

# **Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Gonne; Fresh Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Ireland**

Paddy Lyons



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The long nineteenth century, arguably the most significant period in Irish history, a sustained epoch of trauma and transformation fringed by union and independence, is marked by a series of events that changed the political landscape of the nation forever and gave rise to art and ideas of international importance. At one end of this tumultuous period we have Grattan's Parliament, the United Irishmen, the Rebellion of 1798 led by Wolfe Tone, and the Union of 1801, and at the other the fall of Parnell, the Easter Rising, Civil War and partition. Between times there are the great hinge events of Catholic Emancipation, the Famine, and the Land War. From Wolfe Tone to Maud Gonne Ireland went through a period of enormous upheaval that carved out the culture and politics of the modern nation. Irish Studies as a field of inquiry has not yet fully engaged with the range and richness of material in this period. Nor have critics in the various Anglophone literary fields of the period yet grasped the full extent to which Irish and Scottish events and authors contributed decisively to the development of their own areas, and that despite the best efforts of scholars such as Seamus Deane, Marianne Elliott, Luke Gibbons, Nigel Leask, Murray Pittock, and Katie Trumpener. Romanticism and Victorianism are only ever partially understood independent of events and artistic developments in Ireland and Scotland. Bringing together an international line-up of established and emerging scholars, Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Gonne sets out the case for Ireland as a shaping force in the period and takes Irish Studies in new directions, in particular in terms of a cross-cultural comparison with Scotland and the distinct phenomenon of Unionism, thus breaking out of the binaries and double binds of Anglo-Irish approaches. Irish-Scottish Studies is a fresh field of investigation that throws up a number of fascinating insights that enhance our awareness of the interaction between colonialism, nationalism and culture. All of the major figures of the period are represented here, from Edgeworth and Moore to Yeats and Synge, but there are other, often less noticed but hugely significant writers whose work has been neglected or overlooked, such as Charles Robert Maturin, Dion Boucicault and May Laffan. There are non-Irish commentators on Ireland like Cobbett and Engels, as well as a series of key Scottish figures - including Burns and Scott - as well as lesserknown or lesser-noticed Scottish writers with strong Irish interests such as R. M. Ballantyne and Robert Tannahill - whose work opens up new and promising avenues into Irish writing.

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