contemplate about the “very great contrast which there is between our condition and that of the people from whom my father draws his income” (85) and wonders why the starving tenants are forced to pay rent

⁶⁸ For more information about the representation of Britannia, see chapter 3, section 3.2 of this thesis.

⁶⁹ ‘Jumpers’ is a negative term often used in narratives of the Famine to describe (mostly English) missionaries who, as part of the colonisation of the Irish, seek to divert the uncivilised and uncultured Irish from the Roman Catholic Church.

(86).

In an interesting passage that follows these events, Eleanor witnesses her father being unkind to poor, weak, dying Honora O'Daly, who has come to their house to beg for an extension of payment. Although Eleanor, at this point still an Angel of the House, observes this incident from her bedroom window, and has not yet been into contact with the tenants, she nevertheless perceives a sense of injustice and decides to discuss the fate and faith of the tenants with her mother. Eleanor is stricken by the tenants' enduring faith, and observes that "they are patient and resigned, as none but themselves could be under such circumstances; they never murmur against the will of God, though it consigns them to hunger, cold, and all manner of wretchedness" (86). Although it is clear from this passage that the landlord's daughter is not quite sure why her father's tenants would stick to a religion that seemingly leads them down a path of misery, the reader can, nevertheless, discern a sense of curiosity and admiration. Even though her mother is convinced that the tenants are "provided with good wholesome nourishment for the body as well as for the soul" (87), Eleanor seems prone to the unfair treatment of the Catholics, and exclaims:

Yes, mother, but on what terms ? Are they not driven away like dogs from the soup shops unless they will consent to barter their religion, as Esau did of old his birth right, for the mess of pottage? (88).

It seems that the more Eleanor contemplates about these issues, the more she sympathises with the Irish tenants, and the more she is drawn towards the Catholic faith. Although Eleanor cannot directly discuss these observations with the cold-tempered, Protestant patriarch, she finds a way to dabble in the Irish Catholic community through her new-found love for philanthropy and role as Angel out of the House. As Cusack has noted, charity and philanthropy were important aspects of the representation of class in Famine fiction (176). Often linked to notions of religion and gender, works of nineteenth-century Famine fiction used the theme of philanthropy as a means to counterbalance religious (Protestant) discourses: "within Ireland, philanthropy reflected religious tensions in society" (Kinealy 257). In *New Lights*, the theme of philanthropy is, indeed, inextricably linked to the evil wrongdoings of the Protestant Jumpers. In one of the concluding passages of *New Lights*, Sadlier remarks that the difference between Charity and Philanthropy lies in the fact that the former is "beautifully illustrated in the poor, humble, unpretending Catholic" (434) whereas the latter can be attributed to "the rich Protestant patrons of the New Reformation" (435).

Sadlier, moreover, argues that the results of philanthropy are momentary and fleeting, and claims that although the philanthropist “may spend his thousands and thousands of English gold, providing Bibles, and tracts, and ‘stirabout’, and soup — he may flatter himself and the people who fill his pocket that he is doing wonders amongst the Irish papists — he may succeed to a certain extent, while famine continues to desolate the land” when the plague is over “then the proselytizer, whether hypocrite or fanatic, shall see the whole castle of his hopes topple to the ground, and his beautiful Fata Morgana melt into air” (Sadlier 440-41).

Even though the theme of philanthropy is thus often used by Famine authors, including Sadlier, to underline religious tensions, in *New Lights* it serves another additional purpose. As Luddy and Kelleher have noted, philanthropy and especially Famine-era philanthropy was often a gendered phenomenon, associated with middle and upper-class women, as can be observed in, for instance, Mrs Hoare’s “Little Mary” (1851), Nolan’s *The Byrnes of Glengoulah* (1868), and Emily Lawless’ “After the Famine” (1897). As Kelleher has argued in *The Feminization of Famine* (1997), these representations served to not only “highlight women’s moral character” (87), but also justified “a particular, if limited, form of female agency for the upper classes” (87). It can, therefore, be argued that philanthropy might have also had an emancipating effect on women, as “philanthropy became an acceptable means of conducting a moral mission in public, and such activity brought them very clearly into the public realm” (Luddy 352) while, I may add, still remaining within the boundaries of accepted societal norms and gendered roles. In *New Lights* the notion of philanthropy, thus, not only served as theme to underline religious tensions, but also as a structural feature through which the character of Eleanor Ousely could develop a public presence, and become relatively emancipated.

Although Eleanor has had a Protestant upbringing, her philanthropy and new-found role as Angel out of the House, moreover, allows her to come into contact with the Irish Catholics and enables her to further explore her contemplations about religion. Her interactions with the tenants allow her to move beyond the, in this case, metaphorical threshold of class and religion, and enlighten her about her Protestant upbringing. Eleanor’s unique ambiguous societal position allows her look at the issue from multiple perspectives and through different ‘glasses’. Her mother, who unlike her pre-occupied father, observes a shift in Eleanor’s behaviour, exclaims that she “cannot see these things as you [Eleanor] see them – I, at least, have no leaning towards Popery, that might bias my judgement” (131). Eleanor, very clearly enlightened by her new position in the community, wittingly reasons

with her mother by explaining that her mother is also biased to the whole situation, as she looks “through old Protestant spectacles” which are “at least a hundred years old” (131). This comment cannot only be read as a critique of the ancient feud between Protestants and Catholics, but may also be seen as a primary example of how Eleanor’s character and her way of thinking greatly differs from that of the other English female characters, who, echoing Charles Trevelyan, believe the incidents to be “ordained by Providence” and see “no need to trouble ourselves about it” since “there have been rich and poor ever since the world began, or pretty nearly so” (Sadlier 85). This naïve, damaging, and arguably uneducated outlook on the horrible events that occurred during the Famine, and many other similar examples, will be further discussed in chapter 7 of this thesis.

The great divide between the condition of the Protestant upper classes and the starving Catholic Irish is, moreover, emphasised with references to hunger and food. While his tenants are starving, Mr Ousely’s breakfast table is still richly filled with food: “and a large tray of buttered toast was placed on a steamer close by, awaiting the time appointed for its demolition”(84). Whereas the peasants would rather starve uncomplainingly to help one another and “sooner go without eatin’ another day” than seeing one of the O’Dalys “havin’ an hour’s hunger” (12), Mr Ousely, forced on a diet of “weak tea and water and dry bread” by his doctor after suffering a gun-shot wound, complains that the doctor “mean[s] to starve” him (310). Descriptions of hunger and food, moreover, are not only used to emphasise the great void between the famished Irish and lavishly-living landlord classes, but also seem to stress and propagate Sadlier’s Catholic beliefs. Whereas the Protestant Church only supplies food to the hungry Irish on the condition that they convert to Protestantism, Catholic Father O’Driscoll tries to unconditionally help the starving to his best abilities, and even attempts to spare his starving parish by not accepting invitations for meals among families that barely have enough for themselves: “but then you have enough for breakfast without me, and times are not as they used to be” (184).

Sadlier, moreover, seems to imply that it is not Providence⁷⁰, but English religious imperialists that are largely to blame for the Famine. Following this sentiment, one of the

⁷⁰ This argument resonates with that of John Mitchel, who in his *Last Conquest* (1860) discusses the notion of an artificial famine in relation to the theme of Providence: “that is to say, it was a famine which desolated a rich and fertile island, that produced every year abundance and superabundance to sustain all her people and many more. The English, indeed, call that famine a ‘dispensation of Providence;’ and ascribe it entirely to the blight of potatoes. But potatoes failed in like manner all over Europe; yet there was no famine save in Ireland. The British account of the matter, then, is first a fraud- second, a blasphemy. The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine” (Mitchel 219).

most prominent Irish characters of the novel, Granny Mulligan, who strongly resembles the Irish nationalist figure of Kathleen Ni Houlihan⁷¹, argues that

there was no sich thing as famine or starvation in them days, an' what' moire, there woudn't be any now if oit wasn't for the poor-houses, an' the Jumpers—the hard-hearted haythens, that's puttin' the ould warm charity out of the people's hearts, an' bringin' down the black curse on the country (54).

Although Mrs 'Hetty' Ousely believes the Irish tenants to be “provided with good wholesome nourishment for the body as well as the soul” (87), Eleanor, in similarity to Granny Mulligan, also seems to observe a connection between the proselytising movement and Famine, and notes that instead of relieving the Irish from starvation by offering physical nourishment to them, her father and the Protestant missionaries instead enforce “spiritual food” (Corporaal, “Relocated Memories” 151) on them in the form of Protestant tracts: “not a mouthful of bread for the starving, but plenty of tracts and Bibles” (Sadlier 229).

As the story progresses, Eleanor starts to identify more and more with the Irish tenants and their faith, and becomes a pillar of the Irish community. She looks after the needs of the starving, provides them with material goods, and even attends Catholic death masses of her father's tenants. To the annoyance of her father, she is, moreover, reluctant to make her appearance at the schools of the proselytising movement that her father supports. When Phil Marquire visits Mr Ousely to discuss the abduction of Katty's children, the landlord is greatly outraged by his accusations and disrespectful behaviour. Mr Ousely therefore decides to punish the disobedient “clown” (117) by resolving to violence, but Eleanor, quite literally, stands up to her patriarch and jumps in between both men, grabbing the weapon from her father's hands, and sending “the stick flying far over into the wood” (117). In this passage, Eleanor indisputably becomes the embodiment of a Female Saviour, as she risks her own life by throwing herself between both men, and saves Phil Marquire from what very well might have been a fatal strike. Although, traditionally, one would have expected Eleanor to act like ‘the suffering maiden-in-distress’, she nevertheless transforms into an Erin-type figure; a

⁷¹ Granny Mulligan can be read as a Kathleen Ni Houlihan-type figure, as she is depicted as a homeless old woman who “stumped along supported by a stout oaken cudgel” (52), is considered to be a ‘houseless, homeless wanderer, with the heart of a princess’ (212) because of her charity, and expresses many Irish nationalist sentiments throughout the novel.

proudly defiant spirit, who maintains dignity and virtue in the face of powerful oppression.⁷²

Nevertheless, Sadlier's representation of Eleanor is not that of the disobedient daughter in "a radical sense" (Corporaal, "Relocated Memories" 152), and the eventual conflict between both characters is not directly on the issue of religion, but, more traditionally, on the subject of love. Eleanor namely becomes infatuated with an English baronet named James Trelawney who also greatly disapproves of the Jumpers and sympathises with the suffering Catholic tenants. When James asks for Eleanor's hand in marriage, her father forbids the match on the ground that the Baronet has converted to Catholicism. Interestingly, rather than yielding to her father's commands, as an 'Angel of the House' is expected to, Eleanor defies her father's wishes and secretly marries Trelawney with her mother's blessing. Eleanor, in similarity to Clara Menville, has herself baptised a Catholic as a final act of resistance, and offers to take one of the poor O'Daly girls with her to England. However, in stark contrast to Nolan's *The Byrnes* in which the malicious landlord Mr Biggs descends into madness and eventually dies, Mr Ousely is able to forgive his daughter and husband, and although he does not approve of their new-found religion, he nevertheless resolves to visit the couple, who have moved back to England, every year.

Although Eleanor transitions from an Angel in the House to an Angel out of the House, she reverts to her role as the embodiment of English maidenliness once she returns to England at the end of the novel. Now that she has moved to her native country, she is no longer concerned with the plight of the Irish. Although she has converted to Catholicism, religion, once one of her primary concerns, no longer seems to play an important factor in her life, as she becomes occupied with her new-found role as a mother and caretaker. Even though in Ireland, her ambiguous and unique position allowed her to break through metaphorical thresholds, these once broken class boundaries are re-established in England when Eleanor hires the Irish O'Daly girl to become her servant. This seems to suggest that England, and English societal roles, have had a negative influence on Eleanor's character. Whereas in Ireland, Eleanor, the budding 'English rose', was able to grow and bloom, back in England, her once flourishing, emancipated, and enlightened character seems to slowly wilt away, as she returns to the traditional female position of the Angel in the House.

