

2017-04-29

# Over the Edge of the World: Irish Convict Writing and Contemporary Australian Literature

Barbara M. Hoffmann

*University of Miami*, [barbaramhoffmann@gmail.com](mailto:barbaramhoffmann@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa\\_dissertations](https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations)

---

## Recommended Citation

Hoffmann, Barbara M., "Over the Edge of the World: Irish Convict Writing and Contemporary Australian Literature" (2017). *Open Access Dissertations*. 1856.

[https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa\\_dissertations/1856](https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/1856)

This Embargoed is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact [repository.library@miami.edu](mailto:repository.library@miami.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

OVER THE EDGE OF THE WORLD: IRISH CONVICT WRITING AND  
CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

By

Barbara M. Hoffmann

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2017

©2017  
Barbara M. Hoffmann  
All Rights Reserved

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

OVER THE EDGE OF THE WORLD: IRISH CONVICT  
WRITING AND CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN  
LITERATURE

Barbara M. Hoffmann

Approved:

---

Patrick A. McCarthy, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

---

Brenna Munro, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English

---

Renee A. Fox, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of English  
University of California, Santa Cruz

---

Guillermo Prado, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

---

Hester Blum, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of English  
The Pennsylvania State University

HOFFMANN, BARBARA M.

(Ph.D., English)

Over the Edge of the World: Irish Convict  
Writing and Contemporary Australian Literature

(May 2017)

Abstract of a dissertation at the University of Miami.

Dissertation supervised by Professor Patrick A. McCarthy.

No. of pages in text. (219)

This dissertation explores the ways that Irish convicts transported to Australia in the nineteenth century influenced Australian nationalism and national culture. Using the principle of oceanic studies that the material conditions of sea travel are shaping influences, I look in the first chapter at journals as well as a manuscript newspaper written by Irish Fenian political prisoners on board the convict ship *Hougoumont*. The restrictions and conditions of the ship encouraged these Fenians to practice a subtle, personal, and metaphoric form of nationalism, carried out through telling stories of themselves and the Irish experience. The second and third chapters turn to contemporary Australian representations of Irish convicts which connect such personal storytelling to national identity. Chapter two looks at Christopher Koch's *Out of Ireland*, which rewrites the story of Irish transportation as a story of the development of Australian culture, and highlights the experience of the convict ship as integral in shaping that development. Chapter three looks at Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* and Roger McDonald's *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* which explore the way Irish convicts, particularly Irish bushrangers, helped establish Australian national culture, as well as the ways that national myths and histories collude to form a unified sense of nationality.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Patrick A. McCarthy, for his help, guidance, feedback, and general support – practical, intellectual, and emotional – throughout this process. His attention to detail knows no limits. I would also like to thank Brenna Munro and Renee Fox for their extremely valuable feedback and guidance, and for their help in broadening my view of my topic. I am so grateful to Hester Blum for her contribution to literary theory through her writings on oceanic studies, the field which opened my topic to me when first read of it, and for her valuable feedback as a member of my committee. I am grateful as well to Tim Watson whose class introduced me to the concept of oceanic studies. I would further like to thank Tim and Brenna, as well as Pamela Hammons, for their support as Directors of Graduate Studies in the English department during my time there. I am grateful to the department for offering me funding to conduct research at the wonderful archive of the Mitchel Library at the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney. Thanks to the dedicated editors, collectors, librarians, and archivists whose years of work made my project possible. I am likewise forever grateful to the incomparable Lydia Starling, who is so much more than just the Graduate Program Coordinator for the English department.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends for your love, support, humor, and empathy during this process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	
The Irish Diaspora at Sea.....	1
Chapter 1	
Oceanic Irish Nationalism and the Voyage of the <i>Hougoumont</i> .....	23
Chapter 2	
“All things are queer and opposite”: Irish and Australian Nationalism in Christopher Koch’s <i>Out of Ireland</i> .....	80
Chapter 3	
“Ripped from Ireland like teeth from the mouth of their own history”: Bushrangers as Heirs to Irish Political Revolutionaries in Contemporary Australian Literature.....	140
Conclusion	
“A Distant Unknown Country”.....	199
Epilogue.....	211
Works Cited.....	213

## INTRODUCTION

### The Irish Diaspora at Sea

...for this curious composite, whom men call 'Young Ireland,' the *Jail Journal* is the book that should never be missing. A page anywhere would inflame the old English abhorrence; a sentence taken at random makes Young Ireland clench his fist and go muttering up and down a room.

So says the *New York Daily Times*'s "Notice of New Books" announcing the 1855 publication of John Mitchel's *Jail Journal; or, Five Years in British Prisons*. By the time it was published in book form it was already famous, Mitchel having previously published it in serial form in his Irish Nationalist newspaper *The Citizen* which he set up upon his arrival in New York in 1853 (Fanning and Garvin, 53). The book notice's writer asserts that the publication in installments of the *Journal* are what "gave that juicy paper much of the interest that made its first year one of remarkable success."

John Mitchel was a member of Young Ireland, one of the many political and social groups that formed over the course of Ireland's history to oppose British rule. The movement was begun by members of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association, founded in the early 1840s to support repeal of the Act of Union, who believed that O'Connell was engaging in too much compromise with Ireland's oppressors. Through their newspaper *The Nation*, the Young Irelanders touted their goal of an independent Irish nation, but it was Mitchel who, when taking on the role of editor, pushed for violent uprising as a solution. Mitchel eventually formed his own newspaper, the *United Irishman*, in which he advocated a policy of physical resistance, denouncing O'Connell's focus on peaceful protest as yet another means of suppressing the mass of Irishmen. In response to Mitchel's writing, Parliament passed the Treason Felony Act in 1848, making seditious speech or writing punishable by penal transport. Mitchel was arrested, his jury packed to

ensure conviction, and he was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation, during which time he kept his now-famous journal.

From the moment he decided to publish it, Mitchel made sure his *Jail Journal* was not merely a sentimental recounting of the horrors of the transport vessel and of life as a prisoner, but a manifesto against English hegemony over Ireland and a continuation of his call to arms to Irish citizens – the speech act for which he was arrested and transported in the first place. The newspaper Mitchel founded on his arrival in New York was his “canvas to promote radical nationalism” and the *Jail Journal* was *The Citizen's* centerpiece (McGovern 100). As Bryan McGovern notes in *John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist*, the “*Jail Journal* became an influential piece of nationalist propaganda” and “remains one of the most important tracts in the annals of Irish nationalism” (101).

The journal's narrative core is a detailed record of Mitchel's day-to-day life and musings while held as a mostly solitary captive aboard several ships traversing the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and of his time in Australia planning his escape from captivity. Mitchel's record dates from 27 May 1848, the day of his conviction and sentencing, to 29 November 1853, his arrival in New York. Between those endcaps, Mitchel was held at Spike Island (known as “Ireland's Alcatraz”), transported west across the Atlantic and kept prisoner aboard a ship in Bermuda, conveyed back across the Atlantic to be held in harbor off the Cape of Good Hope, transported to Van Diemen's Land, and finally helped by his former Young Ireland brethren to escape around the other side of the globe, across Central America and to New York.

Mitchel secured the *Journal's* legacy as a nationalist text partly through his addition to the published book of an overtly anti-British introduction. In it, Mitchel not only outlines the long history of English policy debasing the Irish, bringing the nation to near ruin time and again, but also excoriates all forms of non-violent Irish resistance or “agitations” – particularly that endorsed by Daniel O’Connell (“He led them,” writes Mitchel of O’Connell and the Irish, “as I believe, all wrong for forty years” [15]). The introduction culminates in Mitchel’s own trial and of the brief possibility that his conviction prompt an immediate insurrection in the streets of Dublin – a possibility obstructed by some of his own friends.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the ending of this introduction that Mitchel introduces the guiding metonymic relationship between the history of Ireland and his own individual struggle which allows the journal to thus become a piece of nationalist literature. Mitchel explains: “The general history of a nation may fitly preface the personal memoranda of a solitary captive; for it was strictly and logically a *consequence* of the dreary story here epitomized [i.e. the story of English oppression of the Irish told in his introduction], that I came to be a prisoner, and to sit writing and musing so many months in a lonely cell” (24). His personal story of imprisonment and each individual event thereof is laid at the feet of the British, alongside the deaths of all Irish famine victims and – as Mitchel sees it – inevitable armed uprising. His suffering is the suffering of all the Irish; his punishment the punishment of his nation.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Their decision was wrong,” Mitchel writes, “and, as I firmly believe, fatal. But that their motives were pure... I am bound to admit” [24]. Though staunch in his views, Mitchel was generally fair and attempted impartiality and balanced discussion, even when alone – as evidenced by his “Ego” and “Doppelganger” discussions. The author of the aforementioned new book notice ascribes that same evenness to Mitchel: “The criticisms on men and things, but particularly on men, are ‘straight out’” (“Notice of New Books”).

Mitchel makes his purpose explicit in the added introduction, but indications of his nationalist purpose in keeping the journal emerge throughout the text. Even in his lowest moments, when writing seems inconsequential and even living seems to no purpose (one of the most controversial sections of the journal includes Mitchel's ruminations on suicide), the idea that the journal might serve such a lofty purpose sustains him. On September 1, 1848 – “Three months this day” since Mitchel set sail from Cork, a pittance in comparison to his fourteen-year sentence – he questions, “Shall I go on scribbling in a book, making myself believe that I am keeping a journal? Why, one day is exactly like every other day to me.... What have I to write? Or, if I write my nothings, who will ever read?” (80). He concludes, though, that “notwithstanding all these considerations, I feel much inclined to jot down a page or two now and then.... After all, in so very long a voyage, one might well forget from whence he set sail, and the way back, unless he have some sort of memoranda to refer to. This book will help to remind me of what I was, and how I came down hither” (81). Though not explicit, the implication of remembering “from whence he set sail” and “how I came down hither” refers to his home, his country Ireland, as well as the manner and cause for which he was dispossessed of that home.

Thus Mitchel credits the voyage itself with his impetus to write: its monotony and length, his confinement and sequestration, his removal from home and family and the cause to which he devoted his life – all encourage his writing. Mitchel's story of his transportation becomes a national text, and the conditions of transportation inspire the writing of that text. A punishment meant to separate the nationalist from his nation instead served as an impetus to maintain focus on the fight for Irish nationhood.

This project explores the ways in which transportation of Irish prisoners to Australia in the nineteenth century affected both Irish and Australian nationalism. John Mitchel's *Jail Journal* is certainly the archetype of writing by an Irish prisoner on board a transport ship to Australia, and much has been written about that text. This project seeks to look beyond Mitchel at other Irish transportation writing to see the ways that the experience of transportation shaped the transported convicts and political prisoners. The first chapter looks at writing kept on board the prison ship *Hougoumont* in 1867: at the prison ship journals of two transported Fenian convicts, John Casey and Dennis Cashman; at an on-board manuscript newspaper written by Cashman and several other Fenian prisoners; and at a memoir by another Fenian, Thomas McCarthy Fennell, based in part on his own on-board journal. These writings show that the lived conditions of the prison ship worked to solidify and form their belief in and practice of Irish nationalism.

The experience of the transport ship not only affected the Irish nationalism of the prisoners on board, it also influenced the nationalism of their new nation of exile: Australia. The writings kept on board a ship can easily be considered transnational texts, as they are literally written between nations.<sup>2</sup> My project suggests that the practice and presentation of Irish nationalism honed by the conditions of the transport ship affect Australian nationalism and national identity. Contemporary Australian novelists look back to Irish convicts, to their experiences on the convict ships as well as in the fledgling country, in order to explore the ways in which Australian identity was shaped by Irish prisoners, including John Mitchel.

---

<sup>2</sup> Heinz Kosok in "Mitchel's *Jail Journal* – Irish or Australian? Reflections on Defining the Canon of National Literatures" suggests that "works like the *Jail Journal* can be useful because they can help us to clarify our ideas and illustrate the difficulties of distinguishing between various national literatures" (378), and suggests throughout the article ways in which the *Journal* is both Irish and Australian.

The second and third chapters look at Australian novels written in the last twenty years: *Out of Ireland* by Christopher Koch; *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey; and *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* by Roger McDonald. These three novels about Irish convicts and their offspring in Van Diemen's Land, Victoria, and New South Wales show not only the extent of the influence of the Irish in Australia, but also call on their resistance to British hegemony as a foundational type of resistance akin to revolution in other young nations. In so doing, they suggest that Australian national identity traces its roots to the Irish rebels and heroes from throughout Irish history. This reframed view of Australian history, embracing the cultural memory of the transported Irish convicts, works to erase the so-called "cultural cringe" engendered by that "hated stain" of criminality.<sup>3</sup> These novelists, as did the Fenian diarists, question and comment on what it is that makes a nation a coherent entity, on what ties a people together.

### **The Irish Diaspora and Oceanic Studies**

It is not surprising that much has been written about the Irish diaspora. In 2014, for example, the journal *Atlantic Studies* published a special issue entitled *Irish Global Migration and Famine Memory*. Homeland of one of the largest diasporas in the world (over 100 million people worldwide claim Irish ancestry, more than fifteen times the population of Ireland itself), Ireland certainly qualifies as an appropriate realm of focus in a journal which "explores transnational, transhistorical... intersections" as well as the

---

<sup>3</sup> The term "cultural cringe," referring to a sort of national inferiority complex often felt by previously colonized countries, was coined by Australian scholar and critic A. A. Phillips after World War II. The "convict stain," otherwise called "Australia's birthstain" or simply "that hated stain," refers to the genealogical cringe felt by Australians for generations in having convicts in their family tree – some Australian convict progeny going so far as to create fictional family trees.

“larger context of global flows” (“Aims & scope”).<sup>4</sup> In their introductory essay, Margu rite Corporaal and Jason King connect the six essays in that issue as all “explor[ing] the transmission of formative cultural memories of the mother country by emigrants to their host societies and the ways in which these homeland recollections become integrated and inscribed with the cultural legacies of the country of settlement as well as other diaspora communities” (301). The cultural memory of the homeland – especially in cases of mass migration and of a shared cultural trauma – has the potential to infuse itself into the culture of the society of settlement.

This exodus and scattering of Irish around the globe has engendered a variety of new terminology that draws on the language of transnationalism and of Atlantic studies. For example, Kevin Whelan’s essay “The Green Atlantic: Radical Reciprocities between Ireland and America in the Long Eighteenth Century” and Peter O’Neill and David Lloyd’s *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-currents of the African and Irish Diaspora* allude clearly to Paul Gilroy’s seminal text, *The Black Atlantic*. Yet many of these studies of the Irish diaspora, though employing oceanic terminology, focus on experiences of diasporic peoples in their new lands and not on the lived experience on the transport ships.

It is an essay about John Mitchel in this special issue of *Atlantic Studies* that begins to hint at the effect on members of the Irish diaspora of the actual time spent at sea. In his essay “Memory and John Mitchel’s Appropriation of the Slave Narrative,” Patrick O’Neill writes that Mitchel “underwent a transformational transoceanic

---

<sup>4</sup> According to Miki Garcia in *Ireland’s Invasion of the World: The Irish Diaspora in a Nutshell*, “The Irish diaspora is the largest in the world, exceeding that of the Greeks and Jews. It is estimated that there are over 100 million people with Irish ancestors worldwide while the population of the whole of Ireland was just over 6 million in 2013.” Other sources put the number at 70 or 80 million.

experience” through which he “saw firsthand the reach of British imperialism” (323–4). Still, O’Neill does not offer here a sustained discussion of the way that the actual conditions of life on the transport ship shaped the writing of Mitchel’s nationalist text.

The editors of *Atlantic Studies* recognized the importance of the lived experience of people at sea less than a year prior to the publication of the special issue on Irish famine migration. The spring 2013 editorial introduction explains that the journal was preparing “to redefine itself by programmatically connecting Atlantic Studies with Global Currents” beginning with Volume 11 in 2014; thus the second issue of Volume 10 presented “an opening set of four essays focusing specifically on oceanic studies” (149).<sup>5</sup> Serving as special guest editor for the issue, Hester Blum, one of the scholars at the forefront of the oceanic turn in literary studies, explains the ways in which oceanic studies intersect with and differ from other globally-based hermeneutics: “Oceanic studies... proposes that the sea should become central to critical conversations about global movements, relations and histories” (151). Though oceanic studies has “much in common with recent transnational and hemispheric turns in literary, historical, and cultural studies” including their investment in “moving beyond the limitations inherent in considering literary and cultural works as national products,” oceanic studies focuses on the “medium of the sea” itself (151). As Blum wrote in an article for the May 2010 issue of *PMLA*, in which the “Theories and Methodologies” section focused on oceanic studies, “I advocate a practice of oceanic studies that is attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world, one that draws from the epistemological structures provided

---

<sup>5</sup> This rebranding was accompanied by a slight alteration to the title of the journal, with the addition of “Global Currents” to the name; hence, the current name of the journal is *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*.

by the lives and writings of those for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise” (670).

This project sits at the intersection between Irish diaspora studies and oceanic studies. As Patrick O’Sullivan writes in “Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View,” his 2003 reflection on the emerging field of Irish Diaspora studies: “No one academic discipline is going to tell us everything we want to know about the Irish Diaspora. The study of migration, emigration, immigration, population movements, flight, scattering, networks, transnational communities, diaspora – this study demands an interdisciplinary approach” (131).<sup>6</sup> Using the oceanic studies’ hermeneutic of a focus on the lived conditions and practices on the sea itself, I examine the effect that the transport ship had on the nationalism of the transported Irish political prisoners.

The first chapter looks at writings by Irish political prisoners on board the convict ship *Hougoumont* in 1867. By looking at this specific case of oceanic writing, I hope to complicate and expand the relationship between oceanic studies and nationalism. In her essay “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies,” Blum presents oceanic studies as a new model allowing scholars “to derive new forms of relatedness from the necessarily unbounded examples provided in the maritime world” (671). The common trope in oceanic studies – and in other related turns in literary theory, such as the planetary turn and the global turn – of erasing traditional boundaries, such as national identity, allows for more “fluid” modes of signification. Blum writes in her article “Terraqueous Planet: The Case for Oceanic Studies,” “[p]lanetary and oceanic shifts are invested, in part, in recognizing the

---

<sup>6</sup> In his discussion of the way that much understanding of the Irish comes from the point of view of the English and through English writings, O’Sullivan references Mitchel’s introduction to his *Jail Journal*: “John Mitchel spoke of England as having ‘the world’s ear’” (134).

artificiality and intellectual limitations of national, political, linguistic, physiological, or temporal boundaries in studying forms of literary and cultural influence and circulation” (26). I suggest that, because of the realities of Irish national life that preceded the mass transportation of Irish prisoners to the other side of the globe, the material conditions of the transport ship encouraged certain forms and practices of Irish nationalism and worked to reinforce, rather than break down, both the reality of and the perceived importance of Irish national identity.

The Irish political prisoners transported in 1867 were Fenians, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood that evolved out of Young Ireland and embraced the call of Mitchel and others to armed rebellion. Unlike previous Irish republican movements, the Fenians formed without a single leader, as a worldwide movement begun largely by Irish exiles living in America, Paris, and elsewhere. The Fenian movement was underground and conspiratorial, organized in “circles” similar to regiments in order to maintain some anonymity and disconnection should any single member of the brotherhood be captured. This organizational structure is just one example of how the Fenians fashioned themselves as a military organization dedicated to fighting for an independent Irish republic.

In the first chapter, I examine shipboard journals kept by two Fenians, John Casey and Dennis Cashman, both of whom, having called openly for armed rebellion, were transported on the charge of “Treason Felony” – the same charge invented to transport John Mitchel twenty years earlier. I also look at Thomas McCarthy Fennell’s memoir of his experience written about thirty years afterwards but which likely was based on a journal he kept on board. Finally, I look at the seven issues of *The Wild Goose*, a

manuscript newspaper written by several of the Fenian prisoners on board the ship. Together, these writings show that the actual lived experiences of the transport ship worked to encourage the Fenians not only to maintain their strong allegiance to a free Ireland, but also to develop a more subtle, self-aware, and creative form of nationalism which I call oceanic Irish nationalism.

Prevented by the rules and restrictions of the ship from bombastic or militaristic shows of nationalism, separated by a great distance from their homeland, isolated by the double remove of being both prisoners and ocean-travelers, these Fenians were forced to view Ireland as an imagined community long before Benedict Anderson coined the term. Because they were not allowed to speak or write openly about political issues, in their journals and in their newspaper they focused on home, history, friends, family, and right – all of which served as metonyms for Ireland. Furthermore, transportation to Australia, a physical denial of homeland, served as a metonym for the political denial of homeland enacted by the British on Ireland. Therefore, in removing these men from Ireland, transportation made each prisoner experience the physical manifestation of Britain's policy towards the Irish republic, making each man's desire for his own liberty a metonym for the goal of Ireland independence. The conditions of the ship forced these Fenians to define an idea of Ireland and to articulate their causes on both personal and universal scales.

The Fenians on board the *Hougoumont* were certainly not the first Irishmen to express their nationalism symbolically. As Declan Kiberd points out in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation*, in the eighteenth century “poets writing in Irish showed a penchant for covert statement. They praised the beauty of Cathleen ní Houlihan

when they really meant to celebrate Ireland” (33). But Kiberd also sees a gap in such creative nationalism between the writings of Young Irelander Thomas Davis and the writers of the Irish Literary Revival in the early twentieth century (indeed, the idea that such writing had gone by the wayside is exemplified in the name of “Revival”). Kiberd asserts that the belief in the importance of Irish “cultural self-confidence” was “cut off by Davis’s death in 1845” and that it “would be left to Yeats, Hyde and a later generation to restore to culture its central importance in the liberation of the people” (39). The Fenians, on the other hand, were associated with militarism, promoting fighting as the primary means of resistance after centuries of British oppression.

For the Fenian prisoners on board the *Hougoumont*, cultural resistance became their only means of resistance. Removal from their homeland forced the Fenians to hold Ireland in their minds’ eyes; the conditions of the ship made necessary a covert form of nationalism. Telling their own stories and the stories of Ireland was the only form of resistance. They brought that form with them to Australia.

### **The Liminal, the Pedagogical and the Performative**

In serving as a space of transition, so different and separate from the prisoners’ previous lives and allowing for reflection on those lives, the convict ship is a liminal space. The liminal stage in a ritual, as defined and discussed by scholars such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, is one of separation from the usual structures of social life; as Blum points out, this separation from conventional, land-based forms is constitutional of oceanic life. Away from certain conventions and structures, the liminal figure – also called an “initiant” or “threshold person” – can contemplate and reflect on

those structures as an outsider. These new understandings are incorporated into the liminal figure's own beliefs. The Fenian prisoners, while on the transport ship and away from the traditional structures of being that traditionally enabled them to perform their Irishness, had to incorporate new ways of being Irish and practicing Irish nationalism, methods that they brought with them to Australia.

Christopher Koch reflects on the liminality of the Irish political prisoner transported to Australia and its effects on nationalism in his 1999 novel *Out of Ireland*, the subject of the second chapter. The novel is a fictional retelling of John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, written in journal form from the perspective of Irish political prisoner Robert Devereux. Koch emphasizes the effect of the liminal space on Devereux's nationalism, particularly in its levelling effects on all of the liminal figures. The ship allows for Devereux's interaction with a variety of figures – from high level British authority figures to the poorest and most downtrodden of Irish prisoner – all of whom help Devereux's understanding of what it means to fight for his nation. The novel suggests that the oceanic journey actually produced a more equitable, deliberate, and reflective form of Irish nationalism than that which had been being practiced by the Irish patriots in Ireland.

Homi Bhabha's distinction between pedagogical and performative nationalism helps illuminate some of the distinctions between Devereux's nationalism before and after his journey. Devereux had been focused on a pedagogical form of nationalism, one which situates nation in a fixed history. He viewed the people as static, as the "historical 'objects'" of a nation, and treating them as entities which in his benevolence he was willing to guide towards national freedom ("DissemiNation" 145). In the leveling of

ranks and stations associated with the liminal space, Devereux could begin to see the people – including himself – as the living manifestation of nation: as performative nationalism. Koch symbolizes Devereux’s increased understanding of the people and the nation for whom he professes to fight through his relationship with Kathleen, an Irish servant girl, a member of that group “the people” so nebulous to Devereux before. Travel through the liminal space allows for his relationship with Kathleen; their joining reveals that the nation is both pedagogical and performative, both an idea and a living performance.

Through Devereux and Kathleen’s child, Koch further suggests that it is the form of nationalism learned by Devereux in the liminal space of the convict ship which eventually infused Australian national identity. Kathleen dies in childbirth and Devereux, like his historical model Mitchel, eventually escapes Van Diemen’s Land to America. The child they leave behind is the product of the new type of nationalism that Devereux learned on the ship; the boy is a currency lad, a native-born Australian, of the first of this new race, born from the union of the pedagogical and performative. Koch therefore suggests to his contemporary readers that Australia owes in part its practice of nationalism to that imparted by the liminal space of the convict ship and specifically to the Irish convicts both political and otherwise who first helped to settle the nation. By retelling the story of John Mitchel’s *Jail Journal* – a text which, as Fanning and Garvin point out in *Books that Define Ireland*, was “described by Patrick Pearse as the final gospel of the new testament of Irish nationalism” (56) – as an Australian story, Koch suggests that the story of Australia and the story of Ireland are not only intimately tied together, but trace back to the same history.

### **Telling the Story of Nation**

Koch's telling of the founding of the Australian nation through the lens of an Irish political prisoner works to reshape the so-called "convict stain" of Australia's founding, celebrating the politically revolutionary and socially rebellious Irish convicts as the country's forebears. The third chapter of this project explores two other contemporary Australian novels about Irish criminals in nineteenth century Australia: Peter Carey's 2000 novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, based on the historical figure Ned Kelly, and Roger McDonald's 2005 novel *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* about an eponymous fictional convict.

These novels focus on the overlap between two Australian colonial figures: the Irish convict and the Australian bushranger. Carey and McDonald suggest that the figure of the bushranger can trace his lineage back to Irish revolutionary heroes, and present the conflict between the police and these outlaws in parallel to the conflict between Irish republicans and British authority. Like Koch's novel, these two texts explore the way that Irishness and Irish nationalism have become part of Australian identity. These novels are in this sense very self-conscious: they contribute to and expand stories that help create a unified national identity while exposing and exploring the way that national identity coalesces.

In so doing, these novels, like Koch's novel, perform the work particular to many neo-Victorian novels. All three contemporary Australian texts tell or re-tell stories of the nineteenth century – mimicking the styles, themes, and plots of such texts – in order to suggest a new way of looking at the past. Even as they reframe the past, though, they suggest that the past is important for an understanding of how Australians see themselves

in the present. This complicated relationship to the past is exemplified in Carey's choice of William Faulkner's famous line in *Requiem for a Nun* for his epigraph: "The past is not dead. It is not even past."<sup>7</sup> The texts are self-aware of their role in preserving and in transforming a view of colonial Australia; as such, they are both pedagogical in their power of preservation and transmission, and performative in their enacting new and innovative ways of being Australian.

In drawing on historical sources for their novels, Koch in *Out of Ireland* and Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang* exemplify the way that a neo-Victorian novel can present and challenge history by literally re-framing their texts: both novelists create a frame narrative that challenges traditional presentations of their historical figures. Koch, re-writing the famous story of John Mitchel, re-frames the text by having a fictional editor introduce Devereaux's journal as having laid long hidden, only publishing it after the last of Devereux's progeny have died to spare them the shame of public declaration of convict ancestry. This re-framing presents a marked difference between Mitchel's original publication history – he serialized his piece and published it proudly as a book, in his own lifetime and under his own imprint – and that of a convict in Australia, where convict heritage was viewed with shame. Carey likewise calls on the historical figure of Ned Kelly, the most famous of Australian bushrangers, and presents his story as a series of letters written to a fictional daughter, creating a softer, more personal and reflective Ned Kelly beyond famous Kelly of armored last stand fame. These letters, too, are framed by a fictional narrator. The creation of these fictional narrators, trying to unearth the past from scraps and fragments, reveals the authors' concerns with the

---

<sup>7</sup> Carey actually slightly misquotes Faulkner here; the actual line is: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

problem of access to the past and therefore access to the potentially “true history” of Australia.

McDonald, in *The Ballad of Desmond Kale*, also considers the idea of authenticity and access to truth. Unlike Devereux’s diary, Kelly’s letter, and the journals of the historical Irish political prisoners, fictional transported Irish convict Desmond Kale’s story is told in the form of a ballad created by other Irish convicts about Kale. The ballad is presented as both accurate and outlandish, containing hints of truth within a fantastical narrative about the activities of Desmond Kale. But no matter the actual factual accuracy of the ballad, it serves as an inspiration to the downtrodden Irish convicts who hear and repeat it. Thus McDonald presents the ballad as a representation of the way that the myths and history of a people work to bind them together. Through these stories of early Australian Irish convicts, mediated by editors, narrators, and balladeers, these novelists expose the way that myths work and the problems of access to history, while still maintaining in the very telling the primacy of myths and stories to national identity.

In this way, Carey, McDonald, and Koch are heirs to the oceanic Irish nationalism engendered by the transport ships. The restrictions and rules of the convict ships encouraged a form of creative nationalism, reinforcing the importance of telling one’s own stories, stories of the nation’s histories, its myths, and its heroes. These celebrations of Irishness worked against official, British, authoritative language as forms of resistance. This type of resistance is clear in the *Hougoumont* newspaper *The Wild Goose*: while transportation effectively cut them off from news of how their cause was progressing at home, writing their own newspaper, containing columns, poetry, stories, and opinion pieces, allowed the men to continue to feel a sense of participation in their cause.

Forbidden from engaging in overt political speech, they resisted through the medium of metaphor and symbolism. Likewise, the telling of each convict's individual story – Devereux's journal, Kelly's letter, Kale's ballad – becomes a form of telling the collective story of struggle and resistance. The legacy of John Mitchel and the *Hougoumont* Fenians in resistance through creative, subtle, symbolic, and metonymic speech lives on in these fictional Australian characters. Thus do the novelists reinforce the Irish heritage of resistance through speech acts that uncover or reveal an alternate history, outside of the language of officialdom.

This concern with uncovering and revealing truth is represented in the unearthing of the actual artifacts containing the speech acts. The novelists therefore present the stories of their characters as having what Walter Benjamin refers to in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of mechanical Reproduction" as the "aura" of authenticity, and their writing as therefore "being imbedded in the fabric of tradition" (223). In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey calls on the historical figure Ned Kelly's authentic voice by mimicking his language – and sometimes copying it verbatim – from his famous *Jerilderie Letter* which Kelly wrote explaining his bushranging actions. While other representations of Kelly become sites of disputed truth, the *Jerilderie Letter* is authentic. Carey separates Ned's letter to his daughter that makes up the bulk of the novel into thirteen "parcels" each introduced with a physical description by the fictional editor: for example, "45 sheets of medium stock (8" x 10" approx..) with stabholes near the top where at one time they were crudely bound" (18). In *Out of Ireland*, Koch's fictional editor describes Devereux's journal as having lain "hidden for one hundred and twenty-five years" (xviii). Even McDonald's characters engage in some unearthing as they try to

find the truth embedded in fantastical of the ballad of Desmond Kale; the ballad's clues and information are often more accurate than official papers and communiqués.

Likewise, McDonald mixes historical figures, such as Joseph Banks, the botanist and main advocate for British colonization of Australia, into the backdrop of his novel, adding to its feeling of verisimilitude.

These authenticating descriptions connect the fictional characters to their historical counterparts. The editors of the Cashman and Casey journals work to authenticate the journals by prefacing them with physical descriptions of the journals themselves, as well as stories of the histories of the journals: who found them, where they were stored, how they were unearthed and made part of the archive. This focus on preserving an aura of authenticity and thus connecting the object to tradition reveals the way that these editors work to connect the texts they have unearthed to the traditions that collectively form the nation.

In calling on the way that presenting a story as having an aura of authenticity embeds it in tradition, these contemporary Australian novelists work to examine the way that national myths are made and collude to form unified national identity. Their fictional works intersect with historical documents and people, suggesting that these stories are part of the "real" story of Australia. This somewhat pseudo-authentication draws on pre-established authenticity and mythology to offer a re-telling of national myths. In achieving that feeling of authenticity, the authors can harness the aura needed to transform deeply embedded cultural traditions. Koch, Carey, and McDonald rewrite the story of Australia to celebrate and emphasize the role that Irish prisoners had in the settlement of Australia and in the establishment of Australian national identity.

The authors are also very aware of the work their novels do in reframing traditions. Carey, for example, is not merely asserting that the Irish play an important role in Australian history; his characters themselves question and dispute the extent to which being Australian does and should relate to being Irish. Koch exposes some of the problematic issues in Mitchel's *Journal* – such as Mitchel's superiority and his complex relationship to the Irish people – and questions whether or not that is a tradition that Australians want to embrace. McDonald specifically offers a metacommentary on the connection between Irish and Australian literature through his title, playing with the prison writing tradition which includes Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

These three contemporary Australian novelists reveal that it is that impetus to tell one's own story as a form of resistance that Australians embrace as part of their Irish heritage. The concern in Koch's, Carey's and McDonald's novels with speaking the truth of experience, even and especially if that truth is at odds with the official narrative, and of resisting through speech traces its roots back to the forced creative resistance of the transport ship. Australia and Ireland share the burden of a history of oppression, a history that has been coopted by hegemonic forces that speak of a people downtrodden, unworthy, violent, and criminal. The writings of the Fenians, the diary, letter, and ballad in the novels, and the novels themselves exemplify the way that national traditions can be changed and preserved through writing.

### **Reciprocity of Identity**

In their introductory essay to the special issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* on the Great Famine, Corporaal and King begin with a series of questions:

In what ways are memories of fateful events in the homeland reconfigured by emigrant communities and their descendants? Can one speak of a shared cultural legacy with cultural groups in the mother country because migrants have ‘transnational affiliations?’ ... Does this relocation of legacies of the past to other geographical and sociocultural settings lead to dynamic transfers... between the mnemonic traditions of the homeland and the cultural remembrance of the receiving nation, in interactive forms? (301).<sup>8</sup>

In the conclusion, I begin to look at the extent to which Irish and Australian identity interact. I have suggested by examining three contemporary Australian novels that Australian national identity looks back to Irish nationalism, particularly to Irish nationalism honed on the convict ship.

In my conclusion, I will also suggest that Australia plays a role in Irish identity through the diasporic Irish population there. References to Australia in Irish texts by authors from James Joyce to more contemporary novelists such as Roddy Doyle reveal how Australia looms in the Irish imagination, a plus one to the twenty-six plus six. Irish authors such as Evelyn Conlon in *Not the Same Sky* are also beginning to consider more closely the way that the experiences during the voyage to Australia changed and shaped the Irish who landed there.

I also point to the ways that these contemporary novelists both Irish and Australian recognize the problematic position of Irish settlers with regards to Australia’s indigenous population. The narrative of the Irish as historical models for Australian

---

<sup>8</sup> Corporaal and King attribute the term “transnational affiliations” to Virinder Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk’s *Diaspora and Hybridity* (London: Sage, 2005). The final question cited above comes from Michael Rothberg’s concept of “multidirectional memory” in the eponymous book *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009).

identity is distinctly the story of the white settlement of Australia; the true origin story of the land that is now called Australia goes back many hundreds of thousands if not a million of years. These authors address in different ways the role of the Irish in the settlement of Australia that caused the genocide and oppression of indigenous Australians. By creating parallels between the oppression of the Irish by the English and that of aboriginal Australians by all white settlers, these authors force their audiences to face the truth of all parts of the horror and trauma of Australian settlement.

In order to fully understand the experiences of a diasporic people, diaspora studies must pay close attention to the lived experiences on board the vessels that carried the people to their lands of exile. Oceanic studies offers just such a methodology for understanding that experience of the exile, the emigrant, and the transported prisoner. But, it is likewise important to consider the particular conditions of the voyage, and whether the passenger had a view from the masthead, or a view from the hold.

## CHAPTER 1

### Oceanic Irish Nationalism and the Voyage of the *Hougoumont*

In January 1868, the eightieth year of Australia's existence as a convict colony, the ship *Hougoumont* discharged from its hold the last convicts ever to be transported from Britain to the antipodes. Among the 279 prisoners set down at Fremantle in Western Australia, 62 were Fenians, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood transported for treason, or military men, court martialed and transported for failing to report treason (Hughes 578; Sullivan 104).<sup>9</sup>

While the eastern settlements of Australia had long since closed their doors to receipt of what they saw as Britain's offal and were already trying to cleanse themselves of the "convict stain," the comptroller-general's office in the western colony began asking the Colonial Office for a thousand prisoners a year in order to realize the economic prosperity achieved by its east coast counterparts (Hughes 578–9). In June 1850, Fremantle got its first transport of convicts to carry out its public works schema and provide labor for free settlers. But the other Australian colonies raised public outcry that, despite evidence to the contrary, the criminals would cross desert and sea to re-contaminate their settlements. Queen Victoria's government, not willing to alienate the more prosperous east Australian colonies at the expense of the still-unprosperous west, ended convict transportation to Australia with the arrival of the *Hougoumont* (Hughes 580).

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Keneally, in *The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English-Speaking World*, reports that there were 63 Fenians among the 280 male convicts on board (464). Most sources say 62.

In other words, the British government was close to not even having the option of making the same mistake with these 62 Fenians that it had made with the Young Irelanders twenty years earlier. Perhaps the government severely underestimated the tremendous impact that sending the Young Irelanders to the other side of the world had on the formation of the Fenian movement itself, and therefore could not foresee history repeating itself – that the act of transporting these Irish political prisoners strengthened their nationalist sentiments and spread those sentiments across the globe. Like a child who believes its toy missing once it rolls behind the couch, the British persevered with an “out of sight, out of mind” policy when it came to Irish nationalists. Merely one fewer convict ship and those transported Fenians would not serve as inspiration for later Irish nationalists as the Young Irelanders did for them.

Perhaps the authorities truly misunderstood the depth of conviction among these men that Ireland deserved its independence from British rule. As no change of circumstance or situation could diminish that principle, transportation would not quell it, but move it at least and strengthen it at most.

The British government also did not take into account the effect that the actual time spent on the transport ship would have on the Fenian transportees’ nationalism. Transportation created the perfect environment for the mutual fostering of their republican ideals. This effect could have been predicted had the special commission appointed by Dublin Castle to try the Fenians in 1865 paid more attention to the far-reaching effects of the sentence of transportation previously handed down on arguably the most famous Young Irelander, John Mitchel. Commission heads William “Billy” Keogh, then Solicitor-General, and J. D. Fitzgerald certainly had Mitchel in mind during

sentencing: the Fenians were charged with Treason-Felony “under the same statute which had been rushed through Parliament in two days for the purpose of convicting John Mitchel in 1848” (Keneally 417). As with Mitchel’s trial and conviction, the Commission was more interested in the immediate and severe punishment of the Fenians than with the long-term effects of that punishment. They may have learned the latter had they read Mitchel’s widely-published and incensing *Jail Journal*, detailing his transportation to and eventual escape from Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Mitchel published his *Jail Journal* first in serial form in his New York newspaper *The Citizen* and later as a book with an added introduction openly incriminating the British government for its role in the Famine and denouncing Daniel O’Connell for his attempts at peaceful resistance and compromise. Like other journals kept during times of solitary hardship, Mitchel’s story of his time spent on board the convict ship and of his escape from the Van Diemen’s Land prison colony reveals his loneliness, despair, boredom, and anger. But far from being simply the story of an individual, Mitchel universalized his experience and made it about the plight of all Irish people. As Bryan McGovern notes in *John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist*, “he was able to take his own particular case and generalize his situation to all other Irishmen and women”; thus the “hatred that *Jail Journal* produced against the British for colonizing Ireland and inducing the famine laid the groundwork for future nationalists” (102).

---

<sup>10</sup> When it came to punishment of republican activities, the British government certainly had a history of handing down sentences that would prove inspirational fodder for later Irish nationalists. In 1867, about a month after the *Hougoumont* sailed, three Fenians were hanged in Manchester for involvement in an incident which resulted in the death of a policeman. They quickly became Fenian heroes known as the “Manchester Martyrs” and their last words were turned into the chorus of a song which became the unofficial Irish national anthem: “‘God save Ireland,’ said the heroes,/ ‘God save Ireland,’ say we all,/ Whether on the scaffold high or the battlefield we die,/ O, what matter when for Erin dear we fall” (Ó Concubhair 146-7). And of course, half a decade later, the British government again made martyrs of the leaders of the Easter Rising.

Certainly the vitriol with which Mitchel directly impugns the British provided a template of the type of anger and manner of resistance for the Fenians.

Mitchel's *Journal*, his life, and the Young Ireland movement influenced the men who would become Fenians. In *The Fenians: Irish Rebellion in the North Atlantic World 1858–1876*, Patrick Steward and Bryan McGovern note that James Stephens and John O'Mahoney, founders of the Fenian movement, "were attracted to the radical teachings of John Mitchel" in his call "for military and social revolution as a means of expunging both British tyranny and the landlord class from Ireland" (xiii). Indeed, McGovern, in *John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist*, reveals that Mitchel had known O'Mahoney since the latter had been a Young Irelander and that Stephens, during the initial establishment of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, had "traveled to Mitchel's cabin in Tennessee in 1858 asking for [Mitchel's] assistance in helping promote and fund the organization" (187).<sup>11</sup> Beyond his influence on the founding leadership of the Fenian Brotherhood, Mitchel – by serializing his journal to make it widely available and especially through the added introduction section in the published book version thereof – helped maintain vehement anti-British sentiment among Irish nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic. Irish Americans who read his work "embraced [his] assertion that the British government had used the Famine to further its colonization of Ireland" and his "thesis that Britain's lack of assistance to [the Irish] had resulted in deaths upwards of one

---

<sup>11</sup> The movement was first conceived of by O'Mahoney and Michael Doheny, both exiles of the '48 living in New York. In December 1857, they contacted James Stephens, another '48 exile who had fled to Paris but had then returned to Ireland to ask him if he would "explore the opportunities for a new rebellion and instigate preparations for an Irish-American military invasion" (Ó Concubhair 16). Stephens founded the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood – later the Irish Republican Brotherhood – in Ireland; he was able to start the organization there without fear of arrest as official records held him to have died in the 1948 uprising (McGovern 187; Ó Concubhair 16). The Fenian Brotherhood was first founded by O'Mahoney as a support movement among Irish exiles in America, and the whole movement on both sides of the Atlantic soon came to be known by that name (Ó Concubhair 21).

million people, and thus constituted genocide” (Steward and McGovern 7). Mitchel’s “influence with the rank and file” members of the Fenian movement “was great” (McGovern 198).

For those Fenians who already felt this influence of Mitchel’s politics, their arrest and transportation to Australia meant they literally followed in his footsteps. Mitchel is very self-aware of the type of influence such a journal could have on those who read it. In the *Jail Journal*, he compares his plight to political prisoners throughout history, searching for a parallel case of the isolation and monotony: “James the First of Scotland, indeed, was imprisoned eighteen or twenty years in Windsor Castle; but, to be sure, he had plenty of society, and a duchess to make love to, *which would make a great difference*. None of these cases is like mine. The Man in the Iron mask is more to the purpose: he wore away all his weary days in close confinement” (47). He concludes, “I wish I had books and materials here to collect a hand-book of prison biography, for encouragement to myself should I hereafter chance to need it” (47). In acknowledging the work that “prison biography” could do in encouraging others in similar positions, he anticipates the work that his own journal will do. The *Jail Journal*, already famous as an Irish nationalist text, was given the opportunity to become an archetype for these later Fenians by way of the British government’s decision to transport them.

