claim, but nowhere is it adequately developed. Similarly, in her discussion of Brontë's *Villette*, she asserts (but never really demonstrates) that "The novel is underwritten by the assumption common to dissenting bible commentary: that literal truth, even in the foundational text of the English nation, is always figurative" (81). These are complex and important claims, and deserve further attention. Carpenter's book remains, however, a timely reminder of the crucial importance of religion to Victorian studies and of the critical work that remains to be done in this field.

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Ina Ferris. *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. vii + 205 pp.

The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland covers territory well beyond that suggested by its title. Ina Ferris traces developments not only in the Irish national tale, but also in other fictional forms—Irish Gothic and "novels of insurgency"—and in non-fiction including travel narratives, memoirs, and political speeches. All of these genres, she argues, played a key role in shaping national subjectivity in a post-Union, pre-Catholic Emancipation Ireland. Beginning with the Act of Union and concluding with the Emancipation agitation of the 1820s, Ferris uses an impressive synthesis of textual analysis, British Romantic and Irish Studies criticism, and literary theory to describe how Irish writers changed the way they defined their nation's position in its "incomplete Union" with Britain.

"To think about Ireland via the question of incomplete Union," Ferris writes, "is … to move into the foreground a sense of language and public discourse as a mobile scene of agitation and agency (rather than impersonal system and containment) and hence to understand a cultural field in terms of friction as much as analogy or homology" (8–9). The national tale, understood from this perspective, aims to act on both its political environment and its generic predecessors, deliberately shifting the assumptions set by the Anglo-Irish travel narrative to establish a destabilizing subjectivity suited to action in a politically destabilized Ireland.

Ferris uses as an introductory example the case of Percy Shelley, who at nineteen came to Ireland bent on reform with a political pamphlet for the poor already composed, wrote a new one on site for the students of Dublin College (changing both his intended audience and his mode

Reviews.indd 206 2/24/2008, 4:02 PM

of address), and then rapidly withdrew from Ireland altogether. "What makes the Shelley incident particularly telling," Ferris argues, "is that even so limited an encounter with the subject of his discourse occasioned a new text and a change of genre" (10). She then chronicles a much more sustained change of genre in post-Union writing. The first shift was from travel narratives adopting a masculine subjectivity that presented Ireland as a case to be judged, to national tales that undermined their travelling protagonists by drawing them into the Ireland through which they journeyed. The national tale, by involving its subjects, thus created a new emphasis on "the one who presents the case rather than … the one who determines it" (50). Period models of feminine subjectivity became key in this transformation: as Ferris demonstrates through an extended analysis of the heroines of Lady Morgan, such models initially challenged their colonial context but eventually became challenged by it. By disrupting the "conciliatory" project of the early national tale (101), later national tales and succeeding Irish Gothic novels positioned their narratives as sites of civic upset. They thus prepared the way for the rhetoric of Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation movement, which shifted Ireland's mode of address, already altered from a "case" to a "claim," one step further to a "demand" for rights (128).

The unnecessarily heavy jargon of *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* can make this argument difficult to follow. (The book's concluding sentence provides an example: "To return this question to the matrix of British Romanticism is thus to bring into sharper view the workings of this often overlooked stratum in cultural formation and to argue, more generally, for the historical agency and productive value of the indistinct and the indeterminate within the discursive negotiations of civic culture in the period" (154).) Further, Ireland's ambiguous post-Union status as "at once a part of the kingdom (a political subject) but not a part of Great Britain (not a national subject)" may seem to be old territory (1), already featured prominently in postcolonial Irish Studies scholarship, to which Ferris openly acknowledges her debt (3).

Ferris ably expands this territory, however, by "shift[ing] the scene of analysis from the imperial stage, which has been garnering most of the attention in the last decade, to a more strictly civic forum" (3). Her analysis is at its best when it explores the opportunities for new kinds of authority created by the injustices of Britain and Ireland's incomplete union: the alliance between author and reading public created by Lady Morgan's self-defense as a national author against her literary reviewers, for example (67–73), or the utopian spaces opened in Morgan's later novels

Reviews.indd 207 2/24/2008, 4:02 PM

as she removes "her national heroine from the family interior … attach[ing] her to shadowy and temporary associations with obscure, international connections" (100). If the incomplete union was oppressive, it was also a "civic and discursive opening" (154).

Ferris's comprehensive research throughout this argument invites trust. Professional and disciplinary divisions between a nationally-defined Irish literary studies and a period-defined British literary studies too often keep scholars in these overlapping fields apart. Ferris, however, demonstrates that she is at home in both areas, well aware of recent work in both Irish Studies and British Romanticism. Her extensive plot and character analyses are also consistently informed by her wide-ranging use of contemporary literary theory: she moves beyond the obligatory references (Anderson, Habermas) to draw usefully on a wide variety of theorists including de Certeau and Bakhtin. This is a work that keeps capable hold over both its specific analyses of national tales and the broader implications of those analyses for the narrative construction of nineteenth-century Irish identity. As such, it is a welcome contribution to its field.

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Brendan Frederick R. Edwards. *Paper Talk: A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aborginal Peoples in Canada before 1960*. Lanhan, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. 225 pp.

The story of First Nations' relationship with European modalities of print and language is complex and dispersed. Bibliography offers one essential cornerstone: Joyce Banks's *Books in Native Languages in the Rare Book Collections of the National Library of Canada* grounds us in the onslaught of print by which Europeans sought to convert and contain Aboriginal Canadians, while James Danky and Maureen Hady's *Native American Periodicals and Newspapers, 1828–1982* continues the story with many examples of Indigenous communities creating their own print resources. *Paper Talk*, approaching the topic through First Nations' attitudes toward and access to reading, provides a different entrance. Its "plot" is the unfolding of a struggle over the powerful medium of print, as Aboriginal communities sought its benefits without utterly yielding to the agendas of church and state.

Reviews.indd 208 2/24/2008, 4:02 PM