

Uses of Romanticism Abstracts and Bios

‘Events and Transitions: the Uses of Romanticism in Wales’

Mary-Ann Constantine

‘Welsh romanticism’ took a while to come into focus. Late-C18th and early-C19th Welsh literature was a poor fit for C20th conceptions of a movement characterized by introspection, dealing largely with lyric poetry and channelled through a handful of major writers (although Wales itself functioned, Romantically enough, as a setting or place of genesis for many of their works). But the vastly broadened horizons of (new) historicism saw research expanding to explore the responses of Welsh writers to the events of the period across a wide range of genres, meshing and comparing them with other Romantic-era productions from Britain, Ireland and beyond. Texts in both Welsh and English offer distinctive cultural inflections of entwined ‘romantic’ preoccupations – antiquarianism, authenticity and revival, religion and national identity, the impact of war, and the dramatic societal and environmental changes wrought by industrialisation. This paper reflects on the development of Welsh romanticism as a ‘useful’ concept over the last two decades, and, through a specific case study focused on Welsh landscapes of extraction, offers some thoughts on possible future directions.

Mary-Ann Constantine is Professor of Celtic Studies at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. She studies the literature and history of Romantic-period Wales, and has a particular interest in travel writing, industrial landscapes and the cultural politics of the 1790s. With Dafydd Johnston she was general editor of the ten-volume series *Wales and the French Revolution* (2012-2015). Other publications include *The Truth Against the World: Iolo Morganwg and Romantic Forgery* (2007); (ed. with Nigel Leask, 2017) *Enlightenment Travel and British Identities: Thomas Pennant’s Tours in Scotland and Wales*, and an anthology of Breton ballads, *Miracles and Murders* (ed. with Eva Guillorel, 2017). She has led two major AHRC-funded projects under the title *Curious Travellers: Thomas Pennant and the Welsh and Scottish Tour 1760-1820*, and co-led a European-funded Ireland-Wales project focused on the port towns of the Irish Sea (*Ports, Past and Present*). Her most recent publications are *Curious Travellers: Writing the Welsh Tour 1760-1820* (Oxford, 2024), and (ed. with Nigel Leask) *Romanticism, Travel, and the Celtic Languages* (*Studies in Romanticism*, 64; 2024). She is currently working on a digital edition of Pennant's *Tours in Wales* and involved in a project exploring collections at the Natural History Museum, London.

‘Inflammable matter’: Editing Shelley’s Irish Letters

Elisa Cozzi

In February 1812, P. B. Shelley crossed the Irish Sea on his way to Dublin carrying the manuscript of *An Address to the Irish People*, the first of several pieces of his politically engaged writing that would travel back and forth between Britain and Ireland over the next two years. From Dublin, he sent copious letters to William Godwin and Elizabeth Hitchener reporting on the progress of his political activities and enclosing copies of a second pamphlet written in Dublin, *Proposal for an Association of Philanthropists*. After returning to England, Shelley continued to direct his writing toward Ireland: he corresponded with the United Irishwoman Catherine Nugent and launched balloons and bottles filled with his *Declaration of Rights* towards the Irish coast. During his second trip to Ireland in 1813,

Shelley posted the first full draft of *Queen Mab* to his London publisher from Dublin and composed the poem's notes at Killarney.

By following the transit of what Harriet Shelley called this 'inflammable matter' across the Irish Sea, my paper considers what critical purpose the category of 'Irish Romanticism' serves when applied to Shelley's early writing. We are used to thinking of Shelley in hyphenated terms as one of the Romantic 'Anglo-Italians', but the first three years of his literary career reveal an equally transnational, and distinctly Irish, set of voices, modes, political concerns, and ideas that complicate his retrospective positioning within 'English' Romanticism.

The first volume of the new scholarly edition of Shelley's correspondence (OUP), currently underway and for which I serve as co-editor, covers the period of Shelley's most sustained engagement with Ireland, thus offering a case study in how editorial practice can illuminate these shifting critical geographies. By focusing on Shelley's Irish letters, I show how writing 'from' or 'to' Ireland also meant writing through a set of discourses we now associate with Irish Romanticism, positioning Ireland as a generative source of ideas about freedom, empire, and national identity that shaped Shelley's early imaginative and political development.