Underlying the explicit arguments Mitchel makes in the *Journal* against his oppressors and his call for violent resistance, the story of the way that his time on the convict ship shaped Mitchel’s nationalism would teach another important lesson to those future nationalists. Not explicitly, but through the ways that Mitchel’s experiences at sea – interacting with officers, seeing the treatment of his fellow inmates, observing the

British empire in all its far-flung ingloriousness, and in general enduring the time on the prison ship – shaped his views of his own Irishness and of national belonging in general, the *Jail Journal* showed his successors what they could learn about nationalism from their time on the ocean. His voyage was not a gap in his nationalist activities, but rather an integral part in cementing and augmenting Mitchel’s ideas of Ireland, citizenship, and national affiliation.

For John Mitchel’s nationalism was shaped by what Hester Blum calls “the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world” in her 2010 *PMLA* article “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies” (670). She suggests a methodology which explores “the epistemological structures provided by the lives and writings of those for whom the sea was simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise” (670). Elsewhere Blum suggests that “[b]y shoving off from land- and nation-based perspectives, we might find new critical locations from which to investigate questions of affiliation, citizenship..., rights, and sovereignty” (“Introduction” 152). Yet, for the transported Irish nationalists, the ocean-based perspective and the nation-based perspective did not exist as such a binary.

By looking at the Fenians’ writings composed during the voyage of the *Hougoumont*, including the journals of John Sarsfield Casey and Dennis B. Cashman and the seven issues of the Fenians’ on-board newspaper *The Wild Goose*, as well as Thomas McCarthy Fennell’s memoir of his experience, I suggest that the material realities of the convict transportation ship effected a type of oceanic Irish nationalism. In the face of the vastness of the ocean, the horror of the prison sentences they were about to endure, the restrictions placed on them, and the memories of the nationalist acts for which they were

undergoing these punishments, the *Hougoumont* Fenians, barred from open expression of a desire for a free Ireland, needed to rely on more subtle and metaphoric forms of national expression that were nonetheless emphatic in their demand for and celebration of Irish sovereignty. Likewise, because of their separation from land, they needed to develop imagery that still connected them with Ireland even as they sped away from it. The telling of their own stories of punishment and exile mixed with the telling of myths of Irish heroes and of tales of successful revolutions from other nations: thus they imbued their own experiences with historic and mythological status. On the prison transport ship, where restriction and isolation reigned, these Fenians found comfort and salvation in the telling and re-telling of Ireland in all of its forms, including in the forms of their own personal histories. Oceanic studies offers an important methodology in terms of analyzing the transportation experiences of the Fenians; as Philip E. Steinberg suggests, scholars should “incorporate the sea as a real, experienced social arena” (156). The experience on the *Hougoumont* influenced the Fenians’ practice of nationalism.

The oceanic experience did not, as Blum suggests it can, dissolve or weaken ties to national belonging for the Fenians. Even in the geographical location called “Ireland,” a sovereign Irish nation was at that time an epistemological aspiration. So, a “shoving off” from land did not entail a simultaneous shoving off from nation: “Ireland” the Republic was always an imagined community. The three months’ voyage, by removing the Fenians from a landed Ireland, forced the Ireland of their imaginations to solidify in order to remain extant. As Declan Kiberd notes generally of Irish exiles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “[t]he massive exodus which followed the famines of the 1840s left hundreds of thousands of Irish men and women in the major cities of Britain, North America and

Australia dreaming of a homeland, and committed to carrying a burden which few enough on native grounds still bothered to shoulder: *an idea of Ireland*” (19). The writings of the *Hougoumont* Fenians, carrying in their hearts that idea of homeland, express an increasingly solidified and passionate form of Irish nationalism wrought in part through the material conditions of the real, experienced social arena of the transport ship.

While there is no way to know exactly how many of the 62 Fenians transported on the *Hougoumont* kept anything like a journal, at least a few certainly did so. Thanks to the work of dedicated editors as well as the descendants of the men themselves, the original versions of the journals of John Sarsfield Casey and Denis B. Cashman survive in government or academic institutions, and edited versions are fairly readily available. The on-board writings of the Fenians reveal that life on the transport vessel, including, among other things, the restrictions on and allowances for communication among the convicts and the monotony of ship board life, stimulated Irish nationalist feelings.

Before exploring the ways that their time on the ocean shaped and reaffirmed Casey and Cashman’s nationalism, I will give some background on the two diarists. John Casey was transported to Australia when he was 21 years old, on the charge of “Treason Felony” which, as Cian McMahon notes, “had first been used almost twenty years earlier against his childhood hero, John Mitchel” (153). Like John Mitchel, Casey was implicated by his political writings for newspapers: Casey wrote a series of letters in 1864 and 1865 under the pen name “The Galtee Boy” to the *Irish People* in strong favor of armed uprising. In fact, Casey became quite well-known under this epithet. Just after boarding the *Hougoumont*, Cashman notes in his 13 October entry “We had Mass on

board this morning it was served by J. Casey (the Galtee Boy)” (62). During the voyage, Casey suffered quite badly from seasickness, making his ability to keep a diary under such conditions quite remarkable. Once in Australia, Casey built roads with his fellow convicts, and worked as a schoolteacher once receiving his ticket-of-leave. He continued his Fenian activities in Australia, writing letters to the Dublin paper the *Irishman*, and returned to Ireland after being pardoned to continue IRB activities, particularly related to land rights.

Denis Cashman was 25 when the *Hougoumont* sailed for Australia, likewise convicted and transported for the charge of Treason Felony. Only 16 when he joined the IRB, he eventually became the Centre of the Waterford Circle (Sullivan, Introduction 16).<sup>12</sup> At his trial, Cashman pled guilty and was sentenced to seven years’ penal servitude. On board the *Hougoumont*, Cashman served as something of the head of the Fenian evening gatherings, during which they sang songs and gave recitations. He also was in charge of creating and copying the artwork on the front pages of their manuscript newspaper *The Wild Goose*. Cashman became good friends with fellow transportee John Boyle O’Reilly, a Fenian organizer within the British army tried by court martial and transported for failing to report an intended mutiny among “Her Majesty’s forces in Ireland” (Keneally 425; Ó Lúing 25). O’Reilly went on to become a journalist and novelist in America, writing the novel *Moondyne: A Story from the Under-world*, about Australian convicts. In Australia, Cashman at first worked on the road gangs and then

---

<sup>12</sup> Pádraig Ó Concubhair explains the organization of the IRB: “The society was organized in ‘circles’ of 810 men. The leader of each such circle was called a centre. Each centre was responsible for a group of nine captains, each captain for nine sergeants and each sergeant for nine men. It was a system based on that used in revolutionary societies on the continent, with which [Fenian founder James] Stephens had become familiar during his sojourn in Paris” (17-8).

was appointed “assistant clerk to the clerk of the works” (Sullivan, Introduction 24). After his pardon, Cashman went to Boston where he worked with O’Reilly on his newspaper *The Pilot* and wrote a book about Michael Davitt, continuing his Fenian activities until his death.

Unlike Mitchel’s *Journal*, the journals of Casey and Cashman are verbatim the words the two men wrote while on the ship. While certainly some of Mitchel’s journal was recorded during his actual voyage, serialized publication in his newspaper as well as in its final published book form indicates later editing; therefore his journal might be better considered a combination journal and memoir. The editors of the Casey and Cashman journals present them as pieces of writing but also as found artifacts. Martin Kevin Cusack, editor of the Casey journal and himself a descendent of Casey, published it as a side-by-side version, with a copy of the page of Casey’s actual journal facing the page of Cusack’s transcription. He describes the material history of the journal itself – kept by the family for 120 years, accidentally sent to the Cork County Library, returned to the family – and notes as well the physical description: “The original manuscript is quite small, the pages measure just 4 X 5 1/2 inches and are of a very thin paper” (Cusack Introduction n.p.). C. W. Sullivan III, editor of the Cashman diary, similarly describes the physical condition of the diary in some detail:

The diary is currently bound in a patterned, dark-brown leather or leatherette cover, 4 ¾ by 7 ¼ inches, which is clearly newer than the diary itself. Inside that cover is a 4 ¾ by 7 ⅜ parchment cover, without decoration, into which the diary is stitched....The individual pages of the diary, many of which have pulled away from the stitching, are 4 ¾ by 7 ½

inches. The paper is light and thin, and Cashman's handwriting is small, crowded, and neat – often so filling the page that subsequent wear or damage has erased some of the letters and, here and there, a word or two. (Sullivan 11–12)<sup>13</sup>

This authenticating of the artifacts indicates that the Benjaminian aura of authenticity of the journals gives them as much value as the written content itself. Adding these physical descriptions of the journals, the editors attempt to re-attach the reproduced object to the domain of tradition.<sup>14</sup>

By foregrounding the artifacts themselves through these tangible descriptions of the journals they have transcribed – by, in other words, maintaining that aura – the editors of the Casey and Cashman journals establish the journals' connection with tradition. As Benjamin explains, “[t]he uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable” (223). And, as Eric Hobsbawm indicates, such highly “alive” and “changeable” traditions (or, to use his term, “invented traditions”) “are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the ‘nation’, with its associated phenomena” (13). Thus the journals *as artifacts* are given an aura of authenticity through the descriptions of their physical appearances by the editors. That aura places the journals

---

<sup>13</sup> A digitized version of the original Cashman manuscript is available online through the East Carolina University Digital Archives. For citation purposes, when referring to a page number for the Cashman journal, I am referring to the published version transcribed and edited by Sullivan. When I give descriptions of the physical appearance of the pages, or point out the physical appearance of handwriting, I am referring to the digitized manuscript: Denis Cashman, Journal, Oct. 15 1867 – Jan 31 1868. East Carolina University Archives, Box 458.1.b., Digital Collections, <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/957>.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin writes: “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition” (221).

firmly in the realm of tradition, and tradition is one of the key features in creating and maintaining a cohesive nation and national identity.

In this case, since the works of art whose auras are being transmitted through the physical descriptions are also pieces of writing, they do double work in creating and transmitting the traditions which make up national identity. The journals *as pieces of writing* (as opposed to the journals as artifacts) re-present Irish nationalism and Irish national identity. A unified idea of nation is constantly formed and re-formed through narrating the nation. Homi Bhabha refers to this iterative nationalism as the “performative.” Bhabha identifies a “tension between signifying the people as an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (“DissemiNation” 147). This point of tension between the pedagogical and performative expressions of nation becomes an arena for resistance in the postcolonial nation, where the pedagogical authority is the imperial center – in other words, where the definition of national identity emerges not from the nation itself, but is thrust upon it by the colonizer. Therefore, performative nationalism – the assertion of nationhood in the present through speech and writing – is especially important in colonized nations, where the imperial center has attempted to silence and marginalize the voice of the colonized peoples and coopt the national narrative (Ashcroft et al. 82).

In *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation*, Declan Kiberd discusses Bhabha’s aforementioned tension between the performative and the pedagogical specifically in regards to Irish nationalism. In writing their nation, the Irish do not fit neatly into some of the prevalent ideas governing post-colonial writing. Ashcroft,

Griffiths, and Tiffin in their seminal work on language and the postcolonial, *The Empire Writes Back* (which, as Kiberd notes, almost entirely elides any discussion of the Irish, an interesting elision as two of the writers are from Australia, land of many Irish exiles), establish a binary between the colonizer as the pedagogical and the colonized as the disrupters of any essential definition of nation. They write that, “[i]n European thinking, history, ancestry, and the past form a powerful reference point for epistemology” (33). But postcolonial writers “deliberately set out to disrupt European notions of ‘history’ and the ordering of time”: “Received history is tampered with, rewritten, and realigned from the point of view of the victims of the destructive process” (33). Kiberd suggests that the Irish exist somewhere between the two – between the pedagogical focus on an essentialist idea of nation tied to the past and the performative nation formed and reformed. Kiberd writes, “If nationalism is most often invoked in western Europe nowadays by those who wish to defend the status quo, in eastern Europe and in the wider decolonizing world it may equally be an inspiration to those who wish to change it: the Irish case, as always, exhibits both tendencies at work, often simultaneously” (22). Unlike the postcolonial writers’ strategies discussed by Ashcroft et al., Irish nationalists invoke “history, ancestry, and the past” in the service of disrupting English hegemonic control over Irish identity.

By writing their own stories of transportation and exile, the Fenian diarists help create the narrative of Irishness and Irish identity so central in nation formation. They do, to use the terminology of Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffiths, “write back” to their British captors by telling their experiences in their voices, and creating a physical record of the

violence enacted on them by the empire.<sup>15</sup> They add their personal stories to the stories they tell in their onboard newspaper, *The Wild Goose*, of the Irish throughout history who have fought for their right to a homeland. And their journals combine the aura of the artifact and the narrative both so central in cementing and asserting national identity.

In addition to the editorial descriptions of the journals' appearances, the journal form constantly reasserts itself as authentic artifact, produced in a specific time and place and under specific circumstances. One of the basic formal elements of the journal is the use of dates to indicate the various entries, tying the content to a very specific moment. In addition, both Cashman and Casey note the longitude and latitude of the ship as well as the distance traveled since the previous day or entry, Casey recording this information regularly from the start of the voyage and Cashman beginning around 25 November. Entries often note the atmospheric conditions. Cashman in four consecutive entries, for example, records: "A gorgeous sunrise this morning"; "rather gloomy Day"; "the great heat has left us"; "a sail in sight" (88–89). Similarly Casey, clearly influenced by his consistent sea sickness, notes negatively the conditions a few days out at sea: "very heavy sea blowing terribly"; "Blowing exceedingly hard"; "Blowing fearfully all night" (October 16, 17, 19). The connection between the written words and the physical conditions during which they were recorded – the time on the ocean itself – makes the

---

<sup>15</sup> John Mitchel introduces his journal with the importance of who controls the imperial narrative. England, he writes, has not only possession of "the Soil of Ireland" but "possession of the world's ear also" (9): "Britain being in possession of the floor, any hostile comment upon her way of telling our story is an unmannerly interruption; nay, is nothing short of an *Irish howl*" (9, emphasis in original). Since he goes on throughout the rest of his introductory section to tell in detail the story of England's cruel control over the Irish, Mitchel is asserting the power of writing your own story of your nation as part of the fight against hegemony. He also points out how his own personal story of suffering at the hands of the English will likewise become part of the fight, will "rouse the *young* to a pitch of wrathful disaffection that cannot but come to good.... While I am known to be living in vile sinks of felony... the mind of the young Irish generation will not easily settle down and acquiesce in the sway of the foreign enemy" (70). Mitchel believes that telling the story of Irish suffering in general and of his own persecution and imprisonment will stimulate support of younger nationalists – which indeed proved true with the Fenians.

content of the journals inseparable from the material realities under which they arose. The ocean becomes embedded in and emblematic of the tradition of Irish nationalism as these authenticated articles gain their aura from having been produced under certain conditions.<sup>16</sup>

But while the Fenians shared the experience of the weather and the ship's speed and bearing with any other shipboard denizen, the most prominent reality of their oceanic experiences is that the ship was simultaneously a prison. The prison ship offers an important re-framing of some of oceanic studies' core concepts. As mentioned, Blum writes in her introduction to oceanic studies in *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* that "[b]y shoving off from land- and nation-based perspectives, we might find new critical locations from which to investigate questions of affiliation, citizenship..., rights, and sovereignty" ("Introduction" 152). In an earlier article for *PMLA*, Blum had written a similar sentence, revealing that she substituted the nautical metaphor of "shoving off from land- and nation-based perspectives" for the privileged idea of 'freedom': "As oceanic studies reveals, *freedom from national belonging* can make possible other ways of understanding affiliation, citizenship, mobility, rights, and sovereignty, all of which have been read in recent critical history as overdetermined by nationalism" ("Prospect" 671, my emphasis). Blum's phrasing equates nationalism with restriction and connects the ocean – or anything which severs one from national belonging – with freedom. The

---

<sup>16</sup> A note about all quotations from the journals and memoirs, as well as the newspaper. There are frequent misspellings, and certainly in the journals grammatical correctness was not of utmost importance to the writers. Therefore, I transcribe any quotations verbatim, inclusive of errors. To write "[sic]" after each error would be inordinately distracting.

Fenians most certainly could not have made the same equation. Their removal from nation was denial of freedom – was imprisonment; thus, nation was freedom.<sup>17</sup>

The specifics of the experience of the Irish convict on the ocean become clearer when compared with the situation of the Irish emigrant to Australia. In his introduction to Cashman's diary, Sullivan explains that, while the emigrant "knew where he was going and, however reluctantly, had chosen to go there, made plans, gone through the usual separation rituals, and boarded the ship," the Fenians had transportation to Australia thrust upon them (34). In his first entry, written at sea a few days after the *Hougoumont* sailed, Cashman recalls his experience finding out about his transportation. While picking coir at Millbank prison, Cashman writes,

the Iron gate and massive wooden door of my cell were flung open....  
Then for the first time I learned, that I was to be sent to Australia. I received the news with a very bad grace, and protested in the strongest terms against being sent, – but recollecting that I had no voice in the matter, and that go I should, I strove to make the most out of it, and drown the bitter feelings which filled my breast, by fiercely working at, or rather tearing the tough coir. – I really felt wretched. (56)<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> In "Terraqueous Planet: The Case for Oceanic Studies," Blum writes that sailors, as the "first intra-planetary travelers...were imagined free from many of the constraints of social and political life," again reinforcing the idea that the ocean was a type of freedom. She goes on to say, though, that sailors also "faced hostile environmental conditions as well as repressive hierarchical structures aboard ship, neither of which could be mediated by the protections of statehood or citizenship" (27). Thus, Blum does indicate here that citizenship can offer the type of positive liberty that comes from the protection of the state. It was this very type of positive liberty that Irish nationalists sought in their republican ventures.

<sup>18</sup> Picking coir, or rope made from coconut husks, was a common occupation given to Millbank prisoners who were kept in solitary confinement and made to work in their cells in the pentagonal prison wards. In *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Acts Relating to Transportation and Penal Servitude* Captain Donatus O'Brien testifies on 20 February 1863 about the treatment of prisoners: "penal class prisoners will be confined to cells specially constructed for the purpose of preventing communication between prisoners, and strict silence is observed. They will take exercise alone. They will be employed as such hard labour as may be ordered, or in picking oakum or coir.... They

Cashman's description of the doors being "flung" open emphasizes his perception of the haste and precipitateness with which the transportation to Australia was enacted upon him. Cashman's entry, written on an already sailing *Hougoumont*, reveals his shock towards the unreality of the situation in which merely three weeks have passed since he first learned he would be transported.

Casey's first entry, 7 October, five days before sailing, likewise indicates the celerity and inscrutability of the process: "Monday went to work as usual 'till dinner – At 1 OC inspected in company... Confined to cell during remainder of the day – Supplied with clothes &c Received no information as to time of leaving." The following day Casey goes to "work again 'till 9 AM"; "12 OC prepare to depart"; "12.30 Depart." In the course of one day Casey goes from working as usual in Portland prison to actually boarding the *Hougoumont*, his prison home for the next three months. The repetition of going to work along with the use of "as usual" and "again" affirms the suddenness of the departure in contrast to the monotony of prison life. Thus the convict, unlike the immigrant, found himself on board a ship to the other side of the world with little to no preparation.

Further, while emigrants had at least some idea that life would improve by sailing to Australia, for the Fenians who were already in prison in England – despite the abruptness of the departure – transportation was a linear move from prison cell to prison

---

will be restricted to a special diet for three months at least. They will not be allowed to receive visits or letters, or to write letters" (170). When asked if prisoners work other jobs, O'Brien responds "They are not allowed to work at trades, they pick coir or oakum"; asked "Is that considered more irksome?" O'Brien answers, "Yes, and if they do not pick a sufficient quantity they are punished" (171). Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, a Fenian who was convicted and not transported, describes an incident in his memoir of prison life in which he was punished for attempting to make coir picking easier by wetting it. Rossa was brought to the prison Governor who "said he was twenty-five years in that prison and never saw a bit of coir wet there, which, to my [Rossa's] mind, was a big lie, because I learned from the prisoners that the practice was general; however, as charges had to be trumped up against me, practice or precedent was nothing" (228).

ship to prison colony. Indeed, as fellow Fenian transportee John Boyle O'Reilly makes clear in *Moondyne: A Story from the Under-World*, his novel about the convict experience in Western Australia, those in charge of convict affairs made no distinction between the prison ship and the prison colony. On board O'Reilly's fictionalized version of the *Hougoumont*, an officer has a conversation with the ship's owner, Mr. Wyville – who, unbeknownst to the officer, is an escaped convict – about who has ultimate command of the ship. Wyville begins:

“When convicts sail from England, they are assumed to be at once in the Penal Colony. As soon as the convict ship leaves land, she becomes subject to the penal law of Western Australia.”

“Who administers the law on board?”

“The representative of the Comptroller-General of Convicts, the actual authority over the criminals in Western Australia.” (225).

This almost absurd elision of the time spent on the ocean – once the convict leaves England, he is considered already in the Australian prison – reinforces the linearity of the prison-to-prison movement that distinguishes the convict ship experience from the emigrant one.

This elision also highlights the British government's misunderstanding of the effects that the prison ship circumstances would have on the Fenian convicts. All of the convicts on board the prison ship were being taken from their homelands. But for the Fenian prisoners only, the cause for this separation from the familial home was the very fight for the right to that homeland. Their punishment of transportation was synecdochic of the oppression of all the Irish by British hegemony, the one physically and the other

politically denying the Irish a proper home. These men fought for the claim to a home; their transportation across the ocean became a double denial of the right to a home. The prisoner's personal desire for individual liberty maps onto the republican goal of independence.

Therefore, any discussion of "home" in the journals is steeped in political undertones. In expressing nostalgia or longing for familiar scenes of house and family – an act shared by so many emigrants, prisoner or otherwise – the Fenians implicitly express their arguments for a right to a homeland. In this, the Fenians enact what Frederic Jameson calls the "primacy of national allegory in third-world culture," in which "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself" (84, 85–6).<sup>19</sup> Cashman's and Casey's individual stories and their personal recollections of home serve as allegory for the greater Irish story of the nineteenth century, the story of subjugation, denial, and exile.

But it was not just in the personal medium of their journals that Cashman and Casey expressed their nostalgic yearning for home. In terms of stimulating Irish nationalist sentiment, one of the most important consequences of transportation as opposed to imprisonment in England is that the prison ship afforded the men the opportunity to communicate with fellow Fenians. Both Cashman and Casey express initial delight in being able to connect or re-connect with their brothers in the fight for independence. Cashman writes on 30 September as he sails aboard the gunboat *Earnest* from Millbank prison to the waiting *Hougoumont*: "once on board the silent system to

---

<sup>19</sup> While the designation of "third world" is not often applied to Ireland, the Irish are certainly colonized subjects and victims of imperial control.

which, since my arrest on 11<sup>th</sup> January I had been so rigorously subject, totally exploded – by Jove, didn't we talk, shake hands, and enjoy the pleasure of hearing each other talk" (59). While Casey does not express as explicitly as does Cashman the joy and pleasure of communication, he, too, juxtaposes favorably the prison ship conditions with his landed prison. Early in his diary (presumably 8 October 1867, but the top of the page on which this entry appears was cut off), Casey mentions finally being able to talk to other Fenians once on board the *Hougoumont*: "Meet for the first time Men convicted 66 and 67. Converse with them during walk to pier – Officers repeatedly reprimand us for talking and at length separate us." He notes that once sent below deck he and his fellow Fenians spent "the remainder of day conversing with our companions in misfortune and hearing news of the world outside." He ends the day's entry with "no sleep for us talking all night – A new life this to that of Portland." Considering the journal medium in which making mention of an event already indicates its significance to the writer even without further comment, the triple mention of communication within the same entry indicates how significant for Casey was that first day of talk with his fellow Fenians.<sup>20</sup> Thomas McCarthy Fennell confirms in his memoir of the voyage that the initial "freedom of speech" on board the ship "produced its happy, blissful effect" (76).<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Contrast the joy that Casey and Cashman have in communion with their fellow Fenians to Mitchel's occasional despair at his loneliness. Unlike Mitchel, Casey and Cashman never question the purpose of keeping a journal because they had other outlets for their feelings and emotions. They could communicate with others. Conversely, Mitchel had only his journal to keep himself company, and the palpable monotony and ennui he feels are broken by no interlude of friendship. "Shall I go on," Mitchel writes, about three months into his solitary life as a prisoner, "scribbling in a book, making myself believe that I am keeping a journal? Why, one day is exactly like every other day to me. On this fourteen years' voyage of mine, it might seem that one seafaring practice at least might be dispensed with – keeping a log, namely.... What have I to write? Or, if I write my nothings, who will ever read?" (80).

<sup>21</sup> Fennell wrote much of his memoir of his time on the *Hougoumont* after his arrival in America, so its tone and language are different from that of the two journals written while on board the ship. It is not a day-by-day account, but rather organized by chapters covering in-depth major events and issues. Fennell explains that he writes at a time "far removed from the scene of action, and [when] most if not all the participants in the drama [are] forgotten or dead" (91); his editors place the writing around 1900. Fennell is prompted by

The contrast between the silent system then in vogue in the British prisons and the slightly more lax conditions aboard ships encouraged an extreme pleasure and relief in simple conversation, thus elevating communication – a seemingly quotidian activity – to a luxury. Fennell notes that it is “a feast in itself to be away out of the reach of the silent system” (82). The “happiness... [in being] accorded the liberty to assemble in groups... [and] chat and converse freely” is “a new and well valued phase none knows how to appreciate better than themselves” – than the people who had to undergo the silent system (82). Experiencing the contrast between mandated silence and communication reinforced to the prisoners the extent to which the British had been denying their basic human rights. Since, as mentioned earlier, narration is foundational for forming and maintaining national identity, this condition of the prison ship allowed the Fenians that interlocation necessary to speaking the nation.

Both Casey and Cashman refer repeatedly to the joy that talking about Ireland with fellow prisoners brought. Each new narration of their homeland on board the ship solidified Ireland’s place in their minds’ eyes. Cashman writes on 1 October that “The day passed off well – I had a long chat about home & friends with John Flood, and again old memories and scenes were revived; thus agreeably passed the first day” (61). In his journal, to avoid further charges of treason, Cashman sticks to the language of “home & friends” and “old memories and scenes,” but there are indications that this innocuous language masks the true nature of their discussion. Fennell recalls that as soon as they

---

“a keen sense of duty, justice to those living, to mankind and civilization of the age” all of which “demand a public record and exposure of the savage cruelties perpetrated aboard this transport hulk by the full consent and direct approval of the enlightened English government, that it may evoke for it the scorn and contempt it justly deserves from all justice loving governments and people” (91). As Kevin Cusack, editor of the Casey journal, writes in his introduction to the Fennell memoir, “there are some anomalies” in Fennell’s factual details compared to other records and ship’s logs that “become of lesser importance in [Fennell’s] broadly painted canvas” (17).

were able to communicate with one another once on board the *Hougoumont*, the Fenians, “discuss, not so much, the ignominy of the situation, as the precarious condition of Irish national affairs, any and all things appertaining to home news they devour with relish” and “are besieged to learn the very latest disclosures in the sad history of their country” (64). So Cashman, in couching political discussions of Ireland in terms of individual and nostalgic recollection, creates a metonymic relationship between the personal Ireland and the political Ireland. His use of the term “revived” reiterates the ways in which nation comes into being over and over again, and that nation, far from being a solid and complete entity, exists in and through those who speak and think it.<sup>22</sup>

In light of the silence imposed on them in the terrestrial prisons of England, any discussion of homeland became an act of resistance. Homi Bhabha begins his introductory essay to *Nation and Narration* with the idea that nations, “like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (1). Each revival of the nation through discussion enacted the existence of Ireland in

---

<sup>22</sup> In his memoir of his prison experience (which does not extend to his time on the *Hougoumont*) written on his return to Ireland, Casey describes the lengths gone to in Mountjoy prison to keep the prisoners, especially the Fenians, from talking to each other during exercise: “Each prisoner was obliged to keep three yards asunder from his ‘chum’ in front, and look neither to the right nor to the left nor to the frosty blue sky above, nor to the dull frozen earth beneath, but look directly to your front. Elevated mounds of clay were erected at various interval spaces between the rings [of prisoners]; on which warders were stationed, so as to have a full view of each prisoner. . . . Particular care was taken that the Fenians, whether by accident or design, should never be near each other. Six or ten ordinary prisoners were placed between them, so as to prevent the most remote chance of speaking” (165-6). But, Casey reports, he did get a chance during one lap of the yard to speak a word to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, and the joy of first communication is unparalleled: “The first word spoken [by Casey during his imprisonment]; oh what a thrill of delight swept through one at the moment only equaled by the rapture with which Robinson Crusoe after his long solitude first heard the human voice divine, was to Rossa who in reply to my greeting informed me that the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in Ireland” (166). The Fenians were especially singled out for restrictions on communications because, while for the regular prisoner the silent system was enacted in order to keep jails from becoming schools of villainy, such communication between political prisoners represented a threat to English rule. Casey writes later in the memoir: “Groups of convicts passed us hourly, talking and laughing without restraint, whilst ‘Good Morning’ from one Political Prisoner to another was rudely and insultingly reproved, and twenty-four or it may be forty-eight hours bread and water followed on report” (194). The imposed silence exacerbated the desperate desire for and joy over communication, thus making communication even more valuable, perhaps, than it would have been had it not been restricted.

the mind's eye, and insisted on the Irish nation as an essential entity not to be denied by British control. The prison ships, unlike the landed prisons, allowed the Fenians an opportunity for communication and thus resistance.

Despite this difference, the ship was still a prison – as mentioned earlier, the convict ship was considered just another linear move through the English prison system. The prison bears striking similarities to a colonized space. Bill Ashcroft discusses the ways in which the prison is “the most extreme metonym of colonial occupation” (168). The prison boundary – the function of which is “to construct a space that is literally ‘placeless’, a carceral space in which the dominant relationship is that between the imprisoning gaze and a featureless, undefined subject” – is a “metaphor for the authority of an imperial surveillance in which the colonized place, like colonial subjectivity, exists as marginal to the universal space of the world map or the globe” (168). The dominant strategy of this system of oppression is “the suppression of identity by a sense of isolation” – a strategy that is exacerbated for prisoners of transportation by the double isolation of prison and ship.

Any ship – prison hulk or otherwise – must enact a strict discipline in order to function. Fennell writes that as soon as the anchor is raised, “for the first time the new discipline at sea is felt and introduced” (76). He refers here not to the disciplining of prisoners, but to the ordering, recording, timing, and supervising, all “systematized by the ringing of the bell,” that constitutes the normal functioning of a ship (76). Michel Foucault's description of the ordering of a plague town applies equally well to a ship as it does, in *Discipline and Punish*, to a prison: an “enclosed” – in the ship's case, enclosed by the open ocean, as cut off from society as if it were surrounded by a near-

insurmountable wall – “segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, . . . in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among living beings” (197). The ship runs on Foucauldian discipline that regulates everything from the changing of the watch (“The system,” Fennell writes of the dog watch and the changing of hands, “so regulates itself that, tomorrow night, the opposite gang will replace those going on duty tonight at 8 o’clock, and vice versa, the full round of the year”) to the diet of the prisoners (which, Fennell writes, “varies not with time place or condition and the disciplinarians with a tenacity to instruction that eclipses the cruelest fact on the cruelest page of history insists on its issue without a change to the last”) (76; 90). The Irish transportees experience in triplicate the oppression of isolation and of discipline inherent in colonial subjectivity, in imprisonment, and in oceanic sequestration, each of which serves as a metonym of the other.

As a prison, the ship, despite allowing some freedoms compared to the silent system, was still a place of restriction and isolation. Although given the opportunity to talk to one another, the Fenians were restricted quite heavily in the content of that communication. Sullivan notes that Cashman and “others who were keeping records were instructed to avoid any ‘political’ writing” (Introduction 22). Casey’s journal is full of redactions – crossed out sections – at moments when it seems he was castigating the British, or calling on Ireland to defend herself and her rights. For example, when the ship passes the coast of Spain – a nation much admired by Casey for its resistance against Napoleon, the “perfidious & treacherous despot” – Casey contrasts the “heroic deeds of

the Spaniards in 1809-14 with the deeds of the Fenians 1865-7” (20 October). He writes: “I inwardly XXXXXX the power that held my own dear land in bondage sighed for the time when her XXXX would XXXXXX the example of the chivalrous Spaniard” (20 October). Casey clearly had written of his hatred of the British and his longing for Irish rebellion, but later, due to potential repercussions, redacted the statements that he feared would be taken as most treasonous – recall that Casey was only 21 years old and already being taken from home and family on the charge of Treason Felony, so the fear of additional treason charges was quite realistic and profound.

Casey also redacts any statements that disparage the officers on board, those representatives of British authority. When the Fenians refuse to address an officer as “Sir,” Casey writes: “Officer ferocious – what a XXXXX people are not those XXXXXX” (10 November). Unfortunately, we can never know exactly what Casey wrote; but it is clear he is making some sort of universalizing statement, taking the individual case of the officer and applying it at the least to all of the officers on board, if not to all British authority figures or perhaps to British hegemony generally.

In a later entry, Casey wistfully recalls Ireland in response to a death on board the ship (the only of the voyage, remarkably, and a highly affecting moment for the diarists). He “Cannot think without emotion of dying in a far distant land far away from friends home & kindred” (16 December). This emotion gives way immediately and naturally to anger and sadness at the general oppression of the Irish, another example of the allegorical connection between the individual denial of “friends home & family” and the collective denial of home to all Irish. He recalls “that dear old land where my heart is set but which now lays XXXXXXXXX the feet of the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX whilst her noble

generous sons are exiled from her shores Powerful God XXXXX at least an” (16 December) – at which point an extremely long segment of text is redacted.

Though not as explicitly as Casey does with physical redactions, Cashman also reveals the effects of restrictions on the content of their writing. Cashman frequently notes in the journal *that* he engaged in discussion with his fellow Fenians, but does not detail what exactly they discussed. Similarly affected by the death onboard on 16 December, Cashman merely reports in his 17 December entry: “Jack and I had a long chat in bed last night on yesterdays funeral” (105). “Jack” refers to John Boyle O’Reilly, whom Cashman grew quite close to during the voyage. Like Casey, Cashman and O’Reilly most likely saw the funeral as a reminder of their denial of homeland but were also, like Casey, scared to chastise in writing a system that caused men to die lonely deaths far from home and family. In the face of this clearly traumatic event, the silence in Cashman’s entry and the redactions in Casey’s speak back to the horrors of the transport system.

Cashman is forced by the imposed restrictions to remain frustratingly vague in his records of his interactions. Often he must omit any details, and reports only on the fact of the discussions, not their content. On 13 October, for example, he writes, “we all made ourselves quite comfortable below and talked ’till morning” (62). On 17 November, Cashman writes “Jack & I had a long chat” (83); the mere mention of it in the journal indicates the discussion’s importance to Cashman, but the lack of specifics also indicates that a political discussion took place – on any other topic, Cashman would have been free to elucidate.

Indeed in this instance there is no need to speculate. Thomas Keneally reports that, long after Cashman and O'Reilly were safe in America, Cashman acknowledged that "O'Reilly had plans to take over the ship" (466). O'Reilly had previously attempted (unsuccessfully) escape from prison three separate times (Sullivan "Reconsidering" 104). When held at Dartmoor in spring of 1867, he used a foggy night to escape and spent two nights out on the moors before being recaptured (Keneally 461). Fennell, writing from the safety of America years later, spends almost an entire chapter on the mutiny, while still staying vague as to the specifics of the plan and the people involved. He writes of a "secret meeting" at which "only leading figures in the conspiracy are present to fix the time and date," followed by further meetings, at some of which the "recalcitrant leaders hie themselves by stealth to some secreted nook to solve the vital issue" (136-7). The plan for the *Hougoumont* was never attempted because some of the Fenians whose sentences were shorter wanted to merely get them over with and return to family; plus, even if the ship made it to New York, which would have been a safe haven for the Fenians, there was the question of the hundreds of other convicts. Fennell indicates that the leaders abandoned the plan mainly because it was "far better [to] die a thousand deaths from thirst and starvation than share the most brilliant achievement in the most glorious cause with such despicable fiends as companions in victory [i.e. with the other prisoners, the common convicts]" (142). Regardless of the outcome, this later revelation indicates the care with which the Fenians chose what they did and did not include from their verbal communications in their on-board journals.

The most that Cashman will write of his discussions with fellow Irishmen is that they talked of home, but he couches discussion of home in terms of wistful nostalgia for

family and landscape. On Christmas day, a day when the denial of home would have been felt most sharply, Cashman merely reports “J.F. [John Flood] and I had a chat about home” (108). He then goes on to discuss his family: “I sincerely trust that my dear K [Kate, his wife], Anne, Billy & our dear boys are enjoying a happy Xmas” (108). These nationalist activists would likely have discussed much more politically charged ideas, but the restrictions enacted on them led Cashman to either omit specifics entirely, or focus on the seemingly quotidian and non-political.

While it would seem that such a restriction would severely limit the fostering of nationalist sentiment, the journals show that it actually ended up encouraging a very specific type of Irish nationalism, which I call oceanic Irish nationalism. The Fenians in Ireland and America were known primarily for their support and encouragement of armed resistance, partly as a backlash against Daniel O’Connell’s pacifism which resulted in his kowtowing to English authority with the cancellation of his Clontarf rally. As Declan Kiberd writes, the “Fenian philosophy was summed up by one of the leaders, John O’Leary, who opined that it was useless for an Irishman to confront an Englishman without a gun in his hand” (39). In stressing this militaristic bent of the Fenians, Kiberd indicates that the Fenian period of Irish nationalism represented a move away from what he sees as the most effective form of resistance: cultural resistance. Kiberd writes of earlier Irish poets and authors, such as Seathrún Céitinn in the 1600s and Edmund Burke in the 1700s, using poetry, essays, satire, and “covert statement” as forms of resistance against the imperial center, but presents Irish nationalists of the 1800s – with the exception of Young Irelander Thomas Davis – as moving away from this form of cultural resistance. Kiberd sees the early death of Davis in 1845 as a cessation of the

encouragement of “cultural self-confidence” as a means to political independence, only to be “left to Yeats, Hyde and a later generation to restore to culture its central importance in the liberation of a people” (39). While the Irish Literary Revival of the early 1900s certainly “preceded and in many ways enabled the political revolution that followed,” Kiberd overlooks the cultural work done by the Fenians in favor of an overly one-dimensional view of their commitment to armed resistance (21).

The material conditions of the convict ship not only encouraged but essentially required the Fenians to enact cultural resistance. The restrictions put on their speech and writing interdicted direct political commentary, but that would not stop the Fenians from finding an outlet for their beliefs and feelings, especially taking into account this specific group of Irish convicts. A large number of them were writers, and indeed many of them were transported specifically because of their use of the pen to encourage the sword. So naturally the form of expression the men turned to was writing. With the curtailment of their free speech, they turned to creative methods of articulation: nightly performances of songs and recitations, and production of the on-board manuscript newspaper, *The Wild Goose*.

A main – perhaps the main – material condition of the ocean that encouraged the men to engage in these cultural expressions was the monotony of shipboard life. While he was still at Milbank, Cashman’s initial excitement on finding out that he would take the journey with fellow Fenians focuses entirely on relief from anticipated monotony, that he would have friends “with whom I could kill the tedium of the voyage and the exile in Australia” (57). Early in the voyage and faced with months of upcoming boredom, Cashman writes: “We had a debate to-day as to the best means of killing time and

amusing ourselves during the voyage... I drew up a program for a concert” (64). This entry was made on 24 October; the boredom that Cashman was feeling prior to this event is evident in the preceding entries. The entries for 19 through 23 October are all terse one line descriptions of the conditions of the sea around him, for example:

20<sup>th</sup>, Another ship in sight today, – a whale seen, I wasn’t on deck at the time, cleared the Bay

21<sup>st</sup> We sighted the Spanish Coast, – ship with a fair wind running about 11 knots

23<sup>rd</sup> – A Squall passed us today, no injury resulted, – great numbers of porpoises playing around the ship (63)

There is only so long that observations of the weather and of what can be seen in the vicinity of the ship can occupy such literate and passionate men. By the time he writes about “killing time and amusing ourselves,” the boredom and monotony is palpable in these entries – he must feel that without some form of amusement, some outlet for thought and some manner of taking up time on the voyage, he might go mad with boredom.

The newspaper acts as a great relief to that boredom. On 22 November, Cashman writes: “I have been hard at work all day preparing ‘The Goose’ for tomoro’ it promises to be a good number – this occupation pleases me very much – it passes the time – & it takes me from my thoughts which at times are very gloomy” (85). Cashman frequently throws himself into work on the paper to stave off such gloom. On 27 November after a fellow Fenian strikes up a chorus of “We’ll meet again together” which elicits longing for home from Cashman, he writes, referring to the work he does drawing the masthead of

the *Wild Goose*: “I trust the song will be fulfilled and that we will be home again – however – begone dull care – I’ll endeavor to drown thought by weaving a wreath of Shamrocks for next week’s Goose” (89).<sup>23</sup> Cashman waxes somewhat poetic here, referencing the traditional folk song “Begone, dull care!”, and his phrase “weaving a wreath of Shamrocks” not only denotes the physical drawing he undertakes, but also serves as a metaphor for the act of remembering and telling – or weaving – the tale of Ireland.

The editors of the paper, in a piece called “Self-Reliance” therein, explicitly acknowledge the good that working on the paper can have for the prisoners. It begins by noting that “the public... are just now afflicted with the usual accompaniments of such a voyage as ours – monotony and melancholy” (1.2, 4).<sup>24</sup> They suggest that not only reading the paper but also contributing to it can offer relief:

...lest our weekly efforts to cater for the general amusement should prove insufficient to banish them, we suggest to our readers that they should not alone trust to be passively amused by the “Wild Goose”, but that each should endeavor to contribute his quota to the public stock, – the surest way to overcome both the one and the other. (1.2, 4)

---

<sup>23</sup> Hester Blum’s 2008 book introducing some of her core concepts later articulated to be oceanic studies is called *A View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives*. She of course refers to the highest part of a ship’s mast, from which watch was sometimes kept but also where sailors were sent for punishment. Cashman could be said to likewise have a view from the masthead: from the perspective of the newspaperman, punished for having the audacity to speak his mind; and from the perspective of a place of punishment.

<sup>24</sup> I will refer to issues of *The Wild Goose* using a “Vol.Number, page number” notation. Each issue contained various materials, including poems, stories, recollections, humorous parodies, serialized stories, and advice columns, and it would be too cumbersome to cite each separately. A full run of the manuscript paper is kept as part of John Flood’s collected papers at the Mitchel Library in the State Library of New South Wales. Because it is a manuscript newspaper, in different copies there may exist certain differences – a crossed out word here, or a changed letter there – and I am specifically referencing the digitized version of the Mitchel Library copies.

The editors and writers of *The Wild Goose*, Cashman included, understood the salubrious effects of writing on the oppressive monotony of the journey, and encouraged their peers to take advantage thereof.

Casey writes less frequently about the newspaper, but in general his entries are longer and more detailed. Casey, as mentioned, suffered greatly from seasickness throughout the journey, another manifestation of the realities of ship board life. From the length of his entries, it seems that Casey was often alone and spent time writing and trying to cope with the extreme sickness he faced. Beginning, for example, on 21 November, a day of incessant rain on which Casey reports being “very sick,” each entry increasingly highlights Casey’s miserable condition. On 22 November, Casey writes “have a severe cold in head & throat scarcely able to swallow a morsal or articulate a word”; 23 November, “Very sick in stomach with Dr ordered me Salts Body covered with Hives”; 24 November, “Eat nothing today Throat sore Body swelled all over”; 25 November, “1<sup>st</sup> day on ‘Hospital rations’ Stomach very sick revolts at all foods See Doctor orders me Bitters & Jollop – Horribly sick after it... Retained nothing on stomach to day.” Then, after days and days of these horrors, Casey reports on 26 November: “Sent in my Memoir of ‘Sarsfield’ to Wild Goose to day.” Despite the fact that this memoir was not published in the newspaper, Casey clearly filled some of his time in writing for it. Cashman’s mentions of Casey when writing of the initial gatherings to discuss forming the paper also indicate Casey’s involvement.

