

## **The Irish Ring Cycle & its Victorian Popularity**

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The Irish Ring entered the British musical repertoire as a result of the practice of Victorian operatic companies, who often presented three very popular operettas in sequence, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. At first, the sequence was known as the English Ring, but gradually it became better known as the Irish Ring. The operettas brought together were Michael William Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl*, William Vincent Wallace's *Maritana* and Julius Benedict's *The Lily of Killarney*. The composers of these works never envisaged anything like such a Ring Cycle, which nevertheless became popular with music-lovers in opera houses throughout the world, and continued to be frequently performed in Britain into the twentieth century by companies like the Carl Rosa Opera Company.

*The Bohemian Girl* was first produced at Drury Lane Theatre on November 27, 1843 when Julius Benedict was the musical director there and had invited Michael William Balfe, a much travelled Dubliner, to conduct the first performance with stage direction by Alfred Bunn. Balfe's operetta, using the bare bones of a story which can be traced back to Cervantes, was given a hurried and somewhat misleading title because the heroine was an Austrian who had been raised as a gypsy, a fact which the English title obscures with its mistranslation of the French term 'bohémienne', which means 'Gypsy Girl', (although the operetta's setting was, indeed, Bohemia). In spite of some harsh reviews from the London critics, *The Bohemian Girl* ran for more than a hundred performances and that

success was quickly followed by German, Italian and French performances which ensured the European-wide and American popularity of *The Bohemian Girl*.

*Maritana* was by William Vincent Wallace (1812-65), an extremely widely-travelled Waterford man. First produced at Drury Lane on 15 November 1845, with Alfred Bunn again as stage director, its tale, based on a French play, was set in Spain and told the story of a Spanish street singer who became intriguingly involved with the King of Spain. While the critic of *The Athenaeum* H.F. Chorley, feeling very unimpressed by the display of musical eclecticism, dismissed Wallace as in search of a style amid his half dozen of different manners, *Maritana* was an immediate success with the public and was soon being produced in Vienna, Hamburg, Prague, Sydney and Cape Town.

Julius Benedict, who had been involved in the performances of both *The Bohemian Girl* and *Maritana* at their London premieres, composed music for *The Lily of Killarney* with its libretto adapted from a recent play by Dion Boucicault, the remarkable Dubliner who was bestriding the Atlantic Ocean as actor/author rather in the manner of a popular modern celebrity. Benedict's operetta, his most successful work, reflected in music the strengths of Boucicault's version of the story of the traumatic love of an Irish squire for his Irish peasant lover. *The Lily of Killarney* was first produced at Covent Garden in 1862 to great acclaim, after which it was immediately staged at the principal theatres throughout Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The hybrid nature of the three operettas entranced Victorian audiences. The three distinct stories featured: a singing gypsy in Bohemia, Arline, who was an Austrian; a famous street singer, Maritana, native to Spain; and a Colleen Bawn, Eily O'Connor, an

Irish peasant beauty. Two of the composers of the operettas were cosmopolitan Irish – Balfe and Wallace – and the other composer, Benedict, was a German Jew who had settled in London to become the darling of the Victorian musical establishment. Obviously impresarios became aware of a few publicity advantages of a reference to Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, as they promoted as the 'English Ring' the three operettas whose premieres had all been staged in London. Only gradually did English, Irish, European and American lovers of the operettas become increasingly convinced, that in spite of the sheer eclecticism of the works – perhaps even because of such a rampant eclecticism? – the works were essentially Irish! One contributory factor to such a view may well have been that when the memorable songs were detached from the operettas in recitals, they sounded to the ear of the music lovers, very much in the tradition of Thomas Moore's *Melodies*. Soon Moore's most popular melodies such as 'The Last Rose of Summer', 'The Harp that Once Through Tara Halls' and 'The Minstrel Boy' began to be sung side-by-side with selections of songs from the Irish Ring such as Balfe's 'I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls' and 'Love smiles but to deceive'; Wallace's 'Tis the harp in the air' and 'Yes! let me like a soldier die'; and Benedict's 'The Moon has raised her lamp above' and 'Eily Mavoureen'. Many songs from the Irish Ring entered the repertoire of the concert hall and drawing room world, where a growingly ubiquitous band of Irish tenors, including James Joyce's father and John McCormack, sang the melodies to very appreciative audiences especially, though not exclusively, among the Irish middle-class – the world poignantly evoked in Joyce's description of Miss Morkham's party in 'The Dead'.

