Irish Republicanism and the Colonial Australian Bushranger Narrative

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In his Preface to *The Story of the Australian Bushrangers* (1899) – published just two years before Federation – the historian George E. Boxall reflected on the impact of bushranging on emergent forms of national identity: 'Hitherto the histories of Australia have passed very lightly over the bushrangers', he wrote, 'but there can be no doubt that they exercised some influence, and not always for evil, for to their influence is due some of the sturdy Republicanism of the modern Australians' (vi). Boxall also noted the radical backgrounds of many of the earliest transported convicts who 'took to the bush' to escape forced labour and become the first bushrangers, emphasising that 'many of them were political agitators, industrial rioters, and machine-breakers' (1). Here, penal servitude works to further radicalise figures who are already defined by their revolutionary capacity; but the individual bushranging stories this late colonial book goes on to recount rarely focus on the bushrangers' political persuasions. These are instead put to one side, having already been recast as contributing to a general republican disposition that was by then structurally divorced from actual political frameworks. This article examines a range of colonial Irish Australian bushranger novels in terms of their varying investments in revolutionary republicanism, arguing that these become increasingly contested and compromised across the colonial period.

One of the earliest literary works to connect Irish revolutionary republicanism and bushranging in colonial Australia is *Rebel Convicts: An Australian Novel* (1858). Published anonymously by George Slater in Melbourne, *Rebel Convicts* has been more recently ascribed to the English-born writer R. H. Horne after careful research by Lurline Stuart. Horne was a London-based

journalist who had worked for Dickens' *Household Words*, and who travelled widely in Ireland in 1846 as a correspondent for the *Daily News*. Stuart notes that there he met with 'members of the Young Ireland Movement, including Charles Gavan Duffy, whom he was to meet again in Australia' (101). Disillusioned with the hardships of London literary life and experiencing 'a moment of mental depression', as Horne puts it in his autobiographical introduction to *Australian Facts and Prospects*, he 'suddenly rallied with a determination to sail to Australia' (2). He emigrated in 1852 and, giving up plans to join the diggings, held various positions across Victoria, including commander of a gold escort and gold commissioner. By 1856 Horne had returned to Melbourne where he started writing again, developing a literary network that included George Gordon McCrae, Marcus Clarke and Frederick Sinnett.

Initially set somewhere on the banks of the Blackwater River in Ireland, *Rebel Convicts* introduces Fitzgerald Newton, an ardent Roman Catholic whose 'whole efforts and energies were employed to overthrow English authority' (4). His son Francis has just returned from France, where his father had sent him 'so he might see venerated that faith once so universally acknowledged in his own unhappy country' and because the Irish cause 'must look [to France] for assistance' (5). In a later chapter, there is a brief allusion to the brutally crushed Irish Rebellion of 1798, where the United Irishmen – founded by radical Presbyterians (with Catholic participation) and influenced by the French Revolution – aimed to establish an Irish Republic. In the novel, the rebels' objective is nothing less than to restore the supremacy of the Catholic Church. As an *Age* reviewer wryly noted, 'The Ulster Presbyterians with whom the '98 business originated would be somewhat astonished at this account of their motives' (*Age* 6). In any case, romance is far more important than historical specifics here, both in the heroic portrayal of the insurgents and in the relationship between the two young protagonists, which flourishes when Francis is reunited with his neighbour and childhood sweetheart, Kathleen Longville. Her father, Bartlett Longville, is a wealthy property owner and staunch Protestant who is actively working with the government to quell the rebellion. The two families are close despite being 'so much opposed both in religion and politics' (11). Even so, Longville hopes that Kathleen will marry Francis Newton's rival for her affections, the Earl of —, a distinguished English military officer.

