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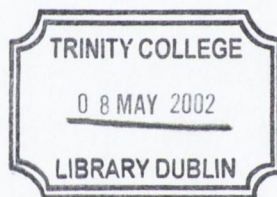
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**'History's Muse': The Prose Writings of
Thomas Moore**

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A thesis submitted to the School of English
at the University of Dublin, Trinity College,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

October 2001



THESIS

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Declaration

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For my parents

Summary

Since his heyday in the nineteenth century Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852) has often been considered Ireland's national poet, principally because of his *Irish Melodies* (ten numbers, 1808 – 34). However, from the mid-1820s on, he turned increasingly to prose, almost all of which enjoyed both critical and commercial acclaim. In contrast to the *Melodies*, this prose was often divisive and occasionally sectarian, and for this reason was largely excluded from the reputation of Moore that was popularised after his death. This exclusion proved enduring: the most recent book-length biography of Moore is dismissive of the prose works, while Seamus Deane's introduction to the writer in the *Field Day Anthology* contains a single, fleeting, and misleading reference to their existence. As a corrective to this view, this thesis argues that the prose was in fact a vital part of Moore's *oeuvre*. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the prose significantly deepens our appreciation of not only the range of Moore's literary achievement, but also the nature of his complex political allegiances.

Accordingly, the thesis provides a detailed literary history of five of Moore's major prose works: the *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824), the biographies of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1825) and Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1831), the *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833), and the four-volume *History of Ireland* (1835 – 46). Of these works, only *Captain Rock* has enjoyed any sustained critical scrutiny in recent years. Expanding upon this pioneering work by Joep Leerssen, Luke Gibbons, and others, this thesis pays particular attention both to the genre

conventions that Moore's prose negotiated and to the influence of the political and cultural context in which it was written and read. The extent to which Moore's domestic situation had a profound influence on his writing life is similarly emphasised. The thesis concludes with an account of the disappearance of the prose and the elevation of the *Melodies* in the creation of Moore's posthumous reputation.

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While History's Muse the memorial was keeping
Of all that the dark hand of Destiny weaves,
Beside her the Genius of Erin stood weeping,
For hers was the story that blotted the leaves.

from the *Irish Melodies*

Chapter One

Introduction

In 1934 Wilbraham Fitzsimon Trench, Professor of English Literature at Trinity College, succinctly outlined the plummeting trajectory of Thomas Moore's critical reputation: 'he enjoyed such widespread contemporary fame as was seldom the lot of any poet, and then, having risen ever so high, he was afterwards to fall ever so low in the regard of later generations.'¹

In 1979, Moore's bicentennial year, Seamus Heaney attempted to account for this fall from favour: 'Moore's "servile head", as Stephen Dedalus called it, cocked attentively to survive among the civilities and longueurs of English society, could not please a risen people.' Moore's note, he explains, 'was too light, too conciliatory, too *colonisé*.'²

This indictment of Moore as the colonial bard, filtered through Stephen Dedalus' symbolic rejection of the College Green statue of the poet, is based upon the view that Thomas Moore's achievement began and ended with his sentimental songs, the *Irish Melodies*. This is the lesson readers have learned from a century of Moore biographies, from John P. Gunning's *Moore: Poet and Patriot* (1900) to the most

¹ W.F. Trench, *Tom Moore: A Lecture* (Dublin: At the Sign of the Three Candles, 1934), Preface.

² Seamus Heaney, 'Introduction', *A Centenary Selection from Moore's Melodies*, ed. David Hammond (Skerries: Gilbert Dalton, 1979), p. 8; p. 9.

recent book-length life, Terence de Vere White's *Tom Moore: the Irish Poet* (1977).³ As the titles indicate, the focus of these works is almost exclusively on Moore's service in verse to the Irish nation; his other publications, including *Lalla Rookh* and the many volumes of prose, fade into an undifferentiated background of works considered minor, even eccentric, perhaps aberrant, and certainly of negligible importance.

Due to the impact of the *Melodies* on Irish culture, Irish biographers of Moore have been particularly prone to under-estimating Moore's other publications, most of which are referred to for the sake of completeness, but rarely discussed with conviction. Gunning, for example, is strong on the *Melodies*, but his uniformly enthusiastic quotes from the prose give no sense of the tensions in those books. Similarly, White maintains that *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) are 'two tedious satires in the Dryden manner', while *Lalla Rookh* (1817) is 'now almost unreadable.' The composition of *Sheridan* (1825) is noted, but not its contents; *Fitzgerald* (1831) is described as 'his most defiant stand as an Irish nationalist', but principally because it seemed to annoy Moore's Whig friends; and the *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833) is dismissed in a line as 'a pot pourri of his theological researches'. The four-volume *History of Ireland* (1835 – 46) is deemed worthless – 'his most ill-judged literary effort' – and its extensive research likened to piling damp rubbish on a bonfire. White's appraisal of *Captain Rock* (1824) is, however, quite acute – 'As a book *Captain Rock* suffers from extreme haste in its composition, but as a statement of British misrule it is devastating. Why it is seldom referred to in Irish books can only be explained by the tacit conspiracy to denigrate Moore's patriotism and confine his activity to drawing-room singing' – but as this is White's last word on

³ John P. Gunning, *Moore: Poet and Patriot* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1900); Terence de Vere White, *Tom Moore: the Irish Poet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977).

the work it is also unintentionally ironic.⁴ Similarly, L.A.G. Strong's three-hundred page biography, *The Minstrel Boy* (1937), dispatches Moore's three multi-volume biographies in several paragraphs under the title 'Miscellaneous Writings: Prose and Verse', the *Memoirs of Captain Rock* and the *Travels* barely merit a single page each, and acknowledgement of the *History of Ireland* is reduced to several regretful asides.⁵

In contrast, biographers from outside Ireland have been slightly less deferential to the traditional importance of the *Melodies* in both Irish life and approaches to Moore. As a result, while the songs still dominate their biographies, they do not eclipse the rest of Moore's works. Published in the same year as Strong's work, Howard Mumford Jones' *The Harp That Once* – (1937), gives perceptive if brief analyses of Moore's achievements as a prose writer, as do Miriam Allen de Ford's *Thomas Moore* (1967) and Hoover H. Jordan's *Bolt Upright* (1975).⁶

For much of the twentieth century, critics concurred with, and were certainly influenced by, these biographers, with the result that to study Moore was to study the *Melodies* – and few chose to study the *Melodies*. In British and American academic communities the *Melodies* were easily excluded from the favoured Romantic canon that ran from Blake through Wordsworth and Coleridge to Keats and Shelley. If Moore was noticed it was usually as a satellite of Lord Byron.⁷ Like his once-popular

⁴ White, *Tom Moore*, p. 71; p. 131; p. 231; p. 232; p. 255; p. 184.

⁵ L.A.G. Strong, *The Minstrel Boy: A Portrait of Tom Moore* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937). Of Lalla Rookh Strong writes, 'the less said the better' (p. 168); he also misnames the *Travels* as *The Travels of a Young Man* (p. 215). Similarly biased towards the *Melodies* and dismissive of the prose is Seamus MacCall's *Thomas Moore, Noted Irish Lives Series* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1935). A fine exception to this tendency of Irish biographers is Stephen Gwynn's *Thomas Moore, English Men of Letters Series* (London: Macmillan, 1905). Gwynn devotes a chapter to Moore's 'Work as Biographer and Controversialist'.

⁶ Howard Mumford Jones, *The Harp That Once – : A Chronicle of the Life of Thomas Moore* (New York: Henry Holt, 1937); Miriam Allen de Ford, *Thomas Moore* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967); Hoover H. Jordan, *Bolt Upright: The Life of Thomas Moore*, 2 vols. (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1975). Despite its age, Jones' biography remains perhaps the best life of Moore we have; Jordan's notes are particularly useful for assessing the critical reception of Moore's prose as it appeared.

⁷ For the twentieth-century rise to pre-eminence of the 'big six' male poets, see Duncan Wu, *Romanticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. xxxi.

contemporaries, Southey and Scott, fellow victims of canonicity, Moore appeared to offer little to the critics' debates about transcendence, imagination, or the nature of the supernatural.⁸ As a result, the critical reputation that had been on the wane at the end of the nineteenth century was all but extinguished in the twentieth.⁹

In Ireland the popular appeal of the *Melodies* remained relatively consistent throughout the twentieth century. However, outside the traditional constituency of fireside performers, Moore's critical reputation suffered the same terminal decline that occurred in England, in particular because the *Melodies* fell foul of the edicts of the Revival writers, for whom they did not strike a sufficiently national note. For Seamus Deane, Douglas Hyde's verdict epitomised this generation's hostility to the melodist. Moore had, Hyde wrote, 'rendered the past of Ireland sentimentally interesting without arousing the prejudices of or alarming the upper classes.'¹⁰ W.B. Yeats's antipathy to Moore was at least the equal of Hyde's – as dedicatee of Strong's biography he brought himself to admit to liking two of the *Melodies*.¹¹ In general, however, as John P. Frayne has noted, 'Because sentimental patriotism was his worst enemy, Yeats devoted much of his energies to dethroning Thomas Moore as Ireland's national poet'.¹² Yeats's success in this regard proved enduring.¹³ By mid-century

⁸ For Southey's 'non-canonical' qualities, see Marilyn Butler, 'Repossessing the Past: the Case for an Open Literary History' in *Rethinking Historicism: Critical Readings in Romantic History*, ed., Marjorie Levinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 64 – 84.

⁹ For an account of Moore's diminishing reputation in the nineteenth century, see Chapter Six. For well over fifty years, perhaps the most balanced estimate of Moore was George Saintsbury's 1914 essay, 'Lesser Poets, 1790 – 1837: Rogers, Campbell, Moore and others', *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. XII, eds., Sir A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1966), pp. 102 – 06.

¹⁰ Quoted in Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 67.

¹¹ They were 'The Light of Other Days' and 'At the Mid Hour of Night'. For Yeats's reluctance on the subject, see White, *Tom Moore*, p. 76.

¹² W.B. Yeats, *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats, Vol. I: First Reviews and Articles, 1886 – 1896*, ed. John P. Frayne (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 36.

¹³ For Yeats's criticisms of Moore and more ample comment on his role in reducing the reputation, see Chapter Six. Thomas MacGreevy could clearly discern Yeats's influence in Moore's critical demotion. In England, wrote MacGreevy, Moore 'is always introduced with condescension or with apologies. A similar attitude made some headway in Ireland at the beginning of the century. It was, to some extent,

the legacy of his prejudices had evolved into a debilitating critical consensus – so much so, indeed, that while the likes of Daniel Corkery and Thomas MacGreevy could call for a re-assessment of Moore, neither they nor anyone else could actually produce such a study.¹⁴ By 1952 Moore was ‘the most dwindled of poets’ because, in the words of *The Bell*, ‘in the clearing of a hundred years we know that Moore’s verse is dead, dodo-dead.’¹⁵

Only recently have the Revivalists’ prejudices been overcome and the calls of Corkery and MacGreevy answered. The change in Moore’s critical fortunes may be traced to the impact of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). The aim of Said’s book was to study the ‘dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires – British, French, American – in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced.’¹⁶ Part of the effect of this on the academy was to re-write the traditional canon and re-animate forgotten authors or forgotten texts by revealing the cultural and political implications of their representations of the Orient. As an example, Said points to the popular Orientalism that attained a vogue of considerable intensity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This, he says, ‘cannot be simply detached from the interest taken in Gothic tales, pseudomedieval idylls, visions of barbaric splendour and

encouraged even by W.B. Yeats – no doubt under Pre-Raphaelite influences’, *The Capuchin Annual* (1948), pp. 286 – 93. For a Pre-Raphaelite appraisal of Moore, see William Michael Rossetti’s ‘Prefatory Notice’ to the Ward-Locke edition of the *Poetical Works* (1878).

¹⁴ In an article on W.F.P. Stockley, Corkery wrote: ‘...if there is a subject in the Irish world which needed, and needs, such thorough examinations [as Professor Stockley’s], it is not only Thomas Moore himself but the Moore legend’, *Capuchin Annual* (1948), p. 265. MacGreevy urged: ‘If and when, therefore, modern Ireland should produce a literary critic of the creative type that is more concerned to rediscover a famous writer’s qualities than to emphasise his defects, it would be a pleasant task for him to try to establish what it is in Moore that has held our allegiances’, *The Capuchin Annual* (1948) p. 287.

¹⁵ H.A.L. Craig, ‘Blame not the Bard’, *The Bell*, Vol. 18, no. 3 (June 1852), pp. 69 – 89. This is the text of a BBC broadcast of 4 March 1852. (Moore’s verse and excerpts from his journals were read by C. Day Lewis.) See also: James Stephens, ‘Thomas Moore: Champion Minor Poet’, *Poetry Ireland*, Vol. 17 (1852), pp. 3 – 5; Robert Wyse Jackson, ‘Thomas Moore’, *Poetry Ireland*, Vol. 17 (1952), pp. 6 – 9.

¹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 14 – 15.

cruelty.’ Rather, it is indicative of the ‘sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, [and] intense energy’ with which certain writers imbued their images of an essentialized Eastern other. The examples he chooses are William Beckford, Lord Byron, Goethe, and Thomas Moore.¹⁷

This high-profile reference gave Moore a new currency among Romantic scholars and *Lalla Rookh* became a staple of Orientalist studies.¹⁸ The best of these scholars recognised that the ‘dynamic exchange’ between ‘Empire’ and ‘Other’ in Moore’s Orientalist work also gestured west, to Ireland, even as it faced east. Indeed, Mohammed Sharafuddin has even claimed that ‘Moore’s deeper personal convictions find their way much more easily into *Lalla Rookh* than in his other works. [...] Whatever political attitudes the *Irish Melodies* may express, they remain too vague and oscillating to be effective.’¹⁹

In Ireland this sensitivity to the complex relations between culture and colonialism had already been anticipated by the rise to pre-eminence of history as a discipline in the humanities.²⁰ As a result, Irish literary studies became increasingly concerned with the historical climate in which texts were produced.²¹ Similarly, the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁸ See, for example, Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 87 – 122; Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 134 – 213; also, Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 53; pp. 113 – 14. For a rare discussion of *The Epicurean* besides Majeed’s, see Samira Basta, ‘The Factual and the Imaginary in Thomas Moore’s Egyptian Tale, *The Epicurean*’, *Literary Inter-relations: Ireland, Egypt, and the Far East*, ed. Mary Massoud (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1996), pp. 125 – 32.

¹⁹ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 138.

²⁰ For this rise of historical studies, see Terence Brown, *Ireland’s Literature: Selected Essays* (Mullingar, Co. Westmeath: The Lilliput Press, 1988), p. vii. Brown identifies F.S.L. Lyons, Conor Cruise O’Brien, and L.M. Cullen as the pioneers of Irish cultural history.

²¹ Some of the key texts in this process include: Malcolm Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature: From Thomas Davis to W.B. Yeats* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972); Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922 – 79* (London: Fontana Press, 1981); Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880 – 1980* (London: Faber, 1985); W.J. Mc Cormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Norman Vance, *Irish Literature: A Social History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).

lessons of Said's 'dynamic exchange' expanded the Anglo-Irish canon to include writers previously considered 'minor', such as James Clarence Mangan, who were re-examined for the light they shed on the development of enduring ideologies.²²

Thomas Moore was another beneficiary of these developments.

Moore's rehabilitation began in earnest with Robert Welch's 'Thomas Moore: An Elegiac Silence'.²³ However, despite Welch's sympathetic reading, the sense prevailed that henceforth Moore was to be studied primarily for his historical value, rather than for his aesthetic or intellectual accomplishments, as Anthony Cronin suggested:

The Irish no longer need Tom Moore in the way they needed him when he was, very nearly, their all in all. But in saying that we should have the grace to remember what he meant when he was, single-handed, repository, re-vivifier and reviver; when to the facile sadness and sense of loss of the minor romantics he brought, as a darker colouration, the greater and somewhat more serious sense of loss of an entire people.²⁴

The studies that followed examined aspects of this important connection between Moore's writings and the historical experience of an entire people. Despite their different emphases, however, the critics responsible for the rehabilitation of Moore's reputation and historical importance have largely followed the lead of the biographers, confining themselves almost exclusively to the poetic achievement, and focusing in particular on the *Melodies*. Certainly, as he himself anticipated in life, it is for the *Melodies* that Moore has been chiefly remembered,²⁵ but it is worth noting the extent to which his other works, and his prose in particular, have been neglected

²² See David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley-London: University of California Press, 1987).

²³ Robert Welch, 'Thomas Moore: An Elegiac Silence', *Irish Poetry from Moore to Yeats* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980), pp. 17 - 45. An important study pre-dating this is Thérèse Tessier's *La Poésie lyrique de Thomas Moore (1779 - 1852)* (Paris: Didier, 1976).

²⁴ Anthony Cronin, 'Thomas Moore: The Necessary National Bard', *Heritage Now: Irish Literature in the English Language* (Dingle: Brandon, 1982), pp. 31 - 36; p. 36.

²⁵ In 1837 Moore wrote: 'I am strongly inclined to think that, in a race into future times (if any thing of mine could pretend to such a run), those little ponies, the 'Melodies,' will beat the mare, Lalla, hollow', *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, Vol. II, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 821.

by some of his most sympathetic critics. For example, Terence Brown's 1986 essay, 'Thomas Moore: A Reputation', suggests persuasive reasons for the nineteenth-century popularity of both the *Melodies* and *Lalla Rookh*, but is silent on the prose component of that reputation. More seriously, given its canon-defining authority, the *Field Day Anthology* introduction to Moore by Seamus Deane contains only one fleeting, misleading reference to the prose ('Moore was a constitutional poet in that he admired rebellion in his verse and steered clear of it in his actions and most of his prose'); the short biographical entry dismisses the four volumes of the *History of Ireland* ('He wrote little after 1835') and the celebrated *Life of Byron* goes completely unmentioned, not even appearing in a bibliography of 'Chief Writings'.²⁶ Similarly, while Terry Eagleton shows knowledge of *Captain Rock*, *Fitzgerald*, and the *History* in his close reading of the *Melodies*, 'The Masochism of Thomas Moore', a genuine attempt to reconcile, as he puts it, 'the kitschy, cloying, maudlin Moore with the fine political polemicist' would have averted his caricatural conclusion:

In his own time, he enjoyed the fame of a modern rock star rather than a writer. For posterity, he is less a person than an institution, which is at once a tribute to his extraordinarily popular achievement, and a wry comment on the blandly impersonal nature of what is offered as a uniquely subjective vision.²⁷

While the *Melodies* and, to a lesser extent, *Lalla Rookh* have thus dominated recent studies of Moore, there has also been a limited but growing interest in other areas of his work, the most wide-ranging instance of which is probably Norman

²⁶ Seamus Deane, 'Thomas Moore', *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. I, gen. ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day Company, 1991), pp. 1053 – 69.

²⁷ Terry Eagleton, 'The Masochism of Thomas Moore', *Crazy John and the Bishop* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 140 – 57. Other recent studies of Moore that focus on the *Melodies* include: Patrick Rafroidi, 'Thomas Moore: Towards a Reassessment?', in *Irish Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Kenneally (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1992), pp. 55 – 62; Mary Helen Thuente, *The Harp Re-strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 171 – 92; James W. Flannery, *Dear Harp of My Country: The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (Nashville: J.S. Sanders & Company, 1997); Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770 – 1970* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), pp. 36 – 52.

Vance's half-chapter on Moore in *Irish Literature: A Social History*.²⁸ Gary Dyer's *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789 – 1832* provides an excellent analysis of works such as the *Intercepted Letters; or the Two-Penny Post Bag* (1813) and *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818).²⁹ The *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, however, is the sole prose work of Moore's that has attracted any significant critical response, the best-known analysis being Joep Leerssen's in *Remembrance and Imagination*.³⁰ All of these studies testify to Moore's extraordinary range and his enduring value to students of a variety of genres.

Why then did the *Melodies* come to dominate his reputation so completely? To answer this question it is vital to establish the status of the *Melodies* when they were first written, before turning to consider the factors that were instrumental in their subsequent apotheosis.

The origin of the *Melodies* is well known: in 1807 William and James Power, Dublin music merchants, suggested to Moore that he should put lyrics to music that the composer Sir John Stevenson had adapted from Irish airs, principally those found

²⁸ Vance, 'The Eighteenth Century and Beyond: William Drennan and Thomas Moore', *Irish Literature*, pp. 65 – 117. Vance covers the renowned texts, the *Melodies* and *Lalla Rookh*, as well as offering rare comments on the *Odes of Anacreon* (1800), the *Sacred Songs* (2 numbers, 1816 – 24), and *The Epicurean* (1827). For equally rare comments on *Corruption and Intolerance*, see Robert Welch, *Changing States: Transformations in Modern Irish Writing* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 19 – 21.

²⁹ Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789 – 1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁰ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp. 82 – 8; p. 240n; p. 245n. Leerssen's discussion of the *Melodies* is also excellent and his remarks on the *History of Ireland* are invaluable. For my discussion of *Captain Rock*, see Chapter Two. See also: Patrick O'Sullivan, 'A literary difficulty in explaining Ireland: Tom Moore and Captain Rock, 1824', *The Irish in Britain, 1815 – 1939*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Pinter, 1989), pp. 239 – 74; Luke Gibbons, 'Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place: Art and Agrarian Insurgency' in *Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Séan Ryder and Tadhg Foley (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), pp. 23 – 44; Tadhg O'Sullivan, 'The violence of a servile war': three narratives of Irish rural insurgency post-1798', in *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, ed. Laurence M. Geary (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 73 – 92.

in Edward Bunting's *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* (1797).³¹

Moore was enthusiastic about the project, as he wrote to Stevenson:

I feel very anxious that a Work of this kind should be undertaken. We have too long neglected the only talent for which our English neighbours ever deigned to allow us any credit. Our National Music has never been properly collected;³² and while the composers of the Continent have enriched their Operas and Sonatas with Melodies borrowed from Ireland – very often without even the honesty of acknowledgement – we have left these treasures in a great degree unclaimed and fugitive. Thus our airs, like too many of our countrymen, for want of protection at home, have passed into the service of foreigners. But we are come, I hope, to a better period both of music and politics. [...] The task which you propose to me, of adapting words to these airs, is by no means easy. [...] However, notwithstanding all these difficulties, and the very little talent which I can bring to surmount them, the design appears to me so truly national, that I shall feel much pleasure in giving it all the assistance in my power.³³

The avowed aim of the *Melodies*, then, was to dignify Irish culture and attest to what Welch calls 'the essential goodness of long-suffering Eire.'³⁴ They were, therefore, in Moore's eyes, 'truly national'. But as I will suggest here, the songs are very far from being pure expressions of Irish nationalism, nor are they the most reliable indicator of Moore's politics at this time. Certainly, as Seamus Deane has argued, the popularity of the *Melodies* constitutes 'part of the history of Irish nationalism', but this of course does not warrant the imaginative extrapolation that, if the *Melodies* were 'truly national' and popular among nationalists, then Moore must have been, as James Flannery has claimed, 'a fervent nationalist'.³⁵ This is an extreme example, but even a far less nationalistic critic such as Leerssen has been seduced by the radical chic of the songs: 'The diction of Moore's Regency verse

³¹ For the best exploration of the 'creative debt' owed by Stevenson and Moore to Bunting, see White, *The Keeper's Recital*, pp. 36 – 52.

³² Moore later inserted a footnote here that read: 'The writer forgot, when he made this assertion, that the Public are indebted to Mr. Bunting for a valuable collection of Irish Music; and that the patriotic genius of Miss Owenson has been employed upon some of our finest Airs', *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 116.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁴ Welch, *Irish Poetry*, p. 21.

³⁵ Deane, *Field Day*, p. 1053; Flannery, *Dear Harp*, p. 171.

should not obscure the straightforward, and often radical political message that was being delivered.’³⁶ This obscuration of the message, however, is *exactly* the effect of the *Melodies*’ artificial diction, and much more so than Leerssen admits, for they were of course lyrics, words for songs – a very different category from ‘Regency verse’ – as L.A.G. Strong has persuasively argued.³⁷

Strong writes: ‘Moore was writing for the voice, primarily for his own voice. He tested each one out himself, again and again, and his first care was to find words which (a) fitted the air, and (b) were singable.’ Consequently, ‘to print by themselves the words of any of the *Melodies*, and judge them as a poem, is to put them to a test for which they were not meant.’³⁸ According to Welch, this view has merit, ‘but it limits the discussion of the *Melodies* in the context of nineteenth century Anglo-Irish poetry.’ If respecting the *Melodies*’ status as songs thus limits discussion in the context of poetry, we can nonetheless enlarge our knowledge of Moore’s wider project by turning to some of his early prose. Indeed, the ‘Appendix’ to *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) is perhaps Moore’s clearest expression of the aim of the *Melodies*, as it was originally intended as a preface to that work.³⁹

After lamenting the fact that Irish history, ‘for many centuries past, is creditable neither to our neighbours nor ourselves, and ought not to be read by any Irishman who wishes either to love England or to feel proud of Ireland’, Moore

³⁶ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 80.

³⁷ Strong, *The Minstrel Boy*, pp. 121 – 37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121. Moore himself was insistent on the *Melodies* status as songs, as he confirmed in the preface to the *Complete Works* (1840 – 41): ‘Though an edition of the Poetry of the Irish Melodies, separate from the Music, has long been called for, yet, having, for many reasons, a strong objection to this sort of divorce, I should with difficulty have consented to a disunion of the words from the airs, had it depended solely upon me to keep them quietly and indissolubly together. But, besides the various shapes in which these, as well as my other lyrical writings, have been published throughout America, they are included, of course, in all the editions of my works printed on the Continent, and have also appeared, in a volume full of typographical errors, in Dublin. I have therefore readily acceded to the wish expressed by the Proprietor of the Irish Melodies, for a revised and complete edition of the Work, though well aware that my verses must lose even more than the *animae dimidium* in being detached from the beautiful airs to which it was their good fortune to be associated.’

³⁹ The *Dublin Examiner* published a shorter version of this Appendix as ‘Mr. Moore’s *suppressed Preface* to The IRISH MELODIES’, (June 1816), pp. 107 – 09.

introduces the story of the Antiochians. The story is presented as a parable for Ireland, as it is 'not only honourable to the powers of music in general, but ... applies so peculiarly to the mournful melodies of Ireland.' The Antiochians, he recounts, lived under the severe reign of Emperor Theodosius, an early enforcer of 'a disqualifying penal code enacted by Christians against Christians.' Their many petitions to the Emperor for better treatment were rejected until, at last, one of their bishops 'adopted the expedient of teaching ... songs of sorrow which he had heard on the lips of his countrymen to the minstrels who performed for the Emperor'. The songs so touched the ruler that he ceased his subjugation of the Antiochians. This, says Moore, is the effect sought by the *Melodies*: 'Surely, if music ever spoke the misfortunes of a people, or could ever conciliate forgiveness for their errors, the music of Ireland ought to possess these powers.'

The *Melodies*, then, were not conceived to foment rebellion, as Moore's admirers would later suggest, but were designed to plead for justice in Ireland to be constitutionally effected. This constitutionalism can further be seen in Moore's contribution to the Veto controversy, his *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (1810).⁴⁰ Arguing against the future O'Connellites of Ireland, Moore's *Letter* is a clear endorsement of the propriety of a governmental power of veto over the appointment of Irish bishops. To his co-religionists he wrote:

The Protestants fear to entrust their Constitution to you, as long as you continue under the influence of the Pope; and your reason for continuing under the influence of the Pope, is that you fear to entrust your Church to the Protestants. Now, I have shewn, I think, in the preceding pages, that *their* alarm is natural, just and well-founded,

⁴⁰ For the background to the Veto controversy, see Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800 – 70: A Study of Protestant-Catholic Relations Between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978); Brendan Clifford, ed., *The Veto Controversy, including Thomas Moore's Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (Belfast: Athol Books, 1985); Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690 – 1830* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992); Brian MacDermot, ed., *The Irish Catholic Petition of 1805: The Diary of Denys Scully* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1992).

while *yours* is unmeaning, groundless and ungenerous. It cannot, therefore, be doubted by which of you the point should be conceded. The bigots of both sects are equally detestable, but if I were compelled to chuse between them, I should certainly prefer those, who have the constitution on their side.⁴¹

Clearly, then, any reading of the *Melodies* must be informed by the public comments that coincide with their first appearance, such as the ‘Appendix’ to *Intolerance*, the *Letter*, as well as their prefaces and advertisements. But what is especially significant about these consistently overlooked sources is the fact that they are in prose. As we shall see, by the mid-1820s prose became Moore’s preferred medium for the expression of his complex allegiances, but this was already anticipated as early as 1808 – a point critics have consistently neglected. The clear message of this prose was invariably conservative, especially in the prefaces and advertisements that accompanied the *Melodies* – though this does not preclude a little self-indulgent sabre-rattling. So, while Leerssen maintains that ‘some of them [the *Melodies*] did pack a political punch and evinced an uncowed and enduring sense of Irish national separateness,’⁴² we have ample evidence in plain prose from Moore himself that this is not the case. In the ‘Letter on Music, to the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal’, prefixed to the third number of the *Melodies* (1810), he anticipated this interpretation:

Though the humble nature of my contributions to this work may exempt them from the rigours of literary criticism, it was not to be expected that those touches of political feeling, those tones of national complaint, in which the poetry sometimes sympathizes with the music, would be suffered to pass without censure or alarm. It has been accordingly said, that the tendency of this publication is mischievous⁴³ and that I have chosen these airs but as a vehicle of dangerous politics,

⁴¹ Thomas Moore, *A Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (Dublin, 1810).

⁴² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 79.

⁴³ In a footnote Moore identifies the charges as coming from ‘the *Morning Post*, *Pilot*, and other papers.’

– as fair and precious vessels (to borrow an image of St. Augustine), from which the wine of error might be administered.⁴⁴

This, he says, is the reaction of bigots and paranoiacs, and as such is redundant as criticism:

To those who identify nationality with treason, and who see, in every effort for Ireland, a system of hostility towards England, – to those, too, who, nursed in the gloom of prejudice, are alarmed by the faintest gleam of liberality that threatens to disturb their darkness, ... to such men I shall not condescend to offer an apology for the too great warmth of any political sentiment which may occur in the course of these pages.⁴⁵

While this measure of political sentiment may be found in the *Melodies*, Moore clearly repudiates the notion that they are intended to foment any discord or rebellion:

But as there are many, among the more wise and tolerant, who, with feeling enough to mourn over the wrongs of their country, and sense enough to perceive all the dangers of not redressing them, may yet be of opinion that allusions, in the least degree inflammatory, should be avoided in a publication of this popular description – I beg of these respected persons to believe, that there is no one who more sincerely deprecates than I do, any appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude; but that it is not through that gross and inflammable region of society, a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate.⁴⁶

Similarly, when a rumour in Dublin suggested that the government delayed the appearance of the fourth number of the *Melodies* (1811) for their political mischievousness, Moore dismissed the inference with typically Whiggish jibe:

... ballads have long lost their revolutionary powers, and we question if even a “Lillibullero” would produce any very *serious* consequences at present. It is needless, therefore, to add, that there is no truth in in

⁴⁴ Thomas Moore, ‘Letter on Music, to the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal’, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore. Collected by Himself*, 10 vols. (London, 1840 – 41).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the report; and we trust that whatever belief it obtained was founded more upon the character of *the Government* than of *the Work*.⁴⁷

Given Moore's *parvenu* status at this time, these sentiments cannot be dismissed as mere rhetorical flourishes: in 1810 he was thirty-one, still hopeful of a government sinecure, and six years away from his public break with the Prince Regent. Furthermore, this was a time of war – in April 1810 Napoleon expanded his empire further by marrying Archduchess Marie Louise, daughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria. From 1812 to 1814 Britain was also at war with the United States. Disloyalty of any kind was sure to be severely punished, as Leigh Hunt learned in 1813 when he was imprisoned for libelling the future George IV over broken promises to Ireland. Moore visited him in Surrey Jail, and although the cell was famously comfortable,⁴⁸ it seems highly unlikely that he would emulate the inmate's radicalism at this time.

While nationalist sentiment is present in the *Melodies*, therefore, it is hardly the guiding principle critics and biographers alike have tended to emphasise. An overview of the *Melodies* confirms this, for, as Leerssen himself has calculated, 'Of the 124 melodies, some 85 are primarily anecdotal or sentimental in nature; but the rest do have a political punch or national thrust.' However, an endnote seems to weaken the 'political punch' of the remaining thirty-nine songs that are being salvaged for their 'national thrust': 'Some of these, of course, are unspecific celebrations of valour and freedom, part of the generally prevailing climate of the anti-Napoleonic wars.'⁴⁹ Moreover, Leerssen passes over an important point raised by Leith Davis: 'although the *Melodies* constantly proclaim the Irish cause, they also

⁴⁷ Thomas Moore, 'Advertisement to the Fourth Number', *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore. Collected by Himself*, 10 vols. (London, 1840 – 41).

⁴⁸ According to Wu, 'The walls of his cell were covered with rose-trellised wallpaper, he was allowed to have food sent in, as many books as he wanted, continues to edit *The Examiner* from his cell, and received guests at will', *Romanticism*, p. 620.

⁴⁹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 79; p. 248, n. 33.

contain poems which promote English and British interests.⁵⁰ As I will suggest in Chapter Six, it was this element, as well as the general sentimental picture of Ireland, that contributed to the acceptability of the *Melodies* among later nineteenth-century unionists, even as they were revulsed by the prose.

Viewed as a whole, then, and in the context of their author's prefatory remarks, it appears that the nationalism of the *Melodies* is in fact quite muted, perhaps surprisingly so when their iconic value for Irish nationalism is considered. How, then, did this misleading, but nonetheless wildly popular conception of the *Melodies* as staples of Irish nationalism arise?

