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# Contrapuntal Discourses in Jane Urquhart's Irish-Canadian Novel *Away* (1993)

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In Antrim, January 1848, rumours circulated that families would be handpicked for the adventure by the landlords, the rest left to work the fields until they dropped of starvation, harvesting food destined for the surfaces of British tables. (*Away* 114)

Canadian writer Jane Urquhart's novel, *Away*, shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, is based on the migration of families from Country Antrim, Ireland to British North America during the Irish potato famine of 1845-1849. This massive exodus, involving hardship, suffering and death, contributed to the largest immigrant group in Canada in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Focussing on one family, the novel is framed by the voice of old Esther O'Malley Robertson, great-granddaughter of the original Irish emigrants, who tells the story of their forced migration. The narrative traces the move of the O'Malley family during the Great Famine of the 1840s to a frugal existence on a homestead in Upper Canada, and from there to what may be viewed as the decolonized position of its children a generation later.

Old Esther's narrative culminates in the assassination of the anti-Fenian Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-1866). Born in Ireland, McGee participated in the 1848 Young Ireland Rebellion, subsequently emigrating first to New York and then to Montreal where he became an elected

member of the colonial government. A Canadian nationalist, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, an architect of the Canadian Confederation of 1867, was, it is still widely believed although never proven, assassinated by a member of the Fenian movement in 1866. Ironically, while McGee and his Canadian supporters saw the potential for decolonization in the establishment of the new Dominion of Canada, his detractors saw him as a traitor to the Fenian cause for the decolonization process in Ireland.

Urquhart's novel represents, in the migration of one family from one British colonial space to another, a passage from recurrent famine to progressive sustenance. Both colonial spaces speak to nineteenth-century British imperial interest. The politics of food, as well as the geographical fact of space made it possible for immigrant families to sustain a livelihood in Canada on land holdings that could expand and support them, a situation opposite to the landlord and tenant tradition in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> British Parliamentary response to the famine privileged the interests of Anglo Irish landholders and the growers of grain within the United Kingdom; a solution to both the starvation of an overpopulated Ireland and the need for population in British North America was emigration.

The novel thus challenges the lacunae of formal historical records which, although they decry the "Great Hunger" which forced tens of thousands of Irish people from Ireland, tend not to emphasize that the move was indeed a migration from one British colonial situation to another, and in effect served the colonial interests of Britain by removing a surplus of population from a food-scarce location to a colony whose development depended on the influx of new population granted land for this purpose and encouraged to grow as much food as it could for the consumption of a growing population strengthening its presence

north of the United States of America.

Several post-colonial theoretical concepts frame this paper. Two are drawn from Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1994). The first concept emphasizes the role of story and resistance in the process of decolonization, and the second stresses a contrapuntal reading of the colonial discourses of the time. According to Said, "stories... become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (xii). Thus, in Said's definition of decolonization — the process of resistance that responds to imperialist dominance — narrative is central.

Said's second concept, "contrapuntal reading" (66), refers to the reading of nineteenth-century novels which takes into account their suppression of references to the position of the colonized and of any resistance to imperial dominance. The text of *Away*, while it is a post-colonial twentieth-century novel, performs a "contrapuntal reading" of resistance to nineteenth-century British imperial power in its colonies of Ireland and British North America. The narrative achieves an "contrapuntal record" of what happened to the Canadian Irish, particularly in Upper Canada, what later became Ontario, where they settled in large numbers, (Akenson 87), but about which there has been a paucity of ethnic historical information (Akenson 87).<sup>3</sup>

