Westward Ho!

A Ramble Through Galway 1840-1950

Collected Essays

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GALWAY'S GREAT READ
Léamh Mór na Gaillimhe

Galway's Great Read is an annual programme of events developed and hosted by Galway Public Libraries, each November.

It aims to promote literary heritage, history and Galway's unique culture, and to foster an appreciation for its diversity and richness.

GALWAY'S GREAT READ
Léamh Mór na Gaillimhe

Westward, ho! Let us rise with the sun, and be off to the land of the West - to the lakes and streams – the grassy glens and fern-clad glens gorges – the bluff hills and rugged mountains – now cloud-capped, then revealed in azure, or bronzed by evening's tints, ….

Sir William Wilde, Lough Corrib, (1867)

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Introduction

Galway's Great Read 2021, under the title *Westward Ho! A Ramble Through Galway, 1840-1950,* centres around travel writers and travel literature from the mid-1800s to mid-1900s. As our ability to travel was curtailed in 2021, the organisers of the *Great Read* decided to delve into and examine some of the wonderful travel literature held in Galway Public Libraries' extensive book collection. We decided to focus on the works of three extraordinary and very different travel writers, and to take a ramble with them through County Galway, going back in time from pre-famine Victorian Ireland to a new and emerging Republic.

Our first book of choice is *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character etc* (1843) by the Halls, the husband and wife team of Anna Maria (née Fielding) (1800-1881) and Samuel Carter (1800-1889). Our second is *Lough Corrib, Its Shores and Islands: With Notices of Lough Mask* (1867) by Sir William Wilde (1815-1876). Our final author is Richard Hayward (1892-1964), who produced *The Corrib Country* (1943) and *Connacht and the City of Galway* (1952).

During our ramble and exploration of these works, we have had the company of several experts, who share their knowledge on, and deep passion for, various aspects of travel literature. First, Dr Jim Higgins, who provides us with a detailed overview of all three authors and examines their place in the genre of travel literature, and the images and artwork depicted in their writings. Then, Dr Amélie Dochy Jacquard, who has an in-depth knowledge of the Halls, examines their work, impressions, and 'exotic' portrayal of Galway, its scenery and people.

Next, we are joined by Anne Hodge, who discusses the use of art in early travel writings and takes us on a visual tour of the Halls' work through the lens of the magnificent watercolours of the artist William Evans of Eton.

A wonderfully detailed biography of Sir William Wilde is provided by Gerard Hanberry, whose comprehensive writing highlights Wilde's many talents and achievements, a true Victorian polymath. Finally, Paul Clements reflects on Richard Hayward, his busy and varied career, and the significant role he played in the cultural landscape of mid-20th century Ireland.

Jim, Amélie, Anne, Gerard and Paul's talks for *Westward Ho! A Ramble through Galway, 1850-1940,* are available for you to enjoy online on Galway Public Libraries' YouTube channel. In addition to these informed and informative lectures we have companion essays from our speakers, which are presented here in this publication of *Collected Essays.* This collection includes a bonus essay from Paul Clements, who discusses the development and changes in travel literature from the 1950s onwards.

Galway's Great Read 2021 has also produced a travel documentary film, *Westward Ho! Travel Writers Remembered.* Our excursion through the Corrib County and Connemara, follows the routes of the Halls, Wilde and Hayward in particular. Our ramble is expertly led by Jim Higgins and Michael Gibbons, who educate and entertain us with their wide-ranging knowledge of Galway's heritage and culture along the way. *Westward Ho! Travel Writers Remembered* promotes the visual beauty and wonders of the landscape, as discovered and seen through the lens of the travel writers who have gone before us.

We hope you enjoy this ramble through the ages, and through a very special part of our county. We also hope that we have tempted you to dip into some of the works we have examined, and whetted your appetite to explore some of the other travel books held in Galway Public Libraries.

Josephine Vahey, A/Senior Executive Librarian
Patria McWalter, Archivist

Travelling Westward: In the Footsteps of the Halls, Wilde and Hayward

Jim Higgins

Anna Maria Hall (née Fielding): Samuel Carter Hall, late 1860s, NPG x17234. (Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London)

Sir William Wilde, by J.H. Maguire, 1847

Richard Hayward (Courtesy of Paul Clements)

What a great privilege and pleasure it has been to re-explore County Galway, through the eyes and perspective of some extraordinary travel writers, as part of *Galway's Great Read* 2021. This pleasure is heightened when our own ability to ramble, roam and explore over the past long number of months was restricted due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Though a stationary 'ramble', it was nevertheless, a joy to wander the highways and by-ways of County Galway over a period of more than one hundred years, between 1840 and 1950, through the words of three writers with very different styles, aims and subject matter. The journey was even more exciting due to the very different modes of travel, Bianconi car and carriage used by the Anna Maria and Samuel Hall, on foot and on the Corrib-steamer with Sir William Wilde, and with Richard Hayward by motor car, rail and fishing boat – to explore Galway's diverse streetscapes, landscapes and by-ways.

In exploring aspects of travel writing in the County of Galway, and to an extent including Galway City too, many writers could have been chosen, however, the *Great Read* programme for 2021 is limited to a small select group; the Halls being the earliest, Wilde in the middle, and at the end of the chronological period, Hayward. They all wrote fascinating, moving, and memorable accounts of their travels in Ireland in works which would become very popular, and which sold well in their day. All of the authors were successful in the travel-writing genre, though Sir William Wilde could be said to be the great guide to antiquities.

Where do the books we are discussing fit in the canon of travel writing in Ireland? By the 16th and 17th centuries accounts of Ireland were mainly written by foreigners, usually English, who listed what they had seen, conquered or hoped to conquer, and whose writings were more official or semi-official accounts of the conquest, and what people and resources were yet to be exploited. One exceptional account of County Galway which was circulated widely in manuscript was Roderick O'Flaherty's, *A Chorographical Description of West or h-Iar-Connacht* written in 1684, and edited and published by James Hardiman in 1846, for the Irish Archaeological Society. It was an answer to foreign writers, in the same way as his *Ogygia*[1] answered British historians' inaccurate views on the Irish past. In *h-Iar-Connacht,* a native Irish historian and chronicler, writes about his own place, its lore, history and topography. Was this travel writing? Probably it was, in the sense that a tour could be made area by area, sites could be seen, places visited, with the geography, local

produce, topography and resources described in much the same manner as many later 18-19th century foreign writers did on places they visited.

Anna Maria and Samuel Carter Halls' *Ireland, Its Scenery, Character etc*[2], is the first book of choice. The Galway area is described in Volume III of that work. Sir William Wilde's *Lough Corrib, its Shores and Island with Notices of Lough Mask*, first published in 1867, is the second book chosen. Two books by Richard Hayward, which include County Galway, have also been chosen as part of our exploration of early 19th to the mid-20th century travel writing. Hayward's *The Corrib County*, first published in 1943, and *This is Ireland, Connacht and the City of Galway*, published in 1952.

"Halls Ireland", as it has become known, was originally published in parts in 1842. The 2nd edition, with a new preface, was published in 1843 in a three-volume set. One of the best editions is that printed by How and Parson, London. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biograph,* describe it aptly as being a "mixed travelogue and social commentary". The Halls dedicated the 1843 edition to "*His Royal Highness, The Prince Albert*".

The couple made five visits to Ireland from 1828 onwards, and their account of Ireland before the Great Famine is an important document. There were other pre-famine accounts such as Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary* [3], Arthur Young's *Tour* [4], and Dutton's *Statistical Survey* [5], or indeed Thackery, Barrow [6] or Inglis' travelogues, which read like scientific enquiries by comparison to the Halls' more fluid and entertaining style. Although some contemporary foreign writers, like William Makepeace Thackery's *The Irish Sketch Book* (1863) and Henry Inglis' *A Journey Throughout Ireland During Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834* [7], are more comparable in their scenery and character descriptions but the Halls' combine the statistical with the descriptive in their travel writing. When 'colleens' were described, by the Halls, they are shown as women of strength and character, with virtue and determination, and as hard-working individuals adept at trying as many ways as possible to earn a living, often in difficult circumstances, *'Certainly Galway abounds in picturesque women. Their long graceful limbs move with so much ease...'* [8].

The Halls wrote prior to the era of workhouses, relief works and a widespread railway system; there were not more than 23 miles of railway track in the entire country when they visited in the 1840s. They loved Ireland, depicted its woes and sorrows, as well as its joys and were generally optimistic about its prospects for improvement. From their perspective Ireland was improving and this was due to its closer association with Britain since the

Wilde's grave at Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin

Act of Union of 1801. In a way they looked to a prosperous future for Ireland and certainly hoped for it. They remind one of well-intentioned improving statisticians, like Arthur Young and Hely Dutton, who interviewed 'the great and the good', stayed in their houses and made thoughtful suggestions on how much more fruitful, happier, wealthier and more developed Ireland might be, if only she could be more like Britain. The Halls did their research and used the work of such writers as source material too. They took, paraphrased, and had re-drawn text and illustrations from earlier writers, like Barrow for example.

Sir William Wilde's *Lough Corrib, Its Shores and Island; with Notices of Lough Mask*, was first published in 1867. A second edition was published in 1872. Both early editions describe the author as '*Sir William Wilde, M.D., Vice-President of the Royal Irish Academy; Chevalier of the Swedish Order of the North Star; Author of "Narratives of a voyage to Madeira and the Mediterranean", "The Beauties of the Boyne", "Catalogue of the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy" etc, etc*". The scope of Sir William's interest can be judged from his funerary monument in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin, which is a topophiliac's and genealogist's treat in terms of being a mini biography in stone. He was a surgeon, oculist to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, an Antiquarian and Ophthalmic Surgeon, archaeologist, ethnologist, antiquarian, biographer. He was also a statistician and topographic historian and a folklorist.

Wilde tells us what not to expect of *Lough Corrib*. He also describes well what his reader was to expect and sets out clearly his aims: *'We wish to take you, as intelligent tourists, with eyes to see and hearts to admire the beauties of nature; where the stately ruin or the cultured demesne bends harmoniously with the graceful outline of the surrounding landscape; where your architectural or antiquarian tastes may be gratified; your historic knowledge increased by the legend or the annal; your scientific inquiries into the geological*

structure and biological productions of the country obtain a wide scope; and the hitherto neglected resources of a portion of our island may be glanced at if not profoundly studied; and we hope to bring you back from your pleasant and cheap excursion on Lough Corrib in good health and spirits, pleased with the scenery and the inhabitants of the West, satisfied with our guidance, and better acquainted with an, as yet, undescribed district than you have heretofore by flying visits to this portion of the Emerald Isle'. [9]

Wilde then, offers to be a good guide on antiquities, archaeology, legends, annals, geology and the biology of the district. Yet he noted elsewhere in his Preface (p.iv) that he had intended to append '*some notes on the zoology and popular legends etc, of the district'*, but was unable to do so but hoped to publish that material in the future. He is best on antiquities, but then so was Hayward, with his ear for conversation. Hayward used outdated or inaccurate architectural and art historical terminology, but he did not claim to be an expert on everything.

Did Wilde succeed in his mission? I think he did to a large degree. There is the factual and the amusing, and plenty of engravings to entice the curious to visit. Indeed, the people he seems most intent on attracting are British visitors, who he clearly wants to see and enjoy the 'real' Ireland, and its abundance of field archaeology and topography, as well as splendid scenery. He makes an economic argument too, how it is possible to have a '*pleasant and cheap excursion*', with a three-day return trip from London to Clifden via Leenane and Kylemore, costing only £6.[10]

Wilde is good at describing scenery and makes one hear and see scenes as he saw them but the scientist in him also peeps through in his writing! He has an enthusiasm for Irish antiquities, archaeology, field monuments and discoveries that is hard to beat. He shows an accurate awareness of Ireland's possession of an unrivalled heritage of monuments, unparalleled in Europe or in a world-wide scale. He is determined that the sincere interested tourist should see the real Ireland, and he rails against 'shamroguery' and 'Leprechaunism'.

Wilde's book is a guide-book, he states as much, and is anxious for the reader to see all the monuments he has laid out in his itinerary. He is determined not to dwell on party politics and avoids showing his political leanings. He states that '*Our object is rather to interest the reader and tourist in the history, antiquities, and scenery of this portion of the West, than amuse him with tales respecting pigs, pipers, praties, or poteen; fools or fiddlers; bailiffs, bullocks, or buckeens; graziers, gaugers, or ganders; wayside waiters, with their dry jokes for the*

"gintlemen," or wandering dancing masters, and poetasters, once so common in the West… We have nothing to say about priests or patterns; politics, peelers, or parsons; soldiers, soupers, or sauggarths; Young-Irelanders or old ones; Fenians or Repealers. There is still plenty of fun, frolic, and folklore in the West; but, for the present, we have no stories to relate about friars or fairies; and we have no opinion to obtrude upon you respecting tithes or tenant-right; High church or Low Church; Ultra-montanisam or Muscular Christianity;…' [11]

His approach to folklore was generally scientific in theory, but although he states in his preface that he had intended to include some folklore, he had not time to do so. Yet in a way, he combined mythology and folklore in his attempts to link the Battles of Moytura with individual monuments in what may be seen as an unlikely approach for a scientific antiquarian.

Ireland had changed radically in the time before the Great Famine to the time Wilde was writing *Lough Corrib*, less than twenty years later. The development of railways was proceeding apace, the Great Southern and Western Railway (GS&WR) railway route from Dublin to Galway opened up the west to some extent when it was developed by the 1850s, but it was not until the 1890s that a line was built from Galway to Clifden in Connemara. The means of transport had improved but had not changed radically from the time of the Halls to that of Wilde.

By the late 1880s and the early 1900s some of the learned societies, such as Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Royal Irish Academy, Belfast Naturalists Field Club, were publishing their own guidebooks to accompany field trips to various parts of the country. Many of them were multi-authored works, with local members acting as guides to various sites in their areas. Highly illustrated with engravings and photographs they were far superior in the academic quality of their content to commercial guide gooks (like Blacks, Murrays for instance) but they were gradually falling by the wayside between the early 20th century and the 1940s.

Literary travel writers were still producing works on Ireland, and H. V. Morton for instance, wrote his '*In search of Ireland*' [12] for a mainly British audience. Morton's book was one of the first to describe the early development of the Free State in a popular book. It was first published in 1930 and was re-printed twenty-eight times between then and 1965 alone. Irish writers entered the travel guide field too, Liam O'Flaherty [13], Stephen Gwynn [14] and Padraic Colum, among them.