This carefully edited reputation seems to be the result of highly selective readings by two popular movements in Irish history, the first led by Daniel O'Connell, the second by Thomas Davis. In Moore's lifetime the *Melodies* were hugely successful among the rising 'Catholic nation'.⁵¹ Songs such as 'The Prince's Day', written to commemorate the prince's birthday, were studiously overlooked in favour of greener compositions like 'Avenging and Bright', 'Remember the Glories of Brian the Brave', 'Let Erin Remember', or 'She is Far From the Land'. It is in this context that Leerssen's discussion of the nationalism of the *Melodies* is entirely justified. The *Melodies* were not, on average, radically nationalist; however, they were received and successfully popularised as if they were. For this reason, Leerssen is right in saying that 'the true political importance of the *Melodies* lies in their cultivation of remembrance.'⁵² Moore's songs gave his audience a 'memory' of ancient Irish

⁵⁰ Leith Davis, 'Irish Bards and English Consumers: Thomas Moore's "Irish Melodies" and the Colonized Nation', *Ariel*, Vol. 24, no. 2 (April 1993), pp. 7 – 25. Davis' article is particularly useful for its focus on 'how the *Melodies* actually provide a means of resisting the possibility of an independent Ireland for which they strive', p. 16. The *Melodies* demand a comprehensive, number-by-number analysis to redefine their reputation for the twenty-first century. The closest we have to date is Welch's tentatively chronological approach in *Irish Poetry*.

⁵¹ The phrase is used by Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, pp. 268 – 326.

⁵² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 81.

splendour that pointed up the poverty of the present, and as Donal MacCartney has shown, ‘In the early nineteenth century, ... to praise the ancient Irish was akin to adopting the politics of the anti-unionists or emancipationists.’⁵³ At the same time, O’Connell’s famous habit of liberally garnishing his rhetoric with lines from the *Melodies* further strengthened the identification of the songs with Catholic-nationalist politics. As we shall see, Moore revelled in his popular reputation, but a late melody such as ‘The Dream of Those Days’, a bitter indictment of O’Connell, demonstrates the ideological distance he maintained from his admirers.

Thus, in the run-up to Catholic Emancipation the *Melodies* – or, more accurately, certain selected *Melodies* – became part of the *lingua franca* of Irish nationalism. This phenomenon continued after Emancipation, and after O’Connell’s heyday, as part of the cultural agenda of the Young Irelanders. There is of course important continuity between these two movements, but whereas O’Connell co-opted the *Melodies* into his religious and constitutional arguments, the Young Irelanders exploited them for their authentication of an Irish *Volksgeist*. Thomas Davis and his fellow ideologues in *The Nation* harnessed the Irish ballad tradition to their nationalist politics and, despite their drawing-room respectability, Moore’s *Melodies* were amenable to inclusion in this project.⁵⁴ The prose however was less useful, and even if Charles Gavan Duffy paid tribute to *Captain Rock* and *Fitzgerald – Sheridan* on the other hand is ‘weak’ and the *History* is ‘cold, feeble, and English’ – his reference to a non-existent biography of Robert Emmet is perhaps indicative of a greater familiarity

⁵³ Donal MacCartney, ‘The writing of history in Ireland, 1800 – 30’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, no. 40 (September 1957), pp. 347 – 62; p. 351.

⁵⁴ The trope of anonymous, or pseudo-anonymous, ballads and songs being the authentic expression of the Irish people echoes through *The Nation*, the work of Lady Jane Wilde and Yeats – see, for example, Seamus Deane, ‘Poetry and Song, 1800 – 1890’, *Field Day*, Vol. II, pp. 1 – 9; White, *The Keeper’s Recital*, pp. 69 – 71; Colin Meir, *The Ballads and Songs of W.B. Yeats: The Anglo-Irish Heritage in Subject and Style* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

with the songs.⁵⁵ For Young Ireland, and, indeed most subsequent commentators, Moore's prose posed problems that the *Melodies* seemed to transcend: the prose was politically tortuous where the songs were read as being simple and direct; furthermore, the messages of the prose changed over time but the *Melodies* achieved 'a kind of static, non-progressive grace'⁵⁶; finally, as I will show in Chapter Six, the *Melodies* allowed admirers to posit a unified posthumous reputation for Moore himself – something the prose consistently resists.

This thesis will attempt to restore to Moore's simplified reputation some of the complexity of his achievement by attempting a literary history of five of his major prose works: the *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, the Irish biographies, *Sheridan* and *Fitzgerald*, the *Travels*, and the *History of Ireland*. As I will suggest, Moore's successes in these works, as well as his failures and shortcomings, are intimately entwined with questions of the genre conventions of the period. Accordingly, attention will be paid to the genre contexts of these works in order to show Moore's ability to negotiate between the limits of established tradition and the need to write *sui generis*. This attention to genre will reveal a trajectory of declining experimentation in Moore's approach to explaining Ireland, from the formal hybridism of *Captain Rock*, through the almost synecdochic refraction of Ireland through an individual life in the biographies, to the ecclesiastical history of the *Travels* and the final attempt at an orthodox history with the *History of Ireland*. As this question of genre defines my chapter divisions, Chapter Three, which encompasses *Sheridan*, *Fitzgerald*, and, to a lesser extent, Moore's biography of Lord Byron, is considerably longer than the other chapters.

⁵⁵ Charles Gavan Duffy, 'Thomas Moore', *The Nation* (1842), reprinted in *Field Day*, Vol. I, pp. 1250 – 54.

⁵⁶ Welch, *Irish Poetry*, p. 20. Welch is referring specifically to the *Odes of Anacreon*, but the phrase is also an accurate description of the effect of *Melodies*.

Furthermore, as a literary history, this study will suggest that these works were very much the product of the political and cultural debates of their historical moment, such as Catholic Emancipation, Reform, Repeal, evangelical drives, and innovations in historical research. I will therefore emphasise how, as an Irishman working close to the core of the English establishment, Moore's often unique view of these issues informed both the composition and the reception of his prose.

As I have suggested, Moore's achievement in both prose and verse is a good deal more complicated than studies have hitherto revealed. This is because these studies have been invariably pre-conditioned by a political agenda, such as Moore's nationalism or his Catholicism, or they have been limited by their excessive focus on one aspect of the *oeuvre*, usually the *Melodies*, sometimes *Lalla Rookh*, occasionally *Captain Rock*. As a result, Moore's complexities and his straightforward contradictions have been insufficiently appreciated. This thesis will draw attention to Moore's changing allegiances and inconsistencies rather than attempt to smooth them away. Moore's use of the 'Milesian myth' is a case in point: in *Captain Rock* a casual reference to a pre-Norman Irish golden age adds to the nationalist temper of the whole book, whereas in the more conservative *History of Ireland* Moore was at pains to dismiss the legend. This might be interpreted as increasing conservatism; but equally, the Catholicism of both the *History* and its predecessor, the *Travels*, gives the impression that Moore was more radical towards the end of his career than at the start. In fact, as perhaps the biographies show best, the political expressions found in Moore's prose works were susceptible to almost quotidian vicissitudes.

Accordingly, this study is not governed by any one critical or theoretical paradigm; rather, the approach is a research-driven presentation of these undervalued works, including, where appropriate, the adjacent material of prefaces, advertisements,

afterwords, replies, reviews, and related aspects of publishing history. The contemporary critical responses to the works in question that appeared in newspapers, magazines, and journals, will of course be of vital use in reconstructing Moore's initial reputation. It is quite often the appreciation of this sort of material that best dispels the inherited view of Moore as 'less an individual than as a collective sensibility or repository of archetypes'.⁵⁷

Finally, a restoration of Moore's individuality, an appreciation of his work as part of a lived life is an essential component of this thesis, for, as I will indicate, Moore's domestic situation had a profound influence on his writing life. The best resources for this sort of approach to Moore are the modern editions of the *Letters of Thomas Moore* (1964), published in two volumes, and *The Journal of Thomas Moore* (1983 – 91), in six volumes, both series edited by Wilfred S. Dowden.⁵⁸ As my final chapter will suggest, judicious use of these volumes is of vital importance because the earlier incarnation of this material – Lord John Russell's edition of the *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence* (eight volumes, 1853 – 56) – was particularly detrimental to Moore's posthumous reputation.

In summation, then, successive generations' selective readings of the *Irish Melodies* have established a misleading reputation of Moore and his allegiances. It is my contention that the best way to begin the overdue process of reconfiguring that reputation and achievement is by returning to the prose.

⁵⁷ Eagleton, *Crazy John and the Bishop*, p. 157.

⁵⁸ Thomas Moore, *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 6 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983 – 91).

Chapter Two

Memoirs of Captain Rock (1824)

A New Career: 'Cutting the Connexion'

For fifteen years after the first publication of the *Irish Melodies* Moore continued to be one of the most successful poets of his era, the critical and commercial high point of this success being *Lalla Rookh* (1817). As we have seen, Moore's posthumous reputation came to rest on the work of these years, for which reason he has been known almost exclusively as a poet for a century and a half. However, by 1823, at the mid-point of his writing life, Moore largely abandoned his career as a poet. The final week of December the previous year saw the publication of the last of his long, serious poems, *The Loves of the Angels* (1822). The poem, based on a passage in the Book of Enoch, relates how three angels fall in love with three mortal women. As with so many of Moore's writings, these antediluvian affairs proved controversial, and to his dismay, the old charge of 'licentiousness' that had been levelled at the 'Thomas Little' verses was resurrected¹; by way of recompense, in the fifth edition he made the angels Turkish and switched God for Allah.

¹ *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little Esq.* (London, 1801), Moore's second book of poems, was considered notorious for its treatment of amorous themes.

Nonetheless, the poem did enjoy a certain degree of success², but certainly not as much as Moore had hoped, as he informed Byron: ‘My “Angels” I consider as a failure – I mean in the impression <they> it made – for I agree with a “*select* few” that I never wrote any thing better.’³

As Jeffrey Vail notes, the mid-1820s experienced a general slump in the sales of poetry – Moore himself referred in the letter to ‘the “departing day” of Poesy’ – but this ‘failure’ of *The Loves of the Angels* seems to have definitively soured Moore’s taste for verse:

This cursed Public tires of us all, good & bad, and I rather think (if I can find out some other more gentlemanly trade) I shall cut the connexion entirely. How you, who are not *obliged*, can go on writing for it, has long, you know, been my astonishment. To be sure, you have all Europe (and America too) at your back, which is a consolation we poor insular wits (whose fame, like Burgundy, suffers in crossing the ocean) have not to support us in our reverse. If England doesn’t read us, who the devil will?⁴

Certainly, Moore did continue to publish verse⁵, but it was of a different order than before, and we can therefore say that from 1823 on Thomas Moore was principally a writer of prose. This was not, perhaps, a ‘more gentlemanly trade’ than that of a poet, but it was, as we shall see, a politically committed one, for all of the major prose works that followed, the life of Byron excepted, were designed to explain and elevate Ireland in the eyes of England, and, on occasion, the world.

² Daniel O’Connell, for example, found it ‘an exquisitely beautiful little poem ... a mere trifle for such a poet, but exquisitely sweet and not stained with a single indelicate thought’, quoted in White, *Tom Moore*, p. 170.

³ For a discussion of *The Loves of the Angels*, see Jeffrey W. Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 141 – 63. Vail reads the poem in tandem with Byron’s *Heaven and Earth* (1823), as did many contemporary reviewers. This letter to Byron is quoted from Vail (p. 163), not Dowden’s edition of the *Letters*. Vail’s ‘Appendix B’ (pp. 199 – 201) publishes the complete text of this important letter for the first time.

⁴ Vail, *Byron and Moore*, p. 163.

⁵ For example, *Evenings in Greece* (1826 and 1832), *A Set of Glees* (1827), *Odes Upon Cash, Corn, Catholics and Other Matters* (1828), *Legendary Ballads* (1828), *The Summer Fête* (1831), *Vocal Miscellany* (1834 and 1835), *The Fudges in England* (1835), and *Alciphron* (1839), an unfinished poetical version of *The Epicurean* (1827). There were also the last numbers of the *Melodies*, erratically published in 1821, 1825, and 1834. Much of this work was written simply because Moore, unlike Byron, was ‘obliged’ to provide for his family.

Moore between the *Melodies* and *Captain Rock*

The letter to Byron closed with words that would prove vital in the launching of this new career: ‘I am just setting out on a five weeks tour to Ireland – to see, for the first time, “my own romantic” Lakes of Killarney.’⁶ This tour of the south-west was a watershed in Moore’s life and directly inspired his first extended prose work, the *Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of his Ancestors, Written by Himself* (1824).

Before examining this work in detail, it is worth considering in what way the 1823 trip to Ireland was a major turning point for Moore. Until this time, the unmistakable commitment to Ireland that characterises the prose is extremely rare in both the published work and the private letters and journals. It seems that the undergraduate revolutionary ardour Moore had shared with Robert Emmet was temporarily suspended, if not forgotten, since the turn of the century. *Corruption and Intolerance* and the *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* might be seen as exceptions here, but while they do provide important evidence of Moore’s interest in, and knowledge of Irish affairs, they are less expressions of specifically Irish arguments than espousals of general Whig policy. Similarly, while the *Melodies* were instrumental in dignifying Ireland and Irish culture for an English audience, we have seen that they were better suited to displaying local colour from a romantic region than functioning as anthems for emerging Irish nationalism. Likewise, the Irish subtext of *Lalla Rookh*, despite Mohammed Sharafuddin’s arguments, is still a subtext.⁷ As Jones puts it, in these years, ‘the Whig had swallowed the Irishman, and from 1813, when the fifth number of the *Irish Melodies* appeared, to 1824, when he

⁶ Vail, *Byron and Moore*, pp. 200 – 01. These lines are not in Dowden’s edition of the *Letters*, as his text was taken from a sale catalogue. Vail, on the other hand, sourced the original manuscript.

⁷ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 138.

published the *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, Moore was less the nationalist than the petted bard of upper-class liberal circles in England and on the Continent.’⁸

This is accurate, if a shade pejorative, as in the political climate, Moore could hardly have been otherwise. Ireland was not a particularly inviting subject in the early years of the nineteenth century. After all, while England was at war with France, the country had risen twice in violent rebellion. This discontent continued to simmer in the post-Waterloo period of economic depression, as can be registered in the regular enforcement of the Insurrection Act (1807 – 10, 1814 – 18, 1822 – 24). Moreover, there was no popular political movement in the country for which Moore could have earned publicity or sympathy based on his fame.⁹ It is thus anachronistic to expect Moore to have been the sort of O’Connellite Irish nationalist that Jones seems to want. Similarly, Moore’s domestic situation mitigated against any sort of radical action; in 1811 he married Elizabeth ‘Bessy’ Dyke, an actress,¹⁰ and by the time of the trip to Kerry the couple had had five children. He also had a number of dependents in Dublin. As a result, even if radical activity had appealed to him – and it had not – he was not prepared to pay the price of being a literary martyr like Hunt or a firebrand like Shelley. Moore’s conservatism on the subject of Ireland in this period is therefore understandable.

If Ireland did not preoccupy Moore during this period, he was nonetheless extremely busy, both professionally and socially. Strong calls his chapter dealing with the immediate aftermath of *Lalla Rookh* ‘Heyday: Success and Friendship’.¹¹

⁸ Jones, *The Harp That Once* –, p. 157. It is true that Moore considered in July 1816 ‘living for two or three years in or near Dublin’ and ‘undertaking a very voluminous work about Ireland’ (*Letters*, Vol. I, p. 398), but he never made any effort in this direction until 1823.

⁹ Thomas Bartlett writes, ‘Whatever momentum the Catholic agitation appeared to have built up by 1812 quickly slipped away. In the next ten years those in charge of the Catholic campaign lost their way’, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, p. 304.

¹⁰ 1811 was also the year in which his comic opera, *M.P., or The Blue-Stocking*, was performed in London.

¹¹ Strong, *The Minstrel Boy*, pp. 162 – 97.

Moore was the dedicatee of both Byron's *The Corsair* (1814), and, after a fashion, Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third* (1819).¹² His centrality in English letters at this time is highlighted by James Chandler in *England in 1819*, in which he functions as a sort of political and cultural nexus, 'a kind of "mediocre hero" of the sort that we find in the new historical novels of the post-Waterloo period, an Edward Waverley or Natty Bumppo':

Moore's life, especially in 1819, offers an impressively rich subject for biography in its own right. Indeed, if Moore rivalled Byron and Scott in literary reputation so did he as well in the glamorous and controversial episodes of his public career some of which returned to haunt Moore in 1819.¹³

The haunting in question (which actually returned in 1818) resulted in Moore's enforced continental exile from 1819 to 1822 – yet another important reason for his lack of interest in Ireland as a subject at this time. The origins of this affair dated back to 1804, when Moore held an Admiralty post for several months in Bermuda. The deputy he appointed there defaulted in 1818 leaving Moore himself responsible for a debt of approximately £5000.¹⁴ Unable to pay, and unwilling to go to prison, Moore fled to France in September 1819. Before settling in the French capital he enjoyed an impromptu grand tour and his *Journal* during this time is full of moments and observations that are richly emblematic of the attitudes of literary pilgrims of the age.¹⁵

¹² This satiric poem is dedicated to 'Thomas Brown, Esq., The Younger, H.F.' This was an expression of political solidarity with Moore (H.F. stands for 'Historian of the Fudges'), a point that Shelley's best biographer, Richard Holmes, seems to miss: he calls *The Fudge Family in Paris* 'a popular children's series of stories', *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 551.

¹³ James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. xvii; pp. 269 – 70.

¹⁴ All of the major biographies offer accounts of Moore's time on the islands. For a recent investigation of the legal problems of 1818, see David F. Raine, *An Irishman Came Through: Tom Moore's Bermuda Sojourn* (St. George's, Bermuda: Pompano Publications, 2000).

¹⁵ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, pp. 212 – 66. He visited Fontainebleau and saw 'the table on which Bonaparte signed his abdication' (p. 215). Mont Blanc was 'stupendous': 'It is impossible to describe what I felt – I ran like lightning down the steep road that led towards it, with my glass to my eye, and uttering exclamations of wonder at every step' (p. 216). In Geneva he saw the Villa Diodati, where

Genesis of *Captain Rock*

Earlier that year, while still in England, Moore had despondently journalised: 'A wet, gloomy day – my spirits of the same hue – Often do wish I had a *good cause to die in*'.¹⁶ For Chandler the most likely candidates for such a cause were Irish independence and Catholic Emancipation. Moore mentioned these causes, writes Chandler, 'but, in spite of his real support for them, Moore kept a certain distance and was seldom moved to anything like passion about them.'¹⁷ This may have been true in 1819, but it was simply not the case after the eye-opening 1823 trip to Ireland.

Before this date Moore had been doubly insulated from certain realities of Irish life. First, he had just spent the previous three years on the continent, during which time Irish woes did not particularly concern him. Certainly, King George IV's visit to Ireland in August 1821 interested him, especially when Byron's 'The Irish Avatar' reached him, but his attitude to the Irish was quite hostile:

The only excuse I can find for the worse than Eastern Prostration into which my countrymen have grovelled during these few last weeks is that they have so long been slaves, they know no better & that it is not their own fault if they are ignorant of any medium between brawling rebellion & foot-licking idolatry – as for the King, he has done his part well & sensibly, and his visit altogether may be productive of benefits, which the unmanly flatterers who have bedaubed him hardly deserve.¹⁸

Milton had stayed in 1639, but home to Byron in 1816, and famously the origin of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Moore travelled via the Simplon Pass to Milan and on to Venice where Byron ('grown fat', p. 223) gave him his doomed memoirs (see Chapter Three: Section 1). At Ferrara he viewed 'the Chairs & inkstand of Ariosto' (p. 228). In Florence he visited Lady Morgan ('as usual odd & amusing', p. 232). In Rome the Coliseum was 'Grand, melancholy, sublime, touching – no one epithet can give any idea of the complicated sensations it excites' (p. 240), the Pope, however, looked like 'a dying man in a rich dressing gown' (pp. 246 – 47), but the foot of the Princess Borghese (Napoleon's sister), which he was bizarrely invited to feel, was 'matchless' (p. 240). Moore was aware of some of the absurdities of the 'grand tourists', even as he indulged in them himself; in May 1820 he sent to Longmans the MS of a satire, 'The Fudge Family in Italy', but was advised against publication as it might jeopardise the settlement of the Bermuda case. Parts of the work re-surfaced in *Rhymes on the Road* and *Fable for the Holy Alliance* (both 1823).

¹⁶ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 164.

¹⁷ Chandler, *England in 1819*, p. 352, n. 3.

¹⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 485.

Second, Moore had had very little first hand experience of life outside Dublin. In the years since Napoleon's defeat, agricultural prices in Ireland had fallen drastically, the failure of subsistence crops led to localised famines, disease was rife, wholesale evictions commonplace, and there were perhaps one million mendicants walking the roads.¹⁹ Against this backdrop Moore recorded the following impression in his *Journal*:

Saw at Collan [Callan, Co. Kilkenny], for the first time in my life, some real specimens of Irish misery and filth; three or four cottages together exhibiting such a naked swarm of wretchedness as never met my eyes before. The ruined house of Killcash, on the road, that once belonged to a Mr. Buller, struck me both from the appropriateness of the name (Killcash), and the dreary shaven look of the country round it: not a bush left standing. These recent ruins tell the history of Ireland even more than her ancient ones.²⁰

If exposure to this sort of suffering resulted in the bitter denunciations of English misgovernment in *Captain Rock*, Moore was equally emboldened by another contemporary phenomenon. In April 1823 Daniel O'Connell and Richard Lalor Sheil had overcome their differences and set up a new Catholic Association. This was indicative of a growing self-confidence among Irish Catholics after a decade of ineffectuality since the veto controversy. *Captain Rock* was at once part of, and a result of, this new expression of Catholic discontent and the push for Emancipation. Indeed, O'Connell himself was instrumental in developing Moore's sense of injustice:

¹⁹ For the social and economic backdrop to the Rockite disturbances, see: Joseph Lee, 'The Ribbonmen', in *Secret Societies in Ireland*, ed. T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), pp. 26 – 35; James S. Donnelly, Jr., 'Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821 – 4', in *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780 – 1914*, eds. Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 102 – 39; Galen Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812 – 36* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), *passim*; Michael Beames, *Peasants and Power: The Whiteboy Movements and Their Control in Pre-Famine Ireland* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1983); James W. O'Neill, 'A Look at Captain Rock: Agrarian Rebellion in Ireland, 1815 - 1845', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 17 – 34. The best synthesis of the historical background with Moore's text is Tadhg O'Sullivan's 'The violence of a servile war': three narratives of Irish rural insurgency post-1798', in *Remembrance and Rebellion in Modern Ireland*, pp. 73 – 92.

²⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 659.

O'Connell and his brother came to dinner. Says the facilities given to landlords, since 1815, for enforcing their rents, have increased the misery of the people; particularly the power of distraining upon the crop. Mentioned a case, which occurs often, of a man, or his wife, stealing a few potatoes from their own crop when it is under distress, being put in prison for the theft as being felony, when at the worst it is but *rescue*, and kept there till the judge arrives, who dismisses him as improperly committed, and he is then turned out upon society, hardened by his wrong, and demoralised by the society he has lived with in prison. The facility of ejectment, too, increased since 1815. On my inquiring into the state of intellect and education among the lower orders, said they were full of intelligence.²¹

O'Connell's claim that the 'lower orders' were forced into crime by ill-treatment was, as we shall see, almost identical to the argument of *Captain Rock*. This is not to suggest that O'Connell gave Moore the idea for *Captain Rock*, but it is worth noting that they discussed the Rock phenomenon, and O'Connell was able to confirm that such a 'system of organisation had spread some short time since through Leinster, which was now considerably checked, and never, he thought, had extended to the south.'²² Later O'Connell would claim that *Captain Rock* was 'to the struggle for Catholic Emancipation what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was to the abolition of slavery.'²³

Moore's first hint of the activities of 'Captain Rock' came some weeks before the conversation with O'Connell, and seemed at first unbelievable:

In talking of the state of the country, O'Driscoll asserted that there was a regular organisation among the lower orders all over the south; that their oath was only "to obey orders," and that instructions came from Dublin; that their objects were chiefly to get rid of their landlords and establish the Catholic religion. This, though coming from such an authority, appeared to me exaggerated and incredible.²⁴

As he travelled, Moore collected as much information as he could about this shadowy group: 'John Scully [husband of Kate, Moore's sister] disbelieves

²¹ Ibid., p. 667.

²² Ibid., p. 667.

²³ Quoted by Oliver MacDonagh, *O'Connell: The Life of Daniel O'Connell, 1775 – 1847* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p. 299.

²⁴ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, pp. 660 – 61. Moore referred here to John O'Driscoll, author of *Views of Ireland, Moral, Political, and Religious*, 2 vols. (1823), a copy of which he owned.

O'Driscoll's account of the organisation of the people; says it is merely a war of the poor against the rich; condemns the new Tithe Bill, as tending, if it was enforced, to the clergy a greater burden than ever; the omission, however, of the compulsory clause, has fortunately rendered it a nullity.'²⁵ These two issues, the Rockite insurrectionists and the tithe question, became his guiding principles and everyone he met was quizzed on both. In the finished *Captain Rock* they were brought together, albeit unevenly, as we shall see. A third concern was referred to several times in passing: the 'spread of Deism among the people.' This inspired the 'framing-narrative' of *Captain Rock*. Similarly, it also provided the stimulus for the *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (1833), a direct response to Church of Ireland evangelism.²⁶

Once he had returned home to Wiltshire, Moore's composition of the new work based on these recent experiences began in earnest. He immersed himself in his subject, as he had famously done for his Oriental works: 'Reading hard and fast upon Irish subjects. Just finished "Newenham," which I borrowed from Lord L. on sending him back "Wakefield."'²⁷ But unlike the work he had been easily composing for so long, he found *Captain Rock* surprisingly difficult to write: 'Have begun writing my

²⁵ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 661. Scully was referring to the Tithes Leasing Bill, introduced in the House of Commons in 1822 and passed with the Irish Tithes Composition and Commutation Bills of 1823. It allowed the Irish clergy to lease for a fixed sum the rights to the tithes owed to the church by Irish tenant farmers.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 664. For the *Travels*, see Chapter Four. Interestingly, the *Travels*, published anonymously, was attributed on the title page to 'the Editor of "*Captain Rock's Memoirs*"'.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 675. The references are to Thomas Newenham, *A View of the natural, political and commercial circumstances of Ireland* (1809) and Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, statistical and political*, 2 vols. (1812). In general, Moore was excellent at recording his reading, both in the letters and journals and in the footnotes of *Rock*. The reason for this is discussed later. His reading during this time also included the *Anthologia Hibernica* (which greatly amused himself and his wife as it contained verses he had written when he was twelve and thirteen), Sylvester O'Halloran's *An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* (1772), Thomas Leland's *The History of Ireland, from the Invasion of Henry II, with a preliminary Discourse on the antient state of that Kingdom*, 3 vols. (1773), John Selden's *History of Tythes* (1816). He also mentioned numerous pamphlets, including William James MacNeven's *Pieces of Irish History* (1807) and John Curry's *An Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland* (1775). There were also many pamphlets on tithes.

“Irish Tour,” but get on very slowly, though I was in hopes I should be able to dispatch it in a few weeks, and get back to “Sheridan”; ‘Wrote away as fast as my slow *prose* pen would let me’; ‘Have determined to change the plan of my Irish work, and make it a “History of Captain Rock and his Ancestors,” which may be more livelily [*sic*] and certainly more easily done.’²⁸

Such difficulties notwithstanding, 9 April 1824 saw the publication of the *Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors, Written by Himself*. Despite its increasing reputation in contemporary Irish studies, the work is such a hybrid of genres that a short description is warranted. *Captain Rock* was published ‘anonymously’, though Moore’s authorship was well established²⁹; instead, the book purported to be by ‘Captain Rock’ himself, a famous Irish bandit. But the *Memoirs* actually begin with a ‘Preface, By the Editor’, an English Protestant sent to Ireland on an evangelical mission. This trope was familiar to Moore’s readers. It echoed, as Leerssen points out, ‘not only the mode of explanatory travel description, but also the familiar framework of many Anglo-Irish novels of the preceding decades.’³⁰ It also provided Moore with the ideal vehicle for satirising the mix of ignorance, naivety, and fear that characterised English missionaries’ attitude to Ireland and Catholicism. The ‘editor’, a missionary from a tractarian ladies’ society ‘directed to the conversion and illumination of the benighted Irish’, was expressly chosen to undertake ‘the honourable, but appalling task of Missionary to the South of Ireland’ because of his superior knowledge of Catholic

²⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 677; p. 677; p. 681.

²⁹ In perhaps the best essay on *Captain Rock*, Patrick O’Sullivan discusses the implications of the work’s anonymity: ‘Guessing at authorship, listening to rumours, spreading them, being in the know, were somehow important’ (‘A literary difficulty in explaining Ireland: Tom Moore and Captain Rock, 1824’, in *The Irish in Britain, 1815 – 1939*, p. 241). Similarly, Joep Leerssen remarks: ‘It is important to remember that *Memoirs of Captain Rock* came out anonymously and that Moore’s authorship was at best a matter of public conjecture’ (*Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 87). Many of the contemporary reviews, however, openly identified Moore as the author.

³⁰ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 85.

countries, ‘from having passed six weeks of the preceding summer at Boulogne’. Moore’s asides here displayed a remarkable lightness of touch, such as the fact that the ‘editor’ arrived armed with ‘Religious Tracts, written expressly for the edification of the Irish peasantry, particularly, a whole edition of a little work by Miss – of our Town, to the effect of which upon the Whiteboys we all looked forward very sanguinely.’³¹

In the coach from Dublin to Limerick the missionary meets ‘a very extraordinary personage ... who wore green spectacles and a flaxen wig’, who instructs him in Irish history:

“Is not this singular?” he added, “is not this melancholy? That, while the progress of time produces a change in all other nations, the destiny of Ireland remains still the same – that we still find her, at the end of so many centuries, struggling, like Ixion, on her wheel of torture – never advancing, always suffering – her whole existence one monotonous round of agony!”³²

As we shall see, this view of history is embodied throughout *Captain Rock*. The ‘editor’, however, continues on his way, and visits an embattled clergyman friend, ‘the Rev. Mr. – , whom I found comfortably situated in his new living, with the sole drawback, it is true, of being obliged to barricade his house of an evening, and having little embrasures in his halldoor, to fire through at unwelcome visitors.’³³ Late one dark evening, slightly under the influence of ‘some genial “Mountain dew”’, the ‘editor’ wanders into a picturesquely ruined abbey near his friend’s house:

I reached, however, in safety the great portal of the abbey, and passing through it to the bank which overhangs the river, found myself all at once, to my astonishment and horror, (the moon at that moment breaking out of a cloud), in the midst of some hundreds of awful-

³¹ Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of Captain Rock, The Celebrated Irish Chieftain, With Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself* (London, 1824), pp. iv – vi. Other ironic asides were more bitter than subtle: newly in Dublin, the editor refers to the bribery that helped pass the Union by passing comment on ‘the part of the structure which *was* the House of Commons, is, since the Union, by a natural transition, converted into a *Cash* office’, p. vi.

³² *Ibid.*, p. vii; p. ix.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. x.

looking persons – all arrayed in white shirts, and ranged in silent order to receive me!³⁴

This sobers him completely. Then a tall man with ‘a plume of feathers in his hat’³⁵ commands him to ‘Pass on’. It quickly transpires that ‘this personage was no other than the distinguished gentleman in the green spectacles; nor was it long before I learned, from his own lips, that I then actually stood in the presence of the great CAPTAIN ROCK.’³⁶ The ‘Captain’ then presents the missionary with a manuscript, his *Memoirs*.

The *Memoirs* themselves comprise two sections, both replete with footnotes, ‘Book the First, of My Ancestors’, and ‘Book the Second, of My Own Times’. The former is a chronicle of the Rocks, ‘a family of great antiquity in Ireland’, from the earliest history of Ireland until 1763. It relates how in each successive generation there was a member of the family who bore the title of ‘Captain’, under which soubriquet he rebelled against the English invaders. The latter ‘book’ begins in 1763, when the narrator – the current ‘Captain’ – was born. This section brings the narrative as far as the time of the Act of Union. In this manner, the *Memoirs* satirically relate the history of Ireland through the continuous insurrections of the Rocks. The ironic *coup de grace* of the work is the fact that the Rocks actually revelled in their rulers’ oppression:

Discord is, indeed, our natural element; ... and the object of the following historical and biographical sketch is to show how kindly the English government has at all times consulted our taste in this particular – ministering to our love of riot through every successive reign, from the invasion of Henry II. down to the present day, so as to leave scarcely an interval during the whole six hundred years in which the CAPTAIN ROCK for the time might not exclaim

³⁴ Ibid., p. xi.

³⁵ Moore’s own footnote reads: ‘Hickey, a *Pseudo* Captain Rock who was hanged last Summer at Cork, appears to have generally worn feathers in his nightly expeditions’, *ibid*, p. xii. In fact, this detail came from the conversation with O’Connell (*Journal*, Vol. II, p. 667).

³⁶ Moore, *Captain Rock*, p. xii.

“Quae regio in terries nostri non plena laboris?”

Or, as it has been translated by one of my family:—

Through Leinster, Ulster, Connaught, Munster,
ROCK’s the boy to make the fun stir!³⁷

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of all the measures of misgovernment' means that 'irony remains in abeyance for scores of pages at a time.'⁴²

This lack of critical consensus about the essential nature of the work is indicative of its own internal inconsistencies. Moore employed the tropes of a range of genres without committing to any in particular. As Leerssen remarks, the English missionary's encounter with the Captain echoes the familiar framework of numerous Anglo-Irish novels; indeed, if the 'typical plot movement in romantic Anglo-Irish fiction is that of a cosmopolitan character moving towards Ireland', then Moore's work is certainly novelistic, without being a genuine novel.⁴³ There can be no doubt too that Moore was deliberate in his exploitation of novelists' techniques, as we can see from his 1827 article on 'Recent Irish Novels' in the *Edinburgh Review*.⁴⁴

Having first acknowledged that Scott was responsible for the 'impulse towards Novel-writing, which is, at present, all over Europe', Moore went on to argue that Ireland was uniquely suited to the novel's strengths. Novels, he maintained, thrived on novelty: 'In the general hunt after subjects and materials, which the competition among this new class of novelists has occasioned, ... every country in the world has, in turn, been ransacked' – except for Ireland.⁴⁵ For this reason, the rulers of Ireland have been utterly ignorant of the ways of the neighbouring island: 'The advantage of

⁴² Eagleton, *Crazy John and the Bishop*, p. 156; Vivian Mercier, *The Irish Comic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 197 – 98.