Nevertheless, Eleanor's siding with the plight and religion of the famishing Irish can not only be read as an example of Sadlier's polemical attack on the proselytisers, but also as a

⁷² For more information about the representation of the figure of 'Erin' in literature, see chapter 4, section 4.2.2. of this thesis.

comment on the societal boundaries imposed on Victorian women. Eleanor, in similarity to Clara Menville, challenges patriarchal and even tyrannical powers⁷³ in both public and domestic spheres by going against the wishes of her father. Her father is not only a merciless landlord, but arguably also a somewhat cold and distant husband, who demands his wife to ‘hold your silly tongue’ (373), when she tries to stand up to her husband in defence of her daughter. Sadlier’s preference for Eleanor as a “woman of commanding talents and cultivated mind” (94), as opposed to her mother, whose “mind had never received any special cultivation” (92) and “whose thought was by no means very extensive” (92), cannot only be read as sympathy towards the Catholic Irish, but also as a critique of societal roles and an example of gender reversal.

Nonetheless, Sadlier seems to cling to more traditional gender norms in terms of her treatment of the female characters in the rest of the novel. This, she seems to have done in order to emphasise her aforementioned nationalist and Catholic propaganda. In similarity to Sadlier’s *Bessy Conway*⁷⁴, for instance, one of the Irish servants in the Ousely household, Nancy, resigns after her father, who is afraid that the Ousely’s might bring her into contact with the Protestant faith, demands that she quits her job: “I know that well, but then my father says I must go, an’, of course, I must when he says so” (107). In line with traditional nineteenth-century gender conventions, Sadlier moreover associates the female Jumpers, who behave very much like Nolan’s spinster sisters, with unconventional and therefore unacceptable femininity. Depicting the female proselytisers as deceitful and cruel, Phil Maguire, for instance claims that

As for the “lady”, as you cal her, I’ll respect her as a lady when she acts like one. It isn’t very seemly conduct for a lady to be tellin’ lies, an’ “hoodwinkin” poor simple children and inveiglin’ them in into the den where you an’ the likes of you’s doin’ the devil’s work! (114).

Both Nolan and Sadlier seem to devote much attention to the experience of women in their novels. Sadlier’s description of Honora O’Daly’s heart, which literally breaks because of the malpractices of the landlord, for instance, very strongly resembles Nolan’s description of Norah Cormac, whose heart also breaks after her mother dies. As Corporaal has rightly

⁷³ When defying her father’s wishes and marrying James, Eleanor exclaims that, following the actions of the landlord, “tyranny may be carried so far that disobedience may become lawful” (Sadlier 370).

⁷⁴ See footnote 67 of this thesis.

observed, “the scope that is given to women’s position cannot just be attributed to the authors’ gender, for femininity generally plays a major part in Irish cultural representations of the Famine” (“Relocated Memories” 150). A similar observation, moreover, has also been made by Margaret Kelleher, who in her *Feminization of the Famine*, argues that depictions of Famine and disaster are dominated by female images. Ireland, as determined in chapter 3 of this thesis, has traditionally envisaged as a maidenly figure, the *aisling*, who is in need of protection and comfort against British imperialism and the disasters that hit the nation, and commands the men of Ireland to defend her (Innes 16-17). It is therefore not surprising that the symbol of the maiden in distress very often features in cultural expressions of the Great Famine.

Nevertheless, both in Nolan’s and Sadlier’s novels, which equate memories of the Famine with nationalism, it is Clara and Eleanor’s resistance to patriarchal authority rather than their helplessness that is emphasised and celebrated. This seems to symbolise and suggests that instead of waiting to be rescued from British imperialism like a damsel-in-distress, Ireland needs to stand up to the English oppressor by fighting for her own rights. From an Irish nationalist perspective, female characters like Nolan’s Clara Menville and Winnie Byrne, and Sadlier’s Eleanor Ousely and Granny Mulligan, may therefore be read as symbols of hope, strength, (female) empowerment, and inspiration, as they stand-up to the empirical oppressor while staying true to their high morals, kind and gentle nature, and the Catholic faith. Following these observations, it may also be concluded that one of the most prominent reasons why these positive depictions of English female characters like Clara Menville and Eleanor Ousely can exist in nineteenth-century Famine novels that are highly nationalistic and critical of the British involvement in Ireland’s greatest disaster, is because these English female characters are essentially Irish at heart.

7. OBLIVIOUS WIVES, WIDOWED MOTHERS, AND THE IRISH QUESTION

Mrs Hampton was an English woman of limited education, and full of strong prejudice against 'Ireland and the Irish'. Still, this was more the effect of an erroneous system of training, than of any natural antipathy to the Irish or any other people, for, on the whole, Mrs. Hampton was a good-natured, well-meaning woman, ready and willing 'to do a good turn whenever it was required' (Sadlier 267).

The previous chapters of this thesis have examined the positive and negative representations of English female characters through the stereotype of the spinster, and the representation of young marriageable English women. From this analysis it became apparent that spinster characters, generally portrayed very negatively, were viewed as a threat to nineteenth-century Irish culture and society, and often came to be equated with England and Englishness, in an attempt made by the authors of these novels to indirectly comment on political tensions between England and Ireland.

English unmarried female characters, however, were represented as one of two extremes, namely either as social outcasts and sinners, as in the case of the spinsters, or as 'social mothers' and religious devotees. As chapter six of this thesis has demonstrated, these English women were depicted as sympathising with the Catholic Irish tenants, subverting gender roles by going against the patriarch ruling over domestic and public spheres, and converting to Catholicism as a final act of resistance and rebellion. Although these particular characters were high-born and of English descent, their social and moral behaviour, charity and philanthropy, and outlook on religion and life, made them more Irish than English by nature. These characters, in contrast to the ethnotype of the spinster, can therefore be read as primary examples of how the English landlord classes, according to the Irish authors of these novels, should behave. What both the spinster characters and these 'social mothers', therefore, have in common, is that they can be studied as social and moral markers of gendered behaviour and conduct in the nineteenth century, as well as symbols of the troubling relationship between England and Ireland

This final analysis chapter will analyse the representation of a third category of English female characters, namely married women who have been depicted as either the

oblivious wife of the English landlord, or as widowed mothers. The study of these characters will reveal that the character of the naïve wife has always lived a very sheltered, guarded and closed-off life in England and is therefore simply unable to truly understand what the famished Irish tenants are going through, and to comprehend the direness of the situation. This naivety and obliviousness often drives a wedge between husband and wife, as the English landlady is isolated and unhappy (frequently complaining to her husband about the decline of the estate), while the landlord is desperately trying to make ends meet and struggling to keep his tenants at peace. The character of the widowed mother, on the other hand, is often portrayed as conservative, bitter, and antagonistic. Unwilling to accept that the Famine has brought about many social changes, she desperately holds onto notions of tradition and class, and can be read as a symbol of a pre-Famine Ireland and imperial decline. The following sections will examine the representation of the oblivious wife and widowed mother in relation to themes of education, gender, tradition, and imperialism, and comment on the importance and meaning of these characters in relation to the Famine.

7.1. ‘Erroneous Systems of Training’ in Sadlier’s *New Lights*; or *Life in Galway*

As the previous chapter of this thesis has outlined, Sadlier’s *New Lights* (1853) expresses a polemical attack on religious conversion prompted by the ‘bible-readers’ and ‘Jumpers’ in an effort to expose “the shameless conduct of the proselytiser” (Sadlier 248). Her, novel, moreover, underlines the flaws of the system of land acquisition and absentee landlords in nineteenth-century Ireland, and explores tensions between different social classes and English and Irish national identities.

Even though Sadlier’s work is highly critical of the English involvement in the Famine, her representation of the novel’s main married English female characters, Caroline Hampton and Hetty Ousely, is surprisingly nuanced and refined. Sadlier, for instance, describes Caroline Hampton as “an English woman of limited education, and full of strong prejudice against ‘Ireland and the Irish’”, but nevertheless acknowledges that “this was more the effect of an erroneous system of training, than of any natural antipathy to the Irish or any other people” (Sadlier 267). This seems to suggest that instead of blaming Caroline Hampton for her misguided animosity towards the Irish, Sadlier believed that the larger social and political system that her character, and that of Hetty Ousely, were part of should instead be criticised. The following section will therefore examine the representation of Caroline Hampton and Hetty Ousely within the larger contextual framework of nineteenth-century education and politics, and comment on the different implications the depiction of these

characters might have had.

In nineteenth-century Britain, education, and especially female education, was heavily influenced by notions of gender, religion, nationalism, and class. Following a traditional point of view that had been established in the early eighteenth century, men were educated to become the household's main breadwinner, whereas women were taught to become 'housekeepers'; belonging at home, raising children, and catering to the needs of her husband. Especially in the British middle- and upper- classes, societal roles dictated that a girl would marry and therefore had no need of a formal education, as long as she looked presentable, could entertain her husband's guests with a number of 'accomplishments' such as singing, arranging flowers, and playing the piano, and produce a reasonable number of children. If, however, a woman could not find a husband she faced a grim future as a 'maiden aunt' or 'spinster', as observed in chapter five of this thesis, whose help could always be called on to look after her aged parents or her siblings' children.

One of the primary arguments for female education in the nineteenth century thus was that it would transform girls into better wives and mothers. Limited in their education and access to educational material, women were, for instance, taught to primarily read religious tracts, as this would enforce women's domestic socialisation and would educate young mothers and wives to raise morally sound children while maintaining morally redemptive household for their men (Rouse 231). Domestic duties were a woman's primary function, and her education was to prepare her for this great responsibility. This form of women's education would, however, not only have a positive outcome on the domestic sphere, but would, in return, also facilitate the smooth running of the British nation. In this patriarchal vision of marriage and harmony between the state and family, "middle and upper class women were contained within the family, and their primary responsibility to the polis was to raise virtuous sons" (Rouse 231). This patriarchal gender-enforcement had a colonising effect on women⁷⁵,

⁷⁵ The notion of the 'colonisation of women' was inspired by María Lugones' theory of the colonality of gender as expressed in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." (2010). Lugones theory mainly pertains to the colonization of indigenous, foreign groups, allowing 'superior' European colonizers to implement their ideas of gender and sex unto the 'inferior' indigenous people and repressing pre-existing conceptions of sex and gender in the indigenous group during the pre-colonialism times. Nevertheless, I believe that the same theory can also be applied to the internal structure of western, 'white', hegemonic, patriarchal societies, in which ideas of gender and sex are also imposed upon the 'inferior race' (in this case women), in an attempt made by the 'superior race' (in this case men) to control their behaviour and influence their subjectivity and ideas of gender and sexuality. For more information about María Lugones' theory of the colonality of gender, see: María Lugones. "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." *Hypatia*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2010, pp. 742-759, and "Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System." *Hypatia*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2007, pp. 186-209.

as their voices remained unheard, their intellectual development and advancement was oppressed, and their wishes and desires were ignored. As Rouse observed, “doctrines of nineteenth-century female education, along with the cult of domesticity, functioned together as a colonizing rhetoric that attempted to ensure a narrative of female containment” (231). This rhetoric seemed to have been largely based on the belief that women had smaller, more feeble brains, less mental capacity and intelligence, and were therefore more sensitive to mental illnesses, hysterics, and madness. It was therefore argued and believed that men were not belittling women, but rather helping and protecting them by limiting their access to education.⁷⁶

In Sadlier’s *New Lights* a very similar rhetoric that mirrors these Victorian beliefs about the feeble female brain can be found. The theme of education, as it turns out, is a defining factor in determining whether characters are morally sound, judicious in thought, and ethical in their acts. When introducing the female English characters, rather than commenting on their outward appearance or personality, Sadlier seems to make it a point of interest to first discuss their, albeit at times limited, upbringing and education. Hetty Ousely, for instance, “had been brought up by a popery- hating old uncle and aunt, from whom she had imbibed that leading trait of character, and allowed it to influence her whole life” (92). Her mind, moreover, “had never received any special cultivation, more than that generally given in fashionable boarding schools, so that her reach of thought was by no means very extensive” (92). Hetty Ousely thus received very limited education at a ‘fashionable boarding school’ where she was, undoubtedly, primarily taught how to be an excellent wife and mother, and therefore cannot look past the restrictive morals and values of her confined upbringing. Nevertheless, this can be easily forgiven by her husband and friends, as she “was a good, well-meaning woman” (92) who knows how to play her role as mother, entertainer, and housekeeper very well, “and discoursed on ordinary topics with propriety and even elegance of diction (92).