The action soon moves to Dublin where Francis is recruited to the rebel cause. The novel emphasises that 'the conspirators were gentlemen, by birth and education, high in character, and of known integrity' (22): it is, atypically, invested in the figure of the Irish rebel as aristocrat, valorising the efforts of a noble and cultivated elite partly by way of contrast with the novel's villain Connel O'Meara, another rebel who has gambled away his money and reputation

and whose 'mock patriotic zeal' soon gives way to treachery (29). The rebels intercept his communications to the Secretary of Ireland betraying the cause, and confront him at a secret meeting. O'Meara murders his accuser and flees; he later seduces and murders Aileen Doyle, the beautiful, wayward daughter of an honourable Irish tenant farmer called Darby Doyle, who also joins the rebellion. But the struggle is soon lost; the Newtons are almost immediately 'captured, tried and found guilty' (57). Days before they are due to be executed, the Earl of — succeeds in having their sentences commuted.

The Newtons, O'Meara (changing his name to Roe) and Darby Doyle are all transported to colonial Australia. Here, the novel pauses to compare England's relationship to Ireland and the colonies and to argue instead for an American-style republic: 'in all things connected to the British Colonies, do we see the same iron hand working out an illiberal, a selfish, and a fatal policy. Vain has been the lesson presented to English legislators in the spectacle of free and self-dependent America' (70). *Rebel Convicts'* aspirations towards political radicalism, however, dissipate in the colonial context as the narrative turns its attention to the adventures of colonial settlement and the possibilities of financial success, both for deserving (Irish-settler) individuals and for the progress of the colonies in general.

The rebel-heroes serve out their sentences as assigned convict servants before each goes on to prosper independently: Darby Doyle as a comfortable smallholder (remaining within his original class structure), Fitzgerald Newton as a wealthy businessman whose 'principles have undergone a change' (losing much of their zeal), and his son Francis as an explorer and overlander, scoping out new areas for settlement (192). The novel suggests that the high-minded passion and personal strength that drove these characters to political agitation for change in Ireland are still the same qualities needed to steer the Australian colonies to their own brand of independence based on prosperity and self-determination. *Rebel Convicts* especially promotes the 'daring courage' of the early settlers through Francis, who remorselessly participates in the violent dispossession of Aboriginal people, insisting that 'they cannot cope with the white man either in courage, arms, or determination to occupy the country . . . their better course is to submit to the occupation of the latter than to declare war, the prosecution of which requires a greater amount of energy and courage than they possess' (98). The graphic scenes that follow show that Horne's novel is unable to reflect on the dispossession and murder of Aboriginal people in the same terms as the oppression of the Irish by the English, instead limiting its critique of colonialism to the morally corrosive impact of the convict system on the settler population.

This is explored through the rebel traitor Connel O'Meara/Roe, who continues offending in the colonies. After repeated periods of incarceration and beatings, O'Meara escapes to become a bushranger. Darby Doyle has been secretly tracking his gang and overhears their plans to raid a wealthy New South Wales homestead, Rarindorta. This also turns out to be where the Longvilles are visiting, Kathleen having convinced her father to travel to the colonies. Fitzgerald Newton travels there too, and soon the bushrangers arrive to rob the colonists and menace them with threats of violence and sexual assault. But Doyle and Francis Newton come to the rescue, with Doyle avenging his daughter by killing O'Meara. Fitzgerald is mortally wounded; on his deathbed he receives word that he and Francis have been granted full pardons. Asked whether he would prefer to be buried in Ireland, he replies:

> Lay me in peace among these solitudes; for every semblance of liberty has been effaced from my country. These wilds will soon expand to the legitimate purpose for which they were created. When the polluting source of contaminated vice sent us by the same iron-handed rulers that enslaved Erin and exiled her sons shall have been driven from her peaceful shores, then virtue shall triumph over iniquity and crime . . . Then cities shall spread – empires will be established that shall extend from shore to shore. Then barques shall bear their name across the wide waters of the Pacific – her name revered for honour, and acknowledged for virtue. But never, until they have plucked this upas [poisonous tree] from their soil, can they be 'great, glorious and free' . . . Teach your children to love the green island of their birth. (203)

Irish rebellion continues to provide a potential model for the colonies in these dying remarks; even so, the remaining characters soon disperse, with little commitment to the future of the nation-to-come. Francis Newton inherits a huge fortune from his father and, 'having no tie to bind him to the country' (203), leaves with Kathleen for New York on business before finally returning to Ireland, occupying an extensive property awarded to the Longville's ancestors for their loyalty to the Protestant throne.

