

MORGAN KAVANAGH



AN OUTLINE OF HIS LIFE

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From time to time during the past twenty or thirty years I have thought about my great-grandfather, Morgan Kavanagh, and speculated about his life. From family members I understood that he had been an author and that Julia Kavanagh, the Victorian-era author, was his daughter. I knew that his son, Alexander (my grandfather) was born in Paris. I also knew, rather vaguely, that Alexander had a brother and a sister (other than Julia). I acquired an old writing box, thought to have belonged to Morgan, his will, and a hand-written manuscript by Morgan. I knew that Morgan's name appeared in some encyclopaedias, one of which referred to him as the author of "various worthless philological works". I found a copy of his book "Origin of Language and Myths" in a second-hand bookshop. That more or less summarizes my knowledge concerning Morgan Kavanagh as of some thirty years ago.

It seemed to me that Morgan had not been an ordinary man and that it might be interesting to attempt to find out more concerning his origins and accomplishments. Fortunately, the internet and the World Wide Web were beginning to exert a significant influence on the availability of information. Because Julia Kavanagh and, to a lesser extent, Morgan Kavanagh were "known" persons, information concerning them began to be available on the Web and this added greatly to what could be found in libraries.

I wrote a paper about Morgan Kavanagh in 2001 using information I had been able to obtain from libraries and several individuals.¹ This was followed by a second paper in 2003 which incorporated further facts I had obtained.² In 2005 I wrote a short paper with additional details I had acquired from various sources.³

Since 2005 a considerable amount of new material about Morgan Kavanagh has been obtained. The Web has proved to be a fruitful source. A major contribution to my knowledge has come from Eileen Fauset, who has recently published her book about Julia Kavanagh. Then, to my great surprise, I was contacted by a hitherto unknown cousin, Michelle McClear, a descendant of Morgan via a family branch of which I had been completely unaware. She added significantly to my knowledge about Morgan's descendants.

With this considerable amount of new information I have been able to fill in gaps in the life of Morgan Kavanagh and, as well, to correct some errors contained in my three earlier papers.

The present paper is intended to bring together everything that I now know about Morgan Kavanagh. I have made use of extracts from my previous papers but there is a substantial amount of new material. This paper provides much additional information about Morgan's life and activities though, of course, many gaps remain. I hope that it is mostly error-free.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance and information provided by a number of individuals: Adele Boyt of New Milton, England, Michelle (Chelley) McLear of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Eileen Fauset, formerly at the University of Leeds, Professor Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard of Université Blaise Pascal Clermont-Ferrand II, Emma Clery Of Sheffield Hallam University, Bruce Stewart of the University of Ulster. In addition the following organizations have been very helpful: The National Library of Canada, The Morrisset Library at the University of Ottawa, The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, the London Metropolitan Archives, and Les Archives de Paris.

I gratefully acknowledge permission to quote from the Royal Literary Fund file no. 548 held by the British Library.

Notes

For the information of readers, the following are my previous three papers on the subject of Morgan Kavanagh:

1. Robert J. Kavanagh, *The Mysterious Irishman: Morgan Peter Kavanagh*, Ottawa, Canada, 2001. (National Library of Ireland, accession number 5682)
2. Robert J. Kavanagh, *Morgan Kavanagh: Enigmatic Poet, Novelist and Philologist*, Ottawa, Canada, 2003. (National Library of Ireland, call number MS 39,914)
3. Robert J. Kavanagh, *Morgan Peter Kavanagh: Further Notes Concerning His Literary Activities*, Ottawa, Canada, 2005. (National Library of Ireland, accession number 6046; Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, ref. duff pam 0143)

EARLY LIFE IN IRELAND AND LONDON

Little is known about Morgan Kavanagh's early life. In his application for financial support, dated November 4, 1844, to The Literary Fund of London Morgan stated:

"I know neither my age nor where I was born; but believe it was in Dublin about the year 1799"

and also:

*"My father's and mother's names were Morgan Kavanagh and Ellen Read – both died while I was an infant."*¹

What happened to Morgan after the death of his parents is unknown. It must be presumed that he was brought up by relatives, or perhaps adopted. It is not known whether Morgan had any siblings.

Another hint concerning his origin is contained in the introduction to Morgan's first publication *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*. This introduction was written by Martin MacDermot who was the author of articles on Spenser and also *A Critical Dissertation on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 1823. MacDermot writes, in part:

*"Born to no inheritance, though of respectable parents, he seems to have cultivated the Muses from the moment science began to dawn on his infant mind – from the moment perception and observation began to unfold to him the charms of nature, and the consecrated pleasures of sympathy, purity, and refined emotions. Fortune, however, proved less favourable to him than nature, and he had to struggle against evils, which it required physical as well as mental strength to surmount."*²

The "respectable parents" were Morgan Kavanagh (senior) and Ellen Read. The Kavanagh name is, of course, well known in Ireland. Originally descended from a king of Leinster, the Kavanagh clan has produced a number of notable figures over the years. One can only conjecture about where Morgan Kavanagh (senior) might fit into the clan.

The "evils" against which Morgan is said by MacDermot to have struggled also can only be the basis of conjecture. Perhaps being orphaned at an early age was what MacDermot had in mind. But whatever actually happened it is clear that he must have been given a good education, although MacDermot does say that Morgan

“had also to to surmount the disadvantages arising from the want of a classical education.”

Throughout his adult life Morgan was fascinated by language. From the nature of his occupations as a poet, novelist, amateur philologist, and language teacher, it appears that he was well educated. In his books on philology he cites the meanings of words from many languages including Gaelic, Latin, French, Saxon, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Italian, Spanish and German. This is not to imply that he was conversant with these languages (except French, which he must have used while living in Paris) but he clearly had some rudimentary knowledge of them. Morgan’s writings show that he had read widely. He quotes from works by leading scholars including: Friedrich Max Müller (German philologist), David Hume (Scottish philosopher and historian), Étienne Condillac (French philosopher), Godfrey Higgins (English scholar and author), Ernest Renan (French literary scholar), John Parkhurst (English biblical scholar), Victor Cousin (French philosopher), Dugald Stewart (Scottish philosopher), and Maximilien Paul Émile Littré (French philologist and philosopher), among many others. This apparent familiarity with other languages and with the works of scholars of his day and of earlier times is consistent with the impression of a well-read, educated man, albeit possibly self-taught.

In some bibliographical references, and in some of Morgan’s own works, he is called Morgan Peter Kavanagh, However, it seems that Peter was not an “official” name. In the same Literary Fund application referred to earlier, Morgan writes:

“I have dropped the name of Peter on learning that it was not strictly legal, it being only a name which I adopted when confirmed.”

This statement provokes the question: how, or from who, did Morgan learn that the name Peter was not strictly legal ? Presumably he learned this from whoever brought him up. This statement also implies that Morgan was a Roman Catholic, in which case confirmation may have taken place in about 1806.

Morgan married Bridget Fitzpatrick in about 1822 or 1823. Bridget was born in 1802 in Mountrath. She was the daughter of William Fitzpatrick and Catherine Haggerty. Morgan and Bridget had one child, Julia, who was born in Thurles on January 7, 1824. She was baptized in the “Big Chapel” in Thurles on January 9, 1824. It is believed that Morgan and Bridget lived on East Main Street (the present Cathedral Street) in Thurles and that this is where Julia was born. James Condon of Thurles has stated the following:

“As for precise location on present Cathedral St. in Thurles... I can only invoke local anecdotal info... Some years ago the present Presentation Convent ran a

*laundry on Cathedral St... this was the site, supposedly, that Morgan Kavanagh lived in in the 19th century (the street was then East Main St.). The laundry is now gone and is the entrance to the more recent Presentation Secondary School."*³

It appears that Morgan, probably accompanied by Bridget and Julia, left Ireland for London in 1824. Morgan had written a manuscript entitled *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*. The likely motive for moving to London was to seek a publisher for this work. This was a difficult task only crowned with success through the generosity of an unknown benefactor. MacDermot's introduction quoted above states the following:

"Whether from that vanity which makes every author an admirer of his own productions, or from a total ignorance of the publishing system, he imagined, or rather was firmly convinced, that he could have no possible difficulty in disposing of his Poem. Accordingly, he set out from a remote part of Ireland for this city, but soon found his mistake; for instead of meeting with a publisher to purchase his production, he could not even find one who would take the trouble, or incur the expence, of having it examined. This, indeed, is not to be wondered at: his apparel and his Poem were completely at variance, and publishers frequently determine the merits of a production by the dress of its author, when he happens to be unknown in the world of letters. He remained accordingly in London, unnoticed and unknown, until he was nearly reduced to his last shilling, when a mere accident introduced him to me, or rather to the gentleman by whom he was introduced. I perused his Poem, and recommended its author to a private gentleman, to whom the first and present edition of 'The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah' owes its existence, having had it printed at his own expence, for the sole benefit of the author, who is also indebted to him for many subsequent acts of favour."

The identity of this "private gentleman" is unknown, as are the "subsequent acts of favour" mentioned by MacDermot. In any event, the poem was published in 1824 by Sherwood and Co., Paternoster Row, London. The price per copy was 10s. 6d. and it had 400 pages. *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*, a poetical romance in ten cantos, was reviewed, probably by Joseph Snow, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in March 1825. Joseph Snow was, at that time, the Secretary to The Literary Fund Society. The reviewer wrote:

*"He who can write such a Poem, when friendless, poor and destitute of the means of reference to works of genius and excellence, need not be diffident of strong and original powers of mind."*⁴

Although critical of Morgan's versification, the reviewer refers to "*the meritorious passages with which the poem abounds*".

MacDermot also seemed to have a high opinion of Morgan's poem. In his

introduction he quotes several passages from the poem. Morgan's description of Currigh, in the disguise of an old magician, is considered by MacDermot to be inimitable:

*“The aged man, low bent, moves on behind,
Heedless his step-now turned here, now there,
As tho' he mused much within his mind,
And of his way did take not heed or care.
One humble garb is his, else was he bare ;
Yet seems he not to care for aught the more,
And heedless oft looks to the heavens where
The silent moon her lonely way now bore,
Then mutters some strange word, and wanders as before,-*

His heedless step now turned here, now there.”

Reviews of *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah* were published in a number of other journals.⁵ Most of these reviews were critical of MacDermot, considering that he was too extreme in his view of the merit of Morgan's poem. But, they generally had something positive to say about the poem. One exception was a review in the *The Monthly Critical Gazette* which refers to the poem as *“this incongruous mass of ill-rhymed stupidity.”*

In spite of the assistance received from his benefactor, by 1825 Morgan was living in straitened circumstances. In October he was residing at 15 Lamb's Conduit Passage, in the Bloomsbury area of London, a street which still exists.