Moore, whose *Melodies* audiences began to link with the Ring, was the son of a Dublin merchant and grocer from Aungier Street and one of the first Catholics educated at Trinity College Dublin. He made his lasting mark as a London émigré on those levels of English society who adored Lord Byron, and the *Melodies* are often marginalised by critics who say that they appealed mostly to a sentimental idea of Ireland popular with ‘every guilt-ridden voluntary exile’. Yet for very many years after their publication, the melodies of Moore greatly appealed to many who never left home. Indeed, the historical context of the popularity of the melodies, the settings of some 130 poems, composed and published in ten instalments between 1808 and 1834, was very near the very centre of the Irish cultural revival which took place during the first half of the nineteenth-century. During his years at Trinity College Dublin, Moore formed close friendships with the United Irishmen, Edward Hudson and Robert Emmet, and an enthusiasm for things distinctively Irish was a strong factor in inspiring Moore’s *Melodies*. Moore’s later performances of his songs were heard as intensely Irish by London’s aristocracy, who saw in the ever performing Moore a great Irish patriot. In 1846 there was a magnificent collected edition published which was illustrated by the outstanding Irish history painter Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) whose very special contribution was acknowledged in Moore’s Preface: ‘An Irish pencil has lent its aid to an Irish pen in rendering the honour and homage to our country’s ancient harp’.<sup>2</sup>

The image was no mere symbolic flourish; Ireland’s ancient harp played a crucial part in Moore’s early encounter with the beauties of Irish native music at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792. The first flush of his enthusiasm was much stimulated by *A General*

*Collection of the Ancient Music*, collected by Edward Bunting and published in 1796.<sup>3</sup> However, Bunting declined to provide the ancient airs for Moore's words and Sir John Stevenson was commissioned to do so by William Power, the Dublin music-seller. Like many future Irish musicologists, Bunting was uneasy about aspects of the Stevenson versions: 'The beauty of Mr. Moore's words in a great degree atones for the violence done by the musical arranger to many of the airs which he has adopted'.<sup>4</sup> The impact of Moore's *Melodies* melodies was much more than musical because they were to become the inspiration of much iconography in Irish art throughout the nineteenth-century. One of Moore's key nationalist melodies was 'The Origin of the Harp' which was superbly illustrated by Maclise. The harp became the archetypal Irish musical instrument and a symbol of Irish cultural nationalism. In the age of Moore's *Melodies*, there was the significant replacement of the 'formalised winger-maiden' harp of ascendancy Ireland topped by the imperial crown by more realistic images of the early Irish harp to represent music-making among all the Irish.<sup>5</sup> Eventually the Society for the Preservation and Publication of the Melodies of Ireland was founded in 1850 with George Petrie as its first President.<sup>6</sup>

Frederic William Burton played a significant part in the propagation of the rediscovery of Irish origins. During a tour of the West by the antiquarians in 1840, Burton sketched Paddy Conneely, the Galway Piper, for George Petrie – Conneely is depicted playing the Irish uilleann (elbow) pipes - and the piper joined the harper as an exemplar for Irish musicians. Burton produced a most arresting watercolour 'The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child' in 1841, establishing (a good half-century before Synge) an image of how Aran seemed to represent the ages of life in pre-Famine Ireland – an iconic image