Third, Urquhart's *Away*, like her earlier *The Whirlpool* (1986), may be read as a paradigm (Turner 94) of what Stephen Slemon has called the "‘always already’ condition of Second-world settler and post-colonial literary writing" that is, its complicity with "colonialism's territorial appropriation of land, and voice, and agency" (Slemon 110). This condition, furthermore, is a "necessary *entanglement* of anti-colonial resistances within the colonialist machineries they seek to

displace" (Slemon). In accordance with Said, as Slemon puts it, the "Second-world... is at root a reading position" (109). Urquhart's text foregrounds this paradigmatic function in the figurations of its second generation characters, Liam and Eileen O'Malley, and in the figure of D'Arcy McGee, an advocate first for Irish independence from British rule, and then, in British North America, an anti-Fenian collaborator in the movement for the establishment of the Dominion of Canada. None of these figures represents a stable binary of "self-other, here/there," or "colonized/colonizer," oppositions which, Slemon asserts, have "never been available to [the] Second-world... of settler-invader societies such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (109). In other words, the colonized O'Malley family in *Away*, settlers in the Second-world colony of British North America, necessarily becomes entangled with the interests of the colonialist forces which dominate the colony.

Fourth, Canadian critic Marie Vautier stresses that postmodern and post-colonialist writing and criticism "strive to destabilize the accepted workings of traditional myth" (Vautier 4). Urquhart's *Away*, while drawing its title from a condition of spiritual disassociation mythologized in Irish folk legends, in fact destabilizes the workings of this particular myth to concern itself instead with the complex of new identities wrought by emigration "away" from Ireland to British North America. Indeed, *Away* is about identities, personal, colonial and national, and the complicity of the former in the latter when it comes to "anti-colonialist resistances within the colonialist machineries they seek to displace."

Fifth, according to Linda Hutcheon, the interrogations of both post-modernism (that is, of the human subject), and post-colonialism (that is, of the imperialist subject) share the agenda of feminism (132). Urquhart's text undertakes this three-fold agenda through the vehicle

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of its female narrator, Old Esther O'Malley Robertson, whose oral record of migration and decolonization distinguishes the discourses of the O'Malley women from those of the men in relationship to them. The female figures in Urquhart's novel react differently than the male figures<sup>4</sup> to the colonial contingencies of both the Great Famine of Ireland and the demands of the homestead in British North America. While the female figures align with both the irrational sphere of an ongoing spirit of anti-colonialist resistance, the male characters tend toward complicity with the social and political forces they seek to rise above. This alignment in Urquhart's text of the positions of gender and the colonized speaks to an imaginative transformation between Ireland and British North America, a transculturation<sup>5</sup> unrecorded in official discourse about the migration from one British colonial space to another. Thus, empowerment of the female voice in Urquhart's novel becomes a strategy of the resistance of story, and in the telling, creates the text's contrapuntal record.

Old Esther's voice frames each section of this tri-partite narrative. Her retelling is both an anti-colonialist and a complicit reading of her family's history according to Eurocentric historical records. Old Esther O'Malley Robertson carries "with her the same curtain of red hair and the same disturbing necessity for water, for passion and pain, as had the girl in the north of Ireland" a hundred and forty years earlier (*Away* 8). The story that old Esther now narrates in the present is one she herself was told at the age of twelve by her grandmother Eileen, an oral family record when "everything began in 1842... on the island of Rathlin which lies off the north-east coast of Ireland. In the present, Old Esther lives in a house first occupied by her grandmother, Eileen, a white, many-windowed house on the north shore of Lake Ontario, part of the Great Lakes. The house, named Loughbreeze Beach, was "like

a compass situated on the southern boundary of the province called Ontario, on the extreme edge of a country called Canada" (*Away* 5). Old Esther's urgency to retell the family story is intensified by the present disintegration of the farm around her; the property has been sold to a cement company, whose expanding quarry is an "impossible earth wound" which, along with the continuous sound of gnawing machinery, heralds the "finish of her world" (*Away* 9).

Esther is the "last and most subdued of the extreme women," (*Away* 3) members of a generational saga that begins "thousands of miles away" (*Away* 6) with the great-grandmother, Mary, "the first to witness the beginning of the miracle," (6) whose spirit is taken "away" by her discovery of the body of a young man she finds on the beach near her Irish Rathlin Island home. The drowned creature's dying word is "Moira", which happened to be the name of the emigrant ship on which he had begun his migration and which foundered and sank scarcely after it began its voyage to the New World.

