

SOCIETY AND MANNERS IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND. By John Gamble. Edited by Breandán Mac Suibhne. Pp lxxxii, 716. Dublin: Field Day. 2011. €45.

In the autumn of 1810, John Gamble, a native of County Tyrone who had long been resident in London, returned to his home country, conducting a leisurely tour, which took him, on an occasionally meandering route, from Dublin to Strabane. As he went, he jotted 'notes and observations, infant thoughts and half-formed ideas' in a pocket book, and the following year he drew on these, publishing *Sketches of history, politics and manners, taken in Dublin, and the north of Ireland, in the autumn of 1810* (1811), a travel narrative, intended to dispel what Gamble perceived as English 'ignorance' regarding Ireland's 'true character' (pp 6, 177). Both entertaining and informative, Gamble's *Sketches* proved moderately successful and by the time of his death in 1831 he had produced, in addition to a play, a political pamphlet, and a series of largely forgettable novels, two further works – *A view of society and manners in the north of Ireland in the summer and autumn of 1812* (1813) and *Views of society and manners in the north of Ireland, in a series of letters written in the year 1818* (1819) – which sought to make the Irish 'better known' (p. 231). In *Society and manners in early nineteenth-century Ireland*, Breandán Mac Suibhne has brought these three vivid narratives together in an exemplary scholarly edition, which will be of value to a wide range of readers with interests in the political, cultural and social history of Ireland during the opening decades of the nineteenth century.

That travel narratives constitute an invaluable, if sometimes problematic, historical source, is well known, and scholars of early nineteenth-century Ireland have long been aware of the utility of Gamble's writings. On the whole, however, they have tended to use them selectively, mining them for apposite quotations and illustrative snippets. This is understandable: rich in incident and character, Gamble's narratives are, as Mac Suibhne notes, 'well written, eminently quotable, [and] easily cherry-picked' (p. xxxii). With its extensive index and detailed notes, those who wish to use Gamble's works in this way in the future will find *Society and manners in early nineteenth-century Ireland* immensely useful. In highlighting Gamble's unacknowledged borrowings and sourcing his quotations, identifying the individuals and locations he refers to and providing the necessary background for the often obscure events he discusses, Mac Suibhne has compiled a formidable amount of information, which serves to anchor Gamble's narratives in the archival record, enabling them to be used with greater accuracy and confidence than has hitherto been the case.

But beyond providing a useful resource for those who wish to use his work selectively, this volume makes a compelling case for Gamble as a writer of distinctive voice, whose seemingly digressive narratives should be viewed as 'deliberate works' – works which were intended to 'make pointed interventions in contemporary political and cultural debates', and which thus merit sustained scholarly scrutiny (pp xxvii–xxviii). In particular, the books function as tracts in support of Catholic Emancipation, with Gamble returning, time and again, to the wrongs suffered by Ireland's Catholics and the pressing need for conciliation. More broadly, as Mac Suibhne's nuanced introductory essay highlights, they embody a sustained attempt to grapple with the fall-out of the 1798 rebellion. In Mac Suibhne's reading, 1798 was, for Gamble, 'history's pivot', the 'year in which the future imagined by a generation finally disappeared', and his narratives thus emphasise dislocation and loss of opportunity (p. xxiii). In short, Gamble's narratives are the productions of a man haunted by the ghosts of what could have been, and they depict a 'spectral afterworld of failed revolution' (p. xxxiii).

On the whole, Mac Suibhne's introduction is persuasive, and it deftly conveys the insistent sense of melancholy – verging at times on the Gothic – which characterises Gamble's narratives. More could, perhaps, have been said about Gamble's religious preferences. While careful to note that he was not a bigot, highlighting his support for Catholic Emancipation and appreciation of Catholic culture, Mac Suibhne identifies Gamble as a 'Dissenter partisan', citing his assertion that 'Presbyterianism as it *now* exists

in the North of Ireland, is beyond all others the religion of reason' (p. xviii). But if he was a Dissenter partisan, Gamble was an idiosyncratic one whose beliefs are hard to pin down: he cared little for theological disputation, disliked Presbyterian psalmody, believed the Catholic religion – 'solemn in music, fragrant in incense' – to be 'delightful' and appears to have been unsure regarding the existence of an afterlife (p. 250). This is, however, a minor quibble. Mac Suibhne's opening essay remains a fitting introduction to a highly impressive publication, which will be of interest to many. Although coming in at a hefty 716 pages (excluding the lengthy introductory essay), it is also an attractive publication: *Field Day* are to be applauded for producing such an elegantly designed and laid out volume.

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FUNDING THE NATION: MONEY AND NATIONALIST POLITICS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND.

By Michael Keyes. Pp viii, 268. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. 2011. €24.99.

Most historians are notoriously more comfortable with ideas and narratives than figures and accounts. Anyone who researches nineteenth-century Irish nationalist politics will come across the issue of politicians' personal and party finances – published subscription lists in newspapers, the image of Daniel O'Connell as 'the Big Beggarman' extorting pennies from paupers, the political tensions caused by O'Connell's shaky personal finances, the perpetual conflict between condemning government patronage in theory and seeking it on behalf of supporters, the role of American contributions in financing Parnell's political movement and the accusations of thievery flung at him after that movement split in 1890 – but it is rare to find systematic expositions of how such considerations shaped political developments. This admirably clear and well-organised study, based on original research – whose challenges will only be apparent to those who have read early nineteenth-century newspapers on microfilm or navigated the undercatalogued manuscript collections of the National Library of Ireland – thus meets an important need.

Keyes's account centres on O'Connell and Parnell. He argues that while some elements of the O'Connellite strategy of building agitation around the collection of 'Catholic Rent' from small subscribers were first suggested by others (e.g. the Waterford M.P. Thomas Wyse, with his lifelong interest in popular education, first grasped how the structures used to collect the 'Rent' could be deployed for political mobilisation) O'Connell's achievement lay in exploiting them to create a new style of populist politics, to a certain extent independent of aristocratic wealth and government patronage. Not only was the agitation sustained by the 'Rent', to a considerable extent the 'Rent' – with its associated processes of collection and publicity (and the clientelism involved in its expenditure) – was the agitation. Keyes relates O'Connell's changing political strategies to the need to secure funding through popular enthusiasm (O'Connell having access to government patronage only during his informal coalition with the Whigs in the late 1830s).

O'Connell's financial resources did not allow him to maintain nationwide political ascendancy; his aristocratic opponents drained the 'Rent' by using their wealth to force him into expensive electoral contests where, in addition to the usual costs, he had to compensate tenants financially penalised by their landlords for supporting him. Parnell overcame these restraints because of reforms which created a larger and less deferential electorate, but also through securing American financial support on a scale not available to O'Connell. This involved its own balancing act. Keyes's Parnell is the Parnell of Paul Bew; a politician strategically manipulating land agitation to secure his own, essentially parliamentary, objectives. American money held together Parnell's support coalition, with