Class, Translation, and Publishing in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ireland[1]

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The nineteenth century began in Ireland with severe censorship of the press. The uprisings of the United Irishmen led to a fear of radical sympathisers in Dublin Castle and, as such, papers thought to be aligned with the separatist or radical views of the Society of the United Irishmen were outlawed. This coincided with another reaction to the United Irish uprisings: the 1801 Act of Union. In effect, the role of the press in Ireland entering the new century was uncertain, and as censorship began to become less strict and the wars of the continent faded, the champion of Catholic Emancipation, Daniel O'Connell, would be the first to make a mark on the media landscape of Ireland under the Act of Union which he later sought to repeal. Brian Inglis summarised, back in 1952, O'Connell's relationship with the Irish press up until the beginning of the 1840s and concluded then that "O'Connell had little sympathy with the principle of the freedom of the press".[2] He presents a vision of the Irish press emerging from a period of intense censorship into one of domination by political actors and private wealth akin to censorship. Simultaneously, the Dublin printing industry was dealt a catastrophic blow by the Act of Union, and Ireland became increasingly reliant on imports from Britain and Europe.[3] This created an Ireland post-Union largely dependant on external trade for any print media beyond what was ordained by political elites and the interests of a small economic class. This changed dramatically as the century approached its mid-point, a change which this article will argue was connected to a larger shift in Irish class dynamics and that this shift shaped the international content which appeared in Irish print in translation during this period.

Broader studies involve this with a trend among the peripheral nations of Europe, whereby the growth of a national majority middle class coinciding with an increase in literacy in the dominant language resulting in the growth of a nationalism largely dictated by the cultural and class interests of this new national middle class. Bill Kissane explores this in a comparison of Finnish and Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century, finding the circumstances in which both nations entered the new century broadly similar as a transfer of power, as in the Act of Union and the Russian annexation in 1807.[4] He claims that "the development of nationalism […] was preceded by a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between the territory and its metropolitan centre" in both cases.[5] The development of a middle class or *petit bourgeois* dictated the character of this nationalism in both cases: this was ushered in in Finland as a result of the autonomy of the Grand Duchy and allowed in Ireland by the increasing liberalisation of the United Kingdom it had recently joined and respectively saw the rise of civic and cultural nationalism in either nation.[6] Thus, the growth of an urban, emancipated, Catholic, English-speaking, literate middle class in Ireland influenced a rise in cultural nationalism and a print media to reflect this. Despite this, Ireland was still peripheral, not as closed off to the world as Finland, and so much of the ideological foundation of this nationalist movement was the product of imported works.

Early works like Richard Davis's *The Young Ireland Movement* consistently claim a German ideological influence on the political work of Ireland's earliest cultural nationalist movement, the Young Irelanders.[7] "Young Ireland" arose as a phrase of attack against a radical subsection of

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[2] Brian Inglis, "O'Connell and the Irish Press 1800-42," *Irish Historical Studies* 8, no. 29 (1952): 26.

[3] Charles Benson, "The Irish Trade," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 373-6.

[4] Bill Kissane, "Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland: A Comparative Analysis," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics 6*, no. 2 (2000): 27.

[5] *Ibid.*, 28.

[6] *Ibid.*, 30-1.

[7] Richard Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement*, (London: Gill & Macmillan, 1988): 19-20.

O'Connell's Repeal party dedicated to re-establishing an Irish parliament. This disorganised movement was made up of radical land reformers, Irish language enthusiasts, secularists, and crypto-republicans who eventually coalesced around *The Nation* journal co-founded by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, and John Blake Dillon. While writers in recent decades such as Richard English have doubted the veracity of the German influence on these nationalists, discounting their cultural nationalism to a reading of Thomas Carlyle, this view can be dismissed by the prominence of translation in Young Ireland affiliated media, and the explosion of the translated book publishing industry contemporaneously occurring in Dublin.[8]