These discussions of the paper also serve as proxies for political meetings; Cashman’s entries use language reminiscent of minutes for a meeting. On 1 November, after mentioning the previous night’s activities and passing the Tropic of Cancer,

Cashman reports: “A meeting today re-newspaper – adjourned” (70). It seems odd for him to have merely jotted down “adjourned” with no other information about that meeting. A later entry contains more elements that mirror minutes from a meeting, including a roll call and resolutions passed, preceding the note of “adjourned”:

5<sup>th</sup> [November] We held a meeting to see if we could start a newspaper – the meeting was composed of Con Mahoney, J. Flood, Duggan, O’Reilly, Coady, Casey, Noonan & self – we passed resolutions, appointed a Chairman & finally settled to start if we get paper. JF [John Flood] appointed editor & O’R – ’sub Kelly manager – B – pD – meeting adjourned” (71).

In the original manuscript, there is a word or name crossed out between “Noonan” and “& self”; it begins with a C but is unreadable under the cross out. The “B” and “pD” are clearly abbreviations, probably mundane meeting notes, but perhaps stand ins for something discussed that would have been illicit to record. Cashman wrote about the meeting on 5 November, but compared to Casey’s records, the meeting actually happened on 31 October.

Casey’s entry about the initial newspaper meeting appears on 31 October in the middle of a much longer entry beginning with discussion of the weather and ending with a description of celebrations for All Hallow Eve. He writes: “Meeting about project of starting a newspaper whilst on board T Duggan chairman Mr John Flood appointed editor Mr J OReilly sub Editor Mr C Keane Reader Mr D Bradley Printers Devil debate as to name not settled meeting adjourned.” The fact that Casey gives more detail about the different positions and that it appears as part of a larger entry about the day’s events

indicates that Casey wrote about it on the actual day it happened. In the manuscript of Cashman's diary, the entry, as mentioned, is at the very bottom of a page and begins "5<sup>th</sup>"; the top of the next page also begins "5<sup>th</sup>" and recounts events that correspond to Casey's records of the events of 5 November, including the appearance of a Brazilian mail steamer and the sighting of a large cormorant. Perhaps Cashman was merely so involved in putting together the concert on the day of the actual meeting, 31 October, that he only had time and inclination to record the program for that night's concert which he briefly introduces with "I have just finished on [a program] for tonight here it is" (69). What with the meeting and his organization of the concert for the special All Hallow Eve celebration he may have just been too busy to record the events of the meeting that day, and didn't get to write about it until 5 November (that "We held a meeting" is in the simple past tense and need not refer to the day of the entry, but merely an event which took place in the recent past).<sup>25</sup> These discrepancies in the men's journals merely indicate that their priorities and the time they spent with their journals were different; Cashman seemed to spend more time in the actual planning and executing of the concerts and newspaper while often-seasick Casey spent more time alone, or with the doctor. Cashman's delayed entry may also indicate that he did not immediately record the formation of the newspaper hierarchy until he was sure he had gotten permission from the Captain to start a newspaper: without that permission, such a journal entry by a man arrested in offices of the *Irish People* might be considered treason.

---

<sup>25</sup> On 8 November, Cashman indicates how busy he is with the paper: "the staff of the 'Goose' are hard at work all day – I have scarcely a moment to spare – printing all day, No 6 Mess is turned into a publishing office" (73). In preparing the Christmas issue, the masthead of which was decorated extensively, Cashman writes "I am up to my eyes in papers today" (106).

Casey discusses the content of the proposed newspaper on 1 November: “Meeting reassembled named paper ‘The Wild Goose’ articles to be purely literary.” Casey, who crossed out some of his writing most likely for fear of being caught committing further treason, perhaps protests too much, insisting that the articles are to be purely literary for the sake of any authority figure who might read his journal. Even Fennell, writing well after the end of his imprisonment and having the hindsight of knowing what was actually written in the paper, insists that “As the discussion of politics was forbidden in [*The Wild Goose*’s] columns its pages are devoted to legendary, descriptive sketches, tales and historical essays” (115). But the fact that the men made a final decision on the content of the journal means that there was discussion of various types of writing they might do, including political (which is, of course, the type of writing with which most of these men, Cashman and Casey included, were most familiar, having been contributors to or otherwise involved in the *Irish People*, the headquarters of the Fenian brotherhood). This discussion over the newspaper’s content, implied through the report of reaching a final decision on that content, might be what Cashman elides between mention of the meeting and calling it “adjourned.”

Like the newspaper, the evening concerts take on elements of a political meeting in their organization. Cashman writes of the first concert that they held on 24 October: “last night’s Concert a decided success. We appointed a Chairman and Vice to preserve order & arrange proceedings” (64). Thus the cultural and the political coalesce in the organization of the newspaper and the evening concerts, and the men are given an outlet to and perhaps a chance to preserve and practice their political organizational skills.

The idea for the evening concerts may have been suggested to them by observing the behaviors of the sailors. Sailors often sing to pass time during monotonous tasks or long shifts on deck. Three days after Cashman writes of drawing up a program for a concert, Casey records his observations of the sailors singing on deck after a storm: “Some sailors return to their duty & are working away to the jolly chorus of: – ‘Heave haul away Haul away my dandies’” (27 October). This was likely not the first time that the sailors had sung on the *Hougoumont* during the voyage; Fennell, though he does not include exact dates, writes that just before the anchor is raised for the first time, “suddenly, to the great joy of all, out from chaos and confusion, the mournful cadances of the sea song, chorused by all hands, rise above the din and clatter” (75). Perhaps observing the way that the sailors engaged their time and their minds during the voyage influenced the Fenians’ decision to use song and other types of performance to kill time and amuse themselves.

Cashman’s three entries about the concerts and newspaper also reveal the extent to which the men formed bonds on board the ship. The ship sailed on 12 October, and by the 24 October entry Cashman already referred to himself and his fellow Fenians as “We”: “*We* had a debate”; “*We* held a meeting”; “*We* appointed a Chairman”. Of course, they already had close ties politically before they were arrested, but they came from different parts of Ireland and were arrested for different infractions as part of an organization that on a structural level kept its units or “circles” autonomous. When first put in his mess aboard the *Hougoumont*, Cashman notes that “All my messmates with the exception of [Edward] Kelly were strangers to me, nevertheless we very shortly

fraternized and became good friends” (60).<sup>26</sup> Friendship became a savior to the men through their journey, a luxury denied to John Mitchel. In the fifth issue of *The Wild Goose*, published on 7 December, a poem entitled “Friendship” by Cashman appears, the only poem he contributed to the paper during its run. He contrasts “bleak misfortune’s frown” and “painful thoughts” with “friendship’s sweet appeal” in which he finds “relief for lost caress.” He applies the relief found in friendship specifically to his case on board the ship:

Oft pausing, when the deck I pace,  
 Strange forms I see around me thronging;  
 No genial smile lights up a face  
 To greet me: then with ardent longing  
  
 For sympathetic friend I sigh, –  
 For one whose words my heart would brighten,  
 To whom I’d talk of days gone by,  
 And try my bosom’s load to lighten. (1.5, 6)

---

<sup>26</sup> A note about the first few entries in Cashman’s diary. The first several pages in which he recounts at some length the events of 24 to 30 September – his removal from prison onto the *Earnest* and then to the *Hougoumont* – appear to have been written after the fact. The header on the first page reads “Convict Ship ‘Hougoumont’ / At Sea (near mouth of English Channel) / 15<sup>th</sup> October 1867” (55). The first dated entry, in which his discussion of being put in his mess on the *Hougoumont* for the first time occurs, is 30 September. But even this entry appears to have been composed later than it is dated: it is much longer and more detailed than any other entries that follow which are usually, as mentioned, just quick notes on each day’s events. Entries of this typical short type start on 1 October. He may have been attempting to write more of a memoir-style journal, in the manner of John Mitchel, but then discovered he had other diversions: talking to fellow Fenians, writing the paper, and organizing the concerts. The memoir style of this early entry, being so different from that of the journal style, indicates that the line about ‘becoming good friends’ may have been written through the lens of two weeks of fraternity with his fellow Fenians (if the 15 October date applies to the entire memoir-style introductory section, through the long 30 September entry).

The specific relief that friendship offers on board the ship comes from offering an outlet and encouragement for recalling “days gone by,” which could refer to memories of home (indicated in the earlier phrase “lost caress,” a reference to the loss of wife and family which Cashman’s journal reveals he felt greatly). He may also here reference the days gone by of the longer history of Irish nationalist fighting, discussion of which would offer relief in the form of reminding Cashman that his struggle is worthy as it is part of a longer history of resistance. Friendship among the Fenians is a conduit to thoughts of home, which offers relief to misery, and is also an act of resistance. So the friendship itself becomes a form of resistance. The journey to the antipodes united the men on an intimate and confidential level, through which each encouraged the other to continue the fight.

The distinction they felt from other prisoners in both degree and kind of crime naturally united the Fenians. Cashman early notes this distinction as the prisoners march from Milbank prison to the gun boat that would take them to the *Hougoumont*: “we were chained together (ten in a gang) our lads being all separated and mixed with ordinary convicts” (59). Just before that he mentions that he shared a “hearty shake of the hand from every Gael who hove in sight” as they are rushed from their cells, so it is unclear if “our lads” refers to all the Irish, or just to his fellow Fenians. It is clear, however, that Cashman perceives a difference between his kind and “ordinary convicts.” As Sullivan points out in “Reconsidering the Convict Ships,” the Fenians’ “education and literary sophistication was [a] way in which they stood apart from other convicts” (108). In a sort of post script to his journal added because he had not “mentioned anything of our treatment on board,” Cashman explicates that the Fenians were kept in “a separate

Compartment in the Convict portion of the ship” for which they were “very glad... as the majority of the Convicts were the greatest ruffians, and most notorious robbers in England” (136-7). The Fenians “Of course... did not associate or scarcely speak to the unfortunates” (136). Cashman does conclude that “a portion of them had been very respectable & well educated,” but the evidence he gives for that conclusion is that “a good many of them had a great respect for our men & endeavoured to show it by several acts of good nature & being most respectful in their deportment” (137, underline in original). Cashman definitely shows the superiority he felt to the other convicts, a somewhat problematically classist conclusion, but also in line with the Fenians’ conviction that they were not criminal at all: that the activities for which they had been arrested were right and the law was wrong.<sup>27</sup>

The ship’s Captain gave the Fenian prisoners – especially those working on *The Wild Goose* – special privileges. On 30 October, Cashman “enjoyed the first cigar today in 12 months,” which, though he refers to it as “a luxury here,” is still a privilege most likely not afforded to the mass of ordinary convicts (69). Keneally notes that the editors of the *Wild Goose* were “given certain extra luxuries, such as a delicious meat loaf, and the privilege to stay on deck till 7.30 p.m. for the duration of the voyage” (468). As military rather than political prisoners, O’Reilly and “sixteen other soldier Fenians had developed a greater sense of despair because they lived on the crowded, brutalizing main

---

<sup>27</sup> Thomas McCarthy Fennell suggests that the mixing of the Fenian prisoners with the common convicts was actually part of their punishment. The Fenians “were made objects of constant reflection, abuse and ridicule by the warders in charge, who, took advantage of every occasion to tell them, and make them feel, they were no better than common criminals, a fact in itself, which goes to show they could derive but soresort mortification from the insidious comparison, and that enforced fellowships with incorrigible ruffians... entailed the meanest kind of temper, the chagrine and irritation it was the intention they should bear. Here, on board, nothing is plainer than that the furtherance of this policy is sought and endorsed” (64). His use of the term “policy” to describe this form of punishment suggests that he sees this as a widespread and purposeful tactic of the British government in the suppression of Irish republicans.

prison deck” where “sleeping space was limited, and seventy hammocks were needed as well as bunks” (Keneally 466). Once O’Reilly began working on the paper and participating in the evening concerts, the officers gave him permission to move his hammock to the No.6 Mess where the civilian Fenians were kept.<sup>28</sup>

A potentially insidious reason that the Fenians were kept separate is indicated in John Mitchel’s journal as well as in older records of the treatment of Irish political prisoners. As Sullivan notes, “Many of the Irish transportees, even in the early years, were political prisoners and... were singled out on board ship for fear of mutiny” (“Reconsidering” 103). Cashman feels this discrimination when he boards the *Hougoumont*, “where we for some time stood the scrutiny of the spectators who gathered ‘round, I presume to see for themselves what Species of Animal the Fenians resembled” (60). John Mitchel writes of what he sees as the absurd fear on the part of the British officers that he might incite a mutiny. When first put in his cell on board the “Scourge” in Bermuda, Mitchel observes “that great care is taken to keep me from all communication with the prisoners” (63); while the prisoners are on board he is “expected to seclude myself” (64). He concludes that the officers “did not expect me to be so quiet; and ascribing my conduct in Ireland, of course, to mere turbulence of disposition, and general insubordination of character, the commander has evidently some distrust of my extreme

---

<sup>28</sup> O’Reilly only participated reluctantly at first; Cashman writes of O’Reilly and the first evening concert, “I believe the beggar doesn’t take much interest in it” (64). O’Reilly’s name is not listed in Cashman’s records of performers at the first two concerts. Cashman writes that for the first concert “Jack O’Reilly and I preparing to recite ‘Brutus & Cassius’” (64) but O’Reilly apparently withdrew from this plan as it is not listed among the performances. Cashman’s record of the program for the third concert on 29 October finally includes O’Reilly’s name – “Recitation ‘The Old School Clock’ O’Reilly” – as well as a note: “This was written by himself – Thackrey inserted it in the ‘Cornhill Magazine’” (68). O’Reilly thereafter becomes a frequent performer at the concerts, often reciting his own poetry; “The Old School Clock” appeared in the sixth issue of *The Wild Goose*, on 14 December 1867 and has been occasionally anthologized in a slightly different form thereafter.

passiveness and submissiveness – he thinks it is all my deepness” (64). When the British eventually empty all the Irish from the hulk on which he is kept, Mitchel does not mince words: “The fools are actually afraid that I will stir patriotic mutinies here” (65).

Mitchel's tone generally drips with mockery of and disdain for the British authority's assumptions of superiority and ignorance towards of the Irish fight for independence. When he begins to understand that he will be sent to South Africa, he concludes, “No doubt they will give me a separate place on board for my own accommodation as usual – out of no love for me, but lest I should raise a mutiny; for they have a wholesome terror of my propensities and talents in that way” (135). Mitchel's derision and ridicule serve to belittle the British while simultaneously expressing his mute outrage towards their view of the Irish rebels as essentially ornery schoolchildren. In his phrase “wholesome terror,” Mitchel simultaneously mocks the view that the British officers have of him while reinforcing that, for very different reasons, their terror of the Irish rebels should be quite real.

While the *Hougoumont* writers do not directly suggest that they are being separated and placated for fear of an attempted mutiny, they do indicate that they collectively rebelled against certain ship board rules, which must have disturbed the officers. For example, as mentioned earlier, Casey writes of their refusal to call the wine officer “sir”:

Wine officer in calling out names requires men to answer ‘Sir or Here Sir – other prisoners do so All our men refuse ordered to remain below he expostulates with them – in vain – upon second consideration gives us

wine – he is for future our determined enemy – what care we as men we will stand upon our dignity (10 November).

Casey's description indicates the importance such collective rebellion had to their feelings of solidarity, especially for Casey who felt separated from his peers by his sickness and insistently reaffirms the collective intentionality of the group through his use of collective pronouns: "our men", "our enemy," "we stand upon our dignity." The officer in this case, though, does capitulate. Perhaps the officers felt that if they allowed the Fenians the outlet of the newspaper, as well as these other accommodations, they would remain docile for the voyage. And this was perhaps an effective move on the part of the officers: unlike Mitchel, the *Hougoumont* Fenians actually did consider a mutiny on which, as mentioned, they did not follow through.

What they enacted instead was the cultural resistance of allegory, of poetry, and of comedy. *The Wild Goose*, as Casey writes in his journal, is certainly literary. It is also historical, the name recalling the brigades of Irish exiles and their descendants who served in the French army after the battle of the Boyne in 1690 and the "disastrous treaty of Limerick" in 1691 (Keneally 332). The name embodies the Fenians' status both as exiles waiting to return home and as fighters.

The editors introduce the figure of the wild goose as the personified voice of the paper itself, as well as a goose who wings her way around the world and ends up at the *Hougoumont* to guide its inmates on the long voyage. The first issue begins with a letter "To Our Readers" in which the "goose" introduces herself and lays out the aims of the paper: "I've dipped my wings in the emerald spray of Erin's waters... and with retrospective eye have contemplated the land of pilgrimage and pride of the 'Wild Geese'

of other days, – to bring you memories of home and friends, of wives and sweethearts, and of scents and songs of fatherland, ever dear to the wanderer” (1.1, 1). The primary goal of the paper, then, is to offer relief in the present through three incarnations of the past: memories of homeland in general; specific memories to recall family and home; and stories of fellow Irish exiles. The “goose” continues, promising to “be here where all else is strange, and that each new weekly visitant may be still more welcome, – not alone for the news it brings to keep your memories green, but also that it may prove of interest to all to watch the changing flight of the flock, and read the mystic story they trace” (1.1, 1). The goal, then, is not solely in preserving and presenting memories. The editors saw themselves as part of a larger “mystic story,” part of the mythscape that makes up the Irish people and the Irish nation. The newspaper, as the journals, forms part of the story of Ireland and enacts Irish nationalism by presenting and preserving their story while keeping thoughts of the nation from which and for which they are exiled fresh.

Because they were forbidden to record directly militant anti-British material, the Fenians relied heavily on allegory and parallelism to present their political sentiments. As with the title of the paper, one main type of allegorical connection they created was between themselves and previous Irish rebels. In an essay “Musings,” John Edward Kelly considers generally the path of the *Hougoumont* prisoners and what awaits them at the end, and subtly connects their journey to that of John Mitchel and the other Young Irelanders: “Scarce twenty years have elapsed since others winged their way over nearly the same path, some of whom, after a short sojourn under the austral sky, sought more congenial climes; some returned to their favorite haunts; and others, pluming themselves

for a last flight, shaped their course for spheres beyond the grave” (1.5, 2).<sup>29</sup> Twenty years before the Young Irelanders were transported for treason and for participating in the rebellion of 1848; those “more congenial climes” might refer to America where Mitchel and others found support for their nationalist cause. Kelly then looks “Farther back in the past” to “see the ‘Wild Geese’ spreading their pinions for the sunny land of France, and... freely shedding their blood to uphold the honor of the fleur-de-lis” (1.5, 2). The Fenians, whom Kelly refers to as “our banished flock,” take their places among these Irish fighters.

In the same issue, the voice of the “wild goose” returns to offer thoughts on “Past. – Present. – Future.”, connecting their plight once again to other Irish exiles and rebels: “Look back – far back into the past; and, although strange, we will find our position is no anomaly. From our little island home, at different periods, have ‘The Wild Geese’ winged their flight – Some into voluntary exile – others driven over the wide world by the unsparing hand” (1.5, 5). The past offers solace as well as inspiration for the Fenians to carry on their fight, by, as the “goose” writes, “learning wisdom and gaining strength as we look on their trials” (1.5, 5). While not directly encouraging militant action, the subtle connections to the past encourage the Fenians to stay the course and uphold nationalist sentiments.

---

<sup>29</sup> Many of the articles and essays in the paper are unattributed, likely joint efforts by the editors John Flood and John Boyle O’Reilly. Almost all of the writers used pen names when signing their work. Kelly went by either Kappa or Laoi (Irish for K), and in one humorous piece wrote under the assumed persona of the wise-yet-unlearned “Paddy from Cork.” Father Delany wrote as either Beta or Delta; Thomas Duggan, who wrote a serialized story about “our Pagan Ancestors” called “Queen Cliodhna and the Flower of Erin,” called himself “Mushra”; John Flood was “Binn Eider,” from his birthplace north of Dublin; Cashman was “Suir,” referring to the River Suir; and O’Reilly mostly went by his actual name, but signed a few pieces “Boyne.”

The longest contemplation of their eponymous forebears comes in O'Reilly's poem "Cremona," published in the Christmas issue shortly before the end of the voyage.<sup>30</sup> The poet tells the full story of the battle of the Irish brigade at Cremona, fighting against the Austrians on behalf of France. Throughout, O'Reilly delicately intersperses references to the general plight of the Irish, and the struggle for freedom in the homeland. The Irish Brigade did not "[grudge] to their adopted land their dead so thickly strown, / But fiercely dealt her vengeance out whilst waiting for their own" (1.7, 9). O'Reilly indirectly connects the transported Fenians with the Wild Geese of Cremona as exiles for whom "many a heart is winging back, away across the main, / To that dear land they loved so well, but ne'er may see again" (1.7, 10), and then writes of the Irish Brigade's capacity to fight under extreme circumstances: "outnumbered ten to one, / They hand to hand still held their own, still gallantly fought on" – a subtle indication of the capacity of the exiled Fenians to do the same. He ends highlighting the prayers of those at home in Ireland for the dead in France, and safely couches a contemporary sentiment in a past event: "a wail / Went up to heaven from their own land – a death wail for her brave, / ... / And with the wail of agony, a fervent prayer arose / to Heaven for one such victory at home o'er Ireland's foes." Though the historical present of the poem is 1700, thereby safely relegating such a prayer for victory to the past and also cleverly avoiding direct mention of Britain as "Ireland's foes," O'Reilly makes clear his current political agenda.

---

<sup>30</sup> In all of the issues, the poems are presented in a subsection titled "Emerald Spray," a reference to the initial letter to the reader in which the "goose" says she has dipped her wings "in the emerald spray of Erin's waters." This subtitle suggests that the poems all in some way call to mind pieces of Ireland.

The writers also use allegory to discuss their position by connecting their plight with that of other nations at other times. In his poem “Farewell” in the first issue, O’Reilly connects the exiled Irish to the wandering Israelites, implying that God is on the side of the Irish:

Farewell to thy green hills, thy valleys, and plains,  
 My poor blighted Country! In exile and chains  
 Are thy sons doomed to linger. O God! who didst bring  
 Thy children to Zion from Egypt’s proud King,  
 We implore Thy great mercy! Oh, stretch forth Thy hand  
 And guide back her sons to this poor blighted land. (1.1, 6)

Again, O’Reilly is quite subtle in his connections, avoiding any direct treasonous language. He merely makes mention that the god to whom he prays is the same one who led the Israelites from Egypt and punished the Pharaoh, and leaves the rest of the analogy to speak for itself.

In a two part piece on his experience during the Fourth of July celebrations in Boston, Kelly praises the American patriots and, like O’Reilly, implies an analogy to the Irish (while still making light fun of the Americans). Awakened by fireworks which he at first mistakes for the thunder of Judgment Day, Kelly realizes it is “the birth-day of a nation,”

the day of all others that forcibly reminds Americans of the time when their fathers, despite of the immense odds they had to contend with, nobly dared to brave the proudest sovereignty of this world, and, battling for their rights, compel it to acknowledge their independence; then, by their

exertions, raising them to the pre-eminence they now hold amongst the nations of the earth. (1.3, 2)

Like O'Reilly in "Cremona," Kelly never directly mentions the Fenians, but the analogy is clear. He later attends an "Antiques and Horribles" parade, at which he views an "allegorical representation... of the Devil inciting Tyranny, crowned and dressed as a monarch, to acts of cruelty towards a group of cowering wretches in chains, whilst the Angel of Liberty was... releasing them from slavery, and the tyrant eventually becomes the prey of the Arch-Fiend" (1.3, 3). In the context of the American celebration, the allegory applies to the American fight for independence, but here Kelly cleverly lays allegory over allegory by including this description in *The Wild Goose*. He concludes the first installment of the story by making the analogy a little more clear with another event from that day, a concert on the Commons at which the "national anthem of the principle nations of the globe were performed" except for that of England which was, to Kelly's "no small surprise and delight, substituted by 'St. Patrick's Day'" (1.3, 3). At that moment, the Irish usurp England's position in an inversion of their current position. Kelly carefully chooses which events to recount in order to clearly yet subtly provide allegories for the real story he wants to tell, of the Irish fight against and eventual hoped-for defeat of the English.

Finally, the writers discuss Ireland indirectly by creating allegorical representations of her. In his poem "A Mother's Love," O'Reilly writes directly of duty to mothers in general, with the implication that he writes specifically of his own mother, and a much more indirect indication that the mother figure in the poem stands in for Ireland. The poem begins with an implication to "shield her well from every pain"

because “Thou’lt never know such love again / When she has passed away” (1.4, 5). O’Reilly here subtly calls to mind the Sean-Bhean Bhocht, as later writers of the Irish Revival would do directly in pieces like *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, the poor old woman who is Ireland in need of care and protection from her young men. John Flood invokes a similar allegory in “Cinderella,” which, while not about an old woman, presents the theme implicit in the tale of the Sean-Bhean bhocht of the poor and homely woman revived and invigorated by a man’s care to become rich and lush. The male speaker discusses his beloved’s beauty and grace despite her lack of wealth and “courtly grace,” but laments that “’Tis crime to love thee” (1.7, 7). In his attempt to shield her from scorn, he “braved the frown of hate/ The law’s harsh decree; / Mavrone! thine is a bitter fate. – / A felon’s doom for me.”<sup>31</sup> Here Flood lets the mask of the speaker slip ever so slightly in revealing that the speaker and the poet share their fate as felons, while practically shouting that the woman is clearly an analogy for Ireland. The speaker ends with the final wish to “see her once before I die,” cementing the allegorical meaning of the poem by calling on the recurrent motif throughout *The Wild Goose* of a longing to home.

The newspaper shares with Cashman’s and Casey’s journals this focus on home. And, again as in the journals, each celebration of and contemplation of home serves a political purpose. The prose piece “Home Thoughts” from the first issue emphasizes the almost religious importance that home has to the transported Fenians. The piece begins by suggesting that, while difficulties, pain, sorrow, and suffering lead men to important lessons and thus to happiness in life, it is “not by adversity alone that we are rendered good and happy” and that there “are powers... of the mind which... will shed a... light on

---

<sup>31</sup> Mavrone comes from the Irish *mo bhrón*, “my grief.”

our path through life and will keep the loftier and better part of our nature green and vigorous” (1.1, 5). The “best and foremost” of these powers is “that beautiful and mysterious feeling of love and reverence that attaches to the word home” (1.1, 5). The writers note that home’s “signification is limitless” – home is “Country, wife, child, brother, friend” – and establish the synecdochic relationships by which writing of one piece of home signifies all of home, signifies the struggle itself for homeland (1.1, 5). They especially emphasize the sublimating influence of home on the exile, for whom, “though wandering far, far away from the scenes of his joyous youth and merry boyhood, the purer part of his nature returns thither” (1.1, 5). Though suggesting the myriad significations that the word home suggests, by the end of the piece they exclusively equate home with country, with Ireland. They suggest that the exile can actually love the homeland more fervently than can he who remains at home: “we will still look back and pray for her [the mother-land] and for them [‘dear ones’] with the true, unswerving love only known to Exiles” (1.1, 6). As is evident in Casey and Cashman’s journals, nation to the exile takes on special significance because it is an idea which must be constantly re-asserted in order to remain extant. Home is no longer an *a priori* essence but a kinetic experience that only exists in exchange with he who contemplates it; in other words, as the subject performs home by thinking it and writing it, home becomes itself.

As the exile creates home through his thoughts of it, home has a salubrious effect on the exile, and particularly on the prisoner. In “Prison Thoughts,” a poem which John Edward Kelly composed while still in Millbank prison and which appeared in the first issue of *The Wild Goose* immediately after “Home Thoughts,” Kelly highlights the way the prisoner’s thoughts fly almost involuntarily to home: “Whilst to and fro my prison

cell I trace / The drear elliptic course with constant feet, / Thought spurns restraint, and, eager to embrace / Loved friends and scenes, speeds far on pinions fleet” (1.1, 6). In imagining being able to kneel by his mother’s grave, the prisoner speaker gains “again new strength therefrom” to carry on and come to peace with his lot. John Boyle O’Reilly picks up on the soothing effect of memories of home and childhood in his long narrative poem “Christmas Night.” The poem follows the North Wind as its joyous Christmas eve flight is interrupted by the sight of a prisoner in his cell, caught in “the grasp of dark Despair” (1.7, 15). The prisoner becomes calm as the wind calls forth for him “long-forgotten scenes of youth when he played a happy child,” and even achieves penitence and communion with god when “softer still the Old Wind blew, and recalled his father’s death, / And his mothers voice, – and a sob burst forth, for he felt her loving breath” (1.1, 15). Memories of home have a reciprocal effect on the prisoners, as they give the exiles calm and strength to keep fighting for that home which in turn supports them in their despair. With discussion of home, the writers couch the political within the personal, and avoid outwardly treasonous language while still reminding readers of their ongoing fight for a homeland.

Kelly’s “Prison Thoughts” also introduces another motif that the writers employ to express their political beliefs while not explicitly denigrating English law: the idea of “the right.” It is the cause for which they are transported, and for which they take their punishment with resigned stoicism. Kelly writes that in prison “A living death [I] must suffer for the right” (1.1, 6). John Flood expands on this theme in “Live it down,” a poetic treatise on surviving “life’s battle” through “inward consciousness of right” (1.5, 6). With the repeated refrain of “Courage, brother! live it down,” Flood emphasizes that

in the face of “Calumny’s sharp tongue,” of “cynic Envy,” of “the little mind,” or of “scoffing ignorance,” that “Right ever conquers – Wrong will never” (1.5, 6). In this guise of general advice, the writers are able to advance the idea that the Irish cause is the right, and, by implication, the British fulfill all of those other qualities that obtain in the wrong. The Fenians draw on a long tradition of the Irish denying their criminality under British law because it was the law itself that was wrong. John Mitchel writes frequently of this contrast, particularly in his refusal to ask for any sort of pardon or special treatment, because a pardon would indicate that he acknowledged he had done something for which he needs beg pardon. Upon hearing news of his fellow Young Irelanders’ sentencing to transportation, Mitchel writes:

I do affirm before God that there are no three men now living in Ireland more reverently obedient to law, more thoroughly and devoutly loyal, than those three now on their way to the Antipodes as felons and outlaws. It is *because* they reverence law, and scorn and loathe the false *simulacrum* of law – because their souls have yearned for peace, order, justice, under the sacred majesty of law – that they sail in a convict-ship to-day. (172, emphasis in original)

The *Hougoumont* Fenians continue this tradition, affirming that the trials they undergo are not only borne the easier by reassurance that they proceed from right action, but that, due to the general carnivalesque inversion of law and right in Ireland, transportation actually proves that they have acted according to the right. The Fenians’ subtlety in their use of this concept of the right as opposed to the nominally legal allows them the

opportunity to forward a scathing critique of British morals while encouraging one another to sustain the republican fight.

The Fenians also used humor in their newspaper to express disdain for the British under the guise of lighthearted fun. In a comic piece in the first issue purporting offer a “truthful account of the land to which they are going,” Kelly uses understatement, sarcasm, and puns to describe Australia. Kelly takes a swipe at British imperialism:

This great continent of the south, having been discovered by some Dutch skipper and his crew somewhere between the 1st and 19th centuries of the Christian Era, was, in consequence, taken possession of by the Government of Great Britain, in accordance with that just and equitable maxim, “What’s yours is mine; what’s mine’s my own.” (1.1, 8)

This critique would obviously have rung quite true with men who were fighting to gain control of their own country, subdued by Britain under just such a maxim; the humor makes the statement more palatable. In a parody of a letter to the editor, Kelly asks a series of questions from the voice of an unlearned and somewhat illiterate Irishman. He asks why Australia is “so dhry, and the ould land so humid?” (1.4, 8). He suggests that, while in Australia is dried out “by the grate hate of the sun,” in Ireland, “it is aisy to see that, even without the assistance of what I call natheral causes, the tears shed by the unhappy children of mother Erin for her misforthins would keep the ould country humid” (1.4, 8). Couched in a humorous piece that even pokes fun at the Irish, Kelly ably inserts these serious moments with great satiric effect, calling on his readers to recognize his tonal shifts while keeping to the windy side of the law in terms of treasonous speech.

The use of many layers of allegorical language as well as humor allow the writers of *The Wild Goose* to express their disdain for British imperialism and to even call for continued resistance in the fight for home rule. The conditions of the prison ship colluded to encourage the men towards subtle forms of resistance, and in their writing they substitute the epistemology of nation for that of right, family, and home. The *Hougoumont* Fenians are certainly not the first Irish people to use poetry to express political ideas; both the *Nation* and the *Irish People* saw poetry as “both a humanizing and a political tool” (Keneally 409). But unlike those terrestrial papers, the *Hougoumont* Fenians never expected their paper to reach beyond their own small circle. It was for themselves, their own form of encouragement and resistance engendered by the circumstances of their removal from the home for which they fought. In many ways, this self-motivated, insider form of nationalism reflects a purer motivation than an outward, bombastic, rabble-rousing nationalism. They spoke and wrote the nation Ireland to one another, not because they expected their words to effect a republic but in order to maintain the Ireland of the mind’s eye. Their focus on the past and on a preserved image of home presented a pedagogical form of nationalism, while their placing of themselves into the grand narrative of Irish resistance – as well as the grand narrative of all revolutionaries in the struggle against empire – enacted a performative nationalism. The nation was extant and it was still becoming, and the Fenians, far from being swept out to sea, were grounded in their national fight through their writing.

Of course, there was always the idea that the writing they did on board would, like John Mitchel’s before theirs, become seminal nationalist texts. But there was no guarantee of this, and according to Cashman’s and Casey’s journals their reasons for

starting the newspaper, for keeping the journals, and for engaging in the evening performances was originally more personal than political. But for such men, taken from their homeland for engaging in the right to home, and especially for Casey and Cashman, taken because of their political writing, any discussion of home, any nostalgia they felt, albeit purely personal – a longing for the embrace of wife and family; a memory of a playing field of childhood – was of necessity likewise political. This embedded metonymy combined with the restrictions on the content of communication on board the ship forced the men to speak allegorically – to always have two levels to anything they were saying. The Fenians' specific causes for and form of punishment made any seemingly simple personal emotion – such as Cashman's "thinking of the Dear Ones at home" – always carry an underlying political message, an unwritten completion to that phrase as if to say, I am thinking of that home because I have been forced from it unjustly (85).

The separate space of the transport ship, and all of the material realities thereon – from the overwhelming isolation experienced by any person adrift in a small ship on a vast ocean to the specific conditions to which the Fenians were subject – encouraged the Fenians to long for and imagine the rights, protections, and freedoms that they believed would belong to them in a sovereign republic of Ireland. The ocean was a call to remain tied to their home, to work hard to remember the land for which they were put adrift in the first place. Ireland was already an idea to them: being physically removed from the land that the idea represented only forced them to solidify and reaffirm that idea as fact even more strongly. And unlike the later generation of poet nationalists in the Irish Revival, they wrote for themselves. A journal is a necessarily private endeavor – even if

there is an idea that it one day might be published – and there was no reason for the Fenians to believe that even one copy of their newspaper would be preserved after the voyage. Even when Fennell was writing long after the voyage, he suggested that the paper, published for a mere seven weeks, “went out of existence to appear no more and is now perhaps a souvenir in the hands of some disinterested party in Freemantle prison” (115). They wrote from a form of personal nationalism engendered by a need to stay connected to the land for which they were being punished, to affirm the right of their position, and to convince themselves that, even if their individual names would not be remembered, that their actions formed part of the larger narrative that they believed would be the story of the emancipation of Ireland.

There is, though, a dilemma in seeing their writing in this positive light. Bill Ashcroft, in *Postcolonial Transformation*, writes about celebrating postcolonial writers’ taking hold of the colonist’s language and transforming it to express themselves and their cultural identity. He suggests that such celebration

would be comparable to saying that the political prisoner has been fortunate because he has been able to write, in prison, an auto-biography which caught the imagination of the world, as Nelson Mandela has with *Long Walk to Freedom*. One might even say that such imprisonment has even been a crucial factor in the ultimate overthrow of the apartheid regime. How do we assess the moral dilemma of such a possibility? (5–6).

How indeed can one view positively the story of a young man, hardly more than a boy, who believed so strongly in his nation’s freedom that he decided to write to the paper to express his views, only to be arrested and shunted around to four different prisons within

a period of a year, there subjected to hard labor and forced silence, then to be told unceremoniously one morning that by the end of the day he would be on a ship to the other side of the world, the land of savages and criminals and deathly heat, for a third of the time he had been alive? To say John Casey's three months of wasting sickness, hives, inability to eat, and abject sadness is helpful or useful in its work towards a greater understanding of the ways that colonized people can speak back to their oppressors is a hard pill to swallow.

Perhaps it is best to take Casey at his word on the matter. In his memoir later published under the title *The Galtee Boy* written upon his return to Ireland about his experience in terrestrial British prisons, Casey explains from whence his inspiration comes to continue the fight: "The hatred begot of race and creed combined to render our position intolerable; but like the martyrs of old, the more our persecutors persecuted, the higher and more indomitable our courage became" (194). He writes this line about his time in prison before he had been transported, but writes it after his return from Australia. His spirit, far from being broken by the voyage, was imbued with the pedagogical patriotism of denizens of the No. 6 Ward on board the *Hougoumont*. While perhaps not as influential as Mitchel with his *Jail Journal*, the *Hougoumont* Fenians served as inspirations to fellow nationalists. Casey and the other Cork Fenians who returned to Ireland received a hero's welcome; the train was "mobbed at every station," and when "Casey emerged gleaming-eyed and elegant at Galtee, the whole town went into a shouting delirium" (Keneally 499). They continued to write the nation for the rest of their lives, some, like Casey, upon return to Ireland, others, like Cashman and O'Reilly, in Boston. Still others would stay in Australia and fight against anti-Irish sentiment there for

the rest of their lives, instilling in that foundling nation the seeds of a quiet yet rebellious, grave yet sardonic nationalism gleaned by seeing the British empire through their view from the hold.

## CHAPTER 2

“All things are queer and opposite”:  
Irish and Australian Nationalism in Christopher Koch’s *Out of Ireland*

On 6 November 1999, to the surprise, frustration, and outright anger of many involved in the cause, the Australian people voted to defeat a proposal that would transform the former British convict colony from a constitutional monarchy to a republic with a president. Despite widespread support from the media and bipartisan support among prominent political leaders,<sup>32</sup> the Australian republic referendum of 1999 failed on both counts of the so called “double majority” needed to pass a constitutional amendment. It received neither the majority of states, passing only in the Australian Capital Territory, nor the majority of voters, with 54.87% against (“Key Results”).<sup>33</sup> The reasons for the referendum’s failure suggested by later commentators are complex – for example, the referendum was pushed for too quickly; republicans were seen as elitist urbanites; the media was too biased in favor – and the commonly cited cause is that people who voted against it were actually pro-republic, but objected to the proposed

---

<sup>32</sup> In a piece written for Australian current affairs journal *National Observer* marking the approach of the one year anniversary of the failed referendum, former South Australian MP Nick Minchin (who later held ministerial positions in the Howard government and is currently the Australian Consul-General in New York) wrote: “Indeed it is remarkable that a majority of the people, and a majority in every State, voted No, given the extraordinary support given to the Yes case. The Yes case had the overt and demonstrable support of:

- \* the Australian Labor Party at State and Federal level (including four State Governments)
- \* the Trade Union movement
- \* the Australian Democrats
- \* the massive resources and influence of the News Ltd. Corporation
- \* every State Liberal Leader bar one
- \* the Deputy Federal Liberal Leader and up to one-third of the Federal Parliamentary Liberal Party
- \* a number of former Prime Ministers and Governors-General.

That vast army, with all its power and resources, failed to overcome the innate conservatism of the Australian people” (19).

<sup>33</sup> Lest this statistic be considered indicative of low voter turnout: Australia has mandatory voting, and thus 95.1% of eligible electors voted in the referendum (“Key Results”).

manner in which the president would be chosen: by a two-thirds majority of Parliament rather than a direct vote by the people (Kirby 525–6; Cross 558).

But a main reason, one in discussion today in Australian politics, is that the Australian people still felt close ties to Britain and to the Queen. The sentiment expressed by then Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies during Queen Elizabeth's 1963 royal tour of Australia – quoting a poem by Thomas Ford, “I did but see her passing by, and yet I love her till I die” – was shared by many Australians. The end of the millennium represented to Australians a moment to reassess national identity: not only was the centenary of Australia's federation approaching on 1 January 2001, but also the Olympic Games were to be held in September 2000, a chance for Australians to show the world what it means to be Australian (Kirby 525). The referendum moved beyond a question of pragmatic politics to revisit Australia's complex relationship with its colonial past. Though Australia was becoming an increasingly multicultural society by the 1990s, and one long devoted to ideals of “mateship” and egalitarianism, identity in Australia had for the first hundred and fifty years of its existence as a British colony hinged on a central question: convict or free settler?

Despite one's status prior to emigration, once in Australia having “come out free” placed a settler among the colony's elite, aligned him with the British authorities, and thus necessarily placed him in opposition to the convicts. This main dividing line of status in colonial Australia persisted through the mid-twentieth century. Known as the “hated stain,” having convict ancestry brought with it derision and ostracism until about the 1960s. Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore* writes that accusations of criminal ancestry “would send upper-middle-class Australians into paroxysms of social embarrassment.

None wanted to have convict ancestors” (158). Sociologist Ronald D. Lambert notes that hiding the stain was evident even at the institutional level:

...perhaps the most dramatic evidence of the stain, so far as genealogists are concerned, was the practice of destroying federal census data through the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the grounds that this ‘protected’ citizens from potentially embarrassing information.... Some genealogical organizations also required that patrons using their resources pledge not to use discoveries about convict ancestry to the possible detriment of living descendants (115).

While most evidence suggests that by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the negative associations with the “hated stain” had diminished, the republic referendum of 1999 reasserted the old binary, mapping the monarchist/republican debate onto old the free settler/convict divide by way of one’s position vis-à-vis a British governmental elite. As one columnist put it: “For some, two fingers to the monarchy now will vindicate those crimes against property and state which transportation was invented to punish in the first place. It will throw history in the teeth of the British” (Jacobson). The contemporary debate was steeped in the sectarianism of the past.

This parallel between the anti-British sentiment held by both 20<sup>th</sup> century republicans and 19<sup>th</sup> century transported convicts could be seen in the monarchists’ assertions about the role of the Irish in the republic debate. An article in *The Independent* shortly before the referendum notes that “One recurring theme of the monarchists has been that the republican campaign is a plot by Irish-Australians to exact revenge on the British for every act of oppression against the Irish through the ages” (Marks 25). While

the republican side downplayed the connection (“The idea that we are trying to adjust the Australian constitution for the sake of the potato famine is deluded” asserted Thomas Keneally, a founder of the Australian Republican Movement and author of *The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English Speaking World*, about Irish convicts transported to Australia), the Irish in Australia have been “involved in every major insurrection against the Crown” since their transportation on the First Fleet in 1788 (Marks 25). An editorial from the *Irish Times* in the aftermath of the failed referendum recalls that the famous Eureka stockade rebellion, “the single historical event from which Australians have drawn greatest inspiration for their egalitarian and libertarian spirit had strong republican, and Irish, overtones” (“Australia’s Queen” 17). The republic referendum debate brought to the fore questions of national identity that preoccupied Australia throughout its history: convicts versus free settlers, Irish versus Anglo, and even Aboriginal versus white oppressor.