Through his publisher, W. Sherwood, he submitted a request for financial assistance to The Literary Fund. This Fund was established in 1790 and changed its name to The Royal Literary Fund in 1842. Its purpose is to help published writers who are in financial difficulties. Morgan requested assistance to enable him to return with his family to Ireland. In a letter dated October 27, 1825 to William Jerden, editor of the *Literary Gazette*, Morgan asked him to lay his case before the Fund committee stating, in part:

*“Having a wife and child to support besides myself, I have been for at least this half year past in a situation sufficiently wretched to authorize me to put in my claim of relief much sooner: but as I am a stranger here and without friends, it is my intention, should the Literary Fund allow me the means to remove with my family to my native country, where from being known it is likely that I should soonest obtain a livelihood.”*⁶

Morgan's application was forwarded by Mr. Sherwood to Jerden the same day and he added his own assessment:

*"I have no doubt that he and his family are at present in a distressed state, and as regards his moral character, I know of nothing objectionable in it."*⁷

Jerden wrote to Joseph Snow in support of this application on October 30, 1825 as follows:

*"The enclosed application for relief, to the Literary Fund, will explain itself; and all that I have to add is that the work referred to is a respectable poem (a long octavo volume) displaying considerable talent – the author an unfortunate aspirant from humble life – and his publication much commended by several critical writers. I consider him a very proper object for relief and his necessities point to the first meeting."*⁸

Morgan sent a copy of his poem to Jerden on November 7, 1825.

The Fund awarded Morgan £25, receipt of which he acknowledged on November 10.⁹ However, Morgan did not use this money for the requested purpose. Instead of returning to Ireland, Morgan took his family to Paris.

Notes

1. Application by Morgan Kavanagh to The Literary Fund, November 4, 1844, Royal Literary Fund (RLF) file no. 548, item 15, British Library.
2. M. McDermot (Martin MacDermot), Prefatory View of the Poem. p. iii, in M. P. Kavanagh, *The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*, Sherwood and Co., London, 1824.
3. James Condon, Thurles, private communication to the author.
4. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 95, Part 1, March 1825, pp. 249-251.
5. *The European Magazine and London Review*, Vol. 86, October 1824, pp. 347-353.
The Monthly Review, Vol. CVI, Art. VI, 1825, pp. 283-288.
The Ladies' Monthly Museum, Vol. XX, 1824, p. 282.
New Monthly Magazine, Vol. 12, November, 1824, pp. 506-507.
The Monthly Critical Gazette, February, 1825, pp. 262-268.
6. M. P. Kavanagh, letter to William Jerden, October 27, 1825, RLF file no. 548, item 1, British Library.
7. W. Sherwood, letter to W. Jerden, October 27, 1825, RLF file no. 548, item 2, British Library.
8. W. Jerden, letter to Joseph Snow, October 30, 1825, RLF file no. 548, item 3, British Library.
9. M. P. Kavanagh, Receipt for twenty five pounds, November 10, 1825, RLF file no. 548, item 5, British Library.

PARIS AND LONDON: 1825 - 1844

Nothing is known concerning the reason for Morgan's decision to move to Paris rather than to return to Ireland. The family must have moved to Paris in late 1825 or early 1826. In a letter written from Paris on September 3, 1839 Morgan stated that he had been residing in Paris for the last fourteen years with the exception of one year.¹ Morgan, Bridget and Julia remained in Paris until about 1840, with the exception of that one year back in London. Morgan supported himself and his family by teaching English.

Meanwhile, during this period Julia was receiving her education, perhaps at home, and possibly being tutored by her father. She was, however, suffering from a spinal disorder. The nature of this disability has been described by Eileen Fauset.²

In late 1837 Morgan was offered employment (a more lucrative position according to him) as the representative of a French company in London.³ He remained in this position for about a year but then lost it, for unknown reasons. Morgan was then obliged to return to Paris. For about 15 months, while the family lived in London, Julia was a patient of Dr. Charles Henry Rogers-Harrison, FRCS, an expert on deformities of the spine. Dr. Harrison was a well-known figure in London medical society for many years, serving on the Council of the British Medical Association. He had a private hospital in Fitzroy Square and Julia was a patient in that institution. The cost of maintaining Julia in the hospital was beyond Morgan's means when he had to return to Paris and so Julia had to leave Dr. Harrison's care and return to Paris with her parents.⁴

While in London, Morgan published his second work, a poem in Spenserian stanza entitled *The Reign of Lockrin*. It was published by Whittaker & Co., Ave Maria Lane, London, in 1839.⁵

Morgan returned to Paris in about March of 1839 but was unable to obtain any employment. He was living at 36 rue d'Astorg in the 8th arrondissement of Paris when he submitted an application for assistance to The Literary Fund in September of that year.⁶

On September 3, Morgan wrote a five-page letter to Octavian Blewitt, Secretary to The Literary Fund.⁷ In that letter Morgan acknowledges that he had previously received support from The Literary Fund. Referring to his poem which he had submitted to the Fund in 1825 (*The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah*), Morgan dismissed it as lacking merit. He stated in his letter:

"As to the production which gave me a claim on their society in the year 1825 I wish to say nothing: it was a very long poem composed while I was yet very young in the short space of two months, but with the exception of a few passages

which cost me a little trouble it was very bad indeed.”

Morgan based his application on the need for financial assistance and on the merits of his recent publication, *The Reign of Lockrin*. He stated, in part:

“I found my right on a work which I published last winter, entitled “The Reign of Lockrin” and on which I bestowed all my leisure time for many years. From the facility with which I had composed my first poem it would not have been difficult for me to complete this last production in as many weeks as I employed years; but I was anxious to write such a poem as would hold a place among the standard works of England”

Morgan’s high hopes for *The Reign of Lockrin* were not fulfilled. It was reviewed by Rev. John Mitford in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in June 1839.⁸ His brief review comments:

“We must give to this poem the praise of versification moderately good, and language not very exceptionable; but it fails in the interest of the story.”

A review in the *Dublin University Magazine* questioned Morgan’s choice of the topic for his poem, and was lukewarm in its overall assessment.⁹

The publisher, George B. Whittaker, when lending a copy to The Literary Fund, states that *“we have sold only a few copies”*. He also adds a note saying *“I know nothing Mr. K. having never seen him.”*¹⁰ Interestingly, Morgan states in his letter to Blewitt:

“As to Whittaker the publisher I have never seen him, the printers, Dunker & son of Dartford, having whilst I was beseeching Mr. Jerden to procure me a suitable publisher, confided to him the publication without my knowledge.”

and also:

“As I am still in arrears 13£ to the printers, Whittaker has been cautioned not to grant any copies on my order till this trifle be paid.”

Morgan’s submission to The Literary Fund was supported by several persons. W. Hislop, a merchant, wrote on October 31 from 32 Queen Street, Cheapside, to corroborate the circumstances of Morgan’s need to return to Paris as well as the costs of Julia’s treatment.¹¹

Henry Glenton was a proprietor of Glenton and Chapman, 147 New Bond Street, London, manufacturers of chimney pieces, stoves, fenders, etc. He wrote to Octavian Blewitt on October 22 stating that he had known Morgan since 1836 when they met in Paris.¹² Apparently, Glenton met almost daily with Morgan for about 18 months while he was in Paris. Morgan must have had a good opinion of

Glenton because, when he had to return to Paris, he left funds with Glenton to pay bills and also authorized him to open his letters. Glenton advanced some money to Morgan's printer, Dunker, for the printing of *The Reign of Lockrin*. His letter to Octavian Blewitt supported Morgan's need for financial assistance. One of the letters which came to Glenton was addressed to Morgan, at the 147 New Bond Street address, and was from William Wordsworth.¹³ Morgan had sent a letter and a copy of his *The Reign of Lockrin* to Wordsworth and the latter replied on July 8, 1839 thanking him for the gift and saying "*Promising myself much pleasure from the perusal of your work hereafter.*"

It is interesting to conjecture about the nature of the relationship between these two dissimilar persons: Glenton and Morgan, an entrepreneur and an author. Perhaps the relationship was that of pupil and teacher.

In the case of a third supporter of Morgan's submission the relationship involved was certainly that of a pupil and teacher. A letter dated October 20, 1839 to Blewitt was from La Comte d'Ormesson, Auditeur and Membre du Conseil d'état.¹⁴ The Count d'Ormesson had been a pupil of Morgan in Paris, studying English language and literature. His letter to Blewitt is sufficiently interesting to warrant quotation in full (English translation from the French original):

"The Secretary of The Literary Fund

Sir,

I have read the request by Mr. Kavanagh and I hasten to certify the correctness of the facts upon which it is based. For more than ten years I have been in touch with Mr. Kavanagh, under whose supervision I have long studied the English language and literature. On many occasions he has read to me hand-written extracts of a poem which he was composing, and which he has since had printed, with the title Reign of Lockrin. Thus, I am certainly sure that he is the author of this work.

After his return from England last winter, and many times since, Mr. Kavanagh came to see me to ask my advice, which my friendship and my familiarity with the law permitted me to give him, concerning the situation arising from the loss of his position in London. I have had the opportunity to perfectly understand the difficult situation in which he now finds himself. His difficulty is even greater than he describes in his letter in which I believe that he makes no mention of his daughter who has been afflicted for many years with an illness of the spine which has required her to remain constantly in her bed and which very likely will keep her there for even longer in this unfortunate state.

Not wishing to be a burden on his friends in France, Mr. Kavanagh merits all the more to be recommended to your kind attention. I have no doubt that an institution which brings such honour to the English nation will be forthcoming for

a man so well qualified for support, painstaking, gifted with real talent, and having prepared through long and conscientious efforts the composition of the work which he has just published. Thus, I cannot fail to join with him in expressing regret that your admirable association, so perfect otherwise in its administration, has not the power to give to undiscovered merit all the publicity which ought to be his. It seems to me that in a country which possesses so many enlightened and kind men it would not be difficult to assemble a meeting in order to examine and make known the works of real merit. I hope, sir, that you will excuse these comments which are intended only to improve the situation of men who are most worthy of respect.

I am honoured, sir, in adding my earnest support to Mr. Kavanagh's request, to assure you of my most sincere respects,

Yours truly,

*The Count d'Ormesson
Auditeur, Conseil d'état*

Paris, 20 October 1839"

As will be described later, Morgan and the Count disagreed many years afterwards concerning Morgan's philological ideas.

Morgan's application for assistance was successful. He wrote to Octavian Blewitt on November 21 from Paris acknowledging receipt of a grant of twenty five pounds.¹⁵ He promised to repay, with interest, the amount of fifty pounds which he had now received from The Literary Fund "*if ever my fortune ameliorate*".

However, within five years Morgan was again asking The Literary Fund for more financial assistance.