Dublin Monthly Magazine, or *Citizen* as it was also known, preceded *Nation* and took a monthly format but saw many active Young Ireland writers including Thomas Davis. Edited by William Elliot Hudson, *Citizen* consistently published translations of German-language poetry from the *Sturm-und-Drang*, Weimar Classicism, and Romanticist movements spanning the late-eighteenth century into the mid-nineteenth century.[9] Possibly the premier magazine for Irish readers of translated European poetry and literature in this period was the *Dublin University Magazine*, affiliated with Trinity College Dublin. Young Ireland poet and translator James Clarence Mangan was employed with the *University Magazine* and produced an anthology of translated German works in 1845. This work is reviewed in *Nation*, which also copies advertisements for growing indigenous publishing houses including a new 1846 translation of Schlegel's *Philosophy of History* and booklists from S.J. Machen for books in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, and French.[10] Machen's role as the publisher of the volumised editions of *Citizen* after it had exited print reveals a partial image of the nationalist print ecosystem emerging around this movement, one which emphasised the translation of works relevant to the nationalist project embraced by the Young Irelanders including an emphasis on the works of German nationalist philosophers and poets.

A more complete image is offered by Anne O'Connor in her book *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*. O'Connor emphasises how, as a peripheral nation, Ireland was largely on the receiving end of such translation, claiming that the "interchange of literatures, ideas, words and cultures can involve skewed and unbalanced transactions, with some cultures exporting much and importing little while others import much and export little," with Ireland falling into the latter category and therefore being significantly shaped by the import of culture from the continent.[11] The importation of ideas involved not just translation, but also transformation as they are suited to the context to which they arrive, reshaping, for example, German ideas of cultural nationalism rooted in unification and a strong academic background to an Irish context of separatism and underdeveloped academia prior to the 1845 Queen's Colleges Act. While also discussing the periodicals discussed above such as *Nation* and *Dublin University Magazine*, O'Connor draws particular attention to the work of a prolific Dublin-based publisher of translations, James Duffy.

Duffy marketed directly to the Catholic middle class and was not explicitly nationalist in character, instead prioritising translations from French, Italian, and Latin writers typically covering Catholic topics.[12] Being known for his strong personal brand and competitive pricing, Duffy dominated the indigenous Irish publishing industry when it came to translation, which meant that it could often be difficult in Ireland to find translated works on secular topics unless they were imported from English publishing houses by Irish booksellers or private individuals. The letters of Young Ireland's resident ideologue, Thomas Davis, to his London-based friend John Edward Pigott, reveal the often-intimate nature of this book trade as he writes requests for translated books for the Repeal reading rooms to his friend alongside accounts of recent affairs of his personal and political life.[13] The Repeal reading rooms provided a means for the literate outside of Dublin to encounter translated works purchased and provided by the Young Irelanders, who championed the reading rooms within Repeal, resulting in their

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[8] Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (London: Macmillan, 2006): 157-159.
[9] See S.J. Machen, *Citizen Vol. I,* (Dublin: SJ Machen, 1840).
[10] *Nation*, 1845;1846.
[11] Anne O'Connor, *Translation and Language in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A European Perspective*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 39.
[12] O'Connor, *Translation and Language*, 61-2.
[13] Thomas Davis "Letters of Thomas Davis. Part II," The Irish Monthly 16, no. 180 (1888): 343.

more secular nature. Thus, it begins to become clearer that class interest generally dictated the translations available to the Irish market, limiting the influence of secular material that Young Ireland had to import from England. This meant that the availability of translated works in the Irish market was largely limited to two key interest groups: the majority being from the Catholic middle class, and the minority from secular cultural nationalists.

