

thwarted elopement the couple were married in 1837. For a number of years, they lived in Newry and Banbridge while John practiced law. They remained together and committed to one another until John's death in 1875. Mitchel was drawn to Irish nationalism and began writing for various papers and journals. He abandoned the law and became involved with the Young Ireland movement and *The Nation*.

Mitchel had strong views and expressed them in strong words. He was convicted of Treason Felony in 1848 before the Young Ireland rebellion and sentenced to transportation. He was sent, after time in Bermuda, to Australia where Jenny and his children were able to join him and establish family life. Russell recreates the life of the Young Irishers in Australia well and the challenges Jenny faced in making a home for the family, especially the children adds an interesting element not often given much attention. Mitchel dramatically escaped to the United States in 1853, and once again Jenny and the children were left behind. Jenny and the children followed in due time, joining Mitchel. In the United States, Mitchel and the other Young Irishers

were viewed as heroes. Mitchel reestablished his career as a journalist, but his strong views caused problems. His defense of slavery at first puzzled and then alienated people. Russell provides a useful discussion of Mitchel's difficulties adjusting to life in the United States, especially his strong support for slavery. That position caused him great difficulty in New York and led him to ultimately settle his family in Virginia. Parallel to Mitchel's struggles and conflicts, Jenny made a home and raised their five children. It provides a nicely done counterpoint to John's activities.

Russell agrees with other scholars that Mitchel's views on slavery, which Jenny largely shared, grew from his rejection of the nineteenth-century world with its urbanism, industry, utilitarianism, and other innovations. He idealized rural, Gaelic Ireland destroyed by the English, whom he hated above all else. In the American South, however, he found order, hierarchy, and tradition, at least among the white slave owners. Most of all, there was little interest in change or progress. Russell does a good job of developing this, with a close analysis of Mitchel's public and private writings.

Even in the South, where he felt most at home, Mitchel had difficulty getting along, alienating Confederate president Jefferson Davis among others. Throughout his life, Mitchel had been involved in controversies that often worked against him. Even some of his life-long friends suffered from this, but they saw his intensity and sincerity and remained his friend. Mitchel paid a horrific price for his support of slavery. Richmond and what business he had built were destroyed. He returned to New York City and started yet another Irish-interest newspaper. The end of the war had made his views on slavery moot, but he got into a feud with Archbishop John Hughes, which seriously depressed circulation of his paper. When it failed, he went to Paris as agent for the Fenians. Through all this, we see the more human side, as Jenny copes with the loss of her sons and tries to keep her family together and safe.

When John returned to Ireland to seek a seat in Parliament, Jenny and the remaining children stayed in New York. His sudden death ended their shared journey. Russell follows Jenny through her years as a widow in a short chapter that ties up the loose ends

of the surviving children's lives. Richard O'Gorman, a Young Irishman who had done well in New York, helped her, as did other friends. Despite his contentiousness, Mitchel did establish deep friendships. In the 1890s as the Lost Cause movement began in the South, she was recognized for the loss of her sons and her husband's support for the South.

As mentioned at the beginning, Russell set himself a real challenge by writing a dual biography of John and Jenny Mitchel and their children. He has done an admirable job and made at least two significant contributions. First and foremost, he has provided a rich personal context for the public life of John Mitchel. All of his actions had consequences not only for himself but for his wife and their children. Russell's book establishes that clearly. He also presents Jenny as her own person—yes, a middle-class wife in the nineteenth century—a woman who had strength and character and dealt with many challenges throughout her life.

—Murray State University

## Living in Plato's Cave: Irish Culture and the Second World War

BY PIOTR SADOWSKI

A BOOK SHOULD NOT be judged by its cover, but with the present handsome volume from the Four Courts Press, I will make an exception. The dust-jacket incorporates a German map of Ireland from 1944, covered with the names of the country's natural and agricultural resources, including *Torf* (peat), *Schafe* (sheep), *Rinde* (cattle), *Kartoffeln* (potatoes), *Gerste* (barley) and so on, as well as dairy produce such as butter, cheese and eggs. The only industry named is *Weberei* (weaving) in the northeast part of country. The map seems to be saying: Here is a traditional, agricultural country, a pastoral idyll that—given the favorable outcome of the war—is practically “ours,” that is, German, to exploit and enjoy. The map forms the backdrop for the thirteen essays included in the volume, each written by a different scholar and each addressing the complexity and ambivalence of Ireland's attitude towards Germany and the war, as reflected in the work of contemporary Irish artists and writers as well as their English counterparts seeking refuge in Ireland from the European conflict.

