

## WHAT'S THE CONTRIBUTION OF IRISH WRITERS TO LITERATURE?



Literary heritage has a major place in Irish culture, it is considered the oldest literature in Western Europe. In Ireland, literature is Gaelic or English language produced by writers of Irish descent who retain ties to Irish life and culture. Thus Irish literature and poetry has had an almost uninterrupted tradition from the 6th century to the present day and until the 14th century, poetry in English was also written in Ireland and outside the country. Irish literature is characterized by its very old literary genres including poetry, drama and takes the form of prose. The historical influence of the Irish linguistic tradition, such as the strong oral tradition linked to legends and poetry including "**Hiberno-Irish**", explains the strong singularity of Irish literature in Europe, marked by wonder at the nature, in an exaggerated or absurd narrative style and the power of satire.

Consequently, Irish literature from the historical point of view has experienced great upheaval marked by different periods ranging from decline to rebirth, which has allowed Irish literature to bring certain specificities, characteristics, specific to their culture, to English literature. The different periods are as follows :

### The 18th and 19th centuries/Irish literature in English

The beginnings of English-language Irish literature coincided with the decline in the use of written and spoken Gaelic. This decline, which began towards the end of the 18th century, was linked to the political decline of the small Irish lords in the face of English power.

### The beginnings of Irish literature in English

The first Irish literature in English became famous mainly in two poetic genres, notably the popular pastoral genre of an art, full of zest and humor was written by anonymous poets from modest backgrounds, but the lyrical genre on the other hand which was more refined and in contrast due to known poets such as **Thomas MOORE** with ***Irish Melodies***.

### English-Language Literature in the 19th Century

In the second half of the 19th century, patriotic and lyrical works dominated Irish English-language poetry. More driven by the desire to awaken the national feeling of the Irish people by aesthetic motivations certain poets wrote works characterized by an enriched language and fiery feelings which exerted an undeniable political influence, and which were published in the ***Nation*** which is a newspaper founded in 1842 and dedicated to the cause of Irish nationalism.

### Protestant and Catholic fiction

The English-speaking Irish wrote a large number of works of fiction in the 19th century. Protestants dealt with Irish life from the perspective of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy or gentry while Catholics chronicled the life of the Catholic peasant class. Protestant writers include **Maria Edgeworth** (1767-1849) whose ***Castle Rackrent*** (1800) was one of the first regional novels in English. Among Catholic fiction writers, two brothers, **John Banim** (1798-1842) and **Michael Banim** (1796-1834), remain known for their novels, which depict the lives of poverty-stricken Irish peasants.

### The revival of Irish literature

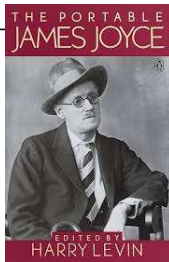
The last decade of the 19th century witnessed a remarkable revival of Irish literature, linked to a return to the Gaelic sources of the national culture. In contrast to those of earlier works, the tone and theme evolved into a clearly articulated devotion to the national cause.

### 20th century literature

The literary revival continued long before the 20th century. Many writers produced remarkable works. In this sense, some authors wrote texts about their life which were collected under the title of autobiography such as Sean O'Casey, but also their interesting historical and personal memories or even the playwright **Lennox Robinson** (1886-1958) who was also director of the ***Abbey Theatre*** and who published the memories of his fight for the theatre in Ireland.

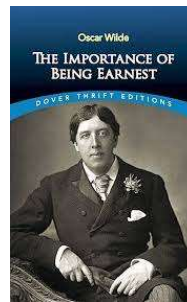
Ireland has had a huge impact on literature worldwide especially through the work of these famous Irish authors. They brought new movements, new writing styles...

**James Joyce**, novelist, poet, literary critic (1882/1941). He is regarded as one of the most influential and important writers of the 20th century as he contributed to the modernist avant-garde Movement.



**Oscar Wilde**, author, poet, playwright (1854/1999), became one of the most popular playwrights in London in the early 1890s.

Notorious for “The importance of being Earnest” (1895), “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*” (1891).



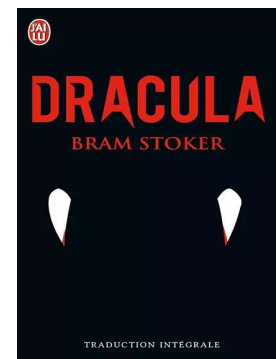
Irish writers, through their specific satirical writing style, also brought new themes into European literature such as myths and legends. Their own traditions are based on their own folklore. But the impact of their myths is not only national, it's become Worldwide. Whether it be leprechauns, four-leaf clovers, or even fairies, Irish culture and folklore is known by more and more people.



To conclude, Irish writers through their writing style, their linguistic wealth, original topics and stories, diversity of movements (artistic, philosophical, literary) have had a massive impact on mainly European literature and modified in depth the literature for the future writers and readers.

The most notorious one is obviously, the legend of Dracula that was born in the book entitled *Dracula* by **Bram Stoker** published in 1897.

This book was the original foundation to the very famous myth that is popular to this day. All of this modified the future writers that were inspired by it and changed the way others tell a story and has brought their culture into other countries' literature.



**Sources :**

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