Caroline Hampton, wife of Captain Frederic Hampton and acquaintance of the Ouselys, is portrayed in a very similar manner. The character of Caroline Hampton can be read as a primary example of an English oblivious and naïve wife, who has been limited in her education, and who has never questioned the gendered roles imposed on her by the

⁷⁶ For more information about nineteenth-century British assumptions about the female brain see, for instance, Aude Fauvel. “Crazy Brains and the Weaker Sexes: The British Case (1860-1900).” *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, vol. 37, 2013. Accessed online via <https://journals.openedition.org/cliowgh/352>.

patriarch. Although Caroline, in similarity to Hetty Ousely, is described as “a good-natured, well-meaning woman” (Sadlier 267) who could not hurt a fly, she has a strong antipathy towards the Irish tenants, “the Papist who hold her husband in awe” (268). Considered to be “more candid than polite” (268), Caroline does not shy away from expressing her discontent about the state of the estate and “the very wild region” (268) that she is forced to live in. When one of her English guests, for instance, remarks that he, in fact, finds Ireland to be “a very beautiful country!” (268), Caroline cannot help but snort “contemptuously”, and exclaim: “Beautiful, indeed! I should like to know what you call beautiful!” (269).

Much to the amusement of Eleanor Ousely, who regularly visits her English friend, Caroline seems to fall into a pattern of mindlessly repeating bits of phrases that she has picked up on during conversation, without truly understanding its implications, larger context, and meaning. During a tea party, Caroline, for instance, explains to Eleanor that “the whole world knows that there is a curse on Ireland — the heavy curse of Popery” (Sadlier 269). Eleanor, who, as explained in chapter six of this thesis, emphasises with the Catholic tenants, cannot help but to make fun of Caroline, by sarcastically stating that “that naughty Popery has much to answer for, my dear Mrs. Hampton! [...] if it be the cause of all the misery which exists and has for ages existed, in Ireland. Popery, you know, will soon be banished from Ireland, and then all will go on well — we shall have the millennium, as a matter of course (270). Although the other guests understand that ‘the Irish question’ is, and has been, a very delicate matter for centuries, and that one cannot simply ‘banish popery from Ireland’, Caroline, who obviously has no idea what she is talking about, fails to “understand irony, and, therefore, took Eleanor's words in their literal signification” (270):

Yes, but who's going to banish Popery? I'm quite sure that the missions here are not making much real progress, though they make a great fuss about what they do! [...] I should be glad to see Popery abolished, yet somehow it don't seem as if there's any great chance of its being so in our time, and I must say that these ten thousand converts — dear me ! I hope the archbishop didn't make a mistake — are not worth all they cost — what with the soup and stirabout, and never-ending collections taken up for them, and the guarding them to church, and I don't know what all (Sadlier 270-71).

Although it does seem that Caroline has very strong opinions about the Irish and their religion, she cannot, unlike Eleanor, break through the mental and physical threshold that separates the English from the Irish, and therefore only seems to cling to very material and

practical matters, such as the above mentioned amount of soup that needs to be delivered to the Irish converts, in an attempt to continue to participate in the conversation and entertain her guests.

When confronted with more serious and difficult questions, however, Caroline seems to heavily rely on the Victorian belief that her female brain is simply incapable of understanding these difficult matters. When discussing Irish history with her husband and guests, for instance, Caroline remarks that “I’m sure I wouldn’t bother my brain about it, for it is not worth half the trouble that’s taken with it!” (285). Rather than participating in the discussion, or even making an educated guess, Caroline resorts to this gendered stereotype to excuse her limited knowledge about the subject. If Caroline truly wanted to know about the Irish and their traditions and history, all she would have to do is step outside and converse with one of the tenants, like Eleanor Ousely frequently does. She, instead, relies heavily on her traditional role as a woman and housekeeper as an excuse to not have to interact with the starving Irish and their plight. This gendered role is, moreover, reinforced by her husband, who acknowledges Caroline’s lack of intelligence, and reassures her that “we’ll let that pass, for anyone who knows you would never dream of your burthening your memory with anything relating to Ireland” (285).

It is important to note that Eleanor’s progressive and freethinking nature can be largely attributed to her upbringing and education. Although Eleanor seems to have been unusually “gifted with a high order of intellect, and a solidity of judgment by no means common to her age and sex” (91), she, in contrast to her mother and friend Caroline, also “had had the advantage of being educated by one who was fully competent” (91), namely a widowed sister of Mr Ousely, Mrs Ormsby. Mrs Ormsby “had resided in the family during the years of Eleanor’s infancy and childhood”, and “being herself a woman of commanding talents and cultivated mind, together with a loving and tender heart, had elicited and matured all the higher qualities and more amiable instincts of her niece’s mind and heart” (91), making sure that Eleanor, at the age of seventeen, “was already complete in her education, both moral and intellectual” (91). Mrs Ormsby, moreover, has always been sympathetic towards other religions and cultures, and “has lately become a convert to Catholicity” (218). This, more than anything, does not only suggest that one’s upbringing can greatly affect one’s character, but it also seems to demonstrate that the right form of education will also have a positive influence on one’s morals and values, and tolerance and openminded-ness towards other cultures, religions, and traditions.

Sadlier seems to further emphasise this point by quoting several lines from Samuel Butler's mock-epic "Hudibras" (1684) in her novel, including the following words: "Learning, that cobweb of the brain / Profane, erroneous, and vain / A trade of knowledge, as replete / As others are with fraud and cheat" (qtd. in Sadlier 136). Samuel Butler (1774-1839), English classical scholar, schoolmaster, and Bishop of Lichfield, as studies by for instance Cavenagh and Palmer et al.⁷⁷ have revealed, was a firm believer of learning through experience, and advocated that one should not: "learn to do, but learn in doing. Let your falls not be on a prepared ground, but let them be bona fide falls in the rough and tumble of the world [...] Act more and rehearse less" (qtd. in Cavenagh 309). Not only does Sadlier seem to be copying and referencing Butler's exact words when discussing the "erroneous system of training" (Sadlier 267) that Caroline Hampton had been exposed to, but her examples of Eleanor's enlightened and tolerant character in contrast to Caroline Hampton and Hetty Ousely's extreme "prejudice against Ireland and the Irish" (267) reveals that Sadlier also seems to favour and support a more hands-on approach to education, in which one learns through empiricism, participation, experimentation, and experience. Thus, rather than learning through books and hearsay, Sadlier seems to believe in a more direct approach in which, in similarity to Eleanor Ousely, one comes into contact with other cultures, traditions, and religions, rather than reading about them on paper, like her mother and Caroline Hampton did.

The fact, moreover, that Eleanor and her aunt convert to Catholicism, whereas Hetty Ousely and Caroline Hampton are firm believers of the Protestant faith cannot be ignored. Seeing that Sadlier mostly wrote a Catholic readership and seemed to have been dedicated to sharing the riches of the Catholic faith with her nineteenth-century American audiences, one cannot help but notice that Sadlier seems to originate the root of all Irish social problems in *New Lights* in Protestant education and public schools, like the 'fashionable' school Hetty Ousely attended, rather than Catholic doctrine. Sadlier continuously compares the Soupers to the Catholic devotees in her novel in an attempt to lay bare the faults of the Protestant faith. Those who succumb to the pressure and receive "soup from the Bible-readers" (Sadlier 11) are exiled and ridiculed within the Irish community. To emphasise the vast difference between the Catholic and Protestant religion, Sadlier seems to rely heavily on

⁷⁷ See F.A. Cavenagh. "Samuel Butler and Education." *The Monist*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1922, pp. 307- 13., and Joy. A. Palmer, et al. *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey*. Routledge, 2001, pp. 138-43.

traditional Victorian constructions of gender and notions of muscular Christianity⁷⁸. Andrew McGilligan “the Bible-reader, with a bundle of tracts under his arm” (60), for instance, is constantly tantalised by Phil Marquire who sarcastically refers to Andrew as “Andy dear”, “honey”, and “*ahagur*” (Sadlier 399) (meaning ‘darling’ or ‘beloved’ in Gaelic), implying that Andrew has become effeminate through his conversion to Protestantism:

“Hillo, Andrew!” cried Phil, winking at Bernard, “What’s your hurry, man alive? can’t you take time to give us a verse or too—do, Andy dear, we’re all poor Papists here, thirsting for the word,” [...] “Begorra,” said Phil, “he’s afeard of bein’ turned into a pillar of salt like Lot’s wife! Och, then, Andy ahagur, but it’s althered times with you, honey! (Sadlier 399).

Rather than standing up to his bullies and defending his faith like a proud Catholic man, Andrew gives his fellow country-men “the cold shoulder” (399) and cowardly runs away from the situation like a scared little girl, not even worthy and brave enough to fight for his own religion. This is in stark contrast with Phil Marquire, the embodiment of manliness and Catholic virtue, who, on numerous occasions throughout the novel, defends his faith with great pride, amiability, and dignity⁷⁹. During a different, but similar, scene in the hospital, Sadlier describes an argument between a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest. The minister wishes to attend to the female patient, who has made use of the Soupers ‘charity’ in the past and is thereby considered to be a Protestant, but is driven back by the priest who has been made aware that the patient is carrying rosary beads, implying that she is a true Catholic at heart. During the unpleasant altercation that follows, the minister resorts to violence and gives the priest “a pounce right on the back o’ the neck” (61). The priest, nevertheless, warns off the minister by hitting him with his fists:

⁷⁸ Muscular Christianity was a philosophical movement that originated in England in the mid-nineteenth century. The movement was characterized by not only a belief in patriotic duty, but also the moral and physical beauty of athleticism, discipline, self-sacrifice, and, above all, manliness. Supporters of Muscular Christianity believed masculinity to be the “antidote to the poison of effeminacy -the most insidious weapon of the Tractarians - which was sapping the vitality of the Anglican Church” (Newsome 207).

⁷⁹ For an example of a scene in which Phil Marquire honourably defends the Catholic faith to his Protestant landlord, see chapter six, section 6.3.1. of this thesis.

‘why, he jist got up, an’ turn’d on the ministher, an’ gives him one box on his big fist that sent him spinnin’ like a top across the room [...] an’ he took the ministher coolly an’ quietly an’ put him outside the door’ (Sadlier 61).

Although resorting to violence is, undoubtedly, very unholy and immoral, the priest is applauded for “holding his ground” (61), since “argument is thrown away on a lad [the minister] like that” (61), and “the ministher gave the first assault” (62). This particular passage seems to imply that the Catholic tenants outperform the Protestant Soupers in every aspect of the faith, including Muscular Christianity, a philosophy that was developed as a response to the Oxford Movement tracts Andrew McGilligan is described carrying around. By equating religion with sexist stereotypes (e.g. the notion that men are strong, rational, and intelligent, whereas women are fragile, emotional, and simpleminded), Sadlier uses the theme of gender as a tool to differentiate between the different colours of faith, to demonstrate that Catholicism is a more noble, moral, and superior religion in every sense of the word.

Although Sadlier thus undoubtedly toys with gendered stereotypes in *New Lights* herself⁸⁰, especially in relation to the treatment of her English characters, her portrayal of Eleanor Ousely in contrast to Hetty and Caroline, also seems to suggest that the English and perhaps also her American and Canadian readers, should not trust the stereotypical and satirical ways in which Ireland, and the Irish, were represented in nineteenth-century British newspapers and magazines, including *Punch*, but should base their opinions on their own experiences rather than on hearsay.

