This scholarly edition of Sydney Owenson's spirited and ambitious seventh novel, which first appeared in 1818, successfully emulates the way Claire Connolly and Stephen Copley edited the work that made Owenson famous, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806 / Pickering & Chatto, 2000). In their comprehensive introduction and extensive notes, Connolly and Copley contextualized Owenson's allusions and demonstrated her tremendous knowledge of antiquarian, classical, and Gaelic sources—a corrective to critics who had dismissed her as little more than a rambling romanticist, bombastic Whig, and Dublin flibbertigibbet. Likewise, Jenny McAuley has written a wonderfully cogent introduction to *Florence Macarthy* and compiled an excellent set of notes for what is a very diffuse yet worthwhile text. Along with Broadview Press's 2013 edition of Owenson's national tale, *The O'Briens and The O'Flahertys* (1827), edited by Julia Wright, this new edition broadens access to the study of Owenson's fiction, which, for most students, has been generally confined to *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The Missionary* (1811). With an introduction, bibliography, Owenson's four-volume text, editorial notes, silent corrections, and textual variants, this edition is admirably thorough, though a brief chronology after the introduction, which many scholarly editions now provide, would have been helpful. Curiously, Owenson's name appears on the spine and back of the book but not on the front cover. As an avid and savvy self-publicist, Owenson would not have approved of this stylistic feature.

But she might have been—or perhaps actually was—amused by a fascinating scene in an anonymously written novel unearthed by McAuley, *Varieties in Women* (1819). While conversing in a circulating library, two women characters disparage *Florence Macarthy* for its focus on Ireland, its pedantry, its affectedness, and its approval by one Miss. B, a woman suspiciously prone to bluestocking tendencies, Jacobinism, and embarrassing admiration for the "enthusiasm" of Owenson's work. As McAuley points out, the passage reflects contemporary praise and criticism of *Florence Macarthy* and Owenson herself. Despite the novel's success, with a fourth edition published only a year after it first appeared, Owenson continued to draw the ire of a Tory periodical press aghast at her success both in Britain and on the continent. As one of the most self-reflexive writers of the early nineteenth century, Owenson practically makes herself the heroine of each of her novels. But as McAuley rightly observes, *Florence Macarthy* is probably the most autobiographical of them, reflecting Owenson's ambivalent attitude toward the patronage provided by Lord and Lady Abercorn, two powerful members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Even before she was adopted by the Abercorns as their pet colleen, Owenson had to entertain "idle crowds" (Fragment XXIV), as she writes in *Lay of an Irish Harp* (1807). While hardly roughing it in the Abercorns' grand homes in Barons Court, Ireland and Stanmore Priory, England, Owenson nevertheless felt trapped by the success of her embodiment of Glorvina, the heroine of *The Wild Irish Girl*: playing this role, Owenson sang at ton events, played the harp, and appeared charmingly Irish to order.

But since she did not write her novels to order, I question McAuley's claim that *Florence Macarthy* displays "historical objectivity" (x). On the contrary, challenging the notion of contained and compacted histories, Owenson unapologetically rewrites colonial narratives of Irish experience from a decidedly nationalist, feminist, and disparate point of view. As Ireland was increasingly pulled into the English orbit after its identity had been whittled away in the eighteenth century, Owenson strategically claimed for it a national and transnational identity. Even a more domestically based character like Glorvina disseminates antiquarian theories positing far-flung points of origin for the Irish. Glorvina's mentor, Father John, who has been educated abroad, brings European sophistication to the wild girl's enclave of Inismore (which pointedly deflates Britain by meaning "Big Island" in Irish).

Owenson partly attributed Ireland's increasing decline to the 1800 Act of Union, which abolished the old Irish Parliament and, from the nationalist perspective, effectively made Ireland a colonial outpost of Britain. In the early scenes of *Florence Macarthy*, which are set in Dublin, the narrator notes that the bustle around the elegant old Irish parliament building is now gone, replaced by a "void" (14). The Union has also exacerbated the problem of absenteeism: "The capital of Ireland, since the Union," we are told, "has become a mere stage for passage to such of its great landholders as occasionally visit the kingdom...The bill that defrays the expense of a dinner at an inn, thus acquires their debt to the country from which they derive their all, which they dislike to visit, and are impatient to quit" (21).