By the 1940s the field was wide open to popularising travel guides by non-Irish writers, and it was Richard Hayward, above all, who was to popularise Ireland through his large series of books published between the 1940s and the 1960s.

For forty years or so Richard Hayward's singing, recording, acting, and writing was a dominant force on the Irish scene. His travel books, and his other work, promoted a gentle and genial view of Ireland for a traveller who likes a good story, with their tourism.

Hayward, in many ways, wrote for action. His texts are peppered with stories like a screen play. He is good at recording stories told verbatim. He is an Izack Walton[15] of fishermen's tall tales, and amusing anecdote. A recent biography of him by Paul Clements[16] shows his many sides and complexities (and see also elsewhere in this volume).

Despite his English birth and his membership of the Orange Order, Hayward is often markedly sympathetic to the Irish in his reading of Irish history, and he makes use of *An Cló Gaelach*, or Irish language font when he uses Irish language placenames. He attempts a translation of the placename too and in his acknowledgements, in the Preface of *The Corrib Country* (1943), he thanks Professor R.A.S. Macalister and Liam Ó Brian, who were helpful to him with Irish language placenames. In his *This is Ireland* and *Connacht and the City of Galway*, Michael Duignan and R.A.S. Macalister, both of whom were equally proficient in the Irish language, are also thanked.

The *This is Connacht and the City of Galway* book is one of a series on Ireland. *Leinster and the City of Dublin, Ulster,* and *In the City of Belfast* are also in the series. The *Connacht and the City of Galway* book was published by Arthur Barker Ltd., of London in 1952.

Aside from his many other artistic talents and endeavours, Hayward also gathered linguistic phrases. He had an ear for a vernacular, local turn of phrase, though he sometimes mixed phrases and idioms used in one area with those current in another. He collected Ulster words, and phrases, which were later to be published as contributions to a dictionary of such linguistic phrases.

His conversational tone gave an impression of familiarity and ease wherever he travelled. The conversation between himself and his fishing companions, Peter Foy, John Lydon and Tom Nevin, as they fished on the Corrib out of Cong in *The Corrib County* (1943, pp.3-18) provide an excellent example. He has a good ear for the words of Tom Nevin of Inchagoill and his description of how a nearby island, Inishanbo, got its name. (*The Corrib County*, 1943, p.19).

In the Corrib Country, colour drawing by J. Humbert Craig, frontispiece in Hayward's *The Corrib Country,* 1943.

Sometimes he overgilds the linguistic lily and the recorded words are not specifically attributed to any one person. In these instances, he overdoes it, and the phraseology can seem 'stage Irish'. Elsewhere Hayward writes *""That's a great story altogether" said Peter, as we made our way westwards across the lake towards Inchagoil. "It was", said John, "but I think the most of it was made up by the old fellow himself".*
"Like some of those big fish pulled out of Corrib when there's no one about", said Peter slyly.[17]*"*

So it is with some of the 'Irishisms' Hayward uses "*And, Yerra man, that's how the Joyces came to Ireland"* [18]. The speaker is Michael O'Halloran, *a 'genial man* who lived in *America for many years*", and says Hayward, "*whose exile did nothing but brighten his vast store of old tales and tellings that marks him down as a real dyed-in-the-wool Shanachie"* [19].

Sometimes one wonders whether the shanachie hammed it up for Hayward or if Hayward exaggerated their 'begob and begarra' for his reading audience.

The illustrations in the travel books by the Halls, Wilde and Hayward are highly important as they gave a feel for the place and might have enticed one to visit the places they depicted. The Halls used engraving by a wide variety of artists and sources in their *Ireland: Its Scenery and Character etc.* They were able to avail of a fair number of works, some of which had been published in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* and the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* for instance, including that of the Mayor's House, Galway sketched by F. W. Fairholt and engraved by Armstrong (No. 189 of Halls work). Some artists' work of exceptional quality previously published included W.H. Bartlett's illustration of Claregalway Abbey, engraved by Cousin for instance (No. 196.) which is described in the book *"Abbey of Clare, Galway"*.

It was usual for authors and publishers to borrow, lend or buy engraved woodcuts, metal blocks and so on for reproduction in their work. Both the Halls and Wilde made frequent use of the sketches of W. F. Wakeman, the noted Irish antiquarian. They also used some of the beautiful watercolours of William Evans of Eton, as the basis for many of their engravings. Evans, an art teacher and watercolourist (like his father Samuel before him) was Drawing Master of Eton College between 1814-1840. He visited Ireland in 1835 and 1838, and made numerous watercolours in Galway City, County Galway and County Mayo. He exhibited these widely in Britain and Ireland.

We are fortunate that a large number of his Irish watercolours still survive and were acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland in 2008.

Like, the Halls, Wilde (1867, pp. xviii-ix) provides us with a list of the engravings in his book *Lough Corrib*, and lists, as the Halls did, not only who drew but who engraved the sketches. Again, both number their illustrations. Many of the same artists and engravers supplied works for both the Halls and Wilde. The latter also includes some of his own drawings engraved by others. He records in his preface his indebtedness to the '*liberality of the Sir Benjamin L. Guinness, Bart.*,'[20] for his sponsorship of the illustrations, some of which he had to commission or buy, or borrow blocks of, if they had been done for earlier works.

With Hayward's books, we are dealing with a whole new illustrated world. While the Halls' employed woodblocks and metal plate engravings and Wilde mentions in his list just one image produced from an electrotype (Wilde, p.ix), Hayward was able to reproduce specially commissioned works of art to illustrate his book. Raymond Piper's excellent

William Evans of Eton, *Buttermilke Lane, Galway,* **NGI.2008.36.25, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland**

William Evans of Eton, *Glen Inagh, Connemara*, NGI.2008.36.11, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

pencil sketches adorn his *This is Ireland: Connacht and the City of Galway* (1952). Even his smaller drawings are finely detailed and evocative.

With Hayward's *The Corrib County* (1943), the work of James Humbert Craig, complements the text in a quiet but successful manner. Craig had earlier illustrated Haywards's *In Praise of Ulster* (1938), and *Where the River Shannon Flows* (1940).

Craig (1877-1944) RHA, was born in Belfast and raised in Co Down. He had a studio in Cushendun., Co. Antrim. He was mostly self-taught but attended the Belfast School of Art briefly. He was elected to the Royal Ulster Academy. His landscapes frequently featured the scenery of Connemara, the Glens of Antrim and Co. Donegal. He exhibited at the Fine Art Society in London. He died at Cushendun in June 1944.

Raymond Piper (1923-2007) illustrated five of Hayward's books in the *This is Ireland* series over a period of seventeen years. He was an artist, illustrator and botanist and was a member of the Royal Ulster Academy and the Royal Hibernian Academy. He is best remembered for his botanical paintings and book illustrations but was also a successful portrait painter. He, like Craig, was largely self-taught but attended the Belfast College of Art and taught at the Royal School Dungannon.

Our three writers, the Halls, Wilde and Hayward, all have their own peculiarities and attractions. The Hayward era of literary travelogue ended suddenly with his tragic death in a car accident in 1964. After that, the era of the literary figure writer producing a travelogue often at the behest of a publisher because the writer's name would sell it, became common. Brendan Behan, Eilís Dillon, Frank O'Connor, and Edna O'Brien all

Ross Errilly Friary (Headford), sketch by J. H. Craig in Hayward's *The Corrib County*, 1943, p.139

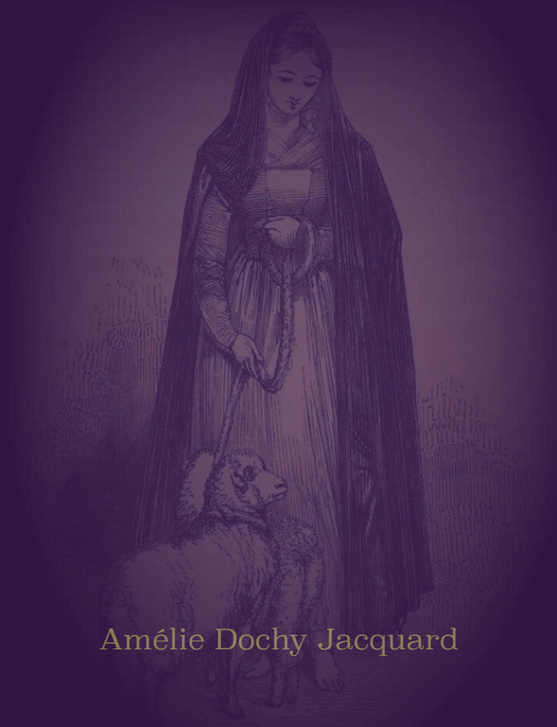
Mweelrea, beyond the Killary, from Mullaghglass, County Galway, sketch by Raymond Piper, in Hayward's *This is Ireland: Connacht and the City of Galway*, 1952, p.155.

contributed to this type of writing. Increasingly and gradually in the 1960s colour took the place of, or sometimes accompanied black and white photographs. The big picture coffee table book began to be popular too. The Batsford Colour Books of a smaller size, being an early manifestation of the type, and in the 1970s and 1980s the "photographers' selection" also became common.

What then of the Halls, Wilde and Hayward? They represent the type of travel writer typically common to their own times. All had a desire to see Ireland popular, well visited and prospering economically. I would image that a "fly on the wall" virtual tour on a Bianconi ride around the Pass of Salrock or up the Maam Valley with the Halls, might capture something of their enraptured joy at the scenery, or travelling by steamer up the Corrib with Wilde, and a tramp across the fields to Ross Errily or across the plains of The Field of the Hurlers, in the Cong-The Neale-Cross triangle, would be informative and discussive as well as scenic. Meanwhile, a motoring trip with Hayward would be an actor's master class in a seanachaí's well-timed piece of delivery, a glad ear would be kept cocked for a good story and the way that it was told and one might even have gotten a few tunes into the bargain! Re-reading their works through the depths of Covid, and beyond, certainly makes me want to travel, tramp and ramble with the same delight and hope that they brought to their travelogues, *Westward ho!*

1. A work dedicated to James II, first published in Latin, in London, in 1685.
2. Hall, Anna Maria & Samuel Carter, *Ireland, its Scenery, Character, etc,* London, How & Parsons, 3 vols., 1841-1843.
3. Lewis, Samuel, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, comprising the several counties, cities, boroughs, corporate, market, and post towns, parishes and villages,* 2 volumes. S. Lewis & Co., London, 1837.
4. Young, Arthur, *A tour in Ireland with General Observations on the Present State of the Kingdom, Made in the years 1776, 1777 and 1778 and Brough down to the end of 1779,* London. Printed for T Cadell, Strand and J. Dodsley, Pall Mall, London, 1780.
5. Dutton, Hely, *A Statistical and Agricultural Survey of the County of Galway with Observation on the means of Improvement, Drawn up for the Consideration and by the Direction of the Royal Dublin Society, Dublin,* 1824.
6. Barrow, John, *A town Around Ireland. Through the Sea-Coast counties in the Autumn of 1836,* London, John Murray, 1836
7. Inglis, Henry, *A Journey Throughout Ireland During spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834*, (4th edn.), Whittaker and Co., London, 1836.
8. Halls, *Ireland*, Vol. 3, 1843, op. cit. p.473.
9. Wilde, Sir William, *Lough Corrib, Lough Corrib, Its Shores and Island; with Notices of Lough Mask*, 2nd ed, McGlashan & Gill, Dublin and Longmans Green and Co., London, 1872, p.5.
10. *Ibid*., p.16.
11. *Ibid*., 1872, pp.3-4.
12. Morton, H.V, (1892–1979), *In Search of Ireland*, Methuen & Co., London, ,1930.
13. O'Flaherty, Liam, *A Tourists Guide to Ireland*, 1st edn., Mandrach Booklets, 1929.
14. Gwynn, Stephen, *The Fair Hills of Ireland*, Maunsel And Company Ltd., 1914.
15. Izack Walton, (1593-1683) was an English biographer and author of *The Compleat Angler* (1653), a pastoral discourse on the joys and stratagems of fishing that has been one of the most frequently reprinted books in English Literature. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Izaak-Walton. Accessed August 2021.
16. Clements, Paul, *Romancing Ireland, Richard Hayward 1892-1964,* (2014).
17. Hayward, Richard, *The Corrib County,* W. Tempest Dundalagan Press, Dundalk, 1943, pp.10-11
18. *Ibid*., p.80.
19. *Ibid*. p.76.
20. Wilde, 1872, op. cit., p.iii.

Imperial Gaze and Tourism in Galway, Anna Maria & Samuel Carter Hall's Exotic Exploration in the 1840s



Amélie Dochy Jacquard

Figure 1 : **Portrait of Anna Maria Hall**, *by Daniel Maclise, watercolour and pencil, 23 x 16 cm, 1833, Chertsey Museum;* **Portrait of Samuel Carter Hall**, *by Paul De La Roche*, *drawing, unknown size, 1847, Wikipedia Commons*

Tourism is a quest for discovery, change, and sometimes exotic adventures, as indicated by nineteenth-century travelogues published in the expanding British Empire. In this context, Anna Maria (1800-1881) and Samuel Carter Hall (1800-1889) wrote three volumes entitled *Ireland, its Scenery, Character etc* (1841-1843), when Anna Maria had already risen to fame with *Sketches of Irish Character* (1829).[1] She had been encouraged to write by Samuel Carter, to whom she had got married in 1824 and who was a journalist in London by then.

So, the authors' common love for their native country must have motivated their work, which resulted from 'several Tours made by the writers, together since the year 1825—the latest of which [dating back to] autumn […] [1840]'.[2] The very word 'Tour' alludes to the Grand Tour tradition, so dear to the British who travelled to Continental Europe to complete their education. But the Napoleonic Wars having closed European routes, the 'Celtic Fringe' surrounding England was reassessed as a 'viable' destination.[3]

At that time, lower middle classes started to go on holidays too, hence the development of tourism as an industry: Thomas Cook's first organised trip took place in 1841, which was the year when the Halls' first volume on Ireland was printed, soon followed by the second opus a year later while the last volume, devoting ten pages to the area around Galway (pp.449-459) came out of the press in 1843.

Ireland was then at the forefront of British politics as Daniel O'Connell was struggling to get Home Rule and challenged the Union with England, so that one may wonder how the Halls responded to these political debates. Their opinion was actually clear: Anna Maria wore orange and green ribbons in her hair to show that, despite her own religious faith,[4] she did not favour Protestantism over Catholicism. Yet her so-called impartial attitude implied a support of the Union and therefore of the British crown.[5] But to what extent can their description of Galway be considered as imperialist?[6] To answer this question, their references to Galway as an exotic town will first be examined, before focusing on the authors' desire to highlight their objectivity. Finally, the originality of their work as a dialogue between text and image, designed to entertain the reader, will be analysed.