Ironic is the foreshadowing in this death the future death of the fiery representative of the Irish in Canada, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, whose life was a volatile mixture of "poetry and politics":

There were any number of ways for young men to die. Some had been flung by vicious currents against granite, some had watched the ocean's ceiling close over them while the fish they had caught swam free of the nets, some had died violently outside taverns after singing songs of love. Some took up arms against injustice and had been killed publicly on scaffolds or privately in ditches at the hands of their oppressors, the poetry of politics still hot on their lips. (*Away* 84)

As one whose spirit is taken "away," Mary insists her name is Moira. The spirit of her daemon-lover, the drowned migrant, pervades Mary, voicing the suppression of the Irish culture and language by hundreds of years of British domination.

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When the potato blight and ensuing famine of the 1840s reaches Antrim on the North-East coast, despite the fact that ships loaded with grain for England still departed for British ports, Mary feeds her family on nothing but seaweed and whatever else she can gather from the sea. The daemon lover visits her, carrying with him the portent of “some magnificent event”:

There was another voice that belonged only to her and she used it beside the lake to make a song for him... ‘Washing over me, you are cities, forests, bright bursts of birdsong. You bring as gifts to me all that murdered you. Gentle drowned one, heart’s darling of the storm, I remember you when the pot is empty and hunger kicks its boots against the door’. (*Away* 99)

Her words mark the coming emigration, putting into language the new geography of it; her poetry is nourishment for the strength that will lead her to migrate with her husband Brian O’Malley and their six-year old son Liam in their flight from famine in a ship to British North America.

Brian O’Malley’s family is one picked by the landlords Osbert and Grenville Sedgewick for migration, Osbert telling them “You must... emigrate to Canada.... There will be land waiting for you — acres and acres — more than you can imagine. The ship leaves in a few weeks.... Her name is the *New World*” (*Away* 124). In the assimilation of this leavetaking, Mary perceives, through the muse of the daemon lover, the historical process of imperialism in the world’s colonizations and migrations. His voice tells her, “when you go, this is what you become part of”:

Then she saw the world’s great leavetakings, invasions and migrations, landscapes torn from beneath the feet of tribes, the Danae pushed out by the Celts, the Celts eventually smothered by the English, warriors in the night depopulating villages, boatloads of groaning African slaves. Lost forests. The children of the mountain on the plain, the children of



the plain adrift on the sea. And all the mourning for abandoned geographies. (*Away* 128)

Mary/Moira is thus a vehicle for the “distant blood” of Irish spirit-guides of “Dancers, poets, swimmers,” the knowledge of which she will carry with her to the colony of Upper Canada in 1848 with her schoolmaster husband Brian and their first-born Liam.

But Mary/Moira will abandon her husband Brian, son Liam and new baby daughter Eileen on the land-locked bush farm to live the rest of her life near water, on the edge of a small lake, coincidentally named Moira, near the aboriginal settlement of Exodus Crow, an act which signals the attention of Urquhart’s text to the parallel positions of gender, race and nature as constructed by the Eurocentric codes of colonization. Exodus Crow returns the body of Mary to Brian, Liam and Eileen seven years later. He tells them about their respect for the other’s spirit worlds. When Mary had told him of the rape of Ireland’s forests by the kings and lords of England, Exodus had told her how white men had seized his people’s land, decimating them and exploiting its resources: “She embraced me then and said that the same trouble stayed in the hearts of both our peoples” (*Away* 185). Mary/Moira’s alignment with both the daemon-lover and Exodus Crow figures resistance to imperialist domination of the indigenous peoples, and their language and history in both Ireland and North America.

According to Said, “contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it” (66). The contrapuntal juxtaposition of imperialism and colonial resistance figure in the characters of Osbert Sedgewick and Thomas D’Arcy McGee. When Liam and Eileen, both parents now dead, are twenty and seventeen years old respectively, Osbert Sedgewick, the Irish landlord, his brother dead, their Antrim estate sold, arrives at the Upper

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Canada homestead to find their mother; she is the one whose sensibility he has connected with the change of his own after watching, during the Great Famine of the 1840s, the tenants who stayed on his estate drop dead in the fields, although there were “tons and tons of grain... shipped to England” (*Away* 218).