which has not yet been widely explored by cultural historians.<sup>7</sup> Burton, a friend of Thomas Davis, designed a memorable frontispiece in 1845 for the very widely read collection of verses by the Young Ireland writers for *The Nation* newspaper. One of last significant events in that first Irish cultural revival occurred in 1857 when Sir William Wilde organised a group sailing from Galway to Inishmore, on board the Galway Hooker, which was a grand reunion of the most prominent ethnologists and antiquaries, with the Provost of Trinity College there to preside over their formal meetings. Many local singers were invited on board the Hooker, or turf boat, and sang while George Petrie, antiquary and painter, played on his violin and noted down the music; and Eugene O'Curry, old Celtic scholar, wrote down the words in English which Whitely Stokes, young Celtic scholar, then wrote down in English. Back on the islands, Frederic Burton painted watercolours of the islanders and Samuel Ferguson, poet and archivist, sketched ruins and antiquarian objects.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that Irish peasant life was being researched and enthusiastically appreciated by the antiquarians as the link with the Celtic past on an island was largely being ignored by the English public.<sup>9</sup> What that public was made most aware of was the recurring image of the Irishman in *Punch* cartoons which featured Paddy as a retarded creature with low forehead, bulging eyes, heavy jaw and slobbering mouth – clearly on a low level of the evolutionary ladder!<sup>10</sup> One *Punch* cartoon by Leech, published on the 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1848 bore the headline: 'The British Lion and the Irish Monkey'.<sup>11</sup> Bridging the gulf between the English perception of the Irish as apes and Young Ireland's perception of their ancestors as akin to the gods lay at the root of Dion Boucicault's Irish plays *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *Arrah-na-Pogue* (1864), *The Shaughraun* (1874) and *Robert*

*Emmet* (1884). The performance of these plays enabled Boucicault in middle age to transcend the world of Victorian theatricals by writing and appearing in plays which trenchantly challenged the Irish world according *Punch*.<sup>12</sup>

*The Colleen Bawn* was first staged in New York at Laura Keene's Theatre on 29 March 1860 and then staged at the Adelphi Theatre London on 10 September 1860 for a run of 278 performances, then a record. It was the last play which Queen Victoria saw three times during February and March 1860 before she went into a long mourning after the deaths in quick succession of her mother and husband.<sup>13</sup> According to most reports, the audiences (including the Queen) responded well to Boucicault's overall view of Ireland. Indeed, his wide-sweeping and masterly melodramatic panache called out for much more music. Boucicault had already included the songs: 'Oh, Limerick is beautiful', 'Cruiskeen Lawn', 'Pretty Girl Milking her Cow', and 'Brian O'Linn'; but the music of Thomas Baker would pale before the songs in Benedict's *The Lily of Killarney* which were credibly transferred to the picturesque region of County Kerry, already known from popular engravings.<sup>14</sup> *The Lily of Killarney* was destined to become the third operetta in the English/Irish Ring and would provide the clinching argument for audiences that the Ring was quintessentially Irish; its flow of Irish music and sentiment moving gracefully through the Bohemia of Balfe and the Spain of Wallace until it was at last all brought back home in terms of setting and characters to the Ireland of Boucicault and Benedict. Yet *The Lily of Killarney* also contained an inner drama capable of touching raw nerves, especially among Irish audiences, which stemmed from the fact that the operetta's ultimate source was Gerald Griffin's novel of 1829 *The Collegians*.<sup>15</sup>

In Griffin's story, written during his time in London, the squire Hardress Cregan secretly marries the beautiful peasant girl, Eily O'Connor. When Cregan changes his mind, he suggests to his faithful hunchbacked servant Danny that Eily should be dispatched to America to join her father in pleasant exile. Shortly afterwards, Eily's dead body is found in a pool, and her murder becomes a crime to be solved. When Cregan meekly follows his widowed mother's command to become engaged to Anne Chute, a girl of his own class, he suffers agonies of remorse over Eily's death because he knows that he simultaneously deeply loved her and wanted her to die. Cregan clashes with his mother when he confides to her his innermost thoughts and feelings, which she disdainfully brushes to one side. The hunchback Danny is arrested and, when questioned, tries to incriminate his master who is then arrested at the reception organised for his wedding to Anne Chute. Cregan is tried, exiled and dies on board the convict ship. Griffin saw Cregan's fate mainly as a result of his immature susceptibility to the influences about him, especially his subservience to the arbitrary will of his mother. The most powerful emotions portrayed in the novel are the feelings of guilt and anguish within Cregan whose other emotion of friendship for his fellow collegian, Kyrle Daly, tortuous love of poor Eily and utilitarian attachment to Anne are much more sketchily depicted.