I
An exotic account

The tourists' desire to see new landscapes, meet unknown people and witness unusual practices fuels exoticism, originally referring to 'a foreign plant' or something 'from abroad', and in the context of the British Empire: *'The exotic […] increasingly gained […] the connotations of a stimulating or exciting difference […]. The key concept here is the introduction of the exotic from abroad into a domestic economy. From the earliest days of European voyages, exotic minerals, artefacts, plants and animals were brought back […] [so that they] could titillate the European public imagination*'.[7]

British citizens' imagination could indeed be stimulated as they travelled in Ireland, which was part of the Union but beyond the Irish Sea, so that it was both domestic and foreign, a duality echoed by the style of the Halls: *The whole of the coast round the beautiful bay, although less magnificently rugged than that more to the north, abounds in* ***picturesque*** *objects; and the* ***peasantry*** *here, as well as in the* ***less familiar*** *districts, are rich in* ***original character****: their vicinity to the* ***wild*** *Atlantic, and their living* ***remote*** *from frequent intercourse with* ***more civilized*** *parts, having preserved much of their* ***primitive*** *simplicity*'[8] [my emphasis].

Exoticism is introduced by expressions such as 'less familiar' or 'original character': Galwegians embody otherness. The 'peasantry', living in a 'remote' area and gifted with a 'character' unspoiled by communication with 'more civilised parts' connote the authors' imperialism and their assertion of British hegemony, symbolising 'civilisation', by contrast with these 'primitive' and therefore exotic inhabitants, described in staggering landscapes where they are surrounded by endemic species such as the Connaught Pig.[9] Its textual and visual portrait was likely to arouse the curiosity of any Victorian, thus lured to Ireland, its intriguing animals and charming peasantry.

Figure 2 : **The Connaught Pig, in** *Anna Maria & Samuel Carter Hall,* **Ireland, its Scenery, Character, etc**, *London, How & Parsons, 3 vols., 1841-1843, vol. 3, 1843, p.451*

It is true that the Halls both belonged to the middle class, contrary to most of the people they describe and who all seemed to embody the working class and a different culture, so that there are dynamics of domination and subordination at stake.

Exoticism is triggered by this 'singular' and feudal system: the 'absolute' king possesses 'despotic powers' and a right to do justice, hence the underlying comment on a backward society in need of improvement brought by more civilised travellers such as the Halls. This is a typically colonial stance of 'anti-conquest', defined by Pratt as a series of strategies '*of representation by the European bourgeois subjects [who] seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony*'.[10]

Besides, claiming that this monarch was 'nothing more than the Lord Mayor of Dublin' evacuates the dangers of treason. Galwegians had actually participated in rebellions against England: by welcoming the survivors of the Spanish Armada (1588)[11] and by supporting the Jacobites after the deposition of James II (1689), so that when Scotland rebelled again in 1746, the Catholics were ordered to leave Galway.[12] In spite of their will to put forward the so-called peaceful state of Ireland in their own time, the Halls were aware of these conflicts as they had read reference books by Henry Sidney (p.452),[13] James Hardiman (pp.452, 454) or Henry D. Inglis (pp.454-455).[14]

II
Beyond exoticism, a quest for objectivity

By using such references, the Halls give a veneer of objectivity to their text. Like many travel writers, they were committed to 'historical depth', to quote Wasserman,[15] who also explains that '*cultural work*' was *'felt to be a necessary complement to economic and political development'*.[16]

However, economic development in Galway had been seriously altered in the context of Cromwell's reconquest (1649-1652), the *Penal Laws* (1695-1728) and the *Popery Act* (1704), which persecuted Catholics and thwarted exchanges with France, Spain and Scotland, the former basis of Galway's trade: *'Galway was a famous trading port [which] […] supplied nearly all Ireland with wine […]. Although this exclusive trade has of late years greatly diminished, it is still carried on […]. In 1614, Sir Oliver St John writes […] of Galway: 'the merchants are rich […]'; previously, Sir Henry Sidney had described them as 'refined' […] and […] old Heylin calls it 'a noted empire […] of so great fame […], that an outlandish merchant […] demanded in what part of Galway Ireland stood'. [Its fame was credited to] […] the 'Tribes of Galway […]'. […] [who] were of Anglo-Norman descent; and although they in time became 'more Irish than the Irish', they were […] at continual war with the ancient families of the district. Several curious rules […] prohibiting all intercourse with the natives, are yet preserved […]: the following singular inscription was […] over the west gate: 'From the ferocious O'Flahertys; Good Lord deliver us'*.[17]

The conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries between native Irish and Anglo-Norman families are highlighted, with a reminder of the fear that colonisers sent by Henry VIII threatened to become 'more Irish than the Irish'[18] but this allusion to a distant form of cultural colonisation does not clarify the economic impact that political measures from the centre had on a periphery like Galway in the nineteenth century. There is no mention of the tensions between Catholics and Protestants, which is consistent with the Halls' desire to please readers of both religious faiths, who might be likely to help developing the local economy.

The Halls regularly hint at the country's potential and Galway is noticed for its port: *'To open this populous district would be to make it prosperous […]. […] Excepting the limited lines—from Dublin to Kingstown (about six miles), from Belfast to Lisburn (about the same distance), and from Dublin to Drogheda (about twenty-two miles), there are no railroads in Ireland. […] A project is now in course of formation for carrying a line of road from Dublin to Galway, we have made some inquiries on the subject, and received some information from P. V. O'Malley, Esq., civil engineer […]. He […] suggests that Wheatstone's electric telegraph should be used. Certainly, if such a project can be carried out—and assuredly it may be, if Government will cooperate with some wealthy and enterprising individuals—in no part of the kingdom can the experiment be tried with surer prospect of success'*.[19]

Sticking to their method of investigation, the Halls offer some information presented as reliable and coming from an engineer. There is a direct call to investors who could finance the construction of the railroad and who are here encouraged with a reassuring 'prospect of success'. It was only in 1895 that the first train left Galway[20] but here, the Halls 'encode' what is 'available for improvement'.[21]

So even when they aim at objectivity, there is a sense of imperialism, especially when they document on the natural resources likely to be turned into sources of wealth: *'We cannot leave the town of Galway without directing the reader's attention to the marble manufactured there, and which so plentifully abounds throughout the county. The subject of Irish marbles is, indeed, one of vast importance […]. It may be made […] a source of immense wealth to the island and employment to its people'*.[22]

A moral dimension is conveyed by the potential 'employment', opposed to waste and idleness, one of the seven deadline sins, a religious allusion that Victorians would have understood.[23] Another apostrophe to their 'attention' opens an extradiegetic conversation between authors and readers and the lexical field of riches ('abounds', 'vast', 'immense wealth') puts forward the value of this resource, described in the upcoming four pages, most likely written by Samuel Carter, whereas the narratives were probably by Anna Maria.[24]

GALWAY.

10 9 8

53

Longitude West from Greenwich.

Irish Miles. 5 10 15

English Miles. 5 10 15

Population 381.364
English Acres .. 1,301.230

ATLANTIC OCEAN

GALWAY BAY

CONNEMARA

Joyces country

Twelve Pins

MAAM

Ballinrobe

Headford

Oughterard

Roundstone B.

Killery Harb.

Ballinakill Harb.

Clifden Bay

Slyne Hd.

Inishboffin

Inishmaan

Inishmore

ILES OF ARAN

Arranmore

Killary Bay

Greatly Sound

Foul Sound

Roscommon

Galway

Clare

Mayo

Tuam

Athenry

Loughrea

Ballinasloe

Eyrecourt

Banagher

Portumna

Gort

Ennis

Shannon R.

Shannon Br.

R. Suck

Grand Canal

Map of Galway, in Halls, op. cit., np

A. Adlard, Doctors Commons

III

A travelogue conceived like a work of art

Two stories are unfolded regarding Galway. The first is about the Lynch fitz-Stephen family[25] and the second is introduced thus: '*Wandering one day by the shore of the broad ocean, an incident occurred to us the recital of which may not be unpleasing to our readers. We had walked a long way, when in the distance we saw above the level of the sea what at first sight we imagined to be, so perfectly motionless was it, an artificial figure—the figure-head of a ship perhaps, placed there as a beacon—but the wind blowing strongly from the land, we perceived some drapery in motion, which led to think that it was really a human being. Still there was no 'stir' or indication of life, or any interest manifested in surrounding objects'.*[26]

The 'wandering' of the authors and their glimpse of a lonely silhouette on a windy shore reminds us of Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818). To this romantic atmosphere is added a touch of the gothic, with the hesitation regarding the nature of this 'motionless' figure wrapped in some 'drapery', like a ghost. The writers then become characters in their own romantic story as they address this enigmatic Irishwoman, with whom the homodiegetic narrator starts a conversation marked by superlatives: *'It is quite impossible to fancy a greater picture of patient meaningless endurance than this poor woman. She was evidently a living sorrow'.*[27] The vocabulary of feelings indicates that Anna Maria must have been writing this passage, as women writing travelogues were likely to adopt a sentimental perspective.[28] Besides, the very telling of this story is justified (*'the recital of* [this incident] *may not be unpleasing to our readers'*), suggesting a writer who is trying to give a legitimacy to her voice, a common point to many female travellers.[29]

Furthermore, the widow's tale is illustrated by a view of a figure standing on a shore, with her black hair and dark shawl blown by the wind, a reminder of the hostility of nature.

These details give a gothic dimension to the engraving, also referring to the 'picturesque' or a 'panoramic viewpoint', fit for 'dramatic effect', gifted with historical significance and 'stimulating for the mind', to the point that they could be painted.[30] The Halls were obviously trying to attract picturesque-hunters,[31] artists,[32] retirees[33] or all the tourists interested in antiquity. Galway's section includes eleven illustrations and apart

The Seaman's Wife, in *Anna Maria and Samuel Carter Hall*, **op. cit.**, *p.460*

Old Arch, in *Halls*, **op. cit.**, **p.***457*

The Fish Market, in *Halls*, **op. cit.**, **p.456**

A Cabin Door, Claddagh, in *Halls*, **op. cit.**, **p.***458*

from those of the *Seaman's Wife*, *Claddagh Ring* (p.458) and *Connaught Pig*, each illustrates an architectural curiosity such as *Tuam Cathedral*, another picturesque view revealing the ancient monument. Exoticism is then further fuelled by three arched gateways (pp.453, 455, 457), highlighting Galway's parallels with Spain, while the *Mayor's House* (p.454), where Lynch fitz-Stephen allegedly died, gives shudders to the reader. Finally, *Buttermilk Lane* (p.452), the *Fish Market* (p.455) and *A Cabin Door* (p.458), form picturesque vignettes comprising Irishwomen in an old-fashioned attire.

Illustrations were crucial: Samuel considered that some of his books (such as *British Ballads*) were 'more important for the illustrations than for the text'.[34] The use of two different semiotic systems, called 'interpicturality',[35] invites the reader to pause and stimulates the desire to see the picturesque town for yourself.

In addition, the text comments on the engravings, an example of 'metapicturality':[36] *'We are fortunate in having obtained the co-operation of* [William Evans of Eton] […] *and lament that the beauty of his coloured drawings cannot be satisfactorily transferred to our pages'*.[37] Evans (1798-1877) was a British artist whose artworks detailed bright red clothes, as in *Buttermilk Lane, Galway*,[38] hence the writers' regret regarding the modifications implied by the engraving process. Yet, the original and its reproduction both enhance exoticism: *'Galway is presented as a quaint little port, with a singular architecture redolent of Spain and inhabited by charming Galwegians, whose lifestyle offered a complete change to travellers. Galway's monuments are actually qualified as 'records of old times [which] are rapidly falling into ruin'*.[39] The Halls were obviously willing to preserve for future times a description of what the area was like between the 1820s and 1840s, as is also indicated by the map used as a frontispiece.

Conclusion

Yet, this document reminds us of the colonial reflex of mapping the territory before land settlement. So, in spite of their Irish origin, the Halls wrote with an imperialist bias as they offered maps, recommendations to investors and information on the natural resources available. This is also seen in their description of the noble but backward peasantry who embodied otherness, just like their customs, their jewellery or the species found in their farms like the Connaught pig.

But it should also be noted that they adopted a methodology aiming at objectivity: by referencing sources, expressing criticism and leading investigations, they presented themselves as reliable authors.[40] Most travel writers in the Empire tended to put forward their innocence, even if their 'imperial eyes passively look[ed] out and possess[ed]'.[41] Nonetheless, as the Halls transformed their exotic vision into their travelogue, they held a conversation between text and image which has given birth to an original work. The literary qualities of the text, resorting to the gothic or the picturesque, are echoed by the vignettes enhancing the pleasure of the reader.

And Victorian readers doubtlessly appreciated this iconic text. Despite *the Quarterly Review's* complaint about the excessive number of 'luxuriant lakes' and 'sparkling billows' in the prose by the Halls,[42] *The Times* liked the 'desire to exhibit things as they really are'[43] just like *The Morning Chronicle* enjoyed the 'truthfulness of the two editors'.[44] Indeed, *Ireland, its Scenery, Character etc,* was so appreciated that their first edition (1841-1843) was followed by several others as in 1846 (London, Howe & Parsons), 1860 (London, Virtue) or 1873 (London, Tinsley Brothers)[45] and more recently a shortened version was edited by Michael Scott in 1984.[46] These multiple editions show that in spite of their imperialist perspective, the Halls' account of their visits to Ireland continues to fascinate readers and thus can be seen as a valuable literary artwork to this day.

1 Morris, Hazel, *Hand, Head and Heart, Samuel Carter Hall and the Art Journal*, Norwich, Russell, 2002, p.73.

2 Hall, Anna Maria & Samuel Carter, *Ireland, its Scenery, Character, etc*,London, How & Parsons, 3 vols., 1841-1843, vol. 1, 1841, p.III.

3 Hooper, Glenn, 'The Isles / Ireland: the wilder shore', *in The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.174-190, 178.

4 The Halls were Protestants. Morris, *op. cit.*, pp.24, 164.

5 Morris, *op. cit.*, p.162. *All his life Carter was to preach the benefits derived from the Union*, *ibid.*, p.19.

6 Williams even speaks of 'Hibernian orientalism' regarding the texts on Galway written by British travellers. See Williams, William H., *Creating Irish Tourism: The First Century, 1750-1850*, London, Anthem, 2011, p.163.