This point will have, undoubtedly, resonated with the Irish-American immigrants who, due to the Famine, were forced to leave their homes and emigrate to the United States and Canada. The Irish had already suffered profound injustice in the United Kingdom at the hands of the British, where they were, as mentioned before in this thesis, widely treated as ‘white negroes’ and animals. Unfortunately, their immigration to the United States did not end these hardships. Upon arrival to the States, the already famished and traumatised immigrants were not greeted with cheers and the waving of thousands of national flags as hoped and expected, but with indifference and hatred. The Americans believed the refugees seeking haven in their country to be poor and disease-ridden, which they undeniably often were. Additionally, not only did the immigrants threaten to take jobs away from Americans and strain welfare

⁸⁰ Mr Ousely, for instance, can be read as a stereotypical English John Bull character, whereas Eleanor (as observed in chapter six of this thesis) is the spitting image of Britannia.

budgets, but they also practiced a different religion and pledged allegiance to a foreign leader.⁸¹ The ill-treatment of immigrants in the United States was certainly hardly an ordeal for the Irish to endure on their own. Nevertheless, while, for instance, the number of German immigrants arriving in the United States was almost equal to that of the Irish during the 1850s (Wittke 131) the Irish were particularly slandered by the nation's Anglo-Saxon Protestants whose ancestors had purposely made their journey across the ocean on the Mayflower to retreat from papism and ensure their religion was cleansed of any remaining Catholic traces.⁸²

To overcome these cultural differences and to fight bias, authors like Sadlier sought to educate their American readers, not only about the Famine, but also about the Irish-American immigrant experience, in an attempt to create more understanding. In a reciprocal fashion, many of Sadlier's other novels could be read as survival guides for displaced immigrants in an often hostile environment.⁸³ Following the depiction of Eleanor Ousely in contrast to that of Hetty and Caroline, Sadlier might not only have written *New Lights* in an attempt to educate her readership about the Famine and the Irish experience, but also as a *vade mecum* to challenge, combat, and overcome national ethnotypes and stereotypical-thinking through cross-cultural communication, open-mindedness, sensitivity, adaptability, and mutual respect.

In conclusion, *New Lights* can be read as a primary example of a product of resistance and female agency. Through her novel, Sadlier seems to indirectly question and criticise gendered patriarchal roles by comparing and contrasting the characters of Hetty Ousely and Caroline Hampton to that of Eleanor Ousely in an attempt to demonstrate that women who, like Eleanor Ousely, think for themselves, do not rely on the intelligence of men, and

⁸¹ For more information about nineteenth-century Irish immigrants, the experience of Irish immigrant women in the United States, and the American perception and treatment of Irish-Americans, see: Donald Harman Akenson. *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*. Meany Publishers, 1993., Hasia Diner. *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*, John Hopkins UPs, 1983., David Noel Doyle. "The remaking of Irish America, 1845-1880." in *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States*, ed. Joseph Lee and Marion R. Casey, New York UP, 2006, pp. 213-252., Carol Groneman. "Working-class Immigrant Women in Mid-Nineteenth-Century New York: The Irish Woman's Experience." *Journal of Urban History*, 1978, pp. 255-273., and Kerby Miller. *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*. Oxford UP, 1985.

⁸² For examples of case studies that have examined American perceptions and representations of Irish immigrants see, for instance, Gilbert Osofsky. "Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants, and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 80, no.4, 1975, pp. 889-912., Linda Dowling Almeida. *Irish Immigrants in New York City, 1945-1995*. Indiana University Press, 2001., and Kevin Kenny. *The American Irish: A History*. Routledge, 2014.

⁸³ For examples of novels that discuss Irish immigration and can be read as survival guides for Irish immigrants, and Irish immigrant women in particular see Sadlier's *The Blakes and Flanagans: A Tale, Illustrative of Irish Life in the United States* (1850) and *Bessy Conway; Or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861). Both these novels deal with central themes in Sadlier's work and life, namely the plight of Irish women, and the dangers of immigration.

challenge and question forms of oppressive authority are much more in touch with the world and the harsh realities of the society. Thus, by understanding rhetoric and literature as a form of colonialization, we can observe how explorations and discussions of education and female intelligence can both enforce social prescriptions for femininity, and allow for female agency through resistance. Rather than merely reflecting expectations and models for white middle- and upper-class womanhood, Sadlier's novel seems to explore a tension that lied at the heart of female education in the nineteenth century, namely a tension between beliefs of biological determinism and the social construction of identity. Whereas characters like Hetty Ousely and Caroline Hampton seem to have fallen victim to the idea that human intelligence and behaviour is innate, determined by ones brain size, genes, and other biological attributes, Eleanor Ousely's character exemplifies that human development is socially situated and that knowledge is mainly constructed through interaction with others.

Although Sadlier's writing is, undeniably, didactic, religious, and nationalistic, one might also label her novel as 'feminist'. This classification might seem odd for an author as conservative and traditional as Sadlier, and her novel is certainly not comparable to the works of twentieth- century feminists and their notions of female equality and liberation. Nevertheless, Sadlier's apparent questioning and critique of female education and patriarchal societies, as well as her explorations of sex and gender, albeit conveyed in the margins and as a subtext, make her a precursor of feminism. Sadlier, in similarity to first wave feminists, seemed to have been aware of the subordinate position of women within British society and, through the character of Eleanor Ousely, set out to create a new world order in which traditional Victorian values of gender and sex might be re-evaluated in an attempt to construct an alternative and more balanced model.

7.2. Widows as Symbols of Tradition and Sons as Markers of Imperial Decline in *In Re Garland* and *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*

7.2.1. *Ireland's position in the British Empire: Sister Kingdom or Subjugated Colony?*

As Kevin Kenny observed in *Ireland and the British Empire* (2004), modern Irish culture has been greatly influenced by the rise, expansion, and decline of the British Empire. British imperial history, in return, was moulded in part by Irish experience. Nevertheless, the nature of Ireland's position in the world's largest Empire has always been prone to critical debate. Central to this discussion is the question whether Ireland was "a sister kingdom" and equal partner in a larger British state or whether, alternatively, Ireland was Britain's most

“subjugated colony” because of its proximity and strategic importance (Kenny 1). Critics have pondered why, for instance, “some of those Catholics of Ireland (and their descendants) who were displaced from their lands and positions by English and Scottish interlopers, subsequently became active participants in colonial ventures both in Britain’s overseas possessions and in other foreign empires” and “if those Irish people, both Protestant and Catholic, who served the British interest whether in Ireland or overseas can be regarded as true Irish people, or whether they became hybridized Britons” (Canny 8). Another point that has often been made by critics is that the Irish, although constrained at home, also had free access to the Empire and to the social and economic opportunities it provided. To Ireland, as Alvin Jackson observed, the Empire was therefore “simultaneously a chain and a key: it was a source both of constraint and of liberation” (qtd. in Kenny 4).

This ambiguous imperial nature, as Gerry Smyth has pointed out, has made it somewhat difficult to use post-colonial criticism to study Ireland and its cultural setting, as its status is “uncertain and its relationship with indigenous initiatives troubled” (27). Therefore, before discussing notions of colonialism and imperial decline in the O’Ryans’ *In Re Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time* (1870) and Nolan’s *The Byrnes of Glengoulah* (1868) this thesis needs to briefly address this debate and define these concepts in light of Ireland’s political status in the nineteenth century.

The term colonialism is generally defined as the practice or policy of acquiring full political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. What complicates Ireland’s colonial status, in relation to this broad definition and nineteenth-century Irish politics, is the fact that the country was not violently invaded by English settlers, like, for instance, Papua New Guinea in 1888, and that the nation was ‘united’ with Great Britain in 1801 under the Act of Union. Unlike other countries, moreover, Ireland was never officially ruled as a colony.

Nevertheless, its administration had distinctly colonial elements, “including a separate executive in Dublin Castle with a Chief Secretary and a Lord-Lieutenant. This arrangement existed nowhere else in the United Kingdom but would provide a model for British rule in India” (Kenny 11). “English officials billeted in Ireland”, as Jackson observes, “developed the same attitudes of mixed bemusement, condescension, complacency, affection, and eagerness to help which characterized their counterparts in India or elsewhere”. Ireland’s historical relationship has often been described as anomalous, exceptional, unique, complex, and even paradoxical. Nevertheless, as Kevin Kenny has rightly observed,

assertions that Ireland's place in the Empire was unique or anomalous merely reiterate the shopworn theme of exceptionalism. Such claims are no more or less true of Ireland than of any other part of the Empire. Each of Britain's many possessions was distinctive, none was anomalous (1).

Although the history and nature of Ireland's political status may have differed from, for instance, Australia or Nigeria, all of these nations, including Ireland, shared a common history as part of a larger entity, namely the British Empire. Whereas Ireland's "defining peculiarity" was perhaps that "it stood at the world's metropolitan centre", it nevertheless, was "no less a British possession for that" (Kenny 2). The fact that Ireland was directly integrated into the United Kingdom in 1801 might be perceived as a form of equality, rendering colonial and post-colonial criticisms implausible. However, given that this integration was clearly not a voluntary union of equals, as the many national uprisings and rebellions that followed have demonstrated, this suggests that it "intensified rather than diminished imperial control over Ireland" (Kenny 10). Opponents of the belief that Ireland was a real British colony because of Irish imperial participation, moreover, fail to understand that this type of assistance "has always been a standard feature of imperial history and in itself has no bearing on Ireland's colonial status" (Kenny 11).⁸⁴

What follows from these sharp observations, is the conclusion that what lies at heart of the interpretation of Ireland's colonial status is a sense of resistance, antipathy, and mistreatment that can only be ascribed to imperial injustice. This thesis therefore acknowledges that although, following the aforementioned principles of colonialism, nineteenth-century Ireland may not be perceived as a British colony, or at least not on paper, the unequal and involuntary union, the treatment of the Irish as inferior, the distinctly colonial elements of administration, and the economical exploitations (especially during the Famine)⁸⁵ made Ireland a colonial victim of British rule and oppression. Ireland was, thus, not a sister kingdom and equal partner in a larger British state, but instead a British colony. Now that this thesis' position in the debate of Ireland's position as a British colony has been established, the next sections will explore representations of imperial decline in Julia and Edmund O'Ryan's

⁸⁴ For more very convincing arguments in favour of the treatment of Ireland as a British colony, see Joe Cleary. "Postcolonial Ireland." *Ireland and the British Empire*. Edited by Kevin Kenny, Oxford UP, 2004, pp. 251-288.

⁸⁵ For a more detailed account of the economical exploitation of Ireland during the Famine, see Chapter One of this thesis.

In Re Garland and Alice Nolan's *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*, and comment on these depictions in relation to themes of colonialism, imperialism, and gender.

7.2.2. *Gender and Imperialism in The Byrnes of Glengoulah and In Re Garland*

British Imperialism, as Philippa Levine notes in *Gender and Nation* (2004), was by nature a gendered process: "the British Empire always seems a very masculine enterprise, a series of far-flung sites, dominated by white men dressed stiffly in sporting and hunting clothes, or ornate official regalia" (1). Occupations within the Empire were reserved, almost exclusively, for men. As Kenny observed, "women's history was, by definition, peripheral to one of the central themes of imperial history: war, conquest, and the exercise of military, administrative, or political power thereafter" (16). Although the Empire was undoubtedly in many ways, "a deeply masculine space of this sort" acknowledging that reality tells "only a fraction of the story" (Levine 1). The Empire, at the most basic level, was indeed mostly run by men. Nevertheless, all forms of social and cultural practise, thereby also including imperialism, are encoded with masculine and feminine meanings: "to give the most obvious examples, soldiering, adventuring, and administrative service were taken to be naturally masculine, while child-rearing and domestic decorum were construed not simply as feminine, but as women's distinctive contribution to national and imperial well-being" (Kenny 16).