⁴³ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ [Thomas Moore], 'Recent Irish Novels', *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 43, no. 86 (February 1826), pp. 356 – 72. The novels reviewed were *To-Day in Ireland* by Evans Eyre Crowe, *Tales of the O'Hara Family* by John and Michael Banim, *O'Hara, or 1798* by William Hamilton Maxwell, and *The Adventurers; or Scenes in Ireland in the Reign of Elizabeth*, author unknown. For other *Edinburgh Review* comments by Moore on the novel form, see 'French Novels', Vol. 34, no. 68 (November 1820), pp. 372 – 83 (he expresses a dislike for epistolary novels and first person narratives), 'French Romances', Vol. 40, no. 79 (March 1824), pp. 158 – 69, 'French Literature – Recent Novelists', Vol. 57, no. 116 (July 1833), pp. 330 – 57 (Balzac would be 'an effective writer' if only he could 'concentrate his talents on one work, instead of wasting them on a crowd of trifling tales').

⁴⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 43 (1826), p. 357. Moore conceded that Ireland was not completely undiscovered: 'Among the many countries fit to be the 'local habitation' of Romance, it is strange that Ireland – particularly after the successful examples of Miss Edgeworth, and Lady Morgan – should, till lately, have been brought so very little into operation', p. 357.

being a *terra incognita*, at least to English statesman, Ireland has, till lately, possessed almost as fully as the interior of Africa.’ The qualifying ‘till lately’ here was surely a gesture to the recent *Captain Rock*, which, while not a novel, nonetheless shared the same imaginative territory and the explanatory impulse as the first wave of Irish novels.

If *Captain Rock* was novelistic in its matter, it was also novelistic in its manner. Ireland’s ‘wretched history’, Moore argued, rendered the country unsuitable as poetic material: ‘the Conquerors of his country he will not celebrate, and her Rebels he dare not, if he would.’ The novel, however, a generally disreputable form, was better suited to this disreputable subject:

The same causes, however, that have embittered and degraded the history of Ireland, so as to render it incapable of furnishing any safe or worthy theme for the poet, have brought the character of its people, both moral and social, to a state which is eminently favourable to the more humble aspirations of the novelist. Though the nobler quarry of the Muse is wanting, there is plenty of fine game for the satirist and observer of character. The anomalies necessarily engendered throughout the whole frame of society by the inverted and unnatural position of all the institutions of that country; the influence which such a state of things must have upon all ranks, ... all these are features, but too prominent in the condition of Ireland, to which a novelist [sic] might, in his portraiture of them, give unbounded variety of play.⁴⁶

When he wrote *Captain Rock* Moore clearly shared these ‘more humble inspirations of the novelist’. Its representation of Ireland was inherently satiric, from

⁴⁶ Moore’s examples of the anomalies in all ranks are worth quoting: ‘those of the higher, in whose hands the execution of unequal laws is placed, being forced, by the very nature of the instrument which they wield, to be bad judges, bad magistrates, and bad citizens, in spite of themselves; while those of the lower class, placed by the same causes in habitual opposition to the law, seem, by riot and plunder, but to fulfil their allotted destiny, and to perform *the base*, as it were, in that great concert of discord which reigns throughout; – the vulgar arrogance of the small gentry, so long encouraged by the despotism thus *put in commission* among them; – the low, circumventing cunning, which is the only peaceable weapon left to their victims, and which is so observable among the Greeks and other trampled-down nations, substituting the serpentine line of the slave for the straight-forward course of the freeman; – those habits of thoughtless and tasteless extravagance, which a long monopoly on the public purse engenders in the master, and the recklessness of comfort, and even of life, to which a long despair of justice reduces the slave’, pp. 358 – 59. Had Moore himself written a novel based on these elements, he could have been an Irish Dickens; sadly, just one year after this article he gave the world instead *The Epicurean* (1827), his only purely fictional prose work, and a poor substitute for the phantom Irish comic epic.

the Rocks' glee for colonial subjugation and their fulfilment by riot and plunder of their allotted destiny, to the grace note details presented as a satiric aside in the fiction, but gleaned, in fact, from reality, such as the ironic description of the 'comfort' of the missionary's clergyman friend.⁴⁷ In Moore's conception of the novel, then, *Captain Rock* was certainly novelistic.

However, to explain Ireland it also partook of the tropes and conventions of other genres, such as biography, travelogue, and the evangelical pamphlet – all forms to which Moore would return.⁴⁸ This mix of genres gives rise to problems within the narrative, particularly of tone. If the Rocks thrive under English rule, why is the book so bitter? Why are serious denunciations of English misgovernment in Ireland distractingly juxtaposed with humorous remarks, such as, 'My unlucky countrymen have always had a taste for justice – a taste as inconvenient to them, situated as they have always been, as a fancy for horse-racing would be to a Venetian'?⁴⁹ For Patrick O'Sullivan this is an obvious shortcoming: 'Often in the main text it is not clear whether Moore speaks with his own voice, as it were, or in the character of Captain Rock. And in the footnotes it is not clear whether it is Moore, Rock or the Missionary Editor who speaks.'⁵⁰ While this is a valid criticism, it is also slightly reductive of the value of a hybrid work like this. Luke Gibbons, on the other hand, offers a more imaginative reading of these tonal wrong notes. This 'oscillation in the narrative voice(s)', he suggests, is 'precisely the 'literary difficulty' in explaining Ireland, or subjecting it to one authoritative point of view.'⁵¹ The inconsistencies, then, are hallmarks of the work's experimentalism in attempting to explain Ireland. However,

⁴⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 664: 'The parson's own house, a waste and ruinous concern; and the embrasures in the hall door, to fire through, speaking volumes for the comfort of his neighbourhood.'

⁴⁸ For my discussion of the biographical element of *Captain Rock*, see below. For Moore's idiosyncratic contribution to travelogues and evangelical literature, see Chapter Four.

⁴⁹ Moore, *Captain Rock*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ O'Sullivan, 'A literary difficulty in explaining Ireland', p. 244.

⁵¹ Gibbons, 'Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place', p. 30, n. 19.

despite the genre experimentalism of *Captain Rock*, and Moore's exploitation of a variety of techniques, it is perhaps most rewarding to consider the work as a single vehicle for two distinct concerns, one contemporary, the other historical.

Captain Rock and Politics

By 1824, then, when Moore had essentially graduated from poetry to prose, Ireland had become his most important subject. As subsequent chapters will suggest, despite their literary forms, works such as *Sheridan*, *Fitzgerald*, and the *History of Ireland* were necessarily interventions into, and products of, the contemporary political scene. This was no less true of *Captain Rock*, as Moore's private correspondence and *Journal* entries confirmed. He was particularly eager that the work should have been published in time for an upcoming debate in Westminster on Ireland. In December 1823, writing as though the project were finished, Moore alluded to his conception of *Captain Rock* as an important factor in the run of parliamentary affairs: 'I wrote a pamphlet on my return from Ireland, to get rid of the bile that was (in Lord Melville's phrase) 'rolling on my stomach'. It will not, however, be printed (if at all) till the meeting of Parliament.'⁵² But Moore missed the deadline for the debate: 'I am, in another respect, much annoyed at not having been able to get my Irish pamphlet out before the discussion of the affairs of Ireland in the House.'⁵³ In March he dined 'with Lord Darnley, "to talk," as he said, "over the woes of Ireland."' Is very anxious for my book before his motion on the state of Ireland; and it ought to have been out long since; but it takes an immense time transcribing, and I am interrupted every moment; besides, it swells out, in copying, to a much greater extent than I had anticipated.'⁵⁴

⁵² Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 520.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

⁵⁴ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 719. The motion in question was made on 8 April 1824 by John Bligh, Earl of Darnley (1767 – 1831) to appoint a select committee to investigate and improve internal affairs

The immediate political issue at stake in *Captain Rock* concerned tithes. Indeed, the issue dominates almost the entire second half of the work, ‘Book the Second, of My Own Times’. As we have seen, this section begins in 1763 with the birth of the current ‘Captain’. As he is his tenth son, his father christens him ‘Decimus’ and dedicates him ‘exclusively to the tithe department’. The focus on tithes is such that, as Patrick O’Sullivan writes: ‘Church of Ireland tithes must, the reader is led to believe, be the main cause of Irish discontent.’ The *Westminster Review* was amused by this focus – ‘...we shall be asked by young ladies if we do not consider the conduct of the Irish clergy respecting First Fruits as exceedingly scandalous’ – but *Blackwood’s Magazine* was not: ‘In vain it has been shown that the right to tithe is as the right to any other property – this writer is determined to regard it as a tax’.⁵⁵ It was this question that most provoked the Irish Establishment, their most sustained counter attack being Mortimer O’Sullivan’s *Captain Rock Detected* (1824).⁵⁶ The ultimate importance of the tithe question in *Captain Rock* is the manner in which it contributes to the arguments for Catholic Emancipation. For Moore, Church of Ireland tithes are, as Patrick O’Sullivan writes, ‘an evil not simply because

in Ireland; it failed, 17 to 57. Darnley’s ‘anxiety’ about the book was not unique; Moore himself wrote that he felt ‘more than an author’s anxiety about its circulation and success.’ He even asked an editor friend to ‘give it a lift.’ The friend, Tom Campbell, obliged in his *New Monthly Magazine*, no. 11 (1824), pp. 236 – 81. Moore need not have worried: *Captain Rock* was to go into its fifth edition in a matter of weeks.

⁵⁵ Quoted in O’Sullivan, ‘A literary difficulty in explaining Ireland’, p. 246.

⁵⁶ The full title is *Captain Rock Detected: or, the Origin and Character of the Recent Disturbances, the Causes, Both Moral and Political, of the Present Alarming Condition of the South and West of Ireland, Fully and Fairly Considered and Exposed by a Munster Farmer* (London, 1824). Mortimer O’Sullivan (1791 – 1851) was a Protestant convert and *Dublin University Magazine* ideologue. For accounts of his career, see: Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland*, pp. 117 – 23, in which O’Sullivan is considered ‘the most important of the Protestant controversialists of the pre-famine period, and the most intelligent and interesting of them’; see also John P. McBride, *The Dublin University Magazine: Cultural Nationality and Tory Ideology in an Irish Literary and Political Journal, 1833 – 1852* (unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1987), pp. 13 – 29. For discussion of *Captain Rock Detected*, see Tadgh O’Sullivan, ‘The violence of a servile war’, pp. 86 – 92.

they oppress the Irish poor but because they compel the Catholic poor to support a religion not their own.’⁵⁷

This argument was appreciated in Ireland: a letter from Milliken, a Dublin bookseller, informed Moore that ‘the people...through the country are subscribing their sixpences and shillings to buy a copy’; he also expected *Captain Rock* to enjoy the dubious tribute of being pirated.⁵⁸ The work went on to spawn a number of publications, often aggressively Catholic-nationalist in tenor.⁵⁹ In his *Journal*, Moore seemed to take particular care to record his Irish reception:

Received the “Irish Observer” (O’Driscoll’s new paper), with an article about “Rock” in it, highly laudatory. Received, too, under Lord Lansdowne’s frank, a letter from the Secretary of the Catholics of Drogheda, thanking me in their name for my “able and spirited exposition of their wrongs,” &c. &c. This is gratifying and satisfying, as I feared the Catholics would not take very cordially to the work on account of some infidelities to their religion which break out now and then in it.⁶⁰

In Ireland, then, *Captain Rock* was a sensation. After reading it, Sir Jonah Barrington gave thanks that the Irish lower classes could not read; he further maintained that it would frighten every absentee landlord into never going near

⁵⁷ O’Sullivan, ‘A literary difficulty explaining Ireland’, p. 248. Of modern critics, only O’Sullivan stresses the central importance of tithes in *Captain Rock*. Leerssen certainly underplays the issue: ‘There are repeated attacks on the Established Church and its exaction of tithes, but on the whole the history aims to tell the story of Irish violence as a mode of resistance and reaction triggered by bad government’, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 85. For the purposes of the present study, I will follow Leerssen’s emphasis on the historical nature of the work, while acknowledging the importance of O’Sullivan’s arguments. O’Sullivan also offers a fine critique of *Captain Rock Detected*.

⁵⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 727.

⁵⁹ For example, Michael J. Whitty’s weekly newspaper, *Captain Rock in London, or the Chieftain’s Weekly Gazette* (1825 – 27), Roger O’Connor’s *Letters to His Majesty, King George the Fourth, by Captain Rock* (Dublin, 1828), and *Captain Rock in Rome, Written by Himself in the Capital of the Christian World* (London, 1833). For a discussion of O’Connor’s work, see Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 82 – 87. In later life Moore himself re-visited the ‘Captain Rock’ soubriquet three times. The *Travels* were ‘by the Editor of “Captain Rock’s Memoirs”’, and there were two squibs in the *Morning Chronicle*, ‘Epistle from Captain Rock to Lord L-ndh-rst’ (2 June 1836) and ‘Captain Rock in London; Letter to from the Captain to Terry Alt, Esq.’ (15 June 1836). Charlotte Elizabeth’s *The Rockite: An Irish Story* (London, 1829) was less a response to Moore than to the actual disturbances.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, pp. 728 – 29. Moore might have luxuriated in this success a little longer had not Byron’s death (ten days after the publication of *Captain Rock*) created a series of new worries.

Ireland.⁶¹ But it also created a political stir in London, being quoted twice in Parliament. The first time was by Lord Stanley (1799 – 1869), soon to be Chief Secretary for Ireland (1830 – 33), who read from it in May 1824 to illustrate the feelings of the Irish about the established church. A month later, Moore recorded that the Bishop of Limerick also quoted from the work, though he did not say to what end.⁶² Thus, in his new career as a prose writer Moore was, from the start, influential;⁶³ more importantly perhaps, *Captain Rock* provided high profile support for the nascent Catholic Association in their calls for Emancipation.

***Captain Rock* and History**

This support for Emancipation was not surprising. Moore, an Irish Catholic himself, was of course a supporter of the Whigs, and Emancipation had been one of their central tenets for decades – even if they had been largely silent on the issue since the veto. What was innovative about *Captain Rock*, however, was its presentation of Irish history. As I will suggest more amply in Chapter Five, Irish history-writing in the early nineteenth century was in a parlous state. *Captain Rock* was the first of Moore's series of prose works designed to improve this situation. The work was, for all its satire, irony, and genre experimentalism, essentially a history of Ireland from the time of the earliest inhabitants up to the Act of Union; indeed, as we shall see,

⁶¹ Sir Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches of His Own Time* (1827 – 32; Dublin: Ashfield Press, 1997), pp. 252 – 53.

⁶² Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 787, n. 2; p. 746.

⁶³ Jones claims that *Captain Rock* even led to an immediate improvement in some of the harsher features of Irish law regarding the recovery of debts: 'After Moore's death the *Dublin University Magazine* (Vol. XLI, pp. 632 ff.) said in 1853 that some of Moore's information came from John Scully, Moore's brother-in-law, who had been nearly killed by miscreants in Tipperary, and from Joseph Abbott, an Irish barrister of note; that in consequence of the publicity given the practice of Irish sheriffs in recovering debts, Mr. Abbott was summoned before committees of Parliament in 1824, and that the law was changed', *The Harp That Once –*, p. 347, n. 7. Moore himself recorded an expected tribute to *Captain Rock*'s influence: 'The night of Lady Jersey's ball the Duke of Gloucester returned again to the subject of *Captain Rock*: said he had lent it to a great Tory and it had converted him', *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 818.

there was a general consensus that the book represented the first time that Irish history had been made available to the world in an accessible form.

In *Captain Rock* – primarily in ‘Book the First, of My Ancestors’ – the history of Ireland is narrated from the point of view of the Rock family. If the book was overtly political its arguments against tithes and for Catholic Emancipation, it was also political in its narration of the Irish past simply because of where, or more accurately, *when* it began. The first chapter runs from ‘A.M. 1. – A.D. 1172’:

That we had made some noise, even before the memorable period, when Pope Adrian made a present of Ireland to Henry II., there is every reason to believe; but under such wise monarchs as Ollam Fodlah, Dubhlachtha, Flabhertach, Brian Boromhe, &c., whose laws, as Mr. O’Halloran assures us, were models of perfection, it was difficult for even the activity of the ROCKS to distinguish itself. Accordingly, for the first 1100 years of the Christian era, we hear but little or nothing of the achievements of the family.⁶⁴

This paragraph is politically charged because of its invocation of a pre-Norman golden age. As Kevin Whelan explains, the late eighteenth-century excavation of Ireland’s ancient civility, carried out by Sylvester O’Halloran and others, was inherently anti-imperial.⁶⁵ Drawing on the arguments of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, the Whig interpretation of history posited a sequence of stadial progress that ran from ‘savagery’ through ‘barbarism’ to ‘civilisation’. For the likes of Scott, this provided legitimacy for the 1707 union with England, as the mid-century highland clearances represented acceleration towards civility. But in Ireland, if there had existed a pre-colonial, *echt*-Irish era of Milesian high culture, then the conquest did not usher in civility, but rather destroyed it.

⁶⁴ Moore, *Captain Rock*, pp. 3 – 4.

⁶⁵ The following paragraph is based on Whelan’s ‘Writing Ireland, Reading England’, the foreword to a new edition of Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*, eds. Claire Connolly and Stephen Copley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), pp. ix – xxiv.

Thus, even before the litany of misrule begins, *Captain Rock* is grounded in an anti-English historiographical tradition. On the other hand, as Chapter Five will suggest, the *History of Ireland* dismissed the ‘Milesian’ tradition, thereby displaying its more conservative approach to the Irish past. In 1824, however, Moore knew that the glory-days of Milesian culture, inherently seditious to conservative minds, were popular with the people – thanks in part to his own *Melodies* – and his narrative of history in *Captain Rock* was always intended to be popular:

I have, myself, in the course of these pages, rejected many historical facts and documents, though of considerable importance to the illustration of my subject; because I am well aware that, in the present times, matter-of-fact has got much into disrepute, and that statements, to be at all listened to, must be measured by a minute-glass – because I know, too, that of all the *bores* of the day, poor Ireland is (what some of her antiquarians wish to prove her) *Hyper-borean*.⁶⁶

Populism, and a lightness of touch, were thus of vital importance to Moore in his presentation of Irish history. The central conceit of *Captain Rock*, the ‘clever thought’⁶⁷ that allowed this was the conflation of the Rock family biography with the span of Irish history. If, for Carlyle, history was the essence of innumerable biographies, Moore here posited the essence of history in biography. This anticipated the method of the later, more orthodox biographies, in which a series of historical concerns were refracted through the lens of a single life. *Captain Rock* of course was free of the constraints of reality that those books work within, and the successive generations of Rocks allowed Moore to write the entire history of Ireland, albeit through a synecdochic reduction. As Leerssen notes, this trope was later used in French historiography in which ‘Jacques Bonhomme’ featured as ‘a device to narrate

⁶⁶ Moore, *Captain Rock*, pp. 134 – 35.

⁶⁷ The phrase was from Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734 – 1801), commander of the English army in Ireland from December 1797 to April 1798. In a conversation with Moore in 1823 he may have provided the inspiration for *Captain Rock*’s central insistence that Irish violence was the product of British misgovernment: ‘Told them my plan of Captain Rock’s Memoirs. Which Abercromby said was a very “clever thought;” urged upon me the importance of setting the Rebellion of ’98 in its true points of view, as an event purposely brought about by the Government’, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 693.

the amorphous history of the oppressed nation in the convenient terms of a transindividual, multicentury biography'. Similarly, for Moore the chief value of the 'clever thought' was its ordering of a fractured historical experience: 'The vicissitudes and violent disruptions and discontinuities of Irish history are reduced to a unified, tellable tale'.⁶⁸

The Rock device was so successful in providing a structure for the narration of Ireland's past that many reviews – including those from Moore's traditional detractors – felt they were reading the first intelligible history of Ireland ever written.⁶⁹ The *London Magazine* acclaimed it as 'a remarkably uncluttered history of Ireland', and declared, 'We have no hesitations in saying it ought to be the manual of every one wishing for information on the affairs of Ireland.'⁷⁰ The *New Monthly Magazine* concurred:

This volume is attributed to Mr. Moore, and, indeed, by what other pen could the story of Ireland's wrongs have been traced with equal wit, truth, and feeling? The memoirs of Captain Rock will, we hope, do something towards destroying the apathy existing in England on the subject of Irish politics, which we are too much inclined to regard as past all hope of amendment. Our politicians may, indeed, plead the prescriptive right of misgoverning that unfortunate country, in which the same mistaken and odious system has been pursued for centuries; but a more complete, lively, and feeling exposure of that system, from its very commencement, has never been made than in the present volume.⁷¹

For the *Times*, Moore had 'found the true royal road to knowledge, divesting an obscure and unattractive history of whatever could alarm the indolent or perplex the dull'. This accessibility of the book impressed the *Westminster Review*, which

⁶⁸ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 86.

⁶⁹ Though apparently less readable, there were, of course, numerous general histories of Ireland that pre-dated *Captain Rock*, a useful bibliography of which can be found in Richard Ned Lebow's *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), pp. 117 – 22. For some of the general shortcomings of these works, see Chapter Five.

⁷⁰ *London Magazine*, Vol. 9 (1824), pp. 583 – 98.

⁷¹ *New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 12 (1824), p. 216.

stated that 'Moore's Miseries' would sit comfortably on the shelf with the *Melodies*, and that 'it will do a considerable quantity of good, for it will be *read*.' Elsewhere, Lord Downshire cut to the heart of the matter, as a gratified Moore recorded in his *Journal*: 'he thought it would do considerable good; that Englishmen, in general, knew nothing of the history of Ireland; that he himself, brought up as a boy in England, was for a long time ignorant of everything relating to Ireland, except that it was the place where his estates lay; that this book will turn the attention of Englishmen to the subject.'⁷²

On the other hand, for those who did not sympathise with Moore's anti-imperial version of Irish history, *Captain Rock* was an affront. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* objected particularly to Moore's unrealistic approach to the Rockite violence: 'There is no attempt whatever to give an apparent reality and distinctiveness to the conception of the lawless fanatic [and] there is not a single effective incident or description of any one scene connected with the disturbances.' If Moore was thus suspect as a commentator on contemporary Ireland, he was an equally unreliable narrator of its past, offering as he did 'the least interesting portions of Irish history, drawn from the most obvious sources of information, reprinted and repeated even to satiety'.⁷³

How fair was this criticism? After all, the 'editor' (or Rock, or Moore) does admit in a footnote: 'It will be perceived that throughout my brief review of the measures of England towards Ireland, I have relied almost exclusively upon English

⁷² *Times*, 27 April 1824; *Westminster Review*, Vol. 1 (1824), pp. 492 – 504; Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 730. One of Moore's earliest biographers, H.R. Montgomery, made the perceptive comment that, in *Captain Rock*, Moore had 'accomplished the difficult, and, in any other hands, almost impossible task of writing a history of Ireland in a form generally to be read', *Thomas Moore, His Life, Writings, and Contemporaries* (London, 1860), p. 112.

⁷³ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 15 (May 1824), pp. 551 – 55. As Tadhg O'Sullivan notes, *Captain Rock Detected* was essentially an elaboration of this critique of Moore's omission of agrarian violence, 'The violence of a servile war', p. 87.

authorities'.⁷⁴ This is recognition of the problems with Irish source material that would bedevil the *History of Ireland*. Nonetheless, the authorities cited in *Captain Rock*, whether English or Irish, are carefully referenced, and often critiqued, in a footnote, thereby contributing to the general pedagogic or explanatory effect of the work:

Sir John Temple, upon whose authority Hume chiefly rests, was about as trust-worthy a narrator of the events of 1641 as Sir Richard Musgrave has been of those of 1798; and so well understood was the appetite of this latter gentleman for the marvellous, that it was the favourite pastime of some humorists in Dublin, at the time when he was collecting materials for his History, to impose gravely upon him as true, the most monstrous fictions – which he as gravely transferred to his dull pages, and of which, no doubt, some future Hume will avail himself, for the old, but never obsolete task, of blackening the character of the Irish.⁷⁵

Moore's use of references thus expanded the reach of *Captain Rock*. As well as being a pseudo-novel, pseudo-history, pseudo-biography or any other liminal taxonomy, it was also a guide for readers through the growing list of works on Ireland, past and present. It was thus at once an introduction to, and intervention into, a range of debates on Irish culture and politics.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Moore, *Captain Rock*, pp. 56 – 57.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 92 – 93. This footnote continued with further comment on Irish historiography: 'There has lately appeared a short Treatise on the Rebellion of 1641, by Mr. Matthew Curry of Philadelphia, in which the evidences, adduced by Temple and others, of a general conspiracy of the Irish Catholics at that period are sifted with a considerable degree of acuteness, and most satisfactorily proved to be futile and incredible.' Moore's warning about the unreliability of certain historians was not confined to metatextual margins. The missionary's account of his preparatory research satirised the prejudice with which Ireland had been depicted: '...read every book relating to Ireland that there was, at all, likely to furnish me with correct notions on the subject. For instance, in everything relating to political economy and statistics, I consulted Sir John Larr – for accurate details of the rebellion of 1798, Sir Richard Musgrave – and for statesman-like views of the Catholic Question, the speeches of Mr. Peel', pp. v – vi.

⁷⁶ In this way, Moore's references functioned much as Claire Connolly sees the footnotes operating in Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl*: '...the dense citationality of the text distinguishes it from other popular fictions, and signals the novel's allegiance to the Irish cultural revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Antiquarian histories, contemporary pamphlets, speeches in Parliament, and grammatical and linguistic authorities are all drawn into the texture of this fiction; and, as a result, mediated and made available to nineteenth-century cultural politics', 'Introduction: The Politics of Love in *The Wild Irish Girl*', *The Wild Irish Girl*, p. xxxiii.

Conclusion

The vision of history presented in *Captain Rock* is one of cyclical, eternal recurrence. According to the Captain himself, ‘So alike is one part of the history of Ireland to another, that in reading it, we are somewhat in the situation of that absent man, to whom D’Argenson lent the same volume of a work four successive time, and who, when asked how he liked the author, answered, “il me semble qu’il se repête quelquefois.”’⁷⁷ This continuous presence of the past in the present – ‘every succeeding century being but a renewed revolution of the same follies, the same crimes, and the same turbulence that disgraced the former’⁷⁸ – is a fitting anticipation of Moore’s later works, in which the arguments of the present informed the depiction of the past. In this sense, *Captain Rock* was both the introduction to early nineteenth-century Ireland that Moore intended it to be, and also a rehearsal of some of the main concerns of the biographies, the *Travels*, and the *History*. All of these works continued the process begun in *Captain Rock* of explaining Ireland to an English audience. But where the later works emulated established forms for their explanations, in *Captain Rock* Moore employed elements of each of these forms and, indeed, several others, to create a new form, a *sui generis* approach to Ireland. As we shall see, even as he turned to established genres, these later works were most successful when they used the partial, tangential, almost symbolic approach to Irish history that Moore first attempted in *Captain Rock*.

⁷⁷ Moore, *Captain Rock*, p. 108.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Chapter Three

The Irish Biographies Section 1: Introduction

Between 1825 and 1831 Moore wrote three full-length, multi-volume biographies, the *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (1825), the *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of His Life* (1830 – 31), and *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1831).¹ In this new direction in his career he was as attuned to the tastes of the marketplace as he had been with *Lalla Rookh*, as a review of the first of the three confirmed:

The favourite prose reading of the present day is biography. With the single exception of trashy and polemic theology, no books are perused with greater avidity than those various “Lives,” “Memoirs,” “Reminiscences,” “Conversations,” and “Letters,” which teem forth on the demise of eminent persons, to “prate of their whereabouts.” The spreading civilization of the age has drawn men out of the circle of private and professional exclusiveness; and has opened the intellects and the hearts of all classes to a common sympathy with the poet, the warrior, the philosopher, the actor, and the artist, – with every one, in short, who has distinguished himself from the mass, no matter in what department of the world’s business, or its pleasures.²

¹ As this chapter is confined to the Irish biographies, *Byron* will be discussed only insofar as it illustrates aspects of *Sheridan* and *Fitzgerald*. For a more ample treatment of *Byron*, see Vail, *Byron and Moore*, pp. 164 – 188. Byron was an important influence on James Clarence Mangan, as Ellen Shannon-Mangan (*James Clarence Mangan: A Biography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), pp. 58 – 59; p. 164) and David Lloyd (*Nationalism and Minor Literature*, p. 118) have both suggested, but apart from a brief discussion by Patrick Rafferty (*Irish Literature in English: The Romantic Period (1789 – 1850)*, Vol. I (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smyth, 1980), p. 40), his general reputation and reception in Ireland has received insufficient critical attention.

² *New Monthly Magazine* (1826), p. 474.

Unlike *Captain Rock*, which, as we have seen, was hailed for its novelty, Moore's biographies are examples of a well-recognised genre. In order to appreciate Moore's use of biography as a vehicle for presenting certain issues, it is necessary to understand the nature of biography in the period.

Compared with the novel, a genre closely related in terms of its origins, focus, and rise to prominence, biography, for all its enduring popularity, has not been the subject of widespread critical debate.³ However, there is consensus among historians of the genre that biography and autobiography rose to established forms and conventions in the early nineteenth century and reached a high-point in the latter half of the century.⁴

The exact source of the great public appetite for biography in the first decades of the nineteenth century is more difficult to establish. Richard Altick sees it as a legacy of the late Enlightenment stress on the power and importance of the individual personality. Earlier theories about the historical process were preoccupied with universal and changeless principles that were held to govern human affairs, including laws and public institutions. But as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, writes Altick,

rationalistic analysis of historical causation now seemed pedantic and futile; the uniformity and predictability that had been assumed in human affairs savored of mere scholastic theorizing. It was men, not impersonal forces – or at least men acting decisively as the agents of

³ Studies of the genre include: Joseph W. Reed, *English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century, 1801 – 1838* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966); Richard D. Altick, *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966); A.O.J. Cockshut, *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Collins, 1974); Alan Shelston, *Biography* (London: Methuen, 1977); Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form* (London: Macmillan, 1984); Ulick O'Connor, *Biographers and the Art of Biography* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991); David Amigoni, *Victorian Biography: Intellectuals and the ordering of discourse* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); David Ellis, ed., *Imitating Art: Essays in Biography* (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1993); John Batchelor, ed., *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴ Biography and autobiography have had similar, though not identical, histories, and it is no coincidence that, in terms of publishing chronology, Samuel Pepys' *Diary* is a direct contemporary of Moore's *Sheridan*.

those forces – that shaped destiny from epoch to epoch. In England, this biographical emphasis in history was most influentially proclaimed and practised by Carlyle, whose dicta ('History is the essence of innumerable Biographies'; 'The History of the world is but the Biography of great men') became high-ranking Victorian platitudes.⁵

In many respects, this was the theory following the practice, for the readers of the early nineteenth century had seen, long before Carlyle, that individual personalities such as Nelson, Wellington, and above all, Napoleon, were the prime agents of historical change. The taste for biography can be interpreted as a reflection of this. In becoming a biographer then, Moore was giving his readers exactly what they wanted. But if it suited his readers, biography as a form also suited Moore. The very conventions of biography in the period made it the ideal vehicle for expressing certain concerns relating to Ireland. As we shall see, Moore's exploitation of these conventions brought questions about Ireland and the Irish past to a much wider audience than a polemical pamphlet (such as the Veto letter) or a specialists' history might attract.

The conventions in question were inherited from the two great antecedents in biography: Plutarch and his *Parallel Lives* from the first century and James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, first published in 1791. Continuously adapted for the times, Plutarch's *Lives* has been a consistent force in English literary history. It was a frequent source for many poems and stories of the Middle Ages; Shakespeare found Sir Thomas North's 1579 translation invaluable; Dryden's 1683 version dominated the eighteenth century; and its continuing edifying power in the early nineteenth century was confirmed by Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* (1818).⁶ The *Lives*

⁵ Altick, *Lives and Letters*, p. 82.

⁶ Victor Frankenstein's creation mused: '...Plutarch taught me high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages. ... I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the significance of those terms...', Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 128 – 29.

functioned as a touchstone for figures as diverse as Rousseau, Goethe, Napoleon, Beethoven, Wordsworth, Macaulay, Emerson, and Shaw.⁷ In every case the attraction of Plutarch was the same: the assertion that the narrative of a life should be morally instructive.

Well into the nineteenth century biography was characterised by this instructive impetus. For this reason dissenting sects printed great numbers of pious biographies, often of martyred missionaries, in their denominational magazines and in books and tracts for both children and adults. As Altick has pointed out, these works 'can be located in no standard biographical dictionary, but to the habitual consumer of such literature their names were as familiar, and revered, as those of Nelson and Wellington.'⁸ Similarly, later in the century, Samuel Smiles' series of arch-Victorian hortative tomes (*Lives of the Engineers* (1862), *Industrial Biography* (1863), *Men of Invention and Industry* (1884)) had frankly avowed instructive purposes. Biography was thus amenable to a whole variety of purposes and was employed to promote any number of causes. Indeed, if, as Altick maintains, the history of the form in the nineteenth century is one of 'artistic potentialities little realized and challenges largely unmet', this is best explained by the 'overabundance of purposes that biography was intended to serve'.⁹

Moore, like so many others then, employed biography to his own ends. He used it to instruct an English populace in aspects of Irish affairs. Certainly, lives of an alcoholic, rakish playwright and politician and a high-born rebel were unlikely subjects for moral edification in the Plutarchan sense. But as we shall see, in dignifying and explaining the lives and careers of these men, Moore was at the same time attempting to dignify and explain Ireland and particular aspects of its recent

⁷ Nadel, *Biography*, pp. 16 – 17, p. 213.

⁸ Altick, *Lives and Letters*, p. 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

history. Often this was accomplished through many extended digressions, a technique made possible by the innovations that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* brought to the form.