7 Ashcroft, Bill; Griffiths, Gareth; Tiffin, Helen, *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp.94-95. See also Renata Wasserman, *Exotic Nations: Literature and Cultural Identity in the United States and Brazil, 1830-1930*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, p.259.

8 Halls, *Ireland, op. cit.*, vol. 3, 1843, p.459.

9 *Ibid.*, p.451.

10 Pratt, *op. cit.*, p.7.

11 https://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0618/971404-spanish-armada-400th-anniversary/ (11/07/2021).

12 For more details on Galway's historical landmarks, see Peadar O'Dowd, *A History of County Galway, A Comprehensive Study of Galway's History, Culture and People*, Dublin, Gill, 2004.

13 The texts by Sir Henry Sidney (1529-1586) were actually used by James Hardiman (1782-1855), who was the author of *The History of the Town and County of the Town Galway*, Dublin, Folds, 1820. The latter was the main reference used by the Halls. The other reference is that of H. D. Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer, and Autumn of 1834*, London, Whittaker, 1834-1835, 2 vols., 1835, vol. 2, p.22.

14 Henry David Inglis (1795-1835) had written his own description of Galway before the Halls, which is acknowledged by the couple. Halls, *op. cit.*, pp.454-455.

15 Wasserman, *op. cit.*, p.251.

16 *Ibid.*, p.254.

17 Halls, *op. cit.*, pp.450-451.

18 Hardiman quotes an act of 1536 ordering that '*everie inhabitant, as well within the said towne, [...], doe shave theire over lipps, called crompeaulis; and suffer the haire of their hedds to growe, till it cover theire eares, and that every one of them weare English capps*'. Hardiman, *op. cit.*, p.80.

19 Halls, *op. cit.*, p.450.

20 Villiers-Tuthill, Kathleen, *The Connemara Railway 1895-1935*, https://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/the-connemara-railway-1895-1935/ (08/07/2021).

21 Pratt, *op. cit.*, p.61.

22 Halls, *op. cit.*, p.461.

23 The authors published other texts of a moralising and religious vein such as *An Old Story, a Temperance Tale in Verse* (London, Virtue, 1874).

24 This is the guess of Hazel Morris, *op. cit.*, pp.33, 137.

25 James Mitchell demonstrated that it was untrue in 'Mayor Lynch of Galway: A Review of the Tradition', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 32 (1966-1971), pp.5-72.

26 Halls, *op. cit.*, pp.459-460.

27 *Ibid.*, p.460.

28 Pratt, *op. cit.*, p.102.

29 Bassnett, Susan, 'Travel Writing and Gender', *in* Peter Hulme, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.225-241, pp.235-237, 227, 233.

30 Châtel, Laurent 'Getting the Picture of the Picturesque', *XVII-XVIII, Bulletin de la Société d'études anglo-américaines*, n°51 (novembre 2000), pp.229-248, pp.231, 233, 234.

31 Halls, *op. cit.*, p.452.

32 *Ibid.*, p.451.

33 *Ibid.*, p.459. Their emphasis on cheap prices resonates bitterly today as the Great Famine would take a heavy toll on the region two years after the publication of these lines.

34 Morris, *op. cit.*, p.28.

35 Louvel, Liliane, *L'Oeil du texte,* Toulouse, Presses Universitaires de Mirail, 1998, p.142.

36 *Ibid.*, p.142.

37 Halls, *op. cit.*, p.456.

38 http://onlinecollection.nationalgallery.ie/people/4283/william-evans-of-eton/objects (11/07/2021).

39 Halls, *op. cit.*, p.452.

40 'The stories [...] delighted Anna Maria's English readers, who expected stories of Ireland to be either humorous or larded with Celtic romance, but infuriated the humbler classes in Ireland, the very people that she had looked on as her friends. They mistrusted her impartiality over politics and religion, and regarded her writings as those of an Anglo-Irish woman with an English view of Ireland'. Hazel Morris, *op. cit.*, p.133.

41 Pratt, *op. cit.*, p.7.

42 *The Quarterly Review,* vol. 85, 1849, p. 491, quoted by Hazel Morris, *op. cit.*, p.33.

43 *The Times*, 12 October 1841, quoted by Morris, *op. cit.*, p.31.

44 *The Morning Chronicle*, 10 November 1841, quoted by Morris, *op. cit.*, p.31.

45 For an analysis of the 3 volumes, see Amélie Dochy, 'Mr and Mrs Hall's Tour of Ireland in the 1840s, More than a Unionist Guidebook, an Illustrated Definition of Ireland Made to Convince', *Miranda*, vol. 9 (2014), https://doi.org/10.4000/miranda.5917.

46 Scott, Michael, ed., *Hall's Ireland, Mr and Mrs Hall's Tour of 1840*. 2 vols. ed. London, Sphere Books Limited, 1984.

William Evans of Eton's Galway Watercolours and 19th Century Travel Writing

Anne Hodge

'Alongside such romantic delight in Ireland's seemingly primordial landscape was the converse desire to "improve" its condition and consolidate its connection with Britain.'

(Eadaoin Agnew, 2011, p .390)

Interest in the western parts of Ireland, in particular Galway and Connemara grew rapidly in the early decades of the nineteenth century, fed by a variety of guidebooks and travel-memoirs. The consumers of such publications were from the well-educated middle and upper classes, people who had the means and inclination to travel or at least read about others' experiences of travel.

Éadaoin Agnew in her review of nineteenth century travel books outlines the key reasons for the burgeoning interest in travel writing about Ireland in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The Napoleonic wars, which closed continental Europe to British tourists, encouraged exploration of lesser-known locations closer to home. Politically, there was an anxiety to integrate Ireland into the new United Kingdom (post-Act of Union), and there was a general romantic interest in scenic, wild landscapes. '*Alongside such romantic delight in Ireland's seemingly primordial landscape was the converse desire to "improve" its condition and consolidate its connection with Britain. […] It seemed that Ireland, like the rest of the Empire must be made known and tractable.*'[1]

The first formal travel guide to Ireland which included detailed descriptions of Connemara was *Ireland in 1834,* published in 1835 by London based author Henry D. Inglis (1795-1835). Connemara also featured prominently in *Ireland: its scenery, character, &c.* (1840-3) or 'Hall's Ireland' as it was popularly known, a three volume, richly illustrated travelogue written by Irish-born but staunchly unionist husband and wife team Anna and Samuel Carter Hall. In the opening pages of their popular travel book the authors were clear about their allegiances and the context in which they were publishing their account of Ireland: '*… it will be our duty to consider England and Ireland as one country – to draw more closely the ties that unite them, and to condemn, as the most mischievous of all projects, that which either contemplates or leads to separation – the inevitable consequence of repeal of the Union.*'[2]

Wood engraved illustrations became an important aspect of travel books from the 1840s. Black and white images translated from drawings made 'in the field' by competent artists and draughtsmen complemented the written descriptions of writers such as Anna and Samuel Hall. Such images gave a sense of reality to the arm-chair traveller's experience of the places described and added to the saleability of the books by widening their appeal.

Although unillustrated, apart from maps, Henry D. Inglis's two volume guide to Ireland entitled: *'A journey throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834'* was influential in terms of travel-writing on Ireland. He described routes and places of interest, but also commented on the social and political situation in Ireland and the style and format of his work was embraced by the other writers who followed in his wake. His enthusiastic observations on Galway and Mayo take up four chapters and although his tone is patronising at times, overall, he provides much detail on the life and customs of the Gaelic-speaking inhabitants of those counties. He was shocked by the poverty he saw everywhere and his final paragraph states*: 'I have not studied to make this an agreeable book so much as a useful book [...] there is little real cause for jocularity in treating the condition of a starving people …'* Inglis's book would have been an invaluable guide for contemporary travellers, and it is likely that the drawing master William Evans was armed with it when he set off on his first sketching trip to the west of Ireland in 1835.

William Evans grew up at Eton College near Windsor and took on the role of drawing master at the school on his father's retirement in 1823. An accomplished watercolourist, he became a member of the Society of Painters in Watercolours (later known as the Old Water Colour Society) in 1830. Like the Irish artist Frederic William Burton (whom he invited to visit and paint at Eton in 1862) Evans painted exclusively in watercolours throughout his career. From the 1820s, during the summer when the school was closed, Evans went on painting trips throughout Scotland and England.

A sketchbook, now in a private collection, filled with quick pencil sketches of scenery on the west coast of Ireland shows that Evans first visited Ireland in the summer of 1835. The simple studies, some with white highlights, depict Achill, Clare Island and Delphi. This visit was a valuable one for Evans as the following year he exhibited five finished watercolours of West of Ireland scenes at the Water Colour Society's prestigious annual exhibition. All five sold for between thirty and thirty-five guineas, and one, 'An Irish Peasant Girl' was bought by the Bishop of Winchester. Two of the watercolours 'The Claddagh' and 'Buttermilk Lane' have titles that incorporate direct quotations from Inglis's guidebook alluding to the importance this book had in opening up public interest in the west. Spurred on perhaps by the positive reception his Irish views received, in 1837 Evans showed nine finished views including scenes around Maam, Renvyle and Killary. Number 133 in the catalogue, 'Inn on the Road to Westport Co. Mayo' sold for 25 guineas to a T.G. Parry Esq. Thomas Gambier Parry (1816-1888) was a wealthy young orphan who had been Evans's star pupil before he graduated from Eton in 1832. Parry acquired the large group of drawings of Galway and Connemara drawings made by Evans on his 1838 tour. These landscapes and figure studies in watercolour remained in the Parry family collection until 2008 when they were acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland.[3]

William Evans of Eton's watercolours present an idyllic vision of Galway city and the Connemara landscape. The sun is shining in almost all of the views and the colours are vivid. When I first viewed these watercolours in 2008, I was somewhat suspicious of the romantic-looking scenery and felt that Evans must have used a large dollop of artistic licence in creating his watercolours. However, on a research trip to Connemara in the summer of 2012, in search of Evans's viewpoints and the actual locations he painted, I realised that he recorded the topography very accurately. The profiles of the mountains are exact and easily recognisable.

Despite this, in order to understand these artworks fully, it is important to bear in mind that Evans was a middle-class Englishman painting for a particular purpose – to create beautiful watercolours that would appeal to middle-class English buyers and patrons. The landscape is rendered accurately but I wondered if his depictions of the inhabitants of that landscape were as true to life. Almost without exception, the people he records look well-dressed and well-fed. Similar to the John Hinde postcards of the 1960s, Evans's figures, often wearing eye-catching red skirts, are strategically placed to enhance a composition or draw the eye across the picture plane.

There is a long tradition in landscape painting of using human figures, sometimes called 'staffage', simply to add interest to a view. Often these figures are roughly sketched in, drawn from the artist's imagination rather than from real life. Although it is impossible to be sure, it is likely that some of the figures in Evans's watercolours are 'types' rather than actual people he met and recorded. At the same time, there are sheets of sketches among his Irish drawings that do appear to have been drawn directly from life, particular the sheets of multiple sketches of figures at the market in Galway city. These are observational

William Evans of Eton, *Woman and Boy beside an Archway on a Galway Street*, NGI.2008.36.23, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

studies full of energy and a sense of 'being there'. Regardless, none of the figures he depicts appear to be malnourished, sick or in tattered clothing. Newspaper reports from the time paint a different picture.

The Kilkenny Journal and Leinster Commercial and Literary Advertiser of 7 September 1833, (just 5 years before Evans's visit), reports on the need to reform the systems of tolls and taxes in Ireland. In a report headed: 'Toll Reform Bill' it outlines the unfairness of the toll system: '… *every poor person bringing brooms to Galway market, is stopped on the west bridge of that town and compelled to yield up a portion of their miserable stock, pretence of toll or custom. The great majority of the poor creatures who struggle to eke out a scanty subsistence in this way are, we understand, females, who barefoot and nearly half naked, traverse the mountains and wilds at a distance of several miles from their wretched hovels, pull with their hands the heath which they afterwards seek to convert into pittance for the support of their starving families. No wonder that all classes should rejoice in the downfall of a monopoly so meanly voracious as to stoop to such paltry pickings'.*

In contrast, the people Evans depicts selling their wares on the streets of Galway do not appear desperate. The figures shown chatting at the Fish Market and going about their business are dressed in brightly coloured clothes and appear fit and healthy. His young people standing under an arch, although tired looking, are not in rags.

The western part of Ireland suffered the vicissitudes of famine and food shortage regularly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. A report in the *Freeman's Journal* of 20th November 1838 which describes Daniel O'Connell's visit to Galway just three months after Evans's trip gives a good sense of the true situation of much of the rural population at that time. Although written in somewhat purple prose, it illustrates how deprived the people were: '*As he passed along the road, [to Clarenbridge] the peasantry were congregated on the highway, wherever he was expected, and cheered him heartily and warmly as he passed by. It was a delightful evening– the winds were hushed, and the clouds which covered the sky were tinged with the richest lines by the setting sun. […] In the midst of that scene of nature's glories, how different was the aspect presented by the wretched inhabitants of the lovely country, […]. Lean, and haggard, and clothed in rags, they seemed like the natives of a wilderness; as they ran across the fields from their hard toil to get a glimpse of the great man who was passing ….'.*

Given the reasons why Evans was painting his views of Connemara and Galway it is not surprising that they do not include any figures who seem to be in distress or suffering severe want. A number of his drawings were used by the Halls to illustrate the chapters on Mayo and Galway in the third volume of their travel book. It is not known how Anna and Samuel Carter Hall came to know William Evans. Their book is a composite of accounts of various tours which they undertook between 1825 and 1840. They may have met Evans while touring and asked if they could use some of his sketches to illustrate their forthcoming book. Alternatively, they may have become familiar with his Irish watercolours through the works he exhibited in London at the Old Watercolour Society in 1836 and 1837. It is possible that they asked him to provide sketches to illustrate particular passages they had written but it is unlikely that he accompanied the Halls on the tour of Connemara. If he had, it is likely that they would have mentioned this in their text, as they did F.W. Fairholt, another English artist who worked for them. A description

Evan's image of a woman knitting, engraving in Hall's *Ireland*, p.472

Evan's drawing of a dwelling, engraving in Halls' *Ireland*, p.488

of a scene they witnessed on the shores of Killary at the village of 'Bundorrah', where people gathered to watch fishermen landing a catch of salmon, is accompanied by a wood-engraving. A footnote states that scene was 'rapidly sketched by Mr. Fairholt, from our boat in front of the group, and is a strict representation of the scene without any artistic "making up"'.