From this rather obscure novel of Irish rebels and bushrangers in the colonies, we now turn to what is probably the best-known example of a bushranger's unmediated voice recounting actual experiences: Ned Kelly's *Jerilderie Letter*. This document was probably composed in 1878–9 and revised at least once; Kelly tried to have it published by the editor of the *Jerilderie and Urana Gazette*, but in fact it was not published in its entirety until 1930. The *Letter* is

an unruly mixture of genres: a chronicle of local events, a series of grievances or complaints against the law, a selector's family history, an unrepentant record of crimes and adventures, and an escalating promise of rebellion, revenge and retribution.

Kelly's Irish genealogy is fairly well known. His father, John Kelly, had been transported from Tipperary to Tasmania in 1841 'for an agrarian outrage, said to have been shooting at a landlord with intent to murder' (Reece 218); his mother, Ellen Quinn, arrived in Melbourne from County Antrim with her family in 1841, marrying John in November 1850 at St Francis Catholic Church on Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. In his *Letter*, Kelly invokes an Irish republicanism that puts the treatment of the Irish convicts in Australia on a continuum with their historical oppression by the English – something it has in common with *Rebel Convicts*. He directs an especially bitter resentment at those Irish immigrants who turn their back on this narrative by becoming representatives of the law in the colonies:

> A policeman who for a lazy loafing cowardly bilit [*sic*] left the ash corner [i.e. fireplace or hearth] deserted the shamrock, the emblem of true wit and beauty to serve under a flag and nation that has destroyed massacred and murdered their forefathers by the greatest of torture as rolling them down hill in spiked barrels pulling their toe and finger nails and on the wheel And every torture imaginable more was transported to Van Diemen's Land to pine their young lives away in starvation and misery among tyrants worse than the promised hell itself all of true blood bone and beauty, that was not murdered on their own soil, or had fled to America or other countries bloom again another day, were doomed to Port McQuarie, Towerinngabbie [Toongabbie, north of Parramatta] Norfolk Island and Emu Plains And in those places of tyranny and condemnation many a blooming Irishman rather than subdue to the Saxon yoke, Were flogged to death and bravely died in servile chains but true to the shamrock and a credit to Paddys land (Kelly 67–8)

We can note the rhetorical force of this long, rambling passage: the elaboration of phrases (where 'true wit and beauty' becomes the more alliterative 'true blood bone and beauty'), or the repetition and echo of opposites like 'doom' and the more Joycean, regenerative 'bloom' which is repeated again in what doubles as a mild profanity in 'blooming Irishman'. The passage also adapts several lines from the convict ballad 'Moreton Bay', an earlier version of which is attributed to the Irish-born convict writer 'Frank the Poet' (Francis MacNamara)

who is thought to have known Kelly's father while serving prison time in Van Diemen's Land (Goodwin 135). By the time Kelly wrote the *Jerilderie Letter*, Irish republicans like Michael Davitt and John Boyle O'Reilly were involved in the American nationalist movement Clan na Gael in support of Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party, and their actions were closely watched by Irish republican supporters in Australia. In Kelly's narrative, the idea of an Irish death in prison is turned into an act of colonial resistance; but the revolutionary potential of republicanism in this passage is relocated to America:

> What would England do if America declared war and hoisted a green flag as it is all Irishmen that has got command of her armies forts and batteries even her very life guard and beef tasters are Irish would they not slew around and fight her with their own arms for the sake of the colour they dare not wear for years and to reinstate it and rise old Erin's isle once more, from the pressure and tyrannism of the English yoke which has kept it in poverty and starvation and caused them to wear the enemy's coat (71)

This is a difficult passage to interpret, but it certainly looks to American models for republican inspiration, albeit in a rather abstract or gestural way that is again reminiscent of *Rebel Convicts*, as if this is a point of speculation or fantasy rather than a real possibility for change in the colonies ('What would England do?'). In both works the Irish in America are seen as more empowered than their Australian counterparts, although *Rebel Convicts* shows greater optimism about the future possibilities for Irish prosperity in Australia than Kelly's more backward-looking narrative – understandable, perhaps, given the *Letter*'s generic kinship with gallows speech or the execution ballad.