It was in the midst of this complicated national debate that Australian novelist Christopher Koch published *Out of Ireland* (1999). A fictional reimagining of Young Irelander John Mitchel’s *Jail Journal*, the novel is framed as the journal of Irish political prisoner Robert Devereux kept during his transportation first to the prison hulks in Bermuda and thence to Van Diemen’s Land, culminating in his escape to America.<sup>34</sup> The novel is concerned with how the early settlers, bond and free, English and Irish, became the first citizens of Australia, and with the idea of nationalism more broadly. Yet, taking its form and a large part of its content from an important Irish nationalist text, it sits in an

---

<sup>34</sup> A prison hulk is usually a former seagoing vessel that has been modified for use as a floating prison. After the American Revolution deprived England of a useful prison colony, the British government dealt with prison overcrowding by stationing many of these hulks in the Thames, as well as at other ports – such as that in Bermuda – throughout their colonial possessions.

interstitial place: the story is both Irish and Australian, and suggests that these two national histories are inextricably linked by way of the convict transport system. The novel suggests that the questions circling around the republic referendum of what it means to be Australian are answered in part by what it means to be Irish.

While Mitchel could not have known as he was keeping his journal the impact it would have on later Irish nationalists (though he later published it with the intention to inspire and motivate), Koch, writing in 1999, had the perspective of history. Written almost eighty years after the Irish Free State Agreement, and in the immediate aftermath of the Good Friday agreement, *Out of Ireland* is a novel about the already-realized potential of forming an Irish republic presented at the moment when another potential republic fought to free itself from the bonds of imperial history. It works to amalgamate those concerns of the past that still affect the present.

In this way, *Out of Ireland* functions as many neo-Victorian novels do in their relationships to the past, particularly those dealing with certain atrocities enacted in the nineteenth century that were covered up by official or mainstream narratives of history. The Neo-Victorian or “Victoriana,” writes Cora Kaplan, “includes the self-conscious rewriting of historical narratives to highlight the suppressed histories of gender and sexuality, race and empire, as well as challenges to the conventional understandings of the historical itself” (3).<sup>35</sup> In *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma*, Kohlke and Gutleben suggest that the neo-Victorian novel “may function as a belated abreaction or ‘working through’ of nineteenth-century traumas, as well as those of our own times, albeit more obliquely” (3). Not only do such works help unearth and explore traumatic events of both

---

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan defines “Victoriana” as “the astonishing range of representations and reproductions for which the Victorian... is the common referent” (3).

past and present, they suggest a continuity between the past and the present. Neo-Victorian novels sit at the nexus between the postmodern view of history and the past as essentially unrecoverable and the desire to actually be able to retrieve something of the past. As Dana Shiller puts it: “neo-Victorian fiction explores the ground between writing as though there are no persisting truths, a way of thinking that gives the author tremendous latitude in reconstructing the past, and writing as though there is indeed a recoverable past, however attenuated” (541). They comment on events of the past, on how to come to know those events, on how knowable the past even is, and on the relationship between the past and present.

Koch explores this neo-Victorian concern with the extent to which the past can be uncovered through his use of a frame narrative. The main body of the novel is a journal just as its predecessor, Mitchel’s *Jail Journal*, was, and thus it is a literal as well as symbolic rewriting of a historical narrative. While Mitchel self-published his journal on his arrival in America, Koch frames the novel as a found artifact introduced by an industrious editor:

The diaries of the Irish political exile Robert Devereux were kept between 1848 and 1851. They lay hidden for one hundred and twenty-five years, on a hop farm in southern Tasmania....

They consist of two thick volumes bound in calfskin, with entries made on both sides of the page. They were lodged in Devereux’s writing-slope, together with a number of personal letters....

I am an amateur historian, and to come into possession of the Devereux diaries was deeply exciting for me. Editing them has been a

labour of love. The Young Ireland rebels – spiritual fathers of Sinn Fein and the IRA – have come to fascinate me. (xvii–ix)

This fictional editor’s introduction is then signed “Raymond Barton, Launceston, Tasmania, 1999.” Koch gives his archivist a name, and even a motivation for collecting and reproducing the document. Koch adds to the authenticity of this journal as an actual artifact by numbering the pages of the editor’s introduction using roman numerals, reinforcing the separation between the portions “written by” the editor and those by the fictional journalist Robert Devereux.

The language Koch uses to describe the discovery of the journal evokes the way in which access to the past is not immediate, but must be unearthed. Though the “editor” later reveals in his introduction that the journal was in a storeroom on the farm, the immediate image of something that “lay hidden” on a farm evokes the need to turn up soil, a Heaney-esque association between the digging of land and the digging a writer does to continue the physical labor of the past: both are the work of nation-building. Likewise with the use of “lodged”: while here it means simply “housed,” the double meaning with “stuck” or “embedded” reinforces the idea that the stories of the past are in some way inaccessible, that there is work required to un-lodge them from their historical context in order to understand them in the present.

Koch’s use of a narrative framed by an editor’s introduction connects the fictional Devereux’s journal with those of other transported Irish convicts. Unlike Mitchel’s journal, the journals of other transported Irish political prisoners went through a similar unearthing and reproduction by dedicated editors. For example, the *Fenian Diary* of Denis B. Cashman kept on board the convict ship *Hougoumont* in 1867 was edited by C.

W. Sullivan III. In his preface to Cashman's diary, Sullivan describes his process in similar language to what Koch will later use in his work of fiction. The preface begins: "In 1982, a local resident, Dr Alfred Sheehy of Belhaven, North Carolina, donated fourteen items to the East Carolina University Manuscript Archives" (9). Sullivan continues: "In 1995... I checked out the materials and decided to work with them. After several trips to Boston, a preliminary trip to Ireland in 1996, and a spring leave in Ireland in 1998, I have become excited by these materials and by the opportunity to publish the diary" (9). Like Koch, Sullivan includes authenticating descriptions of the artifact itself:

The parchment appears to have been some of the official stock from the firm of Dobbyn & Tandy, where Cashman worked as a law clerk.... The paper is light and thin, and Cashman's handwriting is small, crowded, and neat – often so filling the page that subsequent wear or damage has erased some of the letters and, here and there, a word or two. (10)

Both editors, fictional and real, of these found artifacts feel the need to authenticate them, to describe their physical appearance and the means via which they found them. This authenticating of the object itself works to authenticate the history contained therein, to verify that at least this piece of the past is retrievable.

The journal genre in particular offers a type of immediate, personal access to the past that general sweeping histories cannot. Just as Sullivan was "excited" by the Cashman materials, so too was the Devereux diary "deeply exciting" for Raymond Barton, the fictional editor. Barton ends "his" introduction to the Devereux diary by talking about the loss he feels in having finished editing the work and turning the source materials over to the Archives Office of Tasmania. Devereux "seemed very close, at

times” to Barton: “his voice would sound in my head as I worked, and I’d sense the nearness of his spirit” (x). If, according to postmodern historiography, “the historical record is in itself understood as a text always already processed into narrative” (Shiller 540), then it would seem that the most accurate way to access the past is through unmediated narrative recorded in real time as historical events unfolded, and a journal is just that. It does not assert itself as history but as personal narrative, and in so doing elides the distance between official histories and lived experiences. The excitement felt by the editors in uncovering the materials and the closeness to their subjects come from that feeling of closeness to the historical moments the journals record.

By using the device of the framed narrative and maintaining Mitchel’s journal form, Koch asserts the verisimilitude of the history he presents while simultaneously foregrounding the constructedness of devices used to assert authenticity and access to historical truth. Since Koch can use the same narrative framework as the journals kept by historical Irish political prisoners in his work of fiction, he suggests the skepticism with which one should read any text that aspires to historical authenticity and accuracy. At the same time, by presenting a historical novel that not only re-presents an actual text of the Victorian period but also takes great pains to describe with historical accuracy the conditions of the British transportation system and life in colonial Tasmania, Koch asserts the value of the effort to understand the past. As Boehm-Schnitker and Gruss write, “Neo-Victorian texts as cultural *doppelgangers* of the Victorian Age both mimic and challenge the discourses of the nineteenth century.” Rather than assert that the past is inaccessible because it is always already embedded in narrative and skewed by present circumstances, neo-Victorian novels like *Out of Ireland* “attest to the unflagging desire

for knowledge of the past, a desire not extinguished by doubts as to how accessible it really is” (Shiller 557). Koch acknowledges the work that neo-Victorian novels do in the title of the diptych of which *Out of Ireland* is part, along with the earlier-written but later-set *Highways to a War*. The umbrella title of these two works, *Beware of the Past*, indicates that unearthing the past can be difficult and dangerous, but the content of the novels in their stories of the past suggests the value in attempting to understand and access the past.

Koch’s changes to Mitchel’s *Jail Journal* in *Out of Ireland* attest to the ways that a neo-Victorian novel can mimic while challenging in order to rewrite oppressed narratives of the past, and offer a nuanced understanding of events and their after-effects. Koch’s commentary on the way that events of the past can be re-framed through the perspective of time is exemplified in his taking both the title and epigraph for his novel from the last section of W. B. Yeats’s poem on the hatred and anger carried deep in the heart of the Irish people, “Remorse for Intemperate Speech”:

“Out of Ireland have we come.  
Great hatred, little room,  
Maimed us at the start.  
I carry from my mother’s womb  
A fanatic heart.” (vi)

As an intertext between the Mitchel’s journal and Koch’s fictional counterpart, Yeats’s poem creates a link in a widening perspective on the history of the long Irish struggle for national sovereignty. Mitchel’s journal has temporal and personal priority, offering immediacy but lacking in perspective. Yeats’s poem is at a temporal and experiential

remove from the *Jail Journal*. Written in 1931, the poem captures permanent, almost innate anger engendered in the Irish heart by years of bloodshed, oppression, and revolution – a view that Yeats can only offer by virtue of temporal and personal distance. Formally, the poem is at a remove in immediacy from the journal, but still retains the personal in its use of the first person; this could indeed be a poem composed by Mitchel himself, describing his frustrations and desires – especially as his sentence of transportation resulted from an act of intemperate speech in the form of an article he published in the *United Irishman* encouraging his countrymen to pursue armed rebellion.

Koch's *Out of Ireland* takes yet another step away from the immediate involvement in the course of Irish revolutionary history. In adding the editorial frame to the journal narrative, Koch takes an Irish nationalist text and makes it an Australian one by virtue of the way it was preserved and passed on to the present generation. The pride with which Mitchel published his journal – first serialized in his own newspaper and then as a separate publication, complete with an introduction which excoriated the British treatment of the Irish throughout history – is part of the Irish narrative of the fight for nationhood: Mitchel saw value in his tale of incarceration as an incentive to motivate further nationalist activities in Ireland.

The story of the publication of the fictional Robert Devereux's journal, however, reflects the Australian perspective on the convict settlement of Van Diemen's Land. Unlike Mitchel's immediately self-published journal, Devereux's journal as mentioned "lay hidden for one hundred and twenty five years" (vii). Editor Barton's late friend, Michael Langford, Devereux's great-grandson, was "ignorant of... the facts about his ancestry" (vii). In fact, Devereux's grandson had "made sure that his own sons did not

[read the journals]” (vii). But Barton explains: “Only a native Tasmanian of my generation will understand why old John Langford concealed his grandfather’s journals as he did – and why he was so deeply ashamed of so prominent an ancestor” (viii). He connects the Langfords’ treatment of their ancestor Devereux with “many other Tasmanian families [who] did the same with their convict ancestors” and reminds his readers that this is “called ‘hiding the stain’” (ix). Barton ends his editor’s introduction by explaining that although he had the journal in his possession for twenty-three years, he waited until the last of the Langford brothers died to publish it, “knowing that he would not have wanted the family’s ancient secret displayed to the public” and that “Fellow-Tasmanians will understand” (x). The emphasis on the stain and the secrecy of convict heritage frames Devereux’s story of imprisonment and exile as part of Australian history, a story of shame rather than one of pride.<sup>36</sup>

But the publication of the story after the death of the last member of the previous generation emphasizes the changing perspective on that convict heritage. Koch encourages this shift in the view of the past by connecting Australian convict heritage with Irish republican nationalist history. Attempting access to a past that has been systematically denied and obscured is both liberating and dangerous. Koch emphasizes this duality by framing the story through an editor who is simultaneously excited about it and empathetic to previous desires to hide it. Devereux’s sojourn as a prisoner in Van Diemen’s Land makes Irish history a part of Australian history and vice versa, creating a reciprocal relationship between the national histories of the two nations. Koch’s novel

---

<sup>36</sup> When he arrives in Hobart Town, Devereux explains in his journal that “One is either ‘bond’ or ‘free’ here: this is the primary truth to be learned about Van Diemen’s Land” (207) and “between the two classes, bond and free, an invisible gulf stretches” (209). Koch thus emphasizes that central distinction which would mark out family heritage for the next century and a half of Australian history.

suggests that a way to recover the past is by framing it through a different lens, by seeing past incidents as simultaneously part of multiple histories; only in so doing can the present generation work through the traumas of the past that still haunt it.

Koch comments on the way that stories of the past frame an understanding of the present through Devereux's use of classical texts to understand his own predicament. While awaiting transportation at Spike Island (sometimes referred to as "Ireland's Alcatraz"), Devereux kills time reading *Macbeth* and writes: "Thank God for Shakespeare... I suspected I'd depend on him henceforth – and on many another poet and novelist of genius – at least as much as I depended on the dreary but adequate food my gaolers were providing" (10). As Andreas Gaile notes in his article "'Going Double': Exploring Contradictions of Australianness in Christopher Koch's *Out of Ireland*," "Koch draws heavily on Greek, Roman and Christian mythologies and narrative archetypes, most notably those of Arcadia, the Prometheus and the Ulysses myth" (153). In some of his lowest moments, and in particular when Devereux struggles with his commitment to his cause of Irish nationalism, he relies on figures of antiquity for encouragement. While in the prison hulks in Bermuda, Devereux finds himself forced either to risk death from long and debilitating bouts of asthma or to petition the governor to send him "to a penal settlement whose conditions will allow me to survive, and so serve out my sentence" – after having vowed never to debase himself by asking anything of his British captors. Facing this decision to write the letter of petition while alone on Christmas day, far from his family and country, Devereux turns to Aeschylus: "How superb, pitiful and haunting is *Prometheus Bound*! Prometheus, whose defiance could not be broken! Has not his face become my own? Am I not also nailed to a desolate rock?"

Am I not also tormented by tyrants, who seek to break my will?" (155). Devereux finds strength not only in reading but also in writing. When Devereux, a "creature of the world," is denied access to newspapers on board the Bermuda hulks, he feels he "can't bear to live through the next few hours; not even through the next five minutes." Yet, he concludes, "I must; and only writing in this good, thick journal is helping me to do so" (78). Koch creates a parallel between Devereux's recording of his own story and his reading of classics by framing both as sources of comfort and help.

The text Devereux returns to over and over to frame his own experience is Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Transportation to the antipodes is not unlike a decent into the Inferno: as his fellow Irish political prisoner Thomas O'Neill notes of their island prison, "What a suitable name it has! I've decided that Demon's Land is the title by which it will be known henceforth" (273).<sup>37</sup> Devereux explains that within Van Diemen's Land there are also Dantean divisions. On the island prison "the British administration has created for [the convicts] both Inferno and Purgatorio": "Inferno is imprisonment in the penal stations at Port Arthur or Maria Island," where a transported prisoner is sent if he commits a crime once in Van Diemen's Land (208). Most convicts "inhabit Purgatorio – whose other name is Probation," and a convict can move through "three main circles" – from inhabitant of "the 'Tench" (Hobart Town Penitentiary) to passholder to Ticket-of-Leave holder – to "make his way to the remote Paradiso of a pardon" (208). On one of his first nights there, carrying a "paper-wrapped Virgil" (234) purchased at Lenoir's Bookshop, Devereux journeys from the seemingly respectable part of Hobart Town into

---

<sup>37</sup> Koch bases all of his exiled Young Irelanders for the most part on historical figures whom John Mitchel discusses in his journal. Thomas O'Neill is mostly a parallel for John Martin, whom Mitchel stayed with in Bothwell when first arriving in Van Diemen's Land while he regained his strength after his long shipboard battle with asthma.

its “Third Circle,” the wretched slum of St. Giles hidden behind the Hobart Town Rivulet, “the city’s sluggish Acheron” (229). Just as the convict can rise from the Inferno of imprisonment, so too Devereux travels from Hobart up to the Lakes on a high plateau in the Western Tiers where he and Thomas O’Neill go to meet illegally with fellow Young Irelander Paul Barry beyond their captors. As they set off for the ride up the mountain, O’Neill tells Devereux, “I’ll lead you to Paradise, my dear” (280). The bookshop keeper Lenoir, who originally sold him that copy of Virgil, makes even more explicit the parallel: “You stand at life’s mid-way point: you are thirty-five, no? The steps you take now will have consequences for ever” (578). Like Dante, who does not belong in any of the regions through which he travels but is merely passing through, an interstitial figure, Devereux is neither fully convict nor gentleman, passing through the transport system only to escape at the other end, an observer who can learn things from this diversion on his original path in life.

Structurally, the novel parallels Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in its tripartite divisions. Koch breaks Devereux’s experiences into three parts: Part One is “Prometheus Bound”; Part Two “City of Woe”; and Part Three “Boeotia.”<sup>38</sup> Presumably it is the fictional editor of Devereux’s journals who decided on these divisions, and added epigraphs to each one (one of the epigraphs for “City of Woe” comes from Canto III of the *Inferno*: “Through me you pass into the city of woe;/ Through me you pass into eternal pain:/ Through me among the people lost for aye”; the other epigraph to that section is an Irish convict song

---

<sup>38</sup> Gaile also notes the Dantean structure of *Out of Ireland*: “from the punishments of ‘Part One; Prometheus Bound’ over the period of atonement as a holder of a ticket-of-leave in ‘Part Two: City of Woe,’ and from thence on to the state of bliss in ‘Part Three: Boeotia’” (154). In calling the second part “City of Woe,” a reference to the inscription above the gate of Hell in the *Inferno*, Koch suggests that Devereux’s story can be read along multiple lines of interpretation.

called “Van Diemen’s Land” – the connection between the two locales is made quite explicit).<sup>39</sup> The editor is thus the embodiment of the way history comes to us: mediated through all of the circumstances that have passed up to the present moment and through the medium of narrative organization. While Devereux saw in his experiences parallels to Dante and other characters, Koch, by breaking the story into these three sections, can reinforce that the past comes to us already narrativized, with a seeming beginning, middle and end.

Koch also foregrounds how deceptively simplistic such a structuring of the past is. As Shiller notes, “neo-Victorian novels are acutely aware of both history and fiction as human constructs, and use this awareness to rethink the forms and contents of the past” (540). Though the three parts that the editor has separated Devereux’s story into correspond roughly to the three parts of the *Divine Comedy*, within each section the journalist’s experiences range from the divine to the damnable. In fact, the novel ends after the last journal entry with a letter written from Devereux to Thomas O’Neill detailing his harrowing escape from Van Diemen’s Land by passing again through the Inferno in the form of wading through the Hobart Rivulet, earlier described as “Acheron”:

It was mostly too dark... to see what I was wading through. But I knew. Sewage, and a hundred other varieties of foulness: the wastes from various flour mills, distilleries and tanneries; soakage from the cess-pit at the Cascades female prison; discharges of blood and dung from slaughter

---

<sup>39</sup> In Roger McDonald’s novel, *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* which I discuss in chapter 3, one of the characters, on hearing that a former officer was sent to prison camp for betraying the governor, remarks, “But isn’t Van Diemen’s Land the hell on earth of the convict cosmology?” (511).

houses. Ah, Thomas, truly the way was long, and uncouth was the road!  
 Here was Inferno's ninth and final circle, where I would need to arm my  
 heart. (689)

While the tripartite structure seems to organize Devereux's experiences on an arch from the hell of shipboard imprisonment to the paradise of his Australian pastoral, this final escape suggests that his entire experience of transportation was a journey through the Inferno. The same moment in history can be narrativized in several different ways to serve an explanatory or symbolic function for the present.

One of the ways that Koch uses the tripartite structure as both an organizing principal and a way to make meaning out of Devereux's history is by framing his experiences at sea as the "Prometheus Bound" section, or the Inferno section. In a novel about an Irish revolutionary held prisoner in Australia, Koch foregrounds the transformative effects of Devereux's time on the ocean as the most hellish part of his experience. The first third of the novel takes place on the ocean. Alone at sea for over seventeen months, Devereux must face himself and the realities of the cause for which he has been fighting. The structure of the novel emphasizes the way that Devereux's oceanic experiences shaped his nationalism, forcing him to look behind the mask of the British empire and its penal system and allowing him to question certain beliefs he had formed in his insular group of Young Irelanders. The changes effected on Devereux during his time on the ocean shape his interactions in Australia with his fellow convicts, Irish people, political prisoners, and exiles as well as with his captors. By foregrounding Devereux's time on the ocean as a time of reflection and self-discovery as well as a confrontation with certain hellish realities, Koch suggests that the interstitial space of the transport ship

worked to shape not only Devereux's Irish nationalism but also the future of Australian nationalism as well.

In its "in-betweenness" for Devereux, the ocean is a liminal space: physically between Ireland and Australia and also as occupying a period of transition. Viljoen and van der Merwe describe Arnold van Gennep's theorizing of the limen, the threshold, in the context of rites of passage. In the first stage the

initiands are... separated from their usual social life and status. They cross the limen... into a new transitional state where the social fabric they are used to is allowed to unravel. They enter a different space and time that is so radically different from the ordinary that it... has to be described in metaphors or states of the in-between.... The old self dies so that a new self can be born. The second stage, the stage of liminality, is therefore a stage of transformation.... In the final stage... the initiand is symbolically... reincorporated into society, but then as a different person. (10–11)<sup>40</sup>

It is only in travelling through this liminal space of the ocean that Devereux can develop a sense of his national identity that moves beyond his previously narrow conception of Irishness and takes into account the multiplicity of experiences that can make up the nation.

---

<sup>40</sup> Arnold van Gennep first published *Les rites de passage* in 1909 (translated to English in 1960); in it he noted that there is "a wide degree of general similarity among ceremonies" whose purpose is to "enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another" (3). His goal in the book was to lay out a complete scheme of rites of passage rather than to look at specific rites or specific parts of rites. The word "liminal" which so interested later archeologists like Turner and even later literary theorists and critics comes from van Gennep's three parts of the rite of passage: "a complete scheme or rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)" (11).

Oceanic scholars have noted that the ocean is a place of separation from traditional and fixed social structures and cultural conditions. Hester Blum, in “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies” suggests that oceanic studies be “attentive to the material conditions and praxis of the maritime world” (670), one condition of which, especially for sailors, is a “freedom from national belonging” and a “lack of sovereignty”(671). Seamen in the late-eighteenth century “existed largely outside the bounds of national affiliation” (671). In an earlier piece, Blum refers to sailors as “always inter- and transnational figures” (“Pirated Tars” 138). Sailors and others “for whom the sea is simultaneously workplace, home, passage, penitentiary, and promise” (670) exist on the sea in a state of in-between-ness that largely mirrors the condition of the liminal figure. As Victor Turner describes in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, “liminal *personae* (‘threshold people’) ... elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (95). The material conditions of the ocean necessitate that all ocean goers are to some extent liminal figures, existing, even if only briefly, outside of the naturally terrestrial existence of human life.

Blum suggests that the outsider status of the sailor creates a separate, unconnected space of inquiry and of understanding on the ocean. The time and space of the ocean can be a “proprioceptive point of inquiry” and the interstitial existence of the sailor is an opportunity to “make possible other ways of understanding affiliation, citizenship, mobility, rights, and sovereignty” rather than ways based on previous “methodologies and frameworks imported from existing discourses” (“Prospect” 671). In other words,

current understanding of types of affiliations or groupings, such as nationality or race, look different when seen from the ocean. The ocean can be an escape from and can indeed help to shatter the fixed definitions and delineations of identity defined from the point of view of the land and specifically of the nation.

But not all ocean-goers are sailors. Understanding the ocean as a liminal space within the larger three stage rite of passage helps to connect the outsider status of the ocean denizen to those fixed social and cultural conditions from which he is separated. The purpose of the rite of passage is eventual reincorporation after the period of transition. If the outsider status of the sailor or other ocean denizen is understood not as a discrete state of being but as a stage in the ritual process – as the liminal stage – then it is an integral part of understanding and developing the traditions within which the rite of passage takes place.

Just as Dante's trip through the Inferno guides him back to the good, to the "straightforward path," so Devereux's passage through the liminal space of the ocean helps not only to solidify his own Irish nationalism but also to show him what nationalism itself means, what truly binds a people together. Rather than the sailor whose ocean-going experience might lead him to abandon all national affiliation, Devereux as a political prisoner experiences the ocean as a liminal stage in his larger journey of separation, transition, and reincorporation. Koch suggests that Devereux, like Dante, had become lost in a dark wood of his own nationalist rhetoric, particularly related to the Irish people for whom he professed to fight. The ocean does not separate Devereux from his nationalist pride; it gives him the tools to reify his position.

Devereux's understanding of his interstitial position while on board the ship emphasizes the effect it will have on his nationalism. Initially, he sees strong ties between nation and the land itself; thus of his separation from land he writes: "Now I was a man without moorings: a man without a home or citizenship" (28). The ocean forces Devereux to separate his nationalism from the land that he sees as coextensive with the nation of Ireland. To maintain his republican fervor he must turn instead to the ideology behind the nation. Writing of the fact that prior to this journey he had only ever sailed across the Channels, he notes "I was truly at sea for the first time" – a literal fact which clearly also has metaphoric overtones. The ocean is a space where Devereux can acknowledge, however subtly, that he perhaps does not know as much about his nation, his oppressors, and the nature of revolution as he thought he did while still on land.

His liminal status is doubled once he is held in the Bermuda prison hulks. Both Devereux's status as gentleman and his captors' fear that he would incite a rebellion were he to mix with the common prisoners keep him from being sent to work in the rock quarries on land. Therefore, he remains on board the hulks for ten months. He repeats his claim to being "a man without citizenship, not quite on water and not quite on land.... I'm exiled not just from my country, but from *terra firma*" (59). Devereux's stay on a "ship that doesn't move" reinforces the idea that during the liminal stage, a transformation must happen before the individual returns to society – he cannot be constantly moving towards the next stage without first experiencing this separation from the forms and customs of his previous life. His transformation requires this sojourn in purgatory so he can have the interactions and experiences necessary to help him better

understand his chosen fight. The legacy he will leave in Australia is engendered by the separation and stasis of the prison ship.

Devereux's noting of the beauty and wonder of ocean travel, even in his situation as a prisoner, suggests that the ocean will have a profound and positive effect on him. As he is rowed across Cork Harbour to board the ship that will take him to Bermuda he feels a "paradoxical illusion of freedom": "Appalling though my situation was, there was also something tremendous in the prospect of being borne three thousand miles across the Atlantic" (25). This same feeling of wonder visits him again as he speeds towards Van Diemen's Land at the end of his voyage. Staring at the "vast blue circle of the globe" and the "mighty arch of the Milky Way," Devereux writes, "I count myself privileged by accident, since even if I should die tomorrow, I'll have heard the silent singing of the world" (168). He considers that it is "not heard by every man" and that thousands living in Europe will "die without having heard it," but that "The poorest tar on this ship, carried to these unsullied regions, is richer by far than such people; and I'm made richer for life" (168). While these feelings of elation, and especially of freedom, seem paradoxical for a prisoner, Devereux has indeed been freed from the previous constraints on his actions, interactions, and mindsets that were preventing him from fully understanding what it means to be Irish and to fight for one's nation.

The ocean serves Devereux's nationalism in many ways. It works to homogenize and erase previous distinctions of rank and position, and therefore opens a place of hybridity where disparate and dissonant voices join in polyphonic conversation. This erasure also unmask for Devereux the horrors of the British transport system. The isolation suspends Devereux from politics per se and allows him to reflect on the nature

of citizenship more generally. The monotony of shipboard life gives Devereux time to think about his home. Finally, the strange unreality of the ocean – characteristic of a liminal zone – connects it to both Ireland and Australia, paving the way for Devereux’s nationalism to map onto the foundling Australian nation.

The liminal space of the ocean works to help Devereux reframe his Irish nationalism by setting him on an equal footing with a variety of other people whom he had previously seen as being vastly different from himself. As Turner discusses, liminal beings “have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system – in short, nothing that may distinguish them from their fellow neophytes or initiands” and “secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized” (95). This leveling that happens during the liminal stage allows Devereux, once in Australia (itself a liminal space, as I will discuss later), to reconfigure his relationship to the Irish people and to his own status as “gentleman.”

One of the issues plaguing Devereux’s nationalism is his disconnect from the Irish people that comes largely from his status as gentleman and his Anglo blood. Within the British prison system, this difference manifests in Devereux’s special treatment as a political prisoner rather than a common convict. The main part of the novel – Devereux’s journal – opens with his overhearing the common convicts talking about him: “Bugger his eyes! What is he but a convict, like the rest of us? That’s right! A buggering, bloody convicts!” (3). In his insistence that Devereux is the same as all the convicts, the convict who says this is arguing against the fact of his unequal treatment. Koch juxtaposes this opening scene which takes place on board the convict hulks in Bermuda once Devereux is already at sea to Devereux’s recollection of his meeting with the Governor of Spike

Island before his oceanic journey begins. The Governor insists on separating Devereux from the other convicts, calling him “a person of education and a gentleman” (6) and “a celebrated man” (7) and reminding him, “yours is an Ascendancy family” (8). While Devereux later insists to the Inspector who informs him that transportation will be his fate that because the “British Government says I’m a felon” they should “prosecute me with the utmost rigor” and insists “I ask for no special favours” (23), he clearly sees himself as separate from the other prisoners. When the superintendent of the Bermuda hulks subtly warns Devereux not to try to start an insurrection Devereux responds sarcastically: “I would hardly have expected to be involved in public affairs in this place... Nor do I have any desire for the pleasures of intercourse with your other prisoners” (53). Clearly, Devereux is of two minds, a trope reiterated frequently about the Young Irelander: he wants to be considered a regular prisoner but faces both fear and disgust at being counted among their number.<sup>41</sup>

His British captors work to ensure this continued disconnect, keeping Devereux physically separated from the other convicts while on board the ships and the prison hulks in Bermuda. Devereux’s separation from the people becomes part of the strategy to suppress his nationalism, indicating that a connection with the people will prove powerful

---

<sup>41</sup> So disturbed is Devereux by the possibility of being considered part of the mass of regular convicts that when his convict servant Lane lets him know that he can procure a young boy convict should Devereux desire carnal relief and shows him the reason why his nickname is “Long Lane,” Devereux’s anger is only partly due to what he sees as the base and corrupt nature of the offer: “what heightened my rage was the idea that Lane believed he could do this with impunity, and that he surmised that the gap between myself and the other felons was closing” (87). What is truly disturbing is that Lane sees him as a fellow convict – even as Devereux insists that he is no different from the other convicts. He had even tried to insist on his own un-elevated status to Lane himself earlier. Responding to Lane’s remark that the Irish are overjoyed at the food they are able to get on the prison ship, Devereux immediately turns to the black-and-white English-and-Irish distinction: “They starve while your rulers squeeze them off their land.” The sly Lane responds “Well, the gentry can be hard-fisted... But you’re one of the gentry yourself, sir, ain’t you?” Devereux deflects with a category mistake: “I’m Irish, Lane, and there’s an end to it” – refusing to acknowledge any difference based on class and heritage. Devereux doth insist too much on his equal convict status.

in Devereux's fight for an independent Ireland. While Devereux is never allowed to communicate with his fellow Irishmen on board the ships, the leveling and homogenization that is part of this liminal stage puts Devereux in contact with others who are outside of his usual rank and station of communication, showing him that such interactions help define his own positions. Having spent most of his time talking about nationalism to the narrow group of other Young Irelanders – who later find once in Australia that their internal differences are but petty and slight – Devereux learns the clarifying value of conversing with those whom he previously set as 'other'.

One of the voices with whom Devereux comes in contact is a representative of his captors, the ship's surgeon in Bermuda, Doctor Howard. Confined in a room by himself under the pretense of his status as gentleman, allowed to see no one besides one convict servant who brings him his meals, Devereux fears the "little path with the sign on it saying, *Lunacy*" (79) – especially since he realizes that his own punishments are to be "Nothing official; nothing open and honest" like breaking rocks with the chain gangs, but "instead, sly filth and degradation" (57). In other words: "What my gaolers wants is to see me take that path" (79). It is Doctor Howard who saves Devereux from that fate with evening visits and long chats over bottles of cognac. Howard's sympathy with Devereux is not for his cause – he views revolutionaries as paradoxical, wants to "see civilized order intact" (95) and is "inclined to think that your [Devereux's, as well as all revolutionaries'] flames and blood are never worth their price" (109) – but comes from their connection as outsider figures. Devereux is a convict but is not treated like the mass of convicts, while Howard is a ranking figure on the ship, yet not quite part of the regular structure of shipboard hierarchy. Devereux is struck by the "peculiarity of... the free and

easy way in which Doctor Howard spoke to me, a prisoner, about the hulk's commander... as though the surgeon held a position that allowed him to do and say whatever he chose" (90). Writing later of the surgeon on board the *Raffles* which takes him from Bermuda to Van Diemen's Land, Devereux notes: "It's a curious British practice, this placing of naval surgeons in charge of convict ships; perhaps London feels it gives their merciless business of transportation a stamp of humanity" (162). Their outsider status, as well as their meetings in Devereux's room which is neither prison cell nor cabin, allows them to talk as equals. Devereux reflects on "the pleasure of good discussion" like that he has with Howard: "It has a sort of bloodless beauty; and at its best it has no hidden consequences or false motives... if it's conducted without egotism or the desire to dominate one's opponent, it's the calmest, cleanest and most reassuring of pleasures" (110). Even as he occasionally questions Howard's motives in befriending him and notes with distaste that "the prisoner begins to love his gaoler" (156), Devereux recognizes the value in this converse between dissonant voices, the unusual pleasure of being able to engage in calm and bloodless battle.

This joining of voices is, according to Mikhail Bakhtin in his essay "Discourse in the Novel" from *The Dialogic Imagination*, the very essence of the novel: "a diversity of social speech types... and a diversity of individual voices" (262); "an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another" (361). Just as a "language is revealed in all its distinctiveness only when it is brought into relationship with other languages, entering with them into one single heteroglot unity of societal becoming" (Bakhtin 411), so Devereux's conversations with Howard reveal the distinctness of each of their positions while allowing for Devereux's becoming and

developing. Koch uses the liminal stage of Devereux's ocean transport to allow for the leveling needed to bring Devereux the Irish revolutionary and Howard the blandly conniving servant of Albion together in the intentional semantic hybrid of the novel, wherein "two points of view are not mixed, but set against each other dialogically" (Bakhtin 360).

Howard shows Devereux the contradictions in his position not only as his other – the Englishman to Devereux's Irishman, the passive agent of empire to the fiery resistor – but also as a parallel figure, a window into himself. In this way, Devereux and Howard's conversations represent Bakhtin's definition of hybridization: "an encounter... between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by... social differentiation" (358). Howard articulates some of Devereux's deeply ingrained beliefs – beliefs that Devereux would never actually say aloud, playing the role as he does of revolutionary, nor even admit in his journal, but that are implicit in some of his actions and interactions. Devereux is described many times as having two sides to his person: by the fictional editor as having "the face of a man of double nature" (x); by Howard who calls him a "man of contradictions" (104), refers to him as a "realist" (91) one moment and an "idealist" (96) the next during different parts of the same conversation, and reinforces his two sides by accusing him of being his "own worst enemy" (144); and even by himself, acknowledging that "I am a man of double nature" (25). While Koch briefly employs John Mitchel's technique of sussing out his own contradictory feelings by writing imaginary conversations between his "ego" and "doppelganger," it is Howard who plays this role in the novel of Devereux's other self in conversation.

For example, Howard articulates what should be the logical conclusion of Devereux's desire for a revolution enacted by arming the common people mixed with his gentlemanly (and therefore quite English) distaste for mixing of classes in a rhetorical inquiry into the "philosophical problem" of mob rule. Howard wonders to Devereux:

How far do we take these rights to representation, education and equality for the broad mass of people? If we take 'em as far as they'll go, we'll presumably end without any sort of ruling class, and men will no longer see public services as a duty, but as an outlet for the lowest ambitions. The most crudely aggressive and vulgar will come to the top. (109)<sup>42</sup>

Koch ends the conversation without having Devereux respond because he can have no response: Howard has already articulated his opinions and fears. Indeed Howard excuses himself to bed, saying "perhaps we'll debate about this next time"; but there is no further conversation on it between the two because there can be no debate. Howard introduces this topic by referring to his bias against reform via bloodshed as "an English way of thinkin'," suggesting that there is something in Devereux beyond just the Norman blood in his veins that is very English.

With Howard, Devereux is forced to come face to face with the paradox of his status as a gentleman and as a revolutionary, a conflict he struggles with for the rest of his time as a transported convict. When Devereux denounces the Socialists of the French Revolution as "power-seeking Utopians" who are "no better than the Feudal aristocracy they seek to replace," Howard points out that this is surprising "comin' from a leader of Young Ireland.... You do seem to be a man of contradictions: privileged land-owner;

---

<sup>42</sup> This problem is clearly as yet unresolved in contemporary society.

defender of the Parliamentary system; bloodthirsty revolutionary” (104). Devereux’s superficial answer is that he is “hardly in a position of privilege anymore” and that he’s “more proud of those ancestors of [his] who truly became Irish,” insisting that he has *seen* the effects of the Famine on the people, on the tenants of a farm his family once owned (105). Howard’s suggestions that Devereux does not really know what the common people want (“the ordinary people have no use for flames and blood,” Howard insists) enters Devereux’s consciousness and forces him reconsider his relationship to and understanding of the Irish people throughout the remainder of his journey.

It is not only Devereux’s mixing with this representative of Britishness during his time in the homogenizing liminal space of the ocean that forces him to rethink his understanding of his own nationalism: he also is put in a somewhat equalized space with “the people.” Devereux believes himself to be a representative and leader of the Irish nation, but Koch shows that it is only a volkishly romanticized idea of the people driving Devereux’s nationalism. Part of becoming an effective national leader, Koch suggests, is casting off this romanticism and viewing the people as individuals with their own values – and recognizing the real burden in becoming their leader in revolution.

Devereux imagines the Irish people as unreal, as part of the mythology of Ireland. To relieve his despair over length of the sentence he still has left to serve aboard the “wretched box,” Devereux fantasizes about a hill he used to climb during his childhood in north-west Clare. He recalls sitting atop the hill and seeing the valley below as “a place of enchantment,” describing at length in his journal the “men ploughing with horses,” “tender blue spires of peat-smoke,” “the small stone cabins of the people” (130). To Devereux, the “peasantry” whom he saw as the “wild people of the West” were a “riddle”

and a “mystery” with “a special, elusive strangeness about them: the strangeness of a fairy race” (130). As an aside he briefly acknowledges in one line that “Of the poverty and hardship of the real people down there I little knew, in those days,” but he also writes that the mystery of the people “remained unsolved” (130). The imagery of Devereux as a boy sitting on a hill looking down on the people parallels his position as a leader: he remains on high, and what he views as a celebration of the people is actually a form of othering.

Devereux’s time on the ocean begins his process of climbing down from that hill, so to speak. In its in-between state – after separation and before incorporation – the liminal space of the ocean is a version of Homi Bhabha’s “third space,” which is a space of the people. Devereux’s journey on the ocean puts him metaphorically at least in the place of the people, allowing him on his initial reincorporation back into society in Australia to begin to see the people in a different light. Bhabha suggests that the “intervention of the Third Space... challenges our sense of the historical identity, of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people” (“Commitment” 36). Devereux’s romanticizing of “the people” and “the peasantry” prevent him from being able to find real, effective ways to create unity in a national republican movement of resistance. Using Fanon’s writings on the Algerian people as a prompt, Bhabha suggests that

the liberatory ‘people’ who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity. They are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and

negotiation.... The native intellectual who identifies the people with the  
 ‘true national culture’ will be disappointed. (“Commitment” 37)

Rather than being a fixed source of cultural identity, the people are the source of the ever-evolving definition of what a nation is. In other words, as Bhabha writes in “DissemiNation,” the people are not “the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy” but are “the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification... through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process” (145). Devereux, the exemplar of the native intellectual, holds the people as a static symbol of nation and therefore understands national identity as purely pedagogical prior to his journey.

On the convict ship, Devereux, like the people who instigate cultural change, exists in the discontinuous time of translation – as Turner writes, the liminal figure is “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (95). Bhabha creates a metonymic connection between the Third Space of enunciation and the people; Koch places Devereux in that Third Space on the ocean and thereby allows him to experience the view of the people more closely while becoming aware of his location as an outsider to them. British oppression is not merely a topic of political theory debate to be enacted in newspapers and in gentlemen’s clubs, but an effect, carried out daily by the servants of empire. The ships unmask for Devereux the “savagery of the British penal system” – the horrors that “underlay... the scrupulous manners, the strict and conscientious order” (82–3). His focus can shift from the actions of the British to the lived effects of those actions on real people.

His first witnessing of a flogging reveals the living face of the British empire to Devereux. He claims he has “no objection in principle to convicted felons being

flogged... to prevent the breakdown of order and discipline,” but watching the flogging forces Devereux to wonder “whether in fact this should be done to the miracle of human flesh: any human flesh” (82). The spectacle of punishment causes him to question the superficial lines demarcating rank and status that he had allowed himself to believe infallible and to see all human flesh as of a piece. It causes him to recall an elderly convict at whom the young second mate had yelled “as though to something sub-human”; Devereux has “a sudden fellow-feeling for him, and for all the felons. This evening [after the flogging], the thin span of fabric separating me from their endless toil and bleeding flesh seemed very thin” (83). His time on the ship helps Devereux begin to feel a real type of kinship with the people for their mutual, if unequal, suffering.

This connection with the people in light of British savagery continues when Devereux witnesses his second, and much more brutal, flogging: that of his former servant Lane towards whom Devereux had felt so much animosity and disgust. Sentenced to one hundred lashes for attempting escape with a boy, Lane frowns during his punishment, a frown which Devereux sees as “that of all men who ever suffered atrocity: half amazed, half protesting, ignominious yet noble” (126). Devereux’s rational, logical side tries to chastise himself for seeing Lane as noble and for making a fleeting comparison in his mind between Lane and Christ, yet he cannot help but convince himself: “hadn’t my attendant entered the same region of pain and ignominy into which our Saviour descended? A region of which men like me know nothing?” (127). Devereux learns that this “is the second face of Albion: the face of this tortured criminal. It frowns on the ease of my own position” (127). Devereux’s safe life of refined oratory in which he can denigrate British oppression while still imagining that punishment can be civilized

and orderly must face the disorderly tortured human body on board the ships. While drawing on the Mitchel's description of a flogging he witnessed on board the Bermuda hulk, Koch presents Devereux's witnessing of Lane's flogging as symbolic of Devereux's evolving understanding: he can see a man whom he formerly viewed with disgust as worthy of at least the dignity of treatment that all human should share.