Osbert Sedgewick is a figure of what Said has identified as the obsession of Eurocentric culture to have “relentlessly codified and observed everything about the non-European or peripheral world, and so thoroughly and in so detailed a manner as to leave few items untouched, few cultures unstudied, few peoples and spots of land unclaimed” (*Away* 222). Sedgewick reminds Eileen of the British dominance over the lives of their parents in Ireland; and he is a subtextual reminder of the imperialist narrative that still holds sway over Liam’s increasing frustration with the limited potential of the bush farm on the rocky Canadian Shield allotted to them by the British colonial government in 1848. As the man who owned their parents, Sedgewick is at first anathema to Eileen; but she presents him with the evidence that the rocky farm holds the possibility of gold. He buys the homestead because, according to him, it offers “a stable spot in the universe... a forest tidepool of quivering life” and a flowing stream which yields nuggets of gold (*Away* 225). Sedgewick thus becomes also a figure foretelling the economic imperialists who will exploit and export Canada’s resources — what Eileen (inheritor of her mother’s inner sight) foresees as the “curse of the mines.”

But Liam complies with Sedgewick in his appropriation of the colony’s land and resources, and accepts from him more than enough money to purchase the white Great Lake house of his own childhood memory, the white house on the Lake Ontario harbour of Port Hope, which was passed by his parents on their way inland to their allotment

of land. Now, Liam, determined to live for the future in a land where his own cultural heritage had slipped into an unreal past beyond his memory across an ocean, takes his sister Eileen, born in the new colony and inheritor of her mother's passion and red hair, on the three-day walk back down to Port Hope on the north shore of Lake Ontario and to the fertile land that lies around it. In his rejection of the homestead, Liam refuses the Celtic, Catholic beliefs and values his father Brian so fervently upheld and taught, even after their emigration to a largely Protestant area of Upper Canada. Liam chooses instead, as did many in his situation, "pragmatic moderation." According to Canadian historian Michael Cottrell, when these immigrants carved out a new identity for themselves... it was not as Irish Catholic Canadians but as English-speaking Catholic Canadians" (Cottrell 19).

Meanwhile, the white house, with windows facing at every possible angle the vastness of the inland sea, has become a hotel for the sailors who work the boats on the shipping lanes that carry the staple products of furs and lumber to Britain. It is in this white house, which rings nightly with the drinking, music and dancing of the Great Lake sailors, that Eileen will meet Aiden Lanighan, the dancer whose language of flashing movement speaks to her. And it is this white house that her brother will then buy with the complicitous windfall of Sedgewick's money. Liam, in a gesture of daring enterprise and financial foresight, will have it taken from its foundations and moved to the shore of a lake front farm already cleared and abundant in its produce. And it is in this white house on what Liam will name Loughbreeze Beach, a part-Gaelic moniker in memory of his father" (263), that Eileen will become obsessed with Aiden Lanighan, and by extension, his ambiguous involvement with the politics of Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

Eileen's lover Aiden deserts her for his political obligations in

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Montreal. It will not be clear until the end of the novel, either to Eileen or to the reader, that he is acting as a double agent for the protection of McGee from the Canadian Fenian movement. McGee sees their activities for Irish independence as antithetical to his vision for Canadian independence in the New World. Eileen follows Aiden to Montreal, and then, wanting above all to stay in his presence, convinces him to take her to hear McGee speak in Ottawa. On this night Eileen unknowingly betrays Aiden by giving up his gun to a man she supposes is a colleague. McGee is murdered and Aiden reveals himself to Eileen as an undercover supporter of him, an agent whose mission it has been to protect from their retaliatory action the man both the Canadian and the American Fenians hated. On the night McGee is assassinated, Aiden Lanighan shadows him, but, without his gun, is powerless to protect his hero. The “entanglement” of McGee and the Canadian parliament and his rejection of the Fenian movement speaks to the complexity of differences in resistance to “colonial machineries” between the colonies of Ireland and British North America.<sup>6</sup>