Griffin's biographer, John Cronin, has concluded that *The Collegians* was Griffin's greatest work because it had a hero whose psychology paralleled the author's own.<sup>16</sup> Ethel Mannin has suggested that the artist in Griffin was frustrated by his Catholic moralism – apparent in his failure to explore Cregan's feelings for Eily and Anne – but also notes that Griffin told his brother (and future biographer) Daniel that he could see Edmund Kean

playing Cregan at the wedding party just before his arrest for murder, so despite pious restraint Griffin himself sensed the theatrical possibilities of the work.<sup>17</sup> Boucicault's interest in novel led to the construction of the drama around Cregan's predicament, with most emphasis on the intrigue between mother and servant, the impact of the threats from the agent Corrigan, and the great unease generated by the match-made marriage necessary to secure the future of Torc Cregan. Mrs. Cregan's enthusiasm for the Anne Chute solution signals to Danny Mann the need to dispose of the Colleen Bawn. But in Boucicault's adaptation, Eily's life is saved and Myles-na-Coppaleen, a minor character in Griffin, is transformed into a major character crafted to be played by Boucicault himself. Myles – masterful poacher, outlaw and rank social outsider – shoots dead Danny Mann before he has the time to push Eily deeper into the lake. This shooting of Danny produced one of the most sensational *mise-en-scene* in all Victorian theatre – the so-called scene of the 'watery grave' with Boucicault himself as an Irish incarnation of a Prospero orchestrating the staged revels. Myles's immediate explanation of Danny's death as an accident – he thought he was shooting an otter at the time! – is believed by all for the greater good of the local community. Myles hides Eily whom he loves but who really still loves the undeserving landed squire Cregan. The magnanimous act of the vagabond's surrender of Eily to Cregan conjured up a fleeting yet memorable image of a kind of harmony in rural Ireland, offered as the only effective alternative to the destructive schemings of the Cregan matriarch.

The plotting of events in Griffin's original novel was based on sensational events which had actually happened. Early one morning towards the end of July 1819 the body

of a young woman was washed ashore near Kilrush, County Clare – the dead woman was later identified as Ellen Hanley from Ballygahane County Limerick, a sixteen year old girl who had disappeared from the home of her uncle and guardian and who was then secretly married in a mock wedding to the son of a local gentry family, Lieutenant John Scanlan. Eventually Scanlan was arrested for murder when a soldier searched the family castle, and Scanlan’s boatman and devoted henchman, Stephen Sullivan, was also tracked down to Tralee Goal in County Kerry, where he was being held under another name for passing off forged banknotes. After two trials, both men were hanged for the murder – Scanlan in March and Sullivan in July 1820. The trial attracted enormous interest largely because Daniel O’Connell, the Catholic Liberator, defended Scanlan by arguing that Sullivan was the sole murderer without the complicity of his master. Griffin who may well have attended the trials as a young reporter, expressed sympathy with Cregan, his version of Scanlan, because he saw him as the victim of an over-ambitious mother who bullied him to marry Anne Chute within his own class: unlike Scanlan in life, Cregan escaped the hangman’s noose, but he did not survive long on board the convict ship.<sup>18</sup> Griffin’s budding interest in the case, unlike Boucicault’s later interest, was to represent in *The Collegians* in his novel a personal impression of the entire structure of provincial Irish society of his day: the Chutes of Castle Chute, the Cregans of Roaring Hill, the strong farmers the Dalys torn between feelings for the Gaelic past and the Anglo-Irish present, the English of the Garrison, the peasants, the landless men, the horse traders, the boatmen. The novel’s subtitle was ‘A Tale of Garryowen’ and Griffin wrote that ‘the days of Garryowen are gone, like those of ancient Erin; and the feats of her once formidable heroes are nothing more than a winter’s evening tale.’ [ft?]A debate rages

throughout the novel between the present and the past which runs the gamut from abuse to satire, from invective to geniality. It was such realism in Griffin's novel that led the culturally 'monocular' Daniel Corkery to damn Griffin as 'the type of non-Ascendancy writer who under the stress of moulds of his time wrote Colonial Literature.'<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, Griffin's novel teemed with evidence which exposed the ailing body and tortured soul of rural Ireland between the Union and the Great Famine: the country's declining native language, the after-effects of the savage Penal Code, the Catholic middle class emerging without an Irish Parliament, memories of the failed 1798 Insurrection and Emmet's heroic gesture, a disturbed age of Rackrents and Whiteboys, the many emigrants drifting abroad. Corkery failed to see how Griffin had managed to write a tragic novel about pre-Famine Ireland, a sense of tragedy which prompted Griffin himself to give up writing in 1838 and to join the order of the Christian brothers where he tragically died of typhus fever in 1840, at the early age of forty one.

