

IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION,
1830–1880

Ireland's experience in the nineteenth century was quite different from that of Victorian Britain. Its fictions were written in differing forms – like the gothic or historical novel – and its poetry and drama were populated with ballad and song. Its writers were by turns nationalist or unionist, anglophile or de-anglicising. If the effects of Famine and emigration were catastrophic for mid-nineteenth-century Irish culture, they initiated a literary story that spread across the diaspora. Despite the decline of spoken Irish, its literature continued to be published, while scholarly endeavours such as translation and the Ordnance Survey preserved much from the Gaelic past. This rich volume examines the many forms of new writing that thrived throughout this period. Utilising a thematic and historical approach, it addresses a broad anglophone readership in Victorian literature. Chapters consider the Irish authors in America and India, women's writing and the resilience of Irish literature before the Revival.

MATTHEW CAMPBELL is Professor of Modern Literature at the University of York. He is the author of *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry* (1999) and *Irish Poetry Under the Union* (2013). He is also the editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Irish Poetry* (2003) and co-editor of *The Voice of the People: Writing the European Folk Revival, 1760–1914* (2012).

IRISH LITERATURE IN TRANSITION

This six-volume series captures the dynamic energies transmitted over more than 300 years of the established literary landmarks that constitute Irish literary life. Ambitious in scope and depth, and accommodating new critical perspectives and approaches, *Irish Literature in Transition* captures the ongoing changes in the Irish literary canon. Each of the six volumes revises our understanding of established issues and texts and, simultaneously, introduces new questions, approaches and authors. These volumes address periods of transition, but also periods of epochal upheaval and turning points of real significance. Each one of these books challenges in different ways the dominant approaches to a period of literature by shifting the focus from what happened to understanding how and why it happened. They elucidate the multifaceted interaction between the social and literary fields in the evolution of Irish literature until the present moment. Taken together, *Irish Literature in Transition* constitutes a new kind of literary history across centuries of intense cultural and literary creation. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the Irish literary experience, creating a new and dynamic version of literary history that highlights the significance of change as a lived, felt force.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48048-2 — Irish Literature in Transition, 1830–1880
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IRISH LITERATURE
IN TRANSITION, 1830–1880

EDITED BY
MATTHEW CAMPBELL
University of York



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CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108480482
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108634977

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First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Campbell, Matthew, 1962– editor.

TITLE: Irish literature in transition, 1830–1880 / edited by Matthew Campbell, University of York.
 DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | SERIES: Irish literature in transition ; Volume 3 | Includes index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019031569 (print) | LCCN 2019031570 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108480482 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108634977 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: English literature – Irish authors – History and criticism. | English literature – 19th century – History and criticism. | Irish literature – 19th century – History and criticism. | Literature and society – Ireland – History – 19th century.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR8750 .176 2020 (print) | LCC PR8750 (ebook) | DDC 820.9/9415–dc23
 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019031569>
 LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019031570>

ISBN 978-1-108-48048-2 Hardback

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Series Preface

Irish Literature in Transition provides a new account of transitions between and across the centuries of Irish literature. Adopting varying frames and scales of reference, the series offers an original map of a territory too often navigated via the narrow channels of political history. Each of the six volumes revises our understanding of established issues and texts and, simultaneously, introduces new questions, approaches and authors. Together, these books generate alternative genealogies across time and space and help readers to understand and interrogate the ways in which one period re-imagines and remakes another.

Discussions of Irish culture have long focused on the close relationship between literature and history. For all the power of such narratives, however, the field has yet to develop a sufficiently dynamic sense of that relationship. Literary transitions do not ‘reflect’ historical change in any simple or straightforward way. Rather, the complex two-way traffic between these realms involves multiple and uneven processes such as distortion, selection, repression, embrace, and critique. The temporal relationships involved in such traffic include simultaneity, time lag, and anticipation.

The six books in this series track patterns of transmission and transformation across Irish culture. More specifically, they ask: what kinds of transitions are registered and provoked by literature and culture? What are the levers and mechanisms of change? How helpful are our current concepts of literary movements, time periods and national traditions? What is the status of the literary in our literary histories and how do we understand the relations among form, genre, and chronology?

We consider these questions from our own location in a time of scholarly transition. The sheer weight of archival material now available is transforming our sense of both the past and the present of Irish literature, while prompting us to produce new kinds of critical narrative. Older literary histories of Ireland are coming under pressure from new modes of reading,

such as those attuned to ecocritical issues, affect theory, queer genealogies, questions of scale, and diasporic and transnational geographies. As the concept of the ‘survey’ itself comes under scrutiny in classrooms and universities, these volumes show how authoritative interpretations can be innovative, challenging and enabling for future readers and writers. Each volume intervenes in continuing critical conversations about culture rather than summarizing the field or closing down debate. At the same time, the series charts the contours of literary history across the centuries in ways that highlight the significance of change as a lived, felt force.

Transition: the term means passage from one well-defined period to another; it also helps to track subtle interconnections, contingencies or modulations; and it will provoke questions about the definition of change itself. In adopting that term, *Irish Literature in Transition* seeks to provide insight into the future of Irish studies as it re-imagines the literary past and present.

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General Acknowledgements

As general editors of *Irish Literature in Transition*, we wish to record our thanks to everyone who helped bring this six-volume series to publication. Our fellow editors, Moyra Haslett, Matthew Campbell, Eve Patten, Eric Falci, and Paige Reynolds have worked tirelessly on books that make significant new contributions to our understanding of Irish literature across time and space. We also record our thanks to the many contributors who helped shape the intellectual identity of this series with their thoughtful and innovative chapters. Dr Ray Ryan of Cambridge University Press prompted us to rise to the challenge of shaping a new narrative of Irish literature in transition. We thank him for that opportunity, and for all his insight and support along the way. Thanks also to Edgar Mendez of the Press for his help and hard work in seeing the books through to publication. The support of the President's Strategic Fund of University College Cork and the Irish Studies Program at Boston College is gratefully acknowledged here.

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Acknowledgements

The editor would like to thank the general editors of the series, Claire Connolly and Marjorie Howes, for their thoughtful and patient shepherding of a huge undertaking to publication. The contribution of Ray Ryan at Cambridge University Press has been immeasurable, not just to this project but for contemporary Irish studies as a whole. There have been numerous readers of the chapters in this book, many anonymous, and the editor wishes to thank them for their kindness, encouragement and good sense.