The journey on the ocean allows Devereux to learn more about the non-political Irish convicts on board the ships. Commander Moffatt on board the hulk *Medway* explains to Devereux: "Most of your Irish... have come here for stealing sheep and poultry and so on, because they're starved at home. They're astonished to find how well off they are here. There's no vice in 'em, as I'm sure you know" (70). This confirms Devereux's servant Lane's earlier comment that "some of the Irish in particular... ain't scarcely ever *seen* food like this" (64). When finally sailing from Bermuda to Van Diemen's Land aboard the *Sir Stamford Raffles*, during which trip the ship is becalmed for over three months and Devereux is still separated from the other convicts but also left without the company of Doctor Howard, Devereux stands on the quarter deck to "look down on the distant thoroughfare of the main deck" (163). From this position, not dissimilar to his vantage when a boy looking down on the valley in Ireland where his mythical peasants lived, Devereux one night hears "singing in Irish float up from the fore-castle": "There are some two hundred Irish aboard, all of them young men and boys, but they're too far removed for me ever to see them properly" (164). Though he had earlier claimed that he had seen the effects of the famine on the people, this juxtaposition reinforces Devereux's separation from them and therefore his poor understanding of their true conditions. He can neither see them properly nor understand them: Devereux has

“little Irish” and the song the convicts sing is “infinitely strange and melancholy” to him. He recognizes the song as an *aisling*, an Irish-language poem the name of which means “vision” or “dream” in which Ireland appears personified as a woman who foresees the rise and future success of Ireland. Devereux had heard it before when accompanied by a fellow Young Irelander who spoke Irish and told him that it presented Ireland as a lovely but fallen fairy woman. He thus sees that the Irish singing on board the ship is a form of concealed protest: “In this guise, Erin in her bonds could be sung of without fear of English prohibition” (164). In this moment, heading towards the end of his journey, on his way towards reincorporation but still becalmed in this liminal zone, Devereux “was suddenly ashamed that I had no proper knowledge of the tongue of my people.... The people have always been at a distance from me.... I’ve occasionally entered their cabins, and accepted their hospitality, but the truth is they’re almost like a race of trolls or elves to me” (164). Devereux’s sojourn at sea allows him to see the limitations of his nationalism and prepares him to rectify his understanding of not only who the Irish people are but what it means to be Irish.

Symbolizing Devereux’s increased connection with the people and therefore separation from his position as the gentleman on the hill – the benevolent but disconnected native intellectual – is the slow dissolution of his relationship with his fiancée Catherine, carried out through letters over his months at sea. While the historical figure Mitchel had a wife and children who eventually joined him in Australia, Koch instead creates the fictional Catherine to represent the Irish ascendancy, whose manners and tastes seems to derive from the English gentry, and therefore represent Devereux’s “gentleman” side. Devereux’s time on the ocean, though, shows him that something

savage is masked by “the scrupulous manners, the strict and conscientious order” endemic to the gentleman class (83). Like Doctor Howard, who wants to see “civilized order intact” (95), Catherine grows more and more disillusioned with the idea of being connected to a criminal. In her first letter she begs Devereux to “think of nothing else but convincing the authorities to pardon you” (47). By her second letter, which she writes just when Devereux is removed to Bermuda and which he receives a month later while already there, she laments that the authorities and the London press refer to him as “the convict Devereux,” a term which fills her with “shame and horror” (75). Devereux senses his separation from her: “I begin to fear that she no longer understands what I am, or that I can do no other than what I do” (76). Catherine is in love with the gentleman Devereux, the man who fought with civilized words published through civilized means, who existed before being sent across the ocean; the reason Catherine “no longer understands” Devereux is because he himself has changed. Catherine lives in the sheltered world of the old ascendancy, exemplified by her parents’ and Devereux’s parents’ bewilderment over the fact that “a speech, and something printed in a newspaper, can ruin a man’s life” (47). As Devereux remains in his homogenizing liminal space, his transformation is signaled by Catherine’s increasing despair and protest, and her change from blaming the authorities to blaming Devereux for his own situation (131). Finally, she asks Devereux to release her from the engagement. She cannot join him in Van Diemen’s Land where the “population are felons of the lowest kind” and, she writes, even though Devereux’s aims are “noble and patriotic” he has “gone much too far, alarming most moderate and reasonable people” (172). Catherine, representing Devereux the pure gentleman, cannot go to Van Diemen’s land, will not be able to interact with the people there. The end of the

engagement symbolizes the type of death and rebirth that happens as part of passing through the liminal stage: Devereux meets head on what it means to be a pure gentleman, being moderate and remaining separated from the people, and that part of him must die in order for him to continue his project of fighting for Irish nationhood for all of the Irish. While he certainly struggles with the two sides of his persona – the gentleman and the revolutionary – for the remainder of his incarceration, he learns on the ocean the imperative of connection with his fellow prisoners and Irish people.

In addition to a general connection with people whom he formerly viewed as far removed from himself that Devereux gets to experience on board the ships, he connects specifically with James Langford. Recommended by Doctor Howard, Langford becomes Devereux's servant after his dismissal of Lane. An English convict transported for a great train robbery that had received considerable press, Langford tells Devereux on first meeting him that he had been "first man in the colony [of Bermuda]" until the arrival of the more famous Devereux, "A prisoner of state; a patriotic martyr, discussed all the time in the press" (99). Right away, Langford makes compare of their stations not by the nature of their "crimes" but rather by how famous they are made by it, and he is "fearlessly direct" with Devereux despite his position as servant. Langford ends their first interview by offering to procure Devereux newspapers that have been denied to him for the course of his stay in Bermuda, an action that symbolically begins to connect Devereux back to the world, and towards the third stage of his rite of passage: reincorporation. Devereux reflects on Langford: "He's outside my experience: I've had very little to do with a man of his kind, yet his personality threatens to dissolve the social barriers between us. And because of the tedium and isolation of my situation... I have the

novel and probably foolish sensation of welcoming this” (101). With Langford, Devereux finally begins to welcome the homogenizing process, the change of gaining a sort of closeness with someone formerly outside of his realm of knowledge.

Devereux also mentions here another cause of his transformation on board the ships: tedium. A prominent material condition of being a prisoner on board a ship, especially for Devereux who is not even allowed interaction with other prisoners, is the monotony of shipboard life. The prison hulks especially “have given monotony a new meaning” as Devereux’s life settles “into a painless, joyless pattern” (66–7). He is “dazed and stupid with the tedium of captivity, lulled by Bermuda’s narcotic warmth” (77). But it is a monotony mixed with a strange sense of unreality. As he sails to Bermuda aboard the *Nemesis*, Devereux reflects that “a lassitude overtook me which I finally called boredom”; he is “not sure that this term will do, though, since the ship’s routine was always at bottom unreal to me” (35). When he first boards the *Nemesis* he feels he has “entered another world” (25), a feeling which continues in Bermuda where he has “been taken out of reality” (59).

This unreality of the ocean connects that stage of his incarceration to his time in Australia. As he approaches Van Diemen’s Land aboard the *Raffles* and begins to read books about his future island prison/home, he writes, “I might as well read of Lilliput – which Swift located in this latitude. Does Van Diemen’s Land exist?” (174). On his first morning waking in Hobart Town (“Miniature metropolis,” writes Devereux, “London built for dwarfs! City on the frontier of Void!” [212]), Devereux wakes to church bells and is briefly transported “to the right side of the earth” but, snapping back to the reality of the situation, hears the bells as both “sonorous and tedious – above all, tedious!” –

reminding him of the years he has before completing his sentence (213). Hobart Town is “a picture, and unreal” (213) and all of Australia is a place of unreality; as the bookstore owner Lenoir explains to Devereux later that night, “All things are queer and opposite” (224). Recalling the imagery of the Dantean journey through the center of the earth, coming out upside down to climb mount Purgatory, Devereux travels through the hell of oceanic transportation (as indicated in the divisions of the novel) to end up in this queer and opposite zone. Van Deimen’s Land contains both the “City of Woe” and “Boeotia,” and Devereux, living in this region of duality, is himself in purgatory.

The similar feelings of unreality on the ocean and in Van Diemen’s Land connect the two as part of that suspended state of being that is the liminal stage. As on the ocean, hierarchies of rank and social distinction are suspended in Australia. But in this upside-down world that is outside of history, the atmosphere becomes carnivalesque. Unlike on the ocean, the mixings of ranks in Australia happens within a version of the metropole; as happens during carnival, all the seeming forms of “civilization” – like the church bells Devereux hears – remain present, but the interactions of people within them changes. As Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and his World*, “carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal” (10). This “temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank” allowed for new forms of understanding to emerge because it “created a special type of communication impossible in everyday life” (10). Koch

creates a synecdochic connection between Devereux and Australia: both are in that state of becoming.<sup>43</sup>

The suspension of those norms of rank and privilege common in the European world becomes part of Australian national identity. And that suspension started on the ocean. The journey through the liminal stage for Devereux and for all who landed in Australia allowed for an embracing of the type of carnivalesque interaction and communication that became part of the Australian national value of equality and “mateship.”<sup>44</sup> Doctor Howard, whom Devereux meets again in Van Diemen’s Land, tells him that the colonists “want a new country”: “It’s a free society that’s comin’ into bein’ here” (264). Devereux, though a prisoner there, wonders if Australia might not be the new Boeotia, the “land where neighbours were equal; where no man was king, and the just man was honored” (271). As someone who is so deeply committed to the idea that a nation is a nation because of its shared history, its myths, and even its common enemies, Devereux is somewhat horrified that Australia is “innocent of history; empty of memories; blank” (213). But in this blankness, people can be, as Bakhtin writes, “reborn for new, purely human relations” (*Rabelais* 10). Australia and Devereux are both “comin’

---

<sup>43</sup> Devereux’s individual experience parallels the collective experience of all who were involved in the founding of Australia, all those who travelled across the ocean to the antipodes.

<sup>44</sup> The Australian national value of egalitarianism can be seen in some common expressions in addition to the common appellation of “mate.” The phrase “Jack’s as good as his master” is commonly used to express the general Australian ideal that rank and status do not fundamentally affect how people should act or interact. There is a general resentment towards “tall poppies,” or people who try to excel or stand above others. Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke exemplified this egalitarian national spirit in his final press conference, saying that he wanted to be remembered as “the larrikin trade union leader who perhaps had sufficient common sense and intelligence to tone down his larrikinism and behave in a way that a prime minister should . . . a bloke, not essentially changed by high office . . . but who in the end was principally a dinky-di Aussie” (qtd. in Haynes 50).

into being,” aided by the new types of relations allowed for by the initial homogenization of the oceanic journey.<sup>45</sup>

It is not the formation of a free Australian nation, though, in whose part Devereux imagined himself playing a role. Just as Devereux’s becoming and changing parallels that of Australia, so too it parallels the emerging of a free Ireland. Devereux’s imagined Ireland, home to fairies and a humble and innocent peasantry, is just as unreal and mythical to him as is Australia. In Bhabha’s terms, Devereux sees the nation of Ireland as almost purely pedagogical, an identity “constituted by historical sedimentation” (“DissemiNation” 153) wherein the “people are the historical ‘objects’” statically representing the nation that is “based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*” (145, emphasis in original). Australia, on the other hand, a nation which according to Devereux has no history, necessarily has no “prior or originary presence of the nation-people” and must turn the “scraps, patches and rags of daily life... into the signs of a coherent national culture” (145). Devereux’s participation in the becoming of Australia as a nation shows him that the people as the living iteration of national identity are an integral part of any coherent understanding of a nation – that a nation does not live only in its past but in its present, in its ever and always becoming. In order for Ireland to transition successfully into an independent and coherent nation, its leaders, like

---

<sup>45</sup> Australia was, of course, not empty of history but of European history. Devereux actually acknowledges the terrible extermination of the Aboriginal people as evidence of Britain’s atrocities, but his gentleman’s mindset still does not accept anything that happens in the Southern hemisphere – whether by European settlers or by Aboriginal people. As Devereux first sees the “wooded shores” of Van Diemen’s Land, he notes that it is probably “more silent” now than when first sailed by French explorers who “would have seen on the beaches some of the island’s dark diminutive aboriginal race: a race who fought the later British settlers fiercely at first... but who have now been hunted nearly to extinction. Only a handful re left... dressed in the white man’s clothes, their hunting grounds lost forever. Merciless empire!” (178). Despite Devereux’s inherent racism (“dark diminutive”), Koch has him subtly connect the British treatment of the Irish, Aboriginals, and convicts while still emphasizing that the treatment of the Aboriginals was by far the most brutal, saying they were “hunted” like animals.

Devereux, must, if not discard, then certainly temper their romantic idealism of national identity.

Devereux's oceanic journey prepares him to meet the people of Ireland in the carnivalesque setting of Van Diemen's Land, where from such meetings new forms of understanding and of being emerge. With regard to "the common man and woman," the bookshop keeper Lenoir asks Devereux, "Can you tell me honestly, although you say you fight for them, that you do not also despise them?" To which Devereux responds, "Once I might have almost said yes.... But since being transported my opinions are more complicated. I scarcely knew the people, before" (474). The homogenization of the liminal stage and the carnivalesque suspensions of hierarchy allow for the complication of Devereux's ideas on the people. Devereux undergoes the experience of the exile described by Bhabha: he is living "that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering" ("DissemiNation" 139). The Irish community gathered in Australia becomes a microcosm of Ireland, allowing Devereux to interact and commune with the broad range of Irish peoples.

This equalizing of people of different ranks and stations is part of the promise Australia holds as a Boeotia – a promise which simultaneously attracts and horrifies Devereux, who is afraid he will become like the lotus-eaters, forgetful on this island of his true calling in the northern hemisphere. Yet he does decide to take that first step in joining this emerging society by agreeing to become partners with his ersatz shipboard servant James Langford in starting a hop farm together. Upon making the decision to join him in this venture, Devereux tells Langford to stop calling him "sir" and instead call him

“Devereux,” to which Langford responds, “since you’ve been calling me James, I’d sooner call you Robert.” Devereux is at first shocked but recognizes that the new colony has suspended previous rules of social order: “I’d not have accepted it, at home; yet here, in this upside-down colony, it seemed almost natural” (368). His joining with Langford to start a farm represents his acceptance of both the abandonment of traditional social orders and his role as one of those cultivating the new nation.<sup>46</sup>

The most prominent symbol of the Devereux’s increasingly complex understanding of the people of Ireland is his relationship with Kathleen. Transported for stealing food after her family died during the Famine, Kathleen was raped by a fellow Irish convict while working on a ticket of leave, sent to the Female Factory where she had a baby who died, and then hired as a house servant by Doctor Howard when Devereux sees her for the first time. His first glimpse of her face is in a mirror, after she had upset two bowls and exclaimed in Irish “*mo bhrón!*” – an Irish interjection meaning literally “my grief” but used to express upset such as “alas!” (259). Devereux sees the face in the mirror as “that of some water-sprite from legend” and then her actual face as “a physiognomy typical of our peasantry,” exemplifying Devereux’s characterization of the people – established in his mind from his vantage on the hill – as practically mythical creatures (260). The relationship established with Howard on board the hulks encourages Devereux to discuss Kathleen with the doctor – an act which causes Devereux to reflect

---

<sup>46</sup> Once the farm has been established and Devereux begins working the land, he experiences “a sort of happiness” he’d not known before that comes from “toil’s unthinking rhythm” and of testing his body’s strength. The farm becomes a microcosm for Australian society, “where the bond between man and man is not based on blood or station, but on their common tie with the soil, and their common effort” (400). This connection is somewhat problematic, as the other ties established by toil in the colony are those of the toiling prisoners, breaking rocks and chopping trees in service of the state. But perhaps this type of toil, too, served to unite the Australian people – the common history of trauma unites them as a horrific type of “common effort”.

on his interstitial status as a gentleman and an Irishman. He experiences a “pang of shame” because, although “a peasant from Limerick Kathleen might be” she was still “one of my own, on whose behalf I struggled” and “closer to me and of more importance to me than any well-bred Englishman” (266). Yet, he had still “discussed her with this servant of British tyranny as though she were a butterfly” – in other words, as though she were a species of thing different from himself to be pinned down and commented on (266). As though to drive the point home, Howard’s comments just after Devereux has these thoughts are almost exact mirrors of Devereux’s initial reaction to Kathleen, calling her “somethin’ of a mystery to me,” noting that the people in the West of Ireland are “still pretty wild,” and informing Devereux that Kathleen is “quite superstitious” and “believes in the banshee” (267). Though he wants to insist that he has more in common with Kathleen and the people whom she represents, Devereux, in this early stage of his relationship with Kathleen, clearly aligns more closely to the so-called “servant of British tyranny.”

Koch chooses the name “Kathleen” as his representative of the Irish people for whom Devereux professes to fight in reference to Kathleen ni Houlihan, Ireland personified as a woman who, like Kathleen the servant, has been dispossessed of her home. Because Koch is writing this in present day, the reference to Kathleen ni Houlihan works on multiple levels to criticize Devereux’s simplistically romantic ideas about the people. Kathleen’s last name, O’Rahilly, makes Devereux wonder if she was “an actual blood relation of that wonderful Egan O’Rahilly who lamented the death of the Gaelic order, and who created the inspired form of *aisling* in which Ireland herself is the woman of the poet’s vision” (582) – the type of song Devereux had heard being sung by the Irish

convicts aboard the transport ship. Kathleen ni Houlihan is one incarnation of that *spéir bhean*, or fairy woman, from the *aisling*, one of the sources for W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory's 1902 *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. The name and the reference recall that Yeats and Gregory wrote the play as part of an attempt to respond to derogatory depictions of the Irish in English media, yet they themselves were criticized for being elitist and out of touch with the vast majority of the Irish people.<sup>47</sup> Koch may also be making a metacommentary on authors who blatantly exploit the symbolism of names in order to emphasize Devereux's shallowness in seeing Kathleen at first as more of a symbol than an individual.<sup>48</sup>

Devereux's growing love for Kathleen forces him to face his both his ingrained gentleman's view of the people as below him and his romantic revolutionary's idea of the people as mythical creatures. The second time he sees her at Doctor Howard's, when she delivers his wash water, he at first sees her face as "the face of a *spéir bhean*" but immediately corrects his vision: "But then I looked again, and saw that this was no sky woman, but a convict girl from Limerick" (346). He begins to be able to see her as she really is, and feels a "thickening in his throat" that comes from his growing emotions towards her. When she is about to leave his chamber, Devereux implores her to stay longer, saying "I want to know you, Kathleen" (348). He wants to know her as an individual, and hears her story of her family's death during the famine, and of all she has

---

<sup>47</sup> Dean, for example, notes that the founding goal of the Irish Literary Theatre to build up an Irish school of dramatic literature was a "slightly snobbish fiction" in that Dublin already "enjoyed a thriving theatrical tradition in the late nineteenth century." Likewise, though they claimed they would have the support of all the Irish people, "in reality the company was tailoring its work for an elite audience" and even the theater "lacked a certain egalitarianism in its architecture," leaving out the sixpence seats usually occupied by working class theatergoers.

<sup>48</sup> James Joyce also made such a commentary in "A Mother," as Mrs. Kearney is "determined to take advantage of her daughter's name" – Kathleen – as soon as the "Irish Revival began to be appreciable" (342).

gone through in Australia. But it is not only Devereux who must begin to see Kathleen as an individual; Kathleen also begins by worshipping Devereux as a hero, telling him “we had your picture on the wall in our house, cut from a magazine: you and Wolfe Tone and Daniel O’Connell. You were our hero” (269). Each is unreal to the other.

As he comes to know Kathleen, Devereux faces both the differences in their experiences and his misperceptions about the Irish people. Between their lives and experiences, Devereux learns, “there stretches a gap of such dimensions that I sometimes wonder how it can be bridged” (454). Thomas O’Neill, his fellow political prisoner, reminds him of the “vast gap society and fate have placed between you and this young woman” (407). Just as Devereux had earlier subtly accused Doctor Howard of uncharitable intentions towards Kathleen, O’Neill forces Devereux to admit to himself that he had kept his intentions towards her “pleasantly vague” in the beginning, thinking of her as “a semi-mythical being, whom I would make love to outside space and time” but whom he had thought of as a potential “respected mistress” – not as his wife (407). Far from feeling honorable in treating her with the “charitable love” and “compassion” that O’Neill advises him to maintain, Devereux realizes that in maintaining an honorable gentlemanliness towards her he is participating in the very show of respectability that caused Catherine to break their engagement. Compared to Catherine, the “sheltered young Anglo-Irish gentlewoman who had been educated enough to express sentiments and judgements of literature, art and music that were always unsurprising, and always secondhand” and who belongs in “fussy Dublin drawing rooms... where the careful talks and careful, temperate responses all suit her,” Kathleen gives Devereux “loyalty and passion” and opens “her own mind” to him, “not someone else’s” when she speaks (582).

When, three months later, Lenoir asks Devereux the same question O'Neill had, he responds "quite hotly" that he "intends to marry her" (474). In the carnivalesque mixing of rank and station allowed by this emerging and developing society, Devereux recognizes the hypocrisy of attempting to be both an English-style gentleman and an Irish revolutionary through his relationship with Kathleen.

He must also recognize, through his relationship with Kathleen, the fact that the Irish people for whom he fights might feel differently about Ireland than he does. Devereux, who had thought himself representative of what was best for all Ireland, is confronted with "the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 148). When Devereux asks Kathleen if she is homesick and she responds in the negative, the romantic revolutionary admonishes her that "Ireland is still our home; the place whose hills and streams nurtured our spirits from childhood. Our motherland" (418). Kathleen brings him down to reality, to her reality: "All that is poetry... But poetry is for the quality, like yourself – and a cruel mother Ireland was to me. I'm thinking sometime that I may find more kindness here, in this wild place, where we are told that humble folk may begin again" (410). Kathleen sees the emerging nation as offering her a better life – the opportunity there to form a relationship with Devereux being the living proof of that – than can a return to Ireland. Kathleen makes Devereux aware of the differences among the Irish people; those differences do not diminish nor negate the imagined community of Ireland, but rather strengthen it by allowing all voices, dominant and subaltern, to collectively negotiate the "strategies of identification" that perform the nation (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 162). Devereux acknowledges Kathleen's influence on his understanding when he insists to Paul Barry

that he is “in love with a woman who transforms the world for [him]” (449). The world as he had understood it is different because of his interactions with a voice and mind different from his own, but still Irish.

Even as he is understanding the heterogeneity within the Irish collectivity through Kathleen, Devereux still struggles to maintain Irish identity and independence in the face of British hegemony. This struggle is exemplified in what Devereux sees as his inability to marry Kathleen by permission of his oppressors. Within the household at the farm in this emerging nation, Kathleen “lives as my wife without question” (585). Devereux accepts that he wants to marry Katherine despite the fact that he “could never be received again in Dublin society” – in other words, he is willing to give up his status as gentleman to be with her – but he still longs to escape with her back to the northern hemisphere and to marry her on his terms. He refuses to “petition my enemy, the colonial gaoler Denison, like a medieval serf his lord, asking him to allow me to wed a fellow-prisoner” (586). Such an act would, he insists, “demean” him “not only as a man, but as an Irish leader” (586); Kathleen, who has great “bitterness towards... the English” supports him in this.<sup>49</sup> All the complications in their ability to wed are imported from the traditions, values, and strife of the old world – values that remain in many ways important to Devereux the “Irish leader.” Lenoir later asks him, with regards to withdrawing his parole before his escape, “Why not go outside the code in dealing with your enemy?” (679). Devereux is still living within the code of the dichotomy that to be Irish is to be emphatically not

---

<sup>49</sup> In refusing to petition the governor to marry Kathleen but in continuing to sleep with her, Devereux has put Kathleen in purgatory with himself. As she is a Catholic, she cannot take sacraments or confess as long as they are living in “sin”; “If she died now, she once told me, she would go to Purgatory. Perhaps even to Hell, if no priest were available to hear her last Confession” (585). Australia becomes Purgatory for both Kathleen and Devereux.

English, which gives power to the English to create the narrative of Irishness. In marrying Kathleen, he would actually wed himself to the people, creating unity from heterogeneity – surely an act of resistance against his oppressors. He would be able to show more loyalty to Kathleen than to the forms of control established by the British. Devereux’s struggle with regards to marrying Kathleen reveals the ways that British hegemony stifled the development of a unified Irish people by controlling the forms of unity that were allowed. In the carnivalesque atmosphere of Australia, they can come together; but Devereux himself is still held by the hegemonic narrative of British control. His relationship with Kathleen not only forces Devereux to consider what he really means by his insistence that he loves “the people” but also to understand the ways in which the British have usurped the Irish ability to self-define by controlling the means through which they are allowed to do so.

Kathleen is not the only representative of the Irish people with whom Devereux interacts in Australia. He must also face directly and personally – not just theoretically – different types of Irish revolutionaries whose beliefs, backgrounds, and methods are at odds with his own, but who are nonetheless fighting the same fight he is. One such person is Liam Kinane, a fellow member of Young Ireland who fought alongside Martin Fitzgibbon in the ’48 rebellion who is both a member of the people and an Irish revolutionary – a combination the lack of which has plagued Devereux and which challenges Devereux’s beliefs as a gentleman revolutionary.<sup>50</sup> The bookshop owner Lenoir, who lived through the French revolution, knows Kinane’s type of “revolutionary

---

<sup>50</sup> Kinane represents the historic figure Patrick O’Donohue who did not play a large part in Mitchel’s journal; Fitzgibbon is William Smith O’Brien and the ’48 rebellion, known in the novel as the battle of Widow Mac Manus’s cabbage plot, parallels that held on the property of Widow McCormick.

from the people,” who is “clawing his way out of ignorance and poverty” and “driven in a way that [those] of gentle birth are not” (470). While Devereux’s type, “driven by idealism[,]... are the ones who actually *make* revolutions,” Kinane “is driven by a rage and desire... These are the men who are revolution’s soldiers” (470). Kinane sees the people as the spirit of the Irish nation in a different way than Devereux does. Whereas the people for whom Devereux imagines he fights are tied closely to the land of Ireland – as evidenced in his assumption that Kathleen would want to return to the “motherland” – Kinane recognizes the nation of Ireland among the people of the diaspora, among Ireland’s exiles. Whereas Devereux feels that his only options are to return to the North and continue the fight or remain in Australia and “sink into the valley of Boeotia,” Kinane believes that the fight should continue as long as there are Irish people willing to carry it out.

The conflict between these two types of revolutionary is exemplified in Devereux’s disagreement with Kinane over his having started a newspaper. Kinane starts *The Irish Exile* to “be the voice of the Irish people, here in Van Diemen’s Land” and to “give heart to our people here” (202). Devereux has “no interest at all in running a newspaper in a gaol, by courtesy of my gaolers” and can see no parallel between Kinane’s paper and his own *New Nation* back in Ireland, which he insists was “to educate the people of Ireland in preparation for nationhood,” to “show them exactly how the English are maintaining their tyranny, and to call on them to resist” (203). Underlying this argument is Devereux’s elitist assumption that the people are tools of resistance; he is famous for calling the people to arms, for calling them to action, but in Van Diemen’s Land “no such purposes could be pursued as those of the *New Nation*” (204). Whereas

Kinane and his fellow Irish people need Devereux's words as inspiration, as hope – which alone to Kinane is a good enough purpose for the newspaper – Devereux sees no point in inspiring a people who cannot, due to their situation, follow through on the material purposes of such inspiration.

Devereux does not recognize the paradox in his distaste for the people's viewing him as a symbol while he himself clearly views the people – the mythical peasantry – in the same way. When Devereux arrives in Hobart Town, he is greeted with a street ballad sung by the Irish there; the “simple pleasure” of their faces causes a “surge of affection” despite the fact that the “brogue of [his] followers makes a good many of the words incomprehensible” (206–7). But he later reflects that Kinane and his like are “well-meaning fools” who make him “the subject of unconscious caricature” and “a reflection of the worshipper's dreams” (211). Devereux sees no irony in this assessment, because he has yet to learn that his caricaturing of the Irish people is as skewed and romanticized as is their view of him.

Kinane's interactions with Devereux reveal the extent to which Devereux's position as a gentleman affects his understanding of the purpose of revolution, particularly in defining exactly what is meant by the freedom for which all the revolutionaries supposedly fight. Kinane confronts Devereux and the other Young Irelanders with a call for universal freedom. His newspaper, disapproved of by the gentleman revolutionaries, “speak[s] for freedom, here in these bloody colonies! Not just Irish freedom: freedom for all men – even those poor bastards of felons who want to begin life here again” (493). Oppressed not only by the English but also by poverty, Kinane finds it obvious that “When English rule is ended... what Ireland will need will

be Socialism” (515). Devereux, sounding suspiciously like Doctor Howard, rejoins that Socialism would result in levelling, and that, both in revolution and after, “the people must be instructed and led” (528). Kinane confronts him not with that nebulous mass of ‘the people’ but with himself, their comrade in revolution: “I am one of them.... *I* am of the people. Is it as a slave you see *me* – you fastidious gentlemen?... I believe you see the common people as those English bastards do, in their God-damned *Punch* cartoons” (530). As Kathleen forces Devereux to confront his romantic idealization of the people, Kinane forces him to face his elitist othering of the people. Devereux’s praise of freedom as an idealized form must answer to the realities of freedom in practice.

So too must Devereux face the realities of calling for violence as the means to freedom, which he begins to do through his interactions with Daniel O’Donnell. Transported “for burning down the farmhouses of the gentry, and killing their stock,” O’Donnell is the convict who raped Kathleen and therefore has earned Devereux’s deep loathing. But Devereux also despises him – as he does Kinane – as practicing what he believes to be the wrong kind of Irish revolutionary activity: “The man was a fanatic, as Ribbonmen often are, driven by a hatred made splendid in their minds by myths of lost nobility, when the estates of the gentry were rightfully theirs” (569). Again, Devereux sees no paradox in his derision of another for being driven in his nationalism by myths, even as he himself is driven by the myth of the noble Irish peasantry. Further, the fanaticism he mocks is actually inspiring to the people whom he claims to represent. Devereux, renowned for his calls for a violent uprising, somehow does not understand that the type of fanaticism he mocks in O’Donnell is parallel to the leadership the people sought in himself.

Like Kinane, O'Donnell does not see that his nationalist activities should end once he's in Australia. While Kinane starts a newspaper, O'Donnell and some of his fellow Irish ticket-of-leave workers "turn bushranger." According to a newspaper report (which the fictional editor Barton mentions was folded into Devereux's journal), O'Donnell made a speech at a hotel "informing those present that he and his men hated British rule in Van Diemen's Land, and that they would set up what he called 'a territory of Irish freedom' in the mountains, where those who agreed with them might come and join them" (508). After Kinane becomes disillusioned with the "fastidious" gentlemen revolutionaries, he accuses them of doing nothing since coming to Australia, insisting, "Sure, Daniel O'Donnell the bushranger does more than you!... I tell you, he's a fighter and a patriot! He may have done wrong, but at least he thumbs his nose at the Government, in the name of Irish freedom!" (530). Even as the men can dismiss Kinane as being drunk and unreasonable in praising a "murderous criminal" (particularly Devereux who knows O'Donnell's role in Kathleen's history), Kinane's defense of O'Donnell parallels Fitzgibbon's accusation against Devereux. Fitzgibbon, transported for leading the '48 rebellion at Ballingarry, charges Devereux that "it was *your* policy of violence that set us on the road that has brought us here: your lust for blood and destruction – though you yourself never fired a shot, did you?" (525). The dichotomy Kinane and Fitzgibbon point to between words and deeds is at the heart of the problematic nature of the romantic revolutionary to whom the people are both mythical inspiration and disposable cannon fodder.

While Devereux may find it easy to dismiss Kinane's and Fitzgibbon's criticisms, he cannot do so as easily with Kathleen's. She who has the most personal reason to hate

O'Donnell, not only for his original rape but for his continued violent pursuit of her, still respects him for the action he takes. When Kathleen as a Catholic expresses pity that O'Donnell will go to hell for having killed two people during a raid, and Devereux says they deserve damnation, Kathleen responds, "I am not so sure of that... He has killed two men, it's true. But one was a dirty informer – and the other was a constable serving this English government. And at least Dan O'Donnell stood up and fought them" (547). Devereux, astounded that Kathleen would praise someone he believes "disgraces Ireland, and disgraces our struggle," cannot hear the silent accusation that standing up and fighting is exactly what Devereux encouraged the people to do – and is more than he himself has done.

One of Devereux's problems apparent in his judgment of O'Donnell is that he separates different types of violence, seeing some as honorable and some as disgraceful. The standoff with O'Donnell, who attacks the farmhouse and kidnaps Kathleen, shows him what real violence looks like – and makes him question his assumptions about himself that "although I'm described by the British as a terrorist and a man of violence, I do not like the idea of violence. Nor do I wish to turn to it unless it can be avoided" (542). The standoff also brings to the fore the question of owning the narrative of the Irish patriot, which is related in Devereux's mind to this separation of types of violence. While Devereux insists that "O'Donnell is no patriot, but a common criminal" (388), O'Donnell disdains Devereux who both literally and figuratively cannot understand the Irish people. When Ballybunion Tim, one of O'Donnell's gang, charges on Devereux, "he roared: a sound which at first bore no resemblance to human speech. Then I realized he was shouting in Irish, though not a word was comprehensible to me" (563). Kinane's

accusation that Devereux thinks of him as do the British in a *Punch* cartoon – in other words, as an ape, as non-human – is apparent in Devereux’s reaction to hearing Irish, the language of the people, the language of his nation in which are sung those very *aislings* he finds so beautiful and mysterious. Devereux concludes that Tim in roaring and charging has “reverted to savagery,” and the juxtaposition indicates that his Irishness and especially his Irish anger put him outside of civilized society – exactly the same accusation Howard made in saying that no civilized people would want the violence that Devereux himself called for.

O’Donnell directly accuses Devereux of not truly being Irish. When Devereux says he cannot speak Irish, O’Donnell responds,

Yes: this is a queer thing, that Robert Devereux speaks no Irish. It’s one of our great leaders, and he speaks no Irish! But isn’t it a Protestant you are, and one of the bloody quality? Well, I say you’ve never been Irish. Do you hear? Not you nor your ancestors, whom I piss on: the God-damned Old English who stole our estates, and destroyed and ruined our lords. Do you think I know nothing of that butcher Essex, sent by the bloody whore Elizabeth? Your ancestor, Devereux! (568).

His ancestry, his religion, his wealth, and his language are indictments against Devereux’s place as an Irish leader, and suggest that the benevolent gentleman revolutionary is oppressing the Irish people in the same way the British have done and are still doing.

More than simply questioning Devereux’s Irishness, though, the standoff with the bushranger reveals to Devereux what the reality of his call for violence would look like.

He shoots Lynch, one of O'Donnell's men, and "his scream after I fired was appalling: an accusation I had not anticipated" (565). The accusation is against this individual act of violence on a single body, against violence in general, and against Devereux's lack of anticipation of the consequences of committing violence. Lynch continues to cry out, "the falsetto sound both protesting and incredulous, like that of a child whose injury was beyond anything it had been lead to expect"; Devereux "wanted it to stop, but it would not stop" (565). The memory of that killing, and the shooting of O'Donnell thereafter, haunt Devereux: "Lynch's cries... sound in my head before I sleep, while O'Donnell still stares, in the moment his heart explodes, and falls again and again from his horse" (580). The scene emphasizes both the misunderstanding those who call for and participate in armed warfare have over its true nature and the long term after effects of such violence.

Devereux's interactions with O'Donnell continue his education, begun on board the convict ships, on the traumatic effects of violence on the mind of the violated body. Koch creates a parallel between Lane and O'Donnell. The next time Devereux sees Lane after his whipping on the convict hulk, he is running a successful fence operation in the St. Giles slum, Hobart's town-behind-a-town; seeing a nerve jump in Lane's cheek, Devereux "remembered hearing it said that a man never fully recovers from the sort of flogging Lane endured" (378). Kathleen suggests the same is true of O'Donnell: "supposing he had not been put in gaol and flogged, he might have been a better man – and one who might have fought for you, since he fears nothing. Being flogged by the English made him mad. It also put an anger in him that cannot be cured" (547). Kathleen reminds Devereux of the fellow feeling he had for all convicts after he watched Lane

being flayed by suggesting that O'Donnell had the potential to be one of Devereux's men had he not endured such suffering.

Devereux learns that words and deeds cannot be so easily separated, and that no man can know himself until he commits the acts he swears to support. Only in his journal does he admit that while one "self" is "horrified" at killing O'Donnell, his "second self... not only wished to kill O'Donnell: he exulted in it" (580). Devereux recognizes that he will "never be quite the same man" again: "a man who passed as gentle, except in his ideas" (581). Devereux's phrasing subtly suggests that he can never again quite be a gentle man, or gentleman, in the sense of being that idealistic gentleman revolutionary, who writes poems and articles, whose protests are civilized and erudite. Violence – both the committing of it and the suffering it – brings consequences that he who writes of its glory should understand.

For Devereux, though, some of this understanding of the effects of punishment comes too late. O'Donnell, Fitzgibbon, and Kinane were all subject to punishment by the British: O'Donnell by being flogged and imprisoned; Fitzgibbon by refusing to give his parole to his English oppressors and therefore being confined in Port Arthur; Kinane by being put in a prison camp after breaking his parole to visit his fellow Young Irishmen. After killing O'Donnell, Devereux laments, "I have killed a man.... And he was one of my own" (572). When Fitzgibbon – older than the other Young Irishmen, wealthier, of a higher-ranking family, and long opposed to violent uprising – drowns himself, Devereux laments that he "ruined [his] life for our suffering country" when he "had no need to" (595). Devereux, "ashamed of [their] disputes now" calls Fitzgibbon "a true Irish martyr" (595). When Kinane dies, Devereux admits of the justice in saying that "he was destroyed

by English tyranny – that tyranny against which he hurled himself without thought of the consequences.... We called this foolishness, my comrades and I; now we grow ashamed, and call it heroism” (619). All of these people, Devereux learns, were Irish patriots because they believed in and fought for their idea of Ireland, and suffered at the hands of her oppressors. Not the idealized form, conceived in drawing rooms, but the living actions of the people of the nation – the performative signification of nation – are what defines it. Devereux learns that in this land without history.

Devereux too must learn that his own actions define what type of nationalist he is, and how he understands the concept of nation. When Kathleen dies from complication after the birth of their son, Devereux is not with her; instead he is with his fellow Young Irelander Paul Barry helping him escape to America. He repeats over and over, “I was not there, when she fought for her life.... I was not there” (669). Devereux’s idealism and his connection to the *cause* that is Irish nationalism leads him to neglect the living manifestation of that for which he professes to fight. His nationalism is at the expense, too, of his individual happiness.

Koch here invokes the problems inherent in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* which encourages the idealizing of a feminized symbol of Ireland at the expense of the real, living woman. Lenoir asks, “is nationalism really what you worship, Devereux? You, and all the other young men in Europe who have made their countries into deities? I think they are female deities, you direct such passion towards them” (680). While they are making love, Devereux says to Kathleen “*You are Ireland*” (450, italics in original), but the statement is ambiguous. Either it could mean that Kathleen herself, in her action and her daily life, performs the “process of signification” that defines the “coherent national

culture” that is Ireland; or, it could mean that she is the static “object,” the symbol of the nation that Lenoir speaks of (Bhabha, “DissemiNation” 145). Devereux had spent his life loving and fighting for the people as pedagogical, as a symbol of national identity; he had understood national identity from the vantage of a “polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation ‘in-itself’ and extrinsic other nations” – particularly, Ireland as opposed to England (148). But the ambiguity inherent in the two ways that Kathleen *is* Ireland reveals that the “nation [is] split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population” (148). The nation is made up of all the different beliefs and figures, both marginal and dominant, with whom Devereux comes into contact.

The ambiguity within Devereux himself – a fastidious ascendancy gentleman, an inflammatory Irish revolutionary – is metonymic of this plurality within an entire nation. Gaile suggests that the “contradictoriness that Koch locates in his main character is a very Australian phenomenon and captures the multi-layered and complex nature of the continent down under in the present” (155). But Devereux is too tied to the pedagogical understanding of nation, and agrees with Paul Barry’s assessment that living “in a country *without history*” is disheartening and spirit-crushing (445). Devereux must return to the north.

The baby that Devereux leaves behind him when he escapes back to the northern hemisphere symbolizes the way that the Irish in Australia were part of the creation of that new nation. The boy is the combination of Devereux and Kathleen, of the pedagogical and the performative national identity. Earlier when defending Kathleen to O’Neill, he argued, “Yes, she is one of the people: the people we struggle for.... Do you despise them? Have we not said that from the genius of the Irish people, we will build a new

nation? Kathleen embodies for me the spirit and soul of the people” (406). And from the Irish people, Devereux does help to build a new nation – Australia. The boy is what Devereux earlier defined as a “currency lad,” a native born Australian. When dining outside with his fellow Young Irelanders, Devereux indicates that he intends to enjoy his life in Van Deimen’s Land as long as he must be there (thinking, of course, of Kathleen). Fitzgibbon’s shocked rejoinder – “Is all your brilliance and passion to be given to a life beyond the edge of civilization?” – is answered by the thundering hoof beat and whooping laughter from a group of currency lads (439). Devereux does give his brilliance and passion to a life that remains in Australia. Koch’s choice of title and epigraph returns in the implication that this child will also “carry from [his] mother’s womb / A fanatic heart.” Devereux’s departure makes him a tool, a conduit for nation formation through his son.

In Australia those characteristics that the English brand as negative in the Irish can become positive parts of the national identity. Howard calls Irishmen “passionate and feckless,” an assessment mirrored by many of the Englishmen (389). Devereux defines the Irish in terms of what their oppressors think. He sees the British military as lacking “true independence, and that divine madness which I call the Celtic leap” but recalls that in Caesar’s *Gallic War* the characteristics of the Celtic tribes – “brave, eager for war, but also unstable, credulous, scatterbrained and disorganized – given to both anger and panic” – caused them to lose to Rome (31). Even with O’Donnell, when Kathleen praises his taking of action, Devereux is concerned only with being branded by the English as “a nation of ruffians” (547). In a nation without history, these characteristics can exist in an

ideal form. Australia need not exist as opposed to or against the English narrative of it, but can be a nation that writes itself.<sup>51</sup>

Part of writing the story of Australia is acknowledging the harm that the English did and the place of the Irish in the formation of the Australian nation. At a time when the nation was identifying itself, Koch brings forth this journal from the burial grounds of the nation's history to remind the people of their origins. Devereux, ever concerned with the pedagogical in his understanding of national identity, ever looking to the myths and stories of the past, becomes part of the pedagogical identity of Australia. His story is hidden for years and rediscovered, like Finn MacCool rising from the dead to restore the glory of Ireland. His son, then, and the generations of Irish descendants thereafter, continue the performative identity of Australia. For the exiles, "the nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 139). Transportation to Australia "transfer[ed] the meaning of home and belonging across the 'middle passage'" of the ocean, but also allowed for new forms of relatedness to emerge (139). *Out of Ireland* suggests not only a reconsideration of the "convict stain" but also a reappraisal of Australia's cultural heritage and collective national identity as more Irish than English.

---

<sup>51</sup> John Mitchel begins his introduction to the *Jail Journal* by lamenting that "England has been left in possession not only of the Soil of Ireland... but in possession of the world's ear also... Britain being in possession of the floor, any hostile comment upon her way of telling our story is an unmannerly interruption; nay, is nothing short of an *Irish howl*" (1, emphasis in original).

## CHAPTER 3

### “Ripped from Ireland like teeth from the mouth of their own history”: Bushrangers as Heirs to Irish Political Revolutionaries in Contemporary Australian Literature

Since the rise of modern nations during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars from a variety of fields have devoted attention to defining and de-mythologizing the ways and reasons that people come together to form a nation. Among others, Benedict Anderson – whose recognition of nations as “imagined communities” underlies much scholarship on nationalisms – and Eric Hobsbawm – whose term “invented tradition” to describe the nation is no less important in the field – have destabilized the essentialism of nation. In light of this deconstruction, a question arises as to how, once this artifice has been revealed, nations continue to hold together as discrete communities. One answer to this question lies in the shared myths of the nation. In Australia, as the nation sought to shake off the stain of criminality peculiar to the circumstance of its founding as a penal colony, a myth figure that became central to the story of Australian identity was the bushranger. An outlaw who stood up against the British police forces while taming the vast outback wilderness, the bushranger transfigured the helpless, dirty, controlled convict into the rugged, hardy, defiant Aussie, offering Australians a common folk hero to supplant the traumatic convict narrative of origin.