Many rumblings about how the Irish nation stood surfaced in the whole saga of *The Colleen Bawn*: from its beginnings in the infamous murder trial in Limerick which led to the hanging of a squire and his lackey in 1819, in spite of the Kerryman Daniel O'Connell's spirited defence of the squire; through to Griffin's version of the events as a national tragedy; its transformation into the energetic romanticism of Boucicault's play and then even more so in Benedict's operetta, *The Lily of Killarney* celebrated in memorable fashion a visionary union of the gentry and the peasantry in County Kerry, encapsulating something of that vein of idealism which was one of the striking characteristics of an ever reviving Irish spirit over many centuries, but associated in this

period with the ideals of the contrasting expressions of that spirit in the works of Moore and Boucicault. Time's inevitable critical reversals of reputation have occurred in the instances of Moore and Boucicault, a reversal which has spread to an obscuring of the full significance of the pioneering enthusiasms and discoveries of the whole generation of Irish antiquarian scholars inquiring into the language, customs, and music of Connacht.

The Victorian popularity of the Moore's *Melodies* has caused them to be viewed by the twentieth-century Irish critical establishment as amounting to little more than symptoms of the 'bourgeois' and the intellectually undemanding nature of Moore's cultural nationalism, a view which conveniently ignores their historic appeal across all classes and ages. Perhaps the decisive factor in this view is the unquestioning acquiescence in the canon of Irish poetry laid down by W.B. Yeats. Inspired by Yeats, the true believers' conclusions run as follows: 'Any selection of poems from Irish writers of poetry of the nineteenth century is bound to be bedevilled by the discrepancy between the quality of some of the poems and their representative status. More bluntly, it may be said that some of the best-known poems are, to present-day tastes, among the worst... propagandist, full of standard clichés and rhythmic vulgarities.' Not only is Thomas Davis named as the chief offender but Moore is found guilty of effectively exploiting 'infantile romanticism' and even Moore's poetic masterpiece 'Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance', which had a most interestingly thinly veiled Irishry, is summarily dismissed as 'of abnormal, languor and longuers'.<sup>20</sup> Seamus Heaney, Ireland's current national poet, has likewise distanced himself from Tom Moore, Ireland's pre-Yeatsian National poet, by quoting James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* for the opinion of

Stephen Dedalus who remarks that the memorial statue of Moore on College Green, Dublin had the indignity of a ‘servile head’ and little more than ‘a Firborg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian’, ‘an emblem of nineteenth-century Ireland’s cultural and political debilitation.’ [ft?] Heaney then contrasts unfavourably the Tom Moore sculpture in College Green and the Henry Moore semi-abstract sculpture of Yeats in St. Stephen’s Green which for him at least displays the all conquering Yeats as ‘a universal symbolic force, an energy released and a destiny discharged.’<sup>21</sup> Whatever about the relevance of Stephen’s remarks to any current questioning of the value of Moore’s contribution to the Irish Nation, Joyce - in spite of his declared early sympathy for the poetry of the outsider, James Clarence Mangan - included many references to Moore’s *Melodies* in *Ulysses* which suggests to what extent the songs were part of the music-making in Dublin during 1904. There is also a reference in *Ulysses* to a performance on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1904, by the Elster-Grimes Grand Opera Company at 8.00 pm in The Queen’s Theatre, 209 Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street) which they announced as ‘the Irish opera’, *The Lily of Killarney*.<sup>22</sup>

The hostility to the popularity of Tom Moore’s poetry in his lifetime was mainly political in motivation. Charles Gavin Duffy mounted a defence of Moore as early as 1842. Duffy wrote before reviewing Moore’s life:

“But,” said my friend, “why, in the devil’s name, did you put the little Whig into *The Nation*, at all?” “Because he is an Irishman, of whose genius Ireland is proud, and for whose services she is grateful.” ... When the rest of Moore’s poems and the music of the *Melodies* are to be had, his fame will be as great as ever. Our patriots, too, are intolerant with Moore, because he

is not all-out Irish ... Now, fair play is a jewel. Let us remember what Moore was, and what he has done.'<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the fact that Moore was an Irish constitutionalist reformer need not now be held too much against him, in a period when the heat of Irish revolutionary republican politics seems to be entering a period of adjustment during which more all-embracing historical perspectives might well appeal to more than the few. Apart from the issue of Moore's poetic nationalism, there has been another discussion among dedicated advocates of Irish traditional music about the 'damage' inflicted on traditional tunes in Moore's *Melodies*, all part of the very specialised debate about Bunting's arrangements of Irish folk tunes in 'the modern art-music system of major and minor keys.'<sup>24</sup> Why stop 'the traditional music' and 'the art music' flourishing side by side in the concert halls and the opera houses?

Boucicault's popularity has suffered a fate similar to Moore's decline of reputation. When W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn in 1899 founded the Irish Literary Theatre in Dublin to bring about a dramatic shift away from the London to Dublin theatres, they proclaimed 'We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism.'<sup>25</sup> The legacy of *The Colleen Bawn* and *The Lily of Killarney* contained some elements of buffoonery and easy sentiment, only to be expected in the popular genre of Victorian melodrama; but, for all that, Boucicault's Irish plays drew much from an ancient Irish idealism and even more significantly cultivated the seeds of a view of the Irish peasantry much researched during the first Irish cultural revival in the nineteenth-century. What

damned Boucicault in the eyes of later influential critics was his association with promoting 'the Stage Irishman': 'Boucicault found a formula for buffoonery and sentimentality which it became the mission of J. M. Synge, W. B. Yeats and even Bernard Shaw...to counteract and to replace with an authentic picture.'<sup>26</sup> What can now be seen clearly is the glaring gap in the Irish Dramatic Movement, perpetuated by the policies by the Abbey Theatre, which opened as emerging dramatists failed to learn from the comic idealism of Boucicault's view of the country and the tragic realism of Griffin's anatomy of a crumbling Irish society. In a handful of symbolist plays by Edward Martyn, now largely forgotten, and a slightly larger handful of visionary plays by Synge, often crudely misinterpreted in frequent performances, there was far too little building on the legacy of the antiquarian revival. Perhaps the later revival dramatists, rummaging for inspiration in forms of folk poetic and Ibsenite drama, were put off by Boucicault's stagecraft, given 'the little room' the severely constricted spaces on the Abbey Theatre stage allowed. Nevertheless, his vibrant theatrical language and dramaturgy could have been given a local habitation in the Irish Dramatic Movement, an objective which his immediate pale imitators, like Hubert O'Grady, J.W. Whithead and P.J.Bourke, singularly failed to achieve.<sup>27</sup>

The advent of the cinema was to steal some of Boucicault's clothes when Sidney Olcott, director of Kelem Films, began to film versions of *The Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue* and *The Shaughraun* on location in County Kerry around 1910 and replaced the famous spectacular stagecraft with camera angles on Killarney's beauty spots while the captions of silent cinema much reduced the dramatic impact of the language. When *The Lily of Killarney* was filmed in 1934 with Stanley Holloway and shot almost entirely in

England by Twickenham Studios, apart from tourist prologue views of Killarney, the utterance of Boucicault's Hiberno-English language began to sound like a send-up; and thus was launched the tradition of producing Boucicault's Irish plays as send-ups, so much so that even the very word 'Irish melodrama' became a term of abuse on the lips of many rarefied critics.<sup>28</sup> The recent exception to the 20<sup>th</sup> century recurring bad habit of sending up Boucicault's Irish plays in performance was Garry Hynes's 1995 production of *The Colleen Bawn* at the Royal Exchange Manchester which, apart from the spot-on casting and deft use of an arena space, brilliantly incorporated into the action Paddy Cunneen's music vigorously played by a Ceildh Band. Surely even the staunchest defenders of the ambiguous legacy of Yeats can now venture to accept that the much vaunted Irish Dramatic Movement, by failing to absorb the imaginative legacy of Boucicault, fell well short of what might have been realised with a more informed understanding of the rich theatrical tradition that preceded the foundation of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899?