Dr Elisa Cozzi is the 2025–26 National Endowment for the Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow at the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies, University of Notre Dame. She specialises in Irish, British, and Italian literary culture of the Romantic period, with a focus on the circulation of manuscript material, radical ideas, and literary influence across European coteries. She is one of four editors of *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, a new three-volume edition of Shelley's correspondence under contract with Oxford University Press. Her essays and reviews are published or forthcoming in *Romanticism*, *European Romantic Review*, *The Byron Journal*, *The Keats–Shelley Review*, and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. She completed her doctorate in English at The Queen's College, University of Oxford, in 2024, and holds a BA from the University of York and an MSt from Oxford. She has held visiting fellowships at the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen (2025), and the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies, Queen Mary University of London (2023).

'The Uses of Romantic Utopianism'

Porscha Fermanis

In our contemporary world, speculative fiction has become an indispensable weapon against settler societies premised on the ongoing negation of Indigenous existence. The ascendance and practice of Indigenous futurism is a powerful force given that for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries extinction discourse promoted the idea that Indigenous peoples had no future. Ranging from romantic Britain to its nineteenth-century settler colonies to the settler colonial present, this paper examines the romantic origins of speculative futurism, asking what uses we might have today for romanticism's utopian aspirations. How do we reckon with the future-oriented or deferred utopianism of romantic writing? And what can the romantic period tell us about the possibilities of utopian thinking in the present?

Porscha Fermanis is Professor of Romantic Literature at University College Dublin. Her latest book, *Settler Fiction from the Southern Hemisphere, 1820-1890*, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press in March 2026. With Omar Miranda, she is co-editor of the Bloomsbury Academic book series, *The New Nineteenth Century*.

‘The Uses of Romantic Secrecy’

Penny Fielding

The post-Revolutionary period sees the idea of secrecy becoming increasingly complex. We witness a move from ‘secret’ as something akin to ‘private’ or ‘invisible’ to a society in which the binary of public/private cannot easily be translated into the ontology of secrecy. Yet, at the same time, secrecy is increasingly politically useful as the Pitt and Liverpool governments try to establish national spy systems and radical movements work to protect themselves against prosecution. I explore a condition in which the more secrecy is politically useful the harder it becomes to define in terms of knowing or not knowing. I’ll take as examples novels by William Godwin and James Hogg.

Penny Fielding is Grierson Professor of English at The University of Edinburgh. Before Edinburgh, she held lectureships at the University of Bristol and Trinity College Dublin. She has been a visiting lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania and a Visiting Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Her books include *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography* and *Literature in transition: the 1880s*. She is writing a book on Scotland and spy fiction from Scott to Spark

‘Gaelic Romanticism in the Caribbean?’

Nigel Leask and Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh

Our current project of editing and translating the manuscript Gaelic poetry and travel journal of Major Dugald MacNicol, written during 1811-1816 in Barbados and other West Indian islands, perches rather precariously on the edge of Romantic studies. As such it raises questions about the uses of Romanticism, and the range of writing that the term can ‘collect and organise’, pertinent to the theme of the conference. MacNicol’s manuscripts represent the only surviving Scottish Gaelic poetry composed in the Caribbean during the era of colonial enslavement. The voices of Scottish Gaels themselves have proved elusive in British Romantic studies, mainly surviving in a rich corpus of poetry composed in the *Gàidhealtachd* itself, or (in the form of emigration poetry) in diasporic communities in North America. MacNicol employs the language of a minoritized and dislocated culture, reflecting his experience of being drafted as human capital into servicing Britain’s colonial empire, albeit profiting from the colonial exploitation of enslaved (and more brutally dislocated) Africans. Although excellent critical work has addressed the tropical inflections of Romantic aesthetics in anglophone poetry written in (and about) the colonial Caribbean, the poetics of MacNicol’s Gaelic verse appear to be different. He neither endorses a British imperial ideology nor explicitly criticises it, despite working common motifs of dislocation and nostalgia. Although a recurrent focus on nostalgia (*cianalas*) resembles contemporary anglophone Romanticism, this was already a well-developed theme in 17th and 18th century Gaelic poetics. This paper uses MacNicol’s song-poetry as a lens through which to examine Thomas Clancy’s suggestion that ‘Gaelic Romanticism’ is not merely a sub-set of Scottish, or for that matter British and/or Irish Romanticism, but rather a problematic counterpart to it. [Clancy 2011, 49]