Two contemporary Australian novelists explore the figure of the bushranger in the Australian mythscape: Peter Carey in his 2000 novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, based on the historical figure Ned Kelly, and Roger McDonald in his 2005 novel *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* about an eponymous fictional convict. Rather than suggesting

that bushrangers sprang up solely in response to conditions in Australia, Carey and McDonald place them in line with other Irish revolutionary figures, framing the conflict between these outlaws and the police and government as a continuation of the struggle for Irish independence from Britain. These two contemporary novelists reaffirm the bushranger as a pivotal founding figure in Australian myth and history while suggesting that the bushrangers themselves trace their heritage back not only to Irish revolutionary heroes but also to mythical heroes of Irish lore.

In expanding the mythology of the bushranger to be part of the story of Irish resistance, both Carey and McDonald explore the way that myths are made and disseminated, and how they become part of the framework of national identity, while still participating in that mythmaking. Carey, by re-writing the story of the most well-known bushranger in Australian history, suggests that there is an untold story of the man himself, one that was already Ned Kelly's real story and thus part of Australian national identity. Carey explores the extent to which Kelly and therefore Australians in general can or should trace their identity to Irish revolutionary history. McDonald creates in Desmond Kale the rebellious Irish convict-turned-bushranger who serves as inspiration for other convicts; he also tells the story of the ballad sung about Kale that spreads his fame, thus unpacking the way that a man becomes a myth. By drawing attention to the relationship between the "real" person and the myth he becomes, Carey and McDonald parse the scraps and fragments that collude to form unified national identity.

By foregrounding the constructedness of national identity and exploring the way that a myth can become part of national identity, Carey and McDonald also suggest that the myths shared by Australians as their origin stories are explicitly stories of the white

settlement of Australia. By removing the origin of Australian identity to Ireland, they recognize that contemporary Australian identity is imported, or rather transported, from white European roots. Even as they suggest that the history of the Irish in Australia is one of suffering and rebellion, Carey and McDonald disturb their readers' complacency in a unified, white vision of Australian nationalism.

The novels also work to explore the relationship between speech acts and revolution, and the effects of punishment in overthrowing the very system that enacts it. Both of these topics more subtly connect the bushrangers' stories with their Irish heritage by way of the transport ship. The restrictions on speech and action on the convict transport ships denied the convicts any overt political discussion, but, unlike the prisons there were kept in prior to transportation, allowed for some personal conversation as well as for singing.<sup>52</sup> As evidenced from the journals of the *Hougoumont* Fenians, discussion and singing of the stories of Ireland and of the heroes of Irish history became a form of political speech – not overt, but through the subtle reinforcing of the importance of the Irish writing and speaking their own histories. The restrictions of the transport ships encouraged creative forms of rebellion; Carey and McDonald call on this use of the interdicted language by presenting the Irish convicts and bushrangers in Australia telling their own stories. Like John Mitchel in the introduction to his *Jail Journal*, Carey and

---

<sup>52</sup> Mitchel, on a ship from Bermuda to the Cape of Good Hope, writes that “There are nearly two hundred Irish amongst these prisoners... many who have not a word of English.... As I am far removed, however, from their part of the ship, I seldom hear their voices, except when they sing at night. And such singing is mournful beyond all *caoines*, *coronachs*, and *næniæ* [types of funeral song]” (186). Mitchel is moved to think about the suffering of the younger of the Irish convicts, of the conditions under which they and their families lived and of their mothers mourning their fates; “Thoughts like these often come to me when I hear at night, rising from the ship’s fore-castle, some Irish air that carries me back to old days when I heard the same to the humming accompaniments of the spinning wheel; and then I curse, oh! how fervently, the British empire” (187). The immediate connection between the singing of Irish songs and the injustice of British hegemony reinforces the political and nationalistic work that telling your own story and controlling the narrative of national identity does.

McDonald emphasize the contrast between official – in other words, British – speech, and unofficial speech that can tell the real story of oppression and rebellion.<sup>53</sup> Writing some 200 years after the events of their novels, Carey and McDonald can see the continuity between the stories of the Irish rebels and the Irish bushrangers in Australia. The novels tell an interdicted version of history, and also tell of the ways and reasons that those interdicted histories came to be written and spread, offering a metacommentary on mythmaking. *True History of the Kelly Gang* and *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* take up the same role of nation building that the stories, songs, ballads, and speeches of the bushrangers and Irish prisoners had: telling a story that captures and transmits national identity.

As the nation is “invented” and “imagined,” the outline and substance of national identity exists exclusively in the minds of the people. Homi Bhabha begins his introductory essay to *Nation and Narration* with the suggestion that “[nations], like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (1); the nation becomes fixed there through shared national myths. In his comprehensive look at the intersections of myth and history in the forming of national identity in Europe, Stefan Berger notes that national myths and histories (the line between which is thin to non-existent) “fulfill very similar functions when it comes to providing guidance for actions in the present and, in particular, when it comes to attempts at constructing national identities and solidarities” (491). “Through a mixture of public and

---

<sup>53</sup> Mitchel, in the introductory section to the *Jail Journal* in which he lays out the long history of English repression of the Irish, begins: “England has been left in possession not only of the Soil of Ireland... but in possession of the world’s ear also.... Britain being in possession of the floor, any hostile comment upon her way of telling our story is an unmannerly interruption; nay is nothing short of an *Irish howl!*” (9). Mitchel here highlights the difference between official language and interdicted language. In telling the Irish version of the history of English control of Ireland, Mitchel reframes the story from one of continuous oppression to one of continuous rebellion.

private narratives,” individuals internalize a “collective memory with the assumption that individuals should partake in it” (Berger 492). Berger identifies several key myths that promote unified national identity: stories of origin; mythologies of golden ages and periods of decline; mythologies of religion; and spatial mythologies to do with borders and borderlands (491).

Berger argues from his findings that “the most powerful of these myths and the most crucial for national histories were myths of origin” (492); for postcolonial nations, however, whose beginnings as modern nations are often fraught with the memory of slavery, control, and oppression, these stories of origin can be problematic. Berger found that “the longer the continuity that could be constructed in the name of the nation, the more ancient and the more valuable – that is, the higher standing – the nation was. It was important to demonstrate that the people who constituted the nation had been living on the same territory, had spoken the same language, and had transported an original culture down the ages” (492). This continuity between self and place lives at the heart of the crisis of identity in many postcolonial nations. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note in their seminal work on postcolonial theory, *The Empire Writes Back*, a “valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by *dislocation*, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour.... The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies” (9, emphasis in original).<sup>54</sup> In the Australian context, the story of national origin was the story of convict transportation – a nation not founded by a glorious

---

<sup>54</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin go on to write that “the alienation of vision and the crisis of self-image which this displacement produces is as frequently found in the accounts of Canadian ‘free settlers’ as of Australian convicts, Fijian-Indian or Trinidadian-Indian indentured labourers, West Indian slaves, or forcibly colonized Nigerians or Bengalis” (9).

discovery or revolution, but as a prison. Not only were the convict origins of the nation not celebrated, they were hidden, a source of embarrassment and ostracism. The “hated stain” of convict ancestry affected not only individuals who traced their ancestry to transported convicts, but also a sense of national standing and national identity.

Thus a unified sense of national identity in Australia must come from other sources. In the absence of satisfying myths of origin and place, Berger found that myths of origin could also refer “to more recent foundational and re-foundational moments in national history. Not infrequently, revolutions marked those re-foundations, where the nation, according to the historians’ interpretative axis, either lost its way or found itself” (493). In the postcolonial context, such re-foundations need not always be successful revolutions, but merely cases of resistance against the aggressive and often arbitrary rule of the colonizer; indeed, even in cases of failed revolutions, martyrdom becomes a potent symbol for strength and resistance.

This search for a symbolic foundational story of revolution and rebellion can explain the Australian myths celebrating the figure of the bushranger. Bushrangers – the Australian term for “outlaws” – “form part of the Australian *mythscape*” (Tranter and Donoghue 374). They embody the ten motifs that the outlaw hero consists in as outlined by Graham Seal in *The Outlaw Legend: A Cultural Tradition in Britain, America and Australia*: “friend of the poor, oppressed, forced into outlawry, brave, generous, courteous, does not indulge in unjustified violence, trickster, betrayed, lives on after death” (11).<sup>55</sup> Such characteristics of outlaws have much in common with revolutionary heroes in other contexts. Bushrangers also represent another group significant to the

---

<sup>55</sup> Tranter and Donoghue as well as Basu recognize that much outlaw/bushranger mythology aligns with Eric Hobsbawm’s ideas of *social banditry* in his book *Primitive Rebels*.

national imagination: the folk. Berger notes that “the absence of continuous state histories led many historians to seek refuge in an allegedly timeless and unchanging peasantry representing the incorruptible soul of the nation” (495). A ‘friend of the poor’ – like Robin Hood in England or Jesse James in America – the bushranger becomes a representative of the folk or peasant spirit of hard work, simplicity, and connection with the land (Tranter and Donoghue 374, Marsh 57). The “strong ‘mythistory’ connecting the nation to the ideas of freedom and liberty” and the celebration of resistance to oppression color the spirit of nationalism in Australia and place the bushranger as a central figure of Australian-ness (Tranter and Donoghue 495).

Peter Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang* draws not only on the bushranger as a revolutionary figure in the Australian mythscape, but also particularly on the most famous bushranger, Ned Kelly. In their sociological study based on survey questions in the 2005 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA), Tranter and Donoghue attempted to “measure Australians’ knowledge of bushrangers (i.e. their name recognition) by asking respondents to a national survey to name four bushrangers” (376).<sup>56</sup> They found that 80.4 per cent of Australians surveyed named Ned Kelly as a bushranger, a statistic that takes on more significance compared to the second best-known bushranger, Ben Hall, whom only 29 percent named (382). While one can speak of bushrangers in general as being part of the national imaginary of Australia, Tranter and Donoghue’s study shows that “Australians overwhelmingly identify Ned Kelly as *the bushranger*, and, based on the sheer volume of books, films and newspaper articles on Kelly, he is certainly a key figure in Australian mythology” (376). In the absence of a

---

<sup>56</sup> The actual question on the AuSSA was “Bushrangers roamed the countryside during the early period of European settlement in Australia. Please write the names of four bushrangers below” (377).

glorified story of origin, Kelly stands as “one of only a few well-known 19<sup>th</sup>-century figures contemporary Australians recognize and celebrate.... Kelly is inextricably linked to notions of Australian-ness and to national identity, and is one of the few colonial heroes” (Tranter and Donoghue 375).<sup>57</sup> Carey takes this most well-known of not only Australian bushrangers but also of Australian myths in general and tells it very specifically as an Irish story.

A brief description of Ned Kelly and the circumstances surrounding bushranging is here necessary. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, much of the Crown land of Australia was occupied by squatters. After the so-called Selection Acts were passed, allowing for the free selection of patches of Crown land to encourage close settlement (much like the Homestead Acts in the U.S.), the squatters, afraid of losing their purloined land, formed a “squattocracy”; in order to prevent the selectors from taking their land, the squatters used agents known as “dummies” to select the land and then will it to the squatter (Marsh 60). At the time, many former convicts (those either freed from prison or who had escaped), including Ned’s father John ‘Red’ Kelly, sought to establish homesteads through the selection process, but were prevented by the squatters; these unsuccessful selectors turned

---

<sup>57</sup> In the “About Australia” page on the Australian government’s main website, there are four categories: Our Country, Our Government, Australian Stories, and Australia in Brief. The picture denoting the section “Australian Stories” is a painting of Ned Kelly. On the list of pages that offer information on “Australian Identity”, among tabs like ‘national dress,’ ‘food and drink,’ and ‘sacred places,’ only two Australians are mentioned by name. One tab is devoted to “David Mitchell, the Mitchell Library and Australiana,” celebrating the man who devoted his life to collecting and preserving Australian documents, books, and art that have become a core archive for understanding Australian history and identity. The other man to get his own tab from the Australian government as a definer of “Australian Identity,” in a category by himself, is Ned Kelly.

Another example reiterates Kelly’s preeminence not just in Australian national identity, but also among his fellow outlaws. In his study of outlaws in Britain, America, and Australia, Graham Seal has chapters on “Outlaws of Myth,” “British Highwaymen,” “American Badmen,” “Australian Bushrangers” – and an entire chapter devoted entirely to Kelly: “Outlaw to National Hero: The Case of Ned Kelly.” Seal’s confirmation that Kelly is “regarded by many as a national hero” was “confirmed in 1980, the centenary year of his death, when the Commonwealth government issued a postage stamp in his honor” (148). He calls Kelly the “logical culmination of the Anglophone outlaw hero tradition” (147).

to “bushranging” – living off of the land supplemented by stealing, particularly from the wealthy squatters. When ‘Red’ died after a stint in jail for being unable to pay a fine, Ellen Quinn, Ned’s mother, moved the family to a poor selection near Eleven Mile Creek. The Kellys and the Quinns had many run-ins with the police, and Ned was jailed a few times for minor offenses. After Ned’s mother was jailed on a supposedly false charge, Ned Kelly and his brother Dan joined with their friends Joe Byrne and Steve Hart to seek revenge on the police and the squatters who made their lives miserable – these four, then, became the notorious Kelly Gang. After killing three constables at Stringybark Creek and robbing two banks, one at Euroa and one at Jerilderie, “Kelly dictated his famous ‘Jerilderie Letter’ to Joe Byrne,” intending it to be “a justification of his actions, explaining that he was not a cold-hearted killer, but rather a defender of the Victorian Irish who had suffered unjustly under British colonial rule” (O’Reilly 489–490). After eluding capture for almost two years, the gang was captured at Glenrowan, where Kelly famously engaged in a shootout with the police wearing armor that he had fashioned from ploughshares. Though the other members of the gang died in the shootout, Ned’s armor saved him, though only to be arrested and hanged at Melbourne Gaol (O’Reilly 490).

One of the reasons for Kelly’s endurance is that his story has been appropriated repeatedly by a variety of groups with their own particular agendas; thus part of the myth-building process of the Kelly Gang was and still is the argument over who, in essence, “owns” the truth of the myth, over what really happened with Ned Kelly, and over who he really is in the Australian imagination.

The press played a central role in constructing the myth of Ned Kelly. Generally very anti-Kelly during his lifetime, the press incorporated views of Kelly's supporters in order to bastardize them. According to Laura Basu in "The Ned Kelly *memory dispositive*, 1930 to 1960: Identity Production," these representations created a "binary opposition between forces – those of 'law and order' on the one hand and of the Kellys on the other – who were perceived as having many sympathizers linked to the 'lower orders'" (Basu 62). Kelly "positioned himself as a representative of the oppressed and saw his actions as redressing the balance and correcting injustices" (O'Reilly 491), an identity "inverted by the press, which insisted that although Ned *posed* as a hero of the people he was in reality a common criminal and a coward, thereby manufacturing a rupture between how the outlaw *pretended* to be and how he actually was" (Basu 67, emphasis in original). When Kelly was sentenced to death in 1880, 32,000 people signed a petition asking for a reprieve – a tremendous testimony to the mythical status he already had among the Australian people; yet, the fact that his sentence was still carried out bespeaks the lack of political clout of the petition's signatories (O'Reilly 490).

Differences not only in the tenor of discussions about Kelly, but also in the modes of dissemination of his myth, reveal tensions in class, social status, and political influence over controlling the Kelly myth in the national collective memory. In general, literary and written records of the capture of the Kelly gang tended to be anti-Kelly, while visual and oral versions favored Kelly as a national hero.<sup>58</sup> Folksongs of the Australian bush –

---

<sup>58</sup> With the decline of press coverage as the Kelly Gang story was no longer news, the "dominant mode of Kelly representation until the 1920s was the police memoir, based in lived experience and first hand memory, and obviously very anti-Kelly" (Basu 62). In being very anti-Kelly, these first-hand accounts tended also to disparage his supporters. In his account of the capture of the Kelly Gang published in London in 1894, *The Last of the Bushrangers*, the former Superintendent of the Victoria Police, Francis Augustus Hare, asserts that his aim in writing the account is "to keep within the record, to extenuate nothing, nor to set down aught in malice"(2); he goes on to write, in considering how "four men should

known as “bush ballads” – spread the myth of the Kelly Gang as stories of classical heroes were spread by scops and bards. Titles of bush ballads about Kelly – “The Ballad of Ned Kelly (Poor Ned)”, “If Ned Kelly was King”, and “Ned Kelly was Born in a Ramshackle Hut” – reveal empathy, pathos, and worship.<sup>59</sup>

Beginning in the 1930s, *all* representations of Kelly began to take on a decidedly positive attitude. As the story of Kelly passed out of living memory, representations of him become more “concerned with his status as Australian legend, as part of the Australian tradition and long-term national memory” (Basu 63). The 1940s and 1950s showed an increasing desire for confidence in an Australian culture, and pride in Australian history. As Australians begin to assert pride in their Australian-ness and cease to identify themselves as British, the tension in the Kelly story metamorphoses from a story of law, order, and respectability against the “lower” criminal orders, to a story of a poor and disenfranchised Ned battling against imperial domination. Representations of

---

have been able for two years to carry on their career of crime unchecked,” that “what aided them more than anything else – they commanded an enormous amount of sympathy among the *lower orders*” (4 emphasis added). Writing a mere fourteen years after their capture, Hare recognizes that the Kelly Gang “weaved a certain halo of romance and rough chivalry around themselves, which was worth a good deal to them, much in the same way as did the British highwayman during the last century” (5). The language with which Hare portrays this myth-like status mirrors the role that the press had in suggesting that while Kelly *presented* himself as a hero, in truth, he was a mere criminal. Hare’s account also reveals an example of what Basu calls “the most striking feature” of these first-hand accounts: their “hostility towards each other,” all insisting “upon their own truth” (62). Hare writes, “after the destruction of the Kelly gang, unpleasant feelings and jealousies sprang up between different officers engaged in the search, and interested persons kept adding fuel to the fire” (2); thus even in attempting to capture the “truth” of the criminality of the Kelly gang, the memoirs’ “belligerent insistence upon truth paradoxically fueled the myth of Ned Kelly, generating the heat, tension and ambiguity that enable the mythological” (Basu 62). The insistence on truth by the anti-Kelly side, somewhat ironically, was more effective in creating Ned Kelly the Myth.

<sup>59</sup> As the Kellys built themselves a reputation – “courteous to women, fond of singing and dancing, no danger to the personal safety of anyone except the police and those who opposed them by force” – playwrights saw opportunity to harness public interest for profit (Fotheringham 553). Drawing on the Kellys’ ability to elude and make fools of the police, Joseph Pickersgill wrote a farce called *Catching the Kellys*, performed in Melbourne in 1879 while the Kellys were still at large (Fotheringham 554; O’Reilly 491). During a performance of another play, *The Kelly Gang*, a scene in which a police informer is shot by one of the Kelly Gang “was greeted with loud cheers” (Fotheringham 554). Reactions to and popularity of these plays reveals contemporary public support of Ned’s now-mythical persona.

Kelly began to focus increasingly on the battle at Glenrowan and on Ned Kelly's famous last stand there, with his homemade armor, due in large part to a series of paintings of the Kelly gang by Sidney Nolan in 1946–7. Tranter and Donoghue argue that the “crucial factor” for Kelly's enduring popularity into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is his armor, “particularly the image of his helmet” (385). Anne Marsh suggests that in creating “the abstract figure of Kelly in his armour, astride a wonky horse, with a flimsy rifle,” Nolan “turned Kelly into a visual icon” (57). This “image of Kelly, in his poorly made armour, within a brilliantly harsh landscape... redeemed the rebel outlaw and turned him into an *Australian Son*” (Marsh 57), referring to the title of the Max Brown's *Ned Kelly: Australian Son*, published in 1949. “The Kelly helmet and armour survive symbolically and are perhaps more recognizable than photographic images of the man himself... his armor has become an Australian symbol for bravery and resistance against injustice and oppression” (Tranter and Donoghue 386).<sup>60</sup> As Basu notes, many “left-leaning writers and academics” were able, with the passing of time, to “endow the outlaw with deferred socialistic identities based in a working-class Australian history” (70).<sup>61</sup> The origins of the story, as Homi Bhabha notes, are lost in the myths of time, and re-created in the mind's eye.

Against this background, Peter Carey, already a well-known author and winner of the Booker Prize for his novel *Oscar and Lucinda*, wrote *True History of the Kelly Gang* for which he won the Booker Prize a second time. It sold in Australia at exponentially

---

<sup>60</sup> The opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney – which predominantly feature key stories and myths of the host nation – featured riders dressed as Ned Kelly in his armor based on Nolan's paintings of Kelly.

<sup>61</sup> As a 2003 *Guardian* article points out, though: “Some still challenge the legend. Journalist Frank Devine caused a storm of controversy in 2000 when he described Kelly as ‘an embarrassment’ and compared him to Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot.” Devine argued that Kelly “should have been discarded 50 years ago because he's a bad influence on Australia. To have a chip on your shoulder against authority is immature” (Fickling).

higher rates than other novels. As Nathaniel O'Reilly notes in his article in the *Journal of Popular Culture* entitled "The Influence of Peter Carey's 'True History of the Kelly Gang': Repositioning the Ned Kelly Narrative in Australian Popular Culture," the novel "reached an audience far beyond the usual literary audience and became a popular cultural phenomenon," while still garnering "highly favorable" critical reception and "acclaim from his fellow writers" (492).

One of the reasons for this highly favorable reception is the form of the novel. It is in the epistolary form, separated into a series of thirteen "parcels," explaining Kelly's life to his daughter as if in his own voice. Carey derives this "authentic" voice of Ned Kelly from the bushranger's famous Jerilderie Letter, an almost 8,000 word epistle which he intended to have published in the *Jerilderie and Urana Gazette*. The man to whom he entrusted delivery of the letter to the newspaper's editor instead delivered it to the police, who concealed it at Kelly's later trial. The police borrowed the letter to make a copy of it; the letter itself remained in private hands until anonymously donated to the State Library of Victoria in 2000 (O'Reilly 490, Kelly). Described as Ned's "manifesto," it "passionately articulates his pleas of innocence and desires for justice for both his family and all poor Irish selectors" (Kelly). While all other representations of the story of Ned Kelly become sites of disputed "truth," the Jerilderie Letter has the Benjaminian "aura" of authenticity: "The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition.... The existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function." The "cult value of the work of art" has largely to do with its perceived distance, or its "unapproachability" (Benjamin 223). In writing an epistolary novel and basing the voice of Ned Kelly therein on his actual voice

in the Jerilderie letter, Carey calls upon the Jerilderee letter's aura, its unique, irreproducible connection to the man himself that imbues the myth with an element of truth, authenticating it as a bearer of national identity.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Carey weaves direct quotations from the Jerilderie Letter into his novel. In achieving that feeling of authenticity, Carey lends his novel the aura needed to rewrite a deeply embedded cultural tradition.

From the beginning of the novel, Carey establishes that the story of Ned Kelly is the story about the treatment of the Irish. In the second paragraph of this long letter to his daughter, Kelly writes, "God willing I shall live to see you read these words to witness your astonishment and see your dark eyes widen and your jaw drop when you finally comprehend the injustice we poor Irish suffered in this present age" (Carey 7).<sup>63</sup> Carey has Kelly frame this narrative not as a story of his own unjust treatment, but as one of the treatment of the Irish, making his own individual story synecdochic of the larger story of Irish injustice at the hands of the British.

Carey frames the conflicts between the police and Ned and his family as a conflict between the English and Irish. Ned's earliest memory is of his mother making a cake to bring to her fifteen-year-old brother in jail; when they arrive at the Beveridge Police Camp, Ned sees the sergeant as simply "the Englishman" – "I knew not his name only that he were the most powerful man I ever saw and he might destroy my mother if he so desired" (8). This force of destruction who keeps his family apart is presented as the type

---

<sup>62</sup> Carey had been fascinated by Kelly for much of his life, and in particular by the Jerilderie letter; when Carey first read a copy of the letter in his teens, he typed it out and carried it around with him (O'Reilly 493).

<sup>63</sup> As the novel is based on Kelly's diction and syntax from the Jerilderie Letter, Carey imitates the same: sentences written in stream of consciousness style, often strung together with no punctuation. As such, I will not use [*sic*] to indicate grammatical or spelling errors when quoting from the novel.

of all Englishmen. When he is 15, Ned is sent by his mother to apprentice under the famous and feared bushranger Harry Power who practices highway robbery. Power reinforces, somewhat ridiculously, that any hardship or disappointment faced is caused by the English: Power's disappointment that a parcel he robs contains only an English clock "produced a bout of threats and curses against that country and what Harry would do to the English" (72). At sixteen, when Ned is arrested for the theft of a wealthy squatter's horse (but truly arrested as a means to get to Power), he refers to another police officer, Superintendent Hare, as "the Englishman" (136) and describes him as "posh spoken" as "he sat grimly behind the cedar desk trying to frighten me with his blue English eyes" (136).<sup>64</sup> These references to different police as "the Englishman" presents them as a unified, singular force, all working in unison to oppress the poor Irish.

The Englishman's "posh" tone becomes the root and exemplar of the evil that is English-ness throughout the novel. Ned describes a woman he and Power try to rob as having an accent that is "all Englishified in other words she took a certain tone" (80). This tone is exemplary of the general attitude of the English towards the Irish in Australia. At the school Ned attends as a child, all the other children are "proddies" (Protestants) who "knew nothing about us save Ned Kelly couldn't spell he had no boots"; the school children "learned from [the teacher] Mr Irving that all micks were a notch beneath the cattle" (27). Thus the English "posh" tone represents the attitude towards the Irish as being beneath them, but is also a source of resistance for the Irish in being a manifestation of the false gentility of a people who consistently tyrannize others. Ned refers to the town his school is in as "a district of English snobs" (21). When Ned

---

<sup>64</sup> This Superintendent Hare is modeled on the real Hare, who wrote the memoir about Kelly.

and his family attend the assizes at which his father's brother was tried for arson, he describes the court house – a “cool limey building” – where “the law did sit in pomp and majesty and there were no higher place than its own elevated opinion” (45).<sup>65</sup> Ned can revel in the fact that he sees through this falsely elevated opinion the English had of themselves. By presenting Ned's awareness of the posh and snobbish attitude of the British, Carey subtly references the danger of the English that other Irish revolutionaries noted: the ability to hide cutthroat, murderous tyranny under a veil of civility.<sup>66</sup>

Carey symbolizes the story of English oppression of the Irish through the plotline of Bill Frost, one of Ned's mother's suitors (and later husbands) after his father's death. Referred to as “that natty Englishman” and “her [Ned's mother's] Englishman” by Ned, Bill Frost in essence colonizes the Kelly household and lands. When Ned returns to his mother's selection from his apprenticeship under Power, he finds Frost “occupying not only my mother's bed but also my father's chair” (90). Yet he has done nothing to improve their land: “No bridge no more land cleared and the pastures filled with docks and dandelions” (89). The Englishman has forced Ned from his rightful place as head of his family, and he has taken over their land with no ability or interest in improving it. Frost “imagined himself a mighty expert on matters agricultural” but offers only “ignorant opinions” and insults. When Ned asks him what he intends to do to help their

---

<sup>65</sup> “Limey” is a word for a British person, thought to have originated from British sailors' practice of eating limes to stave off scurvy.

<sup>66</sup> In Christopher Koch's *Out of Ireland*, Robert Devereux becomes aware of the “savagery of the British penal system” and its horrors that “underlay... the scrupulous manners, the strict and conscientious order” (82–3). Mitchel references – in a tone dripping with sarcasm – this contrast the British establish through their false gentility and superiority when he points out that, from the English perspective, the story of the oppression of Ireland is really one of “the genius of British civilization” and “British benevolence” helping to ameliorate and “relieve” the “barbarian Celtic nature” (1). Declan Kiberd points out that during the time of the Fenians a “popular proverb... warned children against three things: ‘the horns of a bull, the hoof of a horse, and the smile of an Englishman’” (38).

property, Frost sarcastically responds “Give it to the blacks... then burst out snickering no no the blacks don’t want it give it to the Irish” (90). To the English, not only are all other groups and races below them, but the Irish are the lowest of the low. Frost represents to Ned everything bad about the English: the smooth gentility that allows them to take over land with no intention of improving it. Ned’s revenge on Frost unmans him – he and Harry Power literally catch him with his pants down at a brothel – and specifically targets his false professions of intelligence: Harry Power, grabbing Frost by the genitalia, says, “You know it is a big vein delivering all the blood to this pizzle but you would know that Bill for you’re a highly knowledgeable sort of chap. Don’t they call you Yesbut? Yesbut Frost? Yes but I know better ain’t that it?” (117). As Ned gets quiet revenge on the English by acknowledging their unfounded snobbery, so he and Harry frame their vengeance against Bill Frost as retribution against his English hauteur and pretension.

The novel also refers to Ned Kelly’s opinions from the Jerilderie Letter on Irishmen who become police as being traitors. Kelly wrote in the original letter,

what would people say if they saw a strapping big lump of  
 an Irishman sheparding sheep for fifteen bob a week or tailing turkeys  
 in Tallarook ranges for a smile from Julia or even begging his tucker  
 they would say he ought to be ashamed of himself  
 and tar and feather him, But he would be a  
 king to a Policeman who for a lazy loafing  
 cowardly billet left the ash corner deserted  
 the Shamrock, the emblem of true wit and

beauty to serve under a flag and nation that  
 has destroyed massacred and murdered their  
 forefathers (Kelly).<sup>67</sup>

Carey symbolically presents Irish police as being traitors to their national heritage and thus working alongside the English in oppressing the Irish when he describes Sergeant O’Neil, the Irish policeman who slanders Ned’s father, as riding his horse with “his stirrup leathers so long the iron could be held only with the tip of the toes it were the English fashion” (14). Like the English who put on posh voices, O’Neil is seen as putting on the airs of an Englishman – but is the worse for it because it makes him a traitor. Ned explains to his daughter that “we Irish was raised to revile the traitors’ names”; “[a]t Beveridge Catholic School we learned the traitors better than the saints” (145). By calling on the specifics of the Jerilderie letter, Carey presents the story of Ned Kelly as one of the Irish fighting the English.

Rather, though, than merely insisting on that symbolic level to the Kelly story, Carey’s novel also questions the extent to which Australians can and should consider themselves heirs to Irish heritage. The exploration of how a poor convict’s son became *the* Ned Kelly, Bushranger and Australian legend, is, in Carey’s novel, the story of how Kelly came to understand his Irish heritage and his role continuing the fight of his Irish forebears.

Carey presents two versions of Irish myth history, and particularly two versions of mythical Irish heroes, that Kelly is heir to. One comes from the stories his mother tells him:

---

<sup>67</sup> The pagination I use here mimics the natural line breaks in the manuscript Jerilderie letter, and the spelling is Ned Kelly’s own.

“At night she would gather us about her and tell us stories and poems... we discovered this treasure she had committed to her memory. She knew the stories of Conchobor and Dedriu and Mebd the tale of Cuchulainn I still see him stepping into his war chariot it bristles with points of iron and narrow blades with hooks and hard prongs and straps and loops and cords” (25).

These stories from the Irish mythic cycles inform Ned’s idea of his heritage, and, as Declan Kiberd points out in *Inventing Ireland*, imagine, as did *Sinn Féin*, “the Irish people as an historic community, whose self-image was constructed long before the era of modern nationalism and the nation-state” (18). During a “very poor time” on their selection, Ned’s mother once again begins telling him and his siblings the stories from Irish mythology, and Ned “wished [he] had some equal defense against the world” as Cuchulainn (156). In addition to offering him a version of his history that extends back into the mists of time, well before English occupation, these stories also present to Ned the Irish as bellicose and powerful, rather than shunned and downtrodden.

The other version of Irish hero that Ned is exposed to comes in part from Steve Hart, a friend of Ned’s brother Dan and eventual member of the Kelly “gang”. Ned writes “you would think Steve Hart were a Professor to hear him on the state of Ireland blah blah rattling off the names of his heroes Robert Emmett [*sic*] & Thomas Meagher & [William] Smith O’Brien he never seen them men but he were like a girl living in Romances and Histories always thinking of a braver better time” (196). Though Ned mocks Steve for his pedantry, he still acknowledges that, like those of the Irish myth cycles, these stories also tell of “braver” times in more recent Irish history when Irish heroes fought against their oppressors.

Yet, in addition to Ned seeing himself as the descendent of Irish heroism, Carey indicates that Ned is also heir to the Irish history of suffering and punishment as exemplified by his father. Carey presents John “Red” Kelly as being broken by his transportation and imprisonment; he explains to Ned’s mother that he will not move near her family who “attract the traps [police] as surely as rabbit guts will bring flies” because he “would rather die than go to prison” (20). Red eventually dies from drinking himself to death after going to jail for Ned when he killed a cow for his family to eat. Carey takes language verbatim from the Jerilderie Letter in Ned’s contemplations of his father’s death:

You may think it strange that a man can survive transportation and the horrors of Van Diemen’s Land and then be destroyed in a country lock up but we cannot credit the tortures our parents suffered in Van Diemen’s Land – Port Macquarie – Toongabbie – Norfolk Island – Emu Plains. Avenal lockup were the final straw for your grandfather he did not speak more than a dozen words to me from that day until his death. (34)<sup>68</sup>

Ned here acknowledges that his father faced unimaginable horrors, and, when he is later being beaten by a police officer demanding a confession, he decides that he “could endure much worse than this without succumbing for I were raised on stories of Irishmen being tortured” and thinks “of [his] father and what horrors he endured in silence” (98).

But, unlike the Irish heroes of ancient and contemporary history, Red Kelly was unable to

---

<sup>68</sup> In the Jerilderie letter, Kelly wrote: “more [Irish] was transported to Van Diemens Land to pine their young lives away in starvation and misery among tyrants worse than the promised hell itself all of true blood bone and beauty that was not murdered on their own soil or had fled to America or other countries to bloom again another day were doomed to Port McQuarie Toweringabbie and Norfolk Island and Emu Plain” (Kelly).

withstand the force of his oppressors, seeking to avoid them and eventually succumbing to their tortures.

Ned Kelly's split from his father in the novel represents his disenchantment with this part of his Irish heritage: the Irishman as beaten and controlled. Red loses his place in young Ned's heart because Ned is led to see his father as unmanly and as a traitor. It is Sergeant O'Neil – whom the adult Ned writing his own history for his daughter later sees as being himself a traitor for working for the police – who fills 9-year-old Ned's head with these negative ideas of his father. O'Neil suggests that, back in Tipperary, Red “had a grudge against a farmer for lawfully evicting his tenant” – O'Neil's suggestion that the landlord was acting lawfully again reinforcing the policeman's position as on the side of the English – and that Red convinced his friends to burn down the farmer's house. O'Neil tells Ned and his siblings that Red “betrayed all he had drawn into his conspiracy” and that while the others “was hanged by the neck until dead,” Red was “transported to Van Diemen's Land” (11–12). O'Neil later tells Ned in the presence of his schoolmates who spread the slander around Ned's school that he saw “Red Kelly galloping across Horan's paddocks dressed like a woman” in a “dress with roses on its hem” (14). When later Ned's sister finds a chest buried on their land with a dress in it of that description, Ned feels the loss of his father so keenly that “he might as well have been snatched by a rolling river fallen from a ravine” (18). Ned's split from his father represents a severing of himself from his background and ancestry. He rejects the idea that his story is a part and continuation of Irish revolutionary history: when “Steve Hart began to sing some mournful song in the old language I told him to be quiet we would write our own damned history from here on” (245). Yet the letter to his daughter starts, as mentioned, with Ned

asserting that his story is the story of the Irish. Therefore Ned's story becomes one of reconciling with his father in part by discovering the mystery of the dress and, in so doing, reconnecting with his Irish heritage.

The question about the extent to which Ned does and should consider himself the proper heir to the history of Irish resistance comes to a head at the same moment when Ned learns the answer to the mystery about his father's dress. This moment also comes after Ned killed a policeman at Stringybark Creek, the historical incident which labelled Ned Kelly once and for all an outlaw and wanted man, transformed his small group of friends into a "gang" in the eyes of the police and the public, and therefore put Kelly on his road to becoming an Australian myth. One fictional element that Carey adds to Kelly's history is a love interest, a young Irish woman Mary Hearn (it is by Hearn that Ned has the daughter to whom he composes this history, though he never gets to meet her). Steve Hart enters the hut where Ned and the rest of his "gang" are hiding with Mary after the incident wearing a dress, which behavior Ned had dismissed at other points in the novel as Steve simply being odd. Mary, to Ned's surprise, did not "smile or laugh or point at the dress," but "instead up and at him she ripped at his empty bosom and tugged at the yellow flowers around the lace" crying out "This won't solve nothing" (271). Steve insists that he is a "Son of Sieve", that "Its what is done in Ireland" and "what is done by the rebels"; Mary, though, responds that "this costume is worn by Irishmen when they is weak and ignorant" (273). When Joe Byrne, another member of the gang, responds that "We is all adjectival Irish here", Mary rejoins with the division that is at the heart of the question of the extent to which Australians do or should consider themselves direct heirs to Irish history: "you are colonials. I am the Irish one" (273). Mary tells a story from her

childhood when she watched men in dresses, calling themselves Molly's Children, torture and kill a horse belonging to a lord whom they saw as "taking their common land" from them and from Ireland. Mary concludes by advising Ned and his mates: "if you wish to ride around in this costume the people will not love you. You must ease their lives not bring them terror" (278).<sup>69</sup> Thus through Mary, Carey raises the complex question of what it really means to inherit the cause of Irish revolutionaries beyond the simplistic notion of great mythical heroes and romanticized versions of political rebels.

Ned's resolution to the question on the extent to which he is an Irish revolutionary comes in part through an epiphany that his role vis-à-vis the people is complicated. It is that complication that makes his story so Irish. The question of how to stand up for a downtrodden people, and specifically whether violence is the answer to the violent oppression of the people, has haunted Irish political activists for centuries.<sup>70</sup> Ned realizes, as opposed to what Harry Power tried to convince him of, that "the bush protected no one. It had been men who protected Harry and it were a man who betrayed him in the end" (285). Harry knew he had to be "Rob Roy or Robin Hood" to the people, but he also knew that

---

<sup>69</sup> Carey here refers somewhat indirectly to the Molly Maguires, a secret society in Ireland who enacted agrarian crimes in response to what they saw as the stealing of their land by landlords and land agents. The Molly Maguires, as well as similar rural secret societies such as the Peep o' Day Boys and the Lady Clares, occasionally dressed in women's clothing. In America, the Molly Maguires were active in violent labor movements particularly in the coal mining industry in Pennsylvania; as Kevin Kenny notes in *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*: "Threatening notices signed 'Mollie's Children' were reportedly being posted in the anthracite region [of Pennsylvania, location of the coal fields,] as early as 1848" (80). Like Ned and his gang, the Molly Maguires who enacted "industrial sabotage" in Pennsylvania "have been depicted in every imaginable way, from sociopaths and terrorists at one end of the spectrum to innocent victims and proletarian revolutionaries at the other" (3).

<sup>70</sup> John Mitchel scorns Daniel O'Connell for his efforts to effect change through peaceful means a compromise instead of revolution, saying he led Ireland "all wrong for forty years" (15). By the 1860s, the Fenians had given up on peaceful resistance and planned a major military response, sending young Irishmen to America to be trained to fight in the armies of the Civil War.

Harry were not captured because the traps suddenly learned his trials and hideouts he were arrested when he put a lower price on his freedom than the government were prepared to pay. The sad truth is the poor people's love is cupboard love and all it took was £500 for the police to be led directly to his door. (286)

Like other Irish leaders before him, Ned realizes both that he needs the people on his side and that the people – poor, hungry, downtrodden – cannot be influenced to act by a sense of injustice alone when they lack the basic needs of life.<sup>71</sup>

Ned realizes that being Australian means having a sense of the historical suffering of his ancestors – of embracing it and knowing it, rather than being embarrassed and cutting himself off from it. After Mary tells the gang the story of the killing of the horse, Ned can't sleep thinking about his father and the dress: “what horrible visions assaulted me e.g. what were my father doing with that dress in the tin trunk and to what purpose. That is the agony of the Great Transportation that our parents would rather forget what come before so we currency lads is left alone ignorant as tadpoles spawned in puddles on the moon” (278). To overcome the agony of transportation, Ned realizes he has to embrace and use the anger engendered by centuries of oppression as inspiration, to use “that flame the government of England lights in a poor man's guts every time they make him wear the convict irons” (156). Ned comes to understand how powerful that memory of suffering can be as he tries to sway a group of people to his side: “they was Australian they knew full well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS

---

<sup>71</sup> Like other Irish leaders before him and after him, which, from his vantage point in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, Peter Carey can be aware of. For example, while the leaders of the IRB and Irish Citizen Army were fighting for a republican Ireland in 1916, the people from the slums of Dublin saw the Easter Rising as an opportunity to loot, to feel a momentary easing of their extreme poverty. As Ernie O'Malley writes in his memoir of the Rising, *On Another Man's Wound*, on O'Connell Street “Ragged boys wearing old boots, brown and black, tramped up and down with air-rifles on their shoulders.... Little girls hugged teddy bears and dolls as if they could hardly believe their good fortune.... This was a holiday” (36).

were in their blood” (299). Carey creates a parallel in that sentence between being Australian and having a historic memory of injustice. Ned learns letting go of his heritage would let the English win because severing the people from their history disunites them as a people, making them lose power.

Carey represents Ned’s reunion with and embracing of his Irish heritage through his descriptions of the main artefact that makes Ned Kelly so famous: his armor. *The* symbol of Ned Kelly becomes a symbol both of Kelly’s Irishness and of his realization of the power and importance of telling his own story. Ned’s inspiration comes from a clipping he sees from an American newspaper of an iron clad ship, the Monitor: “its bridge were like a tower forged of steel ½ in. thick an ironclad monster.... O that a man might smith himself into a warship of that pattern” (324). Ned immediately connects this image he creates of an iron clad man with the stories of Irish mythical heroes: “No munition could injure him or tear his flesh he would be an engine like Great Cuchulainn in his war chariot they say it bristled with points of iron and narrow blades with hooks & straps & loops & cords” (324). Thus Ned in his famed armor becomes a parallel image to the great Irish hero, symbol to Ned and to other Irish revolutionaries of the greatness and historic heroism of the Irish people.

The language with which Carey describes the fashioning of the armor connects Ned back to his father and to the heroes Steve Hart imagines. The conception and construction of the armor is described using the language of dressmaking. Though Ned first conceives of himself as being like a warship – “O that a man might smith himself into a warship of that pattern” – his use of the word “pattern” connotes a sewing pattern. He tells Steve Hart that “this is what them Mollys [the Irish rebels whom Steve imagined

himself mimicking in wearing dresses] should of worn yes this were the very seamstress he needed for his dresses” (325). Carey presents the construction of the armor in terms of textile-making. Ned “made the templates for the 1<sup>st</sup> ironclad suit I used fresh peeled stringybark just as women use the paper for a dress” (326), and “used a lump of charcoal just like a tailor uses chalk” (327). As the gang awaits what would end up being their final stand at Mrs. Jones’s pub, their “ironclads” – armor – are “stacked against the wall 3 of them in burnished metal the 4<sup>th</sup> is Steve Hart’s painted with black & orange flowers” (335). Carey further conflates the imagery of the armor with dresses by immediately thereafter having the schoolmaster enter, whom Ned recognizes as the “fellow my mother must stand before in her threadbare dress she must beg to have me educated” (335). The juxtaposition of his mother standing before the schoolmaster in her dress to Ned standing before the police in his armor creates a correspondence between the two images. By presenting the armor as being like a dress, Carey characterizes Ned’s famous armor and his final stand as following in his father’s footsteps, and taking his place in the course of Irish revolutionary history.