Michael Farrell sees the *Jerilderie Letter* as a declaration that works rhetorically or even poetically: 'It seeks to make an effect', he writes, 'rather than to elicit a dialogic response' (43). This is why commentators who attempt to read it as an actual political intervention can be disappointed. Mark McKenna, for example, regards the *Letter* as an 'extremely belligerent but ultimately shallow form of republicanism'; Kelly, he maintains, 'is the least interesting of the republicans and the least typical. His simplistic, aggressive and shallow rhetoric may fit the mould of the stereotypical republican hero but there were few republican heroes in Australia. Unlike Kelly, Australian republicans were politically active individuals who eschewed violence' (123). In fact, for McKenna, republicanism in Australia was driven not so much by Irish settlers but by English or Scottish-born settlers: 'For the most part, Irish settlers kept any republican sentiments focused on their homeland . . . . Despite the dominance of sectarian

concerns in Australia's past, the link between Irish Catholic sectarianism and Australian republicanism has always been more imagined than real' (6).

If we look at bushranger novels that come in the wake of Ned Kelly's *Letter*, we can see that Irish republicanism was indeed imagined in various ways – romanticised in some cases and deflated in others. John Boyle O'Reilly is important to this project. Born near Drogheda, north of Dublin, in 1844, he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1864. Arrested in 1866 and transported to Western Australia in 1867, he arrived in Fremantle the following January, where he was put to work as a convict labourer building roads. A sympathetic Irish Catholic priest, Father Patrick McCabe, helped him to escape and he made his way to America via Liverpool, eventually settling in Boston. O'Reilly later became editor of the Irish Catholic newspaper the *Pilot*, and in 1878–9 he serialised his first novel there, *Moondyne*, 'dedicated in the interests of humanity to the prisoner, whoever and wherever he may be'. *Moondyne* was then published in a number of different editions in the United States, and also in Melbourne by George Robertson and E.W. Cole in 1880.

O'Reilly's personal history coloured expectations of his novel. J. J. Roche's *Life of John Boyle O'Reilly* quotes one review from the New York-based *Freeman's Journal* that criticises *Moondyne* for being too 'pagan', but he also mentions another that dismisses this view: 'To demand of a Catholic author that his chief character shall be a Catholic is absurd' (187). There is in fact very little Catholicism in *Moondyne*, and not much bushranging either, despite the fact that it takes its title from Moondyne Joe, the alias of Joseph Bolitho Johns, an English Catholic bushranger from Cornwall who was transported to Western Australia in April 1853 and who seems to have had no republican aspirations at all. In the novel, Moondyne is a transported convict who escapes from Fremantle Prison and is relentlessly pursued by a vindictive trooper, Isaac Bowman. He is caught, but convinces Bowman to release him by promising to lead the way to hidden treasure at the legendary 'Vasse Gold Mine'. The two men head to a remote area inland, where (in a kind of Lemurian detour) they encounter members of a pseudo-Aboriginal tribe who are custodians of the goldmine and the surrounding areas. Bowman kills an old chief and tries to steal the gold, but Moondyne tracks him down in the desert, only to see him die of thirst.