Gender, moreover, as Cleary has noted, "was a pervasive component of all forms of imperialist representation" (261). The Irish, like many other colonised peoples, were often dually constructed, not only as an aggressive, potent, military race, exercising its natural martial qualities in the wars and adventures of Empire, but also, as we have seen in chapter four of this thesis, as an irrational, sensitive, passive, and feminised people incapable of self-government and desperately in need of guidance. Gender, in terms of imperialism, was not a constant factor, but its malleability depended on the purposes for which it was employed. Whereas, as Kenny observes, "the imperial ruler and the Irish soldier were necessarily male, the colonial subject could be cast not only as feminine and weak but also, at times, as aggressively masculine—as worker or dispossessed tenant, simianized subaltern or simpleton, agrarian rebel or nationalist agitator—the divergence being that masculinity in this case signified bestiality and an innate capacity for violence" (17).

In the novels previously discussed in this thesis, it can be observed that the Irish tenants, in for instance *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*, are indeed treated by English landlord Mr Biggs and his household as aggressive male savages and animals, but also as poor, effeminate, and helpless creatures, in an attempt to justify oppressive and evasive behaviour. Mr Biggs,

for instance, states that “my bowels yearn with compassion for those creatures who are half savages by nature, and whose steps run after iniquity; it will be my care to regenerate them in a new baptism, so to speak, and bring their feet into the path of the Lord” (Nolan 34) and his sister explains that “don't you know one of the worst evils of Ireland is absenteeism, or the landlord making his residence in a foreign land and not looking person ally after the condition of his tenantry ? And now Mr. Biggs is going to repair that evil by residing amongst you all, and watching over your interests” (26). When one of Mr Biggs’ tenants, Mat Doran, moreover, protests against the wrongdoings of his landlord, the landlord notes the “dangerous looking fists of the stout farmer” (70). In these passages, we can clearly observe a dualistic rhetoric in which the Irish are treated as both weak, effeminate, and poor, but also as aggressive savages.

Gender is not only important in terms of imperialism, but has also played a central role to any understanding of nineteenth-century Irish literature. Not only, as this thesis tries to demonstrate, were women prominent among Irish nineteenth-century authors, Irish novels in the nineteenth century, whether by females or males, frequently dealt with romantic love and marriage, both literally and as a metaphor or symbol for the constitutional union and its prevailing shortcomings. The promise and limitations of the Union, as Vera Kreilkamp has demonstrated in her critically acclaimed work, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* (1998), have been central to nineteenth-century Irish fiction, from Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and the ‘national tale’ introduced by Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), to the Big House novels of Ascendancy decay in the early twentieth century. These works, like the novels discussed in this thesis, also feature a recurrent theme of male corruption and decline.

The analysis of the novels discussed in this thesis, however, reveals that in addition to this persistent trope of male corruption and decline, English mothers, and especially, English widows from the Protestant Ascendancy, have come to represent British colonial tradition, as well as imperial decline. An excellent example of this type of English female character is Mrs Garland, Richard Garland’s widowed mother, in Edmund and Julia O’Ryan’s *In Re Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time* (1870). Although Mrs Garland dies before the fictional start of the novel, her presence, and most importantly, her strict morals and values are felt throughout the novel. As observed in chapter five of this thesis, Richard Garland has impregnated Sally Landy, and has promised to marry her. He, eventually, refrains from marrying Sally because he promised his mother, on her deathbed, that he would “do his best to marry a respectable

[...] virtuous woman as soon as decency would allow after she was gone”(22-23). Although Mrs Garland has, thus, long passed away, her dying wishes prevent Richard Garland from acting out his plans. From this example, it becomes apparent that Mrs Garland held on to strict Victorian values, and did not believe that one could marry beneath their social position and class, and that one’s wealth and estate needed to remain within the family at all costs, even if this meant one had to marry a (distant) cousin. The marriage between a member of the Ascendency class (Richard Garland) and an aspiring Catholic (Sally Landy) would have, thus, been viewed with great alarm (Kreilkamp 24).

This also meant that marrying out of love would have been perceived as a nice bonus, but not the main consideration for the arrangement of a marriage. This, certainly, seems to be the case for Mr and Mrs Garland’s union, as one of the elderly tenants remarked that although “squire Garland’s mother a right good woman”, Mr Garland “never wanted from her” (121). The fact, moreover, that the reason for Mr Garland’s death is never mentioned, suggests that his character is largely insignificant, and the very brief references to his personality are merely used to further illustrate and emphasise this point. This, in light of Ireland’s colonial history and British imperialism, also seems to suggest that the union between England and Ireland, like the union between Mr and Mrs Garland, was never truly voluntary, but rather an inescapable and forced construct. Richard Garland, on the other hand, seems to come from a different generation, in which social standards were slowly deteriorating. The Famine seemed to have ushered in a new era in which one had to resort to more degrading measures to keep the estate, and make ends meet.

In Big House novels, as Kreilkamp has noted, the crumbling of the ruling classes is represented through the declining virility and deteriorating authority of landlords and patriarchs. This is certainly the case in Julia and Edmund O’Ryan’s *In Re Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time* (1870), in which Richard Garland transforms from a proud and rakish landlord into a senile and sentimental old man. Although Richard Garland once rejected his illegitimate half-Irish daughter, he is forced to live with her and her Irish family after he is financially ruined by the Famine, and his estate is sold under the Encumbered Estate Court⁸⁶. Interestingly, Although Richard Garland has never been very kind to his tenants, the Irish farmers become aware of the squire’s poverty and try to help him by offering food and

⁸⁶ The Encumbered Estate Court was an act of the British Parliament in 1849 to facilitate the sale of Irish estates whose owners, because of the Great Famine, were unable to meet their obligations.

clothes. Here, we can again observe Sadlier's point, as expressed in chapter six of this thesis, that whereas the English Protestants administered philanthropy in an attempt to better their own position and to lure the Irish Catholics to the Protestant faith, the Irish Catholic tenants, in return, provided charity out of the goodness of their hearts, without any ulterior motives. This almost seems to usher in a new era, or a 'transition time' as the subtitle of the novel implies, in which the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland slowly loses its power and dominance, and we can observe a revival of traditional pre-Famine and pre-Union Irish morals and values related to themes of community, family, heredity, and folklore.

In this particular context, the fact that English female characters, like Mrs Garland, were widowed, also seems to have great symbolic significance. If British imperialism was traditionally perceived as a very masculine enterprise or "a series of far-flung sites, dominated by white men dressed stiffly in sporting and hunting clothes, or ornate official regalia" (Levine 1), then the fact that these landlords die, also signals the end of British imperial power. This is certainly the case for Mrs Biggs, who becomes a widow after her evil landlord husband descends into madness as he is haunted by the spectres of his victims, and eventually dies. Mrs Biggs is portrayed as conservative, bitter, and antagonistic woman, who is unwilling to accept that the Famine has brought about many social changes, and desperately holds onto notions of tradition and class. When, for instance, poor Patrick Byrne, Toney Byrne's youngest son, dies of the scarlet fever she heartlessly states that his death was "a just judgment upon his parents [...] for keeping him from the knowledge of the Lord" (97), instead of acknowledging that this is the consequence of her husband's tyranny. Another interesting point to be made is the fact that Mrs Biggs is unable to conceive children. Her infertility, together with her apparent baldness, as outlined in chapter five of this thesis, suggests that the union with her husband, like the union between England and Ireland, is unproductive and fruitless.

Nevertheless, the authors of *In Re Garland* seem to express sympathy for the landed classes, who, as is so often forgotten in nationalist narratives, also had to bear the suffering brought on by the Famine. Mr Richard Garland is given a fairly happy ending, in which he is reunited with his daughter, treated with respect and kindness by his former tenants, and has a roof over his head. This suggests that the novel laments, rather than celebrates, the 'transition time' during which the degeneration of the Protestant Ascendancy brought about social disruption and the subversion of societal hierarchies. This is in stark contrast to Alice Nolan's *The Byrnes of Glengoulah* in which the landed classes are continuously ridiculed and

criticised. Whereas Richard Garland is treated with empathy and respect, and even receives charity from his formerly ill-treated tenants, Nolan's Mr Biggs is portrayed as a stereotypical evil Gothic villain, who is met with sheer hatred and disdain, and eventually goes insane.

What both these novels, and Sadlier's *New Lights*, have in common, however, is their discussion of Irish heredity and tradition, and nostalgic treatment of the Irish past,

a period when the land of Ireland was all Catholic ; when the heretic or the stranger found not his way into their Alpine regions — when peace and plenty prevailed, and men and women lived for heaven, content with whatever little God might have given them here on earth, and willing to share it with those who had still less, and so they lived happy and died well (Sadlier 441).

In Nolan's *The Byrnes*, a continuous topic of conversation is Toney Byrnes' ancestral history and his legitimate right to 'the throne' of Glengoulah castle. The O'Byrnes, as it turns out, "were once the proudest and most powerful chieftains of Wicklow" who were shortly going to be deprived "of their estates for no crime but fidelity to the faith of their fathers" by "the Lord Protector"⁸⁷ (Nolan 46). Knowing that his fate would soon be sealed, the brave O'Byrne, "resolved to sell his life dearly, and to die fighting in the sacred cause of home and altar" (47). In the altercations that followed, O'Byrne's wife Emeline was captured by two "barbarous" English soldiers, but saved by a sergeant named Plover who had always admired O'Byrne for his bravery (Nolan 48). After learning the noble conduct of Plover, O'Byrne was so filled with gratitude that he consented to surrender without further trouble to the Lord Protector, on the condition that Plover was made proprietor of Glengoulah, and he himself permitted to retire to the Continent. The first part of the proposal was gladly accepted by the Lord Protector, as the battle of Glengoulah castle had already cost him enough of blood and treasure, and Plover had always been one of his favourite soldiers, having distinguished himself many times by his bravery. O'Byrne, however, was not permitted to leave the country, to humble his once proud spirit, but was allowed to become a tenant farmer on the estate of which he was the rightful lord. The O'Byrnes were given "a comfortable house [...] at a nominal rent" (Nolan 48).

When Mr. Plover eventually deceased, he left strict injunctions in his will to all his descendants to forever respect the descendants of O'Byrne, and to "never to harass or annoy them in any manner, particularly specifying how they were indebted to that family for their position in society" (Nolan 49). Mr Biggs', moreover, owes his life to the O'Byrnes, as Mr

⁸⁷ E.g. Oliver Cromwell.

Biggs father, uncle by marriage of the late Sir Charles Plover, was taken a prisoner (before he had met his future wife) by the Insurgents in the rebellion of 1789, but saved by Toney Byrnes' father, who remembered "the peril from which an English soldier once rescued one of his ancestors" (50). Unfortunately, Mr Biggs refuses the request specified in the will of all the Plovers and refuses to extend Toney Byrne's lease, even though he does not only owe his estates, but even his very existence to the O'Byrne family.

Although all of these facts proof that Toney Byrne is, in fact, the rightful heir to the Glengoulah 'throne', he remains humble and proud, and never brags about his noble ancestry or uses it as an excuse to pay less rent, although he is undoubtedly entitled to it. This is in stark contrast with the sly Mr Biggs who refuses to uphold the will of his indirect ancestor and resents, rather than admires, Toney Byrne and his ancestors, probably out of fear of being robbed of his estate. This specific fear, as Kreilkamp has observed, was also characteristic of the works by, for instance, Lever and Le Fanu, who replaced the national tale's allegorised version of union between English and Irish aristocracies with the threatening aspirations of native Irish suitors to the Big House.⁸⁸ This example suggests that from a colonial point of view, the English have conquered the Irish land through illegitimate and dishonest claims, laws, and reasoning, and have deprived the native Irish of their true rights in this process. It, moreover, implies that although the Irish have been forcefully robbed of their rights, they, like Toney Byrne, have nevertheless remained proud, honourable, and strong in the face of adversity and oppression. These examples, finally, demonstrate although traditional Irish rules, regulations, and codes of conduct might be obliterated by the colonial oppressor, Irish heredity, traditions, morals and values, and cultural practises, can never be fully wiped from the Irish collective memory, and will always serve as a counter-narrative to outweigh British imperial claims.

