Julia M. Wright, *Representing the National Landscape in Irish Romanticism*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014. Pp. xxxii + 331. $39.95. ISBN 9780815633532.

This book examines the role of the Irish landscape in constructing Irish national identity in romantic literature. Wright argues that Ireland, as articulated in such key texts as John Leslie's *Killarney*, Thomas Moore's *Melodies* and Lady Morgan's *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, is 'neither insular nor affective but nationally significant precisely because of the leading edge of what we now term globalization', that sought to position Ireland in a 'concertedly international' context (x). She draws this thread from the United Irishman William Drennan's 1790s poems through to the Italian politician Camille de Cavour's strange 1845 *Considerations on the Present State and Future Prospects of Ireland*, works that negatively position Ireland against the rational might of Great Britain. Highly impressive in its detailed, and mostly convincing, analysis of many carefully selected texts, this book is of inestimable value to scholars for its meticulous tracing of 'the multiple, and strategic, positionings of Ireland geographically and […] narratively' (237) in a romantic period that stretches from 1770 to 1845. In Irish topographical verse, as the author rightly notes, 'the landscape registers the ongoing pressure of historical forces' which are 'economic, cultural or colonial' (4). This distinguishes it from the English tradition, which Wright characterises as one 'solidifying a static framework' if bearing its own 'fractures and shifts' (4).

Wright also works to place Ireland in the wider geographic frame of the north Atlantic, arguing that John Leslie's 1772 poem *Killarney* served to position that seminal landscape as a stable outpost of Great Britain and a suitable staging post for colonial excursions. Lady Morgan's *Glorvina* and William Drennan's *Glendalloch* are well-plumbed for the larger scales of geopolitical intent, if not the smaller ones. Minor geographic errors (Killarney is not a 'seaport') indicate that a greater spatial familiarity might complicate aspects of Wright's overall narrative. Yet these are minor quibbles – the precise and careful tracking of such turns and swerves in each site's textual genealogy is Wright's great achievement.

Yet the landscape is in itself also an artistic construct. Many of the landscapes discussed were not immobile tracts of land. They were significantly redesigned and reframed during the romantic period, responding to the tourist's (and owner's) gaze in their orientation, layout and representation. Scholars such as John Dixon Hunt and John Barrell have long argued that to analyse the topographical tradition in literature it is necessary to engage closely with the 'lie' of the land itself – and that its representation is fundamentally a confluence of word, image and landscape design. The ascendancy of Killarney and Glendalough was arguably first accomplished by published images. Likewise, the ascendancy of ruins in such topographical poems as Drennan's *Glendalloch* was first established by the nascent discipline of archaeology and the lists and drawings of such publications as Francis Grose's 1791 *Antiquities of Ireland*. Images of Killarney – maps, paintings, prints are complicit in any poetry it inspired while the post-1776 transatlantic United Irishmen were steeped in the symbolic power of Rousseau's suburban garden at Chambéry and the high peaks of the Alps.

Descriptions of Killarney, Glendalough and other such sites, as any perusal of the travel literature quickly reveals, also soon became clichéd. In a three-dimensional map of Killarney produced for the tourist trade in the 1840s the site is overloaded with high crosses, waterfalls, colleens and ruined chapels. Missing from the book is this legacy of the cliché and its inhibiting impact on the creation of new art forms. How were new versions of the Killarney 'national tale' interpreted in such a clichéd context? Did its translation to other sites and settings affect the perception of the original? By the early nineteenth century, the aesthetic supremacy of sublime landscape also made the relative power of nations difficult to

map precisely. If the ascendant landscape is the untamed upper lake of Killarney how can it represent a neat resolution of colonial power relations? If the edge is more beautiful than the centre, where does that leave the metropole? This book 'begins to trace these lines of Irish literary history', by inspiring more questions than it answers but also by asking many that have not previously been considered.

One observation about this book is that everything – landscapes, people and journeys – appears exceptional, ambitious and very large in scale. The mundane normality of much Irish landscape rhetoric of the period, often couched as 'improvement' – where to plant turnips, how to breed a stallion and which length of lease is best – is somewhat absent. This is perhaps the character of romanticism – a heightened hyperreality of transatlantic and geopolitical significance. Wright conclusively proves that 'Romantic Ireland' was designed to resonate across national and global scales but the more myopic, local scale is less represented and may contain such seeds as might fruitfully ground the analysis in the future.

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