The narrative then moves to a small town near Liverpool, England, introducing a 'bluff old Irishman' (49) named Captain Sheridan, his son Will, Mrs Walmsley and her daughter Alice, and a young villain, Sam Draper. Will and Sam are both in love with Alice, but Will leaves for Western Australia where he becomes a global trader in sandalwood. His experiences give rise to the only Irish-Australian scene in the novel, which involves 'a colony of Irish settlers' at

Dardanup, south of Perth; but these are stockriders and woodcutters, free settlers, not convicts (68). Meanwhile, Alice has married Sam Draper and ended up in a London prison, wrongly accused of killing her baby. She is transported to Western Australia where Sister Cecilia, a 'Popish nun' (150), interestingly becomes her confidante; a Protestant minister, Mr Haggett, disapproves of their bond.

By now, Moondyne has reinvented himself as a successful settler and colonial administrator, living in London under the name of Wyville. He returns to Western Australia on the same ship as Alice, Will Sheridan, Sam Draper and Draper's spurned former wife Harriet – eventually helping to resolve the injustices against Alice so she can be reunited with Will. In the colonies Moondyne is an outspoken republican, but Ireland is not the source of his inspiration. Instead, he speaks 'almost like a *French* republican' and denounces the aristocracy. His model turns out to be the Republic of Liberia, which had declared its independence in 1847 and was recognised by the United States in 1862 during the American Civil War. 'They have carried with them from the great Republic of the West only that which was good', he tells his friends, also turning to America as both Kelly and the author of *Rebel Convicts* had done (224). Back in Western Australia, Moondyne advocates a system of government based 'on the radical principles of humanity' (286). This is as close as he comes to Kelly's Irish radicalism: speaking against his own experiences of convict labour and bondage by advocating rewards instead of punishment and 'Liberty' instead of 'Law'. As a colonial administrator he institutes dramatic changes to the treatment of convicts, offering them hope and independence in order (and in much the same spirit as these changes are imagined in *Rebel Convicts*) that 'the Colony ceased to be stagnant, and began to progress' (290). This is Moondyne's political legacy; his career is cut short at the end of the novel when he dies in a fire while attempting heroically to save Harriet and the undeserving Sam Draper.

Ned Kelly's execution on 11 November 1880 set off a wave of public sympathy and helped to cultivate his reputation as a kind of folk hero who stood up for the poor and disenfranchised. But equally, it produced narratives that steadily worked to dismantle all this, aiming to deflate what we can call the 'Kelly effect'. James Skipp Borlase practised as a lawyer in England before emigrating to Australia in 1864. Soon he was advertising himself in Victorian newspapers as 'Doctor Borlase, Attorney, Solicitor, and Proctor of the Supreme Court of the Colony of Victoria'. He moved to Tasmania for part of 1867, editing a short-lived satirical magazine called *Fun*; *or, the Tasmanian Charivari* and regularly contributing to the *Australian Journal*. Borlase's first book was *The Night Fossickers* (1867), a collection of stories published in London which featured

detective figures investigating crime on the Australian goldfields: as an author-solicitor, the law was clearly important to him. By the 1880s, Borlase was back in England, writing penny dreadfuls and adventure stories for boy's magazines. *Ned Kelly, the Iron-clad Australian Bushranger* was published in London by Alfred J. Isaacs & Sons in 1881, not long after Kelly was hanged.

This novel takes great liberties with Kelly's life, using his final battle at Glenrowan as the inspiration for a complete reimagining of his prior history. Kelly was twenty-five when he died; but in Borlase's novel, he is 'a very handsome man of . . . thirty five', with a fake beard and an adopted fourteen-year-old daughter, Rose, who almost seems romantically attracted to him. Kelly himself is in love with a mysterious Countess, Lola Montez; this was in fact the stage name of the Anglo-Irish actor and dancer, Eliza Gilbert, who came out to the Victorian gold fields in 1855 and performed in local theatres. After pushing a detective down a mine shaft, Kelly and Rose go on the run. Kelly is aspirational at this point, rather than revolutionary, wanting to introduce Rose 'to the respectable world' and secure her 'a brilliant marriage' in Sydney. But soon he imagines a more revolutionary and romantic future for himself: 'Yes, he had determined to be a political refugee (a class of men that all romantic women love), an Irish noble with a price set upon his head for endeavouring to emancipate his unhappy country from the rule of the heretic Saxon' (45). Kelly sails to Ireland and plots assassinations with the Fenians, but they soon turn on him as 'a horse-stealing, murdering spy!' The Irish police try to catch him: 'They set him down as a Fenian emissary from the United States' (376). So Borlase's Ned Kelly is a transnational figure who is made to return to a foundational Irish revolutionary context only to be unceremoniously rejected – with his revolutionary impulses recast in Ireland as unwanted criminal activity.