Nigel Leask is Regius Chair in English Language and Literature at the University of Glasgow. He has published widely on British and especially Scottish romantic literature and culture, with a special emphasis on orientalism and empire, travel writing and ‘improvement’, and the Gaelic world. His most recent monograph is *Stepping Westward: The Highland Tour 1720-1820* (Oxford 2020) which was shortlisted for the Saltire National Book Awards 2021. He is also co-editor (with Anne Dulau and John Bonehill) of *Old Ways New Roads: Travel in Scotland 1720-1830* (Birlinn 2021), addressing the visual culture of the tour. Between 2014 and 2018 he was Co-I of the AHRC funded ‘Curious Travellers: Thomas Pennant and the Welsh and Scottish Tour, 1750-1820’, and is currently Co-I of ‘Curious Travellers: Digital Editions of Thomas Pennant's Tours of Scotland and Wales’, for which he is editing Pennant’s *Voyage to the Hebrides 1772*. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and a Vice-President of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies.

Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Educated at the University of Galway before postgraduate work at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Edinburgh, he has also held research fellowships at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and at the Arnamagnæan Institute at the University of Copenhagen. He has published extensively on the literature and literary history of Irish and Scottish Gaelic during the long eighteenth century, as well as on a number of other aspects of Celtic Studies. He is currently PI of the AHRC-funded project ‘From Lismore to Barbados: The Gaelic Caribbean travel journal and verse of Dugald MacNicol (1791-1844)’.

‘Shadownomics and the Uses of Romanticism: Byron, Shelley, and the Architecture of Erasure’

Omar F. Miranda

This paper rethinks Romantic celebrity through what I call shadow celebrity, a system in which spectacle thrives on the obscurities it manufactures. Focusing on Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*, I show how the novel theorizes this machinery through Raymond’s Byronic rise and unraveling, a celebrity logic built on cycles of accumulation and disappearance. Drawing on Mbembe’s necropolitics and Derrida’s hauntology, I argue that Shelley exposes the geopolitical asymmetries and gendered mediations that structure modern fame. Lionel’s obsessive narration becomes an allegory of how celebrity curates visibility while erasing the lives and labors that make visibility possible. Read alongside Byron, Staël, and the forgotten revolutionary Francisco de Miranda, *The Last Man* reveals Romanticism not as an origin point of modern celebrity but as a critical technology for diagnosing its operations. The paper contends that Romanticism’s shadows -- its omissions, substitutions, and spectral figures -- offer a powerful analytic for understanding the uses and abuses of fame in our hyper-mediated age.

Omar F. Miranda is Associate Professor of English at the University of San Francisco. He is coeditor of *Percy Shelley for Our Times* (Cambridge UP, 2024), editor of *On the 200th Anniversary of Lord Byron’s Manfred* (Romantic Circles Praxis Series, 2019), and editor of the abridged teaching edition of Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (Romantic Circles, 2022). His article “The Global Romantic Lyric” (*The Wordsworth Circle*, 2021) received the Bigger 6 Article of the Year Award in 2022. Alongside Porscha Fermanis, he serves as book series editor for *The*

New Nineteenth Century with Bloomsbury Publishing. He is completing a book that examines how Romantic-era fame inaugurated the diagnostic and theoretical structures that still organize celebrity culture in our own time. He is Vice President of the Keats-Shelley Association of America and serves on the Board of Directors of The Byron Society of America.

‘To the Bower and Beyond: the Legacy of Thomas Moore’

Jane Moore

This paper traces the national and international cultural afterlives of Thomas Moore’s well-known lyric ‘Will you come to the Bower?’ (arranged by John Stevenson in the early 1800s). A phrase I have repeatedly turned to in guiding my thinking on the uses of romanticism is James Chandler’s theorising of Thomas Moore as a figure whose ‘excess can provide a means of *access*’. In the light of this smart observation, my paper traces the reception and adaptation of Moore’s lyric, considering its presence as a sentimental song performed in fashionable drawing-rooms, as a rallying call on the Texan battlefield, as influencing a poetics of pastoral yearning for John Clare in ‘To A Bower’ (c. 1819), and as a popular Fenian song. In the twentieth century, the lyric has endured as a song of exile and homecoming, familiar from its rendition by the renowned Irish folk band *The Dubliners*, and as an influence – or provocation – on Seamus Heaney’s archaeological poetics in ‘To the Bower’ from his 1975 collection *North*. By tracing the lyric’s shifting contexts, from drawing-rooms to battlefields and from folk song to modern poetry, this paper demonstrates the uses of romanticism in shaping how poetry and song are performed, received, and reimagined.

