Nineteenth-Century Irish Writing

Course description

This module will introduce students to the variety of Irish writing in English throughout the nineteenth century. In addition to recent scholarship on the relevant social and historical contexts, primary readings will include poetry, fiction, drama, memoirs, and journalism. Through such readings, the module will examine the ways in which these texts explored a diverse set of themes and issues, including the development of some key modern genres and contemporary ideas about national character. Through presentations and class discussion students will explore additional primary texts and critical perspectives, furthering their engagement with the literature of the period and its ongoing reception and interpretation. The course will also involve primary research with nineteenth-century texts and publications, encouraging students to make use of Trinity’s unique resources.

Aims and outcomes

On successful completion of this module a student should be able to:

1. Show a general awareness of critical approaches to nineteenth-century Irish writing
2. Show a close working knowledge of representative texts from this period
3. Be conversant with the ways that this period in Irish literature relates to earlier texts and to the Irish Literary Revival
4. Demonstrate a broad understanding of key generic and thematic patterns in this period

Assessment

- Critical commentary: 2000 words (30%)
- Essay: 4000 words (70%)

Course outline

- **Week 1** Introduction
- **Week 2** Union and division: Maria Edgeworth, *Ennui* (1809)
- **Week 3** Fiction and nation: Extracts from William Carleton, ‘The Hedge School’ and ‘Wildgoose Lodge’, from *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830-1843) (pdfs)
- **Week 4** Travel writing in Ireland: selected texts (pdfs)
- **Week 5** Place, politics, and poetry: selected texts (pdfs)
- **Week 6** Adaptations: Dion Boucicault, *The Colleen Bawn* (1860)
- **Week 7** READING WEEK
Week 8  Hauntings: Sheridan Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872)
Week 9  Realism and society: George Moore, *Esther Waters* (1894)
Week 10 Performance and society: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)
Week 11 Revivals: W. B. Yeats, selected early writings (1890s-1900s) (pdfs)
Week 12 Conclusions

**Essential prior reading**


All other primary texts will be available as PDFs on Blackboard at the beginning of term.

**Useful anthologies**


**Recommended secondary reading**

NB: these cover key genres, themes, and events in the literature of the period and will be useful to consult both before and throughout the module. More specific criticism on individual authors will be discussed week by week.