Kelly soon begins to hate Ireland: 'I can't stand this any longer . . . . it's always raining in this beastly bog-hole of a country, that's only fit for wild duck and mud turtle. I wonder how the devil anyone better than a frog, and with any coin at all, can live in it; no wonder the swells clear out!' (379). This passage is uncannily close to the beginning of Kelly's *Jerilderie Letter* ('the ground was that rotten it would bog a duck in places'); in the *Letter* a hawker is bogged 'in the spewy ground' (1), while in Borlase's novel, Kelly is 'suddenly plumped up to his knees in a hole full of water' (379). He sells out the Fenians and is forced to flee to London, pursued by one of their assassins, who he kills. He then returns to Australia, arriving in Perth (rather like Moondyne) before travelling to the frontier where, working as a hut keeper, he is attacked by Aboriginal people. Later on, he is arrested and sent to Melbourne Gaol; but he makes a Fenian sign to one of the warders who then helps him to escape, and he heads out to Greta to meet up with Dan Kelly. At this point, Borlase's

chaotic, generically fluid novel re-joins the familiar events of Kelly's last battle, arrest and execution.

The Iron-Clad Australian Bushranger treats Ned Kelly's death as a definitive opportunity to show that Irish republicanism does not have a future in Australia, but this is also partly a product of its genre. Narratives bringing together Irish revolutionary republicanism and bushranging almost inevitably produce one of two outcomes for their central character type: de-radicalisation/rehabilitation, or death. *Rebel Convicts* circumvents this problem by splitting the 'good' (aristo-cratic) Irish revolutionary republicans from the 'bad' ex-revolutionary bushranger, whose further degradation at the hands of English penal authorities confirms the Irish republican cause. The rebel-outlaw threat is also contained by those rebel-aristocrats who become more moderate through their colonial-settler experiences, enabling the novel to conceive of a different type of republic in Australia despite continuing to value American (or other) models. Putting Kelly aside, *Moondyne* is perhaps the most radical text we have examined so far, since it allows its protagonist to retain his republican principles, institute radical systemic change and, at least, die a hero. Bushranging itself cannot be married to the future of the colonies because – in terms of both its politically transformative capacity and its romantic potential – it is an inherently fatal profession.

These patterns continue to intensify in what are, perhaps, the two most significant (and romantic) post-Kelly bushranger novels produced by colonial Australian authors: Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* and Rosa Praed's *Outlaw and Lawmaker* (1893). *Robbery Under Arms* was first serialised in the *Sydney Mail* in 1882 and 1883, just a couple of years after Kelly's death; it was then published as a three volume novel in London in 1888, and in 1889 a revised one-volume edition was published by Macmillan in its Colonial Library series, which also saw it distributed in the United States, 'just in time', as David Carter and Roger Osborne put it, 'to catch the rising tide of romance' across the Anglophone world (41).

Boldrewood was the pen name of Thomas Alexander Browne. His father, Sylvester Brown, was from County Galway; Paul de Serville writes that he probably belonged to a group of families that formed an 'Anglo-Norman oligarchy' in the district, tied to the Protestant Church (4–5). There is also an account of his genealogy that identifies Browne's father as the illegitimate son of a Galway surgeon, William O'Flaherty. Browne ran away from home aged ten, eventually working for the East India Company. Paul de Serville writes, 'Despite his father's origins, Browne [Boldrewood] did not consider Ireland his homeland and never referred to himself as an Irishman' (5); he may

also not have liked the suggestion 'that his family were not in fact descended from the Anglo-Norman Browns but from their traditional enemies, the Irish O'Flahertys' (8). So Browne – Boldrewood – was probably defensive about both the legitimacy of his lineage and his association with Catholicism; de Serville calls him a 'Protestant conservative'.