The *Life of Johnson* is famously rambling, loquacious, and episodic. In contrast to Plutarch, the *Life* has no controlling moral theme to structure the narrative. Instead, Johnson's personality is the focus, with the result that the work includes a great deal of extraneous, digressional concerns, as his editors have confirmed:

There was no question of omitting anything directly pertaining to Johnson. Boswell was intent not on selective salvage but on painstaking and laborious assembly. As in a jigsaw, every piece with Johnson on it had to be fitted in, and various pieces without Johnson too, if the background was to be complete. Even the most trivial items should be included where they helped his work to approach nearer to the truth.¹⁰

After Boswell then, it was acceptable for the narrative of a biography to wander far from its subject if there was the promise that the digression would eventually prove relevant and illuminating. Biography was thus a particularly flexible form, exploiting as it did the techniques of journals, reminiscences, memoirs, and 'table talk'.¹¹ For this reason it was also a specifically public form, or, as Richard Holmes maintains, it was 'a coffee-house form, both talkative and reflective', aimed at amusing, provoking, inspiring and instructing.¹²

When Moore first attempted the form it was particularly attractive for a number of reasons. First, it was the height of fashion to write a biography, and the market often dictated both Moore's tastes and needs. Popularity was vital to him, as he intimated in *Sheridan*: 'whether in painting, sculpture, music, or literature, those

¹⁰ Rodney Shewan, 'Introduction', *The Life of Samuel Johnson by James Boswell* (London: The Folio Society, 1968, 1990), p. 14. See also John Canning: 'Undoubtedly, it is too long, the full version running to approximately 1,500 pages, and contains too much irrelevant correspondence and unwarranted and infantile intrusions by Boswell', *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. ix.

¹¹ The period in question saw a flourishing of records of the conversations of literary men, for example, William Hazlitt's *The Round Table* (1817, with Leigh Hunt) and *Table-Talk* (1821 – 2), Coleridge's *Table Talk* (1835), and Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* (1836).

¹² Richard Holmes, 'Inventing the Truth', in Batchelor, ed., *The Art of Literary Biography*, p. 21.

works which have pleased the greatest number of people of all classes, for the longest time, may, without hesitation be pronounced the best; and, however mediocrity may enshrine itself in the admiration of the select few, the palm of excellence can only be awarded by the many.’¹³

Second, Moore could combine elements of the two models in his Irish biographies in order to use them as vehicles for popularising other issues. From Plutarch he drew the instructive impulse: via the biographies he would quite deliberately introduce Irish history to the English reading public. He would also dignify his subjects by explaining their actions, for, as he wrote in *Byron*, ‘knowledge is ever the parent of tolerance’.¹⁴ As we shall see, his method of explaining the lives of Sheridan and Fitzgerald was to present them in the context of aspects of the Irish past. The very looseness of the biographical form, as recently re-invented by Boswell, made this possible: relevance was now relative, and Moore could discourse at length on events in Irish history in the name of providing context. These lessons on Irish history interpolated into the narratives were intended to ‘explain’ Ireland’s historical grievances to English readers. In both books Moore suggested that if the English understood Ireland better, then more tolerant policies would have been pursued in the past and might be pursued in the future. It was the intention of both books to foster this attitude: if the *Melodies* educated English hearts about nebulous Irish woes, then the biographies would educate English *minds* about the contemporary resonance of specific historical problems.

Despite the manifest looseness of the form, this task required a significant amount of artistry and a willingness to arrange information in order to achieve

¹³ Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (London, 1825); Vol. I, p. 246.

¹⁴ Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of His Life*, 2 vols. (London, 1830 – 31); Vol. II, p. 806.

specific effects. This is especially evident in the case of the biography of Lord Byron. Because of its controversial origins, *Byron* was deeply influenced by the day-to-day considerations of its composition. As we shall see, similar contemporary considerations were important factors in the final shape and emphasis of Moore's Irish biographies. For example, *Sheridan* was erratically composed over the course of eight years and its strange unevenness can only be understood in the context of post-Waterloo conservatism, an essentially leaderless Whig opposition, Moore's two-year exile in Paris, and finally the rise of Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic Association, and the imminence of Catholic Emancipation. *Fitzgerald*, on the other hand, was among Moore's fastest prose compositions and was an extraordinarily volatile document to publish as the Great Reform Bill was about to transform England, while in Ireland O'Connell clamoured for the Repeal of the Act of Union. For these reason then, it is worth looking briefly at *Byron* and the light it sheds on the Irish biographies.¹⁵

Moore and Byron first met on 4 November 1811, at the home of Samuel Rogers, when they made peace over a quarrel that had been brewing since 1810. In time Moore became, as Jeffrey Vail writes, 'a larger presence in Byron's life and work than any other contemporary writer.'¹⁶ However, as Vail has argued, students of Byron have seen Moore in only two roles: as a destroyer of Byron's memoirs and as his biographer.¹⁷ These roles are nonetheless intimately linked, for the type of

¹⁵ A detailed analysis of *Byron* is beyond the scope of this thesis. Analyses can be found in Reed, *English Biography*, pp. 102 – 26, and Vail, *Byron and Moore*, pp. 164 – 88.

¹⁶ Vail, *Byron and Moore*, p. 189.

¹⁷ Byron had give Moore his memoirs in 1819. After he died at Missolonghi, there was confusion among his executors as to what should be done with the manuscript, as his sister, Augusta Leigh, among others, was fearful of their contents. Moore was unsure of his legal right to keep the memoirs and eventually agreed to put the memoirs at Leigh's disposal. As a consequence, the manuscript and its sole copy were burnt, despite Moore's protests. For detailed discussion, see *ibid.*, *passim*; Doris Langley Moore, *The Late Lord Byron: Posthumous Dramas* (London: John Murray, 1961), *passim*, and her article 'The Burning of Byron's Memoirs', *The Atlantic*, Vol. 204, no. 2 (August 1959), pp. 27 – 37. See also biographies of both Moore and Byron, and Moore's *Journal*.

biography that Moore finally produced was heavily influenced by public reaction to the burning of the memoirs.

After Byron's death on 19 April 1824 and the destruction of the memoirs not quite a month later on 17 May, there was a flood of books and articles on Byron, many of which were salacious catchpennies or spurious distortions of the record. Moore was particularly distressed by Leigh Hunt's malicious and inaccurate *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828), and responded in *The Times* with 'The 'Living Dog' and the 'Dead Lion''.¹⁸ The existence of these books meant that when Moore came to write *Byron* he was obliged to set the record straight. The biography was thus weighed down from the outset by considerations extraneous and posthumous to the events of Byron's life. Moore appreciated the magnitude of this task:

Some talk with Lord L. before I came away on a point that has occupied my mind a good deal, namely, the project I have meditated of writing a Life of Lord Byron. Though the Longmans look earnestly and anxiously to it as the great source of my means of repaying them their money; and though it would be the shortest and easiest way I could effect that object; yet the subject begins to be so tarnished and so clogged with difficulties, that my own impression is that I *ought* not to undertake it.¹⁹

However, a mixture of loyalty to his friend's wishes, guilt at his involvement in the burning of the memoirs, outrage at the liberties taken by Hunt and others, and, as usual, financial need, persuaded him to continue the project, and a particular type of biography began to take shape in his mind:

Breakfasted with Rogers. Conversation with respect to my undertaking "Byron's Life." Does not see that what has happened should alter my intention; thinks whatever of tarnish the subject may have lately received, will have passed away before I come to it, and

¹⁸ The poem begins: 'Next week will be publish'd (as "Lives" are the rage) / The whole Reminiscences, wond'rous and strange, / Of a small puppy-dog that once lived in the cage / Of the late noble Lion at Exeter 'Change.'

¹⁹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 775.

that the falsehoods and nonsense which have been heaped upon his memory should rather make me consider the duty to do justice to it the greater.²⁰

As Byron's family and, especially, John Cam Hobhouse,²¹ refused to cooperate with him, Moore shaped the material at hand into the particular portrait that best suited his purpose. A letter to John Murray shows this clearly:

Otherwise, however, I am getting on very well, having satisfied myself with respect to the Italian loves, by omitting the whole of the letter about Angelice [*sic*] (making a love the less) and transferring the long account of Margarita from the place of its date, (where it jars with our Guiccioli Romance) to an earlier period where it chimes in with his dissolute course of life, and this keeps the character of each epoch more consistently.²²

This excision and conflation exhibits Moore's ability and willingness to sacrifice certain facts for certain effects, principally to engender sympathy for his dead, disreputable, friend. The success of the book, both critical and popular, is at least partly attributable to Moore's accomplishment of this goal. Macaulay's review is perhaps the most famous:

We have read this book with the greatest pleasure. Considered merely as a composition, it deserves to be classed among the best specimens of English prose which our age has produced. It contains, indeed, no single passage equal to two or three, which we could select from the *Life of Sheridan*. But, as a whole, it is immeasurably superior to that work. The style is agreeable, clear, and manly; and, when it rises into eloquence, rises without effort or ostentation. Nor is the matter inferior to the manner.²³

Byron thus demonstrates Moore's mastery of both the 'matter' and 'manner' of biography.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 780.

²¹ John Cam Hobhouse (1786 – 1869), a friend of Byron, was instrumental in the destruction of the dead poet's memoirs. He was intensely jealous of Byron's gift of the memoirs to Moore.

²² Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 664 – 65.

²³ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 53 (June 1831), pp. 544 – 72. Of this review Howard Mumford Jones comments: 'The importance of Macaulay's famous essay is twofold: it represented the judgment of the rising generation, and it stuck to the point of estimating the work as a literary production', *The Harp That Once -*, p. 277.

As we have seen then, Moore's *Byron* displays both a willingness to construct artfully a biography to achieve certain effects and a sensitivity to contemporary pressures. These qualities are particularly in evidence in the Irish biographies, for reasons that will be explored in subsequent sections. For now, it is worth considering what it meant to write a specifically Irish biography at this time. As in Britain, biography was used in Ireland to instruct and educate. But where the staples of condensed biographical narratives in magazines such as the *Penny Journal* and *Chamber's Journal* fostered self-improvement, in Ireland the lessons of similar capsule lives were often politically motivated. A prime example was Watty Cox's *Irish Magazine* (1807 - 15).²⁴ The first page of the first issue read:

The *Irish Magazine* will be particularly devoted to Irish Catholic Biography. Authentic Narratives will be given of such distinguished Irish Characters, as pernicious Fashion, Power and Intolerance had driven into unmerited Obscurity, such as eminent Irish Catholic Ecclesiastics, Soldiers, Scholars and Statesmen, who honoured their Country, by their Piety, Learning and Gallantry at home and abroad.²⁵

Somewhat later *The Nation* published a series of sketches of great Irish figures under the name 'National Gallery'. The *Dublin University Magazine* reciprocated in its own way with 'Our Portrait Gallery'. Despite the political differences of these publications, the intentions behind the biographical sketches were identical. In each case there was the project of inculcating a legitimate Irish heritage, of positing a tradition that would legitimise and inspire a contemporary movement that was unable, for various reasons, to rely on general history.²⁶ Before the advent of popular histories in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was biography that provided the forum for inventing a tradition.

²⁴ The full title of the publication was *The Irish Magazine And Monthly Asylum For Neglected Biography*.

²⁵ According to Séamus Ó Casaide, this intention was fulfilled ('Watty Cox and his Publications', *The Bibliographical Society of Ireland Publications*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (1935), pp. 19 – 38).

²⁶ For the difficulties inherent in appealing to Irish history in this period, see Chapter Five.

Though aimed primarily at English readers, the effect of *Sheridan* and *Fitzgerald* in Ireland can be seen as part of this inculcation of a dignified Irish tradition – first by stressing the importance of Sheridan’s Irishness, then by portraying Lord Edward as a martyr in the cause of Catholic Emancipation. And finally, if the biographies educated the English about the Irish past, they also served to educate the Irish about their own past.

Both *Sheridan* and *Fitzgerald* have a much wider cultural agenda than merely narrating two colourful lives. Rather, the lives narrated are the vehicles for introducing recent Irish history into the popular consciousness. The *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is surprised to find that this is the chief value of the works today. *Sheridan*, it says,

is a conscientious work, with extremely detailed documentation of the public Sheridan; of the private person, however, the reader learns little. ... Moore’s biography is crammed with details of political affairs and causes that are likely to overwhelm the average reader today. To a historian of the period, however, Moore offers valuable observations on the issues of his day.²⁷

Fitzgerald is similarly ‘crammed with details’ and for this reason the book ‘will be hard to read for those not intimately acquainted with both Irish and English history, and it would not be inappropriate to say that the work is as much a political history as a biography.’²⁸ The following pages suggest that this was in fact Moore’s intention.

²⁷ Gert Ronberg, ‘Thomas Moore’ in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 144: ‘Nineteenth-Century British Literary Biographers’, ed. Steven Serafin (Detroit and London: Gale Research Inc., 1994), pp. 210 – 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

Chapter Three

Section 2: *Memoirs of the Life of The Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1825)*

Introduction – Moore and Sheridan

As with *Byron*, in writing his biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Moore was writing the life of a friend. They had first met in 1807, at the house of the banker-poet Samuel Rogers, when Moore's star was in the ascendant, and Sheridan's was on the wane.¹ They were to remain friends until Sheridan's death in July 1816, by which time he had been forgotten by many of his former associates. In their minds, writes Fintan O'Toole, 'he already belonged to the past and they were more comfortable with him as an adornment to a heroic age of parliamentary struggle than as a living and awkward reminder of what had succeeded it.'² Moore, however, did not forget him, but continued to visit him during his last weeks and also aided Rogers in providing badly needed financial support. The biography Moore published almost a decade later was a testimony to his refusal to consign Sheridan to the past; instead,

¹ See Linda Kelly, *Richard Brinsley Sheridan: A Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), p. 301. The *Melodies* would of course begin publication a year later. For Sheridan's reduced circumstances at this time, see Fintan O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss: The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London: Granta Books, 1997), pp. 411 – 17.

² O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss*, p. 464.

Sheridan's life and career would be posthumously enlisted in the service of Moore's own political ideals.

The first instance of this occurred immediately after Sheridan's death, when many who had shunned Sheridan in his time of need appeared in force at his funeral. 'Such a catalogue of Mourners!' wrote Rogers to Sir Walter Scott that afternoon, 'And yet he was suffered to die in the hands of the Sheriff.'³ This display of apparent hypocrisy prompted Moore's bilious 'Lines on the Death of Sheridan,' first published on 5 August 1816 in the *Morning Chronicle*. With Swiftian indignation, Moore poured scorn on the hollow obsequies:

Oh! It sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And spirits so mean in the great and high-born;
To think what a long line of titles may follow
The relics of him who died – friendless and lorn!
How proud they can press to the fun'ral array
Of one, whom they shunn'd in his sickness and sorrow:-
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket, to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow!⁴

Moore was delighted with the response the 'Lines...' provoked, especially one unexpected tribute, as he revealed to his mother: 'You will see by the Chronicle that my lines upon Sheridan were published in a pamphlet by some one, at 6d. price. Rogers tells me they made a great sensation.'⁵ Almost forty years later the 'Lines...' were still being referred to in liberal quarters as 'powerful verses'.⁶ More recently, Howard Mumford Jones has described the poem as 'one of the most notable productions in the war of the Whig poets against the Tory ascendancy.'⁷ The sincerity of the lines cannot be doubted, but there is also a more private subtext to Moore's anger. The principal target of the verses is the Prince Regent:

³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 467.

⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 5 August 1816.

⁵ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 403.

⁶ See *Remarks on the Right-Hon. J.W. Croker's Review of the Memoirs of Thomas Moore*, in "The Quarterly", by Nemesis (London, 1855). This work is discussed in Chapter Six.

⁷ Jones, *The Harp That Once* – , p. 166.

And Thou, too, whose life, a sick epicure's dream,
Incoherent and gross, even grosser had pass'd,

Were it not for that cordial and soul-giving beam,
Which his friendship and wit o'er thy nothingness cast...

The prince may have publicly failed Sheridan but he seems also to have cost Moore a more private preferment. Moore's relationship with the monarch dated from 1800 when Moore asked for, and was granted, permission to dedicate his *Odes of Anacreon* to the prince. Moore was then twenty-two and revelled in his new company, as he informed his mother:

I was yesterday introduced to his Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales. He is beyond doubt a man of very fascinating manners. When I was presented to him, he said he was very happy to know a *man of my abilities*; and when I thanked him for the honour he did me in permitting the dedication of *Anacreon*, he stopped me and said, the honour was *entirely* his, in being *allowed* to put his name to a work of such merit. He then said that he hoped when he returned to town in the winter, we should have many opportunities of *enjoying each other's society*; that he was passionately fond of music, and had long heard of my talents in that way. Is not all this very fine?⁸

It was not very fine, however, when their mutual interests advanced from the music-room into the realm of confessional politics. The next few years were an extremely unhappy time for Catholics and their Westminster defenders. In March 1807 the recently elected 'Ministry of All the Talents' intended certain concessions for Catholics. Initially their measures would allow Catholics to be officers up to the rank of colonel in the British army – a status they could already hold in the Irish army. When it transpired that this was to be extended to admiral and general, the king intervened decisively. Fanatical about his reputation as protector of the Protestant constitution, George III demanded a written declaration from the Cabinet that they

⁸ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 22. If this is an example of Moore's notorious vanity and 'social ambition', then it perhaps salutary to consider the manner in which he signs off: 'Do not let any one read this letter but yourselves; none but a father and mother can bear such egotising vanity; but I know who I am writing to – that they are interested in what is said of me, and that they are too partial not to tolerate my speaking of myself', p. 23.

would never again raise the Catholic question. They refused, were dismissed, and remained out of office until 1830.⁹

The prince had the opportunity to improve upon his father's record when, in 1811, the king showing no signs of recovery in his battle for periodic sanity, he became Regent. His closest associates had long been Whig supporters and pro-Catholics, so the Whigs, headed by Lords Grey and Grenville, expected to be called to office. But they were to be disappointed. The prince was ill-disposed towards Grey over his liaison with Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire, and he was mindful of Grenville's siding with Pitt in the previous regency negotiations designed to restrict his powers. Unfortunately for the Whig politicians and their supporters such as Moore, Sheridan intervened against their interests, advising his royal master to reject the Whig proposals. After a month of debate, to the fury of the expectant opposition, the prince called on Spencer Perceval to continue as prime minister. A year later, when the restrictions on his office had expired and he was sovereign in all but name, the prince made a last gesture to the Whigs, offering Grey and Grenville places in a coalition government, but, writes Linda Kelly, 'they refused to join unless there was an understanding that Catholic Emancipation would be granted. The prince, despite his earlier sympathy for the Catholics, was no longer prepared to give this pledge; he let them go with few regrets and Perceval was confirmed in office.'¹⁰

Moore's connection to these events, apart from acquaintance with Sheridan and the prince, was through the prince's chancellor, Lord Moira. Francis Rawdon Hastings, first Marquess of Hastings and (in Irish peerage) second Earl of Moira (1754 – 1826), had been Moore's chief benefactor when he first arrived in London, introducing him to the salons and drawing rooms of polite society, and giving him

⁹ J.C.D. Clarke, *English Society 1660 – 1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 2000), p. 508.

¹⁰ Kelly, *Sheridan*, p. 289.

access to his house and library at Donington. In 1803 Moira and Joe Atkinson, an Irish dramatist who had introduced the peer and the poet, persuaded the Chief Secretary for Ireland to establish, solely for Moore's benefit, an Irish counterpart to the English Poet Laureateship. Moore declined this post, but in August accepted a new offer from Moira: a registrarship in a naval prize-court in Bermuda, little suspecting how the sinecure would affect his life almost two decades later.¹¹

But in the parliamentary affairs of 1811 – 12, according to a recent biography of the prince, the 'greatest casualty was Lord Moira.'¹² Because he had worked so closely with the prince (and Sheridan) during this period, he became *persona non grata* among Whiggish society for his perceived betrayal of the party. Indeed, Moore conceded to his mother that Moira had 'ruined his reputation as a statesman.'¹³ But Moore's own finances were tight at this time, and when Moira was bestowed to the Order of the Garter and appointed Governor General of India – 'rewards' for his service – Moore had hopes for the emolument of accompanying Moira to India as his secretary. Indeed, it was openly said that this appointment had been decided; the *Observer* of Sunday 15 November 1812 stated that the appointment had already been made, with Moore receiving between '4 and 5,000 £. a year.'¹⁴ But time passed and Moore's expectations flagged. Eventually when Moira wrote to him he made no reference to India. Moore read between the lines, as he wrote to his mother: 'I am quite sure Lord Moira will do nothing whatever for me.'¹⁵ Moira wrote again, confessing he had exhausted his Indian patronage but promising to 'leave word with

¹¹ See Chapter Two.

¹² Saul David, *Prince of Pleasure: The Prince of Wales and the Making of the Regency* (London: Little, Brown, 1998), p. 335.

¹³ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 215.

¹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 219, n. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

the Ministers at home that they should do everything in their power for Mr Moore.’¹⁶

For Moore this was far too little, far too late, as he informed Lady Donegal:

...I replied, that, ‘from *his hands* I should always be most willing to accept anything, and that perhaps it might yet be in his power to serve me; but that I begged he would not take the trouble of applying for me to the patronage of Ministers, as I would rather struggle on as I was than take anything that would have the effect of tying up my tongue under such a system as the present.’

Thus the matter rests, and such is the end of my long-cherished hopes from the Earl of Moira, K.G. &c. He has certainly not done his duty by me: his *manner*, since his appointment, has been even worse than his deficiencies of *matter*; but (except to friends such as you) I shall never complain of him.¹⁷

This rupture with Moira was in effect a declaration of independence, a stance we shall see Moore maintaining in subsequent chapters at considerable personal cost. Never again would he look to a government for financial support.¹⁸ Most importantly, however, the break with Moira accelerated the break with the anti-Catholic prince; from this time on Moore would identify exclusively with the oppositional Whigs, and it is no coincidence that his production of anti-government squibs for the *Morning Chronicle* began in earnest in 1812. Thus Terence de Vere White is right to suggest that the ‘Lines on the Death of Sheridan’ were not ‘inspired by sudden grief or indignation’; instead, Sheridan’s death provided ‘the opportunity to vent his spleen against the Prince’, as ‘the Prince was linked in his own mind with Lord Moira and his own bitter recollections of patronage run to seed.’¹⁹ Because of the political nature of his life, as well as the affinities between author and subject, Sheridan was the ideal vehicle for Moore to make political points: the ‘Lines...’ provided the forum for attacking the prince over his connection with Moira and his anti-Catholic policies;

¹⁶ Strong, *The Minstrel Boy*, p. 149

¹⁷ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 235. Moore was so proud of this statement that he quoted it almost verbatim in a letter to the imprisoned Leigh Hunt four months later (p. 254).

¹⁸ He did, however, accept a government pension in 1835, but only after assurances that it would not compromise his independence.

¹⁹ White, *Tom Moore*, p. 129.

later, in the biography – as we have seen, the ideal vehicle for the expression of ulterior issues – Moore would use elements of Sheridan's life as a springboard for commenting on a number of matters, but particularly the imminence of Catholic Emancipation.

Writing *Sheridan*

Sheridan and the prince reappeared in Moore's life in the following November:

I must tell you a little triumph I have had. Wilkie & Murray are about to publish an Edition of Sheridan's Works complete, and they applied to me to write a poem on his Life and Graces to be prefixed, at the same time, sending me the first proof-sheet as a specimen of the typography. This proof-sheet was no less than a Dedication from the Publishers to the Prince Regent, in pursuance, as they expressed thereto, of Sheridan's wish. I instantly said I could have nothing to do with the undertaking, as such a Life as I should write of Sheridan could not possibly be placed beside a Dedication to the P.R. – in consequence of which, after a little deliberation, they sacrificed his R.H. to me, and I am to write the Essay, for which they give me 500£. about 3£. a page. This (I mean about the dedication) is *entre nous*.²⁰

A month later preliminary research had begun, as had the problematic considerations that would dog the work's entire composition: 'The more I think & the more opinions I receive about the Life of Sheridan, the more I see reason to quake upon the subject – Truth will be deadly, and vague praise will be cowardly – so what am I to do?'²¹

With Sheridan so recently dead, what Moore was attempting to write barely qualified as an historical work. So many of the key players in the *Life* were still alive that Moore was obliged to proceed with great delicacy. The indiscretions of his subject made this a doubly difficult task. The *Westminster Review*, when it judged the finished work, understood this:

It is a necessary condition of Biography that the period most favourable for collecting and testing materials, is the least favourable

²⁰ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 430.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

to the publication of an impartial history. [...] The Biographer who enters on his task at this season finds himself therefore rich in facts, but at the same time crossed and beset on all sides by personal considerations which few have sufficient strength of purpose to disregard.²²

These considerations weighed heavily on Moore through most of 1818 and 1819 as he struggled with his subject. His journal for the 25 September 1818 recorded: ‘ – In the garden all day – delicious weather – at my Sheridan task from ten till three – So hard to narrate familiar events elegantly! [...] This would have been a day for poetry – not tame, dull, business-like prose –’. A month later he complained: ‘ – Worked a little at Sheridan – badly off for materials – almost reduced to Watkins.’²³ Then the first major obstacle appeared; unsurprisingly, it revolved around ‘personal considerations.’ Sheridan’s second son, Charles, maintained to the publishers that he had a right to share in the profits of the biography since he had made his father’s papers available to Moore. The tired writer was not unduly dismayed by this complication; it allowed him to turn his hand to another work, *Tom Crib’s Memorial to Congress* (1819), about which he confessed, ‘Twill not take long, and this hitch in the Sheridan business gives me a breathing-time from that work, which I begin to be tired of a little’.²⁴ However, the ‘hitch’ remained unsolved until 1824.

Clearly, then, this would not be a quick production. Unfortunately, Moore’s publishers expected that it would be, sending him salvos of hortative letters on the subject. Then a second obstacle presented itself, one far more serious than the first. To Lady Donegal Moore wrote: ‘Within these twenty-four hours I have come to the knowledge of a circumstance which may very possibly throw me into a prison for

²² *Westminster Review*, Vol. 4 (July – October 1825), pp. 371 – 72. For more on this subject, see Reed, *English Biography*, especially Chapter Three, ‘Dignity and Suppression’.

²³ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 52; p. 77. ‘Watkins’ refers to John Watkins’ two-volume *Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of the Right Honourable R.B. Sheridan* (1817).

²⁴ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 81.

life.²⁵ Just when *Lalla Rookh* was going into its seventh printing, *The Fudge Family in Paris* its fifth, and with a child on the way, the deputy he had appointed over a decade previously on his Bermudan sojourn defaulted, and Moore was held responsible for the amount involved – approximately £5,000. This was in April 1818, and despite the melodramatic flourish in the above letter, he stayed in England until September of the following year when he fled to the continent. Throughout the summer prior to his departure he remained over-optimistic about the work's progress. In July he wrote to Wilkie, his publisher: 'I am getting on with the Life, and I think I can promise it to you with certainty before Christmas – indeed, if necessary, I think I could enable you to have it *out* at that time.'²⁶

Moore had his books and notes for the project shipped to Paris so that, once returned from his impromptu grand tour, he could resume his task. Again he was optimistic for a time – 'I shall now lose no time in completing the long-delayed Life'; 'I shall proceed with the Life, and though slow, hope to be *sure*, in the execution of it – To dash through it, as the poor fellow himself did, would be as little profitable to you as it was to him'. By 1820 he was re-thinking the project, prepared to abandon the *Life* in favour of the original 'essay' idea.²⁷ In October Moore wrote to Wilkie 'representing the exceeding difficulty I found in continuing my Life of Sheridan here, so far away from all the oral authorities it was necessary for me to consult, and that it was my intention, in consequence, not to go any further in the work till I arrived in England.'²⁸

Wilkie and Murray were understandably concerned. It had been three years since the project was mooted and they were yet to see any return on their investment.

²⁵ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 444.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 482; p. 483; p. 483.

²⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 359.

Instead they returned to their original idea of publishing Sheridan's *Works* and petitioned Moore for some sort of short preface, to which he assented, admitting that he 'cannot with any decency refuse it.'²⁹

In 1821 Wilkie and Murray published in two volumes *The Works of the Late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* with an 'Advertisement' by Moore. It is a curious sort of introduction, essentially an apology for the absence of a biographical sketch mixed up with some vague musings on biographical practice. It is written in a laboriously orotund prose, portending the stylistic overkill of *Sheridan*. Nonetheless, behind the oratorical and oracular posturing some insight into Moore's understanding of biography can be discerned.

Moore's first concern, the 'contemporary considerations,' has already been introduced, as it was a factor in the work's composition from the very inception. It revolves around authorial responsibility in dealing with 'events yet recent, and persons still alive'³⁰ – a major influence, as we have seen, on the writing of *Byron*. This difficulty is identified early in the 'Advertisement'. Whatever advantages the biographer may possess, he writes, 'in the freshness and authenticity of his materials, derived either from personal knowledge, or the many living sources to which he can refer, are heavily counterbalanced by that multitude of opinions and prejudices – still actively surviving the object of their variance – which he has to encounter both in seeking and speaking the truth.'³¹ Clearly, Moore was finding contradictory evidence in his research among Sheridan's acquaintances. And because information about Sheridan and his actions automatically drew attention to the actions of others still living – frequently Moore's own acquaintances in Whig society – Moore had to tread

²⁹ Ibid., p. 359.

³⁰ Moore, 'Advertisement' to *The Works of The Late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 2 vols. (London, 1821), p. vi.

³¹ Ibid., p. vii.

very softly in his estimations of past and present political players. His subject's want of general circumspection made this particularly difficult. This played upon Moore's mind and he discussed it with many friends, including the historian Sir James Mackintosh: 'Mackintosh, who seemed yesterday to think that I must hold a veil up before Sheridan's criminalities, told me this morning he had been thinking of the subject the greater part of the night, & had come to the decision that I ought to do no such thing – it would be unjust to my own character & to the world, & that I ought (as he owned, I seemed well inclined to do) tell the truth & nothing but the truth'.³² This was a worthy ideal, but it was also impossible given the nature of biographical practice in the period, as the *Westminster Review* recognised: 'We are persuaded that no man of the present day, living in what is called the world, and attached to a party, could do full justice to the political part of the Life of Sheridan.'³³ We shall see below what effect these 'contemporary considerations' had on the book's reception; for now, it is sufficient to note that Moore was aware of the pressures they exerted on his narrative.

The 'Advertisement' then goes on to an important, if vague, discussion of narrative strategy. Moore dwells on the question of focus, initially warning that 'in sketching the portraits of distinguished men, a biographer should not be too near his subjects.' He fears that what such a biographer may gain in 'minuteness and precision of detail, he may lose in the general effect of the whole.' The better course implied for the narrative is not 'limited, partial, and microscopic'; rather it tends towards the general, consistently leaning towards the bigger picture, the larger context. To emphasise his point he employs an extended eastern metaphor: '...in recording only the littleness of the great, he may resemble one who would give us a map of the

³² Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 179. Mackintosh would later write the *History of England* in the same series as Moore's *History of Ireland*.

³³ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 4 (1825), p. 372.

narrow lanes and passages of Constantinople, instead of a splendid panorama of its sea, its temples and its palaces.’³⁴

As we shall see, this mode of narrative, sweeping away from knotty particulars towards generalised over-views, is inherently attractive when dealing with contentious contemporary politics. The questions that Moore knew would prove divisive could thus be retreated from, or at least treated with the most tentative of approaches. He discussed this narrative tactic in his journal: ‘Much talk with Lord John about my Sheridan work; how far I should venture in passing judgment on political events of the time.’ The generalising method provided the answer: ‘...better merely to draw my conclusions from the general and obvious features of every transaction, such as they appear on the surface of history, than, by attempting to trace negotiations or develop secret motives, run the risk of being falsified hereafter, when memoirs written by the actors themselves may appear, and prove that I was completely on the wrong scent in my conjectures.’³⁵ Thus in order to avoid the political issues made particularly contentious by the contemporary scene, Moore’s biography tended towards general points rather than specific judgements.

However, this is not the only narrative strategy Moore employed. The ‘Advertisement’ subsequently discusses the merits of the diametrically opposed approach, one that leads from a general discussion towards analysis of a particular issue: ‘On the other hand,’ he writes,

it is equally to be apprehended, that in endeavouring to generalize the features of character, or represent them in that softened light through which they will be seen, at distance, by posterity, too many of those small but precious lines, which mark the peculiarity of the individual, may be lost.

³⁴ Moore, ‘Advertisement’, pp. vii – viii.

³⁵ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, pp. 639 – 40.

The generalising narrative is to be condemned if it is ‘assumed as the means of evading disagreeable truths.’ Instead, a more focused method is needed, one whose accumulation of detail will provide ‘that air of reality, by which alone our sympathies can be awakened.’ The value of this type of narrative is that it is perceived as being inherently moral. The more intense the focus on the subject, the more the reader learns of quotidian weaknesses as well as the general successes, the more is learnt of those lessons ‘which the history of Genius and its frailties bequeaths to mankind.’³⁶ This inherent didacticism takes us back to Plutarch, whom we know Moore was reading during *Sheridan*’s composition.³⁷ Even the most dissolute life therefore – such as Byron’s or Sheridan’s – could have a valuable pedagogic function. As we shall see, in the case of *Sheridan*, many of the specific issues Moore focused on taught the probity and moral justice of Catholic Emancipation.

The ‘Advertisement’ preceded *Sheridan* by four years – Byron’s death and the destruction of his memoirs had slowed the already benighted production even more than expected. One should not necessarily expect *Sheridan* to have conformed to the edicts of the ‘Advertisement’ – Moore had already cultivated a reputation for ‘an abhorrence of abstract reasoning’³⁸ – and he was thus never at his best when theorising on any subject. Yet it is striking to see how this binary of narrative techniques was actually adhered to in the finished product. Both were employed by Moore to create certain effects and to solve certain problems, but they were so fundamentally opposed, that they could only co-exist uneasily, alternating in ascendancy as the *Life* advanced. But what is particularly interesting about them is the fact that, as we shall see, critical responses were conditioned by the extent to which it was felt that one focus was indulged at the expense of the other.

³⁶ Moore, ‘Advertisement’, p. viii.

³⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 158.

³⁸ *New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 14 (1825), p. 474.

Sheridan and Style

Eventually, in early October 1825, eight years after the project was initiated, the *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* was published by the Longmans, Wilkie and Murray having long since given up hope on the project. For Linda Kelly, one of Sheridan's most recent biographers, it is 'probably still the classic biography.'³⁹ It had been eagerly awaited by everyone involved in either politics or literature for such a long time that its great sales were unsurprising; a thousand copies were sold in the first ten days alone, in a month it had reached a third edition, and by 1827 there was a fifth. In January 1826 Moore wrote to Charles Sheridan: 'I have raised a storm against me in various quarters by this Work – but as the Public seems to be at my back, I have but little doubt of weathering it.'⁴⁰ Moore typically overstated the case here; the reviews, although mixed, were broadly as could have been expected, given the author and subject. But if the critics were divided on the work in general, they were united on one point in particular: the prose style.