The Halls were keen to underline the 'truthfulness' and accuracy of the drawings which enlivened their texts. Volume 3 includes 217 wood engraved prints after drawings by various artists including Andrew Nicholl, W.H. Bartlett and Fairholt. Twenty are by William Evans and include both small vignettes of places referred to in the text and full-page panoramas of the landscape. Despite this, many of the figure drawings in this volume, particularly those depicting women, are idealised. An image by William Harvey titled 'Delphi Girls', supposedly depicting the young girls who herded sheep in this area near Leenane, show elegant women in Grecian-style dress complete with pottery vessels on their heads. Some of this idealisation could be down to the wood-engravers, in this case a Miss Clarke. Evans's image of a woman knitting, engraved by John Jackson appears more realistic and true to life. Generally, the wood-engravers employed by the Halls publishers to translate the original drawings into print seem to have taken some liberties with the sketches they copied from. For instance, Evans's watercolour of the Spanish Arch shows a group of women in traditional dress engaged in conversation in the foreground. In the wood-engraving by Jackson which appears on page 456 the women have metamorphosed into elegant ladies with fashionable décolletage, who would not look out of place in a London drawing room.

William Evans of Eton, *Valley with Booley Site and Figures on a Path, Connemara*, NGI.2008.36.10, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

Evan's image on the coast at Renvyle, engraving in Halls' *Ireland*, p.490

William Evans of Eton, *Fishing Huts on Lettergesh Beach, near Renvyle, County Galway*, **NGI.2008.36.29, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland**

William Evans of Eton, *Glencoaghan*, **Connemara, NGI.2008.36.19, Photo © National Gallery of Ireland**

One of Evans's drawings which does illustrate the difficult living conditions many of Connemara's inhabitants endured appears above the Halls description of the village of Tully. '*The neighbourhood exhibits many tokens of poverty. Witness one of the "dwellings" in which human beings bring up their families. It was pictured "from nature" by Mr. Evans.*'

This image may depict a booley hut. The people who lived in the mountainous areas of Connemara practiced transhumance, where animals were brought up into the uplands to graze in the summer months. One of the more finished of Evans's watercolours clearly depicts a booley site, with roughly constructed temporary dwellings built into a cleft in the land. Branches of bracken and heather were used for roofing.

On pages 489 and 490 the Halls wax lyrical about the beauties of the landscape in the vicinity of Killary fjord. They advise that 'some idea' of the area's 'peculiar character' may be formed from '*this copy of the sketch of Mr Evans. It exhibits the beach and the immediate headlands, with the low hut of the fisherman nestling among the crags. But to render justice to this glorious scenery is impossible, either by his pencil or by our pen.*'

The wood-engraved vignette is similar to a watercolour by Evans in the Gallery's collection that bears the inscription 'Fishing Huts between Renvile and Island'. This view probably shows Lettergesh beach**.** The huts are semi-sunken houses built into the sandy soil and currachs can be seen drawn up onto the sand. A small settlement can be seen perched on higher ground to the left and the highest peak visible on the horizon is Tully Mountain.

A view of the Glencoaghan horseshoe, to the west of Lough Inagh, illustrates Evans's mastery at capturing the subtle colours of the Connemara landscape and his interest in accurately describing the shapes of the individual mountains and the simple dwellings of the people. This watercolour is taken from a vantage point at the southern end of the valley with a stream in the foreground. The dark mass of Binn Dhubh, partly obscured by cloud dominates the centre of the composition. To the right is Bencorr, while a small settlement of houses takes up the middle-ground. A garraí, a raised garden used to grow potatoes and other vegetables for the use of the family of the house, can be seen to the left. The remains of some of these houses can still be seen today. [4]

The drawings of Galway city focus on notable parts of the city including Buttermilk Lane**.** This colourful drawing appears as a black and white wood-engraving on page 452. The authors draw attention to the fact that most of the engravings which appear in the section on Galway are based on Evans's work: *'The examples we give were selected almost at random by Mr Evans of Eton, to whom we are indebted for the majority of the illustrations which ornament this portion of our work. We are fortunate in having obtained the co-operation of so accomplished an artist; and lament that the beauty of his coloured drawings cannot be satisfactorily transferred to our pages by the aid of wood engraving'*[5]. A view taken near the Spanish Arch shows the closely grouped thatched houses of the Claddagh in the background. Inglis's guidebook includes a detailed account of this unique fishing settlement. He noted that about 1700 fishermen lived in the 'baile' with their wives and children. *'I looked into hundreds of cabins; and there was scarcely one, in which I did not see the females busily engaged in spinning, making or mending nets. These they make not only for use, but for sale.'*[6] One of Evans's detailed interior scenes most likely shows a hard-working Claddagh woman at her spinning wheel.

The enthusiasm and curiosity of the artist and his determination to record clearly and accurately the beauty of the landscape, the homes of the people and their traditional way of life is clearly visible in his original drawings. The Halls believed that the involvement of Evans, an accomplished English artist who had exhibited his views of Connemara at prestigious London exhibitions, would add benefit to their third volume. Their aim was to encourage English readers to visit Ireland, and to illustrate the benefits of political union between the two countries. In their weighty volumes the Halls demonstrate the necessity of the Union through 'scientific' methods (illustrated by their extensive use of footnotes and quotations from official documents), literary anecdotes and beautiful illustrations designed to appeal to the romantic sensibilities of Victorian readers. Whether he was aware of it or not, Evans's watercolours aided the Halls ideological purpose: to justify the Union between Ireland and Britain. Despite the fact that his works appeared in a popular travel journal, Evans never again exhibited Connemara or Galway scenes at the Old Watercolour Society or other public venues, although he continued exhibiting his work well into old age. He remained drawing master at Eton College until 1853 when his son Samuel took over the role.

1 Agnew, Eadaoin, *Travel Writing, in The Irish Book in English 1800-1891,* Ed. Murphy, James H., Oxford University Press, 2011, p.390

2 Hall, Mr and Mrs. S.C., *Ireland, its scenery, character etc*, n.d. [1850s], London, vol.1, p.2

3 The collection of Evans watercolours acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland in 2008 is composed of 41 sheets of various sizes, mostly watercolour on cream paper. 13 sheets of figure studies depict people in traditional dress engaged in conversation, selling produce or spinning flax. There are 8 topographical views taken in Galway city. Twenty vividly coloured landscapes showing the dramatic scenery of Connemara make up the group. Almost all are in excellent condition, the watercolour pigments are fresh and while the paper shows little sign of discolouration.

4 Thanks to Michael Gibbons (Archaeologist, Clifden) for identifying this and other views in the collection.

5 Hall, Mr and Mrs. S.C., *Ireland, its scenery, character etc*, n.d. [1850s], London, vol.3, p.456

6 Inglis, Henry D., *A journey throughout Ireland during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834*, 1835, London, vol. 1, p.27.

Sir William Wilde,
Victorian Polymath and
Travel Writer

Gerard Hanberry

Because of Oscar Wilde's dazzling brilliance and tragic fall, the lives of his parents, Sir William and Lady Jane Wilde, have often been overshadowed by their famous son but they were extraordinary people in their own right. Sir William and Lady Wilde lived amazing lives and deserve their own individual places in Ireland's story. Their sense of national identity came to be expressed in most unexpected ways for people of their social background. Lady Jane Wilde came to national prominence in her early twenties as the poet 'Speranza' for the rousing patriotic verses and articles which were published in *The Nation,* organ of the nationalist 'Young Ireland' movement of the 1840s. Jane Wilde, or Jane Elgee as was her maiden name, came from a wealthy Protestant family based in Dublin and all except Jane were staunch Protestant Unionists. William Wilde was also from Protestant stock with roots in the West of Ireland. From an early age young William developed a strong attachment to the heritage, culture, history and ways of the native Irish that he came to know so well as he romped through the fields around his parents' home in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon and around his maternal grandparents' estate near Cong in Co. Mayo.

Sir William Wilde (from *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Wit* Pearson, Hesketh (1946) Harper & Brothers, New York and London)

Sir William Wilde (1815-1876) is widely recognised as being one of the most outstanding medical practitioners of the nineteenth century. His work in his chosen field of ophthalmic surgery was both brilliant and pioneering and his reputation was international. He was a true Victorian polymath with interests and expertise extending into many other areas apart from medicine. Sir William's lifelong involvement in the development of Irish archaeology reached the same high standards as did his contribution to the study of the eye and ear. His efforts as an antiquarian and a folklorist are equally as pioneering as his medical endeavours. In his role as medical commissioner to the Irish census he made an enormous contribution to the history of medical science in this country. He had a tenacious nature, a liking for facts, figures, tables and statistics, skills which were put to good use in his work on the Irish census and also in the enormous task of compiling a catalogue of the artefacts in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Sir William was tremendously inquisitive about everything, bustling, busy and dynamic.

Sir William Wilde was also a fine writer and public speaker. He published numerous significant works on medicine, archaeology and folklore as well as accounts of his travels around Ireland and abroad. Indeed, some of his writings fit neatly into that genre known as 'Travel Writing', so fashionable in the 19th century when authors such as Caesar Otway, William Makepeace Thackeray, Elizabeth Charlotte and others published popular books describing their experiences while touring in Ireland and further afield. Wilde's very first publication was a travel book with an impressively long title; long titles were in vogue at the time. He called the book *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Tenerife and along the shores of the Mediterranean, including a visit to Algiers, Egypt, Palestyne, Tyre, Rhodes and the Holy Land.'* (William Curry, Dublin, 1839). It is a fascinating account of his adventures as a young ship's doctor voyaging to the 'Holy Land'. Income from this highly successful book funded his post-graduate studies in ophthalmology abroad. He studied first at Moorfields Hospital in London before moving on to Vienna, a world famous centre for ophthalmic and aural surgery at that time.

Throughout his busy life, Sir William always found time to write and went on to publish many more books including *The Beauties of the Boyne and Blackwater* (James McGlashan, Dublin, 1850), *Irish Popular Superstitions* (James McGlashan, Dublin, 1852) and perhaps his most famous and enduringly popular book, *Lough Corrib, its Shores and Islands* (McGlashan and Gill, Dublin, 1867). Wilde's publication *Practical Observations*

on Aural Surgery and the Nature and Treatment of Diseases of the Ear (Churchill, London, 1853) became the standard textbook on the subject used by students for decades.

William Wilde was born in March 1815 in the townland of Kilkeevin, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon, the youngest of five children born to Dr Thomas Wills Wilde, the local medical doctor and his wife, Emily Fynn, of Lucan and Ballymagibbon near Cong, Co. Mayo. William's early education took place at the local Erasmus Smith School on the Sandford estate. Young William then attended the Diocesan School, Elphin and was later sent as a boarder to the Royal School at Banagher, Co. Offaly. William's father, Dr Thomas Wills Wilde, was the local doctor in Castlerea from 1809 to 1838. He was the son of Ralph Wilde, the first of the Wildes of Castlerea, who is found in the locality sometime in the 1740s when he is described rather vaguely in deeds as being a 'dealer'. Ralph Wilde married Margaret O'Flynn of the ancient O'Flynn clan and became a 'farmer' and later a 'gentleman'.

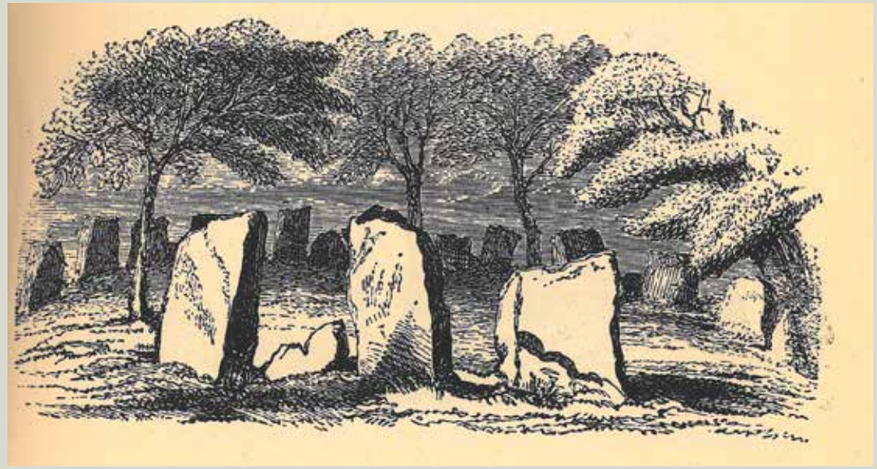
Dr Thomas Wills Wilde's grave, Sir William's father, Oscar Wilde's grandfather, grave at Castlerea.
(Image Gerry Hanberry)

William Wilde's early experiences growing up in Roscommon were an important influence on his later work. As a boy he wandered the countryside and befriended the native Irish and came to understand their ways. He would later devote a good deal of his writing to recording the disappearing culture of the country folk in the years before the famine. Wilde's book, *Irish Popular Superstitions* (1852), contains an attractive picture of his childhood and a sometimes-idealistic depiction of country life in pre-famine Ireland, a description not supported by foreign visitors' accounts such as that found in De Tocqueville's, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (1835). Wilde clearly had an emotional attachment to the culture of the native Irish. He speaks of the Irish language being

The ruins of the old Fynn house at Ballymagibbon near Cong. Oscar Wilde's paternal grandmother's home; totally unknown and forgotten about today in the middle of a field).
(Image Gerry Hanberry)

doomed and laments the passing of old customs such as the "wren-boys" and the fire on St. John's Eve. His writings demonstrate an understanding of the deep belief in the supernatural that existed among the peasantry and he appreciated their love of story and legendary romance. But contrary to what is sometimes stated, he could not speak the Gaelic language and would have regarded himself as being from different stock.

Young William Wilde often travelled from his father's home in Castlerea to stay with his mother's people the Fynns, who in those years were large landowners at Ballymagibbon, east of Cong. This is an area rich in archaeological and historical sites and the ideal locale for an imaginative boy, full of intellectual curiosity, to spend large portions of his time. Here one finds deep caves with romantic tales attached, stone circles with magical connotations, standing-stones, megalithic tombs and large piles of stones called cairns such as the great cairn situated in the townland of Ballymagibbon, just off the main road from Cross to Cong. Wilde's lifelong interest in archaeology and antiquarian studies was clearly kindled in his boyhood years by what he saw around him in the fields at Ballymagibbon and Castlerea.