If Osbert Sedgewick is a figure of Eurocentric discourse, an imperial presence in Urquhart’s text, Thomas D’Arcy McGee is a contrapuntal figure of resistance, caught between the colonial aspirations of Ireland and the new independence of Canada. While Osbert Sedgewick is busily collecting specimens and creating borders on his new Canadian estate in Hastings County,

in Ottawa, the new nation’s capital, the Irish-Canadian politician, D’Arcy McGee, excluded from the Dominion’s first cabinet despite his efforts to bring about Confederation, ... made his way slowly towards Parliament Hill. In this first parliamentary session of the new Dominion he would occupy a seat he’d barely won in the autumn election. His enemies were stalking him, his political friends abandoning him, and his electorate, the Irish poor of St. Anne’s riding in Montreal, were

confused by him, if not embittered. He was five foot three inches tall, uncommonly ugly, a sentimental and prolific poet, and his liver was half ruined by a life long fondness for the bottle. But when he opened his mouth to speak, the world around him stood at silent attention; his words a subtle net thrown over the chaos of any crowd. He had the gift and the curse of this; the ability to entrance, then to cause either permanent devotion or rage.... In recent months he had opened his mouth to speak far too often. (*Away* 283)

Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-68) was born in Ireland and first emigrated to America in 1842, where he worked for and then edited the *Boston Pilot* until his return to Ireland via England in 1845. He was deeply involved in the "Young Ireland" movement and edited the *Dublin Nation*, but was forced to flee to America again after his participation in the Irish Rebellion of 1848. In 1857 McGee moved to Montreal, where as a newspaperman and later a member of the legislature in the colony of Canada East, or Lower Canada, he became a supporter of a "new Northern nationality" within the larger British imperial context. It is important to recognize McGee not as a turncoat to the Canadian imperialism of the Tories, but as a reformer who felt that Canadian nationalism offered a solution to the ethnic and sectional conflicts that he felt impeded the progress of British North America just as they had deterred the potential of his native Ireland. By 1866 he had aligned with John A. MacDonald and George-Etienne Cartier to bring about the Canadian Confederation in 1867. But he had alienated many of the Irish voters in his Montreal riding, and was dropped from the colonial government Cabinet. His reform-minded nationalism was bitterly opposed to the aims of the Fenian movement whose North American aim was to erode the imperial power of Britain by annexing British North America, thus hastening the achievement of Irish independence. When he was assassinated in Ottawa in 1868, a week before his forty-

third birthday, it was generally believed that a Fenian conspiracy was involved.

The feeling among many Irish immigrants, who were in the majority in British North America throughout the nineteenth century, was that in independence from Britain, Canada was to be, as one character, O'Shaunessy, puts it:

our nation, you see — that's at the heart of it. There's more of us in the bowels of the lake boats or in the city factories, or on the roads, or building the canals. McGee talked great lakefuls of words, but, in the end, he turned traitor. (*Away* 255)

For Aiden Lanighan, on the other hand, McGee cares, “more than [his detractors] know (*Away* 330). Eileen, to Aiden, is “privileged.” Her father had “learning” and, now Liam, “land” bought with “a landlord's money.” “What about the rest of us,” Aiden asks, “who had neither the land nor the leisure? What about the rest of us who have to live in this soggy mess [in Montreal] they call Griffintown?” (*Away* 311). For Aiden, McGee provided both a vision of independence from British imperialism and a voice for the Irish working class.<sup>7</sup>

McGee is a figure delineated by the attitudes of others towards him; as such, he is an historiographical construction. Official Canadian history, always complicitous in the Eurocentric codes and constructions that linger in the post-colonialism of the second world, places him as a leader in the decolonization process that leads at this time towards the Confederation of four British North American colonies in 1867, the remaining territories, except Newfoundland, to follow as provinces within the next two decades. McGee's rejection of Eurocentricism in both Ireland and America formed his literary and political nationalist vision of an independent Canada resisting the influence of both the British Empire and the United States of America.