Review after review found *Sheridan* absurdly over-written. The article in the Tory *Quarterly Review*, written by John Gibson Lockhart and never likely to be sympathetic to Moore, took the opportunity of slating the recent *Captain Rock* along with *Sheridan*, opining that both works 'exhibit a manner sufficiently unlike that of any acknowledged master of narration not fictitious.' Readers were also regaled with the most egregious specimens of the 'flowery profusion' of metaphors.⁴¹ Even Moore's friend Lord Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, though highly impressed by the work, admitted that 'there is some room for cautioning Mr Moore to be on his

³⁹ Kelly, *Sheridan*, p. xiii.

⁴⁰ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 547.

⁴¹ [John Gibson Lockhart], *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 33 (March 1826), p. 563.

guard against the seductions of his own too fertile imagination.’⁴² The *Westminster Review* offered a very close reading and was perhaps the cruellest:

The composition of the book is generally loose, and often vicious; the style is poetic, we suppose we must call it, to a surfeiting degree. On a moderate calculation, there are 2,500 similes in the book, not to mention metaphors and figurative terms. The similes are as impertinent as they are frequent; no matter what the subject is, no matter whether there is room for them or not, they contrive to wedge themselves into the tail of a sentence by force of a dash, and introduced with the incessantly occurring like: we do consciously believe, that since the world began, there never was a book with so many likenesses, and so few resemblances.

The article concluded by ‘making a little bouquet of the flowers of Moore.’⁴³

The *Monthly Review* surmised that ‘while engaged in writing this volume, the author had by him a common-place book, in which he had noted down every new simile that occurred to him, in the course of that extensive oriental reading by which he had prepared and imbued his mind for the composition of *Lalla Rookh*. The metaphors which he could not apply in that poem, he has carefully introduced into these chapters...’ This same review went on to make a very interesting stylistic observation: the vast majority of the purple passages and poetic excesses are confined to the first ten chapters. The review continued: ‘It is remarkable that in the latter portion of the *Memoirs*, in which the mind of the author is deeply wrapped in his subject, and the interest of the theme thickens upon him, he discards all these exotic ornaments, and pours forth his valuable details in a language at once simple, picturesque, and eloquent.’⁴⁴

This is very interesting, for it reveals a close relationship between the style and the content that a more consistent writer might obscure. Indeed, the style changed as

⁴² [Francis Jeffrey], *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 45 (December 1826), p. 48.

⁴³ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 4 (1825), p. 405. This able if pedantic review was by Albany Fonblanque; in time he would become a close friend of Moore.

⁴⁴ *Monthly Review*, Vol. 108 (1825), p. 151.

the biography advanced, and different narrative strategies were employed as a consequence. There are a number of explanations as to why this should have happened. To begin with, as we have seen, *Sheridan* had a long and difficult compositional history. This was alluded to in the Preface: 'The first four Chapters of this Work were written nearly seven years ago. My task was then suspended during a long absence from England; and it was only in the course of the last year that I applied myself seriously to the completion of it.'⁴⁵ The decision to let the early chapters stand without re-writing surely accounts for stylistic inconsistency, especially if one adds five or six chapters during which Moore corrected his excesses and began to have the confidence to let his material speak for itself. Simply put, the style improved after the exercise of *Captain Rock*.

Moore's self-confidence and, indeed, his self-consciousness are also important considerations in explaining the overly florid first sections. By the time of *Sheridan*, Moore was the author of only one prose narrative of any length, *Captain Rock*. Serious as that work was, its generic innovation and deeply ironic nature served to confound its critics. *Sheridan* represented a very different challenge. Where *Rock*'s presentation of Irish history was consistently hailed as a wholly original contribution to a previously esoteric subject, *Sheridan* was weighed down by those 'contemporary considerations' that meant that everyone reading the book would have had pre-existing views on the subject. Moreover, as a biography, it could immediately be judged as part of a recognisable tradition. Most reviews of the work opened with a some near variant on the first sentence of the *Literary Gazette* article: 'The subject *Sheridan*, and the biographer *Moore*, constitute so striking a literary attraction, that we are sure we cannot gratify public interest more essentially than by devoting a

⁴⁵ Moore, *Sheridan*, p. v.

considerable portion of this week's Gazette to the notice of the volume.'⁴⁶ There was clearly a very great deal of pressure on the first-time biographer.

But why should this pressure have manifested itself in egregious prose? The small number of the critics who addressed the issue sourced the otiose leanings in Moore's profession as a poet, and in his nationality as an Irishman. The former explanation seems to have a good deal of validity; Moore had after all spent the previous quarter-century penning filigree verses rich in highly wrought metaphor. The latter explanation revives the *canard* of the eloquent Irishman, a trope Moore himself had certainly profited from and one that he imbued with a long after-life. The justice of this sort of vaguely ethnolinguistic taxonomy is at the very least open to debate, but what is particularly interesting is that it means that Moore and his *Sheridan* are identified as specifically Irish, and thus qualitatively different to Watkins' *Sheridan* (1817) or any subsequent works by Englishmen: 'Mr. Moore is an Irishman, and a man of genius, – and his works will bewray him. Why should not the Dorians speak Doric? He cannot but do after his kind.'⁴⁷ The Irishness of *Sheridan* will be examined below.

A subconscious lack of confidence in the material and in his own abilities may also have contributed to the purple hue of *Sheridan* – certainly we know that the project exhausted him: 'This Life of Sheridan has been a heavy mill-stone round my neck.'⁴⁸ But there is also something more conscious, more calculated about this stylistic obscurantism, and it is related the second narrative technique discussed above.

⁴⁶ *Literary Gazette*, no. 455 (8 October 1825), p. 641. See, for example, the *Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 1 (October 1825), p. 461: 'This is by far the most interesting biographical work which has appeared for many years. When the life of an illustrious poet and statesman is written by a distinguished poet and patriot, it cannot fail to excite the public attention.' See also the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 95 (October 1825), p. 345: 'Moore (the first lyric poet of modern times) the Biographer, and that transcendent genius Sheridan the Subject, cannot fail, thus united, to excite the most intense and powerful interest in the literary world.'

⁴⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, p. 47.

⁴⁸ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 534.

As we have seen, this type of narrative shied away from contentious particularities in favour of conciliatory generalities. It had thus the potential of an occluding device. The descent into bombast and fustian language functioned in the same way. Instead of exegesis of a particular issue the prose sheered off into poeticised generalities. It was a stylistic defence mechanism, an evasive tactic. In discussing Sheridan's oratorical style Moore cautioned against those who would 'wander after Sense into that region of metaphor, where too often, like Angelica in the enchanted palace of Atlante, she is sought for in vain.' He footnoted this with a quip from John Philpot Curran, who used to say, 'When I can't talk sense, I talk metaphor.'⁴⁹ Moore hereby provided the rope by which others would hang him, for a number of critics quoted this line back at Moore, essentially accusing him of fudging the issues.⁵⁰

But as the *Monthly Review* astutely remarked, the over-writing was mostly confined to the earlier sections. We know Moore found these sections difficult, perhaps because he did not find them terribly interesting. Early in the composition he had remarked: ' – worked at Sheridan – heartily sick of his duels & courtship – shall be glad when I get him fairly married, for then I shall come to his plays & politics.' Evidently, Moore, as a biographer, had a preference for the interpretation of data over the research required to amass it: ' – Have got Sheridan fairly married at last, and now enter into a region of his life, for which my *viatica* are not half so abundant...' ⁵¹ His interpretations were, of course, highly political.

Sheridan and Politics

If the style of *Sheridan* united the critics, in most other respects it proved divisive. In a preface to the fifth edition Moore remarked:

⁴⁹ Moore, *Sheridan*, Vol. I, pp. 520 – 21.

⁵⁰ See the *Quarterly Review*, p. 563, and the *Westminster Review*, p. 407.

⁵¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 63; p. 77.

The Tory, of course, is shocked by my Whiggism; – the Whigs are rather displeased at my candour in conceding, that they have sometimes been wrong, and the Tories right; while the Radical, in his patriotic hatred of both parties, is angry with me for allowing any merit to either.⁵²

Moore was pleased with the division he had engendered, but when critics disagreed with *Sheridan*, they did so for many different reasons. As may be expected, critical responses were largely conditioned by the political persuasion of the various reviews and reviewers. But this was not uniformly the case, for there was also Tory approval and Whig censure. Instead of tying critical responses to mere party political divisions then, it is more useful to examine patterns of approval and disapproval as they relate to the opposing narrative impulses that Moore employs. It will thus be seen that the critics' reviews divide much more uniformly between sympathy for the 'generalising' narrative and its 'focusing' counterpart.

The former technique, it will be recalled, tended from the particular to the general, and provided the wider context of any one event. It was, therefore, a historicising impulse, perpetually concerned with depicting the individual against an historical backdrop. Moore employed this method chiefly in the latter, less adorned sections of the biography. This narrative tactic was used to avoid volatile issues in favour of the calmer bromides of common consensus. It was thus particularly useful in confronting the vexed issue of 'contemporary concerns' as they manifested themselves in the suppression of details in the interests of propriety. In the main, Moore's discretionary suppression revolved around revelations gleaned from the documents Charles Sheridan had made available:

I had hoped that such a picture, as these letters must exhibit, of his feelings at that most interesting period of his private life, would not have been lost to the present work. But scruples – over-delicate, perhaps, but respectable, as founded upon the systematic rejection of

⁵² Quoted in Jones, *The Harp That Once* –, p. 246.

any papers, received under the seal of private friendship – forbid the publication of these precious documents.⁵³

This is typical of *Sheridan*, as it is of the editorial procedure of the day. However, Moore also deliberately used this elliptical narrative technique to avoid elaboration on the very dangerous subject of 1798. In rather generic terms, Moore confessed his well-known patriotic ardour for his homeland, beginning: ‘I am aware that, on the subject of Ireland and her wrongs, I can ill trust myself with the task of expressing what I feel, or preserve that moderate historical tone, which it has been my wish to maintain through the political opinions of this work.’ But rather than dwell on the subject, Moore substituted direct comment with a quotation from an address to parliament by Sheridan: ‘Instead, therefore, of hazarding any farther reflections of my own on the causes and character of the Rebellion of 1798, I shall content myself with giving an extract from a speech which Mr Sheridan delivered on the subject, in the June of that year.’⁵⁴ This disguised taciturnity seems to confirm Vivian Mercier’s view that it was ‘not until 1831 that Moore came to terms with 1798 by publishing *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*.’⁵⁵

But if this generalising technique avoided issues, equally it could introduce other, often tangentially related ones under the pretext of providing historical context. On numerous occasions, Sheridan himself is mentioned only in passing, as a pretext for introducing lengthy disquisitions on affairs of political and parliamentary history. As we shall see, this ploy was frequently employed in discussing Ireland.

The converse of this narrative tendency was the ‘focusing’ narrative, in which over-views were eschewed in favour of a narrower frame of reference, and detailed

⁵³ Moore, *Sheridan*, Vol. I, p. 106.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 279.

⁵⁵ Vivian Mercier, ‘English Readers: Three Historical ‘Moments’’ in *Irish Writers and Politics*, eds. Okifumi Komesu and Masara Sekine (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990), p. 13.

analysis was preferred to a broad sweep of undifferentiated data. Sheridan's life lent itself particularly well to this duality of approach, for it was a life lived dually, first as playwright, then as parliamentarian. All of his great comedies had been written by the age of twenty-eight, after which came more than three decades devoted to politics. Moore's book addressed one career, then the other, essentially positing a break between them: 'We must now prepare to follow the subject of this Memoir into a field of display altogether different, where he was in turn to become an actor before the public himself, and where instead of indicting lively speeches for others, he was to deliver the dictates of his eloquence and wit from his own lips.'⁵⁶ As we have seen, due to 'contemporary concerns' the political sections of *Sheridan* did not, and could not, abound in detailed analysis of various events. Moore thus found the generalising approach most amenable to his examination of Sheridan's later career. However the earlier part of his life seemed to allow for, indeed demand, a more focused narrative, and it is this sort of delving, exegetical writing that is to be found in the discussions of Sheridan's achievements as a playwright.

In these sections Moore traced the compositional history of classics such as *The School for Scandal*, showed how it was an amalgam of two distinct plots, and quoted from successive drafts to trace how the characters and the plots evolved together. These detailed commentaries were quite different from the attempts at generalised history found elsewhere in the text. And it is this in terms of this difference that critics passed judgment. The *Quarterly Review* was exemplary in this regard, as it found fault with the more historical sections but lauded the textual analysis. Reviewing *Sheridan* in tandem with Watkins' book, it maintained that 'both Dr. Watkins and Mr. Moore have done injudiciously in writing the Life of Mr.

⁵⁶ Moore, *Sheridan*, Vol. I, p. 278.

Sheridan so much as if they had been composing the political history of his time.’ It went on to say that, ‘of all the important measures in the policy of this country during his lifetime, there is *not one* of which it can be pretended that Mr. Sheridan was the principal mover, or even the principal opposer. In fact, the history of England might be written without a single introduction of his name, and in all probability hereafter it will so be written.’ On the other hand, when it came to discussion of Sheridan the dramatist, ‘it gives us pleasure to be able to state that on this head Mr. Moore has satisfied almost every expectation which the announcement of his work excited.’ It concluded: ‘Dr. Watkins’s *Memoir of the Politician* appears to us to be the better work of the two, as decidedly as Mr. Moore’s is of the *Author*.’⁵⁷ The *New Monthly Magazine* made similar judgments. First, the generalising tendency of *Sheridan* was lamented:

In order therefore to avoid details, which he perhaps suspected nobody would read, Mr. Moore has sometimes become obscure ... for a laborious investigation of the particulars which constitute liberty, or determine its existence among men, we should imagine him, both by his poetic and pleasurable temperament, peculiarly indisposed. [...] With an evident endeavour to conciliate all parties, we question, therefore, whether Mr. Moore will satisfy any.

But this is swiftly followed by praise of the more literary sections:

The portion of the volume before us which we have read with the greatest pleasure, is that in which the Poet speaks of the Poet ... these observations are doubly interesting, from their value as coming from such an authority, and from their evident allusion to the author’s manner of producing his own exquisite poetry.⁵⁸

What is particularly interesting about these opinions is the fact that the *New Monthly Review* was a Whig paper – it had recently extolled the virtues of *Captain Rock* – and yet we find it concurring with the Tory *Quarterly*.

⁵⁷ *Quarterly Review*, p. 574; p. 575; p. 591; p. 593.

⁵⁸ *New Monthly Magazine*, p. 476; p. 480; p. 481.

Unsurprisingly, the *Christian Observer* felt that ‘he has entered somewhat too fully into the history of the various political questions with which Sheridan happened to be concerned.’ Yet, again, the literary commentary was appreciated – though they were not great admirers of the morally suspect subject.⁵⁹

The polar opposite judgment was also to be found, the *Edinburgh Review* being among those who averred that *Sheridan* was at its best when it generalised about the past. Lord Jeffery, who wrote the article, stated that he considered ‘the public or political part of the work before us as of more interest than the personal or literary’ and that ‘we do not hesitate to characterize [*Sheridan*] as the best historical notice yet published of the events of our own time.’⁶⁰ The *Monthly Review* was in complete agreement: ‘So important and absorbing is the interest of that portion of these Memoirs, which relates to Sheridan’s political career, and to the last scenes of his existence, that most readers will inevitably look back upon the early pages of the work, embracing his literary and dramatic progress, as a sort of penalty which they were called upon to pay for their subsequent enjoyment.’⁶¹

To further stress that these opinions were not dictated by traditional politics, we find on the side of the overtly pro-Catholic *Edinburgh Review* such organs as the *Christian Examiner* and *Church of Ireland Magazine* – a publication dedicated to ‘advocate the cause of Protestantism against the Roman Catholic, and of Christianity against the Infidel.’ This review found the work ‘deficient’ in its literary discussions, for Moore was insufficiently moral in his portrayal of Sheridan for having admitted ‘as palliations and apologies for sin (we write as *Christian Examiners*, and therefore must give things their proper names) those powers of mind which, in their legitimate use, would afford the best human preservative against it.’ On the other hand, the

⁵⁹ *Christian Observer*, Vol. 26 (1826), p. 479.

⁶⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, p. 3; p. 1.

⁶¹ *Monthly Review*, p. 150.

politics of *Sheridan*, though prudishly kept at arm's length, were deemed innocuous enough: 'The political portion of these Memoirs we do not consider as within the scope of our publication; and therefore shall pass over it with the remark (which we extract from a respectable Weekly Journal of this city,) that "Mr. Moore's partizan politics have, much to his credit, entered very little into a work which would have consistently admitted an extensive indulgence of his bias."'”⁶²

Many other reviews followed this pattern, critiquing not along standard party lines, but in relation to the direction of the narrative thrust, either towards general political history, or towards Sheridan's specifically dramatic achievement. The exceptions to this rule were the Catholic-nationalist papers of either Dublin or London. They offered unabashed encomiums, thoroughly uncritical of even the excessive prose style.⁶³ This calls attention to the particular relationship that existed between Moore's *Sheridan* and the Irish question.

Sheridan and Ireland

By the time of *Sheridan*'s publication in 1825, Ireland, as a subject to write about under any pretext, had changed a great deal since the project had been first suggested to Moore in 1817. To begin with, it was once again a mainstream issue for debate in a way it had not been for almost two decades. Public perception of Ireland was inextricably bound up with the question of Catholic Emancipation, and this represented a significant bugbear in the minds of a huge majority of Englishmen. In his study of the Catholic Question during this time, the historian G.I.T. Machin states that 'there can be no doubt that most of the inhabitants of Great Britain were opposed

⁶² *Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1826), p. 130; p. 131.

⁶³ See, for example, the *London and Dublin Magazine*, Vol. 1 (November 1825), pp. 385 – 98, and *Captain Rock in London, or The Chieftain's Weekly Gazette*, no. 33 (15 – 29 October 1825), pp. 260 – 61; pp. 266 – 71; pp. 278 – 80.

to civil equality for Catholics, as they had been for over two hundred years.’⁶⁴ In this, King George III did not differ from his subjects – in fact it was during his reign that the Constitution was fetishised as a specifically Protestant one. In 1807, when he dismissed the ‘Ministry of All the Talents’ for its pro-Catholic reforms, the result was not merely to banish the Whigs from power until 1830, it was also to effectively impose a gagging order on Emancipation such that, as a party, they remained ‘hesitant to press the issue until the general election of 1826.’⁶⁵ As many recalled, including Moore in his ‘Lines on the Death of Sheridan,’ when the Prince Regent came to power in 1811 he abandoned the Whig friends of his youth and helmed a regime as anti-Catholic as his father’s had been.

Certainly by the early 1820s, on a purely practical level, Emancipation was deemed essential if peace and order were to be restored and maintained in Ireland, for the successive Insurrection Acts and impositions of martial law referred to towards the end of *Captain Rock* were having an insufficient effect. This had always been the Whig policy. Their treatment of the issue, as J.C.D. Clark points out, was always strategic: ‘the importance of conciliating Irish loyalties took priority over native English politico-theological demands.’⁶⁶ In his discussion of Whig policy, Austin Mitchell remarks that, ‘Whig change was conservative, designed to bring institutions up to date, the better to preserve them.’⁶⁷ But even though Emancipation was a central Whig tenet, it would have been politically suicidal to press for Emancipation in the face of royal and popular opposition. At this time then, it seemed very unlikely that any initiative for reform in the anti-Catholic policies would stem from England.

⁶⁴ G.I.T. Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics, 1820 to 1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 5.

⁶⁵ Clark, *English Society*, p. 508.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

⁶⁷ Austin Mitchell, *The Whigs in Opposition, 1815 – 1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 17.

As Machin observes, 'the political atmosphere of 1820, the year after the Peterloo "massacre" and the Six Acts, was not favourable to liberal demands.'⁶⁸

So the great impetus for change came not from England, but from Ireland. Mitchell notes that 'it was not until 1825 that the activities of the new catholic association made Ireland a major subject of discussion in parliament.'⁶⁹ In the spring of 1823 the Catholic Association had been established by Daniel O'Connell and Richard Lalor Sheil, and in a mere six years of existence it exerted enough pressure to make Emancipation a reality in 1829. But if 1825, the year of *Sheridan*'s publication, represents the moment when the Irish question once again became a subject for widespread debate in Parliament, for those who were interested in the subject, such as Moore, it had become an increasingly pressing concern throughout the preceding period, that is to say during the time when *Sheridan* was being written. To understand how and why Moore wrote *Sheridan* as he did, it is vital to see it in the context of the rise of Daniel O'Connell and Catholic Ireland.

Moore was of course personally acquainted with O'Connell, and followed his career with great interest and qualified approval. They had dined together in August of 1823 in Kenmare, by which time the Catholic Association was already working and Moore was considering his *Captain Rock*, the book that would essentially launch his prose career. As perhaps the most famous Irishmen on either side of the Irish Sea, they were continually aware of each other's movements; O'Connell is known to have paid courtesy calls on Moore's mother as a tribute to the author of the *Melodies*. Moore, for his part, sensed something anti-democratic in O'Connell's mass appeal, and he resented the Kerryman's demagoguery.⁷⁰ In any case, while *Sheridan* was

⁶⁸ Machin, *The Catholic Question*, p. 21.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, *The Whigs in Opposition*, p. 192.

⁷⁰ 'The Dream of Those Days' was particularly critical of O'Connell: "'You will recollect," I continued, "that these verses are addressed to Ireland; but I admit that O'Connell had every right to

being composed, O'Connell had made Ireland a dynamic issue. As a result, Moore's Irish blood was stirred politically by his homeland in a way it had not been since the Veto letter. Fashionable as ever, and alert to a changing tide for his co-religionists, Moore contributed to the movement in his own fiercely individual and independent way, first with *Captain Rock*, then with *Sheridan*.

In *A Traitor's Kiss*, Fintan O'Toole begins by noting that, 'since Moore's, there has been no Irish biography of Sheridan.'⁷¹ But the inference that Moore's is a specifically Irish biography is only half right. For much of the early part of the work Moore concentrated on young Sheridan's picaresque adventures and affairs. From there he moved into the dramatic period and the commentaries on the plays. At no point in these sections did Moore insist on an Irish backdrop or even an Irish undercurrent to these activities. It will be recalled that these first sections of the book were written before the Paris exile, before the 1823 trip to Ireland.

However, when Moore returned to his task in earnest in 1824, the year of *Captain Rock*'s publication, Ireland began to exert a strong torque on the narrative, being introduced with increasing consistency. It is in this way that the work *became* an Irish biography. This was made possible by the shift away from focused biography, and towards a more general history. Thus Moore did attest to Sheridan's Irishness – 'Early as was the age at which Sheridan had been transplanted from Ireland – never to set foot upon his native land again – the feeling of nationality remained with him warmly through life, and he was, to the last, both fond and proud of his country' – but only after more than four hundred pages had elapsed.⁷²

take them directly to himself, as he is, and has been for a long time, to all public intents and purposes, Ireland; and I look upon this as one of the most fatal consequences of his extraordinary career...'", Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1610.

⁷¹ O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss*, p. v.

⁷² Moore, *Sheridan*, Vol. I, p. 431.

From this point on, the manner in which almost any subject became a pretext for extended commentary on Irish affairs was at times ingenious. On a debate concerning the East India Bill in 1784, Sheridan wrote a few lines to his brother Charles intimating that, ‘...you are all so void of principle, in Ireland, that you cannot enter into our situation.’ Moore then reprinted Charles’ reply, not as a defence or rebuke, but as a serendipitously found tract illustrating both how politics in Ireland was stymied in the past and in need of reform in the present. Moore’s quotation of the letter performed a pedagogic function for his largely English readership, particularly in relation to the fate of disenfranchised Catholics. To appreciate the nature and amount of information Moore smuggles into his book via the letter it is necessary to quote it, as Moore does, at length:

That no part exertion [on the East India Bill] here can ever lead to power is obvious when you reflect, that we have in fact no *Irish government*; all power here being lodged in a branch of the *English government*, we have no cabinet, no administration of our own, no great offices of state, every office we have is merely ministerial, it confers no power but that of giving advice, which may or may not be allowed by the Chief Governor. As all power, therefore, is lodged solely in the English government, of which the Irish is only a branch, it necessarily follows that no exertion of any party here could ever lead to power, unless they overturned the English government in this country, or unless the efforts of such a party in the Irish House of Commons could overturn the British administration in England, and the leaders of it get into their places; - the first, you will allow, would not be a very wise object, and the latter you must acknowledge to be impossible. [...] In addition to what I have said respecting the consequences of the subordinate situation of this country, you are to take into consideration how particularly its inhabitant are circumstanced. Two out of three millions are Roman Catholics – I believe the proportion is still larger – and two-thirds of the remainder are violent rank Presbyterians, who have always been, but most particularly of late, strongly averse to all government placed in the hands of the church of England; nine-tenths of the property, the landed property of the country I mean, is in the possession of the latter. You will readily conceive how much these circumstances must give persons of property in this kingdom a leaning towards government.⁷³

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 413 – 15.

In this way, then, Moore publicised Catholic grievances for his English audience. Similarly, by virtue of the fact that Sheridan spoke on the issue, Moore was able to provide potted histories of the Act of Union, as well as pointed commentary on its origin and aftermath:

The only question upon which he spoke this year was the important measure of the Union, which he strenuously and at great length opposed. Like every other measure, professing to be for the benefit of Ireland, the Union has been left incomplete in the one essential point, without which there is no hope of peace or prosperity for that country. As long as religious disqualification is left to “lie like lees at the bottom of men’s hearts,” in vain doth the voice of Parliament pronounce the word “Union” to the two islands, a feeling, deep as the sea that breaks between them, answers back, sullenly, “Separation.”⁷⁴

Moore used *Sheridan*, then, to introduce ‘foreign’ matter and comment on Ireland – but only historical matters that would make his readers look favourably on the country. As we have seen, he carefully avoided 1798, since discussion of a rebellion that had resulted in 30,000 deaths might not foster benevolent attitudes towards Ireland. None of the extended lessons in Irish history interpolated into *Sheridan* were intended to be divisive or rebellious. On the contrary, they were designed to show, as *Captain Rock* had done ironically, that the ill will fomenting in Ireland was the result of English misrule – misrule that was based in particular on sectarian policy. Thus most of the lessons were specifically concerned with parliamentary or legislative history, as opposed to say, economic or social matters. *Sheridan*, then, consistently drew attention to Ireland in order to show the historical origins of Catholic discontent. This discontent was now contemporary news since, although it had previously been violent but contained in Ireland, it was now becoming politicised under O’Connell and was exerting pressure at a Parliamentary level in England. The pressure was such that two years later a correspondent of Peel’s wrote

⁷⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 292.

that the Catholic question was ‘mixed up with every thing we eat or drink or say or think.’⁷⁵ The history lessons of *Sheridan* all suggested that Catholic Emancipation was the answer to the Irish question, that religious equality was the price of Irish loyalty. In this Moore was being classically Whiggish.

Conclusion – Moore and *Sheridan*

Peerlessly Whiggish as this may have been, many of Moore’s Whig peers remained unimpressed. Lady Holland acidly remarked to him shortly before publication: “This will be a dull book of yours, this ‘Sheridan,’ I fear.”⁷⁶ It seems that high society’s collective mind had been made up. In the weeks after publication this became clear to Moore: ‘...soon got on the subject of Sheridan’s Life – and his [Lord Lansdowne’s] tone confirmed what his letter from Paris had prepared me for – namely that neither he nor any of my Whig friends are quite pleased with my book’.⁷⁷ Lord Lansdowne outlined to Moore the Whigs’ principal objections to *Sheridan*:

first – the censure upon those who attended the funeral – secondly, what I have said, as to the surrender of principle by those Whigs who coalesced with Lord Grenville – and thirdly, the remark on the “overshadowing branches of the Whig Aristocracy” in my account of Canning’s political debut – which he thought was going out of my way to throw a reflection on the Whigs.⁷⁸

These, however, were the specifics; the Whig chagrin, as Moore saw it, was rooted in an attitude to history and historiography. He explained his position in a letter to the writer George Agar Ellis, an admirer of the book:

I shall not, however, I fear, find all my political friends in such a laudatory vein as you are – you are just of that standing to be able to view the events of which I treat historically; but some of those, who were themselves actors in the scene will, I fear (for I have no other

⁷⁵ This was Charles Lloyd, Bishop of Oxford, quoted in Machin, *The Catholic Question*, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 810.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 858.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 858.

reason to say so than my fears) take rather a less favourable view of my impartiality.⁷⁹

It was this impartiality that Moore valued above all other considerations, to the extent that he would risk alienating his political allies and social circles. Moore would always have great friends among the aristocracy, but since the disappointing episode involving Lord Moira and the Indian secretariat, he relied on no one but himself. Just as the 'Lines on the Death of Sheridan' of 1816 broke ranks definitively with the Prince, *Sheridan* was a mature declaration of intellectual independence from any party-political influence. Moore the dapper singing poet was re-inventing himself as a serious and single-minded thinker and writer, beholden to no one, especially when it came to Irish affairs. Lord Jeffrey understood this, and Moore was delighted to record in his *Journal* the following important conversation:

After breakfast, sitting with Jeffrey in his beautiful little Gothic study ... he told me, at much length his opinion of my Life of Sheridan – Thinks it a work of great importance to my fame – people, inclined to deprecate my talents, have always said – “yes – Moore can, it is true, write pretty songs & launch a smart epigram, but there is nothing solid in him” even of Captain Rock they said – “a lively, flashy work – but the style not fit for the subject” – “here, however, (added Jeffrey) is a convincing proof that you can think & reason solidly & manfully – & treat the gravest & most important subjects in a manner worthy of them. – I look upon the part of your book that related to Sheridan himself as comparatively worthless – it is for the historical and political views that I value it, and am, indeed, of the opinion that you have given us the only clear, fair & manly account of public transactions of the last fifty years that we possess.”⁸⁰

This was of course private conversation, but Jeffrey reiterated his sentiments in the *Edinburgh* where he was at pains to introduce Moore in a new phase:

It must confer, we think, a new character, and a still higher station than has yet been assigned him, among the literary ornaments of the age. Mr. Moore has hitherto been known for the least of his valuable talents. He has passed, we suspect, with most people, for little better than a mere poet – a man of glittering fancy and sweet verse – with boundless

⁷⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 543.

⁸⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 852.

stores of splendid images and glorious expressions, and infinite powers of gorgeous description or pungent satire. From all this it has been naturally concluded, that he must be deficient in sound judgment and practical sagacity – that he can have no rational views of men and business – no knowledge of affairs – no sober or deliberate opinions on grave questions of policy. [...] Those who know the individual must always have dissented, we believe, from this conclusion: - and it must also have been disputed by the comparatively small number who were as well acquainted with his prose-writings as with his poetry. But the matter, we apprehend, must now be conclusively settled by the appearance of the volume before us – which ... we do not hesitate to characterize as the best historical notice yet published of the events of our own time.⁸¹

The life of Sheridan was the subject *par excellence* for Moore's bid for intellectual esteem and political freedom. Sheridan had been a writer and a parliamentary maverick; Moore was a writer now casting himself as a maverick historian. Sheridan had paid the price for his independence, as the Plutarchan note at the end of the book maintains: '...had he been less consistent and disinterested in his public conduct, he might have commanded the means of being independent and respectable in private. He might have died a rich apostate, instead of closing a life of patriotism in beggary.'⁸² The inference is that Moore too was prepared to pay the price for his beliefs. And indeed many commentators had remarked upon the affinities between *Sheridan's* subject and author. For all their successes, both were outsiders to some degree, firstly as Irishmen, but most importantly as commoners – neither had the ancestral fortunes of so many of their peers; therefore to hold to unpopular ideals, as at times both did, was to risk serious financial hardship. Moore was also shrewd enough to recognise just how precarious were their respective positions in society. It is clear that in the following lines he is writing not just about Sheridan but also about himself:

⁸¹ *Edinburgh Review*, p. 1.

⁸² Moore, *Sheridan*, Vol. II, pp. 491 – 92.

He was just now, too, in the first enjoyment of ... the proud consciousness of having surmounted the disadvantages of birth and station, and placed himself on a level with the highest and noblest of the land. This footing in the society of the great he could only have attained by parliamentary eminence; – as a mere writer, with all his genius, he never would have been thus admitted *ad eundem* among them. Talents in literature or science, unassisted by the advantages of birth, may lead to association with the great, but rarely to equality; – it is a passport through the well-guarded frontier, but no title to naturalisation within. By him, who has not been born among them, this can only be achieved by politics. In that arena which they look upon as their own, the Legislature of the land, let a man of genius, like Sheridan, but assert his supremacy, – at once all these barriers of reserve and pride give way, and he takes, by right, a station at their side, which a Shakespeare or a Newton would but have enjoyed by courtesy.⁸³

Blackwood's Magazine, referring to these lines, commented that 'there is perhaps not another paragraph in his book so pregnant with meaning,' going on to say that 'Mr Moore might have gone farther – for he must often have observed – shall we venture to say felt? – that the author or the artist at the table of the great, is but a dainty, served up for the entertainment of the other arrogant guests ... so offensively does the spirit of the legislative *caste* reign at them.'⁸⁴

It is understandable therefore that Moore declined the offer of accommodation in Holland House while he worked on the book; the nature of some of the observations he was making forbade it. *Sheridan*, fattened with arguments for Catholic Emancipation and bristling with censure that ran the past and present political gamut, was a considerable critique of an entire echelon of society and their complicity in all manners of contemporary failings. Hoover H. Jordan summarizes the achievements of the work:

Moore defended Ireland and religious tolerance, peace among nations, and honesty of conduct; he attacked kings and aristocracies, tyranny and cruelty generally, jobbery and venality; he offended Tories, some Whigs, all foes of Ireland and Catholicism, and many aristocrats. He

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 72–73.