This leaves one group unspoken for: those competent in European languages and a subsect of this group being the translators themselves. Among Ireland's educated elite, both Catholic and Protestant, language-learning was a highly valued skill during the nineteenth century. This could also be tied to Ireland's peripherality and reliance on the idea-production of the European core, a cultural aversion to English exclusivity among Anglophobic nationalists, or the historic ties to the majority co-religionist France. Phyllis Gaffney describes it as "cultural and historical reasons" that "modern language study was given prominence in all of Ireland's universities some decades before [Britain's]."[14] Many of the contributors to *Nation* were multilingual, such as Jane 'Speranza' Wilde, Mangan, and possibly Davis.[15] Mangan was one of the most prolific translators of the period and, as such, his interests held sway. His interests lay largely in the German literary tradition, from contemporary Young Germany poets to eighteenth-century *Sturm und Drang* and Weimar Classicism authors such as Goethe. Like the Young Germans he translated such as Georg Herwegh, and like his German-inspired colleague on the *Nation*, Davis, Mangan approached cultural nationalist thought in a distinctly cosmopolitan and anti-imperialist way, with apparent inheritances from the early German nationalist philosopher Johann Gottfired Herder.[16] His work also often borrowed an orientalist character from Goethe, which imagined West Asia in inaccurate terms, but nonetheless reinforced an anti-racialist, anti-imperialist tone, such as his claim "Every Irishman is an Arab."[17] Over a third of translated works in *Nation* prior to Mangan's death were German in origin, highlighting his strong influence within the secular cultural nationalist sphere of translation.[18] Despite this, Mangan struggled to be published in Ireland, and the record shows that repeatedly Davis was one of his most steadfast supporters in getting published in London, indicating that the market share of these secular anti-imperialists was outcompeted by Duffy's Catholic brand.[19] Both men died young in the 1840s, limiting their long-term provenance, but they left a lasting legacy.

It can therefore be seen that the access of the Irish public to translated print material was mediated by a number of factors, first among them being the interests of the growing Catholic commercial class and increasing English literacy among Irish Catholics. Translators and publishers as individuals also held a great deal of sway in how ideas were transformed to the Irish context. Translation of context shaped the implementation of nationalist ideas significantly and systemically, but with the translation of language, change was often the prerogative of individuals or small groups due partly to the process of selection of works for translation, but also because of the authorship of translators. Translators like Mangan and publishers like Duffy therefore shaped the Irish audience's reception of continental ideas as much as the demands of the Catholic middle class did. Andrew Cusack argues that the German Gothic Revival in Victorian Ireland and Britain is a legacy of Mangan's prolific and selective translation work.[20] Mangan was well aware of the influence of a translator and in much of his

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[14] Phyllis Gaffney, *Foreign Tongues: Victorian Language Learning and the Shaping of Modern Ireland*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2024), 4.

[15] In my thesis I interrogate claims regarding Davis's multilingualism and find that, while it is possible that Davis had some knowledge of French, German, and Irish, he likely did not contribute in a significant way to the translation work of *Nation*.

[16] Arda Arikan & Sukriye Teksener, "Cosmopolitanism in James Clarence Mangan's Prose," Forum for World Literature Studies 14, no. 3 (2022): 490-1.

[17] Melissa Fegan, "'Every Irishman is an Arab': James Clarence Mangan's Eastern 'Translations'," Translation and Literature 22, no. 2 (2013): 202.

[18] O'Connor, *Translation and Language*, 151.

[19] Davis, "Letters of Thomas Davis." *The Irish Monthly* 16, No. 179 (1888): 270; "Letters, II," 340-8; O'Connor, *Translation and Language*, 137-8.

[20] See: Andrew Cusack , "Cultural Transfer in the Dublin University Magazine: James Clarence Mangan and the German Gothic", in Popular Revenants, ed. Andrew Cusack & Barry Murnane (Rochester: Camden House, 2012), 87-104.

original work he toyed with the concept of the translator's authorship, indicating a self-consciousness of the non-objectivity of a translator.[21] As mentioned, Duffy's influence was far more systematic and impersonal. He made calculated economic decisions which nonetheless held great sway over the nature of continental works translated into English for an Irish audience.

Thus, Mangan and Duffy both represent the two major influences on the printing of translated works in Ireland during this period: the authority of the translator and the authority of the publisher. Respectively, these influences are shaped in nature by the growth of Irish cultural nationalism and the emergence of an economically powerful Catholic middle class. By Mangan's death in 1849, the landscape of translated media in Ireland had significantly transformed since the early decades of the century, with a greater availability of translated works being present in both periodicals and books. Censorship made a brief return to the island in the aftermath of the 1848 Young Ireland rebellion, but it did not have the lasting impact of the 1798 repressions. The impact of the transformation of the press and publishing in this period on the developments within Irish nationalism is notable and also reflects a broader trend of the Irish public sphere becoming dominated by a wealthy class of literate and Anglophonic Irish Catholics. This development then mediates the flow of ideas from the European core to Ireland in the periphery, impacting which works get translated and how they are imparted to an Irish context.

[21] Fegan, "'Every Irish Man is an Arab'," 206.

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