Dr Jane Moore is Reader Emerita in English Literature at Cardiff University. She has published two books on Mary Wollstonecraft and, for the last two decades, has been closely engaged with the work of Thomas Moore. Jane is the editor of *The Satires of Thomas Moore* (Pickering & Chatto 2003) and the author of numerous articles on Moore’s lyrics and satires. She held the Albi Rosenthal Visiting Fellowship in Music at the Bodleian Library in 2025 and has recently completed her monograph *The Surface Romanticism of Thomas Moore: Poetry, Sociability, and Song in the Romantic Period*.

‘The absurd notions of a useless education: reading Regina Maria Roche in colonial Australia’

Christina Morin

This paper analyses the circulation and dissemination of Irish gothic fictions in the nineteenth-century British-controlled southern hemisphere, with a focus on the movements of one particular novel – Regina Maria Roche’s *The Children of the Abbey* (1796) – across colonial Australia. By exploring *The Children of the Abbey*’s availability to Australian readers and audiences via various archival sources that help us to reconstruct the reading communities of the long nineteenth century, this paper argues for the novel’s clear, if now overlooked, significance to the literary cultures of early colonial Australia. It further reflects on Roche’s relative occlusion from the literary historiography of nineteenth-century Australia by examining the ways in which a discourse of ‘usefulness’ and an accompanying suspicion of imaginative literature dominated critical perspectives on reading in nineteenth-century Australia.

Christina Morin is Professor in English and Assistant Dean of Research in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Limerick. Her publications include *Irish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2023; co-edited with Jarlath Killeen), *The Gothic Novel in Ireland, c. 1760-1829* (2018), *Traveling Irishness in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2017; co-edited with Marguèrite Corporaal), *Irish Gothics: Genres, Forms, Modes, and Traditions* (2014; co-edited with Niall Gillespie), and *Charles Robert Maturin and the Haunting of Irish Romantic Fiction* (2011). She is the chair of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL), literature editor of the journal *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, and founding co-editor of Bloomsbury's Global Perspectives in Irish Literary Studies series.

'A wild and inarticulate uproar': Romanticism and the Politics of Sound in Written Representations of Irish Keening

Tríona Ní Shíocháin

Art Music and Folk Music constitute a sort of symbiotic binary within the Romantic imaginary, underpinned by a fascination with both nature and 'genius'. The Romantic preoccupation with the folk paradoxically implied both democratisation and appropriation, arguably resulting in a simultaneous valorisation and erasure of indigenous and vernacular arts practices. Anglophone writers during the Romantic era provide us with much rich ethnographic context on the historical keening tradition in Ireland, though some accounts are more sympathetic than others. This paper explores written representations of the sonic practices of Irish keening within the cultural framing of Anglophone writers whose ears were likely more attuned to European art music. From the late-eighteenth century onwards, the Irish keen is often represented as a form of non-musicality or musical 'savagery', as can be found in the fiction of Sydney Owenson or the travel writings of Thomas Crofton-Croker; or indeed in the influential work of Joseph C. Walker, where the intricate microtonal melodic structure of the keen is disdainfully framed as being 'so disagreeable from unequal tones' (1786). This paper will offer an arts practice analysis of the melody of the Irish keen that problematises disparaging, albeit fascinating, commentaries on keening as an arresting experience of noise. Where musical romanticism may be seen as 'the organic interconnection of self and nature through sound' (Taylor 2021: 3), consideration is here given to the possible erasure of Irish women's agency through colonial Romantic framings of the keen as the appalling cacophony of a lower-class female collective. It is therefore argued that these instances of Romantic 'devalorisation' of the folk, or what might be understood as a colonial sonic disciplining and erasure, deepen our understanding of the potentially subjugating power of Romantic aesthetics.