At some point during the early 1840s Morgan, Bridget and Julia returned to London. On June 18, 1844 Morgan wrote to Octavian Blewitt, Secretary of The Literary Fund, to ask for a third grant of financial assistance.¹⁶ He was then living at 27 Alfred Street, Bedford Square, London. Subsequently, on November 4, 1844, Morgan followed up this letter with a formal application for financial aid.¹⁷ In this application he stated that he was married, had a 20 year-old daughter, and that his family was wholly dependent upon him for support. By then Morgan and his family had moved to 33 Fitzroy Square.

Earlier that year, in April, Morgan had published his first philological work, *The Discovery of the Science of Languages*. It was published in two volumes by Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans of Paternoster Row, London.¹⁸ The manuscript for this book was almost certainly written while Morgan was still in

Paris. A French edition *La Découverte de la Science des Langues*, was published in Paris with the author's name mis-spelled as Morgan Cavanagh. This edition had been translated by Morgan and Ch. Joubert. ¹⁹

Morgan had a high opinion of the importance of this book. He concludes his book with the following:

"Hence, in many ages to come, this discovery may be referred to, as forming a new epoch in the history of the world and the human mind, and that I now breathe may be then not only known but felt. But whatever it may effect, it must, at least, endure; so that if I have ever had "immortal longings in me," they ought to be satisfied, for of the endless future I cannot be deprived, since what I have done must, wherever civilization is known over the world, live as long as words themselves; or only with their science - if many ages hence it is to be again forgotten - find a grave". ²⁰

However, many years later, Morgan admitted that this book contained errors. He stated:

"Shortly after the publication of my work, I could myself detect, without them being shown by others, the many faults or rather blunders in my second volume, which was composed in great haste, even while it was going through the press." ²¹

In his application to The Literary Fund Morgan stated that he had been required to give up all other pursuits (presumably his teaching) in order to devote the time and attention required by the writing of this book. This was the basis for his request for financial aid. The application was recommended by Henry Glenton (who had also supported Morgan's 1839 application) and by Daniel Chapman, the second proprietor of the company Glenton and Chapman mentioned previously.

Morgan again wrote to Blewitt on November 5, 1844. ²² He apparently intended to return to Paris because, in this letter, Morgan wrote:

"But I cannot think of leaving England without paying at least a few of my debts, especially what I owe to my present landlady in whose house I have been living these five months without its being in my power of paying her so much as one shilling. I have however every reason to suspect that she is almost as much in want of money as myself."

Morgan enclosed with his letter a communication which he had received from Alexandre Langlois, a member of l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, and best-known for his translations from Sanskrit. Morgan had apparently sent to M. Langlois a portion of the manuscript for his "Discovery" book. M. Langlois wrote to Morgan with praise for this item saying, among other things,

“Your system appears to me to be not only ingenious, but also rational, and, in my opinion, it deserves the attention of serious persons and friends of science.”
(Translation from the original French).

A second enclosure with Morgan’s letter was a published review in English of his book. The source of this review is unknown but it is likely that it was from *The London Literary Gazette*. It is known that a review was published in that journal in 1844 on page 332, but it has not been possible to confirm that this was the review in question. The review is not signed. It is guardedly positive stating that Morgan’s book *“is not only a work of science, but of deep thought and research, and cannot, therefore, like a frivolous book, be read and digested in a few days”*. Morgan’s comment on this review was:

“From among several insignificant notices that have appeared of my book I beg to give the subjoined; not because it is favourable, for a review not signed by the author, is in our days no better than an advertisement; but because it affords, in a very short space, a clear idea of the nature of my discovery.”

The third enclosure Morgan included in his letter to Blewitt was an item from the *Le Courier de l’Europe*, a journal written in French but published in London. This item refers to Morgan’s *La Découverte de la science des langues* and prints the text of a letter which had been written “au traducteur” (perhaps Charles Joubert ?) by Eugène Burnouf, an eminent French scholar and orientalist, winner of the Prix Volney. M. Burnouf had read all of the first volume and much of the second when he wrote this letter. He was evidently impressed by the originality of the work but had reservations concerning the correctness of the applications of Morgan’s principles. Nevertheless, his concluding sentence is:

“Il y a cependant, même dans cette partie, infiniment de choses curieuses, et je suis convaincu qu’elle sera lue par tous les philologues avec plaisir.”

The decision of The Literary Fund committee was to award Morgan £25 which he acknowledged with gratitude in a letter to the committee written on November 25, 1844.²³ But Morgan did not return to Paris as was his implied intention.

Notes

1. M. P. Kavanagh, letter to Octavian Blewitt, September 3, 1839, RLF file no. 548, item 7, British Library.
2. Eileen Fauset, *The politics of writing: Julia Kavanagh, 1824-77*, Manchester University Press, 2009, pp. 8-10.
3. M. P. Kavanagh, op. cit.
4. ibid
5. M. P. Kavanagh, *The Reign of Lockrin*, Whittaker & Co., London, 1839. The author’s name does not appear on the title page of this book. The title page of the British Library’s copy has been annotated as “By Morgan

- Kavanagh author of the Myths". This particular copy is also inscribed "Robert Southey Esq with the author's respects". Robert Southey was, at that time, the poet laureate.
6. M. P. Kavanagh, letter to Octavian Blewitt, op. cit.
 7. *ibid*
 8. Review attributed to John Mitford, The Reign of Lockrin, a Poem, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. N.s. 11, June 1839, p. 626.
 9. *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. XIV, no. LXXX, August 1839, p. 173.
 10. Letter from G.B. Whittaker, September 6, 1839, RLF file no. 548, item 13, British Library.
 11. Letter from W. Hislop, October 31, 1839, RLF file no. 548, item 11, British Library.
 12. Letter from Henry Glenton, October 22, 1839, RLF file no. 548, item 12, British Library.
 13. James A. Butler, Two New Wordsworth Letters, *Notes and Queries, Oxford Journals*, February, 1975, p. 61.
This letter is in the Philip H. Ward Collection of Autographs and Memorabilia, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. It is not known how this letter came to be in Philip Ward's collection.
 14. Letter from Le Compte d'Ormesson, October 20, 1839, RLF file no. 548, item 10, British Library. Le Compte d'Ormesson is believed to be Emmanuel Lefèvre d'Ormesson, 1808-1882, who later acquired the title marquis d'Ormesson.
 15. M. P. Kavanagh, letter to Octavian Blewitt, November 21, 1839, RLF file item no. 548, item 14, British Library.
 16. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, June 18, 1844, RLF file no. 548, item 16, British Library.
 17. Morgan Kavanagh, Application to the General Committee, Corporation of The Literary Fund, November 4, 1844, RLF file no. 548, item 15, British Library.
 18. Morgan Kavanagh, *The Discovery of the Science of Languages*, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London, 1844. A paperback print-on-demand edition of this book is available from several publishers including Kessinger Publishing in the USA.
 19. Morgan Cavanagh, *La Découverte de la Science Des Langues*, traduit de l'anglais par Morgan Cavanagh et Ch. Joubert, Au Comptoir des Imprimeurs-Unis, Paris, 1844.
In the English version, Vol. II, page, 347, Morgan states "*Monsieur Charles Joubert, whose encouragement and enlightened opinions have been of great service to the author during the progress of the present discovery.*"
 20. Morgan Kavanagh, *The Discovery of the Science of Languages*, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London, 1844, Vol. II, pp. 357-358.

21. Morgan Kavanagh, *Origin of Language and Myths*, Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston, London, 1871, Vol. II, p.432.
22. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, November 5, 1844, RLF file no. 548, item 17, British Library.
23. Morgan Kavanagh, Receipt for twenty five pounds, November 16, 1844, RLF file no. 548, item 18, British Library.

LONDON: 1844 - 1855

When Morgan was in his early 40s his life changed in several ways. With his wife and daughter he moved back to London from Paris. His first book on philology was published. And soon after the return to London, he parted from Bridget and Julia.

The parting from his wife and daughter occurred around 1845. As noted previously, Morgan was living at 33 Fitzroy Square, London, apparently with his family, on November 4, 1844. On August 8, 1846, Julia and her mother were living at 27 Berkeley Street, Lambeth Palace.¹ Julia was then 22 years old and had commenced her career as a writer by which means she was subsequently able to support her mother and herself. It is not known what was the cause of the estrangement between Morgan and his wife and daughter. As will be described later, Morgan had become antagonistic towards organized religion. Julia remained a devout Catholic throughout her life, as undoubtedly was her mother. This difference of attitudes concerning religion may well have been one factor in the break-up of the marriage.

The publication of his *The Discovery of the Science of Languages* marks the beginning of Morgan's battles with the literary establishment which probably continued until his death. It is possible to construct a partial picture of these battles. Reviews of his publications, which appeared in literary journals of the day, clearly indicate the negative views of the established scholars in this field. Morgan's responses, on the other hand, can be determined, in part, from one of his later books: *Origin of Language and Myths*.² This book contains a number of revealing passages, some of which are in the Introduction. But the most interesting are contained in a curious Appendix C to Volume 2. By means of this Appendix Morgan fought back at his critics, though whether the critics actually read these responses is a matter of some doubt.

In his Appendix C, Morgan describes an imaginary dream which he had.³ In this dream, three well-known scholars whose works Morgan disdained, meet at the Academie française in Paris for the purpose of discussing Morgan's theories. The scholars were: Friedrich Max Müller, a German philologist who became Professor of Modern Languages at Oxford University; Maximilien Paul Emile Littré, a leading French philologist and philosopher, and M. Regnier (this was probably Adolphe Regnier, a French author). After some discussion M. Regnier proceeds to describe a dream which he had. In this dream, the three scholars form part of an audience which had met to hear a discourse delivered by an unidentified lecturer on the subject of Morgan's theories. The lecturer proceeds to expound upon the merits of Morgan's work and upon the errors in his rivals' works. In the course of this account there are descriptions of Morgan's dealings

with reviewers, editors and scholars. If these accounts are taken at face value, and for the most part there seems no reason why they should not, they contribute useful information about Morgan's relationships with the scholarly and literary establishment in both London and Paris.

The first encounter which is described occurred probably in, or shortly before, 1844. Morgan had a friend in Kensington and one Sunday evening he visited this friend to show him some of his discoveries. The friend decided to call in a literary acquaintance who was living close by so that he, too, could assess Morgan's work. However, when this literary acquaintance arrived, Morgan declined to reveal his work to that person on the grounds that his publishers, Messrs. John and William Longman, might not approve. As a result, the literary acquaintance departed, apparently displeased. It seems that Morgan did not know the name of this visitor at that time.

