



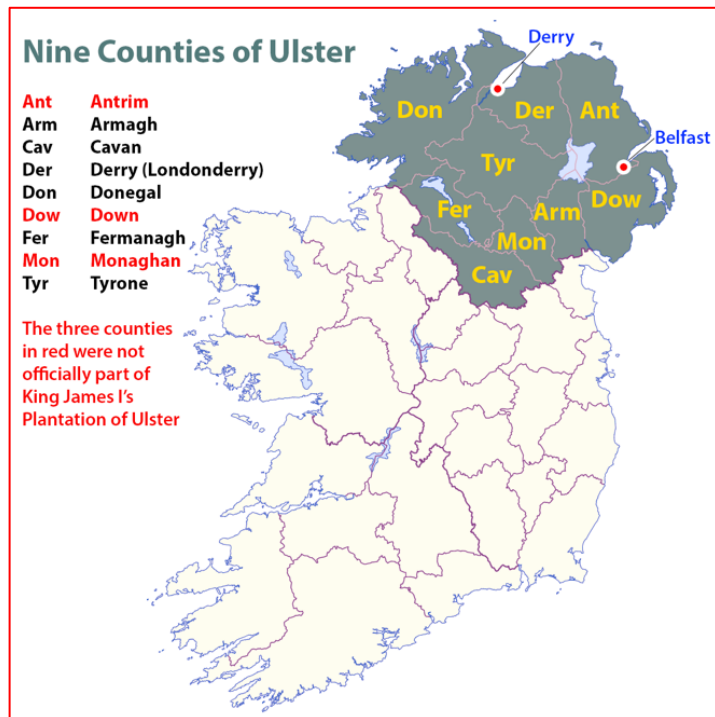
Sarah Leech (1809-1830)

Selections from *Poems, on Various Subjects* (1828)

Ulster-Scots Presbyterian Planters

I: The Nine Years' War and the Flight of the Earls

Sarah Leech is representative of a subculture — **home-industry linen weavers** — within the **Ulster-Scots Presbyterian** community. The greater community traces its origin to one of the most consequential colonial schemes in Irish history, the **Plantation of Ulster**, which occurred from early in the seventeenth century (1600s). We begin by discussing that event, for it informed Sarah Leech's religio-cultural and political identity. Late in the reign of the last of England's **Tudor dynasty** monarchs, the unmarried and childless



Elizabeth I, the crown forces battled against a coalition created and led by the two dominant **Gaelic** (i.e. native-Irish) chieftains in Ulster, Ireland's **northern province**: **Hugh O'Neill** (of Tyrone) and **Red Hugh O'Donnell** (of Tyrconnell). Known as the **Nine Years' War** (1593-1603), the conflict necessitated the **largest deployment of English troops** during the entire Elizabethan era. One phase of the war (March-September 1599) saw Elizabeth appoint the **Second Earl of Essex** (**Richard Devereux**) as commander. Shakespeare's history play **Henry V** refers to Essex in Ireland. In the Prologue to Act 5, the Chorus hopes that "the general [Essex] of our gracious Empress [Elizabeth]" will soon be welcomed home "from Ireland ... / Bringing rebellion **broached [defeated] upon his sword.**" ¶ While especially identified with Ulster, the Nine Years' War also engaged other parts of Ireland; indeed,

a particularly important English victory was the **Siege of Kinsale** (1601-1602) against the Irish and 3,500 reinforcements dispatched by Spain. Kinsale is a coastal community at the mouth of the River Bandon in County Cork on Ireland's southern coast. Later in 1602, Red Hugh O'Donnell died, apparently of natural causes, and was succeeded by his brother, **Rory**. In 1603, Hugh O'Neill and Rory O'Donnell decided to surrender. They began **treaty negotiations**, during which, unbeknownst to them, Elizabeth died. The two Gaelic lords would remain in Ulster, in diminished circumstances, until **September 1607**, when, learning

that they were to be imprisoned, they exiled themselves to Continental Europe. Known as the **Flight of the Earls**, this leave-taking is considered the **end of the Gaelic Irish dispensation** on the island of Ireland. To the right of this paragraph is a portrait of Hugh O'Neill, plus a photograph of the famously bearded Canadian Football League player with the same name.