⁸⁴ *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. 19 (1825), p. 115.

exhibited bold opinions and a dashing disregard for the consequences of them.⁸⁵

It is no wonder that Lady Holland should have disapproved; nor is it any wonder that the book was such a triumph with the general populace. As we have seen, when Moore was first invited to write *Sheridan*, none of this could have been anticipated. However, the lives and interests of subject and author coincided to such a degree that the finished work could not have been other than a very personal project. *Sheridan* is this and more, for the world had changed enough during its lengthy and painful composition that an ostensibly backward looking biography also functions as prescriptive commentary on contemporary politics.

⁸⁵ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 404.

Chapter Three

Section 3: *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1831)*

Introduction

If *Sheridan* was coloured by the push for Catholic Emancipation, Moore's biography of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was similarly influenced by the aftermath of the measure. It was also, like its predecessor, a deeply political production, despite the claims of a letter written shortly after the passage of the bill to his publisher John Murray:

How peaceable you are all in town after this destructive Bill! I little thought I should ever live to see the *end* of my politics – but so it is – the Duke has had the merit of exorcising the devil of rebellion out of me & I am now (at your service) as loyal & well-behaved an author as you could desire. In this feeling, too, I rather think I am the representative of the great mass (or rather mass-*goers*) of my countrymen. All we wanted was fair treatment, and God forgive you & your Quarterly Reviewers who so long grudged it to us.¹

As Moore was on the same terms with politicians as with publishers, he followed the Murray letter with a similar one to Lord John Russell, the future Whig Prime Minister:

¹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 633 – 34. The jibe of the last line refers to Murray being the publisher of the *Quarterly Review*, a journal habitually indisposed to Moore and his politics.

It looks as if you all had not a single thing to think of at home or abroad now that the Paddies are made happy – and for a Paddy like me this is a very natural feeling so much so that I consider my own politics entirely at an end – nothing in the world can ever again conjure up a spirit in me like that which the Duke has now laid, and for anything of a secondary class – anything short of seven millions of people – it is beneath my notice.²

The public swagger of these letters concealed a private sorrow. As the bill's passage became imminent Anastasia Moore, her father's pet since her sister Barbara's death, took ill and eventually died barely a month before the legislation was passed.³ The death of Anastasia was a severe blow, as the valedictory lines of this portion of the *Journal* showed.⁴ Domestic life – invariable domestic tragedy – had a profound effect on Moore's writing life; financial insecurity necessitated an almost constant stream from his pen, thus the significant risk involved in turning to politically volatile subjects such as Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the 1798 rebellion should not be underestimated. Despite these pressures, as Moore moved into a more polemic phase in his writings, his politics became increasingly individualistic. Indeed, as we shall see, *Fitzgerald* marked the end of Moore's identification with any political party.

In 1830, however, Moore's literary and political reputation was at its height. He was listened to in high places. When it came to Ireland or Catholicism he was considered something of an expert and his opinions were widely canvassed, if not acted upon; in the immediate aftermath of the passage of Emancipation he happily name-dropped in his *Journal*: 'Received an invitation yesterday from Peel to dine

² Ibid., p. 635.

³ Moore wrote in the *Journal*: 'on the evening of the 5th. received a letter of Luttrell's to Scott (which my kind Bessy dispatched to me) announcing the *certainty* that Emancipation is to be recommended in the King's forthcoming speech – Could I ever have thought that this event would, under any circumstances, find me indifferent to it? – yet such is *almost* the case at present', Vol. III, pp. 1187 – 88.

⁴ Ibid., p. 1341: 'Here ends the year 1830, and most gladly do I take leave of this melancholy book, which I have never opened without fear of lighting upon those pages of it that record an event to me the most saddening of my whole life – the only event that I can look back upon as a real & irreparable misfortune – the loss of my sweet Anastasia.'

with him on the 14th – Rather amused, as I sat at breakfast, in looking up at my card-rack and seeing there not only this invitation from Peel but the names of the Lord Chancellor & the Speaker of the H. of C. among my visitors.’⁵ Already peerless as a lyricist, with the successes of *Sheridan* (1825) and, more particularly, of *Byron* (1830 – 31), Moore had also established a new reputation for himself as perhaps the leading biographer of the day. As a result, he was invited to write the lives of, among others, Henry Grattan, Lord Canning, Petrarch, as well as requests for hagiographies from assorted minor continental royals. Of these, a *Life of Canning* was perhaps the most attractive. George Canning (1770 – 1827), though a Tory, qualified for Moore’s admiration because of his liberalism, especially when it came to supporting subjugated peoples. From the Foreign Office he championed liberty and constitutionalism in Greece, Portugal and Spain, and he was particularly vocal in support of South American republics seceding from the Spanish empire. Needless to say, he was in favour of Catholic Emancipation.⁶

Moore was always careful that his friendships should never impinge – and never be seen to impinge – on his independence as a writer. For once, however, he made an exception, when relief to the family finances tipped the balance. Lord Grey, who had taken over as Prime Minister as Wellington had feared, had recently secured for Moore’s son Tom a place at the Charterhouse School. As Canning and Grey had clashed in the past, Moore felt he could not reconcile ‘my high opinion of him, and my gratitude to him for much kindness’ with the proposed life of his rival, and so the book was shelved, unwritten. On the other hand, had the book been begun before the Charterhouse connection was made, there may well have been a different outcome. As we shall see, once Moore started on a work publication was inevitable, regardless

⁵ Ibid., p. 1215.

⁶ Duncan Watts, *Tories, Conservatives and Unionists, 1815 – 1914* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), pp. 35 – 36.

of others' wishes. Again, the need to earn and to provide dictated this: Moore simply could not afford to spend time on a project if he could not turn it into income.

There is another reason why a *Life of Canning* was not the perfect project for Moore to turn his hand to next. Moore was prolific by any standards and he clearly wrote with one eye on the market, but even when engaged in what approaches hackwork – some of the squibs and satires in particular – he never wrote without believing in the utility of the piece; of the catchpenny *Tom Crib* (1819) he once wrote: 'I sometimes ask myself, why I write it? and the only answer I get is that I *flatter* myself it serves the cause of politics which I espouse &, at all events, it brings a little money without much trouble'.⁷ A *Life of Canning* would not have allowed Moore to indulge that cause of politics he was intent on espousing with increasing force: the cause of Ireland.

What, then, are we to make of his statements that, with the granting of Emancipation, his politics were at an end? Clearly, these lines were facetiously delivered, but there is also a more serious point to be made. Moore believed wholeheartedly in the probity of Catholic Emancipation. In this he participated in a powerful group dynamic, as Emancipation was, of course, the quintessential Whig cause. But after 1829, however, things changed, and, as we shall see, the passing of Emancipation marked the end of an era in Moore's politics, for it was the last time he could call for a radical change in government policy with either internal assurance or external support. Indeed, as the vexed questions of Repeal and Reform began to dominate the political scene, *Fitzgerald* revealed Moore's essentially late eighteenth-

⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 102.

century cast of mind.⁸ For this reason, *Fitzgerald* is the best record we have of Moore's complicated post-Emancipation disillusionment with party politics.

The idea for a book on Lord Edward Fitzgerald came to Moore by chance. Certainly, he was intent on writing another biography – not even with the *Melodies* or *Lalla Rookh* had public taste and his own abilities and aptitudes coincided so successfully – but a specifically *Irish* biography was clearly the ideal project. *Fitzgerald* was a gift subject in every sense, as he revealed in April 1830: ‘ – Forgot to mention that Henry de Roos has given me some papers of his family, consisting of letters from the Duke of Marlborough, Lord Coningsby &c. & c. to do with as I like – Called to-day upon Agar Ellis, who has got some of them to look over, and was glad to find that he thinks they may be turned to account – ’.⁹ Henry de Roos was a nephew of Lord Edward, and the cache of papers contained a good deal of documentation and private letters concerning his famous uncle's last days.

Moore knew that Lord Edward was a volatile subject, so before embarking on the project he set about testing the waters, contacting Fitzgerald's survivors.¹⁰ He was surprised and cheered by the goodwill he encountered. William Ogilvie, Lord Edward's stepfather, was ‘most promptly disposed to give me all the assistance in his power – Received from him some early letters of Lord Edward, & took down from his relation several particulars of his life – ’.¹¹ Lord and Lady Holland, who were also related to the rebel, and who, as we have seen, had taken offence at *Sheridan*, were equally well disposed. Told of the book, Lord Holland ‘highly approved of it & said

⁸ For an account of how late-eighteenth-century Patriotism evolved into early-nineteenth-century conservatism in the context of municipal politics, see Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civil Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660 – 1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1300.

¹⁰ Moore's sensitivity stemmed from the fact that only three years previously, in the ‘Irish Novels’ article in the *Edinburgh Review*, he had cautioned: ‘What is left for the Irish poet? – the Conquerors of his country he will not celebrate, and her Rebels he dare not, if he would’. In 1831, as a biographer, he took this risk.

¹¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1313.

he would give me some help in the work. [...] Took me to his rooms when we retired for the night, & read to me from the Account of his own Times which I have before mentioned a long character of Lord Edward as well as remarks on the Rebellion in which he engaged himself – all very clever & very bold – said he at present saw no objection to letting me have this for my work.’¹² This was a promising start to the project.

With this support Moore set about collecting his material in earnest. In August he travelled to Dublin where he interviewed, among others, Major Sirr, Lord Edward’s captor. Between receptions and tributes he found the time to discuss matters with the likes of Lady Morgan, Richard Lalor Shiel, and Sir Philip Crampton. He was keen to establish an accurate chronology of events, combing the borrowed files of the *Evening Post* for 1792 – 95. Minutiae fascinated him, and he revelled in mapping events through the streets he knew: ‘...must have been going, he thinks, to Moira House from Thomas St. – two ways by which he might have come, either Dirty Lane or Watling St – Sirr divided his forces, & posted himself, accompanied by Ryan & Emerson, in Watling St’.¹³ In Kildare he visited one of Lord Edward’s captains from 1798, and he also made the acquaintance of Lord Edward’s daughter, Lady Campbell. She was, as Lady Lansdowne had already intimated, ‘rather apprehensive as to the prudence of the projected Life.’ In particular, she was concerned about details Moore had alluded to in *Sheridan* concerning Lord Edward’s relations with Mrs Sheridan. Moore assured her that ‘my business was with his political Life, and that it should touch but very slightly, if at all, on those affairs of gallantry.’ Finally, she was won over when she heard of all the letters Moore had amassed, since she had

¹² Ibid., p. 1305.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1315.

never ‘seen a scrap of her father’s handwriting’ – and Moore was promptly invited to dinner.¹⁴

Everywhere the talk was of politics, but Moore made special efforts to keep abreast of developments in Irish history and historiography – he had already accepted to write his *History of Ireland* for Lardner’s *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* series.¹⁵ He spent a good deal of time at Milliken’s, the booksellers, and carefully noted the opinions he heard: Ferdinando Warner’s *The History of Ireland* (1770) was ‘the best’; there are some ‘curious things about Glamorgan’ in Thomas Birch’s 1747 work on the time of Charles I; the Catholic historians are ‘far the most trust-worthy’.¹⁶

This interest in history was convenient, for in order to assuage fears about the incendiary nature of *Fitzgerald*, Moore deliberately stressed its historical character. To Sir John Doyle, who had served with Fitzgerald in America, he wrote: ‘it appears to me that a sufficient time has elapsed since his death to take away any political objection there might have been hitherto in paying some tribute to his measure.’ And to stress the point he added, ‘Lady Campbell, Ogilvie, De Roos are all, to their utmost assisting me.’¹⁷

Despite Moore’s avowedly historical approach to the subject, however, contemporary events dramatically altered the attitudes of many who were helping him with the project. In autumn of 1830, shortly after Moore returned to Wiltshire, the Tory government led by Wellington fell, and for the first time since the ‘Ministry of All the Talents’ of 1807, the Whigs came into power. As a result, many of those same Whigs who had encouraged *Fitzgerald* while in opposition now performed a *volte-*

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1321.

¹⁵ See Chapter Five.

¹⁶ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1316.

¹⁷ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 699.

face, and turned against the work. Clearly, the issues of 1798 were not sufficiently historical for them.

Moore, Fitzgerald, and Reform

When the Whigs returned to power, it was the all-pervading concern about the question of parliamentary reform that turned them against Moore's new work, as a discussion of rebellion in any form now appeared particularly unwelcome. In *Britons*, Linda Colley conveys a sense of the atmosphere of political peril that was omnipresent in the period between November 1830, when Lord Grey took over, and June 1832, when the Reform Act eventually passed:

Lord Grey and his supporters were ... embarking on the first major reconstruction of the British representative system since Oliver Cromwell's rule in the 1650s, not, for most of the ruling elite, a reassuring precedent. The Whigs themselves had only been substantially committed to parliamentary reform since the early 1820s. They possessed minimal experience of government, and their critics inside and outside Parliament were numerous. What upheld them in the struggle was fear of revolution if they failed to act, a natural desire to consolidate their power, and – above all – their own brand of patriotism.¹⁸

The actual impact of the Reform Act has been the subject of a great deal of historiographical debate.¹⁹ Certainly it had its limitations – Karl Marx for one found it 'a series of the most extraordinary tricks, frauds, and juggles ... calculated not for increasing middle-class influence, but for the exclusion of Tory and the promotion of Whig patronage'²⁰ – but the general consensus seems to be with Colley when she remarks that the shortcomings of the Act are 'less striking than its considerable achievements and the length of time which the system it created endured.'²¹

¹⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 345.

¹⁹ See John A. Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818 – 1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 'Introduction: 1832 and All That', pp. 1 – 11.

²⁰ Phillips, *Great Reform Bill*, p. 24.

²¹ Colley, *Britons*, p. 349.

For such an important measure, Reform arrived without any fanfare. It had been an issue in the 1790s, but Napoleon contrived to make it virtually forgotten until the very end of the 1820s. According to Phillips, Reform only began to attract attention in the early part of 1830 when, in February, Lord John Russell, now Paymaster-General, introduced a bill to enfranchise Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds. As the ramifications of this and other measures became clear great anxieties and great expectations were suddenly aroused.²² Many thought that reform or revolution were the only possible futures; some, like Lord Wharncliffe, saw them as cause and effect, that England was ‘gravitating towards a revolution’ as a result of Reform. The Duke of Wellington declared morosely that ‘in a short time ... nothing will remain of England but the name and the soil’.²³ A doctor told Moore that Reform anxiety was increasing the number of his patients, and Mrs Lockhart told him that Sir Walter Scott’s recent illness was due to ‘worry and alarm at the new measure of Reform.’²⁴ Events in Ireland, to be dealt with below, also contributed significantly to the escalating sense of crisis in the upper strata of society.

As the likelihood of Reform increased, so did objections to Moore’s work, for Moore seemed to many to be justifying violent upheaval in the past when similar violence seemed to loom in the future. In the autumn of 1830 some rural areas of Kent exploded into violence and the conflagration spread in neighbouring Sussex, Hampshire, and Moore’s own Wiltshire – indeed, it was in Wiltshire that more threshing machinery was destroyed in these riots than in any other county. Right through the winter of 1830 there were confrontations between landlords and crowds

²² Phillips, *Great Reform Bill*, pp. 17 – 18.

²³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁴ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1392; p. 1394.

brandishing ‘crowbars, hammers, hatchets, pick-axes, and other bludgeons.’²⁵ To Lord Lansdowne Moore wrote: ‘I had some thoughts at first of going to town for the winter, not liking to encounter the “sovereignty of the people” in the disagreeable shape it has assumed down here – but the measures taken have, I think, produced a subsidence of the mischief & the landlords & parsons must only see that it does not return.’²⁶ The ‘measures’ Moore speaks of were drastic enough, and threatened the Whigs’ already tenuous popularity: 600 were imprisoned, 500 transported, and 19 were hanged.²⁷

At first, then, criticisms of *Fitzgerald* were only implied and isolated: ‘Barbara [Godfrey, Lady Donegal’s niece], in talking of my Lord Edward, said “Rather a ticklish work, just now, isn’t it?”’ But Moore clearly saw loose ranks serrying against him: ‘This evidently the echo of what she had heard from others’.²⁸ To Lady Morgan in Dublin he confided: ‘People express a little alarm about my ‘Life & Death of Lord Edward’, and I get hints from all sides that it would be prudent to defer its publication – but I shall not mind them.’²⁹ With the increasing violence censure soon became more direct, and in December 1830 Moore was obliged to defend his book and his intentions:

Talked of my Life of Lord Edward [with Lord Holland] & said he thought it was worth my while to consider whether I should publish it just now, in the present ticklish state of Ireland, as I could not (he said) “do justice to Edward” without entering into the question of resistance & this, as things were going on now all over the world, was rather a perilous topic – I owned that it *was* rather an unlucky moment for such a book, but that it was not of *my* choosing, as I had begun the work before any of this excitement had occurred, and it must take its chance –

²⁵ See Elie Halévy, *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 3: ‘The Triumph of Reform’ (1830 – 1841), trans. E.I. Watkin (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1961), p. 7.

²⁶ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 707.

²⁷ These statistics are from Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 491.

²⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1337.

²⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 710. As it happened, Lady Morgan too felt that postponement was the prudent option.

I must only endeavour to keep the tone of the book as cool & moderate as the nature of its subject would admit of.³⁰

The pressure on Moore seemed to increase daily, as his *Journal* records. Early in the new year the Duke of Leinster wrote, 'at the request of Lady Campbell [Lord Edward's daughter] to beg I would postpone the publication, and adding that he agrees with her as to the expediency of doing so –'. Three days later Lord Lansdowne, now Lord President, broached the subject with Moore, intimating with the utmost delicacy his 'anxious wishes on the subject.' In February Lady Holland 'attacked me on the subject of Lord Edward...' As Moore was beginning the second volume, Lord Russell took him aside and 'expressed his regret at my intention of publishing it, and said it seemed unkind and unfair to Lord Holland who was one of Lord Edward's family & who was so much against it'. A fortnight later Sir John Newport brought up the book, saying 'he was very angry with me about it – that such a book would do great mischief'.³¹

This is clear evidence that Moore's prose writings were believed to have considerable political weight. Since *Sheridan*, the prose had, as Lord Jeffrey noted, conferred upon Moore 'a still higher station' than that of 'a mere poet'. He was now in a position to deliver 'deliberate opinions on grave questions of policy'.³² His renown was such that, some time after the publication of *Fitzgerald*, the King of France wrote to him to correct a reference to the Orleans family: '...both he & Madame Adelaide express their desire that I would set the matter right in a future edition.'³³ Moreover, Moore's influence was felt to be especially strong in relation to restive Ireland: 'If the Tories had such a person as you on their side,' a Whig hostess

³⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1339.

³¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 1376; p. 1377; p. 1387; p. 1405; p. 1415. Sir John Newport (1756 – 1843), a staunch Whig and lifelong supporter of Catholic Emancipation, was MP for Waterford (1803 – 32).

³² [Francis Jeffrey], review of *Sheridan*, *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 45, no. 89 (December 1826), p. 1.

³³ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1440.

Moore was in two minds about Reform. When a rumour spread that he was an Anti-Reformer, he reacted angrily: 'Told him how this report had arisen from the stupidity of certain of my neighbours who seeing but *one* side of the question themselves (and that but dully) cannot understand the language of a man who happens to see *both*.'³⁸ It must be said that it was easy to misunderstand Moore's language on the issue. A rumour had also spread that he was a Radical and an Anti-Unionist, to which he countered: 'So far, too, from being a *Radical*, just now, I think that the Reform which the whole country is so blindly urging you to (and which must, at all hazards, come) is nothing more or less than the 'commencement de la fin', ... whatever transient satisfaction or calm it may produce'.³⁹ He felt that the bill gave too much too soon. He maintained that 'we have been in the *stream* of a Revolution for some years, and that the only question is whether the present measure of Reform will hasten or retard the stream'. Certainly, Moore was in favour of retarding the flow: 'the ministers *might* have satisfied the country by a far less dose of Reform than the present'.⁴⁰ These anti-revolutionary opinions are particularly interesting as Moore was at this same time working on a justification of the Irish rebellion of 1798. It will be shown below how assiduously he presented his arguments as historical concerns so as to discourage any comparisons with the present.

In his letters and journals Moore constantly qualified others' statements about his politics. At the same time, he revealed very little. Clearly, no one knew exactly where he stood, and because of who he was, there was a great deal of speculation on this issue. Observers found it difficult to reconcile his conservative leanings with the nature of his forthcoming publication. Eventually, he felt he had to 'explain how I felt upon the subject, and how it came that my opinions were thus misinterpreted.' As

³⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1431.

³⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 706.

⁴⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1399.

explanations go, it requires explanation itself, but since this represents an important juncture in Moore's relationship with mainstream politics, it is worth quoting at length:

The fact was that, from the very first, while I agreed with the Whigs in the *principle* of the measure, I also agreed with the Tories in their opinion as to its *consequences*. "How is it then," said he [Lord Lansdowne] "that you can *approve* of a measure that is likely to lead to mischievous consequences?" – "I do not," I answered, "look upon them to be mischievous, though certainly awful, and for us who may have to witness them, disagreeable; but the country will ultimately be all the better for the movement. [...] But even should this be a mere dream, the experiment has become, in the minds of most people, *necessary* and is, I am persuaded, about to be tried – the people have received an impulse (I might have added, received it in a great measure, from this Bill) and there never has yet been an instance known of a people stopping, in such a career, where they *ought* to stop. [...] Taking this view (whether right or wrong) of the present course of affairs, I certainly cannot help feeling grave at the prospect that is before us – Were I a young man, it would only bricken up the spirit of adventure within me, as I might then hope to outlive the storm and enjoy the advantage of the calm. But not being young and wishing the remainder of my course to continue on the same level as heretofore, I cannot bring myself to dance down these first steps of the precipice so gaily & sanguinely as I see others do."⁴¹

Moore confessed to being 'half asleep' while writing this 'amplification (or rather I fear botheration)' of his opinions on Reform, but the 'spirit & substance' remains. What it ultimately meant was a cooling of relations with his Whig friends now that they were in power. As a satirist, Moore's natural position was in opposition – he once commented that 'my verve fails me on the side of Power ... I am only good in attacks upon triumphant injustice.'⁴² To all intents and purposes he remained in opposition to many of the new policies. In March 1832 he went so far as to maintain that the cause of Liberty suffered more than it gained by the Whigs being in power:

Forced as they are when in office to suspend, if not relinquish, the principles they held while *out*, and the Tories (to do them justice) seldom allowing even exclusion to alter theirs, the consequence is that the Whig principle, unsupported either side, remains in abeyance till some good chance comes to turn its champions *out* again. Even a boon

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 1426.

⁴² Ibid., p. 1395.

such as the Whigs are now giving to the people would have come better – or at least, with more safety – from Tories.⁴³

This is because the Tories would have conceded the measure reluctantly, thus inspiring gratitude and fealty from the people. It is for this reason Moore spoke of the ‘grace & strength of the Emancipation Bill’ precisely because it ‘came from the hands of the Duke of Wellington.’⁴⁴ Moore was growing apart from his former friends because of his belief that change in society must be more harshly rationed and retarded in order to maintain law and order.

Of course, many long-standing Whigs held the same views, but if Moore did not turn from them over their opinions of the optimal pace of progress, he turned from them because of *Fitzgerald*. Because, as he maintained, *Fitzgerald* was an historical work, Moore could not accept its rejection on the grounds of contemporary politics. This, as we shall see, was disingenuous of Moore – *Fitzgerald* was clearly a product of its time. Moore declared the Whigs were acting hypocritically. He discounted Lady Holland’s attack on the book because of her self-serving motive: she feared ‘the injurious effect it might have with reference to my friends now in power, ... This was the whole secret – had they been *out*, instead of *in*, the work would have been most charmingly timed, in their eyes’.⁴⁵

Moore assumed the moral high ground over *Fitzgerald* and made a display of refusing to be coerced into any action that might be deemed hypocritical. When Lord Russell made known his objections to *Fitzgerald* Moore wrote the following in his journal:

... it made me feel I had got into a situation where I must either do injustice to myself by shrinking from my purpose or else annoy &

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1460.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1460. It is of course significant that Moore should attribute Catholic Emancipation exclusively to Wellington, and not at all to O’Connell. Moore’s disapproval of O’Connell’s methods will be discussed below.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 1387.

offend some of those I most regard by persevering in it – With respect to Lord Holland, I can hardly include *him* (with all my liking and admiration for him) among those who I should much consider upon this occasion – as his change of tone on the subject arises too evidently and glaringly from change of position to be much regarded or respected.⁴⁶

Barely a fortnight later Russell advised yet again against publication, to which Moore replied: ‘I should only damage my own character by what you wish me to do, without any good whatever resulting from it to other.’ Moore explained that he ‘could not now, in justice to myself, give it up or even defer the publication – people (in Ireland particularly) would think it was from my friends having come into power that I was influenced.’⁴⁷

Between *Fitzgerald* and the Reform Bill, then, Moore had, at least privately, disconnected himself from the ruling party. When the book was finally published this rift became public, as he bitterly commented:

What my Whig friends will think or say of the book, I know not nor (I must say) do not much care. The insight I got into the views & leanings of the party during my last visit to town, has taken away much of my respect for them, as a political body and changed my opinion of some as private men. [...] There are a few man among them who have the public weal, I believe, most sincerely at heart, and these are easily numbered – Lord Grey, Lord Althorp, Lord John Russell & Lord Lansdowne – but even these are carried headlong through a measure, of which in their hearts they must see the danger, by an impulse of party spirit which supersedes too much every other consideration – and as to the herd of their followers any few grains of patriotism there may be among them are so mixed up with an overflowing portion of *self* as to be diluted away to nothing.⁴⁸

More than ever, then, Moore was free to pursue his own political agenda, one that henceforth would be almost exclusively devoted to Irish affairs. Subsequent publications such as the *Travels* and the *History* were essentially of interest only to Hibernophiles and Hibernophobes. The biography of Lord Edward was Moore’s last

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 1405.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 1415.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1422.

work that could hope to attract a general readership, and if it was informed by attitudes to imminent parliamentary reform, these attitudes can only be fully appreciated when situated in the context of febrile Ireland and O'Connell's clamouring for Repeal.

Moore, *Fitzgerald*, and Repeal

After Emancipation Moore had every reason to hope that his politics were genuinely at an end. His aspirations for Ireland had been forged in his parents' house in Aungier Street in the 1790s. The Moores were intimates of the revolutionary scene – young Tom was once dandled on Napper Tandy's knee – but they did not go beyond passive support. Members of the United Irishmen may have been frequent visitors to the Moore home, but within the family violent revolution was not popular. Instead, a more gentlemanly kind of Enlightenment Patriotism was fostered, one that harked back to the days of the Irish Volunteers, 1782, and the policies of Grattan and Flood. Joep Leerssen has distinguished between the ideologies of these two movements, between Grattan and Tone, between '82 and '98. What Grattan aimed to achieve for Ireland, he says, was 'heteronomy rather than autonomy.' He continues: 'The Patriots' agenda invoked arguments of equity and just representation of interests rather than an essential national difference between Ireland and England. Their concern was the fair distribution of power within the state, rather than opting out of the state altogether.'⁴⁹ As a Trinity undergraduate, Moore moved in the circles of those who would opt out, but when it came to action he veered towards the old guard, publishing his first poems in the Patriot-oriented *Anthologia Hibernica*. When rebellion loomed in 1798 he took the advice of Robert Emmet and, clearly more influentially, that of his mother, to detach himself from events. In May, when the

⁴⁹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 20.

rebellion broke, Moore found himself suffering from some minor ailment that confined him to bed. In Trinity he had been questioned on his involvement with the revolutionaries, but as he had been privy to next to nothing he avoided expulsion.

Moore admired many of the men of '98, but for him their ideals had led to the gibbet. The ideals of the older Patriots, on the other hand, still rang true. After the Union, and right through the Napoleonic era, when the idea of Irish separation was unthinkable treasonous, Moore's conception of good government and political justice was based on Grattanite ideals, and came to revolve entirely around the Whig perennial of Catholic Emancipation. Once this measure was granted, Moore was vindicated and, in theory, could have removed himself from politics had not O'Connell, from the other side of the Irish Sea, insisted that while parliament was reforming the time was ripe for a repeal of the Union.

1843 was of course O'Connell's declared 'Repeal Year' and many historians reserve discussion of the measure until that period, but it was a live issue long before, and during Moore's fact-finding mission to Ireland in 1830 Repeal was everywhere the principle subject. As D.G. Boyce notes, 'O'Connell dismayed Irish Protestant Tories and vindicated all their worst fears when he followed up his Emancipation victory by demanding the repeal of the Union and the restoration of the Irish parliament.' If Tories were dismayed, so too were many Whigs – including Moore. Repeal at this juncture was, *pace* Boyce, 'a kind of leap in the dark.'⁵⁰ O'Connell used the issue strategically, 'trying, through whipping up a campaign for Repeal, to bring the whigs to more satisfactory terms on Irish issues – and, equally important in his eyes, in the filling of Irish offices.'⁵¹ 1830 was the year of the July Revolution in

⁵⁰ D.G. Boyce, *Nineteenth-Century Ireland: The Search for Stability* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), p. 61.

⁵¹ Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist: Daniel O'Connell, 1830 – 47* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 45.

France and the Belgian uprising against the Dutch. These events, coupled with the Emancipation victory and his massive popular support in Ireland, gave O'Connell a great deal of leverage in parliament. Crucially though, for O'Connell Repeal did not mean separation, and it seems highly unlikely that he believed in his own repeated claims that Repeal was imminent. When Peel accused O'Connell of intending to sever Ireland's links with Britain through his Repeal agitation, O'Connell of course denied this, and denied that 'Repeal implied either violence or repudiation of the crown.'⁵²

There were many who simply could not believe this, Moore among them. In September 1830 he discussed the matter with a Repealer: "After all" said I to him – "by Repeal of the Union you must mean in your hearts Separation" – "I do" he answered. "Then you really think that Ireland could exist as an independent state" – "I have not a doubt of it" he replied.'⁵³ Moore certainly doubted it, and he had even graver doubts as to the prudence of such a measure. He felt that with his calls for Repeal as such a delicate time, O'Connell had done 'more harm to the cause of liberty in Ireland than its real friends could repair within the next half century'.⁵⁴

When he met the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, a pro-Repeal organ, Moore outlined his principal objections to O'Connell's 'premature & most ill-managed' activity:

Time & the spirit rising in England, as well as all over Europe is fast ripening that general feeling of independence of which Ireland, at her own time may take advantage. The same principle is also in progress towards removing, without any effort of hers some of the worst grievances that weigh her down – The Church, for instance which would be just now fought for, against any such attack as O'Connell's [sic], with the whole Protestant force of the empire, would, if left to the natural operation of the Revolution principle, be put aside in due time without any difficulty – England herself leading the way by getting rid

⁵² Ibid., p. 39.

⁵³ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1327.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 1382.

of or at least lowering her own establishment. This was the great struggle for which the energies of Ireland ought to have been reserved – In assailing the enormous abuses of the Irish Establishment Catholics would have been joined by Dissenters, and in their pursuit of this common object that amalgamation would have taken place between them, that *nationalised* feeling, without which (as O’Connell’s [sic] failure has shown) it is in vain for Ireland to *think* of making head against England.⁵⁵

The sectarian nature of O’Connell’s politics appalled Moore, as did the anti-democratic sway he held over his co-religionists. He had spent thirty years in and around the corridors of power and he could see where O’Connell’s Repeal would lead. He startled two Irish visitors to home in Wiltshire with semi-apocalyptic predictions:

As if a Catholic House of Commons (which they would be sure to have out and out) would not instantly set about disposing of Church Property in the first place, and Absentee Property in the second; and as if England would stand quietly by, to see the work of spoliation go on – As if (were even *these* elements of strife out of the way) there would not constantly arise questions, on trade, foreign treaties, going to war &c. &c. on which the two legislatures like those of England & Ireland, would be certain to differ, and then away would go their slight link of connexion to the winds. What was so near happening in 1789, when the Parliament was entirely *Protestant*, could hardly fail to take place after a Repeal, when it would be, to all intents and purposes, Catholic. [...] Whether, even then, she would be able to remain free between England and France, to one or other of whom she seems destined to belong, is another awful question; but that she will be, at some time or other not very distant, the seat of war between both countries is but too probable.⁵⁶

Since Moore considered himself a gentleman, he did not particularly enjoy criticising O’Connell in his absence. So when they met one April morning in 1831, Moore was ‘glad to have an opportunity of repeating to himself all I had been saying to some of his followers lately’. According to his *Journal*, Moore did not tone down his arguments, referring plainly to the ‘mischief of his premature agitation’ and how it seemed expressly designed to ‘divide the upper classes & madden the lower’.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 1384.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 1501 – 02. The visitors were the Griffin brothers, one of whom was Gerald, author of *The Collegians* (1829), a book Moore greatly admired.

O'Connell listened intently but just as he was to answer they were interrupted and had to part company. Moore's last comment on the meeting was to note that when they discussed the 1798 rebellion, O'Connell 'showed wonderful ignorance of the events of that time.' Moore's golden age meant nothing to the Liberator, and this is emblematic of the gulf between their beliefs.⁵⁷

It appears, then, that Moore was not in favour of Repeal. Unfortunately, such appearances are deceptive. As with Reform, Moore was in two minds about Repeal. On the one hand, he found its consequences reprehensible; the confessional flavour of O'Connell's intent was unpalatable to his Enlightenment tastes. On the other hand, if 'the removal of the Irish parliament was ... a veritable guillotine to Irish Patriotism',⁵⁸ then its re-instatement was the first principle of that Patriotism. Too much had changed in the interim not to make this an anachronistic position, but Moore clung to it nonetheless:

As to my own poor poetical politics they are the same, God help them, as they have been ever since I can remember them. At the time of our Catholic triumph, I thought their task, like that of the 'tricking Ariel' was done & that I should have no more occasion for them. These late events, however, in the world have affected me, as they have other people, and have given a new shake to the bottle which has brought up all the Irish spirit (or sediment, if you please) again into ferment. The author of the Green Flag & Captain Rock would prove himself to have been but a firebrand of the moment *then* if he did not go on burning a little *now*. The union I always detested the very thought of, and though I resent most deeply the introduction of the question now, & under auspices that would disgrace a far better cause, I never could bring myself so far to sanction the principle, origin or mode of carrying that measure as to oppose myself to any steps taken for its repeal.⁵⁹

That Moore's politics were essentially unchanged since before the Union is a point that a number of *Fitzgerald's* reviewers remarked upon. Presented as an historical work, *Fitzgerald* is also a meditation on a set of political principles in action

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 1391.