At ten o'clock the next morning Morgan had an appointment with the Longmans. It transpired that they had already been informed about Morgan's visit the previous evening, apparently by means of a message from the literary acquaintance. The purpose of the message, it seems, was to cast doubt upon the value of Morgan's work. Nevertheless, Longmans did publish Morgan's work, his 1844 book on *The Discovery of the Science of Languages*. Morgan apparently found out the name of the literary acquaintance subsequently. It is not possible to positively identify this person but, according to Morgan, he was at one time a reviewer for *The Athenaeum*, and for *The Leader*. In fact, in another passage, Morgan states that this was the same person who subsequently wrote a damning review of his later book on Myths. The identity of that reviewer is known to be Augustus De Morgan, Professor of Mathematics at University College, London. ⁴ Morgan's opinion of this person is not very high. He describes him in the following terms: "*he was no better than a mere pettifogger among reviewers, and that his interfering, after the manner just described, between himself and the Messrs. Longmans, proved him to be no better than a literary scamp of the very lowest order, and a wretch to be both despised and feared.*" Interestingly, Morgan (through the words of the lecturer in the dream) also says that person never allows "*an opportunity to escape without thwarting, whenever he can, not only Mr. Kavanagh's views, but also those of a very near relation.*" This "very near relation" was probably Julia and this suggests that one of her works may have received an unfavourable review from De Morgan. However, no such review has been found.

Again, relying upon Morgan's "dream" it appears that soon after the appearance of his 1844 book, Morgan sent a copy to Professor Robert Gordon Latham, a distinguished scholar who, at one time, was a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge and Professor of English at University College, London. Morgan asked for Professor Latham's opinions of his discoveries. According to Morgan:

"I received in a day or two a very kind answer, which was to the effect that he had already learned much from my work, and that in about a fortnight, when he would have finished reading it, I should have his sincere opinion of it."

As described below, Morgan never did receive that further opinion.

Probably not long after sending his book to Professor Latham, Morgan had himself introduced to "a gentleman lawyer in the Temple" who was involved in the establishment of a new grammatical institute. Morgan evidently hoped that this lawyer would help with the acceptance of his theories. However, the meeting did not go well. The lawyer adopted a superior attitude and dismissed Morgan's ideas outright. Furthermore, the lawyer stated that he would return to Morgan the copy of his book, which his 'institute' had received as it was of no use to the institute. To make matters worse, when Morgan told the lawyer about the letter he had received from Professor Latham, it turned out that the lawyer was a friend of Professor Latham. The lawyer undertook to speak to him about Morgan's work. The result, it seems, is that Professor Latham thought better of providing the opinion which he had promised to send. Morgan left the lawyer and returned to the house in which he lodged. It was not far away, in the vicinity of the British Museum. His two volumes were delivered to him shortly after he returned home.

Morgan's description of the lawyer is very unflattering. Apparently the lawyer later wrote a critical review of one of Morgan's books. The lawyer's identity is unknown.

In early November of 1847 Morgan submitted his fourth application for assistance to the Royal Literary Fund.⁵ He was then living at 15 Leicester Place, Leicester Square, London. He stated that he was married, his wife was living, and that he had a daughter age 22. This was misleading in that it suggests that he was living with his family, which was not true. By then Julia and her mother were living in Kensington.

In the section of the application form entitled "Cause of distress", Morgan wrote as follows:

"Want of the means to return to, and settle in Paris where I was known, as a professor of languages, and where I may again, after a few months, recover in part of what I gave up four years ago for the purpose of coming here to publish my last work."

Once more, therefore, Morgan was asking for financial assistance to enable him to return to Paris.

The application form includes recommendations from Joseph Robinson of 40 High Holborn who claims to have known Morgan for twenty years, and Ralph Capper of 8 Lower Brook Street, who had known Morgan for three years. Robinson, therefore, must have first met Morgan soon after the publication of

The Wanderings of Lucan and Dinah.

Morgan wrote a "private" letter to Octavian Blewitt on November 8, 1847. ⁶ Referring to his application, Morgan asks:

"Do you wish either the author of White Friars (?), or Mr. Capper, or both these gentlemen, to wait on you at any time ? If so, please to let me know, as I am sure that both of them would be very happy to grant me this favour."

The author referred to is presumably Joseph Robinson. The title of his work is somewhat uncertain because of the indistinct reproduction of Morgan's writing. A third recommendation was sent to the Royal Literary Fund on November 5, 1847 by James Manners who was residing at No. 22 Upper Southwark, Hyde Park. He had known Morgan for about three years.

Once again the Literary Fund committee agreed to make an award to Morgan. On this occasion the amount was £20. However, he was not pleased with this grant. Writing to Octavian Blewitt on November 19, 1847 Morgan complained that

"twenty pounds were not by any means sufficient towards covering all the expenses which my departure from this country and my settlement in France would require." ⁷

He said that he only knew two persons who had applied to the Literary Fund and both of them were given forty pounds despite their not needing to leave England. In another letter, undated, Morgan states:

"On turning over my little fortune, I have found that it would be next to madness to attempt leaving here and living in Paris several months with such a trifle. I must therefore stay where I am for the present; but I am not the less thankful to you and the society." ⁸

Blewitt replied by expressing regret that Morgan had not told him earlier that the grant was useless for travel to Paris. Otherwise he would not have paid Morgan until he had consulted the committee again.

Thus, on three occasions, Morgan had asked the Literary Fund for a grant to enable him to leave England: in 1825 to return to Ireland; in 1844 and in 1847 to move back to Paris. Although he was awarded a grant each time he did not use the money for the proposed purposes.

While he was living at Leicester Place Morgan was involved in a court case concerning his teaching. A newspaper cutting describing the case is included as an unnumbered item in the Royal Literary Fund file no. 548 held by the British Library. The date and the identity of the newspaper are unknown.

The case came before the Westminster County Court and the headline of the newspaper report was: New Mode of Teaching the English Language – Laughable Case – Kavannah v. Angloise. The first paragraph of the report reads:

“In this case, the plaintiff, an Irish tutor, living in Leicester Place sued the defendant, an Italian, and a performer in Her Majesty’s Theatre, for the sum of 18l. 5s., for teaching the wife of the latter to sing in English. The case lasted several hours, and excited much interest.”

Morgan had entered into an agreement with an Italian lady, Signora Angloise, to teach her sufficient knowledge of the English language to enable her to sing in English. Lessons were given for several months and the lady’s husband paid Morgan £5. However, Morgan believed that he was owed additional money and sued for non-payment.

The lady’s husband, Signor Angloise, who was the defendant in the case, argued that his wife was unable to understand English. During the examination of the lady she testified in Italian that Morgan had given her a book of anecdotes to translate. The judge questioned why Morgan had given his pupil a book of anecdotes rather than a grammar of the English language. Morgan claimed that he gave his pupils a superficial knowledge of grammar first, but there is no necessity for it. The response of the judge was:

“What ! do you mean to say that you can teach a foreigner to sing an English opera without teaching them grammar first ?”

The case was dismissed with costs.

In 1847 Morgan made the first of numerous submissions to the annual competition for the prix Volney. This prestigious linguistic prize was awarded, beginning in 1822, by the Institut de France to recognize work in general and comparative linguistics. A detailed study of Morgan’s involvement with the prix Volney competitions has been made by Prof. Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard of Université Blaise Pascal Clermont-Ferrand II in France. Prof. Saint-Gérard has studied the archives in the library of L’Institut de France and his work reveals interesting insights into Morgan’s unsuccessful attempts to win this prize as well as an analysis of *La Découverte de la Science des Langues*.⁹

For the 1847 prix Volney competition, Morgan submitted the French version of his *Discovery of the Science of Languages*. There were 7 other submissions. Morgan’s submission, however, was withdrawn from the competition by the authorities of l’Institut on the grounds that it had been published too many years previously (in 1844). The two parts of this work, bound into one volume, were deposited in the library of l’Institut. Prof. Saint-Gerard notes that only the first nine pages of the first part had been cut !

On May 1, 1850, Morgan wrote to the Royal Literary Fund with a request for further financial assistance.¹⁰ He was then living at 6 Rupert Street, Coventry Street, London. He followed this up with a completed application form dated June 3, 1850.¹¹

In his letter Morgan refers to his previous grant and that it was insufficient to allow him to return to Paris. However, in the present case he stated that he would be grateful for whatever sum the committee decided upon even if it were not large enough to enable him to return to France.

On the application form Morgan states that he was born in 1798 in Dublin. This is more or less consistent with what he had stated in his 1844 application to the Fund. As in the 1847 application Morgan stated that he was married with one child, a daughter, an authoress 26 years old. Once more he was implying that he was supporting his family even though they were not living with him.

The application was recommended to The Literary Fund by four persons. They were: J. Manners and Ralph Capper, who had both supported the 1847 application; and two sisters, Elizabeth and Amelia Pearson of 22 Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, who said that they had known Morgan for 5 years. Mr. Manners wrote a separate letter of support to Octavian Blewitt on June 12, 1850.¹² In this letter he said that he had been introduced to Morgan some years ago by the late Mr. Valentine Lee of the Oxford Circuit, who was a well-known barrister.¹³ In some manner, Morgan had made the acquaintance of Mr. Lee. Mr. Manners stated that he had been asked by Mr. Lee to examine a work published by Mr. Kavanagh in which was developed an entirely new theory of grammar. He was of the opinion that this work was "altogether visionary". While examining this work Mr. Manners apparently saw Morgan frequently over a considerable period.

A second letter sent to Blewitt was from Elizabeth Pearson. She was writing on behalf of herself and Amelia Pearson, her sister. Her letter read as follows:

"My sister and myself having signed a testimonial addressed to the Literary Fund Society in favour of Mr. Kavanagh you will allow me to give you the following information which he thinks necessary to lay before the committee. Mr. Kavanagh had resolved upon going to France and called last Saturday to take leave of us.

We regretted much his determination and having formerly named him to a friend of ours who has much influence in the management of a large public school near upon the point of choosing a French teacher we repeated the application. Our friend had an interview with Mr. Kavanagh and in the course of conversation perceived that he should be a highly desirable assistant to the Establishment in question and preferred that he should remain in England to await the decision of the council which cannot be had till on or near the 25th of July.

*The salary will be about £100 per annum but probably no part receivable in less than three months. Other advantages may be expected to arise with this appointment should Mr K as we hope be successful in gaining it.”*¹⁴

In fact, Morgan did not go to France at this time. Did he apply for this position but not receive it ? Or did he not apply ? On the face of it this might have been a good solution to his financial problems.

There is no document in the RLF File no. 548 to show that a grant was made to Morgan by The Literary Fund. It is assumed that the committee finally lost patience with Morgan and denied him an award.

Morgan again competed for the prix Volney in 1850. On this occasion he submitted a manuscript, in English, entitled *Origin of Language and Myths*. This was not the same work as his 1871 book of the same name. Apparently, it was the work which Morgan subsequently published in 1856 under the name *Myths traced to their Primary Source through Language*. The handwritten manuscript bore a note written by the author dated July 20, 1850 stating that his address was 28 Dean Street, Soho Square, London.¹⁵ He had evidently moved to that address from Rupert Street in June or July. There were only two submissions for the prize in this competition. Morgan's manuscript evidently received only a cursory inspection. The prize was awarded to the other candidate.