For example, in his article "The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion," he insisted that a national literature was essential for decolonization and an independent Canadian nation:

The books that are made elsewhere, even in England, are not always the best fitted for us; they do not always run on the same mental gauge.... It is quite clear to me that if we are to succeed with our New Dominion, it can never be by accepting a ready-made easy literature, which assumes Bostonian culture to be the worship of the future, and the American democratic system to be the manifestly destined form of government for the civilized world, new as well as old. ("The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion" 93-95)<sup>8</sup>

McGee, however, was clearly not a universally popular figure of resistance in Ireland or in Canada. At the International Dublin Exposition in 1865 he spoke about the problems of Irish immigration, and railed against the demagogues he felt were promoting Fenian activity in North America; further, he pointed to flaws in the Irish character that left them open to such influences (*Away* 199). Perhaps most unforgivably to Fenian supporters at the time, he joined political forces with the Protestant-led colonial elite from whose ranks were drawn the Fathers of Confederation, whose plan led to the Canadian Confederation and independence of 1867. McGee's vision, as Eileen hears him describe it in the House of Commons Gallery the night of his assassination, is of a country

in which there would be no factions, no revenge for old sorrows, old grievances. Everything about it was to be new, clear; a landscape distanced by an ocean from the zones of terror. A sweeping territory, free of wounds, belonging to all, owned by no one... He was addressing them, he said, not as the representative of any race, any province, but as the forerunner of a generation that would inherit wholeness, a generation released from fragmentation. (*Away* 338).<sup>9</sup>

Although McGee was complicit with a nationalist bourgeoisie that

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replicated old colonial social and political structures, albeit on new terms, his vision allowed him to see possibilities in the new Dominion for a democracy based on neither British nor American values, one that would not be heir to the internal dissensions that had plagued movements for Home Rule in Ireland.

In his discussion, "Yeats and Decolonization," Edward Said remarks that in Ireland, "nationalism coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples possessing a common history, religion and language." (223). Thus, for centuries in Ireland and since 1759 in British North America, the geography, politics and culture were dominated by British imperial power whose influential centre was elsewhere. In British North America, a bourgeoisie was able to coalesce sufficiently to create a nationalist movement that could be separate from, but continue in the context of, the British Empire in 1867. In nineteenth-century Ireland, political influence was factionalized along economic and religious class lines within the Anglo-Irish bourgeoisie itself.

Old Esther concludes her narrative at "7:45 on a summer morning [when] the [quarry] night shift is ending. Visited by what her grandmother Eileen had foretold as "the curse of the mines," now "Loughbreeze Beach spreads in ruin around [her]. The parts of it that are not being claimed by that which is unclaimable are being excavated by industry" (*Away* 9). In the present, the growing quarry is a further element of the contrapuntal in Urquhart's text, another feature of dominance and complicity, this time the destruction of the environment and its exploitation for profit. The fragmentation McGee sought to heal in his politics and writings may be seen to persist in the latter part of the twentieth century in the continuing Second-world legacy of the



“troubles” voiced by Exodus Crow in his affinity for the spirit of Mary/Moira — exploitation of the environment by the machinery of multinational corporations. The novel’s last line speak against the complicity of the present with ancient codes of imperialist exploitation:

Under the glare of artificial light the fossilized narratives of ancient migrations are crushed into powder. (*Away* 356).

Four generations after the famine migration from Ireland to British North America, Jane Urquhart’s novel tells a story which records the Second-world politics of colonial migration and imperial interest. Old Esther’s story of the O’Malley family records their passage from famine to food, and in the telling, speaks to the politics of migration from one British colonial geographical space to another. The text of Urquhart’s novel foregrounds the resistance of Old Esther’s story to the colonized positions of the Irish in Ireland and British North America in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in the figure of Mary/Moira, the one taken “away”; in the transculturation of Liam O’Malley; in the imperial presence of Osbert Sedgewick; and in decolonization’s advocate, Thomas D’Arcy McGee. One hundred and forty years later, the symbolic space of the house on Loughbreeze Beach, which has housed the narrative of the O’Malley women for four generations, is now encircled by the “curse of the mines.” Loughbreeze Beach falls into the fragmentation of another lost geography.

