

This is the first comprehensive study of the Irish writers of the Victorian age, some of them still remembered, most of them now forgotten. Their work was often directed to a British as well as an Irish reading audience and was therefore disparaged in the era of W. B. Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival with its culturally nationalist agenda. This study is based on a reading of around 370 novels by 150 authors, including still-familiar novelists such as William Carleton, the peasant writer who wielded much influence, and Charles Lever, whose serious work was destroyed by the slur of 'rollicking', as well as Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, George Moore, Emily Lawless, Somerville and Ross, Bram Stoker, and three of the leading authors from the new-woman movement, Sarah Grand, Iota, and George Egerton. James H. Murphy examines the work of these and many other writers in a variety of contexts: the political, economic, and cultural developments of the time; the vicissitudes of the reading audience; the realities of a publishing industry that was for the most part London-based; the often difficult circumstances of the lives of the novelists; and the ever changing genre of the novel itself, to which Irish authors often made a contribution. Politics, history, religion, gender and, particularly, land, over which nineteenth-century Ireland was deeply divided, featured as key themes for fiction. Finally, the book engages with the critical debate of recent times concerning the supposed failure of realism in the nineteenth-century Irish novel, looking for more specific causes than have hitherto been offered and discovering occasions on which realism turned out to be possible.