In the face of Ireland's diminishing status, Owenson sought to present it as part of Europe and the world rather than as a lesser dominion of legislative convenience. This is evident in the atmospheric opening of *Florence Macarthy*, which features a ship approaching the Irish shoreline. One of the men at the helm is Owenson's cosmopolitan hero, Lord...
Fitzaldem. Like many characters in her more mature national tales, he is an elusive and seemingly rootless character: "From his accent or manner it would have been difficult to assign him to any particular country. He seemed rather to belong to the world" (6). Returning from a West Indian island and service undertaken in the South American-Spanish conquest, he has seen Ireland from abroad as much as from home. Owenson's eponymous heroine is also a transnational figure whose family has distinguished itself in fighting not only for Ireland, but also for Spain and the popular cause of South America.

Together they exemplify a common theme in Owenson's mature fiction: the return of political exiles to Ireland. As the past impinges on the present, memory and experience reconvene in a re-match Owenson stages between the opposing forces of Ireland and Britain. Reflecting what Ina Ferris describes as an increasing "aesthetics of estrangement" marking Owenson's later national tales (The Romantic National Tale [2004] 75), her Irish exiles have been both Europeanized and internationalized; as a result, they sometimes struggle to recover a uniform Irish identity. National identity itself is both fixed and fluid in Florence Macarthy, whose domestic setting is charged with transnational experience. In playing Glorvina as the Celtic princess extraordinaire, Owenson theatricalized and self-fashioned even her Irishness. Yet in displaying nationalism as an essentially fragile though successful construction, her ludic moments seriously questioned what Irish identity was. Sympathetic and even misty-eyed about Gaelic culture, Owenson mourned its attempted eradication by colonial forces. Yet she never claimed that this was Ireland's only pedigree. As a shifting, restless exponent of her country, Owenson reflected the shifting patterns of Ireland's population, which--after a series of invasions and exiles--dispersed over wider physical and psychological terrains.

On a lighter note, Florence Macarthy is probably Owenson's funniest novel, with its excoriating parody of effete aristocrats led by Lady Dunore. An absentee who finds the running of her estate tedious, she is happy to take the rent to bolster her luxurious, whim-filled life, which includes a penchant for putting on theatricals. Her friend, the prancing Lord Rosbrin, fancies himself as a dramaturge and Shakespearean actor who specializes in playing Lady Macbeth and Poor Tom. Among the many references to Shakespeare in Florence Macarthy, the most resonant are those to The Tempest, which, for some readers at least, features another island under colonial rule. Florence Macarthy thus showcases Owenson as a brilliantly polemical if overly verbose writer, who was also a skilled character assassin. In Florence Macarthy her victim is Conway Crawley, said to be a thinly disguised depiction of one of Owenson's most vehement critics, John Wilson Croker (probably best known for his dismissive review of Keats's Endymion. Crawley is a toady to the English colonizers and a corrupt Jack of all trades--agent, magistrate, county treasurer, land jobber, road-maker, landlord, attorney at law, and head of the Dunmore Volunteers, who wear orange rather than green silk and whom Crawley directs in their maneuvers while shaving. As caustically comic as the creation of Crawley is, however, Owenson had already had her revenge on Croker, since his bile helped sell her books by increasing her notoriety. Her friends were keen to remind her of this. Writing from Paris in 1818, Baron Dénon pointed out: "You are abused, but purchased, in English" (Passages from My Autobiography 23).

The transnational experience that filters through the domestic setting of Florence Macarthy seems to contradict the novel's final words: "that Ireland best be served in Ireland" (367). Perhaps Owenson became more aware of this, since she ends her subsequent national tale, The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys, by taking her protagonists to the continent, where Murrough O'Brien goes to fight for Napoleon. Beavoin O'Flaherty resembles Florence Macarthy, particularly as she appears in the final volume of Owenson's novel, where she appears much as Owenson liked to portray herself: "there was a mobility, a variety of expression and colouring, which corresponded with the vigour, spirit, and energy of her extraordinary mind" (287). The final phrase fits its author. Despite being pilloried as an intellectual lightweight in her lifetime by the periodical press--the old boys' network at its most vituperative--Owenson did have an "extraordinary mind." With its wonderfully meticulous notes, this edition of Florence Macarthy reveals just how much Owenson had read and how she worked this knowledge into her text. That she could do this while combining a salvo against colonialism, poverty, and misogyny with a thoroughly entertaining tale is testament to her talents. Thanks to McAuley and Pickering & Chatto, Owenson's talents are still available to us.

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