**Dorothea Depner and  
Guy Woodward, Editors.**

IRISH CULTURE AND WARTIME EUROPE,  
1938-48.

DUBLIN: FOUR COURTS PRESS, 2015. €55.

As R. F. Foster reminds us in the Foreword, Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War has been likened by the historian F. S. L. Lyons to living in Plato's Cave, facing into a world of reflected shadows with one's back turned to the clear light of reality. Éamon de Valera's sensitive connections with Britain during the 1930s, and his desire to distance the Free State from its Commonwealth ties (not severed until after the war), entangled Ireland in a web of ambiguities, hypocrisies, and conflicting loyalties, as the Catholic, Protestant, republican, and unionist parts of the

society weighed their pro- or anti-British sentiments, and by extension their attitudes towards Hitler's Germany as Britain's current mortal enemy. The divisions ran deep, with traditional anti-British feeling now infrequently manifested as Nazi sympathy, at a time when thousands of Irishmen enlisted in the British army to fight against Germany, only to be branded deserters at home and after the war barred from state jobs and refused military pensions (the amnesty and official apology were not granted to these Irish servicemen until 2013). In a recently published short story “Emergency” by Mary Morrissey, a young soldier parachuted on Irish territory is referred to as “a German,” despite the fact that he “sounds exactly like an Irishman” and is in fact a local from Moveen, who has joined the German army because he'd “do anything to fix those Brits.” For the Irish soldier, “there's no such thing as neutral, [because] We all have to take sides in the end.” When he returns home to Moveen his own father reports him to the police.

Ireland's neutrality and a resulting sense of isolation but also refuge from the worldwide conflict, reflected in the creative engagements by Irish and English writers and artists, are meticulously discussed in the present volume from new perspectives deriving from published texts as well as archival research into contemporaneous sources such as diaries, letters, and manuscripts. Thus in Simon Workman's essay Louise MacNeice and Patrick Kavanagh, often considered as occupying opposite ends of a poetic spectrum, are also seen as different in their reactions to the European conflict. Having resisted the seductive pull of Irish refuge MacNeice spent most of the war in England working for the BBC, for which he wrote plays and features focusing on European culture and indirectly condemning Ireland's foreign policy and insularity. For Dublin-based Kavanagh on the other hand, the war was a threatening if more peripheral phenomenon. His most famous war-time poem, *The Great Hunger* (1941), deals not so much with the war itself as with Kavanagh's bitter frustration

at the state of neutral Ireland, which he saw as a country devoid of spiritual, artistic, social or economic nourishment.

Kathryn White's essay on John Hewitt, who was often described as a “father figure” to a generation of Irish poets, including Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley, focuses in turn on the influence of contemporary Northern Irish painting on the development of Hewitt's poetic aesthetics. After extensive pre-war travels to numerous European art galleries, Hewitt spent the war years in Belfast, where “his thinking turned inward,” as he devoted himself to the poetry that would “paint the Ulster landscape with words” to capture, in White's words, “the glens of Antrim; the cityscape of Belfast; the roots and rootlessness of man; the poetics and aesthetics of place: in essence, the northern rhythm.” Equally distanced from the war were the aesthetic pursuits of a group of artists, including the Englishman Nevill Johnson and the Irish painter John Luke, described in Conor Linnie's essay as joined by a mutual determination to counter the isolated and conservative cultural atmosphere of Belfast.