Ulster-Scots Presbyterian Planters

II: The Plantation of Ulster

After Elizabeth's death, the throne of the Kingdom of England (which included the so-called Kingdom of Ireland) passed to her cousin, **King James VI of Scotland**, a member of the **Stuart dynasty**. James was the Protestant son of the **Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots**, beheaded by Elizabeth. Thus, three kingdoms (England, Ireland, and Scotland) came under the reign of a single individual, although technically each remained separate from the other. In Scotland, James retained the title "**James VI**"; in England and Ireland, he acquired the title "**James I.**" James had to address the vacuum in Ulster created by the English victory in the Nine Years' War and the subsequent Flight of the Earls. He determined to institute a **major Plantation scheme for six of the nine counties** that constitute the Province. The remaining three counties (Antrim, Down, and Monaghan) were also planted, but under **private schemes** endorsed by James. ¶ A plantation involves **confiscating lands** from the **rebel natives** and then settling them with **colonists loyal to the crown**. The "planters" introduce their religion and culture, plus their **agricultural and urban-settlement practices**. Seen as an "Anglicizing," "civilizing," and "pacifying" endeavor, James's six-county Plantation of Ulster began in 1609 and affected around a **half-million acres**. It had a complex structure, with several grades of planter, not least, a category called **servitors** (**army veterans** of the Nine Years' War) and another called **undertakers** (wealthy English and Scottish individuals capable of maintaining large grants of land and managing tenant farmers on that land). Yet another category was trade guilds (also known as **livery companies**) from the City of London, such as the **Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths**. A consortium of guilds received lands around the ancient monastic settlement of **Derry**



(**"oakwood"**); they constructed a walled settlement on a grid pattern, naming it **Londonderry** (see the plan, from around 1622, to the left of this paragraph). Today, the city is often referred to as "Derry/Londonderry." ¶ Many of the tenant farmers enticed to Ulster by undertakers were **Presbyterians from James's home country of Scotland**, the country on the island of Britain closest to Ulster. Sarah Leech could trace her ancestry to such people — specifically, families that settled in Donegal, the westernmost of Ulster's counties. As they embedded themselves in Ulster,

the Scottish Presbyterians developed a distinctive identity, now called **Ulster-Scots** (or sometimes **Scotch-or Scots-Irish**), based to a consequential degree on attending local churches (or **kirks**) and laboring in the linen industry, which historically was a household endeavor, from cultivating the raw material, the **flax plant**, to spinning and weaving in the family domicile (i.e. "cottage industry").

Ulster-Scots Presbyterian Planters

III: The 1641 Rebellion and Orangeism

In **1641**, the displaced, angry native Irish rebelled against the planters, an action that developed into the Ireland-wide **Confederate Wars**. When the Puritan general **Oliver Cromwell** gained power in England — he would become **Lord Protector** of Britain's short-lived republic (the **Commonwealth**) — he invaded Ireland (1649-1653) to suppress the conflict, doing so by such brutal means as massacring the populations of two towns: **Drogheda**, north of Dublin; and **Wexford Town** in southeastern Ireland. ¶ After the British restored the monarchy, the last Catholic to wear the crown, **James II** (adjective: **Jacobite**), a Stuart-dynasty king, suffered outright military defeat by his Protestant son-in-law, **William of Orange** (adjective: **Williamite**), a Dutchman, who replaced him, reigning (as **King William III**) over the three kingdoms: England, Ireland, and Scotland. The decisive victories of William's successful campaign against James occurred in Ireland: the **Battle of the Boyne** in 1690; and the **Battle of Aughrim** in 1691 (which remains the