Glebe Stones, from William Wilde, "Loch Corrib", p129 (1955)

It was at Ballymagibbon that young William befriended Fr. Peter Prendergast, the last Abbot of Cong, who resided in a farmhouse on Fynn land where he kept a number of valuable relics and priceless items such as the Cross of Cong and the Shrine of St. Patrick's Tooth in a kitchen press. The old Abbot took pride in showing these relics and explaining their powers to young William who was clearly fascinated.

At the age of seventeen William was sent to Dublin to learn surgery at Dr Steevens' Hospital. It was the beginning of an extraordinary journey that would see him achieve enormous successes in various fields. William greatly impressed his tutors, showing enthusiasm, commitment and flair as he progressed through the four-year course. He then went on to spend an extra year studying midwifery at the Rotunda Hospital. Shortly after receiving his licentiate a wonderful opportunity to sail to the Mediterranean unexpectedly presented itself.

Two of Williams tutors, Sir Henry Marsh and Dr Robert Graves, required a doctor to attend a wealthy patient of theirs who was about to undertake a voyage to the Mediterranean for medicinal reasons. The patient, a Glaswegian by the name of Robert Meiklam, was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and possessed a 130-ton steam yacht called the RYS *Crusader*. William had recently contracted fever and it was believed that his own health might benefit from a spell in a warmer climate. It was also felt that this young graduate who had recently dealt with a cholera patient in a brave and competent manner while visiting Ballymagibbon could be relied upon to perform similar deeds if the need arose while abroad.

There may also have been another pressing consideration. The newly qualified doctor was about to become a father and perhaps someone thought it prudent to have him away from the city at such a sensitive time. Wilde would later go on to have two further children outside of wedlock before his marriage to Jane Elgee in November 1851.

On 24th September 1837 Robert Meiklam's yacht *Crusader,* rigged as a topsail schooner, sailed from the Isle of Wight making for sunnier climes. William, armed with notebooks and writing materials, recorded everything he encountered along the way, the people he came across, the condition of the ports, the history and commerce of the places, the regional dress, the quality of the wine.

After exploring Lisbon they crossed to Madeira where William took detailed notes of the botanical wealth and found the white wine to be the finest he had ever tasted. Next stop was Tenerife where William and Meiklam climbed to the top of the island's 13,000-foot volcano. It took twenty hours to complete the ascent, at first on horseback and then on foot. They next entered the Mediterranean, stopping at Gibraltar and Algiers with William continuing to record all he saw.

Even between ports of call William could not be still. As the ship sailed past the coast of Sicily they came upon a school of dolphins and the young doctor, with some help from the crew, immediately set about catching one. The energetic youth immediately fell to dissecting the fish and conducting experiments out on the open deck. Then it was on to Egypt where William was to perform deeds that were truly heroic if not downright foolhardy. He decided he would like to climb to the top of one of the ancient wonders of the world. The Great Pyramid of Giza has stepped ledges all the way to the peak so William chose the second pyramid, a much more hazardous undertaking, because the coating or outer layer of stones was still smooth and perfectly in place for 140 feet from the top. He then took off alone into the desert. When darkness came he found a cave where he passed the night in fitful sleep surrounded by local Bedouins. The following day, William came upon the mummy pits and descended, without hesitation, into the narrow, sand-filled tunnels to explore the dark tombs.

William and his companions arrived at Alexandria where he came across the famous obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle lying on the ground. Back in Cairo, William visited the slave market and also the asylum where he found the ragged inmates chained in tiny cells with their hair matted and their nails grown to talons. He also spent several days

studying the causes and treatment of the eye disease trachoma at a large military hospital and medical school in Cairo. His experience of eye disease while in Cairo no doubt influenced the direction his future career would take.

They visited Rhodes and then Tyre where William once more allowed his imagination run riot as he recalled the story of Alexander's ferocious attack on the city. Eventually, the sailors reached their intended destination, the 'Holy Land', and William's head was filled with visions of proud knights and Crusaders galloping towards the Holy City. They visited all the Christian sites such as the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane. He questioned the authenticity of some sites such as 'the stable of Bethlehem' where his poking about angered the assisting friar. He boldly snatched four skulls from a tomb while visiting the Field of Blood and made off with them on horseback.

Stopping off at Athens on their return voyage, William was disappointed to find that visitors to the Acropolis had to 'wade through the mud and dirt of narrow streets and lanes'. Important lessons about the value of one's own national heritage were being learned. They stayed eight days in Athens visiting all the usual sites. The Meiklams then decided to leave their shipmates and travel east on a visit to Constantinople, allowing the schooner with its crew and doctor to make its weary way back home.

On returning to Dublin, Wilde rented rooms at 199, Great Brunswick Street, now Pearse Street, and began writing an account of his adventures abroad based on his extensive notes. Soon he had a completed manuscript of what was to become his first published book, *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira and along the shores of the Mediterranean....* Funds from this book paid for his medical studies in London and Vienna.

After completing his studies abroad he soon established himself as a successful medical practitioner in Dublin. Thus began a career that would see him honoured in many countries throughout Europe and eventually receive a knighthood in 1864 at Dublin Castle. Sir William Wilde would experience many triumphs in his lifetime but would also live through times of extreme personal anguish and tragic loss.

William Wilde remained drawn to the West of Ireland, returning again and again throughout his life. The arrival of the railway line into Galway from Dublin in 1851 meant that Wilde could travel west more often and with ease. In 1853 he acquired a modest hunting lodge called Illaunroe near Killary Harbour in Connemara. Ten years later Wilde

The peninsula in Lough Fee past Leenaun, where Sir William's old hunting lodge, Illaunroe, still stands today and is inhabited occasionally. Oscar inherited the Lodge and spent occasional hunting trips there when a student at Oxford. (Image Gerry Hanberry)

Moytura House near Cong. (Image Gerry Hanberry)

purchased 170 acres of Fynn land from the Landed Estate Court and built his beloved Moytura House, a two-storey gabled lodge, on a ridge overlooking Lough Corrib. He named his lodge after a mythical battle he was convinced took place through the fields about the house. This would be his retreat and haven for the rest of his life.

In the 1860s he conducted a lengthy examination of a triangle of land contained between the villages of Cross, the Neal and the town of Cong. This inspection expanded north to the shores of Lough Mask and west through Clonbur to the slopes of Benlevy. Armed with a translation of an unreliable fifteenth century manuscript attributed to Cormac O'Cuirnin which contained an account of the mythical Battle of Moytura, Wilde travelled through the countryside in the company of Andy Hopkins, an ex-teacher and man of fertile fancy, who was full of local lore but had little grasp of the importance of historical accuracy.

Wilde's examination of the many ancient sites he was familiar with around Cong soon expanded into a much bigger project. All about Lough Corrib and its islands one can see the remains of bygone eras - the great pre-Christian cairns and ring forts, the early Christian churches, the ruined monasteries and abbeys, the stone towers and castles, the big houses of the 'gentry'. Wilde decided to conduct a survey of all of these sites beginning in Galway town then journeying up the east side of Lough Corrib and down the west side with stop-offs at some of the islands. He painstakingly mapped and measured, catalogued and contextualised, sometimes fancifully, all the archaeological sites and historical ruins he came across.

This fieldwork became the basis for his most successful book *Lough Corrib, its Shores and Islands,* published in 1867 and still sought after to this day. This entertaining publication, a travel book containing detailed descriptions of what one can expect to encounter around Lough Corrib coupled with anecdotes and observations, is framed around a typical journey that Wilde himself would have undertaken many times. He takes his readers on an expedition beginning at the Broadstone Terminus of the Midland Great Western Railway in Dublin at 8.30 a.m., arriving 'into the great terminus of Galway at 1.45 o'clock....to emerge among the beggars into Eyre Square, surrounded by hotels, club-houses, banks, private residences and coach offices...'. Soon the readers are all aboard the 'Eglinton' steamer to be taken to Cong to dine at 6.30. Of course, the option to travel to Cong by road is also available, 'a fair day's journey of about thirty miles'. The road trip

provides the traveller/reader with the opportunity to explore the sites on shore, returning to Galway via Maam and Oughterard.

Wilde specifies that the book, unlike some contemporary travel books, is not intended "to amuse our Saxon friends" with "imaginary conversations in broken English" or other examples of "the vulgarity of the lower order of Irish". Instead, the work is aimed at "intelligent tourists, with eyes to see and hearts to admire the beauties of nature…where your architectural or antiquarian tastes may be gratified, your historic knowledge increased by the legend or the anal ……and the hitherto neglected resources of a portion of our island may be glanced at if not profoundly studied". A second edition of *Lough Corrib, its Shores and Islands* was published in 1872.

Sir William Wilde died in his home at 1 Merrion Square on 19 April 1876. Though he had expressed a desire to be buried at his beloved Moytura, near Cong, his funeral took place to Mount Jerome Cemetery, Harold's Cross on 22 April. It was one of the most imposing seen in Dublin in a very long time. In October 1971, a plaque in Portland stone and sculpted by Michael Biggs, honouring the great Victorian polymath, was unveiled by the door of No.1 Merrion Square.

It reads:

Sir William Wilde, aural and ophthalmic surgeon, archaeologist, ethnologist, antiquarian, biographer, statistician, naturalist, topographer, historian and folklorist: lived in this house from 1855-1876.

Richard Hayward: Galway and Connacht

Paul Clements

Richard Hayward (Courtesy Paul Clements)

In the middle decades of the twentieth century Richard Hayward (1892-1964) played a significant role in the cultural landscape of Ireland. For forty years he was a pivotal figure as a travel writer, singer, actor and filmmaker, and was well-known all over the country as a tour guide and folklorist. Hayward was particularly fond of the west and among his eleven travel books, two were on Connaught while another featured the Corrib region. Paul Clements, the author of a biography of Hayward, reflects on his activities and explores his connection to Galway and other parts of the west.

Although born in Southport, Lancashire, Richard Hayward grew up on the coast of Co. Antrim and become a lover of many parts of Ireland. His travel books are filled with cultural history, folktales, legends and stories from people he met. His first book on the west was *The Corrib Country*, published in 1943, after he made several trips and had prolonged stays at Ashford Castle Hotel in Cong. He toured the area with the artist, James Humbert Craig, a distinguished landscape painter with whom he had enjoyed a fruitful collaboration on a book on Ulster in 1938.

The watery light, landscape and lakes appealed to Craig's artistry. His thirty-eight wash drawings included the Maumturk Mountains, bogs, turf cutters, farmers and fishermen at work, as well as Cong Abbey and Cross, the Gods of the Neale, Ashford Castle and Loch Mask House where Captain Boycott lived.

Hayward knew the value of stories from older people and one of his ploys was to arrive in a town or village and ask around for the oldest person. Through a contact with a priest, Fr Neary, he met an old man called David Carney in Cong and he compiled a list of craftsmen and traders from the early 1860s – going back 80 years or more.

He drew on the work of the nineteenth-century antiquarian Sir William Wilde, author of *Lough Corrib: Its Shores and Islands* (1867). Hayward followed in his footsteps, visiting a triangular patch of land known as Moytura Cunga, north of Cong, where he delves into a Bronze Age burial mound, a one-man cairn that Wilde explored. Wilde uncovered a decorated clay urn with the ashes of a cremated warrior in whose memory it was raised. The urn was later donated to the Royal Irish Academy. Hayward quotes the nineteenth-century poetry of James Clarence Mangan and William Rooney; he refers to a contemporary poet, Maurice Farley, whose poem 'The Last Stronghold' he had not been able to get out of his head for days.

If there is a leitmotif in the book, then it is the inscriptions on memorial stones, churches and monuments. Everywhere he visits, Hayward noted their wording, copying the lettering carefully in his journal. In the Old Kilmaine demesne, when he surveyed a six-sided stone structure known as the Temple of the Gods of the Neale, he became frustrated at the length of time it took him trying to decipher the inscription on the plaque erected on the folly by Lord Kilmaine:

> *It is nothing more than one of those ornamental farradiddles which noblemen of the eighteenth century seem to have considered necessary to the adornment of any self-respecting demesne … a more absurd conglomeration of unrelated objects never confronted the eyes of man. … but to which I was foolish enough to devote many maddening hours in an attempt to produce some intelligible translation or explanation.*

J H Craig's sketch of The Gods of the Neale sketch, in Hayward, *'The Corrib County'*, 1943, p.96

The passage is an example, not only of the parade of fanciful words in his canon, but a measure of Hayward's commitment to finding answers to historical puzzles. After his journey, to try to pin down the exact wording, he consulted R.A.S. Macalister, then President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, and Brendan Adams, a northern philologist. He brought rubbings made for him by Peter Foy, and the two experts helped fill in missing letters. Hayward felt he had cracked most of the inscription but concluded: 'Who composed the lengthy and absurd main inscription, and what information, if any, he was trying to impart to succeeding generations, is something entirely beyond my comprehension.'

In recent years the Connemara-based writer Tim Robinson referred to Hayward's visit to the folly in his final book *Experiments on Reality*, published in 2019, the year before his death. Robinson said that Hayward was the first investigator to transcribe the plaque and had dismissed the monument as 'a whim of the irresponsible landlord class'.

In his Corrib book, Hayward included eight sketches of Galway, devoting fifteen pages to the city at the end of the book. But this was just a foretaste of what was to follow in his later books of travel on the west. In the late 1940s he embarked on a series of five topographical books on Ireland – one each on Ulster, Munster, and Leinster, and two on Connacht because he felt there was enough material for separate volumes on the western province. The first of these, *Connacht and the City of Galway* was published in 1952, while the second was named after the four counties: *Mayo Sligo Leitrim Roscommon* and came out in 1955. Both books were published by the London firm Arthur Barker.

Hayward had signed up a new artist, Raymond Piper, whom he had met through the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club and who had worked with him on the Ulster and Leinster books. By the time they went off on their western journey the Hayward-Piper collaboration was well established. After a summer tour they returned home, heading off again in Hayward's trusty Singer 12 as two carefree spirits in September to explore Galway city in considerable detail. The two men spent the autumn covering 8,000 miles and driving all over Connacht. Galway city and county was explored as well as other parts of the province. At times it was hard going. The single-track western roads were rutted and dusty especially in dry weather and notebook entries moan about the rain.

The first of these two Connacht books deals with Galway city and county, incorporating the Aran Islands as well as Lough Corrib. The book contains 56 delicate pencil sketches by Piper, 19 devoted to the city and the remaining 37 to the county. Hayward began by painting a broad-brush stroke of Connacht, writing of its history, geology and landscape. He then delved into the history of Galway, describing it as 'the most Irish of all cities'.