While some artists sought escapism, others were more engaged. The Northern Irish writer Stephen Gilbert joined the British Expeditionary Force, experienced the war first-hand in France and during the Dunkirk evacuation, and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. Written and published during the war, Gilbert's autobiographical novel *Bombardier*, the subject of Guy Woodward's essay, quietly but insistently dissents from officially promoted depictions of British Army life, and unusually focuses on the experiences of Irish soldiers, for whom the meaning of “home” was more complex than the official Anglocentric maritime mythology tended to depict. Moving in the opposite direction to Gilbert, the English author T. H. White spent the war years in rural Ireland, at first enthusiastic and later disenchanted with the country in which he sought inspiration for his Arthurian epic *The Once and Future King* (with the Gaels ending up as villains). Drawing on White's notebooks and per-

sonal papers Anne Thompson argues that the writer's guilt over his avoidance of the war seems to have contributed significantly to the shaping of the Arthurian narrative in a decidedly anti-war, anti-Fascist (and anti-Irish) tone. More sympathetic to Irish culture was the English poet John Betjeman, a press attaché in the British Embassy in Dublin during the war, a keen promoter of Irish art, literature and architecture. Alex Runchman traces in Betjeman's activities the intersection of the enduring English propensity to perceive Ireland in romantic terms with the emerging realist tendency in Irish art, as evidenced in particular in Betjeman's involvement in the Irish issue of the London-based influential literary magazine *Horizon: A Review of Literature and Art*, in January 1942.

Neutral Ireland provided a personal “safe house” to other English writers, including Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, who used the Irish canvas to paint their anxieties arising not only from the immediate war but also from the resulting social changes and the post-imperial fallout in England. Eve Patten's essay traces Waugh's disillusionment with England that would soon “have no aristocracy left,” a nostalgia countered by the writer's unsuccessful attempt to recreate a gentrified life in an Irish “big house.” Graham Greene, while employed by the British Secret Service overseas during the war, later too found the pull of the Irish idyll irresistible. A simple cottage on Achill island, where the writer spent considerable time with his partner Catherine Walston, provided an idealized version of isolated and picturesque Irish life, a place, in Patten's words, “where the Englishman might shed the burden of international leadership and retreat to an unspoiled, unregulated Eden.”

In Ute Mittermaier's essay, the Ireland of the late 1930s is reflected obliquely through Kate O'Brien's writings on Spain, especially in the parallels between General Franco's and de Valera's unhealthy close alliances between the Catholic Church and the State. An intriguing if morally uncomfortable case of Francis Stuart, an Irish



writer who chose to spend the war years in Germany where he worked for German Military Intelligence, is discussed by Dorothea Depner, who traces Stuart's motives and wartime artistic development through the writer's surviving diaries, some of them edited, re-written, and expanded after the war to suit the writer's self-conscious attempt to shape his own unapologetic image. Denis Johnston's experience as a BBC war correspondent is the subject of the essay by Maurice Walsh, in which Johnston's *Nine Rivers from Jordan* (1955), a lost masterpiece of war reportage, an experiment of literary form, and a personal quest that so baffled the early readers, is reappraised in the light of the writer's career as an Anglo-Irish playwright. Tom Walker's essay continues the discussion of the eclectic literary inspirations of Johnston's *Nine Rivers*, and analyses the writer's experience as a war correspondence covering the Allies' campaigns in North Africa,

Italy and northern Europe, focusing in particular on Johnston's issue with Ireland's place in Europe in the context of the country's neutrality.

One of the tragedies of a great war is the displacement and forced exile of millions of people, but for some the war can provide an opportunity of spiritual exile as a way of life. In her essay on "fugitive literature," Julie Bates compares Samuel Beckett's double wartime exile, first from Dublin and later from Paris, with the writings of the German author W. G. Sebald, who left his country in 1965 to settle and write in England. Sebald felt at home neither in Germany nor in his adopted country, and both writers felt that their voluntary exiles sharpened their sensitivity to the wider contemporary experience of displacement and homelessness.