In *Robbery Under Arms*, Dick Marston is the son of an ex-convict selector; his father, Ben, has left the farm, however, and is already a bushranger. The Marston family is Irish Australian, but the father is Protestant while the mother and Dick's sister Aileen are Catholics. 'I don't hold with Catholics myself', Ben Marston says at one point, 'and I'm not likely to now; but if every man and woman followed up their religion like mother and Aileen did we shouldn't want many police in this country, and they might let gaols out for lodging-houses' (267). The novel sentimentalises Catholicism through Dick's mother and sister; and, interestingly, it splits Catholics and Protestants across gender and in terms of their obedience to the law. Dick writes:

> Mother was a Roman Catholic, most Irish women are; and Dad was a Protestant, if he was anything. However, that says nothing. People that don't talk much about their religion, or follow it up at all, won't change it for all that. So father, though mother tried him hard enough when they were first married, wouldn't hear of turning, not if he was to be killed for it, as I once heard him say. "No!" he says, "my father and grandfather, and all the lot, was church people, and so I shall live and die. I don't know that it would make much matter to me; but such as my notions is, I shall stick to 'em as long as the craft holds together. You can bring up the girl in your own way; it's made a good woman of you, or found you one, which is most likely, and so she may take her chance. But I stand for church and king, and so shall the boys, as sure as my name's Ben Marston. (18)

This is a patriarchal lineage that refuses to 'turn' Catholic. At the same time, Catholicism is itself stripped of any revolutionary or republican potential, associated instead with a law-abiding, introspective femininity: at the end of the novel Aileen goes into a convent. Ben Marston's Protestantism is law-*breaking*, but it, too, is politically conservative. His predicament is comparable to Ned Kelly's (as a selector on the run from the police), but his admiration for Captain Starlight, a cultivated, aristocratic Englishman, turns him into Kelly's political opposite. 'Men like my father', Dick says, 'who have hated the breed [the English] and have suffered by them too, can't help having a curious liking and admiration for them. They'll follow them like dogs, fight for them, shed their blood and die for them' (56–7).

Robbery Under Arms opens with Dick Marston in prison, awaiting execution, but an influential group of squatters takes an interest in his case and his death sentence is overturned. Dick does not die in chains pledging his loyalty to the shamrock. Instead, he is recuperated by the most powerful landowning class in colonial Australia and absorbed back into the project of nation building as a settled, productive and politically docile figure. This has some resonances with the nation-building agenda of *Rebel Convicts*, although the latter at least imagines a much stronger connection to an empowered Irish-Catholic diaspora that will cast off English oppression through future colonial economic success.

Rosa Praed had a more definitive Anglo-Irish genealogy than Boldrewood. Her father, Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior, was the son of an Irish Colonel, and her mother, Matilda Harpur, was the daughter of Thomas Harpur, from County Tyrone in northern Ireland. She emigrated to New South Wales in 1840. Murray-Prior became a well-known Queensland landowner and politician; Angela Woollacott calls him 'a wealthy squatter in a frontier colony' (174) while Nehemiah Bartley calls him 'one of the most courtly and polished of the early squatters' (217). In 1882, Praed went to live in London, where her career as a novelist began to flourish; she also developed a number of influential literary connections, becoming well acquainted with, for example, Oscar Wilde and Lady Gregory. As Len Platt has noted, this also took Praed into the orbit of the *fin-de-siècle* Irish 'revival', which drew on Matthew Arnold's influential account of Celtic 'turbulence' to valorise 'aristocratic action, energy and heroism' (39). In 1884, she met the Irish politician Justin McCarthy and they collaborated on a number of novels, remaining close friends until McCarthy's death in 1912.