Morgan's new place of residence is interesting. The building at 28 Dean Street, which still stands and now houses a restaurant, was home to several families. The census return of March 30, 1851 for that address lists Morgan as being married and being a teacher of languages.¹⁶ Neither Julia nor Bridget are listed. In fact, it is known that Julia and Bridget were living in Kensington at about that time.¹⁷ A notable resident at 28 Dean Street was Karl Marx, listed as "doctor (philosophical author)", together with his wife, children and servant. Marx and his family occupied 2 rooms which he rented from Morgan for £22 per year.¹⁸ Some sources imply that Morgan owned the building. But this seems extremely unlikely given Morgan's impecunious state. Marx is said to have lived at 28 Dean Street for 6 years from 1850. Whether Morgan also lived there throughout that period is unknown. The Dean Street building is not far from the British Museum. Morgan and Marx both worked in the Museum library. It is easy to conjure up the picture in one's mind of these two controversial characters walking together to or from the library engaged in philosophical debates !

In about 1852, Morgan wrote to the Scottish man of letters, Thomas Carlyle. He sent him a single specimen of his work and sought his opinion. Carlyle replied and invited Morgan to visit him the next day. Carlyle was living then at 5 Cheyne Row in Chelsea. According to Morgan this visit was a favourable one with the result that Carlyle said he would recommend Morgan's work to the editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* with whom he was acquainted. This would have been John Gough Nichols who was editor of that periodical until 1856. The result,

however, was that Carlyle received a letter from Mr. Nichols who apparently said that Morgan's previous publication was extremely bad and that, therefore, his latest work on Myths could be no better. Nichols did continue, however, by offering to publish a portion of Morgan's work in *The Gentleman's Magazine* on condition that he (Nichols) approved of it. Otherwise, Nichols offered to pay Morgan for it. This offer was made, apparently, because of the strong recommendation from Carlyle. Carlyle sent this letter on to Morgan who declined the offer from Nichols. According to Morgan, Carlyle then suggested that the work be published by subscription and that his name could be included in the list of subscribers. Morgan considered this to be a very kind offer but declined to proceed in this manner.¹⁹ Subsequently, Morgan presented Carlyle with a copy of Julia Kavanagh's book *Woman in France during the Eighteenth Century*. His inscription read: "*From Miss Kavanagh's father as a slight token of his esteem & gratitude to Thomas Carlyle Esq.*".²⁰

On the evening of December 3, 1852 Morgan was walking in Drury Lane when a man approached him. The man began thanking him for having saved his life on some (perfectly imaginary) occasion. He then apologized for having stopped Morgan, walked off in one direction, while Morgan continued in another. Just after they parted Morgan realized that his watch was missing from his waistcoat pocket. Morgan managed to catch up with the man who, finding escape was not possible, returned the watch. Morgan was able to detain the man until a policeman arrived. At the Middlesex Sessions on December 20, the man was found guilty of stealing the watch and was sentenced to seven years' transportation. It was stated at the court that the watch was valued at 6 guineas. This was not an insignificant sum at that time. Morgan could not have been destitute if he owned such an expensive watch.²¹

Meanwhile, Morgan commenced his short career as a novelist. His first novel was published in 1855 by the London publisher, Mr. Thomas Cautley Newby. *Aristobulus, The Last of the Maccabees*, was a historical novel based upon Jewish and Roman life and society. It is interesting to note that the name of one of the principal characters was Julia, the name of Morgan's daughter. This book was reviewed in the September 29, 1855 issue of *The Athenaeum*. The reviewer (Geraldine Endors Jewsbury, a novelist) sums up this novel as follows:

*"For those who have time and strength to tackle a tough historical novel, which moves along with the solemn stately pace befitting long flowing garments and a quasi heroic long-windedness of speech, 'Aristobulus' will possess both interest and instruction."*²²

The opinion of this reviewer, at least, suggests that this book had some merit. The nature of the book also indicates that Morgan must have had some understanding of the period which is the setting for his story.

Notes

1. Eileen Fauset, *The Politics of Writing: Julia Kavanagh, 1824-1877*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2009, p. 14.
2. Morgan Kavanagh, *Origin of Language and Myths*, Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston, London, 1871.
3. *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 432.
4. The Athenaeum Projects, Centre for Interactive Systems Research, Department of Information Science, City University, London.
<<http://www.soi.city.ac.uk/research/cisr/athenaeum.athall.html>>. Augustus de Morgan is known for his laws which relate to logical operators. Although he was a Professor of Mathematics he also contributed reviews on a wide range of subjects, including astronomy, mathematics, science, religion, the history of science, philosophy, encyclopaedias and medicine.
5. Morgan Kavanagh, Application to the Royal Corporation of the Literary Fund, November 8, 1847, RLF File no. 548, item 21, British Library.
6. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, November 8, 1847, RLF File no. 548, item 23, British Library.
7. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, November 19, 1847, RLF File no. 548, item 27, British Library.
8. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, November 27, 1847, RLF File no. 548, item 26, British Library.
9. Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard, *Morgan Kavanagh: Condylure oublié en histoire des sciences du langage ?...* Published on the internet at two sites: <<http://www.univ-bpclermont.fr/LangueXIX/kavanagh/>> and <<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/langueXIX/kavanagh/>>
10. Letter from Morgan Kavanagh, May 1, 1850, RLF File no. 548, item 30, British Library.
11. Morgan Kavanagh, Application to the Royal Literary Fund, June 3, 1850, RLF File no. 548, item 29, British Library.
12. James Manners, Letter to Octavian Blewitt, June 12, 1850, RLF File no. 548, item 32, British Library.
13. Mr. Valentine Lee was a well-known barrister practising on the Oxford Circuit. His obituary was printed in *The Law Times*, Vol. 8, October 17, 1846, p.45.
14. Elizabeth Pearson, Letter to Octavian Blewitt, June 12, 1850, RLF File no. 548, item 33, British Library.
15. Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard, *op. cit.*
16. Census returns of March 30, 1851 for 28 Dean Street in the Parish of St. Anne in the City of Westminster.
17. Eileen Fauset, *op. cit.* p.14. Neither Julia nor her mother are recorded for any location in the 1851 census. As Fauset has suggested they may have been in transit between residences. It is also possible that they had left England for one of their tours of the continent.

18. Yvonne Kapp, *Eleanor Marx: Family Life (1855-1883)*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, Vol. I, 1972, p. 23.
19. The visit to Thomas Carlyle and the offer from the editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* are described in *Origin of Language and Myths*, Vol. II, pp.565-568.
20. At the time of writing (2010) this book is in the possession of Dr. Richard Ford, London, seller of books, printed ephemera and manuscripts.
21. The case of the stolen watch was reported in *The Times* (London) on December 21, 1852.
22. *The Athenaeum*, September 29, 1855, No. 1524, pp. 43-44.

A NEW FAMILY: 1856 -1871

The next fifteen years brought about substantial changes and developments in Morgan's life. These concerned both his publication activity and his family life.

Morgan published his second book on philology, *Myths Traced to their Primary Source through Language* in 1856.¹ It was published by T. C. Newby in London. According to Morgan, publication was partly at his own expense. Writing in about 1870 Morgan speaks about this book as follows:

*"Some fourteen years ago I published a work entitled Myths traced to their Primary Source through Language; and though I was then as it were, only feeling my way, I was not the less convinced that the discovery to which I laid claim was real; and however strange it may now appear, I cannot help still entertaining the same opinion. In that work I showed, as well as I could, how man must have first acquired the use of speech; and by the knowledge thence derived I was enabled to account for the ancient belief in the Divine origin of language, to trace letters to their birth, to discover the primary forms and meanings - hitherto unknown - of many words; and finally, to prove that the fables of the heathen mythology, as well as those of religion and ancient history, were first suggested by the several meanings that a name had at different times obtained."*²

Apparently Morgan anticipated a sceptical reception for this book. The title page includes the following quotation from Johann Lorenz Von Mosheim:

"Thus does it generally happen in human life, that when danger attends the discovery and profession of the truth, the prudent are silent, the multitude believe, and imposters triumph."

The book was reviewed in at least three periodicals and the reviews were uniformly negative. These reviews are indicative of the prevailing opinion of the value of Morgan's work.

The review in *The Athenaeum* was written by Professor De Morgan of University College, London. The review was quoted, in part, by Morgan Kavanagh in his 1871 book. The following extracts from the review will indicate its tone:

"We are afraid that etymologists will, with one consent, repudiate Mr. Kavanagh's mode of derivation, and will regret that so much ingenuity should not be better guided by discretion and furnished with more accurate notions of the structure of language to work upon."

*"He has attempted, without width or depth of knowledge, to handle subjects in which the greatest width and depth have not always preserved the speculator from failure, and he has produced results to which the word failure is inapplicable, because success with his means would have been impossible."*³

Morgan wrote a rebuttal of this review in his 1871 book. But this, of course, was many years later.

A second review, in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, was very succinct. In total, it was as follows:

"We speak mildly of this pretentious work, when we say that Mr. Kavanagh has attempted to handle a subject altogether beyond his reach. From beginning to end it is a tissue of absurdities." ⁴

Morgan did not learn about this review until long after it was published. He discovered it while working in the reading room of the British Museum, probably in 1870. Morgan's comment on this review was:

"Now this is the sort of review which honourable gentlemen of the press call a smasher; for it is so very conclusive, so very crushing, that no logical argument, however powerful, can, with the least chance of victory, oppose it." ⁵

This review prompted Morgan, some 13 years after the event, to offer to lay a wager of forty pounds to twenty with the editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* that the review was a very gross misrepresentation.