single bloodiest engagement in Irish history). Constituting the first major event of the campaign, between April and August of 1689, the citizens of the city of Derry/Londonderry, loyal to William and asserting “no surrender,” withstood a 105-day **siege by Jacobite forces**. Three of the above events — the 1641 Rebellion; the **Siege of Derry**; and the victory by “**King Billy**” at the Battle of the Boyne (commemorated on **July 12, “The Twelfth”** each year) — became first-order religio-cultural and political touchstones for Protestants in Ulster, a community whose majority coterie was (and remains) Ulster-Scots Presbyterians. ¶ The 1641 Rebellion bears special attention, for it was recollected in terms of the horrors suffered by Protestant planters at the hands of native-Irish Catholics. The alleged privations and atrocities were documented via a series of evidentiary hearings, known today as the **1641 Depositions**. These extensive witness testimonies, collected in the 1640s and 1650s, cover loss of goods (including crops and livestock), arson and other damage to property, **desecration** of churches and religious artifacts, and a range of crimes against the person, not least: drowning and other forms of murder, assault, rape, **stripping**, and incarceration. The 1641 Depositions constitute the **largest single written repository of women’s voices from Early Modern Europe**. One witness, **Eleanor Price**, a widowed mother of six from County Armagh, told the inquiry about being imprisoned by Irish rebels and, then, enduring the loss of five of her offspring in a **massacre-by-drowning in the River Bann at Portadown Bridge**. Price asserted that the rebels “then and there instantly and most barbarously drowned the most of them [the captured planters]: And those that could swim and come to the shore they either **knocked them in the hands** and so after drowned them, or else **shot them to death in the water**.” A propagandistic Protestant discourse emerged with reference to the 1641 Rebellion, a key text being **John Temple’s** 1646 book, *The History of the Irish Rebellion of 1641, together with the Barbarous Cruelties and Bloody Massacres that Ensued Thereupon*. ¶ In 1795, 14 years before Sarah Leech’s birth, a Protestant fraternal organization, the **Orange Order** (or, formally, the **Loyal Orange Institution**) was established as ethno-religious tension began escalating in one of Ulster’s counties, **Armagh**, which was relatively densely populated and about equally divided between Protestant and Catholic residents. To assert their identity, Orangemen to this day organize themselves into local lodges (LOLs or “**Loyal Orange Lodges**”) and march, wearing **orange sashes**, through Ulster communities on July 12. Many lodges parade with large, elaborate **banners**, and the ones pictured below depict (on the left) King Billy on his white horse at the Boyne and (on the right) the Portadown Bridge Massacre.



Sarah Leech and Linen Production

As stated earlier, the growing of flax (pictured on the top left of this page) and the subsequent manufacture of linen became a livelihood staple for many Ulster-Scots Presbyterians. By the time of Sarah Leech's nativity, the descendants of participants in the Plantation of Ulster could identify linen as the Province's preeminent economic pursuit.

Raising Flax → Spinning Yarn → Weaving Cloth

According to W.H. Crawford's 2005 book, *The Impact of the Domestic Linen Industry in Ulster* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation), the 1700s saw linen production "[expand] so rapidly" in Ulster "that annual exports increased from



less than a million to forty million yards of cloth" (Crawford p. 2). Crawford emphasizes the longstanding house- or cottage-based nature of the enterprise: "Flax was grown on every small farm [in Ulster]" and then "prepared and spun into linen yarn and woven into webs of cloth by families in their own homes" (*Ibid.*). Next, the cloth was "sold in linen markets in [various Ulster] towns to the linen-drapers and -bleachers who finished the linens and marketed them in Dublin or in Britain" (*Ibid.*). Linen transactions were "conducted in coin," sustaining a cash economy that rendered Ulster's rural landscape notable for "the density of its family farms" (*Ibid.*). Sarah Leech's short span of life, at the start of the nineteenth century (when Ulster's population was around two million), coincided with efforts to shift much linen-spinning and -weaving from homes to factories (or "mills"); however, even then the domestic space remained viable within the industry, which was overseen by Ireland's Linen Board, founded in 1711. Leech died in 1830, just five years after the English inventor James Kay patented a mechanized wet-spinning process suitable for the fine-quality linens with which the Ulster industry was associated globally. Prior power-spinning machines, from as early as 1790, had been rejected by Ulster linen-manufacturers, although they were often adopted by English and