This wide-ranging and insightful volume ends on a more personal note with a moving account by the poet and critic

Gerald Dawe about his experience of growing up in Belfast in the 1950s and 60s, when the damaging effects of the war were being constantly relived by proxy as it were, through wartime stories, schoolbooks, films, public life and politics. Growing up during those decades also meant confronting the abomination of the Holocaust and the postwar oppressions that befell Europe with the cruelty of the Iron Curtain and the displacement of millions of people. For Gerald Dawe, one of the most enduring images of the Holocaust is a famous photograph, taken during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in April 1943, showing a Jewish boy with raised hands in front of German storm troopers: "The image of the boy and—presumably—his mother haunted me. His arms raised, his cap seemingly too large for his frightened face, brought up close reality of war on the civilian population in a way the rhetoric of most English war movies of the time did not." Inci-

dentally, this photograph always reminds me of my father, who as a child found himself in a similar situation to the Jewish boy during the Warsaw Uprising of the summer of 1944, in the working-class district of Wola. In reprisal for the insurgence, the Germans organized mass executions of civilians throughout Wola, during which up to 50,000 people lost their lives. Thousands of families, including my father's, were dragged out of their homes, street after street, to be shot on the spot. My father told me that when he was put up against the wall with his parents and sisters, he was laughing, because he knew that in a few moments' time he would not be scared any more. The reason I can recall this story today is that on that occasion the execution was—unexpectedly and inexplicably—simply called off.

—Dublin Business School

## Gothic Bogland

BY JARLATH KILLEEN

**B**OGS, THOSE SQUELCHY, spongy, bothersome parts of the country believed to be populated by "culchies," "bogtrotters," and "BIFFO," managed to get into the news once again this year. In April 2016, discussions on the formation of a new government were almost abandoned when, to the apparent amusement of many commentators, the Independent TD for Roscommon South, Michael Fitzmaurice, withdrew from negotiations with Fine Gael because of an inability to agree a shared position on turf. Fitzmaurice, the chairperson of the Turf Cutters and Contractors Association (TCCA), had fought the general election as a defender of the traditional rights of farmers and other land owners to harvest their bogs for turf, rights he considers threatened by an EU directive that turf cutting on designated heritage areas be brought to an end. Along with other members of the Independent Alliance, Fitzmaurice claims to represent those disproportionately affected by the financial crisis and left behind by the current economic recovery. In his case, these disaffected groups live in predominately rural areas suffering from depopulation and unemployment, and the argument about rights to bogland has become emblematic of what is too often configured as a struggle between rural and urban Ireland in a bitterly divided country.

Ironically, the politician left with most egg on his face when Fitzmaurice pulled out of the government talks also represents "rural Ireland": Taoiseach Enda Kenny hails from the small rural community of Islandeady, Co. Mayo, and has been mocked as a "trendy culchie," by national newspapers, and ridiculed as a bogtrotter on social media with rather predictable regularity. In 2007, the *Irish Independent* asked "Has Ireland settled into its modernist, urban groove well enough to accept a guy with a west-of-Ireland accent and hair with a mind of its own as leader? Or is our fondness for culchies strictly confined to the realm of nostalgia?" The answer to that question, in 2016, is, probably not. In the battle between supposed establishment interests and embattled and disempowered groups, the bog is currently playing a highly significant and symbolic part. That

environmental concerns about the preservation of important ecologies and topographies are now routinely caricatured as emanating from cosmopolitan interests in Dublin and Brussels complicates this national "discussion" even further.

### Derek Gladwin

CONTENTIOUS TERRAINS: BOGLANDS, IRELAND, POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC.

FOREWORD BY CLAIRE CONNOLLY.

CORK: CORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. €39.

Despite the Celtic Tiger, bogs have not gone away. They continue to exert an influence (menacing or comforting, depending on your particular perspective) on national events. It is apposite, then, that *Contentious Terrains*, Derek Gladwin's powerful analysis of the place of the bog in Irish culture since the 1880s, should arrive in bookshops. Early in the study, Gladwin notes that in the Iron Age bogs were treated as "gateways to other worlds." Given the recent bemused and bewildered representation in the national media of places like Roscommon, Offaly, and Mayo as zones of the weird and bizarre hangovers from a more primitive time, it can often seem that this configuration still holds some attraction in what passes for contemporary analysis.