⁵⁸ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 706 – 07.

in two moments, two countries, and two revolutions – one with pikes, the other with policies.

Fitzgerald and History

As we have seen, as contemporary events turned opinions against *Fitzgerald*, Moore was obliged to stress the purely historical nature of the work. In this, Moore acted disingenuously, tailoring his justifications to his various interlocutors. To Lord John Russell, whom he did not wish to upset, speaking of ‘the *danger* of such a work, in the present excited state of the public mind,’ Moore claimed: ‘Why, the subject has become historical – & I don’t see why it should be more dangerous than your own *Life of Lord Russell* [*Life of William Lord Russell* (1819), Lord John’s father] would be, if published now.’ To which Lord John replied ‘but too truly’ in saying, ‘Ah, that’s a quarrel that has been long made up – not so with the Irish question.’⁶⁰ Moore’s aside – ‘but too truly’ – indicates his awareness of *Fitzgerald*’s possible impact on Ireland and Irish affairs. To Lord Holland, whom he did not care about upsetting, he was less dissembling. Told he should postpone publication until Ireland was quiet, Moore maintained that that would be like waiting until the stream went by, like Horace’s Rusticus.⁶¹

Whatever about these private comments, Moore did not want to alienate his potential readers. Accordingly, the Preface makes every effort to divorce the subject of the book from the context of its publication:

In order to guard against the suspicion of having been influenced in my choice of the subject of this work by any view to its apt accordance with the political feeling of the day, I think it is right to state that the design of writing a *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* had been taken up by me some months before any of those events occurred which have again given to the whole face of Europe so revolutionary an aspect.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1416.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 1339.

Thus he anticipated in public the reaction he found in private, and pre-empted his critics by staking a claim for the work's independence as an historical document, 'lest the public should mistake my object, and consider as meant for the occasion what is intended as historical.'⁶²

In the Preface, Moore suggested that Ireland's situation in 1831 was 'essentially different from that in which the crisis commemorated in these pages found her.' With O'Connell growing daily more vociferous in parliament, many people in Britain believed Ireland was a land of barely-contained rebellion. In an article entitled 'Ireland and the Reform Bill' *Blackwood's Magazine* warned its readers that 'If the Bill should pass, it will be the first of a three-act political drama, of which the second act will be "Repeal of the Union," and the third, "Rebellion in Ireland."⁶³ Moore strenuously objected to this portrait of his country. The argument of *Captain Rock* was that Ireland would have been, and would be, a peaceful place if it were only accorded its due justice; it was misgovernment and bigotry that had engendered revolt at every turn. The same logic obtained in *Fitzgerald*, but now that those injustices were either gone or going, Moore assured his readers that 1798 could never happen again, and that Ireland would soon be grateful and gracious in its obeisance: 'Of the two great measures, Emancipation and Reform, the refusal of which was the cause of the conspiracy here recorded, one has already been granted, and with that free grace which adds lustre even to justice, while the other is now in triumphant progress towards the same noble and conciliatory result.' The new Whig government, he wrote (contradicting his private reservations), will only hasten this happy moment: '...instead of having to contend, as in former times, with rulers pledged against her interests by a system traditionally hostile to all liberal principles,

⁶² Thomas Moore, *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, 2 vols. (London, 1831); Vol. I, p. vii.

⁶³ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 30 (October 1831), p. 58.

my country now sees in the seats of authority men whose whole lives and opinions are a sufficient security that, under their influence, better counsels will prevail.⁶⁴

For Moore, then, *Fitzgerald* was far from treasonous; rather, it was a pragmatic warning from history. Ireland could yet be a contented constituent of the United Kingdom if the Whig government could remove the remaining inequalities: 'I shall willingly bear whatever odium may redound temporarily upon myself, should any warning or alarm which these volumes may convey, have even the remotest share in inducing the people of this country to consult, while there is yet time, their own peace and safety by applying prompt and healing remedies to the remaining grievances of Ireland.' This had to be done quickly because of O'Connell's agitation for Repeal, which was casting serious doubt on Moore's arguments that Ireland was not the same hoary hotbed it had always been. O'Connell was effectively ruining the conciliatory history lesson of *Fitzgerald* by making it appear to be a contemporary issue in period dress.

The critical response to *Fitzgerald* was dictated by the extent to which reviewers felt that it was or was not a purely historical work. The *Edinburgh Review*, as it always did, greeted Moore's latest work with pleasure. The review itself was by R.L. Sheil who was sympathetic both to the risks Moore had run and the intention of the work:

[H]e has exposed himself to the imputation of having, at a period of more than ordinary excitement, directed the eyes of his countrymen to a dismal and pernicious retrospect. Why, it may be observed, recall what it will not only be useless but dangerous to remember? [...] To these objections we cannot give any kind of assent. Thirty-three years make rebellion a part of history. We think, besides, that no mischievous consequences are to be apprehended in Ireland from the form in which this narrative appears.

⁶⁴ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, pp. viii – ix.

If *Fitzgerald* had any contemporary resonance, Sheil suggested, it was only as a monitory, ‘an example in the fatal policy pursued with regard to Ireland, which might deter them [the government] from the adoption of measures fitted to the production of similar results.’⁶⁵

The unpredictable *Westminster Review* agreed that the arguments of 1798 were no longer contemporary issues, and was equally well disposed to the work: ‘the time is not long gone by when any kind of apologetical or complacent advertence to such grounds and motives to action, as those which impelled Lord Edward Fitzgerald ... would have been received with all sorts of affected horror and disgust, if not with rancorous persecution.’ Thanks to ‘the recent tenor of the social progress’ this has changed: ‘With his usual nicety of tact Mr. Moore has seized the opportunity afforded by this reaction and correction of public feeling, to pay tribute to aristocratic liberality, and the graceful and grateful associations excited by the heroism of high birth, and exalted family pretensions.’⁶⁶

The Athenaeum also approved of Moore’s depiction of the rebel as an Enlightenment patriot whose ‘motives and feelings have been strangely misrepresented’: ‘The work is one of the most interesting we ever read; and its publication will do immense service to the nobility, whom the world generally are accustomed to look on in a false and artificial light: here they shine forth in all the glory of our common nature – examples as parents, children, brothers, husbands, wives, and friends. A dozen such volumes would corrupt the virtue of a republic!’⁶⁷

The Literary Gazette was less convinced, however, recognising the attractiveness of Lord Edward but shying away from the context in which he acted: ‘This book will, we presume, be read with very different feelings, as the readers may

⁶⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 54 (August – December 1831), p. 115; p. 116.

⁶⁶ *Westminster Review*, no. 31 (January 1832), p. 110.

⁶⁷ *The Athenaeum*, no. 196 (30 July 1831), p. 481; no. 197 (6 August 1831), p. 503.

happen to sympathise with or abhor the Irish Rebellion of 1798, of which its subject was one of the most interesting heroes. [...] We shall, therefore, keep as wide as possible from the debateable ground of politics – the most repulsive of all politics too, being Irish politics’.⁶⁸

Those who were most scathing of *Fitzgerald* saw the work as a direct intervention into contemporary affairs. For Robert Southey, who attacked it in the *Quarterly Review*, Moore’s historical arguments were deemed to be almost beside the point. He seemed to deliberately gloss over the central argument of the biography: ‘It is not necessary here to inquire into the historical causes which have entailed so much unhappiness upon the Irish people. The biographer of Lord Edward Fitzgerald has announced a history of Ireland, and whenever his history appears, we will meet him upon that ground.’ Pejoratively invoking *Captain Rock*, he criticised *Fitzgerald* as an irresponsible work in the current climate, a point ‘which Mr. Moore also may do well to reflect upon before he composes any more songs, or biographies, which have a tendency to *make the fun stir*. [...] Well will it be, if some generous and noble-minded youth, like Robert Emmet, or Lord Edward himself, be not seduced by it to take as an example what, if it were exhibited at all, ought to have been exhibited as a warning.’ Moore was practically accused of fomenting discord, as Southey warned that ‘dreadful will be the retrospect of those who have done all in their power to bring upon their country the miseries of rebellion and revolution!’⁶⁹

But the *Quarterly* was mild compared to the treatment Moore got from *Blackwood’s* and their reviewer, Samuel O’Sullivan, brother of *Captain Rock*’s ‘detector’, Mortimer O’Sullivan. For O’Sullivan, the historical value of *Fitzgerald* was non-existent; it was ‘a mere catchpenny’, written wholly to profit from the

⁶⁸ *The Literary Gazette*, no. 758 (30 July 1831), p. 481.

⁶⁹ *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 46 (November 1831 – January 1832), p. 240; p. 253; p. 263.

moment. As such, it was of a piece with all of Moore's recent writings, since they 'seem calculated, if not intended, to work against the institutions of the country, by encouraging insane political hallucinations.'⁷⁰

O'Sullivan referred disparagingly to Moore as 'the little Epicurean' and 'the little Tyrtaeus of Jacobinism' as he spluttered in disbelief at the heinous subject under review: 'The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald! What can have been his motive for undertaking such a work! Every thing of importance connected with that unhappy person may be summed up in one sentence; namely, that he lived a fomentor of, and died a victim to treason.' Clearly beneath contempt in itself, *Fitzgerald* was used as a vehicle for attacking the coming reforms: '*He* would have done, by means of the United Irishmen, what *they* are in progress of doing, by their reforming majorities in Parliament. He would have done, in opposition to the law, what they are doing, with a scrupulous observance indeed of the forms, but in open violation of the spirit, of the constitution.' The review went on to bemoan the fact that England was governed by a ministry of which Lord Edward would have approved and who have gone so far as to have adopted his policies, 'namely, the subversion of the church, the overthrow of the privileged orders, and the downfall of the monarchy. All these things must necessarily take place, if the Reform Bill should pass into a law.'⁷¹

That Lord Edward and the events of 1798 could have been successfully presented as wholly historical occurrences was never likely. Moore knew this when he interviewed the surviving players in Dublin in the late summer of 1830. For all the assurances of the Preface, at the close of the first volume he attested to the afterlife of 1798 in the minds of those who witnessed it – including himself:

⁷⁰ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 30 (October 1831), p. 631.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 640; p. 645; p. 631; p. 643.

Meanwhile affairs in Ireland were hurrying to their crisis; and events and scenes crowded past, in fearful succession, of which – if personal feelings may be allowed to mingle themselves with such a narrative, – so vivid is my own recollection, I could not trust myself to dwell upon them. Though then but a youth in college, and so many years have since gone by, the impression of horror and indignation which the acts of the government of that day left upon my mind is, I confess, at this moment, far too freshly alive to allow me the due calmness of a historian in speaking of them. Not only had I myself from early childhood, taken a passionate interest in that struggle which, however darkly it ended, began under the bright auspices of a Grattan, but among those young men whom, after my entrance into college, I looked up to with most admiration and regard, the same enthusiasm of national feeling prevailed. Some of them, too, at the time of terror and torture I am now speaking of, were found to have implicated themselves far more deeply in the popular league against power than I could ever have suspected; and these I was now doomed to see, in their several ways, victims, – victims of that very ardour of patriotism which had been one of the sources of my affection for them, and in which, through almost every step but the last, my sympathies had gone along with them.⁷²

It may appear that Moore was sabotaging his own project here by admitting the existence of contemporary resonances in *Fitzgerald*; however, the insistence on the work's historical nature was essentially a rhetorical flourish deemed necessary to free the work from the bitterly divisive calls for Reform and Repeal that coincided with its publication. Moore was never afraid of controversy, but as a gentleman biographer and man of his time he was averse to giving offence. For this reason, despite a superficial pretence to the contrary, Moore's conception and presentation of the character of Lord Edward was heavily influenced by the demands of the contemporary scene.

Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald

Lord Edward was a well-known figure before Moore's biography appeared. Both sides of his family – Fitzgerald and Lennox – were well connected in

⁷² Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, p. 300. Tellingly, despite alluding thus to an intimacy with some of the rebels, Moore refrains from discussing his own interrogation in college by the Lord Chancellor. Readers may have appreciated the first-hand knowledge of their author, but anything more than vicarious rebel action on his part would have over-tested their sympathies.

Hanoverian high society.⁷³ Moore had already contributed to Lord Edward's fame in his melody 'When He Who Adores Thee' and Lord Byron had once remarked that the rebel's life would make an excellent novel.⁷⁴ Some of the members of Lord Edward's family who disapproved of *Fitzgerald* did so because Moore had not adhered sufficiently to the family legend. Edward's sister Lucy complained that 'no justice is done to Him, although I grant to Mr. Moore all the wish to do Him justice.'⁷⁵ So too did Edward's daughter, Lady Pamela Campbell, who was two years old when her father died. Because Moore's version of the life clashed with the heroic conceptions she held, she snubbed the biographer, and refused to acknowledge the presentation copy he sent her.

But as far as the general public was concerned Moore's book was the definitive life of Lord Edward, and, partly due to the absence of other information, it became the template for most subsequent biographies. In 1904 Gerald Campbell introduced a biography of his ancestors by saying: 'As far as the chief actor is concerned, Thomas Moore's *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* has so completely covered the ground that there is scarcely room for any further work on the same lines. So far as I know, the only existing material for a consecutive record of Lord Edward's career is contained in such of his letters as were not destroyed during his lifetime, and the bulk of these were used by Moore.'⁷⁶

⁷³ See Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox, 1740 – 1832* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994).

⁷⁴ Stella Tillyard, *Citizen Lord: Edward Fitzgerald, 1763 – 1798* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), p. 312.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Gerald Campbell, *Edward and Pamela Fitzgerald* (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), p. 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. v. Most of the biographies and monographs published since 1831 pay some degree of tribute to Moore. In his *Impartial Enquiry respecting the Betrayal of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Robert Emmet* (Dublin, 1832), the author Joseph Hamilton prefaces his comments with a claim to 'yield to no man in respect for Mr. Moore.' Ida A. Taylor's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald 1763 – 1798* (London: Hutchinson, 1903), quotes Moore and lists *Fitzgerald* and *Sheridan* among her principal authorities. The Irish Library Series published a *Life and Times of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (Dublin: Irish Library Series, 1909) that was 'Abridged from the poet Moore's well-known work,' reducing the original six hundred pages to ninety-six. Patrick Byrne's *Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1955)

Stella Tillyard, as an expert on Fitzgerald's life, is in a position to itemise where and how Moore manipulated or diverged from the facts in his conception and presentation of Lord Edward. For instance, she scotches completely several anecdotes that came to Moore through Lady Campbell and Sir Francis Burdett. Both of these informants encouraged Moore to produce a romantic rather than a militant version of Lord Edward, and in many respects he was happy to oblige. Tillyard owns that 'Moore's biography has manifold virtues,' but she is dubious of his motives and his disinterestedness. She characterises him as 'a romantic nationalist and a romantic poet, inclined to play up chivalry and neglect politics, especially where the aristocracy was concerned.'⁷⁷ It has been sufficiently demonstrated that the first part of this sentence requires judicious qualification, while the latter half is simply untrue. As she rehabilitates Lord Edward as a political animal, Tillyard recycles the clichés of an apolitical Moore. As we have seen, however, the independence of Moore's endeavours at this period cannot be doubted. Nevertheless, Moore clearly had a romantic conception of his subject, remarking that as a young man he associated Lord Edward with 'all that was noble, patriotic and chivalrous.'⁷⁸ But it must be stressed that the de-militarised Lord Edward presented by Moore owes far more to Moore's own disposition and to the biographical protocols of the day than it does to any attempt to curry favour with the gentry.

Tillyard fairly points out that where there were differing versions of events it was always the more romantic version that Moore found most congenial. More than this, however, he also saw fit to suppress certain aspects of Lord Edward's militarism. During the research trip to Ireland in 1830, Moore met a former captain of Lord

draws on Moore but usually only quotes him directly to correct an inchoate inaccuracy. John Lindsey's *The Shining Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (London and New York: Rich and Cowan, 1949) draws equally heavily on Moore but fails to acknowledge this.

⁷⁷ Tillyard, *Citizen Lord*, p. 312.

⁷⁸ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, p. 306.

Edward's, a man called Garry, 'a fine, grave handsome & intelligent spoken old fellow, who showed, by the way in which he spoke of passing events, that the fire of 98 was not quite extinct in him – "It is of the kingdom of God (he said) I have now alone to think; but still, to the last moment in my life, it will always give me pleasure to hear of the downfall of despotism."'”⁷⁹ The next day he discussed military strategy with another *confrère* of Lord Edward, Judge Johnson of Leitrim, of whom Moore records: 'For his vote for the Union he was made a Judge, and now holds a pension from the Government of £1500 a year, which enables him to publish pamphlets in Paris recommending Separation from England.'⁸⁰ From the *Journal* it is evident that both of these men greatly impressed Moore, but neither of them were even alluded to in *Fitzgerald*, nor was there any reference to the discussions they had about Lord Edward's remarks upon drilling and the use of archers. Quite simply, they gave evidence of Lord Edward's keen military mind, and this was at odds with the version of Lord Edward intended for the book.

Why did Moore write this most influential account of Lord Edward in this way? What was the underlying logic of this carefully shaded portrait? Why did the subject and the form of the narrative seem to send consistently different messages? Part of the answer to these questions has been anticipated in both *Captain Rock* and *Sheridan*. It has been shown how both of those works, in their own ways, exhibit uneasy tensions between personal biography and wider historical concerns. *Fitzgerald* has similar tensions, but the ideological implications of each pull in fundamentally opposite directions.

From the outset, emphasis was laid on Lord Edward's 'simplicity', 'warm-heartedness' and 'charm', qualities that contrasted strikingly with the 'troubled course

⁷⁹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. III, p. 1325.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1326.

on which he afterwards entered.’⁸¹ He was an archetypal romantic who transcended a violent and tragic reality thanks to a surfeit of sensibility. That the portrayal of Lord Edward is angled throughout towards the poetic or symbolic can be discerned in the overtly metaphoric treatment of the Fitzgerald line in Irish history:

[I]n the annals of the Geraldines alone, – in the immediate consequences of the first landing of Maurice Fitzgerald in 1170, – the fierce struggles, through so many centuries, of the Desmonds and Kildares, by turns instruments and rebels to the cause of English ascendancy, – and, lastly, in the awful events connected with the death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald in 1798, – a complete history of the fatal policy of England towards Ireland, through a lapse of more than six centuries, may be found epitomised and illustrated.⁸²

This was very similar to the conceit of the fictional ‘Rock’ family, and Moore went some way towards suggesting a transhistorical Fitzgerald character when he chose not to end his book in June 1798, when Lord Edward died, but in October, when the Bill of Attainder received royal assent and the family name essentially ceased its progress through Irish history. Tellingly, that bill’s reversal in 1819 passed unmentioned.

For Tillyard, politics infused Lord Edward’s life; he was a confirmed regicide whose ‘aim was to sever the British connection with Ireland, and to found a pristine new republic in which man could renew himself.’⁸³ Not so for Moore; throughout the narrative Lord Edward was figuratively lobotomised, passively and irrationally steered by his heart’s whims: ‘Lord Edward’s excitable heart now found itself surprised into a passion which became afterwards such a source of pain and disappointment to him.’ In the young Lord Edward there was ‘something akin to the mood in which the great painter of human passions had described his youthful lover as indulging, when first brought upon the scene, before the strong and absorbing

⁸¹ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, p. xi.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 1 – 2.

⁸³ Tillyard, *Citizen Lord*, p. 316.

passion that was to have such influence over his destiny took possession of him.’⁸⁴ There is perhaps more than a little identification here between author and subject as it was the youthful Moore himself who would sign love-letters with the anagram of Romeo. Indeed, the possibility that Lord Edward could have been largely a figment of Moore’s imagination can be discerned in Lord Holland’s upbraiding of Moore for having ‘confounded the character of my present hero with my two former ones, Sheridan & Byron’.⁸⁵

Similarly, Lord Edward’s politicisation was not ascribed to the labours of a coruscating intellect but to the play of that same erratic heart. His conversion to republican egalitarianism was effected, ‘not, like Jefferson, after long and fastidious inquiry, but through the medium of a susceptible and wounded heart.’ In the spring of 1786 he fell in love with Lady Catherine Meade, an heiress and daughter of the first Earl of Clanwilliam. When he asked her father if he might make a proposal he was peremptorily dismissed – unsurprising given that he was a younger son with few prospects of advancement. Moore chose to interpret this event as a watershed in his subject’s inner life:

The repulse which his suit had met with from the father of his fair relative had, for its chief grounds, he knew, the inadequacy of his own means and prospects to the support of a wife and family. [...] The view ... of the pomps and luxuries of high life, as standing in the way of all simple and real happiness ... he observed here no other distinction between man and man other than such as nature herself, by the different apportionment of her gifts, had marked out.’⁸⁶

This romanticised version of Lord Edward – at once a ploy to defuse his rebellious politics and at the same time a version sensitive to the biographical protocols of the day – was maintained throughout the two volumes of the work. In

⁸⁴ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, p. 56; p. 55.

⁸⁵ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1416.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, pp. 98 – 99.

this way Moore attempted to defuse the treasonous or violent element of the narrative; if Fitzgerald's rebellion was without any ideological underpinnings then it can be seen as an unfortunate chance event, as opposed to the concerted response to a series of historical circumstances. It thus tended towards certain aspects of the use of history of the *Melodies*. Robert Welch has discussed the approach to the men of '98 in the *Melodies*: 'Their gestures are made heroic through retrospection; they are at a distance so their actions (about which Moore was so silent at the time) can be sentimentalised. They can be associated with other heroes and martyrs of Irish history and by this magical process their lives and actions can be transmuted out of the everyday into the timelessness of emotional mythology.'⁸⁷ The same process was employed in the depiction of Lord Edward in the biography where he was transformed into an almost archetypal Patriot, the logic of whose cause was less important than the generosity of his heart. Again referring to the *Melodies*, Seamus Deane identifies Moore's project of making 'a version of ancient Ireland accessible and acceptable to a contemporary Irish and English audience'⁸⁸; if 'recent Ireland' is substituted for 'ancient Ireland' an important theme of *Fitzgerald* is revealed. As O'Connell's Repeal movement exacerbated English anxieties about Ireland, Moore wanted to show his country as a place where a high-mindedness to which all could aspire, regardless of nationality or creed, had existed and had flourished before being crushed by the bigotry and self-interest that emanated from Westminster. Lord Edward – patriot, nobleman, and martyr – was conceived of as the ideal vehicle for this exercise in *rapprochement* in Anglo-Irish relations.

But this project was unsettled by *Fitzgerald's* other nature. As I have suggested, the book was at once a romantic biography of poetic Lord Edward and at

⁸⁷ Welch, *Irish Poetry*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Deane, 'Thomas Moore,' *Field Day Anthology*, Vol. I, p. 1053.

the same time a blow-by-blow partisan history of 1798 and the events leading to that crisis. As had happened in *Sheridan*, the subject of *Fitzgerald* disappears from the narrative for entire sections at a time. His absence is filled by lengthy and involved history lessons about Belfast's application for protection in 1776, the constitution of the Volunteers, the actors in the Irish parliament, the origins of the United Irishmen, and so on. Moore is conscious – occasionally apologetically so – of continually losing the thread of Lord Edward's life in the tracing of broader historical patterns: 'I shall, through the short remainder of my story, confine myself, as much as possible, to those public occurrences more immediately connected with Lord Edward himself, and with the part taken by him in that deep-laid and formidable conspiracy with which, about the period we have now reached, he, for the first time, connected himself'; 'I shall now proceed with the narrative I have been thus tempted to interrupt'; 'To return to poor Lord Edward...' ⁸⁹

Moore was not only intent on rehabilitating Ireland's reputation, he was also determined to educate his English audience about Ireland's history – *Captain Rock* and *Sheridan* had been his first attempts at this. Unfortunately this pedagogic intent clashed with the portrait of Lord Edward. If the politically *déraciné* Lord Edward served to draw Britain and Ireland closer together, the interpolated disquisitions on Irish history had the opposite effect, highlighting the gulf between the cultures – the guilt of the one and the grievances of the other. Ironically then, the more Moore tried to defuse *Fitzgerald* by emphasizing in his Preface and elsewhere the historical nature of the project, the stronger in fact the issue burned.

The origin of this difficulty goes beyond *Fitzgerald* and beyond Moore. The book was an intervention in the Irish Question – we have already seen the trepidation

⁸⁹ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. I, p. 265; p. 307; Vol. II, p. 86.

it caused among certain parliamentarians – and as such it was susceptible to some of the inherent paradoxes of that question. The problem for *Fitzgerald* was that when it addressed Irish history it automatically – for some – addressed the Irish present. Moore negotiated this bind as best he could; he sensed that it was the weight of Irish history that would bring about the changes he desired. If history were to become a genuine political tool it was vital that it should be packaged, controlled and understood in the right way – hence the pervasiveness of this sort of writing in the latter half of his career. The *History of Ireland* was an extension, albeit an idiosyncratic one, of this same impulse. But Irish history was not really as malleable as Moore had hoped, especially when it came to 1798 and the vexed question of justifying a rebellion.

Conclusion: Moore, *Fitzgerald*, and Rebellion

As we have seen, continental revolutions, the *bouleversement* of the Reform Act, and O'Connell's alarums and excursions made rebellion a very contemporary issue at the beginning of the 1830s. In order to vindicate or at least redeem Lord Edward, Moore had to justify the bloodshed of 1798. 'Of the right of the repressed to resist,' he began, 'few, in these days, would venture to express a doubt; – the monstrous doctrine of passive obedience having long since fallen into disrepute.'⁹⁰ This was a typically Whiggish pronouncement, bolstered too by Moore's current reading: Jefferson's memoirs and correspondence.⁹¹ But he faltered when it came to the specifics: 'To be able to fix however, with any precision, the point at which obedience may cease, and resistance to the undue stretches of authority begin, is a

⁹⁰ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 195.

⁹¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1380; p. 1385. On his way to Bermuda in 1801, Moore had met Jefferson but was too skittish and immature to be impressed; as the years passed he would speak of the president in increasingly admiring terms. According to White, the founding father, for his part, quoted lines from his favourite *Melodies* in a letter to his daughter written while on his deathbed in 1826 (*Tom Moore*, p. 47).

difficulty which must for ever leave vague and undirected the application of the principle.’⁹² Glossing over the many complexities of 1798, Moore depicted it as almost solely concerned with the struggle for Catholic Emancipation. Invoking Aristotle’s *Politics*, he wrote:

Had the philosophic politician carried his supposition still farther, and contemplated the possibility of a system in which the great majority of the people should not only be excluded from all weight and voice in the administration, but should be also disqualified, by statute, for the acquisition of property, insulted, as well as proscribed, for adherence to their faith, and in every walk of life, branded, as serfs and outcasts.⁹³

In *Fitzgerald* this system is portrayed as the first and last cause of the United Irish rebellion.

However, as Roy Foster has noted, the push for Emancipation in the mid-1790s was ‘a cause embraced as much from opportunism as from enlightenment’.⁹⁴ Similarly, the activity of the Irish *sans-culotte* elements was as much inspired by land hunger, increased taxes, and crisis in the local agrarian economy, notably the grain market. Very little of this is suggested in *Fitzgerald*; instead we have a rather poetic Lord Edward who is dedicated to institutionalising Catholic rights, even at the price of his own life. And since by 1831 Emancipation had been granted, Moore deemed Lord Edward’s revolt to have been justified: ‘the concession, late, but effectual, of those measures of Emancipation and Reform which it was the first object of Lord Edward and his brave associates to obtain, has set a seal upon the general justice of their cause which no power of courts or courtiers can ever do away.’⁹⁵ More important than this, however, was the suggestion that now that the cause of 1798 had been settled, there would be no more revolution in Ireland. Clearly, this sat ill with the supporters of

⁹² Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. II, p. 195.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 196 – 97.

⁹⁴ R.F. Foster, ed., *The Oxford History of Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 1992), p. 150.

⁹⁵ Moore, *Fitzgerald*, Vol. II, p. 200.

O'Connell's agitation in Ireland, as much of their political leverage came from the threat of incipient violence. Moore was convinced that the Irish cause could no longer be served by bloodshed and he denied the legitimacy of any future rebellion if it were to serve merely as a gestural blood sacrifice: 'It is plain, however, that, strong as may be the inherent justice of any cause, without some clear and rationally grounded probability of success, an appeal to arms in its behalf can, by no means, be justified.'⁹⁶ In 1831 then, Moore was a confirmed constitutionalist, and in the next section it will be shown how close this constitutionalism came to carrying him into parliament.

The *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* was a tension-filled book. There were tensions that came from without: it takes account, as Moore says, of 'every concession short of what I consider as compromising my own consistency and independence'⁹⁷ – these concessions stemmed from private considerations as well as the more public issues of Reform and Repeal. There was also an inherent tension in the subject matter: how to justify a rebellion and yet deny the forces it unleashed. Finally there was the tension between the portrayal of the 'citizen lord' and the actions he undertook. As such, *Fitzgerald* was an accurate barometer of the pressures exerted on Moore by the politics of the day.

Demonstrative of his politics at a particular moment, *Fitzgerald* also had the effect of changing Moore's subsequent political beliefs. The Whig reception – or lack of it – of the work greatly disappointed Moore; he found their hostility to be unacceptably hypocritical. This disaffection was compounded then by a push for Reform that he regretted. After the work had been published and the Whigs had begun exercising power, he felt moved to comment that the fate of Ireland seemed 'hopeless' under English government, 'whether of Whigs or Tories (the experiment

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 200.

⁹⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1406.

now having been tried thus with both, and the results of both being the same)'.⁹⁸ The nationalist element of his constitutional nationalism began to come to the fore and he retrospectively began to see *Fitzgerald* as an important part of this. When, in later years, O'Connell accused him of quiescence, Moore countered strongly:

With respect to what O'Connell says of my lukewarmness in the cause of Ireland, since the grant of Emancipation, he seems to have forgotten already the praises which he himself, under his own hand, bestowed upon me for the 'courage' of my 'Life of Lord Edward,' and the 'treasonous truths,' which he said that work contained. He little knew the extent of the courage he thus praised. It is easy to brave a *public*; but it was in defiance of the representations and requests of some of my own most valued friends that I published that justification of the men of '98 – the *ultimi Romanorum* of our country. He appears also to have forgotten my last work, which, though as regards the rest of the world theological, is in its bearings on the popular cause of Ireland deeply political, and so was viewed by enemies who understood me, as it appears, far better than O'Connell. No, I have little fear that the historian (if he ever meddles with such 'small deer' as myself) will say that, hitherto, at least, I have shown any apathy in the cause of Ireland.⁹⁹

The 'last work' referred to was the *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion*. Before examining why this book had a different meaning in Ireland than in the rest of the world, it is worth pausing to consider the reduced state of Moore's prospects at this time. The enlightened Patriot politics celebrated in *Fitzgerald* now appeared to be definitively of the past, and Moore's centrality in the affairs of his country seemed to be diminishing rapidly. Before him lay grief, ill health, insolvency and the great Sisyphean task of the *History of Ireland*: 'How far the chill of years, increasing hopelessness as to the result, and such instances of injustice to my humble efforts as O'Connell has here set the example of; how far these combined causes may palsy me in years to come, I know not. But we must only hope for the best.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 1501.

⁹⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, pp. 786 – 87.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 787.

These were poignant curtain lines, for in many respects *Fitzgerald* marked the beginning of the end of Moore as a reputable force in contemporary debates.

Chapter Four

Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion (1833)

The Right Honourable Thomas Moore, MP?

Moore's changing political allegiances informed the various conceptions, compositions, and receptions of all of the works dealt with so far, and this was no less true of the *Travels*. Indeed, the political nature of this book was particularly salient, as it followed a clear declaration of Moore's deep disaffection with both O'Connell's movement in Ireland and the Whigs' policies in England. Before turning to the *Travels* then, it is worth considering the origins and nature of this valedictory declaration.

Since the achievement of Emancipation Moore was repeatedly urged to stand for an Irish seat in the House of Commons. Whether in London, Dublin or Wiltshire, these suggestions usually came from Irish friends, not from members of the new Whig government. The Irishmen assured Moore that he would be a shoe-in were he to choose a constituency – Limerick, Cashel, Waterford and Louth were all mentioned.¹ Moore had famously been an intimate of Whig circles for so long that they assumed

¹ Also, Lords Cloncurry and Anglesea both thought Trinity College, Dublin was the ideal constituency, but the issue was never pushed (Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1500).

he could rely on governmental support. They were not privy to the cooling of relations that had taken place over *Fitzgerald*.

Fitzgerald and the debates and controversies over Reform distracted Moore from the idea of a seat, and he habitually dismissed the notion.² In private, however, he was tempted, admitting that, ‘it had always been one of the fondest objects of my ambition to sit in Parliament for Ireland.’³ It was 1832 before he entered into any serious consideration of the issue. He was consistently pressed on the question of his allegiances, and as a result, every letter and journal entry concerning the matter was a declaration of independence:

Received a letter from O’Connell, marked “confidential” on the subject of my election for Limerick, of which he says there would not be the slightest doubt were there not an impression entertained that from my friendship with Lord Lansdowne I should consider myself bound to follow his line of politics – Answered to say that if I *did* come into Parliament it would not be to follow the track of Lord Lansdowne or any other man’s politics, but to maintain Irish liberties & Irish interests at all risks and against all ministers.⁴

There is the impression here that O’Connell was deliberately provoking Moore so as to sound him out – if the poet were not in the pocket of the Whigs, how reliable an ally might he prove to be? Moore was disinclined to give O’Connell any satisfaction on this point: ‘I then added that having thus answered for myself as far as regarded *English* influence, I must say to him, who embodied in his own person all Irish influence, that of *him* also, in the event of my coming into Parliament I must

² In 1830 Moore recorded a conversation that occurred in a coach for London when he went unrecognised by two fellow travellers: ‘ – “I suppose” remarked the captain – “we shall have Tom Moore now coming into office” – “Oh no –” interrupted the Political Economist, in a tone that made me rather apprehensive of what was coming (the Benthamites being, to a man, deadly enemies of mine) and, though the Captain very good-naturedly put in a word for me, saying, “Why, he’s counted a very talented man in other ways than poetry,” I lost no time in putting an end to the topic by saying – “No – I don’t think it is at all likely” and started a fresh subject of conversation’, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 1336 – 37.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 1498.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1479.

keep myself equally independent, and in short, to repeat his own words in his letter “be bound to no *man* or *party whatever*.”⁵

This independence – undoubtedly deeply felt – seems also to have functioned as something of a smokescreen: ‘My whole past life ought to have been a sufficient security, I thought, for my independence in future, and so far from there being any chance of my becoming the nominee of Lord Lansdowne, I doubted very much whether (knowing the line I should take in Irish politics) he would be at all disposed to *give* me his interest in Limerick, and most certainly *I* should not be disposed to *ask* him for it.’⁶ Moore’s insistence on his independence ultimately prevented that independence from ever being tested in the Commons; it became a self-imposed barrier to the acceptance of a seat. The question remains: if Moore wanted to become an Irish MP, why did he not accept such a post? And if he genuinely did not want the job, why did he keep feigning interest?