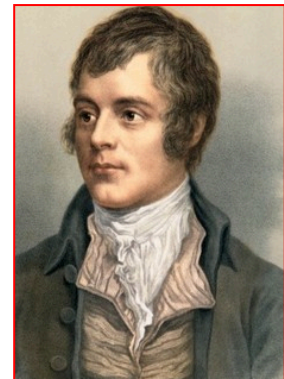


Scottish manufacturers, whose product was much coarser. In Ulster, the Linen Board provided grants to aid the adoption of Kay's wet-spinning technology, and one result of that initiative was a considerable concentration of mechanized linen-production on the upper reaches of the River Bann in southeast Ulster, causing certain towns on the river, such as Banbridge, to become a byword in Ireland for linen factories. In her book-length study, *The Linen Houses of the Bann Valley* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2007), Kathleen Rankin acknowledges the broad turn to mechanization, but she also succinctly expresses the situation more familiar to Sarah Leech as a cottage-based linen laborer: "In Ireland, during the eighteenth century, the spinning of linen yarn was carried out by women in their cottages, which were scattered throughout the countryside. Irish linen developed and specialized in the production of extremely fine yarns, which were [hand-]woven [generally by men] into damasks and cambrics, unmatched in quality worldwide" (Rankin p. xv). Damask linen was often used for tablecloths and cambric linen for handkerchiefs. To reiterate: If cottage-based spinning was a female activity (precisely the work executed by Sarah Leech), cottage-based weaving typically engaged men (see the image to the right of this paragraph, from 1783). Of importance to us as scholars of literature and culture: A number of the latter individuals presented themselves not just as skilled laborers but also as vernacular poets. According to Jane Gray's essay "Gender and Uneven Working-Class Formation in the Irish Linen Industry," collected on pp. 37-56 of *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1996; edited by Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose), "[a]t least four spinners were required to supply a full-time weaver with yarn (p. 42); furthermore, "[a] loom ... cost at least five times as much as a spinning wheel" (p. 43).

Ulster-Scots Weaver Poets: Broad Scots

Our contemporary consciousness of Ulster's so-called Weaver Poets owes much to a book titled *Rhyming Weavers and Other Poets of Antrim and Down*, released in 1974 (during the Northern Irish Troubles) by

the Belfast-born poet and left-wing thinker **John Hewitt** (1907-1987). Hewitt coined the term “rhyming weavers,” having been drawn to their literary output out of a broader historical interest in labor practices during the period of transition from cottage to factory production in the linen industry. In one of his own verses, Hewitt contended that “**Rhyming Weavers fell silent \ when they flocked through the factory door.**” The print-publication of poetry by Ulster-Scots handloom weavers began only around the end of the eighteenth century. Various reasons account for this development. One was the Romantic movement’s interest in the **authentic voice of the Volk** or common people; another was **greater literacy** combined with **more affordable printing**; yet another was the vogue throughout much of the English-speaking world for the **Scottish poet Robert (“Rabbie”) Burns** (1759-1796; pictured to the left of this paragraph), now considered Scotland’s national poet. Burns composed in the English language; but he also wrote in the **Scots language**, which developed in the **Lowlands** (or southern region) of Scotland from the **Middle English** spoken there in the medieval period. By the 1400s, it was distinct enough as a vernacular to be called Scots. Alternative names for this language — or (in the opinion of some) this dialect — include “**braid Scots**” (or Broad Scots) and **Lallans** (meaning “lowlands”). ¶ Here is a phrase in Broad Scots from Burns’s poem “Elegy on the Year 1788” (written on New Year’s Day of the next year): “**our gudewife’s wee birdy cocks.**” The noun *gudewife* means *wife*; the adjective *wee* means *little*; and the locution *birdy cocks* means *male birds*. The Ulster-Scots could readily absorb and enjoy the highly popular Burns because so many of their forebears had brought Broad Scots with them from Lowland Scotland to Ulster during the Plantation. The tongue had established itself across swaths of Ulster, including the **eastern part of County Donegal**, where Sarah Leech was born and functioned. Today, the particular form of Broad Scots spoken by some of Ulster’s population is generally known as **Ulster-Scots or Ullans** (= Ulster + Lallans). ¶ Burns’s choice of Broad Scots was not especially pioneering: between 1706 and 1711, there had appeared the three-volume, **James Watson**-edited anthology titled *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems, both Ancient and Modern*; and, furthermore, during the brief two-year period of 1771-1774, a kind of wunderkind in Broad Scots poetry, **Robert Fergusson** (note the double *s*), had emerged. Fergusson’s death at 24 (in 1774) quieted an exceptional talent. Part of the legacy from Scotland, available to Scots-Irish Weaver Poets, was several verse forms favored in Broad Scots poetry, such as the **Christis Kirk Stanza**. Its name derives from the first poem in the first volume of Watson’s anthology: “**Christis Kirk on the Green**” (“Christ’s church on the village green”). Although a fifteenth-century lyric, Watson obtained it from seventeenth-century sources. Beginning in 1718, the poet and editor **Allan Ramsay** began issuing other versions of “Christis Kirk on the Green.” Some of them added material (multi-stanza cantos) to the Watson version, and one of them presented a transcription of the fifteenth-century (i.e. the oldest known) instance of the work, found in an artifact called the **Bannatyne Manuscript**. Below, please study an example of the Christis Kirk stanza, from a poem by Robert Fergusson about the All Saints’ Day Fair or market in Edinburg, Scotland’s capital city:



At *Hallowmas*, whan nights grow lang,
 And *starnies* shine fu’ clear,
 Whan fock, the nippin cold to bang,
 Their winter *hap-warms* wear,
 Near Edinbrough a fair there had,
 I wat there’s nane whase name is,
 For strappin dames and sturdy lads,
 And cap and stoup, mair famous
 Than it that day.