A third review is interesting because it was written by Dr. Abraham Benisch, the editor and proprietor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the leading British Jewish newspaper of the time. Morgan states that he had conversed with Dr. Benisch several times about his work. Dr. Benisch published, at about that time, a new English translation of the Old Testament. Dr. Benisch's review was quoted by Morgan, in part, in his 1871 book. An extract reads:

"Our author's statement, therefore, is that the first object named by man must have been the sun, appears to us quite gratuitous, destitute of every foundation, and therefore the whole reasoning built upon this assumption must fall to the ground." ⁶

Morgan's reply to this review, as given in his 1871 book was, in part, as follows:

"Now this German doctor, and who is both editor and proprietor of the Jewish Chronicle, is allowed to be a very great linguist, and his great repute in this respect led our author to make his acquaintance at a time when the doctor was giving from the Hebrew text a translation of the Bible. As I have never met with so many very stupid and wilful misrepresentations as are to be found in the few columns of his journal in which he reviews 'Myths traced to their primary Source through Language,' his translation of the Bible, will not, I am afraid, rank very high either for its truthfulness or its literary merits." ⁷

An unabridged facsimile of *Myths Traced to their Primary Source through*

Language was published as an Elibron Classics Replica Edition by Adamant Media Corporation in the USA in 2003.⁸

Myths Traced to their Primary Source through Language was published in two volumes. In fact, Morgan wrote a third volume with the title *The Errors of Religion* which exists as a hand-written manuscript of about 680 pages. Accompanying this manuscript is a note, probably in Morgan's handwriting:

Important
belonging to A.M. Kavanagh Son of the author
M.S. on the Errors of Religion
by Morgan Kavanagh

It appears that this manuscript was written in about 1855-56. There are references in several places in the manuscript to books published in the years from 1845 to 1855. Most significantly, there is a note in Morgan's handwriting on the back of the last page of the manuscript which reads as follows:

"The circumstances here alluded to are to be found in the second volume of the Myths, of which the present work was to form the third volume."

In *Errors of Religion* Morgan argues that religions, Christianity in particular, have been the cause of intolerance, prejudice, acts of persecution, mass murder, and many other undesirable acts. He criticizes blind belief in doctrine rather than in reason and rational inquiry. He deplores the role of Christianity in supporting slavery in America. He is clearly supportive of the ideas put forward by Thomas Paine. Morgan cites the religious problems in Ireland as another example of the evils brought upon the people by religious intolerance and also refers to the prejudice against Jews in England at this time.

Towards the end of the manuscript, Morgan reveals his own religious beliefs. Essentially, he believed in the existence of an infinitely wise, powerful, just and good God. He believed in an after life when both the virtuous and the wicked would receive their due. He did not believe that creation was a consequence of accidents. He believed that conduct through life should be kind, just and merciful. Morgan believed that this was the only religious system needed and that the world would have been a better place had it never known any other. At some point, probably prior to the 1850s, Morgan must have renounced any adherence he may have had to the Roman Catholic faith.

This manuscript was passed down in the Kavanagh family, having been saved by Alexander Morgan Kavanagh, Morgan's youngest son. In March 2006 it was donated to the National Library of Ireland.⁹

In about 1857 a son, Alfred, was born to Morgan. The mother is believed to have been Mary (or Marie) Rose, surname unknown. The date of this event has been

estimated from a British census return for the year 1891. This census, for the parish of Lambeth in London, lists Alfred Kavanagh, who is stated to be 34 years old and born in Lambeth. It will be shown in the Appendix that this was, indeed, Morgan's son. No birth certificate for Alfred has been found. It is likely that Morgan did not register the birth.

Thus, having parted from Bridget in about 1845, Morgan acquired a new partner, probably around 1856.

Although Morgan left Bridget and Julia in about 1845 there is evidence that some occasional form of communication continued to exist between Morgan and Julia. This evidence is provided by the unfortunate controversy which occurred in 1857 concerning Morgan's second novel, *The Hobbies*, published in that year by Mr. T. C. Newby.¹⁰ The manuscript of that novel was, apparently, given to Mr. Newby by Morgan in 1856.

On June 9, 1857 Julia Kavanagh wrote to *The Athenaeum*, in part, as follows:

"Mr. Newby of Welbeck Street having, during my absence from England, and without my cognizance, published a novel in three volumes called 'The Hobbies', on the title-page and in the advertisements of which it is stated to be 'Edited by Julia Kavanagh,' I am under the painful necessity of stating that my name has been affixed to the book without my knowledge or consent...."

She goes on to threaten legal action.¹¹

Mr. Newby wrote to *The Athenaeum* on June 16, 1857 in his defense. He wrote, in part:

"Nearly twelve months since, Miss Julia Kavanagh's father brought the MS. of 'The Hobbies' to me, with a view to its publication, telling me that a considerable portion of it had been written by his daughter, who had carefully revised the whole as its editor. The MS. fully bore out this statement, inasmuch as I found a large part of it, as well as numerous emendations, in Miss Kavanagh's handwriting. I was also shown several letters of Miss Kavanagh's, in which she wrote in high terms of the merits of the work, and of her having made such alterations as she thought would make it more acceptable to the public. These circumstances, and the fact of her having previously offered the work to one of the leading publishing firms in London for publication, on the understanding that it was to be announced as edited by her, induced me to believe her father's statement,.....I was unaware when I accepted the MS. that unhappy family differences had arisen between Miss Kavanagh and her father....."

Mr. Newby went on to state that, in response to Julia's objections, he had printed a new title page and sent it to every library to which copies of the work had been sold. He believed that he had complied with Julia's wishes and concluded that

"if any complaint existed, it ought to be settled between her father and herself than between herself and me." ¹²

Julia Kavanagh wrote again to *The Athenaeum* on June 18, 1857 in response to Mr. Newby's statement. (Her letter was written before the publication of Mr. Newby's letter in *The Athenaeum*. She had presumably received a copy directly from Mr. Newby.) She disputed Mr. Newby's assertion

"that I had previously sanctioned such an announcement being made by another publisher. I am therefore compelled to state most distinctly that this is the reverse of the truth, as I positively refused to allow my name to be made use of." ¹³

The Athenaeum terminated the controversy when it published the following statement in its "Our Weekly Gossip" column:

"We are tired of the controversy about 'The Hobbies' and we trust we shall have no need to publish further correspondence on the subject. We must, however, state that Mr. Newby has placed in our hands a copy of a letter from which we gather that Miss Kavanagh formerly offered the novel to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, and proposed to edit it for them". ¹⁴

This last statement seems to undermine Julia Kavanagh's position, as does Mr. Newby's assertion that he had seen letters from her in support of the publication of *The Hobbies*. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Mr. Newby was, himself, a controversial person. Charlotte Brontë (who knew Julia Kavanagh) did not have a high opinion of Newby. She stated that: "Mr. Newby shuffles, gives his word and breaks it" and refers to "the shuffling scamp himself". Charlotte's biographer, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, states "About Newby.....I should like to warn others off trusting to him as much as I cd." ¹⁵

What is one to conclude from this exchange of correspondence ? Eileen Fauset states her conclusion as follows:

"What this exchange of published correspondence between Julia and Newby suggests is that Julia, on whatever terms, was in contact with Morgan at this time and that the dispute here was professional. The evidence suggests, nevertheless, that she did assist him with this novel, but to what extent remains unclear. Not surprisingly, she wanted nothing to do with the final published version." ¹⁶

The novel was reviewed in the July 18, 1857 issue of *The Athenaeum* by Geraldine Endors Jewsbury, who had previously reviewed *Aristobulus ,the Last of the Maccabees*. Her very scathing review states, in part:

"The novel is an exaggerated caricature, with scarcely a semblance of life or nature about it.....'The Hobbies' is, on the whole, the most foolish novel we

ever read..." 17

Another review was published in *The Spectator* on July 11, 1857. This review commented:

In a critical point of view we can readily conceive the unwillingness of a writer of established reputation like Miss Kavanagh to be connected as editor with a novel from which no editorial exertions could remove defects that were inherent, not merely in execution but conception. Passages might admit of improvement; the whole must remain a mistake unless recast and rewritten. 18

From what Mr. Newby said, there should exist two versions of this book, one with Julia's name on it and one without, and both with the date 1857. The book is evidently rather rare and only few copies have been found listed in library catalogues. The Bodleian Library at Oxford University has a copy which is stated in their catalogue to be "ed. by J. Kavanagh (or rather, written by M. P. Kavanagh)". The date is 1857 and so this is apparently the original version of the book. The British Library has a copy also with the date 1857 but there is no indication that Julia's name appears on the title page. This may be the second version of the book. Cambridge University Library lists a copy but it is not possible to tell from the catalogue entry whether this is a "Julia" version.

Another copy of *The Hobbies* is in the collection of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. The catalogue of that library gives the date of publication as 1859. The title page of that copy does not have Julia Kavanagh's name on it and the date is, indeed, 1859. It is in a publisher's remainder binding, priced 21 shillings on the spine, and has cancelled title pages, dated 1859, for all three volumes.

Evidently, and perhaps not surprisingly, *The Hobbies* did not sell well and so the publisher disposed of the remaining copies in 1859, changing the date on the title page accordingly.

In 1857 Morgan once more entered the competition for the prix Volney. He submitted his *Myths Traced to their Primary Source through Language* published in the previous year. The result was as before and Morgan did not make another submission until 1869.

Morgan attempted to fight back at his many critics by publishing, undoubtedly at his own expense, a volume which he called *An author his own reviewer; or, an analysis of "Myths traced to their primary source through language"*. This document was published in London by J. R. Smith in July or August of 1857. Its contents are unknown, but it seems likely that the various responses to critics quoted earlier may also have been contained in this publication. A short notice of this publication appeared in *The Leader* on August 22, 1857. This notice was as follows:

" We know not to what class of readers Mr. Morgan Kavanagh has addressed *An Author his own Reviewer* (J. R. Smith), a spiteful, unintelligible, and imbecile tirade against certain critics." ¹⁹

Morgan, in turn, responded to this notice with the following statement (through the words of the imaginary lecturer) in Appendix C of *Origin of Language and Myths*:

"Our author on finding himself so unjustly treated by the reviewer of the *Athenaeum* and others replied to such attacks in a brochure entitled, '*An Author his own Reviewer*,' but this was regarded by the prince of pettifoggers in literature as the height of impertinence. This gentleman has the right of gross misrepresentation and lying as much as he pleases, but no author must be so bold as to oppose this gross misrepresentation and these palpable falsehoods. When knocked down and trampled upon while down, the poor devil must, on rising, take off his hat to the gentleman, and say, 'Thank you, sir, you have done me a great honour.' He must not presume to utter a word in his defence; if he should so far forget himself he is a spiteful wretch, and his defence is so stupid as not to be understood. Lest you should suppose, gentlemen, that this representation of the reviewer's conduct is rather too strong, allow me to submit to you his own words, and which you will find in a journal entitled the *Leader*, April, 1857, page 476. " (note that Morgan gave an incorrect reference for the *Leader* review).²⁰

One further episode relating to the publication of the *Myths* book may be noted. Again, according to Morgan, he sent a copy of that book to *The Times* as soon as it appeared in 1856. However, *The Times* declined to print any notice of it. Morgan ascribes this to the fact that Friedrich Max Müller (one of the participants in his dream) was the reviewer for *The Times* of such publications. Max Müller was one of Morgan's contemporaries. Morgan despised him and considerable sections of his 1871 book are devoted to demonstrating the errors in Max Müller's publications.