For Gladwin, the bog has functioned culturally as a Gothic space, what Yi-fu Tuan calls a "landscape of fear," used by Irish artists to "analyse colonization, in its various iterations (post-, anti-, de-, and neo-), through Gothic conventions and during four major political junctures from the 1880s to the present" (27). The book moves through the land wars of the 1880s, the post-Independence crisis of national identity in the 1920s and 1930s, the Troubles of the 1960s and 1970s, and the emergence and subsequent collapse of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s and 2000s, tracing the ways in which writers have figured the bog as both suffocating and liberating depending on the historical moment and ideological gravitation. Gladwin examines a very impressive range of both writers and genres, bringing together prose (the work of Bram Stoker, Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain), poetry (Seamus Heaney), and plays (Marina Carr and Deirdre Kinahan), as well as an

remarkable variety of critics, theorists and commentators from a variety of disciplines (geography, environmentalism, postcolonialism, feminism, queer theory, literary criticism), that creates a conversation about a crucial site in Irish history and culture that has been relatively ignored in Irish Studies until now. There are many wonderful, appropriate, and evocative images provided throughout, and as a bonus the book has a perceptive foreword by Claire Connolly pointing back to the bog in Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* (1809) and its "uncanny resonance," with Kevin Barry's treatment in "Dark Lies the Land," (2012), which indicate how writers have had to negotiate with the bog as "both concept and as lived reality," in Irish life (xi, xii).

As well as supplying penetrating and extremely focused readings in the main chapters, Gladwin's handling of the discourse of so-called "bog Gothic," in his final chapter is equally impressive. As Gladwin convincingly demonstrates, the employment of the term "bog Gothic," to describe the work of (almost exclusively) Patrick McCabe is very problematic, and is likely generated by the (unconscious?) belief of some critics and commentators that anything that takes place in Ireland outside of Dublin can be described by gesturing towards the bog. In other words, far from being a carefully theorized consideration of a sub-genre of Irish Gothic fiction, the term "bog Gothic," is currently part of a wider discourse that includes the denigrating terms culchie and bogtrotter. The examination of the eco-bog work of Tim Robinson is an effective response to claims by some lobbyists that much of the concern for protecting the bogs emanate from an urban mentality which dismisses the lives of those who actually live in areas of the country dominated by bogland as irrelevant. In these final sections, Gladwin's book is a critical intervention into current debates about the future of the country.

*Contentious Terrains* is, then, a very significant contribution to Irish Studies, and an accessible and provocative introduction to Irish Gothic Studies, a growth area in the discipline. The study is full of brilliant and startling insights, and brings the empirical and the symbolic together in a very refreshing way (especially given that the bog has

far too often been simply considered in metaphorical or symbolic terms). The humor with which many writers have also handled the bog could, perhaps, have been highlighted: Sir Kit's Jewish wife is given a brief and darkly amusing look at the bog of Allyballycarricko'shaughlin as her introduction to Castle Rackrent, while the constant comparisons between Nora Joyce and the bog in Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* (1890) are (I think...) meant to make the reader laugh as well as grimace. I would also have liked more on what could be termed the "Midlands revival," incorporating Marina Carr and Eugene O'Brien. While Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998) does indeed receive extended analysis, significant texts like *Eden* (2001) and *Pure Mule* (2005), by Eugene O'Brien, set around Banagher, Co. Offaly, go unmentioned (though Gladwin does note the importance of the "Midlands," as a kind of liminal zone within the Gothic space of the Irish "countryside," more generally). In relation to the analysis of Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*, while the argument that Stoker had a conflicted and complicated and possibly contradictory position on the draining of bogs is suggestive and worth considering, I don't think that Gladwin provides enough textual support for such a reading. It still seems to me that Stoker rather uncomplicatedly advocates draining and exploiting the bogs for economic progress without any genuine reservations, as part of the author's more general investment in the modernization of Ireland. I was also unconvinced by the often sweeping use of terms like "neo-colonialism," and "neo-liberalism," and would have appreciated more on the ways in which such terms have been subjected to intense criticism and nuancing. However, one study can't cover everything or satisfy everyone, and this is certainly one of the most significant publications in Irish Studies of 2016. I highly recommend it, and it will quickly become required reading for anyone interested in Irish Gothic. It is probably too much to hope that Michael Fitzmaurice and Enda Kenny read it, though.

—Trinity College Dublin



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