Example of Christis Kirk stanza:

first verse of “Hallow-fair,” a 13-verse poem by Robert Fergusson, originally published in *Ruddiman’s Weekly Magazine* on Nov. 12, 1772

Hallowmas = All Saints’ Day (Nov. 1) • *starnies* = stars • *fock* = folk/people • *to bang* = to defeat • *hap-warms* = mantles/ cloaks • *there had* = there is held • *I wat* = I wager/bet • *cap* = cup • *stoup* = drinking vessel

In the example, Fergusson deploys the rhyme scheme **ABAB \ CDCD \ E**, although the traditional Christis Kirk stanza configures as **ABAB \ ABAB \ C**. The first eight lines are called the **octave**, and the shorter ninth line is called the **bobwheel**.

Ulster-Scots Weaver Poets: Some Names and Achievements

Among the Ulster-Scots Weaver Poets, the leading figure is **James Orr** (1770-1816) — the “**Bard of Ballycarry** [in County Antrim]” — who, like Robert Burns, wrote in both English and Broad Scots (or, if one prefers, Ulster-Scots). The **Presbyterian** Orr did not tend towards the Orange tradition, which underwent considerable consolidation during his lifetime; instead, he joined the non-sectarian **Society of the United Irishmen** in 1791, the year of its founding. That organization was dedicated to revolution in the cause of freeing Ireland from British colonial control and establishing a **sovereign republic on the American and French models** with separation of church from state. Some of Orr’s verse appeared in the Society’s newspaper, the *Northern Star*. When the United Irish Rebellion occurred in 1798, Orr fought on the rebel side in the **Battle of Antrim** (June 7, 1798), a British victory. Around 300 Irish were killed during the engagement, which Orr memorialized in his 14-verse poem “**Donegore Hill**,” composed in Broad Scots, using the Christis Kirk stanza. The poem is conscious of women, describing how, when sending their husbands off to the Battle of Antrim, “[w]ives **baket bonnocks** [bread rolls] . . . \Wi’ tears instead o’ water.” Orr’s revolutionary activity rendered wise his decision to exile himself temporarily in America. ¶ “Donegore Hill” was collected in an anthology, *Poems, on Various Subjects, by James Orr*, published in 1804 by the Belfast house of Smyth and Lyons. We see a similar title in the anthology of Sarah Leech’s poetry, published in 1828 by the Dublin house of J. Charles: *Poems, on Various Subjects, by Sarah Leech, a Peasant Girl, with a Biographical Memoir*. Or consider the title of the first ever anthology of Ulster-Scots poetry, work by the Presbyterian, Broad Scots-speaking **Samuel Thomson** (1766-1816), the “**Bard of Carngranny** [in County Antrim],” a school-master (not a weaver) who promoted himself as an Ulster version of Robert Burns: *Poems, on Different Subjects, Partly in the Scottish Dialect*, which debuted in 1793. Thomson would also produce *New Poems, on a Variety of Different Subjects* (1799) and *Simple Poems, on a Few Subjects* (1806).

Sarah Leech’s Biography

By no means did all Ulster-Scots Weaver Poets align with the United Irish credo that so attracted James Orr. Orangeism’s central tenant of **loyalty to Britain’s Protestant crown as the authority in Ireland** was



forthrightly embraced by Sarah Leech, the only unambiguous example of a woman writing as a “member” of the Ulster-Scots Weaver “school” of poetry of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. We will return to Leech’s politics later, but first we should discuss gender a bit more. One could name several additional female poets associable, at least slightly, with Ulster’s weaver-poet tradition. One is **Frances Browne** (1816-1876; pictured to the left), daughter of a **postmaster** and known as the “**Bard of Stranorlar** [in County Donegal]” and the “**Blind Poetess of Ulster**.” The principal reason for female spinners’ being less represented than male weavers in this literary tradition is men’s greater access to literacy. Not only was there a gender divide between spinning (by women) and weaving (by men), a