It seems to be one of the regrettable facts of Ireland's unfolding cultural history that one period's 'canonical' preference of the only authentic style, is inevitably replaced by another 'definitive' version, as the wheel of public taste, driven by new generations of scholarly publicists, continues to turn. In this saga, the role of the independent critic should be to construct a case against factional exclusiveness and in favour of an arguable inclusiveness which draws wisdom from the many very different periods in the history of the arts in Ireland in favour of a cultural plurality. Part of the reason for the falling off in performances and popularity of the English/Irish Ring has to be linked to the changing critical attitudes to Victorian operettas among music lovers world-wide, in the context of

the all-conquering grand operas of Wagner, Verdi and Puccini – unlike Vienna, neither London or Dublin has never learnt to treasure the grand tradition of operetta. Nowadays there can be little doubt that a revival of popular interest in the performance and appreciation of the Ring very much depends on an *Irish* revival of a once important but now undervalued manifestation of Ireland's early nineteenth-century cultural revival on the world stage. So may the day come soon when on the last night of the Irish Ring in cities like Dublin, London, New York, and Sydney, audiences again have the opportunity to experience live the Ring's supreme musical moment approaching its grand conclusion, when Hardress Cregan sings one of the great Irish love songs, composed by the German/Jewish/English Benedict: 'Eily Mavoureen'!

- <sup>1</sup> See *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [*Oxford DNB*] (Oxford: University Press, 2004-5) for Clive Brown's entries for William Vincent Wallace (1812-1865), Michael William Balfe (1808-1870) and Sir Julius Benedict (1804-1885).
- <sup>2</sup> *Moore's Irish Melodies* (London: Longmans, 1846): a publication with 218 floral borders and many black-and-white illustrations. This illustrated edition has been recently republished in facsimile (New York: Dover Publications, 2000).
- <sup>3</sup> See Michael Heaney's entry for Edward Bunting (1773-1843) in *Oxford DNB*.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted by Seamus Deane, 'Thomas Moore (1779-1852)' in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* [*FDA*] vol. 1, ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991): 1053.
- <sup>5</sup> See *Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1998* for Catherine Jones, '“Our Partial Attachments”: Tom Moore and 1798', 24-43; and Barra Boydell, 'The United Irishmen, music, harp and National identity', 44-51.
- <sup>6</sup> See *Oxford DNB* for Marie-Louise Legg's entry for George Petrie (1790-1866).
- <sup>7</sup> See Marie Bourke's 'The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child', *The GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook 1988*: 190-196 which includes colour reproductions of 'Paddy Conneely, the Galway Piper' (pencil and watercolour) and 'The Aran Fisherman's Drowned Child' (water-colour on paper), both in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland. See also Marie Bourke's 'Rural Life in pre-Famine Ireland: A Visual Document', *Ireland: Art into History*, eds B.P. Kennedy and Raymond Gillespie (Dublin: Town House, 1994): 61-74.
- <sup>8</sup> Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980): 29-30.
- <sup>9</sup> See *Oxford DNB* for the following entries: Paul Caffrey on Frederic William Burton (1816-1900), Fergus Kelly on Eugene O'Curry (1794-1862), Paul Denman on Samuel Ferguson (1810-1886), Nollaig O Muraile on Whitley Stokes (1830-1909), James McGeachie on William Wilde (1815-1876).
- <sup>10</sup> R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch* (London: Allen Lane, 1993): 178-84.
- <sup>11</sup> *Drawing Conclusions: A Cartoon History of Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1998*, eds Roy Douglas, Liam Harte and Jim O'Hara (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998): 47.
- <sup>12</sup> For the texts of these plays, with the exception of *Arrah-na-Pogue*, see *Selected Plays of Dion Boucicault*, chosen and introduced by Andrew Parkin (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987). For an extract from *Arrah-na-Pogue*, see *FDA 2*, in the section 'Fenianism 1858-1916', ed. Seamus Deane, 209-31.
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Fawkes, *Dion Boucicault: A Biography* (London: Quartet Books, 1979): 122-3.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Lily of Killarney*, libretto by John Oxenford & Dion Boucicault with music by Julius Benedict: overture with 22 songs and books of piano arrangements (London: Boosey & Co. 1862).