7.2.3. *Decaying Estates and the Improvident Landlord*

Apart from themes of tradition and gender, the estate, or rather the decline thereof, also has symbolic value in nearly all of the analysed novels and can be read as a marker of imperial decline. This is in stark contrast with the English poetic and pictorial tradition in which romanticised depictions of the countryside "evacuated the anxiety of historical decline from its local ruins and instead memorialized the antiquity of the British nation" (Kreilkamp 161). Interestingly, especially in *In Re Garland*, the real threat to the Ascendency is not rural

⁸⁸ See for instance, Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and *Uncle Silas* (1864), or Francis Lever's *Roland Cashel* (1850).

capitalism, but personal bankruptcy. Mr Garland's biggest downfall is not his tenants' inability to pay the rents because of the Famine, but rather his lavish spending on drink and entertainment, and his uncontrollable gambling addiction. When the bailiff, Mr Mahaffy, comes to collect Mr Garland's furniture, he is confronted with an almost empty and nearly collapsing mansion, and "very little indeed there was for the law to lay its hands on" (O'Ryan 183). The Squire, during his single life, had only furnished but a few state rooms, and although Ms Starlight of Castlevue had refurnished some rooms in a desperate attempt to see things "exactly as they were in the good old times of Mr G's 'ancestors'" (183), she had "bought them for herself and removed with herself" (183). Some of the Squire's heaviest purchases, moreover, had, under favour of his last loads of corn, travelled back to the cabinet-maker for a consideration. In short, so little remained that was available to a creditor, that, after a few messages, passed between Mahaffy and his principal, that little was, by common consent, removed ; and the old house and old master left to solitude.

The relentless decay of the Garland estate, thus, prefigures in the little domestic details: a broken chair, small cracks in the ceiling, and leaking roofs, and as Kreilkamp observes, "the endless stratagems by which an improvident and isolated society—Empire's new losers—wards of the reality of its marginalization" (170). In *In Re Garland*, *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*, and *New Lights*, novels which all contain symbols of imperial decline and discussions of Irish tradition versus colonial rule, recurring variations and notable changes in gender roles accompany and underline the economic, political, and social marginalisation of the English landlord. Even in more domestic fiction, such as Sadlier's *New Lights*, which centres heavily around the private world of Eleanor Ousely, "personal maladjustments appear grounded in a conquering class's growing political and social impotence" (Kreilkamp 164). Characteristically, not only Julia and Edmund O'Ryan's *In Re Garland*, but also many other nineteenth-century novels that deal with British imperialism in an Irish context, such as Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and novels by Somerville, Ross, and Le Fanu, represent landlords who drink, tend to overspend their incomes, and flirt with the female sex.⁸⁹ As the patriarchal world of the Ascendancy deteriorates, "ruthless gentry chatelaines" as Kreilkamp observes, "move into the roles abdicated by their defeated and increasingly ineffective

⁸⁹ In novels by Edgeworth, Le Fanu, Somerville and Ross, the flaws of the upper/landlord classes are often outlined and criticised. In these narratives, the notion of absenteeism is used as a symbol of alienation, signifying the colonial landlord's rootlessness and his unstable and damaged relationship with his tenant. This sense of rootlessness is often represented through scenes of alcohol abuse, lavish spending, and sexual misconduct. Examples novels that include these types of representations are Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864), and *An Irish Cousin* (1889) by Irish cousins Somerville and Ross.

husbands” (161). Although Richard Garland’s maid, Nance Eettlewell, cannot be classified as a ‘gentry chatelaine’, her position within the Garland household, nevertheless, increases simultaneously while Richard Garland’s social status is rapidly decreasing. As Richard Garland “for the moment would have rather fled from it [his financial troubles]” (183), she takes over the position as head of the house and matriarch, and finds sly ways to hide valuable items from the bailiffs, while also telling Mr Garland off, who seemed afeared of her strength and strictness, and who would rather hear “all this bustle of removal, as any noise was, he thought, preferable to the sound of Nance's tongue directed at himself” (184).

The depiction of an irresponsible, imprudent, and cowardly landlord in novels like *In Re Garland*, contradicts and even ridicules the vigorous patriarchal policies of English colonialism. These novels, in that sense, seem to deliberately threaten and undercut nineteenth-century British imperial narratives in which a feminine Celtic subject was ruled by the masculine British lord. In, for instance, Nolan’s *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*, the very graphic final image of the frantic and helpless landlord Mr Biggs, who maddened by his own evil wrongdoings, “would shake with terror and hide away in corners” and had “attempted self-destruction several times” (329), embodies the collapse of the British empire and the patriarchy. Although Richard Garland’s ending is considerably less graphic and tragic, he is nevertheless also confined to the walls of his illegitimate daughter’s Irish cabin and, as his health deteriorates, is forced to rely on her care. Here we can, again, observe how, as the role of the patriarch disintegrates, traditional British colonial discourse is threatened and mocked through the subversion of gender roles, and the fate of the male coloniser and oppressor is laid within the hands of the female colonised subject. These pitiless depictions of imperial breakdown, even when considered alongside relatively gentler and kinder depictions of English landlords, displays a very tangible congruity between Irish nineteenth-century female novelists who wrote about the Irish Famine and challenged British imperialism through explorations of gender, nationalism, and colonialism.

8. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.1. Concluding Remarks

In Alice Nolan's *The Byrnes of Glengoulah: A True Tale* (1868), Irish tenant Mat Doran ridicules the English lacquey Mr Job Scruggins for his "lace epauletts", "powdered wig", and "black-silk hose" (122). Commenting on the slender shape of the servants' calves, Mat Doran sarcastically exclaims: "is that the kind of a shape yiz have in England? If we had such a beauty as you born in Ireland, we'd make a fortune exhibiting him. Good mornin', avourneen!" (Nolan 123). Equating England and Englishness with the 'Norman yoke' of feudalism and arbitrary monarchy, Nolan depicts the humiliated English Mr Scruggins as a poor excuse of a man: fragile, dainty, and, above all, French. The fact that Mat Doran refers to the English servant as "avourneen", a Gaelic term of endearment for women, meaning 'darling' or 'sweetheart', moreover, emphasises Mr Scruggins' ladylike appearance and effeminate character. The notion of gender, in this particular passage, is thus used as a very sufficient tool to challenge the servant's virility and to mock his English identity, which was traditionally associated with masculinity, potency, and strength.

From this particular passage, and many other instances discussed in this thesis, it has become apparent that the textual tradition of stereotyping national identities has been an important feature of nineteenth-century Irish Famine fiction. Although national stereotypes, thus, play a central role in Irish literature, strikingly very little critical attention has been paid to the representation of the English, and especially female English characters, in the analysed nineteenth-century Irish works of fiction in this thesis, and Irish literature in general.

To exemplify, an examination of Joep Leerssen's comprehensive and elaborate online imagology database⁹⁰, which contains studies on how in any given literary tradition certain temperamental characteristics are imputed to a nationality, has revealed that the search for Irish representations of Englishness only generates two results. On closer inspection, the mere two sources that derive from this inquiry⁹¹ are outdated and mostly discuss representations of

⁹⁰ See: Joep Leerssen. "Bibliography." *Imagologica*, 2 Jan 2018, <https://imagologica.eu/bibliography>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2018.

⁹¹ The two generated sources are Catherine Brace. "Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity, 1890-1940." *Ecumene* vol. 6.no. 1, 1999, pp. 90-109., and Barbara Freitag.

how the English perceived themselves. In contrast, queries into English portrayals of, for instance the Irish, generates 16 results⁹², of which 15 sources are highly useful, and searches into literary French depictions of English national characters produces 17 academic publications.

Menno Spiering's survey of the English, represented in Beller and Leerssens' *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters* (2007), moreover, is highly gender-biased and only lists male representations of England and Englishness, such as John Bull and the stereotype of the gentleman. One of the main aims and motivations behind the writing of this thesis, therefore, has been to fill this notable gap in research, and to examine the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels, from 1851 to 1870. Since Leerssen and Beller's handbook is highly influential within the academic field, and key to the general understanding of the concept of imagology, this thesis finds that their work, and especially Spiering's contribution, needs to be significantly revised. The primary and secondary sources used in this thesis, and the results from the analysis thereof, could contribute to this revision, and might be adopted in an effort to outbalance Spiering's remarkably gendered survey.

Although Spiering's work proved to be highly insufficient in relation to the analysis of English female characters in Irish literature, Joep Leerssen's theory of imagology and concept of nationalism, and especially his suggestions for the treatment of primary sources turned out to be profoundly beneficial. Whereas previous critics had recurrently studied the discussed novels in isolation, this thesis, following Leerssen's guidelines to imagology, has placed these novels within their broader cultural tradition, in order to find more larger parallels between these works and to get a better understanding of how nineteenth-century Irish female writers interacted with national stereotypes and personifications, issues of gender and nationalism, and themes of colonialism and imperialism. Even though it is impossible, and even perilous, to measure all the examined novels by the exact same standards, and one can find, as this thesis has demonstrated many different elements and important nuances between these literary works, a number of distinctive parallels can nevertheless be drawn. The analysis of the

Keltische Identität als Fiktion. Eine Untersuchung zu den Sozio-Kulturellen Bedingungen der Anglo-Irischen Literatur. Heiderlberg, 1989.

⁹² Some of the sources generated by this search have been analysed and used for this thesis. These sources include L.P Curtis. *Apes and Angels. The Irishman in Victorian Caricature.* Smithsonian, 1997., and Sheridan Gilley, "English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780–1900." *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society.* Edited by Colin Holmes, Routledge, 1978, pp. 81-110.

representation of English female characters in the examined novels, first of all, has revealed that these characters can be divided into three distinct, but at times also coinciding, categories, namely that of the spinster, the young unmarried woman, and the (widowed) mother. In addition to these findings, more broad and overarching conclusions that were uncovered during the study of these characters can be made.

In terms of nationalism and national personifications, it can be concluded that the female authors of the examined Famine novels, as exemplified by the depiction of Mr Jacob Scruggins, were very aware of the traditional nineteenth-century rhetoric employed by male authors, in which Ireland was often personified as female, and England as male. The literary works discussed in this thesis all addressed this rhetoric and the national personifications that followed from this discourse in similar ways. All discussed female novelist seemed to endorse traditional nineteenth-century national personifications of John Bull and Britannia to ridicule the beef-eating English ruling classes and their colonial oppression, and to underline their sinful and immoral Protestant nature. These crude representations of England and Englishness, even when considered alongside relatively gentler and kinder depictions of England and Englishness, demonstrate a very tangible congruity between Irish nineteenth-century female novelists who wrote about the Irish Famine and challenged British imperialism.

Apart from recurring nineteenth-century national stereotypes, such as the choleric John Bull, the gracious Britannia, and the courageous Erin, Irish Famine fiction written between 1851 and 1870 also repeatedly adopted similar literary modes. Themes from the Gothic tradition, for instance, were used to underline the evil, villainous, and malicious nature of the English landlords, and elements from, the Big House genre, moreover, were borrowed to ridicule the national tale, and to criticise the union between England and Ireland. The works discussed in this thesis, moreover, not only engaged with the same genres, but also utilised identical narrative techniques, such as the pathetic fallacy to foreshadow detrimental events, frame narratives to substantiate arguments, different points of focalisation to underline the Irish experience, and usage of an omniscient intrusive narrator to instruct the reader. The national stereotypes, literary modes, and narrative techniques used in the novels discussed in this thesis can therefore be perceived as evidence of the existence of a (trans)cultural tradition, or perhaps even a repertoire, of nineteenth-century Famine novels that criticised British imperialism through explorations of gender, ethnicity, and national personifications.