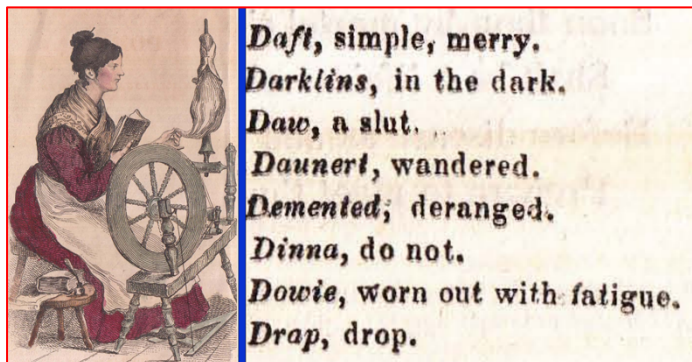
geographic divide also emerged, with “**spinning districts**” being more concentrated in the west of **Ulster** — such counties as Leech’s native Donegal — and “weaving districts” in the east. Both practices could exist in the same location, however. The “**Biographical Memoir of Sarah Leech**” — included in her 1828 (and only) verse collection, *Poems, on Various Subjects* — indicates that Thomas Leech, the linen-spinning poet’s father was a “**linen weaver**.” ¶ Penned by an individual identified only as “**Editor**,” the “Memoir” is our main source of biographical information about Leech. It identifies the “village” of **Ballylennan**, “about three miles” from the town of **Raphoe** as her birthplace. During the Plantation of Ulster, Raphoe (a medieval ecclesiastical center) was reimagined as a planter settlement, radiating out from a “**diamond**” (town square) and containing a Presbyterian church or kirk. (One of Leech’s poems mentions a grave “[i]n the cauld kirk-yard of Raphoe” [p. 30]). Raphoe sits within the fertile region of eastern County Donegal known as **the Laggan**. Several Scottish undertakers granted lands in the Laggan had the family name of Cunningham; thus, planned villages found there include **Manorcunningham** and **Newtowncunningham**. ¶ As a three-year-old, Sarah Leech, one of six children, lost her father to **pleurisy**, a condition affecting the lungs. An older

sister's tutelage and intermittent stints at school rendered Sarah able to read and write, but on the cusp of her teenaged years the family's economic needs (according to the "Memoir") obliged her to "submit to the drudgery of a spinning wheel." The Editor is writing while Leech is still alive, aged 19; she would die in 1830, just two years later. Notable about the "Memoir" is the Editor's keenness to present Leech as an ingenuous, rustic folk poet, revealed to "a gentleman ... on a visit" to her "vicinity" by means of her local word-of-mouth reputation. Having encountered the young bard "busily plying her spinning wheel in an humble cabin," the traveler persuaded her to sanction his "transcrib[ing] some of her Poems" for publication in a newspaper, the *Londonderry Journal*. While the broader Romantic movement could fetishize the common woman or man, the Editor, evoking Christian responsibility towards the needy, refuses to view Leech's socioeconomic and health conditions through rose-tinted spectacles. Elsewhere in *Poems, on Various Subjects* (specifically, the Preface), the Editor acknowledges that while Leech "undoubtedly possess" an "extraordinary talent," the motivation for publishing her poems (an idea suggested by a "graduate of Trinity College [the University of Dublin]") is "to raise" by sales of the book "a small sum to assist her in her pilgrimage though life" — an existence thus far "spent in labor, indigence [poverty], and obscurity." Clearly, the matter of **benefaction** applies here: the university graduate and the Editor wish to help Leech by launching her into a career as a published author. For its part, *Poems, on Various Subjects*, by James Orr (1804) includes multiple pages under the heading, "**SUBSCRIBERS' NAMES**" — in other words, a list of the individuals supporting Orr's literary project financially. (See the image to the right of this paragraph.)

SUBSCRIBERS' NAMES.	
A	B
Rev. N. Alexander, Crumlin	Rev. J. Bankhead, Broad
J. Aiken, Islandmagee	island, 3 copies
Robert Aiken, do.	A. Brennan, do.
Mrs. Allen, do.	A. Claney, do.
George Allen, Loughmorne	Miss Bankhead, do.
John Allen, Ballycarry	Miss Mary Bankhead, do.