Hayward loved folklore and legend but his chief delight was spent exploring the built heritage. Lynch's Castle, he stated, was 'the one single example today that really gives us anything approaching a picture of what the city must have looked like before the curse of Cromwell fell upon it. but he complained about the lack of interest in protecting the built heritage:

'Apart from the church of Saint Nicholas, there has been an appalling disregard for beauty and tradition which is perhaps more apparent in Ireland than in any other country of the civilised world. I have frequently bemoaned this utter lack of public tastes in my fellow-countrymen, this dreadful vulgarity which fills our fairest and most sacred ruined abbeys with tombs of an ugliness that must be seen to be believed.'

Although he celebrated many aspects of local life, Hayward was frequently outspoken about what he saw as the lack of civic pride. On his travels generally around Ireland he found little interest in preserving buildings. But for all his criticism, there were many aspects of Galway that he cherished and he celebrated its historic past. As he walked the streets and lanes, he drank in the atmosphere, and found Lynch's Castle the most interesting specimen of domestic architecture standing in the city. He spent considerable time in St Nicholas's Church which he described as 'easily the most important ecclesiastical building in the *Citie of the Tribes*, and one of the most notable in the whole of Ireland … and within itself is virtually the whole history of Galway in stone!.

Connacht and the City of Galway was published in March 1952 in a print run of 2,000 copies. The book was reviewed widely in the press in Ireland and in Britain. In the *New Statesman and Nation*, the Irish poet Louis MacNeice said it was packed with fascinating facts, but he felt Hayward was 'unduly addicted to superlatives and to words like "lovely" and "veritable" and allowed the landscape to wax in splendour. The *Times Literary Supplement* review, written by the Mayo-born poet Richard Murphy, thought that Hayward's writing was old-fashioned and that he 'seemed unaware that to see the country in the present it is necessary to look with contemporary eyes'.

The Irish papers were more generous in their reviews. The *Northern Whig's* critic Alex Riddell remarked: 'Hayward is a kindly guide with a good deal of knowledge – he has certainly worked to gather its great bulk – which he transmits with a hint of the manner of the good papa of the 'Swiss Family Robinson' leading his children through that marvellous island'. In his review for *Irish Book Lover*, Kevin Faller, a Galwegian, said the book was 'tastefully produced' and 'remarkable for the pencil sketches by Raymond Piper. Anyone familiar with the grey, blurre landscapes which predominate in the western province, can anticipate the charm and authentic atmosphere that a talented pencil spreads throughout such a work.' He added: 'I doubt if another will ever replace it.'

Whatever the views of the critics, Hayward's books were eagerly anticipated by readers throughout Ireland and further afield. By the early 1950s Kenny's Bookshop, then in Shop Street, had chalked up respectable sales of his *Corrib Country* and promoted his first Connacht book. Des Kenny remembers his mother Maureen, who ran the business, talking about Hayward's visits:

During the 1940s and '50s he used to come in and look around the books and talk to my mother for quite a long time. He would have been seeking information, asking questions about Galway and checking on sources. I remember her telling me years later that after they had chatted, he would walk down to the Wolfe Tone Bridge and look over the Corrib. Frequently she spoke about him and said he used to stare into the river for hours and she often wondered what he was thinking about. She never understood why he did that although he may have been taking notes and deliberating on his writing. His books sold very well in the shop and his writing which was anecdotal and historical was popular. I would describe his work as a cross between a journalist and a serious writer. It was after Hayward's death, as well as the deaths of Brendan Behan, Kate O'Brien and Austin Clarke, that we decided in the late 1960s to start the picture gallery of authors as we realized that we did not have anything to remember them by.

Another west of Ireland connection to Hayward was through the singer Delia Murphy, who came originally from Claremorris. He had heard her singing at a meeting of the Irish PEN in Jurys Hotel, Dublin in 1937 and, as one of his jobs was a talent scout for Decca Records, he immediately signed her up.

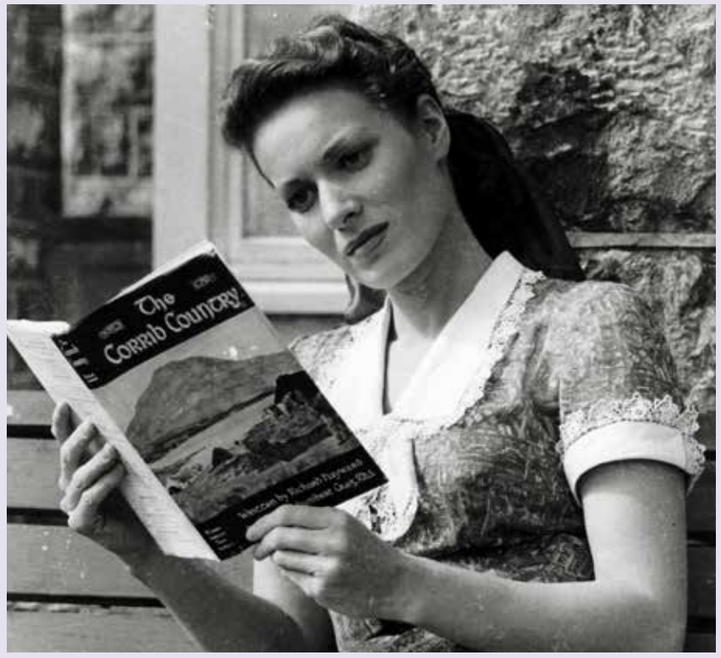
With her strong accent and distinctive singing voice, she preformed 'Three Lovely Lassies', a song he especially enjoyed. Delia had been educated in Tuam, Dublin, and at University College Galway where she learned tunes from Pádraic Ó Conaire whom Hayward called a fine Irish writer and storyteller.

Murphy and Hayward went on together to form a successful four-year partnership, developing a synergy between them and singing all over the country. They sang duets on Radio Éireann, including 'If I were a Blackbird', 'The Rose of Mooncoin', 'The Bantry Girls' Lament', 'The Bright Silvery Light of the Moon', and 'What will you do Love?' Murphy's best-known song was 'The Spinning Wheel' written in the nineteenth century.

Hayward had a connection to *The Quiet Man* filmed in Cong in 1951, and his musical arrangement of 'The Humour is on me Now' was used in it. The Hayward publicity machine was given another shot in the arm during a break in the filming when an elegant Maureen O'Hara was photographed relaxing in a chair with a copy of *The Corrib Country*, an enduring image of the star.

Delia Murphy and Hayward photographed on concert poster. (Courtesy Paul Clements)

Hayward playing the harp – he was taught to play it by two nuns at a convent in Co. Antrim. (Courtesy Paul Clements)



Maureen O'Hara on the set of 'The Quiet Man' reading Hayward's Corrib Country, 1951. (Courtesy Paul Clements)

For Hayward's second Connacht book, *Mayo Sligo Leitrim Roscommon*, published in 1955, three years after the Galway volume, Mayo was the launching point. His journey began in Cong, familiar to him from his Corrib stay, where he embarked on a boat trip with Piper on Lough Mask before moving on to Achill Island.

Galway Oyster Festival, 1961.
(Courtesy Paul Clements)

Although he enjoyed walking on Achill he was appalled at the 'vicious devastation' that he found at the Deserted Village. He felt that the people of the island 'seem to have had small regard for their monuments of antiquity, a regard which is not greatly developed in the Irish people as a whole'.

On the way to Sligo he diverted to tour the back roads around Lough Talt and wrote of his love for them: 'For the *green roads* of Ireland ever tug at my heart, and I never tire of exploring their withdrawn beauty nor of seeking out their hidden or forgotten history. Quays fascinated him, ancient customs intrigued him, old graveyards were favourite haunts, lost names in history and stories such as those involving Fighting Fitzpatrick and Grace O'Malley all fed his writing mill.

Hayward loved nothing better than a hike into the hills relishing the opportunity of tramping the bogs and tackling the peaks. He nourished readers with the idea of freedom that the hills offered.

A lover of Galway, Hayward was a regular visitor to the Oyster Festival in the late 1950s and early '60s and enjoyed socialising and meeting people at the event.

Aside from writing travel books, Hayward led tour groups all over Ireland through his involvement with the Belfast Naturalists' Field club and was a collector of regional dialect.

He was also a film-star and ran a film production company, producing feature films shown throughout Ireland in the 1930s. They included *The Luck of the Irish, Irish and Proud of it* and *The Early Bird* which broke box-office records in Galway, Carlow

Hayward leads a group from the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club group to Sligo from Belfast at Easter 1961.
(Courtesy Paul Clements)

and Kerry. Hayward made documentary films, including one about the Corrib based on his journey through the area in the early 1940s, and another one on the Shannon, *Where the River Shannon Flows*, which tied in with his book being published in 1940, following his journey down the river in 1939.

In the final years of his life Hayward received awards including an honorary degree which was conferred on him by Lafayette College in Pennsylvania in June 1959. The citation stated that his doctorate was awarded for 'distinguished services to Irish literature' and in recognition of his contribution to the development and spread of Irish literature. It recognised his 'love of Ireland and Irish lore' and that he 'had convened the joy in beauty and the love of the country to many.'

His tragic death in a car accident near Ballymena, Co. Antrim on 13 October 1964, in which two other people were also killed, was widely reported in the press. His obituary in *The Irish Times* said Hayward 'took the view that the Gaelic language was the indispensable key to the understanding of Irish literature and culture, and as such should be possessed by every Irishman.'

Richard Hayward was a man of boundless energy, fierce ambition, and infectious enthusiasm. His books are a remarkable record of a country going through dramatic social and political change before the modern era.

Travel Writing: A Fifty-Year Survey

Paul Clements

'Very often there is an outer journey that runs parallel with an inner one, leading to an inner discovery where travellers set off to find themselves or their soul.'

In the past 50 years, since around 1970, travel writing has become a hybrid of many subjects with enormous elasticity and wide parameters. Apart from the journey itself, along with storytelling and descriptions of place or landscape, other subjects in travel books include a cocktail of topics such as memoir or spirituality, music, history, art, philosophy, wildlife, cookery, architecture, archaeology or many other fields.

The English writer Jonathan Raban, who has lived in the United States since the 1980s, once said that travel writing is 'a notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed'. Whatever the chosen subject, the writing features the twin pillars of people and place on which the structure is built. Dialogue is often at the heart and soul of contemporary books which come under the broad genre of creative nonfiction. These are made up of chance encounters with strangers, overheard conversations (once memorably described by the English travel writer Norman Lews as 'legalised eavesdropping') or in other cases pre-arranged interviews. If you are going to travel 5,000 kilometres to see someone, then you will want to make sure they are available to meet you. Often the best type of journey is the digressive or discursive one where there is no particular set goal – just aimless wandering; travelling with a destination and a time frame is what some writers prefer while others opt for the joy of serendipity.

Very often there is an outer journey that runs parallel with an inner one, leading to an inner discovery where travellers set off to find themselves or their soul. There may be a quest too – often spurious – perhaps for a rare bird, a delicate orchid, a piece of sculpture, flamenco dancing or travelling in the footsteps of a previous writer. Books following in Robert Louis Stevenson's footprints through the Cevennes mountains of southern France are eternally popular.

Another *raison d'etre* are links to childhood which stir the emotions and the pulse with a beating heart. Bruce Chatwin in his book *In Patagonia* (1977) went off to South America in search of the story behind a piece of dinosaur skin which he had admired and found in his grandmother's cupboard – the fabled brontosaurus hide from the family curiosity cabinet – which had been thrown out after her death. Chatwin famously sent a telegram to *The Sunday Times* where he had worked with a short declaration of intent: 'Gone to Patagonia.'

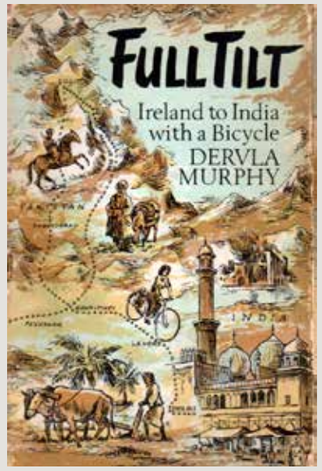
His powerful motivation though of a search for a piece of dinosaur skin was quickly forgotten about and he concentrated instead on writing about the Welsh community who were the descendants of people who left Wales in the early 19th century to escape from English religious, linguistic and political persecution. His book is a series of quickfire impressionistic pen portraits, although he ruffled a few feathers and annoyed the Welsh people. They felt they were depicted in a transparent manner and were reduced to a few vivid details by a total stranger they had just met for an hour or so.

Nonetheless Chatwin's book is cited as a benchmark against which many other travel books have since been tested. His five books occupy a zone between genres, known as the 'twilight of veracity'. There is a haunting presence in them and they are sparse and solitary yet engaging and his sentences are finely crafted. Chatwin, who died in 1989, was a traveller of tales, a connoisseur of the extraordinary and a chameleon-like character with a fertile imagination whose books were a blend of fact and fiction. He was a tremendous talker, and a friend once said that 'he murdered people with talk', often raising his voice over others like a chattering bird, hence his nickname: 'Chatter, chatter, chatter, Chatwin.'

Chatwin's *In Patagonia* and Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) are credited with reinventing the travel writing boom in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Theroux's book sold more than 1.5 million copies unleashing a huge interest in journeys and opening up the marketplace to many others. But with mass travel, television documentaries that brought foreign places into living rooms, and the arrival of the internet, there was a dip in publishing. Some people believed that travel writing was in the doldrums around the early years of the 2000s with a tendency by authors to turn towards personal memoir and more reflective writing relating to place, landscape and nature.

Some writers, such as Colin Thubron describe a linear journey, either travelling to a country or through several different countries in regions of Asia. Others, such as Jan Morris, concentrate on the destination and being there. The common thread linking all these writers and what unites them is that they belong to a tradition of travel and literary writing; they have one foot in the library and the other in a foreign field or a field at home.

As the author of 26 acclaimed travel books, the indefatigable Dervla Murphy is acknowledged as one of the leading writers of travel. She has set out from her home in Lismore, in west Waterford, on journeys to many far-flung and dangerous places such as Afghanistan, India, Israel, Palestine, Laos and Siberia – and for most of these journeys she has travelled alone and by bicycle.



Murphy's list of titles stretches back to 1965 when she published her first book *Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle,* a story of an intrepid journey across Europe and Asia and quickly established her as a fresh voice in travel writing. In her writing she tries to achieve a balance between personal events and impressions and the bigger picture. The act of movement, rather than the act of arriving, is for her often the experience. Frequently there is a random nature and spur-of-the-moment side to her decision to go to a country – perhaps a chance remark or a newspaper article about a country will inspire her.