In addition to the armor representing Irish myth history, Steve Hart’s Irish rebels, and his father’s suffering, Carey adds another layer of symbolism to the armor through the name of the inspiration: the Monitor. When Ned is a child, his teacher finally – after “everybody with an English name had taken a turn” – is appointed ink monitor at his school. Ned “cannot now remember why [he] desired such a prize only that [he] wanted it a great deal”; he thus “vowed to be the best monitor that were ever born” (28). The ink monitor mixes up the ink; he allows writing to happen. Through the name Monitor, Carey connects rebellion to writing, equating Ned Kelly’s armed rebellion with his written

one.<sup>72</sup> As he did in the Jerilderie Letter, Ned attempts to write his version of events several times in the novel; even before he conceives of the armor, as he writes “the history of the police and their mistreatment of my family” he thinks of himself as “the monitor once more making fresh ink from McCracken’s powder” (308). When Ned takes up ink and paper to tell his version, even after his writings are stolen or ignored, it is then – not when he has a gun in his hand – that he considers himself “the terror of the government being brung to life in the cauldron of the night” (317). The night of his last stand, when he wears his armor at the Seige of Glenrowan, is also the night when he finishes composing his story, this letter to his daughter; the two becomes equally important in their simultaneity.

Through the parallelism of the armor and the written story, Carey emphasizes the importance of writing. Telling interdicted histories is both a form of rebellion and of nation-building. Ned writes the letter to his daughter to let her know she is Irish, but also to let her know how to be Australian. Being Australian, as Ned suggests to his daughter and thus as does Carey to his reader, is facing the history of oppression of its people, its traumatic birth as a nation. Ned knows that, finally, the people support him because “we was them and they was us and we had showed the world what convict blood could do. We proved there were no taint we was of true bone blood and beauty born” (323). Carey works to undermine the notion of the convict stain by suggesting – as John Mitchel does in his *Jail Journal* – that, were Australians to tell their own stories and not rely on the

---

<sup>72</sup> Even the parallel between Ned in his armor and Cuchulainn has undertones of literary and cultural resistance. After the death of Parnell, Kiberd writes, “The way was open for a literary movement to fill the cultural vacuum. Its writers would take Standish O’Grady’s versions of the Cuchulain legend, and interpret the hero not as an exemplar for the Anglo-Irish overlords but as a model for those who were about to displace them. Cuchulain provided a symbol of masculinity for the Celts, who had been written off as feminine by their masters” (42).

official language of their oppressors, it would be the story of resistance and of the continuation of the long fight against British tyranny.

In fact, based on the parallel imagery of the Monitor as both Cuchulainn and as the ink monitor, Carey's suggestion is that Ned's more powerful and important contribution to Australian identity and history is not his armor or famous last stand, but his writing of the Jerilderie letter. Cuchulainn is indeed a fitting symbol of the physical resistance enacted by Ned Kelly at Glenrowan: it was a beautiful, symbolic show of resistance that was ultimately futile. Since Ned concludes his letter to his daughter, and thus the main part of the novel, mere moments before he walks towards the police in his armor, Carey includes a description of the last stand in the form of an afterward that the fictional editor describes as a "12 page pamphlet in the collection of the Mitchell Library, Sydney" (350). The ironclad Kelly is outwardly terrifying, "hammer[ing] the butt of his revolver against his chest..., the blows ringing with the distinctiveness of a blacksmith's hammer" and yelling "I am the b----y Monitor, my boys" (349). But the author of this scene concludes: "But he was not the Monitor, he was a man of skin and shattered bone with blood squelching in his boot" (349). This juxtaposition of power and human fragility parallels Cuchulainn's end: "Cuchulainn died strapped to a rock, single-handedly defending the gap of the north after a lifetime spent knocking the heads off his rivals' bodies; and as his life ebbed away, a raven alighted and drank his blood" (Kiberd 48). These violent stands prove finally to have violent and ineffective ends.

It is Ned's writing, though, that lives on to become effective resistance to the British who saw the Irish convicts and the currency lads they spawned as a "notch beneath the cattle." Carey, in writing a novel based on Kelly's authentic voice and with

the purpose of redefining what it is about Kelly that Australians celebrate as a symbol of national identity, works to ensure the importance of Kelly's writing and of writing in general. Though Ned had already written parts of his story as justification to send to officials, it is Mary who asks him to write his full story to his daughter so "she will always know the proper story of her da and who he is and what he suffered." Ned knows at that moment that Mary is "certain [Ned] would be murdered by the government," but unlike armed conflict, writing "werent nothing to do with death at all it were its very opposite" (265). He writes to his daughter, "you was my future right away from that moment you was my life" (265). Writing is presented as a definite connection with futurity, tying past to future. Ned can undo the agony of transportation that ripped his "brave parents... from Ireland like teeth from the mouth of their own history" (87) and left him and his fellow currency lads "ignorant as tadpoles spawned in puddles on the moon" (278) by connecting his past to his future through writing.

Carey explicitly calls attention to the effect on reframing history and therefore national identity of writing back against the official narrative. The thirteen parcels that make up Ned's letter to his daughter are taken from him by a school teacher who promises Ned that he will clean them up and publish his history for him, but who in reality views Ned as despicable and is the one who warned the police of Ned's planned ambush. In the afterword describing Ned's last stand, Carey presents the school teacher in later years as asking a question central to the question of Ned Kelly's place as a national symbol: "What is it about we Australians, eh?... What is wrong with us? Do we not have a Jefferson? A Disraeli? Might not we find someone better to admire than a horse-thief and a murderer?" (350). But, the unknown writer of this afterwards says,

Ned's letter to his daughter "seems to have made its own private demands upon his [the school teacher's] sympathy. The evidence suggested by the manuscript suggests that in the years after the Siege of Glenrowan he continued to labour obsessively over the construction of the dead man's sentences" (350). It is Ned's writing that changes perceptions of the man. Ned's story provides the answer to the school teacher's question that Carey works to provide in the novel: that when the true history is written, Australians might not find someone better to admire than Ned Kelly.

The type of writing that the historic Kelly did in the Jerilderie letter and that Carey presents Ned as undertaking in the novel – writing which attempts to set the record straight and tell an underlying truth – represents the work that Irish and post-colonial writers more broadly engage in. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note, "Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' become established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice" (7). The title of Carey's novel itself refers to the idea that the story of Ned Kelly is a site of disputed truth: this is the *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Ned foregrounds truth in the first paragraph of the letter, before he explains that this is the story of Irish suffering in the second paragraph: "this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false" (7). The implication here is that there exist false versions of his story, which Carey presents throughout the novel as coming from newspapers and police, creating a correlation between official language and untruth.

Carey dramatizes the conflict between official and unofficial language in the editor's notes that precede each parcel into which the document is supposedly divided.

For example, parcel 5 is preceded by the following description of its content:

The author's return to Eleven Mile Creek, and a claim that the family attempted to restore the stolen horse to Magistrate McBean. A description of his arrest by Sgt Whelan and imprisonment at Benalla. Kelly's growing reputation confirmed by the arrival of two superintendents. The manuscript contains allegations of both corruption (the police) and perjury (R. R. McBean)... (131).

The fictional editor and compiler of these manuscript parcels, a representative of the official, condoned, and safe language, uses words such as "claim" and "allegations" to reinforce that, from the standpoint of history and officialdom, Ned's version of events is in question.

Carey reinforces this divide throughout the story. The police are clearly represented as purveyors of official and therefore untrue versions of events. He informs his daughter, "If you have read Cons Fitzpatrick's sworn statement you will not know of our kindnesses to the sniveling cur" (225). The newspapers are likewise implicated in the spread of falsehoods about Kelly both in writing and imagery. Carey creates a parallel to the comments that the editor makes on Ned's narrative by having Ned include article clippings in his narrative and inserting comments where correction of the official version of events is needed (where the newspaper clipping says "On Sunday night Edward Kelly again rode up to Davidson's Hotel where he had a great many drinks", Ned amends it with marginalia reading "If 2 be a great number than he does not lie" [310]). Regarding another newspaper clipping, Ned points out a missing piece of the story: "you will notice

that true & secret part of the history is left to me” (199). Ned sees a drawing of himself in a newspaper and asserts that “the author of this so called LIKENESS were not content to show my natural imperfections he must join my brows across my nose and twist my lips to render me the Devil the Horror of the ages”; in the article about the murder at Stringybark Creek accompanying the picture, the author “made [Ned and his gang] Irish Madmen” (260). Ned sees this unknown author as “a coward who never had his beasts impounded or his family gaoled on the evidence of perjuries” (260). Thus Ned sees officialdom connected in its vast web of lies, committing perjuries to harm him and his people and then spreading further lies when they fight back against the initial injustice.

As Ned suggests by referencing the lies that led to his family’s poverty and jailing, Ned’s letter is an example of using writing as justification for and as explanation of his action. His actions are presented as direct consequences of the treatment of him, his family, and the Irish in general. In writing his story, Ned desires that the people as well as the government itself know that “we was driven to the deed that the law was scandalous in our pursuit” (262). That Ned’s mistreatment caused his responses creates a parallel between Ned’s individual actions and the collective response of all Australians to the trauma of transportation and of being labelled convicts. As Ned accepts and presents his role as the heir to Irish suffering and resistance, his bushranging becomes a direct consequence of centuries of persecution.

Ned suggests that not only were his actions caused by the very system in place oppressing him, but also that his crimes were not indeed crimes. Thus Carey’s Ned Kelly stands in the tradition of John Mitchel and the Fenians who argued that, while their

actions were against British law, they were certainly on the side of right.<sup>73</sup> When a squatter rents all common land from the government, denying the poor access to pasture and feed for their livestock, and Ned's mares are subsequently impounded for grazing on formerly common land, Ned "break[s] the lock at the Oxley Pound and take[s] back what he legally owned," concluding, "this did not seem a crime to me not then or now" (190). Ned tells his daughter a formative story of killing a cow for his family to eat (the same that sent his father to jail precipitating Red's death) and concludes: "I'm sure you know I have spilled human blood when there were no other choice at that time I were no more guilty than a soldier in a war. But if there was a law against the murder of a beast I would plead guilty and you would be correct to put the black cap on your head for I killed that little heifer badly and am sorry for it still" (22). Ned has a very clear moral code; as his actions are, to him, right, it is the law that is wrong.

Finally, before his last stand at Glenrowan with his armor, Ned issues a warning letter to farmers in the area in which he inverts his role vis-à-vis the police. The letter, which has the force and tenor of a proclamation, declares that anyone in north eastern Victoria "who aids or harbours or assists the police in any way whatever... also those who would be so depraved as to take blood money will be outlawed.... Their property will be either consumed or confiscated and them and all belonging to them exterminated off the face of the earth" (328). In presenting the police and their abettors as the "outlaws" and himself as the arbiter of justice, Ned redefines the spheres of action considered in or outside of the law, and aligns that which falls outside of law more

---

<sup>73</sup> John Mitchel proclaims, "If any Irishman wish to be accounted an honest man, let him straightway get transported – let him aspire to be enrolled amongst those whose presence in Ireland is incompatible with the existence of the thing called 'government' there" (172). In *The Wild Goose*, the Fenian transportees often refer to the actions for which they are transported as "right" (see chapter 1 of this dissertation).

closely with his sense of moral justice. Ned suggests a new truth, erasing the stain of convict and of Irish heritage and painting instead British law as that which is stained with immorality.

Carey plays with the idea of truth in his title: though calling it the “true” history, the novelist is of course not asserting that these are really the words of the famous historical bushranger. Rather, he suggests that the truth of the story of Ned Kelly is that of resistance to imperial hegemony. If the story of Ned Kelly is a major defining and unifying myth of Australia, and if the true story of Ned is the story of discovering and embracing his Irishness and seeing himself as heir to the Irish fight against British domination, then that, Carey suggests, is also the story of Australia. In looking for those foundational myths that help solidify a sense of national identity, Carey presents the story of Ned Kelly as being simultaneously a revolutionary moment and an indication that Australian identity can trace its roots back to Young Irelanders, to Robert Emmet, and even to Cuchulainn. The convicts and bushrangers are not celebrated symbols of national identity despite being “horse-thieves and murderers”; they are worthy emblems because of their place in a long line of those who stood up for right over unjust law.

Published five years after Carey’s widely popular novel about Australia’s most famous bushranger, *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* by Roger McDonald presents a fictional convict who, like Kelly, becomes a legend in his own time. McDonald creates the fantastical figure of escaped Irish convict Desmond Kale, who gains renown by escaping his convict chains to rear the fledgling colony’s finest wool in what was widely thought to be the uninhabitable Australian bush. Showcasing the ways that myths are made and become part of the march of history, McDonald has the story of Kale’s escape

spread by way of a ballad sung in Irish that serves as inspiration to the convicts and threat to the authorities. The story itself of Kale's success in outwitting and besting his captors is the story of Australia's founding as a nation, of its becoming a nation in its own right; the ballad that spreads Kale's story within the novel is McDonald's vision of the way that the story of a nation is continually performed – of the way that “the scraps, patches and rags of daily life [are] repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture” (Bhabha 145). Like Carey, McDonald highlights the central role played by Irish convicts in creating the new nation, as well as the way that their punishment particularly was an impetus to the type of revolt central in so many stories of national origin. As Peter Carey's Ned Kelly works to invert official designation of law and outlaw, so McDonald's Desmond Kale stages a revolt of rejection, undermining the British by refusing to accept their authority, and embracing the unique landscape of Australia rather than seeking to conquer it.

Desmond Kale, sentenced to fifty lashes for stealing a rake from his former employer, Parson Matthew Stanton, a magistrate and the owner of the sheep station Laban Vale where Kale had been assigned to work, begins the novel with his escape into the bush to the west of the settled land.<sup>74</sup> Kale has the help of “Ugly” Tom Rankine, a captain of the New South Wales rangers, and Moreno, a Spaniard who had fought with Rankine in Spain. Rankine gives Kale control of 300 sheep taken from the King of Spain and Kale pushes with them further and further into the bush, producing from them the finest wool sent out of the new colony. McDonald reveals slowly that Kale had earlier been assigned convict servant to a botanist, George Marsh, who had ventured farther into

---

<sup>74</sup> In Australia, a “station” is the equivalent to the American term “ranch”: a large area of land used for raising and breeding livestock.

the bush than any other before him, and thus had Kale come to his knowledge that the inland area beyond the ken of Stanton and other breeders offered the perfect hardscrabble terrain to raise fine wool sheep.<sup>75</sup> Stanton becomes obsessed with finding Kale partly because he absconded while still serving his sentence for the theft of Stanton's rake, but more so because Kale's sheep's wool is of a quality surpassing that of Stanton's. As Kale moves further inland, his actual presence in the text becomes scarcer as the ballad telling the story of his escape and success becomes more prominent.

The novel is epic in scope of space and character, ranging from the interior of Australia to the ports of South America, from a shipwreck in the South Pacific to the wool-halls of London and Yorkshire, and tracing Tolstoyesque family lines and interwoven personal histories. Rankine falls in love with Kale's daughter Meg Inchcape; Stanton employs Meg's son and Kale's grandson Warren Inchcape – whose father is Kale's former master George Marsh, the botanist – on his sheep station to have an edge over Kale; Stanton's wife Dolly was the former lover, in England, of Rankine's half-brother Blaise Henry Cribb, a wool appraiser in London who recognizes Kale's wool as higher quality than Stanton's. Like many neo-Victorian novels and post-colonial works, *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* works to highlight what is missing from traditional or official historical records and to “interpolate[] a growing circle of national subjects” (Bhabha 145): McDonald's novel also tells the story of an Anglo-Jewish family, the Josephs, whose travelling store becomes integral in the settling of the interior, and of the

---

<sup>75</sup> To both George Marsh and later to Matthew Stanton, Kale was assigned as a convict worker, essentially a form of indentured servitude. Upon arrival in New South Wales, convicts were either put to work directly for the government in works projects (as McDonald describes it, “Convict gangs marched out and marched back in to Parramatta and Toongabbie. Stone cutting, wood cutting, road making, field ploughing, stump burning” [164]), or provided labor through “assignment” to an individual until they had worked off the term of their sentence or had been emancipated.

tensions and interactions between white settlers and Aboriginal peoples, including and especially Stanton's adopted son Titus. In the end, Stanton's obsession with finding and punishing Kale causes his own ruin while Kale continues to move further into the bush, the vanguard of the new nation, with the edge of settlement following close after.

Though the plot of the novel travels back and forth in time – revealing larger histories through flashback and memory, and suggesting the future through the narrator's comments on what, for example, “years from now... would be discovered” (55) – the starting point of the novel and thus the pivotal moment of this story of the settlement of Australia is Kale's escape on the morning of June ninth in an unspecified early year of the colony.<sup>76</sup> In the first lines of the novel, McDonald presents Kale as already famous, already known not only among his peers but presumably by anyone reading this story. The novel begins: “After Desmond Kale was flogged for stealing a ten-shilling metal rake he was cut down from the punishment tree and commanded to walk the ten miles back to the prison stockade of Toongabbie” (3). McDonald's use of the subordinate clause to begin the novel suggests that the action it describes is already known or universally understood to have happened: it does not begin by describing the flogging, but by starting with what happened after it. The wording also suggests that the name Desmond Kale is known to the reader; McDonald offers no appositive or other

---

<sup>76</sup> McDonald reminds us that June is winter in the southern hemisphere: “this was mid-winter in New South Wales; it was June the ninth; the king's birthday” (4). In 1788, the year that the First Fleet landed in February, the first Governor of New South Wales, Arthur Phillip, declared that celebrations for the King George III's birthday were to be held on June 4<sup>th</sup>, the actual birthday of the king. Historical records indicate that the King's birthday holiday celebrations continued to be held on his actual birthday, 4 June – not 9 June – for the first several years of settlement: for example, a proclamation made by Governor Philip Gidley King on 29 May 1801 declares “Thursday next, being the anniversary of His Majesty's birth, will be observed as a holy day” – the Thursday following 29 May 1801 being 4 June (Bladen 376). However, since the death of George V, the holiday has been celebrated in Australia on the second Monday in June, which, in 1800, was 9 June – an anachronism that perhaps indicates that the year the book takes place is 1800. McDonald is possibly being symbolic here as well: the day that Kale, king of the convicts, escapes is the day of his rebirth, thus the King's birthday.

description of who Kale is, but simply indicates that his name is enough, calling, perhaps, on the fame of a figure like Ned Kelly, whose name looms so large in the Australian imagination. This association with Kelly is also suggested by the next line of the novel, signifying that Kale is not only known to the contemporary readers of the novel, but also was a myth in his own time: “So famous was Kale’s conceit in Botany Bay, he was ordered to walk in ankle irons, holding his chains in his fists” (3). In the first lines of the novel, McDonald introduces the way that the telling of a story creates or reinforces fame, making a legend of an otherwise ordinary or indeed subordinate figure in his own time and for posterity.

The first lines of the novel also connect fame to punishment, and suggest the way that punishment can work against itself in undoing the power structures that rationalize its enactment. Punishment itself allows Kale to reject the system that is punishing him, and it is his “conceit” that makes him famous: “‘But fifty is nothing,’ Kale was heard to say” during the whipping (3). McDonald emphasizes not that Kale said such a line, but that he “was heard” to have said it. The higher the level of punishment and the more singled out for punishment the figure is, the greater the statement and import of rejecting the effect of the punishment. Extraordinary punishment begets fame for he who undergoes the ordeal, which works to unite all those oppressed under the same system. Kale’s punishment resembles the transportation of John Mitchel and of the Fenians: it was the punishment itself that allowed for their fame, that helped unite people against the British convict and transportation system. Thus the order to walk in ankle irons apart from the wagon that pulls the rest of the convicts along the road to Toongabbie represents another extraordinary punishment that results in Kale’s ability to further his fame, and

further unite his fellow convicts. It is only because he receives an extra level of punishment that Kale can “struggle forward of the bullock wagon and keep pace with his escort soldier” who, it turns out, is the Spaniard Moreno, disguised to help Kale escape into the bush. The structure of the novel’s first line also suggests that the punishment itself is subordinated to the reaction of the sufferer of punishment and the aftereffects of the punishment. The story of Kale and the spread of his story can and does only happen “after” his flogging. The insistence on greater and greater punishment by the British authorities works to inspire greater respect for Kale in his flippant rejection of each successively increased punishment – even to the point of the punishment being the very means of his escape.

But although McDonald frames Kale as a figure already known, unlike Peter Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang* and Christopher Koch’s *Out of Ireland*, McDonald’s *Ballad of Desmond Kale* presents an entirely fictional central figure whose story encompasses scraps and patches of the lives of so many Irish convicts transported to Australia. As was Ned Kelly in the beginning of his life, so Desmond Kale is an unknown: not a political prisoner, like John Mitchel or the Fenians, but a regular convict. By choosing to tell the tale of a common convict and his rise to fame through rejection of British authority, McDonald erases the idea of the common convict and common crime. He raises all crimes in the colony to the level of a protest against British hegemony by calling on the longstanding conflict between the Irish and the British as the backdrop for Kale’s rebellion.

Kale becomes the type of all Irish convicts, and Stanton the representative of relentless – but ultimately fruitless – British persecution. In a flashback recounting Tom

Rankine's first meeting with Kale in a jail yard in Paramatta, Rankine, asking the identity of "one who stood apart," is "told it was the Irishman – a singular sort of reply: because of all the numbers present, Irish were in the predominance" (58–9). Stanton likewise refers to Kale as "the Irishman" when considering their position as wool breeders: "The only Botany Bay breeder with the gift of carrying great blood to rarer heights... was the Irishman" (17). Even the governor of the colony, Sir Colin Wilkie, refers to Kale as "the Irishman," and tacitly acknowledges his power, when he not-so-subtly ribs Rankine for his relationship with Meg Inchcape: "When the Irishman hears an officer's got his daughter pinned, hoots he'll roar!" (194).<sup>77</sup> Though there are many Irish convicts, Kale is seen as *the* Irishman, a representative of his race, by his persecutors.

Kale's consistent and unjust persecution also emblemizes Kale as the type of all Irish in relation to his oppressors, as the Kellys are in Carey's novel. McDonald emphasizes not only the consistency of Kale's punishment – "Desmond Kale was so hated so beaten, so worked over.... The law went after Kale like a warregal bush dog" – but also its injustice: Patty Inchcape, Warren's grandmother and Meg's mother, just for consorting with Kale, "was taken and had her hair shaved off, in the female factory, so that everyone would know she was depraved and disorderlied with Kale" (137). Meg later reveals to Rankine that it was Stanton who ordered her mother Patty back to the female factory for that punishment, reinforcing Stanton's role as the symbol of unjust British hegemony. To Kale's fellow Irish convicts, any Englishman, including Rankine,

---

<sup>77</sup> Some of the details about Governor Colin Wilkie also indicate that the book takes place around 1800. Like the second governor of New South Wales, John Hunter, who served from 11 September 1795 to 28 September 1800, the fictional Governor Wilkie was Scottish; likewise, both were recalled from their posts as governor due to some controversies. I am unsure whether or not his name is meant to reference Wilkie Collins, but the similarity is striking.

is to be “heartily mistrusted on the evidence of his nation laying waste to Ireland” (201).<sup>78</sup> Kale is the consistently persecuted, yet resilient and resistant type of his Irish race.

Another way that McDonald works to blur the distinction between political and “common” criminals is to elide what Kale’s crime in Ireland actually was. McDonald hints at Kale’s background, mentioning early on that “His years of official torture had battered him far from his long lost Irish gentleman’s niceness of complexion” (52). Similarly, in a flashback wherein Blaise Henry Cribb, Rankine’s wool-appraiser half-brother back in Yorkshire, first sees a sample of fine wool from Botany Bay and is told the breeder is a “convict shepherd,” the name springs out at him and he thinks: “The house of Kale: a destroyed family of Ireland known to be good with fine wool sheep but politically overwrought and exiled into shame and destruction” (69). But, McDonald never truly reveals Kale’s background: “What Kale’s original sentence had been was lost in documents never sent with the convict fleet” (85). McDonald presents the act of transportation as an equalizing force but also as a space of erasure. His mysterious origin also aligns Kale with archetypal heroes of myth.

The mystery of Kale’s origin allows his story to become the story of all of the Irish sent to Australia. The story of “the Irishman” – Kale – is that of *the Irishman* as a species, a race. McDonald suggests through Kale’s story that the process of transportation served to unite all Irishmen even more strongly against their common enemy. Though born “protestant Irish,” “Kale threw in his lot with radical Fenian Catholics arrived in a

---

<sup>78</sup> In this case, the former convict who mistrusts Rankine on such evidence is John J. Tharpe, a “drover and packhorse driver, formerly of Cavan, transported for sheep stealing and having long avoided the noose” and who “found himself back practicing his original pilfering craft at the direction of Desmond Kale” (201). Tharpe helps Kale and Rankine steal Stanton’s prize breeding ram, Young Matchless, whom Kale had helped breed for Stanton in the first place when he was working on his station as a bond stockman.

boat to inflame his thinking with slogans of Ireland above all” (85). With no definitive record of Kale’s past, rumor, painted more with the teller’s experience than the subject’s, fills in the blanks until there “seemed no limit to the elaboration of legends around Kale if you listened to the talk of how he was wronged” (85). “One heard” – McDonald writes, again emphasizing, as in the case of Kale’s possibly saying “fifty is nothing” on the whipping tree, that the inspiration comes from what one hears, what one chooses to repeat, and not necessarily from the truth – “that troopers had burned hayricks and sacked dairies of Kale family lands, had blown turrets from gatehouses and driven a poor young gentleman to live in caves and make raids with a vicious band from the hills” (85).<sup>79</sup> Kale can represent both Protestant and Catholic Irish, the Irish gentleman farmer and the militant Irish outlaw.

Like Carey’s novel, *The Ballad* begins as a story not just of rebellion, but particularly of Irish rebellion – of Irish convicts uniting behind a common cause and purpose. The escape of the lone Irishman is enabled by the other Irish convicts in the wagon on the road to Toongabbie. As Kale sneaks further ahead with his false escort soldier Moreno, the men in the wagon set up a cry for water to distract the other guards. When Kale finally reaches the spot in the bush with a hammer and chisel preplaced to cut him out of his chains, the sound of the hammer stroke is muffled by “the men in the wagon wailing Irish songs” (6). The use of that “treacherous tongue” causes the guards to punish the men by “sen[ding] them forward on foot” – another example of a punishment whose chief result is to undermine the efficacy and authority of the punisher. It became to

---

<sup>79</sup> That Kale’s house was potentially burned down offers the Irish convicts and others spreading such rumors about Kale a redemptive reframing of the conventional stories of Irish rebels burning down the homes of English landlords, often used to justify views of the Irish as essentially criminal, base, and vulgar.

the Irishmen “a matter of importance between their convict souls to mess the track as much as they could,” preventing the soldiers from being able to track Kale into the bush (6–7). In this moment, as the “flogged men came drooling and messing the sand, for the sake of Desmond Kale and the life he wove into them,” Kale becomes their inspiration, one “gone from the world of punishment, gone as if he had never suffered in it” (11). Both Kale’s extraordinary punishment of being walked separately in irons for his conceit during punishment and the Irish convicts’ similar punishment of being set to walk for singing in Irish enable a potential erasure of the punishment itself and therefore a maligning of the system which enacts the punishment.

Thus McDonald emphasizes the power of speech acts – the Irish songs, Kale’s flippancy – in resisting colonial hegemony.<sup>80</sup> In the aforementioned first encounter between Rankine and Kale in the jail yard, the latter is sitting in his cell singing, which, the jail superintendent tells Rankine, the Irishman is not allowed to do. Rankine concludes that it is only his own presence keeping Kale from being dealt “a few keen blows” for this minor act of rebellion (59). Forms of silence becomes speech acts for Kale’s rebellion: as the superintendent tells Rankine, the Irish prisoners hold a “kind of superstition” that if “the Irishman ever cries out on the punishment block, it shall be the end of them all” but that Kale’s silence on the block only “gets Kale flogged more” (59). When Kale was working as a convict on Stanton’s station, he spurned the idea of “getting

---

<sup>80</sup> In *Post-Colonial Transformation*, Bill Ashcroft asks “What does it really mean to *resist*?” in a post-colonial context. He suggests that “if we think of resistance as any form of defence by which an invader is ‘kept out’, the subtle and sometimes even unspoken forms of social and cultural resistance have been much more common. It is these subtle and more widespread forms of resistance, forms of saying ‘no’, that are most interesting because they are the most difficult for imperial powers to combat” (20). Another example of this type of resistance through a non-verbal speech act in the text is Meg’s story of her mother Patty’s hair. Stanton ordered Patty’s hair to be cut off, but “[w]hen the minister [Stanton] approached her, to calm her, and so control her, she took a pair of scissors in her hand and commenced cutting off her own hair” (177).

a grant of land” by kowtowing to his supposed “better”, “regarding [Stanton] as no gentleman though Kale himself wore rags” (85). Stanton considers this “interior bias” to be “veritably Irish, and more aggravating than a torrent of words in Stanton’s face, because it made an argument and amplified an accusation without committal to the letter of speech” (85). Kale’s silence is amplified by the correlation of an Irishman as being necessarily a “wafter of words”, and Kale is *the* Irishman. Despite the surety of punishment, Kale speaks, sings, refuses speech, or speaks with flippancy (“But fifty is nothing”) in opposition to what his captors would have him do. Kale – before his escape – inhabits a cycle of resistance and punishment: “whenever he stirred himself he was laid up with a flogging” (58). Kale’s speech, his strategic silence, and his punishment itself constitute speech acts that resist his captors, partly through the inspiration they provide to his fellow prisoners.<sup>81</sup>

McDonald emphasizes Kale’s resistance through speech acts and his notoriety as “the Irishman” in the same scene – the prison yard where Rankine first meets Kale – in order to highlight the way that particularly Irish speech worked to undermine British hegemony in the new colony. One symbol of this specifically Irish type of resistance recurring throughout the novel is a certain curse reserved only for Matthew Stanton known as “the curse of the Irish”: each time Stanton hears it, it works to interrupt his feelings of power and control. For example, as he leaves Kale’s daughter Meg Inchcape’s dwelling after having convinced her to give her son Warren over to him to work on his

---

<sup>81</sup> McDonald plays with the ways that being trapped or imprisoned can actually afford the means for rebellion. Dolly Stanton, Matthew Stanton’s wife, recalls her youth in England: at 18, she was engaged to a soldier away fighting in France when Blaise Henry Cribb (Rankine’s half-brother who later becomes England’s best wool appraiser) begins a heavy flirtation with her. She recalls that “It was being not free made her free to try twisting her shackles” (92). As Warren, Kale’s grandson and Meg’s son, walks next to his pony and tries to keep step with it he determines that “being out of step was the greatest part of being in step, because then you could do something showy with your toes” (124).

station (and after having slept with her as well, as was in his power to compel at that time), the curse is hurled at him by the outcast Irishman Lehane: “Stanton! You’re the first, you horribilis cunt, and bugger my eyes if I don’t get hanged for it” (76). The curse of the Irish is thrown at him as he watches a flogging he ordered from afar; Stanton attempts to keep his power by remaining aloof, only to be brought down by the “foul, purposeful, lewd piece of language made to scorch his ears” (18). Its power comes in part from Stanton’s inability to face it through official channels, through the power structure of the hegemony. “Horribilus cunt” – the “pledge reserved for him specially” – works against Stanton because it exists outside of a structure of language established by the system of authority within which Stanton operates. Stanton can “not bring himself to utter the phrase” (77) and he can bring himself to record it “only in his private diaries and never in his letters of complaint to various governors” (76). He is thus powerless to stop its spread, as one day even his beloved daughter Ivy calls him “*Horribilis!*”; asked where she heard “that word”, Ivy replies that she heard it from Titus, the Stanton’s “rescued” Aboriginal boy, who, having “heard people say it,” reported it to Ivy as “you horribilis crumpet” (235). Ivy, a young woman, and especially Titus hear and share words and ideas through a system of communication reserved for outsiders of the official – white, male, British – sphere. The curse of the Irish against Stanton represents the subtle yet highly effective way that language works to undermine power systems, particularly when that language operates along a path outside of those systems.

This interdiction is the power of the ballad. Official language in the colony is written, prose, and English; the ballad is sung, verse, and Irish. Official language is concerned with recording facts and figures; the ballad thrives off of embellishment,

superstition, mystery that can capture the truth of a situation better than a statistic. Rankine, trying to keep Kale's location with the sheep secret after the escape, discovers that "a good deal too much information about Kale moved through the Irishry independent of Rankine's caution" (148). Straddling the two worlds of officialdom and banditry, Rankine comes slowly to an understanding of the way this unofficial communication network operates. Bidy Magee, the young Irish woman whom Rankine brought with him from his time in Spain, approaches Rankine with a seemingly random problem – saying only "The man is ill" and "He is sick to die"; Rankine asks "who?" and Bidy replies "The Irishman" with no need to clarify that it is Kale of whom she speaks (148). Rankine, still wrapped up at that point in his official capacity, asks if it was "posted in the *Sydney Gazette*", but Bidy heard it through the ballad. It is an underground news source for the Irish, as when later Warren Inchcape returns to Australia after being abandoned by Stanton in South America and wonders how everyone knows he was "ditched by the parson and lost at sea," Lehane tells him: "Word come through the ballad of Desmond Kale, how his grandson was bothered with" (594). It is also a way to stake one's role in the story of the Irish settlement of Australia. After Clumpsy M'Carty is arrested "for the too fanciful crime of saving Desmond Kale in the Mundowey forest," Clumpsy concludes with "grim satisfaction": "I have written myself inter the ballad of Desmond Kale... I have purchased me fame" (352). Subversive communication medium, the ballad spreads Kale's fame as it interpolates more subjects into its version of the story of Australian settlement.

The creation of the ballad symbolizes the way that unofficial and interdicted language gives voice to the otherwise silenced. One of the bond convicts working on

Stanton's station, James Moroney, "was a poet... who could never address a direct word to anyone without a susurrant stutter" (115). He "picked up from the empty air the first verses of the ballad, brought the words down to the surface of his furred tongue, and vibrated their repetitions.... There was no stutter when he sang" (115). Singing of "where a man breaking his shackles might aim, of what he might do when he struck out making free with his livestock" gives Moroney the power of clear speech (115). Glorifying Kale's escape is a shared secret among the downtrodden; even though "[n]one of the bond convicts dared talk about Kale within earshot of authority – their cuts were too deep and his escape too perilously insolent – ...they trod a light measure around the name at other times in their enjoyment of the man who was free in the bush" (114). Instead of being a sign of their oppression, the fact that the convicts do not speak of Kale in front of authority figures is actually a form of collective power: the act of withholding something gives the convicts authority, as they collectively decide what their oppressors may and may not be privy to. Thus the ballad of Desmond Kale inverts hegemonic notions of authoritative speech by investing the convicts with the power to decide what gets to be part of official discourse. Their silence once again becomes power. Just as the Irish convicts singing their Irish songs allowed Kale the opportunity to escape into the bush in the first place, so this Irish ballad continues to undermine the British authority by serving as an inspiration to the rest of the Irish convicts.

The creation and spread of the ballad which makes such a proto-national hero out of Kale suggests, as does Bhabha, "the representation of the nation as a temporal process" (142). As the ballad spreads, changes, evolves, incriminates, and inspires, it does the work of unifying the convicts into a cohesive group – of creating a sense of national

identity. The ballad reveals the “repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative” in signifying national identity even as the novel itself is a piece of historical fiction, a genre in which “the people are historical objects” (145). McDonald’s novel dramatizes “the tension between signifying the people as an a priori historical presence... and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (147). McDonald presents Kale as a national sign and the ballad as the pulsation of that sign. The ballad serves as a counter-narrative, disrupting the authoritative voice of hegemony which defines the convicts as other and thus necessarily as lower.

The fact that the ballad is both myth and reality – that it takes on a life of its own and also presents real information about Kale – represents the way that national myths serve the very real purpose of “constructing national identities and solidarities” and “providing guidance for actions in the present” (Berger 491). When Moroney is called to recite the ballad to Governor Wilkie – a Scotsman who can understand the Irish Gaelic of the ballad – the poet (described in this scene as “the epileptical blazing-eyed misfit”) “presented his fragment as allegorical, bardworthy, lofty, apostolical, rippling his voice like a bagpipe chanter” (166). The ballad presents Kale as a larger-than-life figure, almost Finn MacCool-esque: “A man went west in a vision... around his neck was slung a ram. Under each arm he carried a ewe. In his hair was a nest of purlambs and gimmerlambs” (166). But it also presents real details from Kale’s story, indicating that, among ovine commodities, the man carries a “bottle of French brandy”; Rankine, riding out to Kale for the first time after his escape, brings a variety of goods including “four bottles of French brandy” (41) and he, Kale and Moreno toast their “honest start” in “beakers of brandy”

(52). The ballad also relates that a piece of wool that came off of a sheep during their escape “was brought back and made into a thread that the Devil wore on his wrist” (167). Matthew Stanton, meeting Joe Josephs when trying to gather information on Kale’s escape and location, is given by the travelling Jewish trader a “staple of fleece” that Stanton, expert that he is, recognizes as “fine sheep’s wool, the essence of distinction” which he is certain would lead “back to Desmond Kale more certainly than search parties of mounted troopers” (32); later, McDonald reveals that, to Stanton, Kale’s stolen sheep are “represented in the threads Joe Josephs gave him, which he wore now twined around his wrist and swore to wear, rain, hail, shine, and bath time, until Kale was found” (89). Governor Wilkie finds “the almost mythical details of the narrative almost mythically elevating” but simultaneously decides from the two details of the brandy and the wool bracelet that “there was something in the words needed looking into” (166). Indeed, McDonald mentions these two details so briefly and so passingly in the novel that even for the reader it is unclear which parts of the ballad are really part of the story and which the buildup of the mythology (in fact, Sir Wilkie mistakenly assumes that the purloiner of the brandy and the wearer of the wool thread are the same person). Thus the ballad intersects with and hints at reality, representing the thin line between history and myth, and the way that both function simultaneously to solidify national identity “in the mind’s eye” (Bhabha, *Nation* 1).

This intersection between reality and myth in the ballad allows McDonald to offer a metacommentary on the somewhat artificial but nonetheless effective way that tradition is formulated as a unifying national force. Writing in the context of the Romantic revival of an interest in ballads, David Atkinson points out that the authorial anonymity of

ballads, the lack of a definite author and thus of a central textual authority, allows ballads to maintain a “sense of cultural ownership shared virtually without limits” and thus the “identification of ballad poetry with a national literature, the collective productions of a nation or people” (295–6). He also notes, though, that an effort to determine the “archetype or *ur*-form” of a ballad – to find the “real” thing – does not take away from a ballad’s work as a unifying national force. Atkinson asserts that “once both the abstract nature of tradition and the volitional element within tradition are accepted, then it becomes apparent that all traditions are necessarily ‘invented’, and Eric Hobsbawm’s idea of the ‘invention of tradition’ need not be employed with pejorative implications” (297). Tradition can be a “volitional construction of the present out of particular instances in the past, expressed through the achievement of a perceived continuity with previous kinds of cultural activity, particular artefacts or texts” (296). The constructedness of a unifying national tradition does not trivialize the real work that it does in creating a shared national identity.

McDonald foregrounds this volitional element of tradition through the emphasis on the ways that the people needed and wanted Kale to be the hero that tied them together and therefore made a legend of him in his own time – as was the actual case with Ned Kelly. After the passing of only “eight and a half weeks”, “[a]lready rumor was so rich around Kale. But so mythical were the details (while staying accurately rough) that nobody believed them as fact except poetic believers of utterance itself” (128). The tradition – in this case, the ballad – that ties people together need not reach back to some “consciously idealised prehistory” or “pre-societal ‘golden age’” (Atkinson 277). The somewhat bathetic description of the ballad as having details that are “so mythical” but

still “accurately rough” represents the way that the upholding of a unifying national tradition requires the purposeful mythologizing of some cultural artefact while parenthetically acknowledging that a real, commonplace story hides underneath the aggrandizement. Those who believe the myth as “fact” are “poetic believers of utterance itself”; the story, the myth – the utterance itself – does real work. McDonald here also points to the seeming oxymoron of the idea that “nobody” actually believes that the stories of Kale are true – and yet, everybody continues to share the story. The reality of the story is not important: the real effects of it are.

In his description of the origin of the ballad of Desmond Kale, McDonald reinforces the connection between a perceived national consciousness and a lack of individual authority. As Atkinson points out, “the original composition of ballads is generally acknowledged to be beyond recovery” and it is this very anonymity that allows them to become part of the mythscape (294). In the novel, Moroney, the poet who first sings the ballad, is significantly not ascribed as its original author: rather, he “picked up from the empty air the first verses of a ballad” and “brought the words down” (115).<sup>82</sup> Framing ballads as “anonymous literature” works to “present them as the representative, collective productions of a nation or people” (Atkinson 278). Of course, ballads do not appear suddenly from the wind, and the irrecoverability of an original composition or authority does not indicate that such a thing was not extant. But by suggesting absurdly

---

<sup>82</sup> The idea of pulling a poem from the air is perhaps also McDonald’s commentary on the way that artistic creation in general happens, referencing Theseus’s definition of a poet in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “The poet’s eye, in fine frenzy rolling,/ Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; / And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen / Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name” (5.1.13–18, emphasis added). This definition of the creative process reinforces the work that a novel or ballad can do in transforming something from imagination – such as a fictional Irish convict – into something real: a unifying national narrative.

that the song came from the wind, McDonald highlights this somewhat romantic view of the way that ballads come into being; the power of tradition to create a collective national identity comes not from some definite originary moment but from a choice to view some artefact as part of that collective tradition. When McDonald writes that “None of the bond convicts dared talk about Kale within earshot of authority” he is writing, as mentioned earlier, about the power that silence and a shared secret can give to the oppressed (114). But he is also subtly writing about the way that keeping a shared story from authority and presenting it as a voice of the people allows that collective tradition to become the life of a nation.

That the title of the novel – *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* – parallels what could be the title of the ballad itself indicates that the novel serves the same function as the ballad. It is, certainly, a novel *about* the ballad sung of the Irishman Kale, and also *is* a ballad about Kale, a narrative that aggrandizes the achievements of a certain individual and in so doing tells the collective story of a people. Both the ballad of Desmond Kale and *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* are presented as works of mostly fiction (“so mythical”), but with elements of truth in them – the details of Kale’s life are the myth, but the surrounding story of the struggles of the convicts and their children against the oppressive forces of the British is very real. The ballad in the text serves as a uniting force that creates and upholds the folk hero needed to inspire both a rejection of hegemonic British authority and the settling of the nation. So McDonald presents the novel, metonymic of the ballad through the shared title, as intending to serve the same purpose for his contemporary Australian readers, even while acknowledging that ballads have the effect that they have because of this sort of collective agreement to construct the

present out of something from the past. McDonald puts before his contemporary readers for their consideration the story of Kale as an Australian type, and his story as a foundational story of the Australian nation.