Tríona Ní Shíocháin is Established Professor of Music and Performing Arts and Head of the School of English, Media, and Creative Arts at the University of Galway. She formerly held the positions of Professor of Modern Irish and Performing Arts and Head of the School of Celtic Studies at Maynooth University, prior to which she was Head of the Department of Music at UCC, where she lectured in Irish Traditional Music. An interdisciplinary scholar of Music and Irish, and a whistle-player, *sean-nós* singer, and set-dancer, she specialises in oral theory, performance theory, Irish traditional music, Irish-language arts practice, and women oral composers from the 17th to 19th centuries. She is fascinated by hidden histories of women's thought within traditional performance practices, and the symbiosis between embodiment, vocality, and style in Irish traditional music. She is author of *Singing Ideas: Performance, Politics and Oral Poetry* (Berghahn 2018, 2021) and *Bláth 's Craobh na nÚdar:*

Amhráin Mháire Bhuí (Coiscéim 2012). She co-edited *Léachtaí Cholm Cille 53: Léann Feimineach agus Inscne na Gaeilge* (Irish-language feminist and gender studies) with Máire Ní Annracháin in 2023. Triona is a member of the steering committee of *IMBAS: an Irish Forum for Arts Practice Researchers and Artists*.

'Ship, Boy, Sea: Felicia Hemans's 'Casabianca' as Mediterranean Text'

Diego Saglia

Starting from the intriguing fact that Hemans's poem mentions the sea only once, I want to approach it as a text dense with Mediterranean resonances. My aim is to open up a different reading of 'Casabianca' in light of this single and singular presence/absence (the sea as a phantasmatic, haunting 'fact') – and what can it tell us about the 'uses' of Romanticism now.

Diego Saglia is Professor of English Literature at the University of Parma (Italy). His research focuses on Romantic literature and culture, also in connection to other European traditions. He is the director of Italy's Interuniversity Centre for the Study of Romanticism (CISR) and a member of the advisory committee of the Ravenna's Byron Museum. He is a contributor to the online museum "Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition (REVE)", and among his latest publications are the monographs *European Literatures in Britain, 1815–1832: Romantic Translations* (2019) and, in Italian, *Modernità del Romanticismo: scrittura e cambiamento nella letteratura britannica 1780-1830* (2023). He is currently Principal Investigator of the interuniversity project "Reviving 'The Liberal': Literature and Politics between Britain and Italy, 1821-23", aimed at producing an annotated online edition of the journal.

'Wordsworth's Irish Gaze'

Brandon Yen

In the autumn of 1829, William Wordsworth spent five weeks touring Ireland, visiting major towns and locations celebrated in contemporary tour guides, novels and poems – the Wicklow Mountains, Glendalough, Glengarriff, Killarney, Carrauntoohil, Edgeworthstown, Oliver Goldsmith's Auburn, Lough Erne, the Giant's Causeway and Fair Head. In Ireland he caught up with friends such as Trinity College astronomer William Rowan Hamilton, and made new acquaintances, including the Edgeworth family in Longford. Undertaken in the immediate aftermath of Catholic Emancipation, the tour brought the poet into direct contact with political and religious tensions which, for over a decade, he had been engaging with creatively. His Irish experience ostensibly gave birth to only one image in his poetry – a pair of eagles hovering above the coast of County Antrim – but the image itself has a subtext that abounds with Irish associations, and his copious letters from Ireland shed light both on himself as a poet and on late-Georgian English perceptions of the 'sister isle'. Part of a larger project on Wordsworth's Ireland, this paper explores some of the intertextual richness of the poet's Irish gaze, tracing his allusions to Milton and Spenser as well as illuminating a number of key moments during his Irish tour from both textual and contextual perspectives.

Brandon Yen is an independent scholar based in Essex, England. He holds a PhD in English from Queens' College, Cambridge, and has taught at University College London and worked as an Irish Research Council postdoctoral fellow at University College Cork. He is the author of *'The Excursion' and Wordsworth's Iconography* (2018) and co-author (with Peter Dale) of *Versed in Living Nature: Wordsworth's Trees* (2022) and *Wordsworth's Gardens and Flowers:*

The Spirit of Paradise (2018). He is currently co-writing *Wordsworth's Ireland* for Cambridge Elements in Poetry and Poetics. He is interested in pre-Famine Irish–English literary connections and plant humanities.