Other than the fact that Alfred Kavanagh believed that he was born in Lambeth, it is not known where Morgan lived in London at this time. However, at some point in the late 1850s or early 1860s Morgan moved back to Paris, taking Mary Rose and Alfred with him. In 1862 he was living at 9, cité du Marché, in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. This arrondissement includes the district of Montmartre. It is interesting to note that Julia and her mother were also back in Paris at this time, living at 12 rue de Ponthieu. This was in the 8th arrondissement, not far from the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.

On July 14, 1862, an official of the 18th arrondissement issued a birth certificate (acte de naissance) for Mathilde Rose, born at three o'clock in the morning of July 12 at cité du Marché, 9. The father was Morgan Cavanagh, teacher of languages, age 60, and the mother was Marie Rose, no profession, age 32.

Morgan and Marie were stated to have been married in London in 1859. Two witnesses signed the certificate: Paul Saint Etienne, mechanic (mécanicien) age about 50 (the exact age is indistinct), living at Place Saint Pierre, 9; and Pierre Marie Perrot, wine merchant, age 47, living at cité du Marché, 9.

From this certificate it appears that Morgan was supporting his new family by language teaching, as in previous years. The statement that he and Marie (Mary) were married in London was based upon information provided by Morgan and not on fact. No such marriage can have taken place. Although the ages given are only approximate it is evident that Marie was much younger than Morgan. The fact that M. Perrot was also living at cite du Marché, 9 indicates that this was a multi-family dwelling.

On May 3, 1864, Morgan wrote a will which stated:

“Left with Mr. Lecomte 1100 francs this day (3 May 1864) which in the event of anything happening to me is to be given to Mrs. Kavanagh residing no. 23 Rue Berthe à Montmartre.”

The sum of 1100 francs was a significant amount. It would be approximately equivalent to £44 at that time.²¹ By way of comparison, Morgan charged Marx £22 per year as rent for two rooms.

It must be presumed that Morgan was also living at this address. Rue Berthe is a very narrow street below the hill now surmounted by the Sacré Coeur Basilica.

By January 1866 Morgan and his family had moved again. They were now residing at 45 rue Lepic in Montmartre. This was an ancient street which climbs the hill of Montmartre. In later years, in particular, many well-known artists and others lived on this street.

On January 31, 1866 an acte de naissance was issued for Alexandre, born at two o'clock in the afternoon of January 29. 1866 at rue Lepic, 45. The father was Morgan Kavanagh, teacher of languages, age 60, and the mother was Marie Rose, no profession, age 40. Morgan and Marie were stated to have been married in London in 1856. The two witnesses who signed the certificate were: François Delamare, chef administration (the writing is indistinct), age 31, living at rue De l'abbaye, 35; and Aimé André Gratien Bertrand, teacher of languages, age 69, living at rue Labat, 24.

Evidently, Morgan was still teaching languages and it is likely that M. Bertrand was a colleague, implying that they were teaching at some kind of educational institution. The ages of Morgan and Marie, and the date of their supposed marriage, are inconsistent with the corresponding data provided in 1862. It seems that Morgan was not very particular about dates of events.

Morgan and his family (now consisting of Marie, Alfred, Mathilde and Alexandre) then moved again. In March 1868 they were living at 95 rue Nollet, which is in the neighbourhood of Batignolles. This is in the 17th arrondissement of Paris, to the west of Montmartre. Morgan's new residence was about a kilometre west of rue Lepic.

On March 14, 1868 Morgan added to his original will dated May 3, 1864. The addition read as follows:

"The above sum (which referred to the 1100 francs) has considerably increased since above was written. My wish is still the same, whatever the present sum be. I am now residing 95 rue Nollett Batignolles – Paris.

Given under my hand this 14th day of March 1868

Morgan Kavanagh"

To which was added the information:

"Monsieur Lecomte resides No. 12 Rue Lafitte Paris."

In 1869, Morgan returned to his quest for the prix Volney. He was one of 8 candidates and he submitted a French version of his manuscript for *Origin of Language and Myths*. Professor Saint-Gérard notes that Morgan had, in his obstinacy, submitted a text in a subject area which had been ruled ineligible by la Société de Linguistique de Paris since 1866. Morgan, on the other hand, hints that the reason that his submission was not successful is that the committee was composed of M. Littré (another of the dream participants) and six of his friends. Furthermore, Morgan suspects that the criticisms, in his submission, of Max Müller's works would not have been favourably received.²²

Following the negative decision of the committee concerning his submission, Morgan visited the Institute in order to make extracts from his manuscript. However, the manuscript could not be found. He was informed that the manuscript was last seen with one of the members of the prix Volney committee, Henri Patin, a member of the Academie française and dean of the Faculté des lettres in Paris. Morgan was given permission to write to M. Patin about the manuscript. In his reply to Morgan, M. Patin wrote:

"Il s'agit de la solution d'une question très ardue, que j'ai bien pu exposer consciencieusement et fidèlement comme rapporteur, mais sur le question je ne me sens en mesure ni de vous approuver, ni de vous contredire."

Morgan placed much weight upon M. Patin's statement that he could not contradict Morgan.

Morgan challenged M. Littré to a wager concerning the validity of his claim to have discovered the origin of language. His wager was for 1000 francs against 100 francs and he apparently gave him the name of the stockbroker in Paris where the 1000 francs was deposited (This sum, presumably, is the amount referred to in his will). Morgan proposed that the winner would be judged by twelve of M. Littré's colleagues chosen by lot. Morgan seems not to have expected that M. Littré would accept the challenge and, evidently, this was the case.

In about 1868 Morgan was passing by a Paris bookseller's shop when he noticed a book in the window entitled *La science du langage*. The author was Max Müller, a distinguished professor at Oxford University. Morgan had a very low opinion of Müller's knowledge of the science of language. Morgan bought the book and determined that, in his opinion, it abounded with numerous mistakes. This event provoked Morgan into writing a new manuscript on *Origin of Language and Myths*. This manuscript was probably written in 1869.

In July 1870, the Franco-Prussian war commenced. Paris was under siege for about four months until January 1871. Following the capitulation of the French forces, there was an uprising in Paris which led to the creation of the Commune which held power for about two months to May 1871. One of the strongholds of the Commune was Montmartre. The Commune was eventually overcome after much loss of life.

During this period Morgan's family was in Paris (possibly in rue Nollet, near Montmartre) and are known to have suffered from starvation as did the population of Paris in general. The children survived but, as will be seen, it is likely that Marie Rose did not. At this time, Alfred would have been about 14, Mathilde 8, and Alexandre 5 years old. As for Morgan himself, it is not known whether he was in Paris during this time or whether he may have been in London.

Notes

- 1 Morgan Kavanagh, *Myths Traced to their Primary Source through Language*, 2 Vols., Newby, London, 1856
- 2 Morgan Kavanagh, *Origin of Language and Myths*, Vol. I, p. vii.
- 3 *The Athenaeum*, January 10, 1857, No. 1524, pp. 43-44.
- 4 *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, April 1857, p. 476.
- 5 Morgan Kavanagh, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 568.
- 6 *Jewish Chronicle*, April 10, 1857.
- 7 Morgan Kavanagh, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 514-515.
- 8 Morgan Peter Kavanagh, *Myths Traced to their Primary Source through Language*, Vols. I and II, Elibron Classics Replica Edition, Adamant Media Corporation, Brighton, MA, USA, 2003.

- 9 Morgan Kavanagh, *The Errors of Religion*, Unpublished manuscript, Acc 6354, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
- 10 M. Kavanagh, *The Hobbies; A Novel*, 3 Vols., T. C. Newby, London, 1857.
- 11 *The Athenaeum*, June 13, 1857, No. 1546, p.761.
- 12 *ibid*, June 20, 1857, No. 1547, p.792.
- 13 *ibid*, June 27, 1857, No. 1548, p. 822.
- 14 *ibid*, July, 4, 1857, No. 1549, p. 854.
- 15 Juliet Barker, *The Brontës*, Phoenix, London, 1995, pp. 747, 800.
- 16 Eileen Fauset, *The Politics of Writing: Julia Kavanagh, 1824-1877*, Manchester University Press, 2009, p. 29.
- 17 *The Athenaeum*, July 18, 1857, No. 1551, p. 909.
- 18 *The Spectator*, July 11, 1857, p. 785.
- 19 *The Leader* (London), August 22, 1857, No. 387, p. 813.
- 20 Morgan Kavanagh, *Origin of Language and Myths*, Vol. II, pp. 562-563.
- 21 This is only a rough estimate based upon the statement in Whitaker's Almanack for 1886, p. 377, that a 10 French franc coin was equivalent to 7s 11d.
- 22 Morgan Kavanagh's account of his candidacy for the 1869 prix Volney and the subsequent events are described in his *Origin of Language and Myths*, Vol. I, pp. xxii-xxvi and xxx-xxxi.

THE FINAL YEARS: 1871 - 1874

Morgan's last book, *The Origin of Language and Myths*, was published in London in 1871, probably during the summer.¹ He is believed to have been living in London at that time, although this is not certain. His children, Alfred, Mathilde and Alexandre, are thought to have remained in Paris, perhaps living with another family.

The Origin of Language and Myths was reviewed in several publications including the *Athenaeum* in September 1871 and *The Spectator* in November of that year. Both are major reviews of substantial length. In view of the earlier reactions to Morgan's works on philology it seems surprising that these journals would devote so much space to his latest book. Nevertheless they did, and the nature of these reviews is as before.

The review in *The Athenaeum* was written by a Danish scholar, Eirikr Magnusson. His review commences as follows:

" This, in its way, is one of the most remarkable works of the age. It is a continuation of Mr. Kavanagh's earlier writings on the same subject. At three different periods in his life, Mr. Kavanagh, it seems, has come forward with his discoveries. In 1844 he discovered the "science of languages"; in 1856 he traced myths by the aid of science to their very fountain-head; and now he takes us, through some thousand pages, up to the very source whence human speech took its primary start."

Another passage is as follows:

"It is evident that a savant of his zeal could not be expected to stand by patiently when inferior intellects were winning applause. Conscious of having made the grandest discovery that ever was achieved, although ignored by an ungrateful world, he determined to show up the Müllers, the Littrés, the Grimms, and the rest, in a worthy fashion, and to lay bare not only their blunders, but also the rotten foundation of philological science and demonstrate the infallibility of his own discoveries and assertions. The handsome two volumes before us are the result of this determination."