McDonald celebrates not only Kale as a type of all Australians, but also the ballad form as a particularly Australian type of verse. In so doing he ties Australian identity directly back to Irishness, placing Australian national heritage on a continuum with the revolutionaries of Irish history and reframing the convict stain into a mark of righteous rebellion. As already discussed, Kale in the novel is the type of all Irishmen – he is *the* Irishman. Through the course of the story, McDonald transforms him into the symbol of Australianness, a foundational national figure. As Bill Scott points out in “Traditional Ballad Verse in Australia,” the Australian ballad tradition can be traced back to particularly Irish roots: among the transportees were many “Irish convicts who had been familiar with ballads from their childhood” (309). Thus when these early convicts came to “compose their own laments at their conditions or their shouts of defiance at the Authority [*sic*] which governed their lives in their new country, they turned to the old familiar form of the ballad” (310). Scott calls these “convict-originated” ballads the “first truly Australian traditional songs” (310). A traditional Irish form became the first Australian poetry, and “shouts of defiance” and “praise for outlaws who defied the system” the first topics of their national compositions (Scott 310). Through the use of the ballad form, McDonald emphasizes the role Irishness and Irish traditions played in establishing Australian national identity.

McDonald also reinforces the congruence of Irish and Australian experience through the novel’s title which anachronistically references Oscar Wilde’s indictment of

the penal system, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, written in the 1890s long after the fictional Kale escaped into the bush. By incorporating Wilde's poem as an intertext, McDonald calls upon the work that a neo-Victorian novel can do in reframing the past through the perspective of time. It places the ballad and the novel in the larger tradition of Irish prison literature, a "tradition which," according to Declan Kiberd in *Inventing Ireland*, "includes John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, Wilde's *De Profundis* and 'Ballad of Reading Gaol,' and Peadar O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open*" as well as Behan's *The Quare Fellow* (536). Seamus Heaney similarly asserted that "the provenance of Wilde's chain-gang poem is Irish... and looks back to all the convict ballads, gaol journals and political poetry of Irish nationalist literature in the nineteenth century" (175). While there has been much debate in Wilde studies over the extent to which he can be read as an Irish nationalist writer, McDonald, in aligning *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* with *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, seeks to suggest a continuity between Irish prison writing and Australian convict writing. This continuity is implied by Heaney and Kiberd in placing Wilde's "Ballad" in parallel with Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, a piece which already straddles and connects the national literatures of the two nations.

McDonald, in referencing Wilde's poem, not only places his novel in this larger tradition of Irish prison writing, but also suggests thematic similarities between the works. As McDonald obscures what Kale's actual crime was, so the condemned man's crime is largely elided in the poem; the focus is on the nature and effects of punishment. Wilde suggests that prison serves as a unifying space, erasing distinctions among the prisoners. First Wilde's speaker "walked, with other souls in pain, / Within another ring" (19-20), seemingly separated from the condemned man, set off because he "had killed the

thing he loved / And so he had to die” (35-6); “Yet,” the speaker apprehends, “each man kills the thing he loves” (37). The parallelism of the diction serves to create the connection between condemned man and all men, and reinforces the cruelty of the arbitrary nature of punishment. The speaker no longer sees himself as separated from the man, but as connected with him through their mutual state as prisoners: “A prison wall was round us both” (169). The ballads make “C.T.W.” and Kale synecdochic of all prisoners, allowing them to become symbols both for their fellow prisoners and for the readers of Wilde’s poem and McDonald’s novel. As Karen Alkalay-Gut points out in “The Thing He Loves: Murder as Aesthetic Experience in ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol,’” “The punitive actions of all the prison officials are constructed as willful, intentionally painful, impersonal – and far more blameworthy than the act of the murderer itself” (351). The ballads and the novel invert the hierarchy of criminals and officials, celebrating and elevating the criminals and denigrating the officers and the entire penal system.

The novel also works to invert the roles that the convicts and the British officials played in the story of the settlement of Australia. Like the ballad, the novel mixes fiction and reality not only in its detailed descriptions of convict and settler life, but also by having a historical figure, Sir Joseph Banks, loom in the background of the story. This underpinning of historical realism in the novel serves a similar function as the hints of reality in the ballad: through it, McDonald suggests that national histories and national myths overlap to do the same work of national unification, and that his novel, like the ballad, is performing such work. But, as Christopher Koch does in his rewriting of John Mitchel’s *Jail Journal* in *Out of Ireland*, McDonald both mimics and challenges the

historical record, rewriting an *ur*-narrative of the settlement of Australia. Sir Joseph Banks, who sailed as botanist in Captain James Cook's first expedition to the Australian continent in 1768–1771, returned to England and became the driving force behind the settlement of New South Wales in general and specifically as a convict colony. He also greatly encouraged exploration into the west, along the Parramatta River, the same area where the fictional Kale disappeared into the bush. Banks's role as the preeminent proponent of Australian settlement cannot be overstated. In a letter dated 7 February 1799 to John Hunter, who would later become the governor of New South Wales on whom McDonald based his Sir Colin Wilkie, Banks writes

Persevere however my good Sir in the manly honest & open conduct you have hitherto held & you must in time prevail Your colony is already a most valuable appendage to Great Britain & I flatter myself we shall before it is long see her Ministers made sensible of its real value rest assured in the mean time that no opportunity will be lost by me of impressing them with just ideas of the probable importance to which it is likely before long to attain & to urge them to pay to it that degree of attention which it clearly deserves at their hands. (Banks CY 3005 217)

To this prominent figure in Australian settlement, though, McDonald gives a shadowy background role; the real figure leading the outer edge of settlement is the Irish convict Desmond Kale.

As the novel draws to a close, McDonald dramatizes the conflict over who gets to hold the prominent role in the story of the nation's settlement – over which side gets to control the narrative – by enacting a race between two camps to find Kale in the interior.

On the one side is the party of settlers led by Blaise Henry Cribb at the backing of Lord Bramley, using maps from George Marsh, whose original expedition was commissioned by Sir Joseph Banks – maps which turn out to be “so absurdly out of date as to be insultingly, humiliatingly useless” (633). Banks is therefore not only a background figure, but his second-hand contribution, the maps, symbolize the ineffectual and hapless efforts of the British trying to administer from the metropole.

On the other side of the race to find Kale is Tom Rankine, who, after serving time in Van Diemen’s Land for helping Kale escape, has become known as “traitor to his own class. Fomenter of Irish delusion. Defier of laid-down regulation and deceiver of authority” (557). In other words, Tom, merely a “Vandemonian passholder, veteran of punishment gangs,” represents the side of the convicts (626). He and his wife Meg, daughter of Kale, lead a gang of convicts to the interior with the backing of Valentine Lloyd Thomas, the new convict commissioner – whose interest in backing the party comes from information he hears in the ballad. Lloyd Thomas tells Rankine he seeks “an inland sea, fed by a great river. It is called Kindur”; Rankine figures out that Lloyd Thomas has heard it in the ballad and warns him that “If the Irish bandy a name, it’s often poetical” (561). Lloyd Thomas replies:

Don’t deny me, Tom, your tangle of secrets is safe. Reach Kale, you will have crossed and surveyed more land than anyone’s sensibly found.... Tom, in my commission so far, I have interviewed most of the free inhabitants of Botany bay.... You will not believe the number of times Kale’s name has been spoken. The man is a boast to the downhearted, a bother to the secure. I have raked

together all the dirt and filth, scandal, calumnies and lies that were ever circulated.

Kale's name shines through pretty clear. (561).

The ballad tells more truth than the maps. McDonald creates a parallel between Kale and Banks as somewhat shadowy, distant figures – as Lehane tells Warren, Kale is “on a bit further, always out of reach” (596) – in order to highlight the superiority of Kale's contribution to settlement. Even Banks's party eventually is seeking Kale. McDonald presents Sir Joseph Banks as the distant and out-of-touch British colonial power, whose belief that he knows about the nation, represented in his commissioned maps, proves a chimera. The real vanguard of national settlement is Kale, the Irishman, who has already passed farther into the interior than known record. McDonald subordinates Banks's role, and makes the victors in the race into the interior the convicts and especially the Irishman, symbolically presenting their story as the real story of Australian settlement.

These inversions – presenting the convicts as leading pioneers and inspirational figures, and the magistrates and government as bumbling at best and diabolical at worst – serve to save the criminals. This refining is the work the novel does. By putting the history of regular criminals and bushrangers in line with that of Irish revolutionaries, McDonald refines criminality to rebellion, and saves the nation from the convict stain by making it a mark of righteousness.

Both *The Ballad of Desmond Kale* and *True History of the Kelly Gang* suggest that the escaped convicts and bushrangers of Australian history are fitting emblems of Australian national identity because their rebellions constitute a continuation of the Irish fight against British hegemony. The authors suggest that Australians' embracing their convict heritage is not a celebration of lawlessness but rather, through the connection

with Irish heritage, a recognition that at the time of the nation's settlement law was not necessarily equated with right, and that those who broke the law were perhaps standing for the right. Carey's Kelly and McDonald's Kale are the products of a system of unjust treatment, and their actions the direct consequences of that treatment. They embody the sentiment John Mitchel expresses at the close of his introductory section to the *Jail Journal* which traces the history of the English control of Ireland and Ireland's attempts at resistance: "The general history of a nation may fitly preface the personal memoranda of a solitary captive; for it was strictly and logically a *consequence* of the dreary story here epitomized, that I came to be a prisoner, and to sit writing and musing so many months in a lonely cell. 'The history of Ireland,' said Meagher to his judges at Clonmel, 'explains my crime and justifies it'" (24). The history of Ireland explains and justifies Kelly's and Kale's crimes and their lives, and is established in the novels as a fitting origin of Australian identity.

## CONCLUSION

### “A Distant Unknown Country”

As Australia traces its past back to Ireland, so Australia is Ireland’s other. In the Irish imagination, Australia occupies the *unheimlich* position of being an extension of the homeland while being so far away – as far from home as one can be. References to Australia punctuate Irish literature, painting it as a safe haven, an exotic escape, a punishment, or a promised land. No matter how it is portrayed, Australia is there, sitting in the corner of Ireland’s eye. Part of the story of Ireland continues to take place over the edge of the world.

For a nation so long concerned with home, with defending and maintaining a right to homeland, Australia interrupts a unified vision of home. Yet Australia also stands as a symbol of hope, of escape from the cruel mother that Ireland can be to so many of her children. In “Eveline,” James Joyce’s story of the paradoxical hope and fear that comes from leaving Ireland, Australia intrudes in the middle of the eponymous heroine’s contemplations on leaving home. Eveline considers that “Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home”; Joyce begins the next paragraph with the single-word sentence: “Home!” (47). This use of anadiplosis both separates and connects connotations of “home”: in the former instance, home is something to be left – the leaving of home is normalized, and connects Eveline to the lived experiences of others from her childhood. Home is a trap from which others have escaped, and Eveline longs to follow. The second instance – “Home!” – is wistful, nostalgic, associated with the “familiar objects” of her life.

One of these so-called familiar objects, though, is still an object of mystery: the photograph of the priest who had been a school friend of her father's whose name "during all those years" Eveline had never found out. The "casual word" with which her father describes the photo to visitors is: "He is in Melbourne now" (47). Australia is the foreign, the strange and unknown, within the familiar. Eveline's father here parallels his daughter: the priest is his "other" who has gone away while he has remained, acting as an antipodean doppelganger. Joyce thus undermines Eveline's father's assumed "casual" tone towards his friend's departure by placing this reference in the middle of Eveline's fraught contemplations about the idea of leaving home. The father's statement is also not entirely true: while the priest himself is in Melbourne, he is still – through his picture and through Eveline's father's continued reiteration of him – in Ireland, haunting his former home from his "yellowing photograph." Joyce does not mention that it is to Buenos Ayres Eveline considers going until several paragraphs later, placing Australia in the central position as "not home" – "a distant unknown country" – to Ireland's "home," but also as a place still deeply connected to Ireland.

Other Irish authors pick up on Joyce's image of Australia as both an extension of Ireland and an escape from Ireland. In Sean O'Casey's "Juno and the Paycock," Captain Boyle complains that the will that was meant to leave him a large amount of money was "made out... wrong," saying "first cousin an' second cousin" instead of directly naming him. Now, Boyle fears, these first and second cousins are "springin' up in hundreds, an' comin' from America an' Australia thinkin' to get their whack out of it" (136). This image calls up the idea of the close ties between Ireland and Australia (as well as America); these are not distant relatives, but first and second cousins. It also presents – albeit

hyperbolically because of Boyle's upset over the miswritten will – the massive quantity of Irish in Australia: Ellison's cousins from abroad alone number in the hundreds

Contemporary Irish novelist Roddy Doyle presents Australia as a place of escape, combining in that image both the positive feeling of freedom and the fear of leaving Ireland that Joyce presents in "Eveline." In *Paddy Clark Ha Ha Ha*, Doyle contrasts an image of Ireland as Paddy's whole world to Australia as a place of escape. After his parents fight and Paddy decides he wants to run away, he pulls out his atlas. Paddy considers that, so far, he has only used his atlas to learn the counties of Ireland – his world has been limited to the confines of his own nation – and concludes that "[t]here was nowhere [he] wanted to run away to, except maybe some of the islands" (231). But, he reasons, "You couldn't run away to an island; you had to sail or swim part of the way." He then adds that "an uncle of mine had run away to Australia," returning a few thoughts later to clarify: "My uncle had gone to Australia, by himself. He hadn't run away, but he'd been very young, still not eighteen. He was still there. He had his own business and a boat" (231). This direct contradiction that his uncle both had and hadn't run away to Australia presents the contradictory image of Australia to the Irish. Running away, especially to young Paddy who longs for escape, is wonderful freedom – especially running to somewhere so far that it is not even on the map of places in your world, and to which you can't even actually run, but must cross water to get to. But the disturbing image of his uncle, still not eighteen, needing for some unknown reason to leave and go to Australia depicts the horrifying choice that Eveline could not make of flying to a place he knew not of to escape those at home.

In *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*, Doyle again presents this tension of what Australia represents to the Irish. Paula and Charlo, after getting married, were “dying to get out of our houses and into our own – a room, a flat, a box, anything. Anywhere. Fitzgibbon Street, Coolock, Darndale. Australia.” (132). She traces a path leading slowly further and further away from the center of Dublin and concludes with an absurd elision of space by jumping to Australia. This elision, though, places Australia in direct line with these Irish places while the juxtaposition through the climactic syntax serves to emphasize how absurdly far away Australia is from Ireland. Paula and Charlo go back and forth on whether or not to run away to Australia, one saying “Christmas on the beach,” the other rejoining, “It wouldn’t be the same” (132). The conclusion that a reason not to go to Australia would be that things there are not the same as things are in Ireland defeats the very reason for escaping to a place so far away, but underlines the expectation that Australia should somehow be more like home than other far-away places. The image of Christmas in summer emphasizes the unheimlich nature of Australia, the carnivalesque inversion of a potential life in southern hemisphere. Paula decides finally that Australia “was so far away; we’d never see anyone again. It was too far” (132). Just as Paddy Clarke hints at the wonder of a place too far to even run away to, so Paula captures the main problem with Australia: it is not just far – many places are far – but it is *too* far. Australia is preventatively far away, even as paradoxically so many Irish people have gone there.

This unheimlich image of Australia in recent Irish literature emphasizes the dual nature of travel to Australia from Ireland in the nineteenth century. As a penal colony, it was clearly a place of punishment, a hell on earth for the many convicts. But to many

emigrés, it was escape from the deadly famine, from a life of no hope – a juxtaposition clearly dramatized in Koch’s *Out of Ireland* through the relationship between Devereux and Kathleen. Irish novelist Evelyn Conlon captures this duality in her 2013 novel *Not the Same Sky* about the over 4,000 girls shipped from Irish workhouses during the famine to Australia ostensibly to become servants there, but ultimately to marry and have children, and populate the foundling nation.<sup>83</sup> The book deals with the difficult truth of these girls’ lives: they were ripped by an act of parliament from the only home they’d known, forced to leave their families and neighbors and emigrate to a part of the world they couldn’t even contemplate existing; however, they left behind workhouses and famine, dead and dying parents and siblings, and many of them were given a life they never would have had in Ireland.

The girls spend most of their lives in Australia, having left Ireland between the ages of sixteen and twenty, and for most of them, the solution to making a new life in Australia is to forget the past. When their ship’s surgeon, Charles Strutt – a historical figure on whose journal Conlon based part of her novel – goes to visit the now-women whom he was responsible for bringing to Australia years before, one of them, Anne, tells him: “I don’t talk about the past” (188). Another, Honora Raftery, echoes that sentiment: “we don’t go into the past” (191). She clarifies: “I build new memories here... for my children” (191), explaining further: “That thing I said, about making new memories for my children, they wouldn’t like mine, the early ones yes, they might, but not what

---

<sup>83</sup> The novel was first published in Australia in 2013, then published in Ireland in 2015. The blurb at the front of the novel about Conlon interestingly insists on her Irishness – “Born in Ireland”; “Her last novel... was shortlisted for Irish Novel of the Year”; “She is a member of Aosdána” – but also seeks to give credence to her knowledge of Australian cultural and national identity by informing the reader that “she lived in Australia for a number of years.” Thus even the description about the author not only speaks to the connection between Ireland and Australia, but also reveals the continued concern that an author be connected with a place in order to be allowed to speak its people and its nationality.

happened after” (193). Honora captures here the horror of being ripped untimely from their childhood home, and attempts, through her children and new life in Australia, to find “some contentment out of the debacle of her history” (193). But she also references the horror of what might have been her life had she not been forced to emigrate: “what happened after” her early childhood was Honora’s parents dying of hunger. As she later explains in a letter she leaves behind after her death, “We had fallen into the open mouth of famine. Why would we want to remember?” (205). There was no looking back but also no looking forward.

The girls’ learning to make a life without a past parallels the way that Australia became a nation. How, the book asks, does one become a new nationality, especially in a nation that is essentially – at Robert Devereux insists – without history? The story of the girls becomes the story of learning how to be “from here” – a question, put another way, of what it means to be Australian. When one of the girls, Julia, is asked, “Are you the Irish girl?” she responds, “Yes,” then thinks, “although I don’t know what that means anymore. How can I be from Ireland if I’m not there?” (217). Julia’s answer and contemplation reveal the problem for all the Irish in Australia: is one still Irish if one is “from here” now? As Charles Strutt watches the girls on the quay in Plymouth, England, just before they embark for Australia, he notes that the girls “took up their new profession, that of making the best of it. They would polish this profession and its gleam would crystalise to form part of the national character of where they were heading” (30). The girls become the nation’s new history.

Despite this insistence on forgetting the past, the book is an entreaty to remember. Of itself it is a memorial to the girls, to all who were forced to emigrate whether in irons

or by act of Parliament or simply to escape hunger. Conlon also emphasizes the importance of remembering through the frame of her narrative. The novel begins with a prologue set in Ireland in 2008, when Joy Kennedy, a stonemason there, gets a letter from Australia asking her if she wants to participate in helping to create the memorial to the famine girls. The letter suggests, "I'm sure you know all about them"; but, after Joy reads the letter to her boyfriend, she concludes, "I've never heard of them" (3). After telling the story of the girls' journey to Australia and their lives there, the novel returns to Joy. The reader, likely in the same position as Joy, only learns of the famine orphan girls at that moment, but accepts through the reading of the novel the importance of learning about them to understanding of both Ireland's past and Australia's. Joy decides to go to Australia herself, to learn more about this history and the memorial.

Conlon also, as do the other Irish authors who reference Australia, focuses on how very far away it is from Ireland. She does so by focusing on their time on the ocean. Conlon emphasizes the transformation of the girls over the course of their ship journey, spending almost fifty pages of the book with them at sea. Charles Strutt uses the time on the sea to teach the girls the skills that they will need to be house servants. But one of the most prominent images from their education at sea is their looking at the map. The first time Charles shows them the map, he wonders, instead of or in addition to their simply not understanding "the notion of representation," if maybe "they did not want to understand the vastness of that water, the length of time it would take a letter to travel. The truth of the distance might be too catastrophic" (55). But the girls become fascinated by the map, by learning where they are – horrified too, at times, but desirous of learning the truth of where they are going, of understanding that even the sky would be different

there. Conlon spends so much time on the girls' oceanic journey to emphasize that their transformation begins there, as does their understanding of Australia, starting with its farness, its finality: "They would know that forever it would only be letters that would go home, never them" (55). The ship gives the girls the time and space for transition. On the Christmas eve they spend on the ship, much to Charles's surprise, the girls gather in a spontaneous threnody, collectively "weeping for their lost land and their families"; to Charles, the sound "was splitting time itself and pushing a canyon in it" (86). Having expressed this anguish, the girls look at Charles "with a certain amount of resignation" (87). This moment, like others on the ship – looking at the map for the first time, crossing the line and seeing the new sky – prepares the girls to accept their new lives, to accept Australia.

Joy the stonemason later considers that the girls stopped speaking of the past because they "might... have lost the language to tell the story. Somewhere on the sea, it might have left them" (244). But Joy, too, learns what it means to travel to Australia – Conlon emphasizes that even today Australia is so far away. She details Joy's plane journey in the same way that she does the girls' ship journey, painting the rhythm of the plane trip – "food arrived, breaking up the hours"; "Film over, people stretched their legs one inch" – in parallel to that of the oceanic journey. Joy is surprised both by how long the trip is, and by the hours that seem to pass without her notice. Just as the journey to Australia for the girls may have been their enjoiner to begin the process of forgetting, so Joy's journey is one to remember, to learn, to bring the girls back to Ireland from Australia. Joy's journey back likewise helps her punctuate her trip, a stopover serving as "a marker against which she could check all the things she now knew that she hadn't

known weeks ago” (248). Thus Conlon suggests a duality to the journey overseas: it is a place to mourn the loss of home and to learn exactly what it means to leave home; a place to begin forgetting or to decide how to best remember.

Conlon emphasizes the extent to which the Irish famine girls became part of Australia’s history. The initial letter that Joy receives about the memorial mentions that the committee is “making an estimate soon of the numbers of descendants, in the region of a million as you can imagine” (2). When Joy is in Australia, Simon, the man who wrote her the letter, explains: “if you take the number of them and the scarcity of single white men here at the time, and the number of children they had with the number of husbands they had, they’re at the top of a lot of us” (235), an image prefaced by Honora Raferty’s funeral at which her ten children and twenty grandchildren are in attendance. For Australians, these Irish girls are their past. And for Joy, they are part of her Irish past from which she had become estranged.

The novel also references the problematic nature of the settlement of Australia, and the difficulty in being from a colonized land while taking part (intentionally or not) in the colonization of another. In the letter Honora leaves after her death, she writes of an Aboriginal man near her home: “He was here first. I know what he thinks of me. I want to say to him that I do not want to be in a house on his land, I have my own spot, even if I cannot get to it. But it doesn’t matter to him if I think that, I’m still in a house on his earth” (202). Simon, the Memorial Committee member who first wrote to Joy, considers the problems of asserting identity in Australia, where “many people were quietly picking up bits and pieces of wonderment” but where one’s “beginning was always far away” (233). He considers, “And what of the people who were here forever, whose history this

really was, who would always know more of here than you, who could never be caught up with? How could your few hundred years matter?” (233). As Peter Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang* questions the extent to which Australians should trace their lineage back to Irish political history, Conlon questions any effort of Australians to trace and celebrate their lineage. She points out the truth forever embedded in Australian nationalism that the land was never and will never be theirs. The genocide of the Aboriginal people always undermines any claim to Australian national identity.

Roger McDonald creates a parallel between the Irish and aboriginal Australians through the relationship between Stanton’s two adopted sons, Titus and Warren Inchcape. Both were forcibly taken by Stanton, who insists both to himself and others that he had done so for benevolent reasons; in truth, they are Stanton’s pawns and slaves, a stolen generation forced from their families (not unlike the famine orphan girls). Together, Titus and Warren escape from Stanton in Brazil while the family is on a trip back to England; the two trace an epic journey together back to Australia. Even as McDonald frames the boys’ experiences as similar, he is careful to highlight the differences in treatment. For one, Stanton whips Titus – under the guise of converting him – and, though he ordered Kale to be whipped, never himself whips Warren. As the boys eke out existence in Rio before finding passage on a whaler back to the South Seas, Titus’s blackness allows him to enter homes and rob them: “Titus was seen but not grabbed, nor did he rouse alarm. When he was seen he perfectly made sense they had so little idea of their slaves” (513). McDonald reinforces that, even as Warren certainly lacks power and is looked down upon, Titus’s blackness makes him almost non-human. Titus and Warren see one another as sympathetic; it is through their coming together that they are able to return home.

Their return to Australia, which is their home and their nation, can only happen when they are together. Perhaps McDonald is suggesting through their friendship that, if contemporary Australians trace their heritage back to Irish roots, the parallel between the treatment of the Irish by the British and the treatment of the indigenous Australians by all white settlers creates a demand for sympathy with and reparation for the injustices against the indigenous population.

Peter Carey likewise comments on this problem of celebrating Irish-Australian heritage at the expense of eliding the treatment of native Australians. He creates a parallel between the forced settlement of Australia and that of Ireland. Just pages after Sergeant O'Neil tells Ned that his father had convinced a group of men to burn down the landholder's house for evicting his tenant in Tipperary, Carey presents Red Kelly in the place of the usurper vis-à-vis the aboriginals. As Ned describes it, "A vicious Sydney black by the name of Warragul had gotten a mob together made of the remnants of different tribes" and, insisting that "my father had done nothing against Waragul," Ned explains that his father hid in a hut only to find it set on fire by the "shouting savages" (15). Carey quite cannily here draws a parallel and forces the reader into awareness of Ned's privileged and ignorant position, reminding the reader even moreso that the past is not something one-sided, easily accessible. Ned's recognition that his identity must embrace memories both proud and ignominious is Carey's admonition that Australians face all parts of their story of origin, including the oppression of the indigenous population.

The relationship between the Irish and the settlement of Australia is complicated, and, as Conlon makes clear especially through Honora's letter, worthy of the potential discomfort and sadness that looking at that history engenders. Like Christopher Koch, Peter Carey, and Roger McDonald, and, like the Fenian writers of *The Wild Goose*, Conlon emphasizes the importance of telling stories from the past, of speaking one's own story. Despite Honora's insistence to Charles Strutt that she does not speak of the past, she still writes the letter that she leaves after her death, explaining what she remembers and why both remembering and forgetting are good. When they are on the ship, Julia accuses Honora of "telling lies"; Charles explains that they are not "actually lies": "She's telling stories" (60). When Julia asks what the difference is, Charles insists with uncertainty as to his own reasoning that it is "all right to tell stories... even if they're not true" (61). Like the ballad of Desmond Kale, the truth of stories is not necessarily in their adherence to fact: stories contain truth even if they are not true. Later, Charles overhears two girls speaking with reference to an unknown other girl: "She said that was a story for the equator. She said her father carried stories. How could you carry stories? And she says that she's going to do that too, always going to carry them. No matter where she ends up" (81). Even as they insist on not speaking of the past, the girls carry it with them, and their lives become part of the story of Australia.

## EPILOGUE

I was very lucky to receive funding to go to Australia in the summer of 2016 to do research in the incredible archives of the Mitchel Library at the State Library of New South Wales. I read shipboard journals from surgeons, letters written by Irish settlers to cousins at home, a journal written by a nineteen-year-old emigrant named Emma Rogers heading to Australia to find work, and – perhaps most incredibly – a letter written from Lord Grenville to Lord Hobart in 1789 regarding a ship of Irish convicts that had been sent to the United States, which, to the dismay of these lords, was still annoyingly insisting on being its own nation: “The landing convicts in the territories of the United States (even if the masters of the ships perform their contracts for so doing) is an act highly offensive to a country now foreign and independent, and as such, very improper for Government to authorize” (368).

To get to the State Library from the place I was staying near Oxford Street, I walked down College Street across from Hyde Park, passing the Australia Museum and St. Mary’s Cathedral, rounded by Hyde Park Barracks, past the Mint and Parliament House to the Mitchel Library. I did this every weekday for two weeks, and back.

I passed the memorial to the Famine Orphan Girls every day. And I did not stop to look at it once. I did not know what it was.

I noticed it, certainly, as I passed it: a large sheet of glass with a sculpture of a rough wooden table passing through it, empty on one side of the glass and with a plate and utensils on the other side of the table, on the other side of the glass. I never walked over to it, and never read the names of the over 4,000 girls etched onto the glass. In my effort to get at history, I walked right by a piece of it.

I knew even when I was in Australia that I wanted to read Evelyn Conlon's novel; she spoke at a conference I had attended in Maynooth the summer before I went back to Australia, and she read from *Not the Same Sky*. I was excited to find an Irish author also writing about the experience of transportation to Australia, especially about the experience on the ship itself. I knew I wanted to write about references to Australia in Irish literature in my conclusion, and so I waited to read her novel until after I had finished the main part of my dissertation. If I had read it earlier, I would have known about the girls. And I would have stopped and read their names, and felt the power of the empty table.

I, too, feel from this just how far away Australia is. I walked down that street every day, and it feels like I could do it again – feels like I could just walk out my door and go look at that memorial. But I can't and because Australia, even today, is just so far. I feel its closeness to me and I feel its extreme, incomprehensible remoteness.

And so I read Conlon's book to help preserve memory. I read the journals of the men on the transport ships and feel so close to and so far from those twenty-three-year-old boys being shipped over the edge of their known world. I tell and re-tell their stories as they told their own, simultaneously preserving and creating themselves and their nation from the scraps and fragments of their own lives and from the lives of those who came before them.

## Works Cited

- “Aims & Scope” *Atlantic Studies: About this Journal*. Taylor & Francis Online.
- Alkalay-Gut, Karen. “The Thing He Loves: Murder as Aesthetic Experience in ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’.” *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 35, no. 3, Fall 1997, pp. 349–366, [www.jstor.org/stable/40003057](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40003057). Accessed 16 Nov. 2016.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1991.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. Routledge, 1989.
- Ashcroft, Bill. *Post-Colonial Transformation*. Routledge, 2001.
- Atkinson, David. “The Ballad Revival and National Literature: Textual Authority and the Invention of Tradition.” *National Cultivation of Culture, Volume 4: Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin, Brill, 2012, pp. 275–300.
- “Australia’s Queen.” *Irish Times*, 8 November 1999, p. 17.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press, 1981.
- . *Rabelais and his World*. Translated by Helene Iswolsky. Indiana UP, 1984.
- Banks, Sir Joseph. Letter written to John Hunter. 7 February 1799. Letters of Sir Joseph Banks. Series 38.14. Frames CY 3005 217-219. Mitchel Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. 6 August 2016.
- Basu, Laura "The Ned Kelly *memory dispositif*, 1930 to 1960: Identity Production." *Traffic* [Parkville] no. 10, 2008, pp. 59–74. *Expanded Academic ASAP* [//go.galegroup.com.access.library.miami.edu/ps/i.do?&id=GALE|A192853039&v=2.1&u=miami\\_richter&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&authCount=1#](http://go.galegroup.com/access.library.miami.edu/ps/i.do?&id=GALE|A192853039&v=2.1&u=miami_richter&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&authCount=1#) Accessed 10 April 2012.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. 1955. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Schocken Books [New York], 1968.
- Berger, Stefan. “On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe” *European History Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 39, 2009, pp. 490–502. doi: 10.1177/0265691409105063
- Bhabha, Homi K. “DissemiNation.” *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994, pp. 139–170.
- . Introduction. *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, 1990, pp. 1–7.
- . “The Commitment to Theory.” *The Location of Culture*, pp. 19–39.

- Bladen, F. M. *Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol IV., Hunter and King, 1800, 1801, 1802*. Charles Potter, Government Printer [Sydney, NSW], 1896.
- Blum, Hester. "Introduction: Oceanic Studies." *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2013, pp. 151–155, doi: 10.1080/14788810.2013.785186. Accessed on 15 Sept. 2015.
- . "The Prospect of Oceanic Studies." *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 3, May 2010, pp. 670–677, doi: 10.1632/pmla.2010.125.3.670. Accessed on 12 February 2014.
- . "Pirated Tars, Piratical Texts: Barbary Captivity and American Sea Narratives." *Early American Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 2003, pp. 133–158, doi: 10.1353/eam.2007.0058. Accessed 12 April 2016.
- . "Terraqueous Planet: The Case for Oceanic Studies." *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru. Northwestern University Press, 2015, pp. 25–36.
- Boehm-Schnitker, Nadine and Susanne Gruss. "Introduction: Fashioning the Neo-Victorian – Neo-Victorian Fashions." *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations*. Edited by Boehm-Schnitker and Gruss. Routledge, 2014.
- Carey, Peter. *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Alfred A. Knopf. 2000.
- Casey, John S. *Journal of a Voyage from Portland to Fremantle on board the Convict Ship "Hougoumont" Cap Cozens Commander October 12<sup>th</sup> 1867*. Edited by Martin Kevin Cusack. Dorrance & Co. [Bryn Mawr, PA], 1988.
- . *The Galtee Boy: A Fenian Prison Narrative*. Edited by Mairead Maume, Patrick Maume, and Mary Casey. UCD Press, 2005.
- Cashman, Denis B. *Fenian Diary: On Board the Hougoumont 1867–1868*. Edited by C. W. Sullivan. Wolfhound Press [Dublin], 2001.
- Cashman Journal, Oct. 15 1867 – Jan 31 1868. East Carolina University Archives, Box 458.1.b., Digital Collections, <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/957>.
- Conlon, Evelyn. *Not the Same Sky*. Wakefield Press, 2013.
- Corporaal, Marguérite and Jason King. "Irish Global Migration and Memory: Transnational Perspectives of Ireland's Famine Exodus." *Irish Global Migration and Famine Memory*, special issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2014, pp. 301–320, doi: 10.1080/14788810.2014.937057. Accessed on 26 Sept. 2014.
- Cross, Bernard. "The Australian Republican Referendum, 1999." *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2007, pp. 556–567, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-923X.2007.00884.x. Accessed on 3 April 2016.

- Cusack, Martin Kevin. Introduction. *Journal of a Voyage from Portland to Fremantle on board the Convict Ship "Hougoumont" Cap Cozens Commander October 12<sup>th</sup> 1867*. By John S. Casey. Dorrance & Co. [Bryn Mawr, PA], 1988.
- Dean, Tanya. "Staging Hibernia: Female Allegories of Ireland in Cathleen Ni Houlihan and Dawn." *Theatre History Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2014, pp. 71–82, doi: 10.1352/th.s.2014.0018. Accessed on 3 March 2016.
- Dillon, William. *Life of John Mitchell in Two Volumes; Vol. II*. Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. [London], 1888.
- Doyle, Roddy. *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. Penguin Books, 1993.
- . *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. Penguin Books, 1996.
- Fanning, Bryan and Tom Garvin. *Books that Define Ireland*. Merrion [Sallins, Co. Kildare], 2014.
- Fennell, Thomas McCarthy. *The Voyage of the Hougoumont and Life at Freemantle: The Story of an Irish Rebel*. Edited by Philip Fennell and Marie King. Xlibris, 2000.
- Fickling, David. "Ned Kelly, the Legend that Still Torments Australia." *The Guardian*, 29 November 2003, n.p.
- Flood, John and John Boyle O'Reilly, eds. *The Wild Goose: A Collection of Ocean Waifs*, Vol. 1, nos. 1-7 (9 Nov.–21 Dec. 1867). Mitchel Library Archives, State Library of New South Wales, call no. MLMSS 1542 (Safe 1/409). Digitized 2014. <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=422350>.
- Fotheringham, Richard, editor. *Australian Plays for the Colonial Stage 1834–1899*. University of Queensland Press, 2006.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Vintage, 1995.
- Gaile, Andreas. "'Going Double': Exploring Contradictions of Australianness in Christopher Koch's *Out of Ireland* (1999)." *Antipodes*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2002, pp. 151–156. [www.jstor.org/stable/41957212](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41957212). Accessed on 3 February 2016.
- Garcia, Miki. *Ireland's Invasion of the World: The Irish Diaspora in a Nutshell*. History Press [Dublin], 2015.
- Gilroy, Paul. "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity." *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press; 1993.
- Granville, Lord. Letter to Hobart. 25 November 1789. BT-59 Series 1 pages 367-371. Bonwick Transcripts 1641–1892. Mitchel Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. 11 August 2016.

- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Edited by Jonathan Rutherford. Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-237.
- Hare, Francis Augustus, P.M. *The Last of the Bushrangers; An Account of the Capture of the Kelly Gang*. Hurst and Blackett Ltd. [London], 1894.
- Haynes, Bruce. "History Teaching for a Patriotic Citizenship in Australia." *Patriotism and Citizenship Education*. Edited by Haynes. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 44-59.
- Heaney, Seamus. "Oscar Wilde Dedication: Westminster Abbey, 14 February 1995." *Wilde the Irishman*. Edited by Jerusha McCormack. Yale UP, 1998, pp. 174-176.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge UP, 1983, pp. 1-14.
- Hughes, Robert. *The Fatal Shore*. Vintage Books, 1988.
- Jacobson, Howard. "Why Australia Needs the Monarchy." *The Independent*. 3 November 1999.
- Jameson, Frederic. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text*, vol. 15, Autumn 1986, pp. 65-88, doi: 10.2307/466493. Accessed on 15 November 2015.
- Joyce, James. "Eveline." *The Portable James Joyce*. Edited by Harry Levin. Penguin Books, 1975.
- . "A Mother." *Dubliners*. 1914. Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004.
- Kearns, G. "'Educate that Holy Hatred': Place, Trauma and Identity in the Irish Nationalism of John Mitchel." *Political Geography*, vol. 20, 2001, pp. 885-911, doi: 10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00018-X. Accessed on 28 September 2015.
- Kelly, Ned. "Letter written by Joe Byrne at the dictation of Ned Kelly." February 1879. Accession no. MS 13361, State Library of Victoria, digitized [handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/211066](http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/211066). Accessed on 29 April 2012.
- Keneally, Thomas. *The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English Speaking World*. Anchor Books, 1998.
- Kenny, Kevin. *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*. Oxford UP: 1998.
- "Key results – 1999 referendum report and statistics." *Australian Electoral Commission*. Commonwealth of Australia, 2000. [www.aec.gov.au/Elections/referendums/1999\\_Referendum\\_Reports\\_Statistics/Key\\_Results.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/referendums/1999_Referendum_Reports_Statistics/Key_Results.htm). Accessed on 19 May 2016.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. 1995. Vintage Books, 1996.
- Koch, Christopher. *Out of Ireland*. Doubleday, 1999.

- Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Christian Gutleben. "Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century." *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma*. Edited by Kohlke and Gutleben. Rodopi, 2010, pp. 1–34.
- Kosok, Heinz. "Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, Irish or Australian? Reflections on Defining the Canon of National Literatures." *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 49, no.4, 2001, pp. 375–384.
- Lambert, Ronald D. "Reclaiming the Ancestral Past: Narrative, Rhetoric and the 'Convict Stain'." *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2002, pp. 111–127, doi: 10.1177/144078302128756534. Accessed on 7 April 2016.
- Marks, Kathy. "Oz republicans play down Irish angle." *The Independent*, 31 October 1999, p. 25.
- Marsh, Anne "Ned Kelly by Any Other Name." *Journal of Visual Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2002, pp. 57–64, doi: 10.1177/147041290200100105. Accessed on 2 April 2012.
- McDonald, Roger. *The Ballad of Desmond Kale*. Vintage, 2005.
- McGovern, Bryan P. *John Mitchel: Irish Nationalist, Southern Secessionist*. The University of Tennessee Press, 2009.
- McMahon, Cian. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840–1880*. University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Minchin, Nick. "Directions for Australia's Future after the Republic Referendum." *National Observer: Australia and World Affairs*, issue 47, Summer 2001, pp. 19–23, Academic OneFile, [access.library.miami.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.access.library.miami.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=miami\\_richter&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA83342664&asid=f3216b161ed315d09930b8ad26271853](http://go.galegroup.com/access.library.miami.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=miami_richter&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA83342664&asid=f3216b161ed315d09930b8ad26271853). Accessed on 19 May 2016.
- Mitchel, John. *Jail Journal; or, Five Years in British Prisons*. Offices of *The Citizen* [New York], 1854.
- "Notice of New Books." *New York Daily Times* 22 January 1855, p. 3.
- Ó Concubhair, Pádraig. *The Fenians were Dreadful Men: The 1867 Rising*. Mercier Press [Cork], 2011.
- Ó Lúing, Seán. *Fremantle Mission*. Anvil Books, 1965.
- O'Donovan Rossa, Jeremiah. *Irish Rebels in English Prisons: A Record of Prison Life*. D. & J. Sadlier & Co. [New York], 1880.
- O'Casey, Sean. *Juno and the Paycock*. 1924. *Three Dublin Plays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 63–148.

- O'Malley, Ernie. *On Another Man's Wound: A Personal History of Ireland's War of Independence*. 1936. Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1999.
- O'Neill, Patrick. "Memory and John Mitchel's Appropriation of the Slave Narrative." *Irish Global Migration and Famine Memory*, special issue of *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2014, pp. 321–343, doi: 10.1080/14788810.2014.895130. Accessed on 15 September 2015.
- O'Reilly, John Boyle. *Moondyne: A Story from the Under-World*. Roberts Brothers [Boston], 1879.
- O'Reilly, Nathaniel. "The Influence of Peter Carey's 'True History of the Kelly Gang': Repositioning the Ned Kelly Narrative in Australian Popular Culture". *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2007, pp. 488–502, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2007.00405.x. Accessed on 12 April 2012.
- O'Sullivan, Patrick. "Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View." *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 130–148, doi: 10.1353/nhr.2003.0031. Accessed on 13 January 2017.
- Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Acts Relating to Transportation and Penal Servitude Vol. II Minutes of Evidence*. London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1863.
- Scott, Bill. "Traditional Ballad Verse in Australia." *Folklore*, vol. 111, no. 2, October 2000, pp. 309–313, [www.jstor.org/stable/1260609](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1260609). Accessed on 1 Nov. 2016.
- Seal, Graham. *The Outlaw Legend: A Cultural Tradition in Britain, America, and Australia*. Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Wolfgang Clemen. Signet Classic, 1982.
- Shiller, Dana. "The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 29, no.4, Winter 1997, pp. 538–560, [www.jstor.org/stable/29533234](http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533234). Accessed on 27 May 2016.
- Steinberg, Philip E. "Of Other Seas: Metaphors and Materialities in Maritime Regions." *Atlantic Studies Global Currents*, vol. 10, no.2, 2013, pp. 156–169, doi: 10.1080/1478880.2013.785192. Accessed on 15 September 2015.
- Steward, Patrick and Bryan McGovern. *The Fenians: Irish Rebellion in the North Atlantic World*. University of Tennessee Press, 2013.
- Sullivan, C. W. Introduction. *Fenian Diary: On Board the Hougoumont 1867–1868*. By Denis B. Cashman. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001, pp. 9–54.
- . "Preface: Setting the Record Straight." *Fenian Diary*. By Denis Cashman, Ed. Sullivan. Wolfhound Press [Dublin], 2001, pp. 9–15.

- . "Reconsidering the Convict Ships." *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 12, no.4, 2008, pp. 101–116, doi: 10.1353.nhr.0.0039. Accessed on 26 February 2014.
- Tranter, Bruce and Jed Donoghue. "Bushrangers: Ned Kelly and Australian Identity." *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2008, pp. 373–390, doi: 10.1177/1440783308097127. Accessed on 29 April 2012.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 1969. Alsiné Transaction, 2008.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle I. Caffee. Routledge, 1960.
- Vernay, Jean-Francois. "C. J. Koch's novels: from fiction to friction – fictional reality strikes back." *Antipodes* 21.1 (2007): 7–9.
- . "Repetition and colonial variation on the Europe theme: an interview with Christopher J. Koch." *Antipodes*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2003, pp. 114–117, [www.jstor.org/stable/41957582](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41957582). Accessed on 17 January 2016.
- Viljoen, Hein and Chris N. van der Merwe. "Introduction: A Poetics of Liminality and Hybridity." *Beyond the Threshold: Explorations of Liminality in Literature*, edited by Viljoen. Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 1–26.
- Wilde, Oscar. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." *Oscar Wilde: A Critical Edition of his Major Works*, edited by Isobel Murray. Oxford UP, 1989, pp. 548–566