Although many traditional nineteenth-century Irish Famine narratives⁹³ were said to be dominated by female images, and addressed the horrors of the tragedy in great detail through recurring literary motifs and symbols such as the starving female body, in the novels discussed in this study, the Famine, instead, functioned as a backdrop, and was employed as an instrument to address political concerns and to question and criticise notions of gender and nationality. This suggests that the discussed nineteenth-century female authors used alternative registers through which not only the painful Famine past, but also Irish-English relations could be negotiated and conveyed.

It is important to note at this point that although imagology has proven to be a useful concept to identify certain tropes and stereotypes, and is considered to be comprehensible and easily applicable, Beller and Leerssen *Imagology* (2007) neglects any discussion on the use of setting and the specific role it might play in establishing national stereotypes. When collecting sources it was, in fact, nearly impossible to find any studies that connected the use of setting to the stereotyping of national identities. Since setting, especially in the novels discussed in this thesis (in which the Famine was used as a tool to underline the evil nature of the English), has proven to be highly important to the creation and establishment of literary national stereotypes, this is definitely an element that needs to be reconsidered and incorporated into any methodological framework that analyses stereotypes of national character through an imagologist lens.

The indirect and distant treatment of the Famine, moreover, is very much in line with the rhetoric and discourse employed by Irish nationalist John Mitchel (1815-1875), who used the horrors of the Famine as an instrument to underline and exemplify all that was wrong with “the dark record of English atrocity in Ireland” (Mitchel “History”, 7). Mitchel’s work, as Peter Gray has observed and exemplified, constituted pioneering writings on the Great Famine and, despite its extreme views, heavily influenced popular and critical nineteenth-century discourse. Mitchel’s presence can be felt in every novel, and especially the arguments made in his *Last Conquest* (1860) are sometimes directly quoted. This will, undoubtedly, also have to do with the fact that many of these novels, such as Alice Nolan’s *The Byrnes* (1868) and Sadlier’s *New Lights* (1853) were aimed at a predominantly Catholic audience, and serialised and published in many Irish and Irish-American nationalist periodicals, some of them even edited by Mitchel himself.

⁹³ Such as Mrs Hoare’s “The Black Potatoes” and “Little Mary: A Tale of the Black Year” (1851), and Rosa Mulholland’s “The Hungry Death”(1891).

In examining the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels, this study has thus consistently drawn parallels between the discourse of non-fictional Famine writings, and the rhetoric, tropes, and stereotypes employed in Famine fiction. This technique has demonstrated the different ways in which Famine novels have adopted and/or reconstructed discourses from non-literary Famine narratives, illustrating that Famine fiction can exhibit both novelistic registers and nationalist rhetoric traditionally associated with political pamphlets, economic treatise, and religious tracts. Subsequently, the novels discussed in this thesis are generically unstable and very difficult to classify. Although this makes categorising these novels exceedingly difficult, they do, nevertheless, contain very similar sentiments related to notions of religion, nationalism, and gender.

Traditional Irish national personifications such as Erin, Mother Ireland, and Kathleen Ni Houlihan, were frequently employed by the authors of the analysed novels to enforce political beliefs and to emphasise the nationalist cause. National stereotypes of the Irish imposed or invented by the English, such as the representation of Hibernia in *Punch Magazine*, however, were modified and fashioned into a new shape that allowed the authors of these novels to celebrate Irish national and cultural identity, and to criticise British oppression in Ireland. The weak Hibernia, as depicted in *Punch Magazine*, for instance, was transformed into the strong, proud, and honourable Erin, who did not need to be rescued by Britannia. The strong and courageous warrior-Britannia, in reciprocal fashion, was transformed into the malicious Protestant spinster or the weak, widowed mother.

The authors of the novels discussed in this thesis, moreover, frequently used dominant English discourse related to the national character of the Irish and their uncivilized nature. The theme of the Irish savage, for instance, was used in all of the studied novels. The fact that the authors used the theme of the Irish savage repeatedly throughout their works suggests that they must have been aware of this common nineteenth-century stereotype of the Irish in British literature and art. Nevertheless, instead of following this popular discourse, the authors seemed to mock this stereotype by re-using the words in a humorous and sarcastic manner. In doing so, the female authors have taken the words out of the mouths of the British, and transformed them into a counter-narrative, e.g. a narrative that arises from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalised. In the examined novels, the female authors wittily and consciously mocked the hegemonic discourse at the time, in which the Irish were perceived as barbarous, while simultaneously demonstrating that these words have become meaningless in this new context, because when the Irish female authors re-used them, they

lost all of their original dominance and strength and, instead, became markers of sarcasm and ridicule.

It can, moreover, be argued that all novels, to a certain extent and in different variations, have experimented with notions of gender and social constructs. Gender, as it turns out, can be used as a very sufficient tool to challenge, not only traditional Victorian beliefs about the ‘feeble’ female sex, but also notions of colonialism and imperialism. The depiction of an irresponsible, imprudent, and cowardly landlord who needs to be saved by the ruthless gentry chatelaine, in novels like *In Re Garland*, contradicts and even ridicules the vigorous patriarchal policies of English colonialism. These novels, in that sense, seem to deliberately threaten and undercut nineteenth-century British imperial narratives in which a feminine Celtic subject was ruled by the masculine British lord.

Age, moreover, also is a common theme in the discussed novels. In the context of Irish characters, such as Nolan’s representation of Father Esmond or Sadlier’s depiction of Granny Mulligan, age, and especially old age, seems to have been associated with experience, wisdom, and knowledge. These older Irish characters are treated with great respect throughout the novel, placed on a pedestal, and elevated to a “livin’ saint” (Nolan 68) status. Older English characters, however, are portrayed as conservative, bitter, and stubborn spinsters, social pariahs, and unhappy widows, who are set in their ways, and unwilling to accept that the Famine had brought about many social changes. Younger English female characters, nevertheless, such as Clara Menville and Eleanor Ousely, are portrayed as very malleable, resilient, enlightened, and progressive. These characters seem to symbolise the longing for brighter future, and perhaps even a free Ireland, and all hope is placed on their transformation from English Protestant landlord daughters to virtuous Catholic devotees. The theme of age, in that sense, also seems to have been used as an instrument to underline the differences between the moral and honourable Irish, and their vicious English coloniser.

Although the examined novels seemed quite radical, experimental, and perhaps even feminist, in some areas, it also needs to be emphasised that they are all very traditional and conservative in their treatment of religion. The Catholic faith, in all of the analysed novels, is depicted as the only true religion. Protestantism, contrarily, is associated with notions of England and Englishness, and therefore by default corrupt, immoral, and unjust. There is, however, one simple cure to this Protestant cancer presented in Nolan’s *The Byrnes of Glengoulah* and Sadlier’s *New Lights*, and that is to convert to Catholicism in order to cleanse oneself of the sinful and degenerate condition brought on by the wrong faith.

From this study, a number of important conclusions can be made. First of all, it can be determined that Irish women writers were, certainly, aware of the national personifications used by their male contemporaries to define and shape “the conscience of the race” (Innes 3). The fact that these female authors, for instance, used traditional personifications of England and Englishness to mock the landlord classes, but re-constructed personifications of Ireland and Irishness to emphasise their critique of British colonial power, proves that they very consciously and strategically employed certain stereotypes to emphasise their nationalist, didactic, and religious beliefs. These observations, moreover, also demonstrate that nineteenth-century Irish women, albeit in their own domesticated forms, were much more involved with Irish and British politics than is commonly theorised and believed. These findings, therefore, might contribute to a paradigm shift in which a broader definition of political culture, which also considers and includes private, domestic, regional, and philanthropist political expressions and settings, can be employed to study nineteenth-century politics and political representations in literature. Whereas the novels in this thesis, as well as a large number of nineteenth-century publications by women, have often been overlooked by political historians, this study has demonstrated that these sources may also be included in historical and political analysis, alongside political pamphlets, historiographies, letters, memoirs, and autobiographies. This might result in more all-encompassing and versatile explorations and examinations of the political experiences of Victorian women that move beyond the tedious suffrage narrative.

The analysed novels, moreover, also give insight into the minds of nineteenth-century Irish women, and outline some of their main concerns. Whereas, following traditional Victorian discourse, one would expect nineteenth-century women to have been primarily concerned with their duties as wives and mothers, these novels demonstrate that what lied at the hearts of these female writers were questions of gender, politics, and social and religious reform. Although these female writers might not yet have been able to hold office or vote, certain passages in their novels can most definitely be read as political pamphlets containing societal commentary. Sadlier, for instance, discusses social problems such as, poverty, corruption, violence, and the capitalist exploitation of Irish tenants, and demonstrates how these issues affect, not only Protestants and fallen Catholics, but also virtuous Catholics and people from all social classes. Richard Garland’s rakish behaviour in *In Re Garland: A Tale of a Transition Time*, moreover, can be read as a comment on alcoholism and substance abuse, and his social degeneration and financial troubles may also be attributed to

technological progress, financial investments in new industrial structure, a shift from rural work to more industrial labour, and early developments of a new class consciousness.

Although women like Sadlier's character Caroline Hampton will have, undoubtedly, been the victim of their flawed and misguided Protestant upbringing and education, the novels analysed in this thesis also demonstrate that if one is willing and able to break through the mental and physical threshold that separates the English from the Irish, like Clara Menville and Eleanor Ousely did, one can overcome national stereotypes and form new alliances that will, not necessarily create a new union between England and Ireland, as this is undoubtedly not what nineteenth-century Irish nationalists had in mind, but rather to lay the foundations of a new era of mutual respect, understanding, and recognition.

8.2. Suggestions for Further Research

Since Irish literature has often been conceived both in academic scholarship and popular imagination as a predominantly male phenomenon, one of the main objectives of this thesis was to redress this misconception and gendered imbalance and to demonstrate that nineteenth-century female Irish authors have also greatly contributed to the Irish, British, and even American literary marketplace, and interacted with issues of gender, nationalism, and imperialism, albeit in the subtexts and margins of their works. This thesis has, therefore, paid special attention to how female authors portrayed English female characters, and has neglected representations of English female characters by male nineteenth-century Irish authors. To expand the study of the depiction of England and Englishness in Irish literature, and to give a more rounded and inclusive impression of Irish representations of national stereotypes of the English, nineteenth-century Famine novels written by male authors, such as William Carleton's *The Black Prophet* (1846), Charles Kickham's *Sally Cavanagh: Or the Untenanted Graves* (1869), and William Frances Barry's *The Wizard's Knot* (1901) must be further studied. The analysis of works of Famine fiction by male authors from the same period could reveal more about the similar and different ways in which nineteenth-century male and female authors responded to nationalist rhetoric, national personifications, and stereotypes.

Another interesting point of further research might be to compare the novels discussed in this thesis to nineteenth-century literary and cultural products from other British colonies, to explore whether the Irish experience as expressed in this thesis is unique, or falls within a larger transnational tradition of colonialisation and female writing. Did nineteenth-century authors of famine narratives from other parts of the British empire, such as India, use similar literary tropes, modes, narrative techniques, and themes? How did foreign nineteenth-century

authors deal with notions of oppression and despotism? What were some of the most recurring motifs in their works, and how does this relate to the novels discussed in this thesis? Margaret Kelleher's critically acclaimed *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (1997), which relates reiterated themes in nineteenth-century literature of the Great Irish Famine to twentieth-century accounts of the famine in Bengal, can be used as an excellent example of how one could structure and carry out this analysis.

Furthermore, since this thesis has established how Irish female authors responded to nationalist rhetoric, themes of colonialism and gender, and national personifications and stereotypes, another interesting subject of study would be to examine the reception of these novels, not only in Ireland and the United States, but also more specifically in Britain. Were these novels, for instance, widely distributed and read in England? How did the English readership, if any, respond to these novels? Did these novels provoke harsh criticism? And did English authors treat national stereotypes of the Irish, as expressed in these novels, in a similar fashion to underline notions of backwardness and savagery? Taking a more regionalist approach, another interesting topic of further research, moreover, would be to examine whether one can find regional differences in Irish nineteenth-century literary representations of England and Englishness, and whether these local and rural depictions differ from narratives that have been located in urban settings.