For more than 70 years Jan Morris, who died in November 2020, travelled the world as a journalist and writer, producing a total of 60 books of travel and history reflecting her love of cities and countries. Amongst here best-known books are *Venice* (1960), *The Presence of Spain* (1964) and *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere* (2001). She also wrote biography, memoir and diaries and her novel *Last Letters from Hav*, about a mythical city state, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1985. Her trilogy on the rise and fall of the British empire was published between 1968 and 1978 and is regarded as the cultural and artistic centrepiece of her life.

Everywhere she travelled Morris sniffed out the oddball, the whiffs, wafts and smells, and her books contain many examples of onomatopoeia. Through her waterfall of words the reader can hear the plop, splash, hiss and fizz, the click of high heels or the floating voice of an operatic contralto. She also indulged in animism, attributing human characteristics to inanimate objects or plants and personification, and assigning cities or buildings with virtues and values. An insightful writer, Morris frequently linked the past with the present using her historical imagination. Generally, she did not describe the journey to a place but wrote about its effect on her. Her books are filled with sensory writing and she captured the *genius loci*, or spirit of a place, better than most.

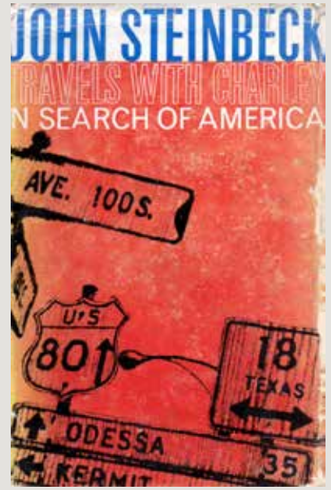
The English traveller Colin Thubron, who was born in 1939, writes about the geographical and natural characteristics of many Asian countries. Acknowledged as the laureate of travel writing, his books spring from curiosity about worlds which his generation found threatening: China, Russia and Islam, and from a desire to humanise and understand them. In the 1960s he became fascinated by the multi-layered mystery of the Middle East and the Moslem world and by inland cities in Syria and Palestine, writing books about Jerusalem and Damascus. He went on to write another three books about the eastern Mediterranean, including an excellent study of Cyprus in 1974. Aside from the historical detail, Thubron brings his subject alive through research, erudition and intuition, and is an acute social observer. One critic once wrote of him: 'He makes me interested in places I'm not interested in.' Reading Thubron will certainly increase your vocabulary since he was poetic and his lyrical writing style is filled with emotional depth, delicacy of feeling and sensitivity to the local communities through which he travels. His writing is melancholic, yet with a modest, retiring and compassionate style.

It is Thubron's own insecurity, emotion and humanity, as much as his inquisitiveness, that make him a leading travel writer. It requires effort to read him and understand some of the complexities of his journeys but it repays the time spent. In Thubron's case, as in some of the other writers, there is always a journey that begins before the journey begins, through extensive advance geographical and historical research poring over maps and working out itineraries. In some instances, he learns the language (e.g. Russian and Mandarin Chinese) before setting out. This gives him a unique advantage of being able to talk to local people in their own tongue, often resulting in much colourful detail and stories that would ordinarily be missed. Prior to departure, Thubron may also collect names of people to visit. The fact that he carries out advance research does not mean that he is not open to the unexpected or to disruption – on the contrary he loves the joy of this and by speaking the language it helps him find the soul of a place. But he is constantly the master of spotting the significant moment and discarding the irrelevant. His most recent book *The Amur River: Between Russia and China* is based on a dramatic journey along the tenth longest river in the world and was published in September 2021.

No survey of travel writing in recent decades would be complete without mentioning Patrick Leigh Fermor who was born in 1915 and whose writing is noted for its ornate language and exotic words. In his school report from King's School, Canterbury, Leigh Fermor's housemaster said: 'He is a dangerous mixture of sophistication and recklessness which makes one anxious about his influence on other boys.' He decided to carry on educating himself reading Greek and Latin texts, Shakespeare, poetry and history books.

His most celebrated books are *A Time of Gifts* (1977) and its sequel *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986). These represent two-thirds of a trilogy while the final volume, *The Broken Road: From the Iron Gates to Mount Athos* (2014), was published after the writer's death in June 2011. The books are based on an extremely long journey across Europe on foot, from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople. He set out in 1933 at the age of 18 with his hobnail boots, a greatcoat and rucksack, taking a boat on which he was the only passenger from London to the Hook of Holland. He also brought with him the all-important volume of Horace and *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Walking an average of 12 miles a day, Leigh Fermor's route took him through Holland, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia roughly following the courses of the Rhine and the Danube with innumerable detours and side excursions. Along the way through the countryside, he met tramps, gypsies, farmers, shepherds, innkeepers, as well as aristocracy, including counts in their private libraries, and slept in barns, shepherds' huts, barges, monasteries and castles: 'There is much to recommend', Leigh Fermor wrote, 'moving straight from straw to a four-poster and then back again.'

The books are disquisitions on many subjects, showing his knowledge of history, architecture, religion, obscure central European dialects and little-known sects. Few writers in the English-speaking world could rival Leigh Fermor's pre-eminence as one of the great stylists. His books are full of allusions, afterthoughts, and cross-references, alongside flights of learned fancy and has been described as art concealing art.

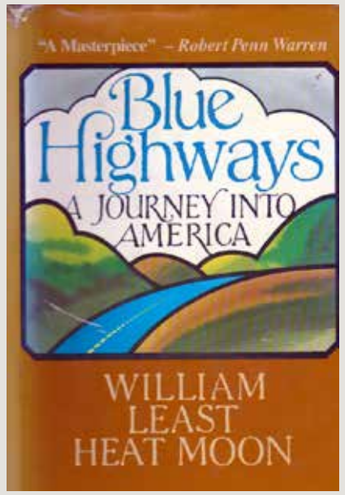


Moving across the Atlantic, the novelist John Steinbeck was noted for *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* in 1962, about his journey around the States with a French poodle called Charley. Steinbeck had become disenchanted with America and felt that consumerism was destroying the old values and selfishness was taking over. He had spent a considerable time living abroad in the 1950s and decided to return and learn about his own country. The result was a book that is part memoir and part travel in which he observed America and Americans with a humorous and sceptical eye. He sees a generous country and decides it is too packed with individuals for single judgements.

Steinbeck had kept dogs throughout his life. One of them was an Irish setter called Toby who once chewed up half of the only manuscript of his novel *Of Mice and Men*. He explained this delicately to his agent saying: 'The poor little fellow may have been acting critically.' In his travel book, readers are given a detailed account of Charley's foibles, preferences, and prejudices. He is an intelligent and well-mannered travelling companion who is integral to the project. Quite often the dog helps break the ice with people he meets on the road and Steinbeck decides that a dog is a bond between strangers: 'Charley is my ambassador … he can't read or drive a car, but in his own field of endeavour he has no peer.'

Twenty years after Steinbeck's book came out, in 1982, William Least Heat-Moon (real name William Trogdon) of Irish, Scottish, English and Osage ancestry, published *Blue Highways*, which became a cult classic. His book was based on a journey around the States in 1978 and is the story of the people and the places he discovered on his 13,000-mile trip along the back roads and in small, forgotten towns. It is full of the odd and the quirky, and of the spark of ordinary life. His plan was to cross the States without ever using a federal highway. Heat-Moon travels the back roads: 'The blue highways' of the title, which he writes in the introduction were marked in blue on the old

highway maps of America: 'Then, in truth, they carry a mysterious cast of blue and it's that time when the pull of the blue highway is strongest, when the open road is a beckoning, a strangeness, a place where a man can lose himself.'

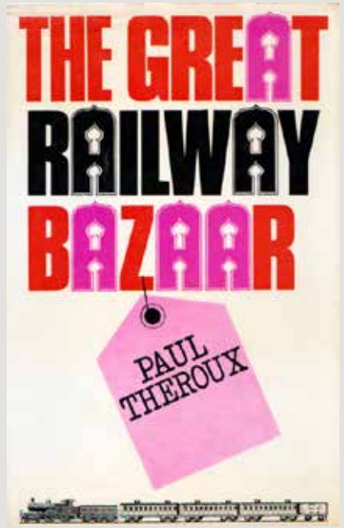


Heat-Moon has a gift for talking to people and getting them to talk to him and explores their lives, captures their language and recreates lost worlds. He has an easy style in reporting what he sees and what people say. One of the most important things he does is to ask the right questions. This will often prompt other questions that unravel the picture, opening up the story in all sorts of ways demonstrating a skill that is as much to do with listening as anything else.

Quip-lash books (a non-literary term), where every paragraph appears to contain a joke, have been extremely popular with Bill Bryson as one of the finest exponents. The introduction to his first travel book, *The Lost Continent* (1989), is one of the best ever penned: 'I come from Des Moines, somebody had to'. Bryson had spent ten years living in England and his idea was to return to the land of his youth and drive around his own country to get to know it better. By the end of his journey he had covered nearly 14,000 miles and had visited thirty-eight states. He felt that he had much to be grateful for as he did not get shot or mugged, the car did not break down, and he was never once approached by a Jehovah's Witness. The book was acclaimed as one of the funniest of the year.

Aside from travel writing, Bryson has written a number of other highly regarded books dealing with language, history, biography and popular science. In 2020 he retired from writing, and when asked about his travels, described the beauty of going to a strange land: 'I can't think of anything that excites a greater sense of childlike wonder than to be in a country where you are ignorant of almost everything.'

A different style is adopted by another American writer, Paul Theroux, who has travelled by train, car and boat through many countries. He can often appear curmudgeonly in some of his books, making the journey the story, concentrating on the hardships, frustrations and delays. Theroux takes on, not just countries, but entire continents and oceans in his epic journeys. By and large in his travel he circumvents common tourist destinations, presenting often highly prejudiced



observations of people and places. He does not dwell on the cuisine or the architecture of the countries but is more likely to denounce the local people for their littered streets or to bemoan the insufferable conversation of his travelling companions. Part of the reason for this is due to the fact that he does not want to romanticise places in the way his predecessors did. He demystifies them and reports that they are real, human places with beauty and flaws. Theroux always remains detached, but observant, largely keeping a gap between him and the locals he meets, allowing the reader to enjoy the experiences. He is regarded as the master of the cameo performance of minor characters in the everyday. His travel writing is more novelistic and he is the author of some thirty novels.

Theroux has been one of the dominant voices of travel literature in the past forty years. He offers insights into the power of isolation and solitude in travel and the gruelling self-reflection that occurs on journeys. His output, of both nonfiction travel writing and fiction, is vast and is of a consistently high quality. He has always said that he is a traveller, not a tourist, and balances the good with the bad. At the end of *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) he writes: 'The difference between travel writing and fiction is the difference between recording what the eye sees and discovering what the imagination knows. Fiction is pure joy – how sad I could not reinvent the trip as fiction.'

During 2020 and 2021 armchair travelling has been back in fashion as so few people have been travelling because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021 English publishers, such as John Murray, reissued out-of-print tales of classic journeys and have found a strong appetite for some of the most enduring travel books of the past fifty years. In the early 1970s travel writing was made up a few books hidden away at the back of shops, but they now take over entire walls and in the eyes of many readers are as gripping and immersive as fiction.

William Evans of Eton, *View of Leenane, Mweelrea Mountain and Killary Fjord*, Co. Galway, NGI.2008.36.28. Photo (c) National Gallery of Ireland

Biographies

Paul Clements is a literary journalist and author of the biography "*Romancing Ireland: Richard Hayward 1892-1964"* (2014), which was adapted for BBC television. His most recent travel book is "Shannon Country: A River Journey Through Time" (Lilliput Press, 2020). His other work includes, *"Wandering Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way: From Banba's Crown to World's End"* (2016), and "*Irish Shores: A Journey Round the Rim of Ireland*" (1993). He also writes local history book reviews and 'Irishman's Diaries' for *The Irish Times.* Paul is a Fellow of Green Templeton College, Oxford and lives in Belfast.

Dr Amélie Dochy Jacquard is Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Toulouse II, France. She taught at the National University of Ireland (Maynooth) before sitting the French civil service exam for a tenured English teaching position ("Agrégation d'Anglais") in 2009. She then became a Research Assistant at the University of Toulouse II (France). Her PhD in Irish studies focused on the topic of "Cliché, Compassion or Commerce? The Representations of the Irish by the Scottish Painter Erskine Nicol (1850-1904)". She adopted a post-colonial approach in analysing the portrayal of the Irish through the iconography of Nicol's prolific depictions. Amélie's research interests include visual representations of the Irish in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Gerard Hanberry is a retired post-primary teacher, poet, author, and musician, who lives in Galway. His works include "On Raglan Road – Great Irish Love Songs and the Women Who Inspired Them" (Collins Press, 2016), "More lives than one: the remarkable Wilde family through the generations" (Collins Press, 2011), and his collections of poetry include "*Something like lovers"* (Ebbw Vale, Wales, 2005), *"At Grattan Road"* (Salmon, 2009), *and "What Our Shoes Say About Us"* (Salmon, 2014).

Dr Jim Higgins worked as a freelance archaeologist in Ireland and aboard, prior to being appointed Heritage Officer to Galway City Council in 1999, the first such officer in the state. He is a graduate of NUI Galway, receiving his PhD in 2011, on the topic of Galway 's medieval sculpture. He is widely published, in aspects of archaeology, history, art history, folklore and folklife, sculpture and symbolism. He is the author of twelve books, and editor and co-author of six more.

Anne Hodge is graduate of NCAD and UCD, was appointed Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Ireland in 2001. She is responsible for the works on paper collection, comprising over 12000 items, and manages the Prints and Drawings Study Room. Research interests include printmaking in Ireland, photography, landscape drawing and topography and the history of collecting. Anne commissioned Wendy Judge to create new work for the exhibition *From Galway to Leenane: Perspectives on Landscape* (2013) and worked with Dorothy Cross on *Trove* (2014), a collaboration between the Gallery, IMMA and the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork. Among the many other exhibitions Anne has been responsible for are the Edvard Munch (2009) and Leonardo da Vinci (2016) exhibitions.

On location filming for *Westward Ho! Travel Writers Remembered*

https://www.youtube.com/c/galwaypubliclibraries

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Briddon, The Boatman, William Evans, in Halls' *Ireland,* 1843, p.491.

Westward Ho!

A Ramble Through Galway 1840-1950

Collected Essays

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017–2022

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