- <sup>15</sup> Gerald Griffin, *The Collegians*, 3 vols (London: Saunders & Otley, 1829).
- <sup>16</sup> John Cronin, *Gerald Griffin 1803-1840* (Cambridge: University Press, 1978): 69.
- <sup>17</sup> Ethel Mannin, *Two Studies in Integrity* (London: Jarrolds, 1954): 68.
- <sup>18</sup> See also the *Limerick Leader*, 8 May 1999, for an article about the local demands for the erection of a Colleen Bawn in the locality where she was murdered.
- <sup>19</sup> Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Cork: University Press, 1931): 8-9.
- <sup>20</sup> For dismissal of Davis and Moore see *FDA 2*: 1 and 1: 1053-4 respectively.
- <sup>21</sup> *FDA2*: 783. See Terence Brown, *Ireland's Literature* (Mullingar: Lilliput Press, 1988): 14-27 for a chorus-line of witnesses testifying that Moore was 'the poet of bland wish-fulfilment' with quoted testimony from various critics including Stopford A. Brooke, W.B. Yeats, Paddy Kavanagh and Tom Paulin.
- <sup>22</sup> See Don Gifford & R.J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), for details in Index of references to Moore's *Melodies*, Boucicault's plays and Benedict's Irish opera.
- <sup>23</sup> Reproduced in *FDA 2*: 1250-54.
- <sup>24</sup> Tomás O Canainn, *Traditional Irish Music* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978): 14. See also Nuala O'Connor, *Bringing it all back home* (London: BBC Books, 1991): 167.
- <sup>25</sup> Quoted in R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, vol 1: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914* (Oxford: University Press, 1997): 184.
- <sup>26</sup> *FDA 2*: 505, part of the introduction to the section 'Drama 1690-1800', edited by Christopher Murray.
- <sup>27</sup> Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002): 19-26.
- <sup>28</sup> Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons & John Hill, *Cinema and Ireland* (London: Croom Helm, 1987): 7, 212ff., 229.

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Ring Forts are circular, fortified settlements that were mostly built during the Early Middle Ages up to about the year 1000. They are found in Northern Europe, especially Ireland. Stonehenge Ireland Travel Galway Ireland Ireland Vacation County Cork Ireland Vacation Travel Old Head Templar Ancient Artifacts.Â Ring of Kerry, Ireland Travel Video Guide. For my final Irish story, I visit Cahersiveen where there are some Stone Forts that may well been the home of my Shea ancestors. I also revisit Knocknabar Mo Time In Ireland Images Of Ireland Ireland Homes England And Scotland Emerald Isle Donegal Ireland Travel Heaven On Earth Northern Ireland.Â Self-guided bike holidays in Ireland's least explored region. Cycle Ireland's beautiful coast. Experience the real Ireland. (In a shrouded Victorian interior, one might have had to actively search for a place to leave a ring.) Of course, beer mats are still with us, publicizing their commercial messages. Some do more. Fifty thousand drink coasters containing information about missing persons were recently distributed to bars and restaurants around Albany. In other cities, bars lay out coasters printed with warnings about drunken driving or QR codes that patrons can scan to arrange for transportation during a carousing holiday like St. Patrick's Day. And more and more bars are using coasters manufactured by Drink Sa Victorian era, the period between about 1820 and 1914, corresponding roughly to the period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901) and characterized by a class-based society, a growing number of people able to vote, a growing state and economy, and Britain's status as the most powerful empire in the world.Â Political conflicts between Ireland and Britain and the rise of Irish nationalism were also hallmarks of the era, as were women's rights activism, which resulted in the Married Women's Property Acts, the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the growth of education and employment options for women.Â The Victorian British Empire dominated the globe, though its forms of rule and influence were uneven and diverse.

5 THE IRISH VICTORIAN NOVEL Confusion Reigns A Sea of Difference. 6 THE ABSENCE OF REALITY Faith and Finance The Equity of Comparison Criticism Missing in Action? 7 THE REAL CHARLOTTE Somerville and Ross and The Real Charlotte Some Principles of Realism as Applied to The Real Charlotte.Â Irish fiction of the nineteenth century is a tricky animal, and Irish realism even trickier. Much of the research into Irish fiction of the period appears to concentrate on seeking an Irish version of George Eliot's Middlemarch, and having difficulty in finding one, then setting out to explain its absence.<sup>1</sup> Such research however seems to focus almost exclusively on textual analyses without examining the broader issues and contexts of publication: the analysis of realism is not.