Notes

1. The exodus of famine emigrants, many of whom had been in contact with cholera and related diseases, to British North America has left a legacy of suffering and loss of life experienced by no other immigrant group in Canada. According to Cecil Woodham-Smith, Over a hundred thousand emigrants left the United Kingdom for British North America in 1847 alone. By the end of that year... 20,000 had died in Canada, 5,300 at Grosse Isle (in quarantine) and 14,706 in Quebec, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto. A further 1,120 died in the province of New Brunswick, and 25,000 at least had been in Canadian hospitals. See Robert Whyte. *1847 Famine Ship Diary: The Journey of an Irish Coffin Ship*.

According to contemporary Canadian historian Donald Akenson, "well before the Great Famine, the Irish were the single most important group of migrants to British North America" (90). Based on his research, nineteenth-century statistics show that "the 1842 enumeration inquired into place of birth of the province's residents. In that year, Upper Canada had 78,255 Irish-born inhabitants, making the Irish by far the largest non-indigenous group" (93).

2. The "Tenant Right," developed in the eighteenth century, gave the right to a single individual to sublet his rented land. By the nineteenth century, this method had, combined with the potato as the only staple food, resulted in smaller and smaller land plots on which to grow food for the tenant families. See Woodham-Smith (22).

3. Akenson emphasizes the "These lacunae become all the more striking when one realizes that the Irish in Upper Canada (later called Canada West, and after Confederation in 1867, Ontario) were much more important to Canadian society than the American Irish were to the United States. For most of the nineteenth century the Irish were the single largest European group in Upper Canada" (87). Migration during the nineteenth century took place in three phases. During the first half of the century, most migrants were "above the subsistence line, and came to the new world with resources and ambitions intact. The second migration, from 1846 to 1854, inclusive, stemmed from the starvation and social

dislocation caused by the Great Famine. During these years the flow of migrants was a veritable flood. Third, from 1855 onward, migration from Ireland to British North America continued at a reduced, but substantial rate for the rest of the century” (Akenson 88).

4. See Turner on Urquhart’s *The Whirlpool*, page 100. In her analysis of Urquhart’s first novel, Turner asserts that the “reactions of the women in the novel to the demands of the new world are significantly different from the men’s. Their discourses... are already at some remove from the more traditional forms the men use, and their lives less conventional.”
5. According to Mary Louise Pratt, transculturation is a term ethnographers use “to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (6).
6. See Cottrell. According to his article on the Guy Fawkes episode in Ontario in 1864, the Canadian Fenian movement never gathered the support for the Republican cause held by the Fenian movement in the US.
7. According to one recent oral account, “the Irish survive in the area as ghosts of the past, forgotten ghosts at that. While Irish and Irish Canadian history was not taught in the school system, it was passed orally, in the families of Irish Canadians (John Donovan 69). See also Sheelagh Conway, *The Faraway Hills are Green: Voices of Irish Women in Canada*.
8. McGee’s publications include *A Popular History of Ireland* (1863), *The Irish Position in British and Republican America* (1866), and *Canadian Ballads and Occasional Verses* (1858). See Ballstadt, page 91.
9. According to Nicholas Flood Davin, in his nineteenth-century *The Irishman in Canada*, on March 17, 1868, a month before McGee’s assassination, his speech at a St. Patrick’s Day banquet dwelt on “satisfying the just demands of the Irish people” (658) [in Ireland] ; and on the night of his assassination, April 7, 1868 speaking in the House of Commons he emphasized his support of Confederation not as a representative of any race... but emphatically as a Canadian” (658).

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Other Works By Jane Urquhart

Fiction

- The Whirlpool* (1986)  
*The Storm Glass* (1987) stories  
*Changing Heaven* (1990)  
*The Underpainter* (1997)

Poetry

- False Shuffles* (1982)  
*I am Walking in the Garden of his Imaginary Palace* (1982)  
*The Little Flowers of Madame de Montespan* (1983)

Brief Biography:

Jane Urquhart was born in Little Lac, Ontario and grew up in Toronto. She has been writer-in-residence at a number of Canadian universities, most recently at the University of Toronto. She lives with her husband, artist Tony Urquhart, in a small town in southwestern Ontario.