Leech's Politics and Verse

The English writer **William Wordsworth**'s 1802 *Preface* to the anthology *Lyrical Ballads*, a touchstone of the Romantic movement, explains that the "principal object" for poetry should be "**incidents and situations from common life**"; and, furthermore, that the poet should "**relate or describe**" those matters "as far as ... possible, in a selection of language really used by men." This formulation explains the attraction to many contemporary readers of poetry by Scots-Irish linen-industry laborers. Their "Poems, on Various Subjects" certainly fit with Wordsworth's ideal of "incidents and situations from common life"; and their deployment of Broad Scots exemplifies "language really used by men" — or, in Sarah Leech's case, women. John Hewitt's 1974 study, *Rhyming Weavers*, assesses Leech with very faint praise: "She is **rather a dull [rhymers] than a downright bad rhymers**." However, recent scholars have tended more to the opinion, expressed by the Editor of the 1828 collection of her poetry, that Leech manifests "extraordinary talent," especially considering her limited education, demanding work, and tough economic circumstances. One poem suggests that Leech gets time to write only at night, by candlelight, when "**house-folk ... are gane to bed**." While Leech's *Poems, on Various Subjects* does not feature a subscriber list, it concludes with a "**Glossary**"



of Broad-Scots (or Ulster-Scots) terms used in the collected lyrics. Occupying more than two full pages, this guide effectively enhances the text's overall credentials as an authentic expression of — to again quote the Wordsworth of the *Preface* to *Lyrical Ballads* — "common life," poetically "relate[d]" in real, everyday language. The image to the left of this paragraph presents the "**D**" entries from the Glossary, as well as illustration, titled "Sarah Leech," that appears opposite the book's title page. (Any of the eight "D" words may appear on a future quiz or exam!)

appears opposite the book's title page. (Any of the eight "D" words may appear on a future quiz or exam!)

¶ Revealing her politics, Leech dedicates her book to the individuals leading “the **Brunswick Constitutional Club of Ireland**” (formally established on August 14, 1828, in Dublin). The year 1828 saw the formation across Ulster — and in other parts of Ireland — of multiple **county-level and local-level Brunswick Clubs**, generally steered by individuals in the **upper tiers of society** and dedicated to the maintenance of **Protestant rights and privileges**. Top priorities included: (1) the **dissemination of propaganda** (via newspapers and in the form of pamphlets and posters); and (2) the **petitioning** (i.e. lobbying) of politicians. Named for a **title of nobility associated with the British royal family**, the Clubs grew quickly in response to anxiety on the part of some Irish Protestants over the growth and influence of a **major, Ireland-wide, grassroots movement** in support (primarily) of the right of Catholics — the island’s majority population — to sit as representatives in parliament (that is, the London-based parliament of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**, the nation created by the passage in 1800 of the **Act of Union**). Demanding **Catholic “Emancipation”** — a word that appears on page 44 of Leech’s collection — and advancing itself by means of the mass-membership **Catholic Association** (instituted in 1823), the movement was directed by the charismatic lawyer **Daniel O’Connell**, a native of County Kerry, who gained the moniker of “**Uncrowned King of Ireland.**” ¶ Of particular note: Ulster Protestants loyal to the Protestant British monarchy and establishment became intensely exercised about campaign activities in the province by the O’Connell acolyte (and former Belfast journalist) **Jack Lawless**. Some deemed Lawless’s strategy in Ulster a Catholic “**invasion.**” The image to the right of this paragraph is a portion of an early-nineteenth-century lithograph (by John Doyle) that depicts “Honest John Lawless” (left) and O’Connell (right). ¶ In this lecture, we do not have time to analyze Sarah Leech’s poetry in detail; however, we should acknowledge the lyric (on pages 62 and 63 of her collection) titled “The Brunswick Clubs.” **Written in English** (not Broad Scots) and comprised of six octaves (i.e. eight-line stanzas), it coheres by finishing each octave with a reference to Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic Association — for example, “**crushing DAN’s Association**” in the first and second octaves; and “**laugh’d at DAN’s Association**” in the fourth octave. The second stanza enjoins readers to “bring ... down” the “**monster**” that is the Catholic Emancipation movement by such actions as “[p]etition[ing] **WELLINGTON and PEEL**”: the (Irish-born) **Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK)** and leader of the **British Conservative Party** in the upper chamber of parliament (**House of Lords**); and **Robert Peel**, the Party’s leader in the lower chamber (**House of Commons**). Although both Wellington and Peel opposed Catholic Emancipation (also known as **Catholic Relief**), they eventually gave in to O’Connell’s demands, fearing civil strife in Ireland (even though O’Connell insisted on **non-violent political agitation**). The relevant legislation, *An Act for the Relief of His Majesty’s Roman Catholic Subjects*, took effect on April 13, 1829, after which time the Brunswick Clubs largely dissolved. ¶ In the poem, “The Brunswick Clubs,” Leech’s speaker invokes both present-day and past characters. The fourth stanza refers to an incident in an Ulster town (Ballybay, County Monaghan) on September 23, 1828, when “**JACK LAWLESS, bent on agitation,** \ Was put to flight” by, among others, the Orange Order’s principal local leader, Samuel (“Sam”) Gray. The fifth stanza encourages readers to summon the “**DERRY LEATHER-APRON spirit**” — that is, the determination to resist Catholic pressure exhibited by 13 leather-apron-wearing **Apprentice Boys**, who, at the start of the 1689 Siege of Derry, shut the city gate against the approaching Jacobite forces. (Another poem in Leech’s collection hopes that a certain author’s literary work will prove “[as] lasting as the walls of Derry.”) ¶ Elsewhere in *Poems, on Various Subjects*, Leech again polemically targets “**DAN, \ And his base faction.**” Mixing English and Broad Scots, that lyric is the 17-stanza “**Epistle to the Editor** of the *Londonderry Journal.*” In addition to **voicing the racial slur “Sheamus”** (italics original) in connection with Irish Catholics — an editorial footnote explains the word as “[t]he Irish for **James**” — the piece exploits the cultural lore of “[t]he **DERRY ’PRENTICE BOYS,**” in particular the defining “**watch-word**” of the **Siege of Derry: “NO SURRENDER.”** The verse form in “Epistle to the Editor” is the six-line “**standard Habbie**” stanza, which later became known as the **Burns stanza** because of Burns’s preference for it. (Other names are: the **Scottish stanza**; the **six-line stave**.) Ensure that you learn the stanza’s basic characteristics, presented in the image at the top of the following page.