Magnusson proceeds, at some length, to ridicule Morgan's book.²

The identity of the author of the review in *The Spectator* is not known. But he was no kinder. The review starts off as follows:

"It is to be hoped that Professor Max Müller is proof against nightmares, or that if he is not, the inevitable 'some damn'd good-natured friend or another' will not show him Mr. Kavanagh's book. Not that we apprehend any danger to Mr. Max Müller's repose from Mr. Kavanagh's repeated assertions that he knows nothing

*of etymology, any more than we do to M. Littré's from Mr. Kavanagh's impetuous offer to bet a thousand francs that his own discoveries in language are right and M. Littré's dictionary all wrong. The philologists might well enough continue to sleep the sleep of the just in spite of the new discoverer's wagers and denunciations. But the grotesque and bewildering confusion of this new Origin of Language and Myths would surely make their dreams hideous for many nights if their waking eyes should unhappily fall upon it."*³

Doubtless, Professor Max Müller and M. Littré would have read these reviews given that they appeared in two of the leading literary journals of the time. But whether they read Morgan's book is much less certain !

Another review by an unnamed person was published in The Westminster Review.⁴ Once again, it was very negative.

Nothing is known about Morgan's reaction to these reviews. But, unless he suddenly changed his principles and his nature, it is probable that he continued to believe that he was the victim of malicious and ignorant critics.

Once more, Morgan unsuccessfully entered the competition for the prix Volney. For the 1871 competition he submitted his two-volume *Origin of Language and Myths*. There were only two other candidates, no doubt because of the recent traumatic political events in France.

Morgan apparently was acquainted with a Dr. T. Purland, a dentist who lived in Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square. Dr. Purland was a friend of Alfred Russel Wallace, the explorer, anthropologist and biologist, known for his independently proposing a theory of evolution due to natural selection. Wallace published "A Life: A Record of Events and Opinions" which included accounts of his friends and acquaintances, one being Dr. Purland. Referring to a letter received from Dr. Purland, Wallace wrote:

"The next letter refers chiefly to an eccentric friend of his, Mr. Morgan Kavanagh, author of a work on "The Origin of Language and of Myths" and always referred to by Purland as "The Great O" on account of his fundamental idea that (O) was the sign of the sun, the only permanently circular object in nature, and that the word "O" was the original name of the sun (from making the figure with the lips), and was thus the origin of all language. The book, however, is full of the most ingenious and suggestive derivations from Sanscrit and the Eastern Languages."

The letter to Wallace from Purland dated September 24, 1872, said, in part:

*"As to the great O, he was here on Saturday – Och Murther – as usual, full of his diskivery – but, it is all bosh."*⁵

Morgan's last submission for the prix Volney occurred in 1873. He submitted a

document entitled *An Author his own Reviewer; with an outline of the author's work, entitled, "Origin of Language and Myths."*⁶ This document is not the same as his 1857 publication with a similar title. Certain references in the Introduction confirm that this document was written after the publication of *Origin of Language and Myths* in 1871. The document is set in type and bound in some fashion. But there is no indication that it was published in the normal sense. There is no publisher's name on the title page. It must be presumed that this document was produced specifically for submission to the French Academy and not for public dissemination.

The Introduction provides some additional glimpses into Morgan's character and life. He offers a prize of fifty pounds to any one who can prove that his "discovery" of the origin of language is not real. This offer is not unlike his challenge to M. Littré, following rejection of his 1869 prix Volney submission, to a wager of 1000 francs against 100 that Morgan's claim to have discovered the origin of language is valid.

Morgan argues that man was not born with the gift of speech but that speech evolved from a first word "O" formed by the mouth as a representation of the sun. Some of his detractors believed that God created man with the full ability to speak. This belief is founded upon religious dogma, with which Morgan strongly disagrees. Evidently, Morgan received letters following the publication of *Origin of Language and Myths* from persons who challenged his theory. He refers in the Introduction to a letter from a friend "*of this class, with whom I have been intimately acquainted for more than thirty years, and whose superior judgement and wise observations I have often had occasion to admire, cannot admit the reality of my discovery because he supposes man to have been born with the gift of speech.*"

Morgan also refers to a letter which he received from one of his former pupils:

"I know a French gentleman who would, I have reason to suppose, regard it as a sin to inquire into the origin of language. And why so ? Because he is, like all the other members of his excellent family, very piously inclined. This gentleman, who is of the nobility, was my pupil a great many years ago. He is now an academician, and his valuable works must cause him to be regarded as an honour to the French Academy. This gentleman has read my work, and the following short passage, which I copy from a letter he has written to me respecting it, may be regarded as the gist of all he thinks of it:

'I consider language but as having been given to man complete at once, and sufficient for all his wants, as it may be inferred from the Bible. Any hypothesis in order to derive it from a labour of human mind may be ingenious, but vain and arbitrary' "

Morgan goes on to say "*Now, as I often took the liberty of explaining to this*

gentleman, when he was my pupil, some of the dark passages of our English poets, he will excuse me, I know, if I now take the liberty of telling him that he has not understood several passages in the opening of my first volume, in which passages I do clearly show that, 'at the birth of language, human intelligence can have been scarcely above that of the brute creation' ".⁷

These quotations from the Introduction show that the detractors of Morgan's works fall into two groups: those who consider his theories nonsensical (such as those who wrote reviews of his book *Origin of Language and Myths*); and those who believe that language was a god-given ability conferred at the time of the creation and not something which was acquired over time.

The first page of the main text of *An Author His Own Reviewer* consists of the initial section of a letter addressed to the Editor of the "Guardian". It appears that this editor (addressed as Rev. Sir) has either personally attacked Morgan's work, or has published material from some other person having the same negative opinion. There is insufficient information contained in this small section to be able to confirm further details.

The 1873 submission for the prix Volney provides interesting new information concerning Morgan. The title page includes a hand-written note dated 24 March, 1873 which gives Morgan's address as 13 Ashburton Grove, Holloway, London. This confirms that he had left Paris and was now living in London.

Morgan died on February 10, 1874. The circumstances concerning his death are available from a report on the Coroner's inquest held at the Queen's Arms, Queensland Road, Hornsey Road, Islington on February 14, 1874. The Coroner was Edwin Lankester.⁸

As noted above, Morgan's current home was in Ashburton Grove, a street off Hornsey Road in Islington. On the evening of January 31, he went out accompanied by his daughter Matilda (who was then 11 years old). They were on Holloway Road, a nearby major road, waiting for a tram car. Morgan stepped back to avoid a passing carriage and fell, fracturing his skull. He was placed in a cab and, with Matilda, taken home. His doctor, Dr. George Wight, was called and he came to see Morgan. Dr. Wight saw him again on February 9. Morgan was found dead in his bed on the morning of February 10, 1874. The cause of death was stated as "Concupia".

Evidence was given by Matilda Kavanagh, by Dr. Wight, and by a Louisa Kavanagh. The latter was stated to be Morgan's wife. Louisa stated: her place of residence; that Morgan was an author and wrote on languages; that Morgan had been attended by Dr. Wight for some months; that he had gone out with his daughter; and that no blame was attached to anyone for the accident.

The report on the Coroner's inquest provides some new information concerning Morgan. The fact that Dr. Wight was said to have been in attendance on Morgan for some months indicates that Morgan had been suffering from some medical problem. The facts that Matilda was living with Morgan in London and that Morgan was now living with a Louisa Kavanagh, stated to be his wife, lend credence to the conjecture that Marie Rose had not survived the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71.

No information has been found concerning Louisa Kavanagh.

So ended the life of a controversial, eccentric, talented Irishman who had devoted his whole life to language, as a teacher, author, and ardent promoter of theories about its origin.

Notes

- 1 Morgan Kavanagh, *Origin of Language and Myths*, Sampson, Low, Son and Marston, London, 1871. A paperback print-on-demand edition of this book is available from several publishers including General Books in the USA.
- 2 *The Athenaeum*, September 30, 1871, No. 2292, pp. 426-427.
- 3 *The Spectator*, November 18, 1871, Vol. 44, No. 2264, pp. 1401-1402.
- 4 *The Westminster Review*, Vol. XLI, January and April 1872, p. 262.
- 5 Alfred Russel Wallace, *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, Chapman & Hall, London, 1905, Vol. II, Chapter XXVIII, p. 81.
- 6 Prof. Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard of Université Blaise Pascal Clermont-Ferrand II, France, has very kindly provided a photocopy of the initial pages of this *prix Volney* document. This document is held by the Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France. These pages include the title page, the Introduction, and the first page of the main text.
- 7 This former pupil was, undoubtedly, La Comte d'Ormesson, who studied with Morgan in the 1830s.
- 8 Coroner's Inquest on Morgan Kavanagh, Islington, February 14, 1874. (London Metropolitan Archives).

APPENDIX – CHILDREN OF MORGAN KAVANAGH

Morgan Kavanagh had four children. Summaries of information about each of these children are given below.

Julia Kavanagh was the only child of Morgan and Bridget Fitzpatrick. She was born in Thurles in 1824. Julia never married and died in Nice in 1877. After the separation of Julia and Bridget from Morgan, Julia supported herself and her mother by writing. She became a well-known and respected author. Eileen Fauset's book about Julia, *The Politics of Writing: Julia Kavanagh, 1824-1877*, is a comprehensive account of Julia's life and her writing.

Alfred Kavanagh was the eldest child of Morgan and (probably) Mary Rose (surname unknown). His full name may have been Alfred Morgan Kavanagh. He is believed to have been born around 1857 in Lambeth, London and to have moved to Paris with his parents in about 1860. Alfred eventually returned to London and lived with Elizabeth Brittain, with whom he had three children. (No record of a marriage between Elizabeth and Alfred has been found.) In the census return for 1891 Alfred was listed as a "hall keeper" but in subsequent years he was employed in the electrical industry. By 1901 Alfred had separated from Elizabeth and in 1911 he was living with Jane Parkinson, then a widow. Following her death in 1923 Alfred moved to Montreal where he worked as an electrician. He died in Montreal in 1930.

Matilda Kavanagh was the second child of Morgan and Mary (or Marie) Rose. She was born in Paris in 1862. She is believed to have left Paris for London with Morgan at some time after the presumed death of her mother during the siege of Paris. She was with Morgan at the time of the accident which led to his death. Matilda had been living with Louisa but after her father's death she probably returned to Paris and was reunited with her brothers. She returned to England in about 1887. She obtained employment in England in various positions as a domestic servant and died in Kingston, Surrey, in 1923.

Alexander Morgan Kavanagh was the third child of Morgan and Marie Rose. He was born in Paris in 1866. He remained in Paris following the presumed death of Marie Rose until about 1887 when he left for New York. In 1891 Alexander had moved from the USA to England and was temporarily staying with Alfred and Elizabeth in Lambeth. This reunion of Alfred and Alexander was recorded in the census of 1891 and it is this record which confirms that Alfred was, indeed, the brother of Alexander and therefore the son of Morgan. Alexander married Matilda Parkinson (the daughter of Jane Parkinson, mentioned above) in 1894 with whom he had two children. Alexander had a successful career as an ivory carver and die cutter, being responsible among other accomplishments for the watermark of the head of Britannia which was used in the British pound note for many years. He died in Winchester in 1942.