Finally, in the Preface of *The Byrnes of Glengoulah*, Alice Nolan expresses the necessity of the creation of her novel, as she "was surprised to find that many atrocities perpetrated by landlords within the last twenty-five years were almost unknown in America, even to Irish people who had emigrated before that period" (vi). This quote, to some extent, can also be applied to this thesis, which aimed to educate its reader about the monstrosities of the Famine, as well as the political implications, literary tropes, and national stereotypes the disaster brought forward. This thesis has hopefully demonstrated how, by analysing female renderings of national stereotypes, it is possible to contribute to the study of Irish literary representations of Englishness and England and the concept of imagology, and to revise and broaden the definition of political culture. In examining the representation of English female characters in nineteenth-century Irish Famine novels, this study has, moreover, consistently drawn parallels between the discourse of non-fictional Famine writings, and the rhetoric, tropes, and stereotypes employed in Famine fiction. This technique will hopefully draw more attention to the reconsideration of fictional works as sources of political thought, and inspire

more research on nineteenth-century Irish women writers, nineteenth-century female political participation, and representations of national stereotypes in Irish literature.

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10. APPENDIX: IMAGES OF NATIONAL PERSONIFICATIONS

I. John Bull.



Figure 1: John Philips. "The Present State of Great Britain." W. Richardson, no. 68, 1779.

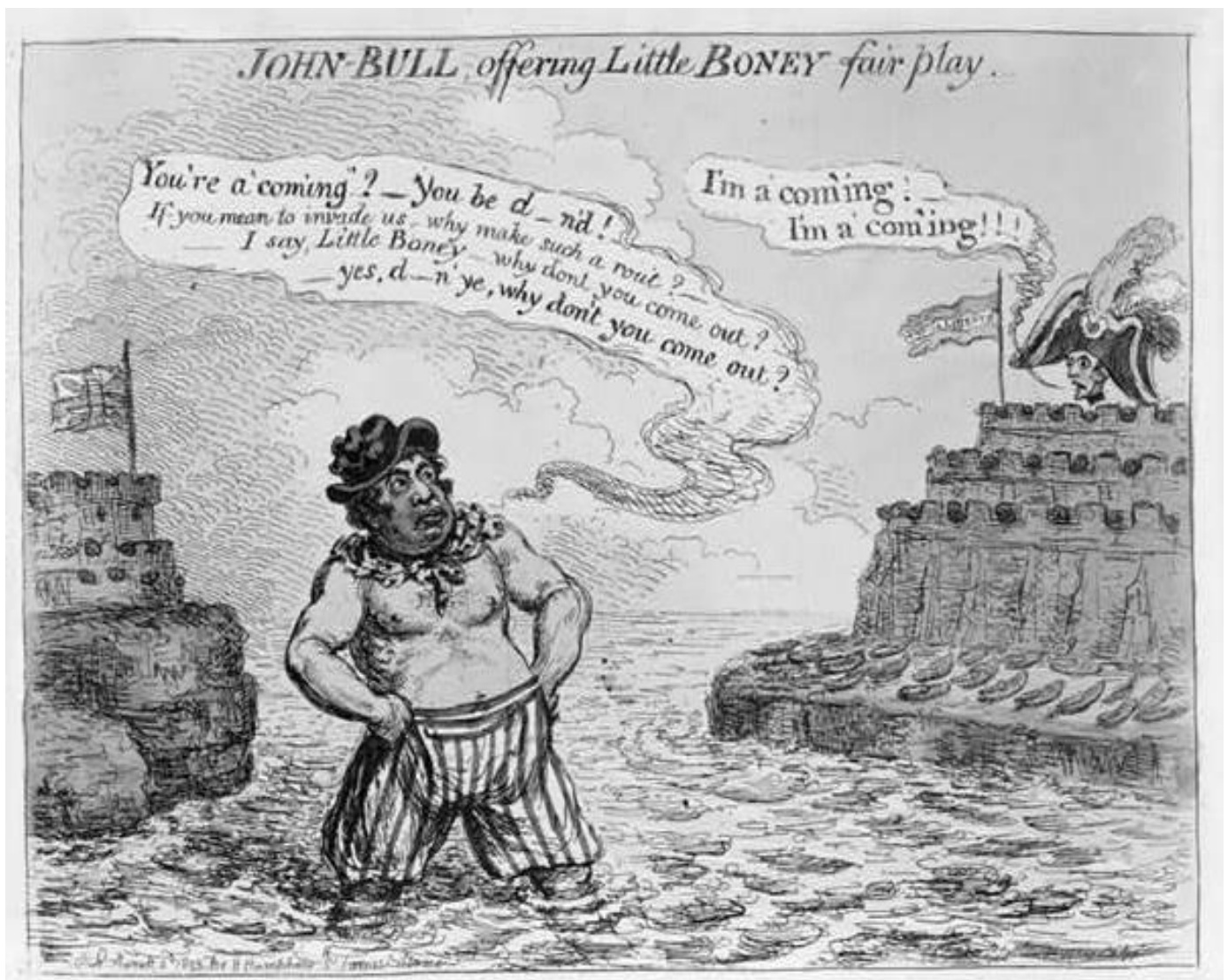


Figure 2: James Gilray. "Little Boney." Gillray St James Street, 1803.



Figure 3: John Doyle (H.B.). "John Bull, Or the Man Wot is Easily Led by the Nose." London, 1830-32.



HEIGHT OF IMPUDENCE.

Irishman to John Bull.—"SPARE A THRIFLE, YER HONOUR, FOR A FOOR IRISH LAD TO BUY A BIT OF ———
A BLUNDERBUSS WITH."

Figure 4: John Leech. "Height of Impudence.": Irishman to John Bull. - "Spare a thrifle, yer honour, for a poor Irish lad to buy a bit of - a blunderbuss with." *Punch*, 1846.

II. Britannia



Figure 5: A Roman coin commemorating Roman Emperor Hadrian's conquest of Britain. *Yale Art Gallery*. Rome Mint. Struck AD 136.



Figure 6: Henry Peacham. "Britannia." *Minerva Britannia*. 1603.

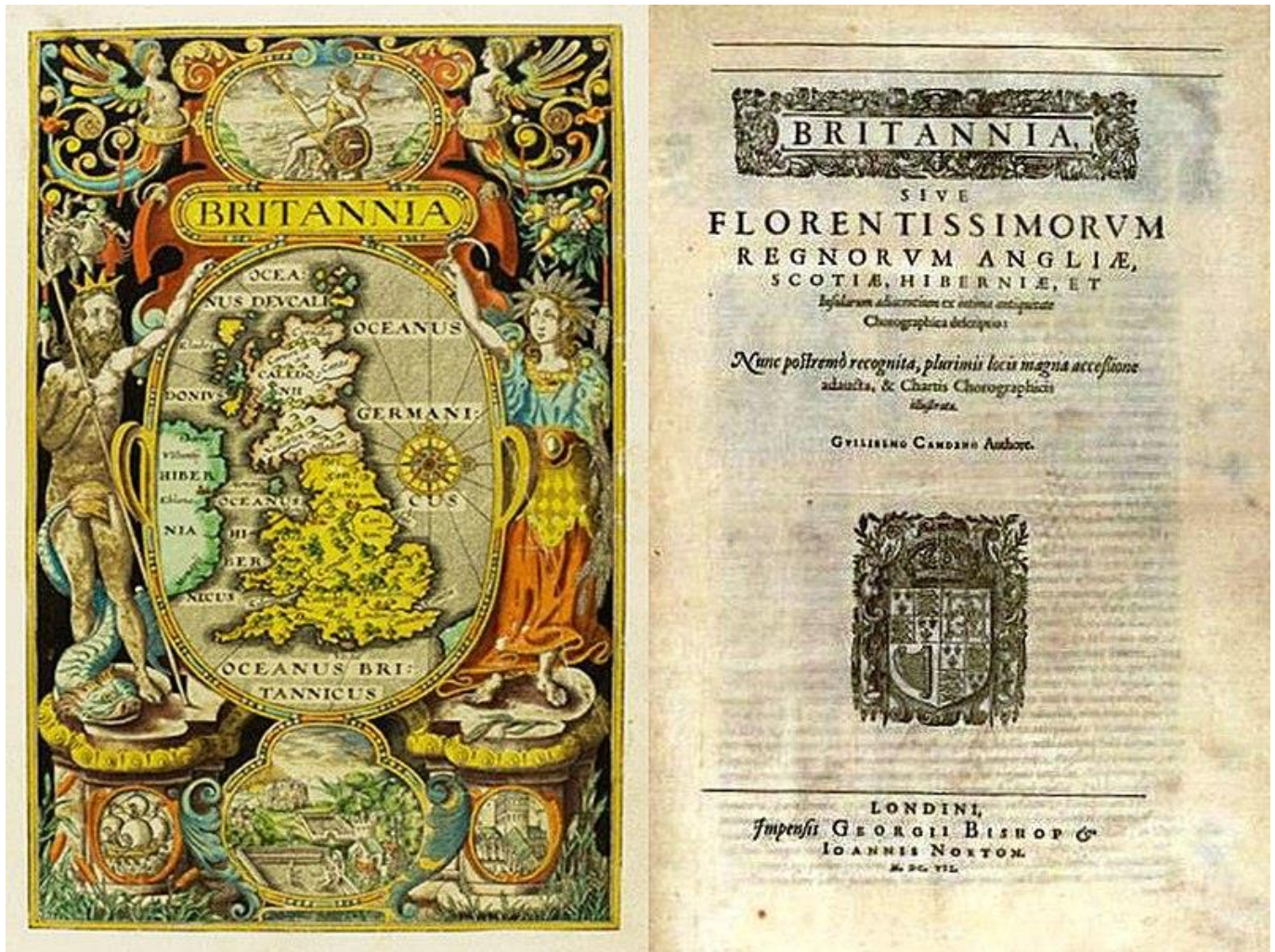


Figure 7: William Camden. *Britain, or a Chorographicall Description of the Most Flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1610), front piece.



Figure 8: A Dutch Gold Medal Aimed at Satirising Britain. *British Museum*, 1655, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=952186&partId=1&searchText=oliver+cromwell+protector&page=1.



Figure 9: A British Medal Designed by King Charles II, *Rare Coins and Tokens*, 1665, http://rarecoinsandtokens.co.uk/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=81_89_100_103&products_id=4146&zenid=653um8iplti3rua797bh8pka30.

III. Germania



Figure 10: Painting of Germania by unknown, 1848, painting covered the old organ inside the Paulskirche, Frankfurt, Germany.

IV. Marianne



Figure 11: Eugène Delacroix. "Liberty Leading the People." Louvre Museum, 1830.

V. Hibernia



THE FENIAN-PEST.

HIBERNIA. "O MY DEAR SISTER, WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH THESE TROUBLESOME PEOPLE?"

BRITANNIA. "TRY ISOLATION FIRST, MY DEAR, AND THEN——"

Figure 12: Sir John Tenniel. "The Fenian Pest" : The Fenian-Pest. Hibernia. " O my dear Sister, what ARE we to do with these troublesome people?" Britannia. "Try isolation first, my dear, and then - " *Punch*, 1866, p. 89.



THE IRISH "TEMPEST."

CALIBAN (RORY OF THE HILLS). "THIS ISLAND'S MINE, BY SYCORAX MY MOTHER,
WHICH THOU TAK'ST FROM ME."—*Shakespeare.*

Figure 13: Sir John Tenniel. "The Irish 'Tempest': Caliban (Rory of the Hills) - "This island's mine, by sycoramy mother, which thou tak'st from me." - Shakespeare. *Punch*, 1870, p.111.



TWO FORCES.

Figure 14: Sir John Tenniel. “Two Forces”: Britannia depicted on the right, protecting the scared Hibernia from the Irish anarchist, *Punch*, 1881.

VI. Erin



Figure 15: John Johnson. “A Terrible Record”: Erin – “In forty years I have lost ... more than three millions of my sons and daughters”. *Weekly Freeman*, 1881.