<p>The DERRY 'PRENTICE BOYS ne'er can Again depend upon a man, That basely frae his colours ran, frae = from When call'd to action— To gain the fulsome praise of DAN, And his base faction.</p>	<p>Burns/Standard Habbie Stanza</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rhyme scheme = aaabab each "a" line has 4 metrical feet (tetrameter) each "b" line has 2 metrical feet (dimeter)
---	---

Leech in Broad Scots

On pages 51 and 52, *Poems, on Various Subjects* inscribes a verse titled "Letter," directed to an unmarried woman of "delicate" sensibility resident in a place called Foyleview. (The city of Derry/Londonderry sits on the River Foyle.) The poem's diction combines English and Broad Scots (Ulster-Scots), and each of the five verses uses the Christis Kirk stanza. The speaker invokes the modesty trope — "weel I ken [know] my muse is rude" — before pronouncing on several matters of religion that particularly concerned Presbyterianism, not least: (1) the centrality of "the Bible" and "its laws" to right-living; (2) the phenomenon of God's "grace"; and (3) the question as to whether — in order to obtain eternal life "[w]hen time's nae mair [no more]" — an individual's "faith and works" must be "[c]lose knit in firm connection."

¶ We will close out this lecture's time with the third of the 32 lyrics in *Poems, on Various Subjects*: "On Killing a Mouse in Harvest," whose six verses deploy the standard Habbie (or Burns) stanza and whose theme is as much human mortality as it is the speaker's accidental killing of a "harmless mouse" — reducing the "helpless creature" to "reeking gore" — while "reaping grain" with a "sickle" (an implement associated with the Grim Reaper during such catastrophes as Europe's fourteenth-century Black Death). Relying extensively on Broad Scots, the poem is indebted to Burn's eight-verse, standard-Habbie, Broad-Scots lyric "To a Mouse: On Turning Her Up in Her Nest, with the Plough, November 1785," best remembered for the lines, "The best laid schemes o' Mice and Men \ Gang aft agley [go often askew/off the straight]. Burns's speaker regrets destroying the nest built by the "[w]ee, sleekit, cawrin, tim'rous beastie" ("little, cunning, cowering, timorous beast"); however, by contrast by the scenario in Leech's poem, the animal remains alive. Words by the Scottish historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in response to reading Burns's poem are perhaps also applicable to Leech's: "How [the speaker's] heart flows out in sympathy over universal nature!"

••• ••• •••