McCarthy was a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party, but when Gladstone and his Home Rule Bill were defeated in 1886, McCarthy set sail for the United States to speak to supporters about the republican cause. Rosa Praed and her husband went with him. She later recalled, 'I was . . . in ardent sympathy with the Nationalist ideal. Having been brought up under a colonial system of Home Rule, it was difficult for me to understand why Ireland should not have her Parliament and manage her own affairs. Perhaps I think a little differently now, but that's no matter. At this time, I was quite willing to be enrolled under the Irish banner' (*Our Book of Memories* 2–3). Arriving in Boston, Praed received a bottle of champagne, some flowers and a dinner invitation from John Boyle O'Reilly which read: 'We want you to drink with us, 100 Irishmen of Boston, Mr Justin McCarthy's health tonight' (64). Praed was fascinated by O'Reilly:

> I fell in love with that strange, romantic, and altogether delightful personality . . . patriot, poet, athlete, ex-convict, man of social

> gifts . . . . the talk between him and Mr McCarthy, both devoted Irish nationalists, both literary men of extreme culture – one of the old world and one of the new – was most agreeable listening . . . . Mr McCarthy had for him the deepest admiration and regard, and it was he who told me Boyle O'Reilly's curious history. (*Our Book of Memories* 63)

Praed published *Outlaw and Lawmaker* three years after O'Reilly's death, using him as a source for her noble Irish bushranger character Morres Blake – also known as Captain Moonlight (rather like the split between Wyville and Moondyne in O'Reilly's novel). In valorising an Irish republican cultural elite, *Outlaw and Lawmaker* has much in common with *Rebel Convicts*; but where the latter confines the transgressions of its rebel-heroes to political insurgency, Praed's novel instills into the Irish-aristocrat-bushranger hero a much darker sense of danger and adventure, both enhancing and complicating his romantic appeal for Elsie Valliant, its heroine. 'The Blakes of Coola are a wild set', Blake tells her, 'Catholics, and . . . ardent Nationalists, the very stuff of which a Fenian is made. You may have heard too, of Boyle O'Reilly, who was tried and sentenced for inciting his regiment to revolt, and finally sent to Western Australia, from which he got away to America. My offence was the same' (*Outlaw and Lawmaker* 277).

Blake is probably also modelled on McCarthy: he works by day as an elected member of Parliament in Queensland, fighting the Squatters Land Bill and lobbying against the interests of wealthy landowners like Frank Hallett, Elsie's fiancé. His bushranger identity gives him license to operate outside of conventional politics, but even bushranging for this character is a mode of direct action, with the spoils from his robberies used to fund the cause for Home Rule: 'I have robbed – not for greed of gain', he insists, 'but for Ireland' (325). Nevertheless, as Kay Ferres has noted, 'the novel does not articulate [Blake's] nationalist political programs. Irish and Australian destinies do not converge, and Blake's radical, republican enterprise makes way for Hallett's liberalism' (33).

Outlaw and Lawmaker ends with Blake as Captain Moonlight, pursued by police, throwing himself over a cliff: like all bushrangers who retain their revolutionary politics, he has to die. 'Blake himself disappears', Ferres writes, 'just as late nineteenth-century republican narratives have all but disappeared in the official civic histories of the achievement of federation' (33). As we noted at the beginning of this article, Boxall's foundational *The Story of the Australian Bushrangers* works in a similar way, divorcing bushrangers' revolutionary politics from meaningful republican agitation and displacing it instead

onto a generalised nationalist ethos that begins to crystallise with Federation – as if the contribution of the Irish republican bushranger can only be assimilated in retrospect, once any threat to social and political order has been contained. The bushranger novel after Ned Kelly certainly remained a site for exploring the imaginative possibilities of Irish republicanism in Australia. But even Praed's *Outlaw and Lawmaker* – which perhaps romanticises those possibilities to the greatest degree – finally distances itself from all this, framing its characters' expressions of Irish revolutionary potential as nothing more than 'a strange, tragic episode' (358), already buried in the depths of colonial Australian history.

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