The answers to these questions must lie in Moore’s concern about his reputation. This can be discerned in his handling of the concerted efforts made by the Limerick Union to entice him into becoming their Westminster representative. The request from this group, transmitted through Gerald Griffin, was made in mid-1832, and, rather than reply directly, Moore fudged an answer which merely vaunted the unpurchasable patriotism found in *Fitzgerald*: ‘They who have cast their eyes over the last work I published may accuse me of imprudence – violence – or even (as some in England do) of *treason*, but certainly not of any abatement of my zeal for Ireland & her liberties.’ This point, he continued, was of far greater importance than whether or not he should choose to stand for Limerick, and he signed off asking ‘that my letter

⁵ Ibid., pp. 1480.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 1481 – 82.

may not get into print.’⁷ One way or the other, Moore was not yet prepared to make a public declaration.

Unsurprisingly, this was a poor answer for the Limerick Union, and so they pressed him again. This time Moore chose to decline the offer, citing his parlous finances as the reason: ‘...the impossibility I feared there would be of my coming into Parliament at all, from my whole means of subsistence being dependent on my daily labour.’⁸ The Union persisted, informing Moore in October that a subscription had been started in order to buy him an estate worth £400 per year. Again Moore dithered, and his would-be constituents had to write yet again informing him that the negotiations for the estate could not proceed unless they were certain of his intentions. Once again, Moore declined the offer, or, more accurately, wriggled out of it:

[W]hile it removed the difficulty which I had alleged, on the score of want of means, it was attended with a difficulty of another kind still more insurmountable. To receive such a popular tribute *after* the performance of Parliamentary Service would, I said, be as honourable to him who accepted as to them who gave it – but to be thus rewarded *beforehand* ... was a situation in which neither for *their* sakes nor my *own* was it advisable that I should place myself.⁹

This was the last of the prevarications. In November 1832 he offered his final refusal, or the ‘Definitive answer to the Requisition,’ as he styled it in a subsequent letter, to the Limerick Union. For Moore, this letter represented a formal public declaration, as he ensured that it was reprinted in the Limerick papers and elsewhere. Indeed, he was so concerned about this statement that he wrote to the editor of the *Globe* in London to insist on corrections to their reprint of the piece. The letter itself was a rhetorical *tour-de-force* and is worth quoting at length:

⁷ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 751.

⁸ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1482.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1499. The Limerick Union made one final attempt in November when the Griffins travelled in person to Wiltshire, but to no avail.

But, Gentlemen, rarely in this life can so high and bright a position as that in which your offer now places me be enjoyed without its opposing shadow; and in proportion to the pleasure, the triumph, which I cannot but feel at this manifestation of your opinion, – placing as it does within my reach a post of honour which I have so often in the ambition of my young days sighed for, – in proportion to my deep and thorough sense of the distinction you would thus confer upon me, is the pain with which I am compelled reluctantly to declare that I cannot accept it. The truth, plainly told, is, that my circumstances render such an appropriation of my time impossible; not even for a single session could I devote myself to the duties of Parliament without incurring considerable embarrassment. To the labour of the day, in short, am I indebted for my daily support; and though it is by being content with this lot that I have been able to preserve that independence of mind which has now so honourably, and I may be allowed to boast in so many quarters, won for me the confidence of my fellow-countrymen, it is not the less an insuperable impediment to the acceptance of the high honour you offer me. [...] Were I obliged to choose which should be my direct paymaster, the Government or the People, I should say without hesitation the People; but I prefer holding on my free course, humble as it is, unpurchased by either: nor shall I the less continue, as far as my limited sphere of action extends, to devote such powers as God has gifted me with to that cause which has always been uppermost in my heart, which was my first inspiration and shall be my last, – the cause of Irish freedom.¹⁰

With this letter Moore committed himself to Ireland in a forceful manner without actually having to do anything new or different. His self-presentation as something like an Irish martyr was well received and many wrote to congratulate him on it. Essentially, the letter was a successful exercise in public relations, or reputation management. This was, after all, 1832, the year of the Great Reform Act, the measure which, with Repeal, O'Connell had made an intrinsic part of the campaign for Irish liberties. We have already seen how Moore's attitude to these measures was lukewarm at best. Certainly he wanted to be on what was popularly perceived as the Irish side in the debates, but he knew he could not bring himself to stand shoulder to shoulder with the likes of O'Connell. Were Moore to engage in politics from Westminster benches he would either have had to hypocritically support O'Connell

¹⁰ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 759.

and the Reforming Whigs, or else find himself siding publicly with those reactionary elements he had opposed for a lifetime. The letter to the Limerick Union, then, represents Moore's withdrawal from party politics with – crucially – the reputation earned by the *Melodies*, *Rock*, and *Fitzgerald* still intact.

In any case, politics of this sort had begun to exhaust him. To Samuel Rogers he wrote: 'I am really quite sick, by anticipation, at what I see is *coming*, among our Whig friends, and often sigh for a little breathing of conversation with the only man (meaning yourself) who can look abroad in politics, and get out of the little selfish, intriguing ferment of the moment.'¹¹ Moore was pessimistic about Ireland's future. Saying he disapproved of 'the present government' and its Irish legislation, he quickly added, 'When I say the *present* Government I must mean, I fear, *any* government, for where *they* fail, how can I hope that others will succeed?'¹² Moore was not about to risk his reputation or limited energies on dead-end party politics; instead he devoted himself to the broader, fertile ground of cultural politics where he felt his voice might still be profitably employed. In 1833 the lyricist, orientalist, satirist, quasi-novelist, biographer, and experimental historian re-invented himself once again, this time as a religious controversialist.

Moore and Religion

As he worked on the *Travels*, Moore referred to it as 'a favourite hobby'.¹³ This was an understatement. From *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) and the *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (1810) on the Veto question, through the *Sacred Songs* (first number, 1816), *The Loves of the Angels* (1823), and *Odes upon Cash, Corn, Catholics and Other Matters* (1828), to the longer prose works dealt with in this study, Moore consistently demonstrated a keen interest in ecclesiastical concerns, be

¹¹ Ibid., p. 762.

¹² Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1500.

¹³ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 742.

they spiritual or temporal. The *Travels of an Irish Gentleman* was the fullest expression of this interest and it benefits from a lifetime of theological speculation and reading.

In his own life, Moore's interest in religion did not translate into actual practice; it was a subject for philosophical speculation rather than a *Weltanschauung*. Moore had ceased attending mass as an undergraduate; he married a Protestant, and his children were brought up as Protestants; he occasionally attended service in Wiltshire (he would have gone more often, he said, if the singing had been better). Nonetheless, he counselled his sister Ellen against converting when she was tempted to do so. His reverence for Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Enlightenment *philosophes* never translated into Shelleyan atheism¹⁴; his reported last words, to his wife, were, 'Lean upon God, Bessy. Lean upon God.'¹⁵ But the Catholicism he professed throughout his life was an expression of solidarity with his Irish co-religionists, rather than a prescription for living.¹⁶

Unfortunately for Moore, with the rise of O'Connell and the increased politicisation of a Catholic bourgeoisie, this solidarity effectively collapsed after Emancipation. Supporters of that cause – Moore included – had long argued that the

¹⁴ Moore was not offended by the younger poet's unorthodox views, as he wrote to Mary Shelley: 'It is a shame that Shelley and I should never have met. I am sure I should have liked *him* whatever he might have thought of my ordinary ways of going on', *ibid.*, p. 846. There are many recorded instances of Shelley's esteem for Moore, not least in *Adonais* where he was apotheosised with Byron as a mourner for Keats.

¹⁵ Quoted in Strong, *The Minstrel Boy*, p. 295.

¹⁶ The best biographical examination of Moore's Catholicism is perhaps W.F.P. Stockley's 'The Religion of Thomas Moore', *Essays in Irish Biography* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1933), pp. 35 – 92. Stockley's essay is a reaction to those Catholic nationalists who would lay exclusive claim to Moore. He concludes his essay thus: '...facts are fairly against those who see only the Catholic side in Moore. Facts show that he was a good-hearted and probably well-meaning man; that he was of that early nineteenth century superficial school of Liberalism; that he had its illogical terror of dogmatic theology, while accepting Theism; that in Moore there was also emotional piety, acute artistic sensibility, and a refusal, or an incapacity, to push theological premises to personally responsible conclusions', pp. 90 – 91. See also Daniel Ambrose: 'Thomas Moore: the Religion in Which He Died,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol. 15 (1895), pp. 18 – 26; N. Walsh, 'A Reminiscence of the Poet Moore,' *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 32 (1904), pp. 687 – 92; John Hennig, 'Thomas Moore As Theologian', *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 75 (1947), pp. 114 – 24; Beda Herbert, 'Thomas Moore, Apologist', *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 80 (1952), pp. 48 – 52.

passage of this measure would effectively remove the Catholic question from Irish politics. We have seen this in various guises at the core of *Rock*, *Sheridan*, and *Fitzgerald*. To the chagrin of many, O'Connell demonstrated the unlikelihood of any Catholic quiescence. Instead, he essentially rode roughshod over Protestant sympathies and sensibilities by identifying Reform with Repeal and vice versa. As Jacqueline Hill notes, 'the subsequent loss of much Protestant support for reform during the 1830s meant that post-Emancipation Irish politics became more, rather than less, divided on sectarian lines.'¹⁷ The eventual passage of Reform actually exacerbated this, serving to demarcate particular boroughs along lines of sectarian political allegiances. As a result, popular Protestantism assumed an increasingly defensive psychology and evolved into 'a coherent force in urban politics.'¹⁸ Political identification had by now evolved into something openly confessional. On the Protestant side of the equation sustenance as well as inspiration was drawn from the activity of evangelical groups working for the 'Second Reformation.'

As Roy Foster remarks, the early nineteenth century was a boom-time for Protestant evangelicalism, 'epitomized by the Hibernian Bible Society (1806), the Religious Tract and Book Society (1810), and the countless smaller organizations gathered under the umbrella of the Irish Evangelical Society.'¹⁹ The so-called 'Second Reformation' really took off in the 1820s: the Religious Tract and Book society claimed to have distributed over a million tracts between 1819 and 1833.²⁰

¹⁷ Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists*, p. 283.

¹⁸ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600 – 1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 302.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

²⁰ The best account of the 'Second Reformation,' its background, and its principal personalities is Desmond Bowen's *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland 1800 - 1870*, particularly the first four chapters. For a specifically Catholic view of the time, see Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), especially Chapter 6, 'The Waning of 'Old Ireland''. See also Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists*, especially Chapter 13, 'The Ancien Régime Defended, 1822 – 1832.'

Moore was of course alert to this phenomenon, lampooning its activists as early as 1824 in *Captain Rock*.²¹

In *Captain Rock* it is the converter who is converted. Having read the Captain's manuscript, the missionary believes that 'it is the Rulers, not the People of Ireland, who require to be instructed and converted.' He returns to England with the idea that a 'new mission should forthwith be instituted, for the express purpose of enlightening certain Dignitaries both of Church and State. [...] The Ladies listened to my proposal with apparent interest, but no steps have, as yet, been taken on the subject...' ²² In 1824 Moore was in a position to be so sanguine. He himself was at the height of his powers and popularity, while in Ireland the Catholic Association had injected new life into the campaign for Emancipation. In 1827 these evangelists were still figures of fun.²³ By 1833, when he responded to the 'Second Reformation' in the *Travels*, much had changed. His politics were outmoded; his parliamentary influence had all but evaporated; there was a new regime in power, and even as a writer he was increasingly more respected than admired. Moore was thus obliged to be more serious, and the *Travels*, for all its comic veneer, was a deeply serious work. Moreover, since Irish politics had become confessionally cleft as never before, the *Travels*, ostensibly a catalogue of abstruse theologising, was, at least in Ireland, an important part of a widely conducted debate. As Moore himself suggested, what was theological in the rest of the world was, in Ireland, tantamount to the latest news.

²¹ As noted in Chapter Two, when Moore travelled around the south of Ireland in 1823, he took careful note in his *Journal* of the 'spread of Deism among the people', Vol. II, p. 663; p. 664.

²² Moore, *Captain Rock*., p. xiii; p. xiv.

²³ In the *Edinburgh Review* article on Irish novels, Moore noted with approval a book 'in which the mischiefs produced among a people like the Irish, by the officiousness of Saints and Bible Missionaries is, with considerable ability and humour, exposed. Indeed, however excellent may be the intentions of those worthy disturbers of the peace, their evangelical labours have, as far as we can learn, produced nothing as yet, but what there is already an abundant crop of in Ireland, without their help – speechifying and discord', p. 364.

The Travels

In *Captain Rock* we have seen how Moore exploited the conventions of various established genres for his own *sui generis* production. Similarly, the *Travels* was Moore's satiric version of aspects of popular pious literature, such as Hannah More's *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), the title of which Moore deliberately echoed.²⁴ The satiric element of the *Travels*, however, is essentially confined to the few pages of the frame-story that appear erratically and with increasing rarity in the text; the remainder of the two volumes represent a more serious attempt to show that the doctrines and observances taught by the Catholics of the first ages were the same as those professed and practised by the Catholics of the present and therefore maintain the purest expression of Christian faith. The opening lines must count among Moore's best lines in prose:

It was on the evening of the 16th day of April, 1829, – the very day on which the memorable news reached Dublin of the Royal Assent having been given to the Catholic Relief Bill, – that, as I was sitting alone in my chambers, up two pair of stairs, Trinity College, being myself one of the everlasting “Seven Millions” thus liberated, I started suddenly, after a few moments' reverie, from my chair, and taking a stride across the room, as if to make trial of a pair of emancipated legs, exclaimed, “Thank God! I may now, if I like, turn Protestant.”²⁵

The narrator resolves to convert to Protestantism, but finds he must choose a particular branch: ‘I had ... little other notion of Protestants than as a set of gentlemanlike heretics, somewhat scanty in creed, but in all things else rich and prosperous, and governing Ireland, according to their will and pleasure, by right of some certain Thirty-nine Articles, of which I had not yet clearly ascertained whether

²⁴ In one of his articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, Moore poked fun at this work: ‘Mrs Hannah More is said to have surprised many young men into religious principles, who never thought of gaining any more from her than a few hints for their matrimonial speculations’, Vol. 40, no. 79 (March 1824), p. 161.

²⁵ Moore, *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion, with Notes and Illustrations, by the Editor of “Captain Rock’s Memoirs”, In Two Volumes* (London, 1833); Vol. I, pp. 1 – 2.

they were Articles of War or of Religion.’²⁶ In order to chose the ‘Protestantism of the best and most approved description,’²⁷ the narrator embarks on a scholarly examination of religious texts from the time of St. Paul, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, Origen, and others. This study comprises the entire first volume of the *Travels*.

The conceit of *Captain Rock* is re-used here. Intending to convert himself to Protestantism by studying these texts, the narrator’s reading serves only to convince him of the case for Catholicism.²⁸ Those ‘Popish abominations, to wit, Transubstantiation, Relics, Fasting, Purgatory, Invocation of Saints, &c. &c.’²⁹ to which he had bade ‘a glad and ... eternal adieu’, he finds justified in his catalogue of ancient documents: ‘I found myself forced to confess, that the Popery of the nineteenth century differs in no respect from the Christianity of the third and fourth.’³⁰ Moreover, whenever he finds what appear to be the antecedents of contemporary Protestantism, it is ‘among the heterodox and schismatic’: ‘In short, I discovered ... that, in some of their leading doctrines, *the Gnostics were essentially and radically Protestant*.’³¹

By the beginning of the second volume, the narrator is in a position to declare that ‘there is not a single one of those doctrines or observances, now rejected by the Protestants, as Popish, that was not professed and practised, on the joint authority of the Scriptures and Tradition, by the whole Church of Christ, through the four first

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 2 – 3.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁸ Beda Herbert has remarked upon how this coincides exactly with the experience of John Henry Newman and the first stirrings of the Oxford, or Tractarian, Movement, whose *Tracts for the Times* began publication in 1833. Newman, like Moore’s ‘gentleman’, re-examined the texts of the Church Fathers as a basis for strengthening the Anglican position. His reading brought him to the conviction that the ancient Church most resembled the Church of Rome. This led to his ultimate conversion. See Beda Herbert, ‘Thomas Moore, Apologist,’ *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 80 (1952), pp. 48 – 52. For an account of the Tractarians, see R.W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years, 1833 – 1845* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²⁹ Moore, *Travels*, Vol. I, p. 12.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

³¹ Ibid., p. 287; p. 270.

ages.’³² But the gentleman remains undeterred in his decision to convert, and he finally reveals his motivation. A landlord – ‘one of our most considerable absentees’ – owns an estate near to the narrator’s family home. An agent, who lives with ‘a rather elderly maiden sister’, runs this estate.³³ They are of course Protestants, ‘her case being of that species called the Evangelical, or Vital.’ She frequently proposes walks along the banks of the river to the narrator, ‘for the charitable purpose of conversing with me upon religious subjects.’³⁴ But the narrator cannot help observing that, ‘in proportion as I approached the marriageable time of life, and as she herself receded from it, a more tender tone of interest began to diffuse itself through her manner,’ to the extent that, ‘her religious discourses came to be so “rosed over” with sentiment, that never before were Cupid and Calvin so indistinguishable from each other.’³⁵ It transpires that she can secure him a sinecure in the rectory of a place called Ballymudragget: ‘it depended but upon myself, should the Rector die tomorrow, to embrace Protestantism, and her, and Ballymudragget together!’³⁶

This is comical, but there is a more serious criticism also at work. Moore was here attacking what he saw as the dubious methods of the evangelicals. He poured scorn on ‘the utter failure of a late saintly farce, called the Second Irish Reformation,’ and was withering on ‘the parade made about a few scores of hungry Papists, who consented to become Protestants on the same terms on which Mungo consents to tell the truth, “What you give me, Massa?”’³⁷ While the ‘gentleman’ was motivated by avarice, Moore suggested that the average Irish proselyte was forced into conversion by abject poverty.

³² Ibid., Vol. II, p. 3.

³³ Ibid., p. 6,

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 7 – 8.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 8 – 9.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 15 – 16.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 31 – 32. ‘Mungo’ was a black slave in *The Padlock* (1768) by Charles Dibdin, and libretto by Isaac Bickerstaff (Dowden’s note, *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 121, n. 5).

Where the first volume is a defence of Catholicism, the second is essentially an attack on the various sects of Protestantism, especially those of the time of the Reformation – the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Bucer, Melancthon, and others.³⁸ At the behest of his elderly paramour, the narrator travels to Germany to drink of the source of Protestantism. Unfortunately, that source appears to be a strong beer from Eimbeck, ‘which was counted so orthodox a drink among the German Reformers, and over flagons of which most of their new plan of Christianity was settled.’³⁹ The subsequent two hundred pages consist of highly involved lucubrations examining the tenets of various odd and minor sects.

Eventually Moore returns to his framing narrative device and the ‘gentleman’ returns to Ireland: ‘On the 23d of April, 1830, – completing just a year and a week from the date of that memorable evening, when, in my chambers, up two pair of stairs, Trinity College, I declared so emphatically, “I *will* be a Protestant,” – I found myself once more safe landed, on Irish ground, and, I need hardly add, a far better and honester Catholic than when I left it.’ The book closes with: ‘Hail, then, to thee, thou one and only true church, which art alone the way of life, and in whose tabernacle alone there is shelter from all this confusion of tongues.’⁴⁰

The *Travels*, then, is unambiguous. But what are we to make of the ever-temperate Moore publishing such a divisive work at this juncture? Firstly, it needs to be said that, for all his ecumenism and tolerance, Moore stood by the argument of the *Travels*:

³⁸ Aspects of this section had been rehearsed in an article (in collaboration with his friend and neighbour R.H. Brabant) in the *Edinburgh Review*, ‘State of Protestantism in Germany’, Vol. 54 (September 1831), pp. 238 – 55.

³⁹ Moore, *Travels*, Vol. II, p. 93. The ‘Irish gentleman’ is hardly a model pupil himself. When his course of lectures at Göttingen is due to begin, he finds himself ‘rather indisposed, (no doubt, in consequence of the Lutheran beer on which I had ventured)’, p. 99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319; p. 343. There are thirty-four pages of notes appended to the first volume and nine to the second.

All that I have said in that book of the superiority of the Roman Catholic religion over the Protestant in point of antiquity, authority and consistency, I most firmly and conscientiously believe – being convinced that the latter faith is but a departure and schism widening more and more every day, from the system of Christianity professed by those who ought to know most about the matter, – namely, the earliest Christians. *Thus* far, my views agree with those of my hero, and I was induced to put them so strongly upon record from the disgust I feel & have ever felt at the arrogance with which most Protestant Parsons assume to themselves & their followers the credit of being the only true Christians, and the insolence with which weekly, from their pulpits they denounce all Catholics as idolaters, and Antichrist.⁴¹

The bitterness expressed here needs to be understood in the light of Moore's disappointments over Reform and Repeal as well as his reaction to the evangelical crusade that was at work in Ireland. The *Travels* represent the work of a man to whom politics and diplomacy had become all but redundant and who no longer felt the compulsion to make his opinions palatable. But this is not to say that he was a spent force in politics. As he himself suggested, religious controversy in Ireland was simply politics by other means. Thus, as the *Travels* provided an intellectual defence for Catholics against the evangelists' arguments, it also offered resistance to the general political culture at Westminster. The *Travels* suggested that this resistance was needed because, despite Emancipation, Ireland was still being misruled. Indeed, the *Travels* goes so far as to suggest that Emancipation had a minimal effect and that power and security – satirically represented by the Ballymudragget rectory – were still firmly in the hands of an undeserving Protestant minority.

After all, in 1833 Ireland was still a fiercely subjugated land and the passage of Emancipation was looking more cosmetic than ever. In February of that year Moore's composition of the *Travels* was 'very much disturbed by this new Algerine

⁴¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1639.

Act of my friends, the Whigs, against Ireland – the Coercion Act.’⁴² This Act, introduced by the same Lord Stanley who had quoted from *Captain Rock* when in opposition, was a response to unrest in Ireland. It gave the Lord Lieutenant the power to prohibit any meeting that he considered dangerous to the peace and to suspend completely civil liberties during a period of public agitation. Militants were also threatened with deportation – a fate Moore referred to in his poem, ‘Paddy’s Metamorphosis.’ To Moore the act was ‘apostacy’ [sic], and it seemed to confirm his worst suspicions about Ireland’s future.⁴³ The Whigs appeared to be having an even more detrimental effect on Ireland than he had ever anticipated.

He discussed this state of affairs with O’Connell, who said: ‘I am now convinced that Repeal won’t do, and that it must be Separation.’ Moore replied that he had ‘always considered them identical questions,’ and that his great difficulty in espousing Repeal publicly – that is, in Parliament – would have been ‘the concealment (if I *could* have concealed) of the consciousness or rather conviction there is in my mind that one would be followed by the other as naturally and necessarily as night is by daylight.’⁴⁴ This, as we have seen, was what kept Moore out of Westminster: he did not agree with Repeal, but neither could his reputation afford to oppose it. The avenues of conventional politics were thus closed to him, and so, for all its recondite argument and abstruse learning, the *Travels* represented Moore’s idiosyncratic method of continuing to contribute to the cause of Irish Catholicism.

⁴² Ibid., p. 1517. The ‘Algerine Act’ Moore refers to was the name O’Connell gave to an earlier act prohibiting political meetings in Ireland (Dowden’s note, p. 1581, n. 3).

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1519. When, towards the end of 1833, the King suddenly turned the Whigs out of office, Moore opined that after four years of power, ‘more has been done to unsettle not merely institutions, but principles, than it will be in the power of many future generations to repair’, *ibid.*, p. 1639.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 1535.

Reactions to the *Travels*

For this contribution Moore was hailed in Ireland as the ‘Defender of the Faith’ and the ‘Father of the Hibernian Church.’⁴⁵ These reactions surprised Moore; during composition, he had repeatedly expressed doubts about the likelihood of the success of his ‘hobby’: ‘I have no idea whether it sells or not – I could ill afford the time I spent in writing it, and if I do not lose money as well as time by it, it is the utmost I expect. I had counted a good deal upon our fellow Catholics for the sale, though my publishers told me I must not expect much from that quarter.’⁴⁶ While not approaching the heights of *Lalla Rookh* or *Byron*, the *Travels* appears to have sold well. Certainly it had widespread influence. The *Dublin Review* observed that, ‘Priests held it in hand in the pulpits or on the altars of Ireland, and, Sunday after Sunday, delivered courses of instruction from it to their flocks, supplementing ‘Milner’s End of Controversy’ with an Irish layman’s ably put arguments.’⁴⁷ Given the nature of the *Travels*, reviews tended predictably towards extremes of eulogy or

⁴⁵ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 765.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 764. The *Travels* was an odd project, and its potential failure weighed on Moore. He recorded the following exchange with Lord Russell on the subject: ‘With respect to the question whether any one would read my book which I expressed some doubts of, he said “There’s no knowing – it may take *confoundedly*”’, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1535. Russell was right.

⁴⁷ *Dublin Review*, Vol. 84 (1879), p. 36. Moore received tributes from a number of Catholic prelates, ‘full of praise & surprize [sic] at my work,’ (*Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1552), including a letter from one Daniel Rock and a presentation copy of his *Hierurgia; or the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, 2 vols., (1833), *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1541.

excoriation.⁴⁸ But because Moore's name was so influential, a number of writers felt moved to respond at length.⁴⁹

A friend quoted a review of the *Travels* to Moore: 'These two little volumes will, we predict, be the parents of two thousand others.'⁵⁰ The exaggeration is pardonable because the sentiment was accurate: though on the wane creatively and socially, Moore was still capable of stirring controversy. An impressive response was the *Reply to the "Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion" in Six Letters*, by *Philaethes Cantabrigiensis* (1833). Lord Russell intimated that this was Edward Maltby, successively Bishop of Chichester and Durham. Moore was delighted; in all his controversies he had never deigned to respond to his critics, humorously maintaining that he would 'not condescend to reply to any one *under* a Bishop, but little thought I should *really* arrive at the honour & glory of having an Episcopal opponent.'⁵¹ Reprinted from the pages of the *British Magazine* as a 171-page pamphlet, this creaking response characterised Moore as 'the enemy of all

⁴⁸ Whether for or against Moore, reviews invariably made two points: first, wonder was expressed at Moore's learning; and second, the fame/notoriety of the author will ensure the influence of the book. The odd nature of the *Travels* kept it out of the pages of certain journals, such as the *Edinburgh Review* – despite Moore's note to the editor: 'It will not be in your power, I fear, to notice my Theology; – I flatter myself it would go against the grain with you to abuse me, and you could hardly do otherwise' (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 765). Reviews appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. 2 (1833), pp. 101 – 11; pp. 144 – 52; the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 103 (1833), pp. 147 – 49; the *Westminster Review*, Vol. 25 (1836), pp. 425 – 49; the *Monthly Review*, Vol. 2 (1833), pp. 59 – 78; the *British Magazine*, Vol. 3 (1833), pp. 690 – 91; the *Christian Examiner*, Vol. 2 (1833), pp. 364 – 69. For particularly favourable Irish comment, see also the *Dublin Review*, Vol. 10 (1841), pp. 429 – 50 (a review of Moore's *Collected Works*), and Vol. 32 (1879), pp. 323 – 68 (an article celebrating the centenary of Moore's birth).

⁴⁹ Those commentators who were antipathetic to Moore had good reason to fear his influence. His popularity in Britain and Ireland is well known, but there was also the sense that on Continental Europe – especially in Catholic countries – his was the voice of Ireland. According to John Hennig, the *Travels* are 'the first work of Anglo-Irish theological literature to be translated and discussed on the Continent', 'Thomas Moore as Theologian,' *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 75 (1947), pp. 116 – 17. The *Travels* appeared in German – *Wanderungen eines irländischen Edelmannes Zur Entdeckung einer Religion: Mit Noten und Erläuterungen* (1834) – French – *Voyage d'un jeune irlandais à la recherche d'une religion* (1835) and *Voyage d'un gentilhomme irlandais...* (1841) – and Italian – *Viaggi d'un gentiluomo irlandese in cerca di una religione con note e dichiarazioni di Tomasso Moore* (1850). This last volume is a 'Nuova versione italiana' so the *Travels* had been published at least once prior to this date. A German refutation also appeared, by the theologian George F. Rheinwald, *Travels of a Saxon Gentleman* (1835).

⁵⁰ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 764. Neither the friend nor the journal is identified.

⁵¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1596. As it happens, the author was not who Russell suspected. It was John Kaye (1783 – 1853), but, as he was the Bishop of Lincoln, the point stands.

restraints upon the actions or speech of men, the advocate of universal liberty – I had almost said universal licentiousness.’⁵² Moore of course did not reply to the *Reply*.

Another critical response was Joseph Blanco White’s *Second Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion; with Notes and Illustrations, not by the editor of “Captain Rock’s” Memoirs* (1833). White refuted Moore, but in such a bizarre manner that even Moore’s enemies could not warm to the book.⁵³ More successful was *A Letter from Ignoramus to the Irish Gentleman* (1834). This essay is, according to H.H. Jordan, ‘hard to summarize because of its delicacy of thought.’ The ‘ignoramus’ has been schooled by both Catholics and Anglicans and would like Moore to solve a problem for which he has ‘no talent, skill, learning, time, leisure’: were he a missionary, a Brahmin might sensibly advise him against converting others until Christians themselves had agreed on what Christianity is. Jordan suggests that, had Moore replied to this text, his response ‘might have held more interest than his Travels.’⁵⁴

Perhaps the most interesting response was Mortimer O’Sullivan’s speedy production of a 345-page book entitled *A Guide to an Irish Gentleman in His Search for a Religion* (1833). O’Sullivan, the author of *Captain Rock Detected*, was, as we have seen, an old adversary. His volume warned Moore to avoid ‘the shipwreck of his soul’ and to recognise the truths of Protestantism. Predictably for a man of his intelligence, he also took issue with Moore’s theological findings, but it was clear that

⁵² Quoted in Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 532.

⁵³ The bewildered *Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine* (Vol. 2, new series, 1833, p. 936) commented that, ‘we can scarcely venture to recommend a book in which the triumphant defeat of Mr. Moore’s petty band of patristical advocates for Popery is interwoven with speculations from which we shrink, opinions that we must condemn, and conclusions too rash and unmeasured to be admitted at any time without considerable consideration, and considerable abatement.’

⁵⁴ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, pp. 532 – 33.

his antipathy to Moore was also personal.⁵⁵ In a public speech in September 1835 he declared that Moore,

wrote as one who glories in the dark murders which disgrace his country – he wrote as one who teaches murderers to think lightly of crimes which he, their favoured poet, commemorates as if they were matters for sport or levity. [...] Safe from danger – affluent in all the enjoyments of domestic life, of public favour, of powerful friends – thus he writes of the afflictions and wrongs of a class of men like the Protestant clergy of the south and west of Ireland – thus he writes of men surrounded by brutal and pampered tormentors – thus he writes, whose words have, as he well knows, power to exasperate those remorseless enemies, and to point their fell passions towards unprotected victims.⁵⁶

O'Sullivan's anger stemmed from the irresponsible sway Moore appeared to hold over the Irish lower orders. This was typical of the *Dublin University Magazine's* attitude to Moore. Indeed, the *Guide to an Irish Gentleman* should be read in tandem with the *Dublin University Magazine's* review of the *Travels* – fittingly, the author of the article, R.J. McGhee, reviewed both works.⁵⁷ McGhee and O'Sullivan were colleagues as writers for the *Magazine*, and while their opinions of Moore and his *Travels* coincided, McGhee was in a position to be more direct in a review than O'Sullivan was in his *Guide*. The review is particularly important as it indicates the relationship between Moore and the Protestant establishment in Ireland. 1833 was the first year of the *Magazine* and, since so many Irish journals had floundered in the past, it was determined to stamp its authority. The popular Catholic-nationalist Moore was the ideal target to pillory. In many respects, then, the review of the *Travels* was a review of a career and a declaration of intent. The article began by addressing the *Travels*: 'Of all the impudent productions that have ever been intruded

⁵⁵ Moore chose not to respond directly to the *Guide*. Instead, he ridiculed O'Sullivan's conversion in *The Fudges in England* (1835) in which his critic appears as 'Mortimer O'Mulligan'.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Jones, *The Harp That Once* –, p. 305, from the *Morning Herald*, 18 September 1835.

⁵⁷ *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. II (July to December 1833), pp. 101 – 11; pp. 144 – 52; pp. 303 – 23 (review of O'Sullivan). For an account of McGhee's polemical career, see Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade*, pp. 113 – 17.

upon the patience of the public, we believe that none has ever yet appeared, which if it approximated, has exceeded “*the travels* [sic] *of an Irish Gentleman in search of a Religion*,” from the pen of Mr. Thomas Moore.’ But the article soon moved to a judgment of the whole career: ‘He spent the talent of his youth in effusions calculated to debauch and to destroy the human soul; and now he has employed the labours of his declining years in attempting to pour the poison of infidelity and superstition, into the only fountain of mercy, that heaven has given to redeem and save it.’⁵⁸ Both McGhee and O’Sullivan took umbrage at Moore’s decision to present the *Travels* as being ‘by the Editor of “*Captain Rock’s Memoirs*”’:

This is that well known title, under which the vast mass of nocturnal crimes, that have disgraced and ruined this unfortunate country, have been perpetrated. [...] Moore sits down to write the memoirs of Captain Rock, in which he vindicates and excuses this fictitious personage, and attributes all these crimes to the just vengeance of Popery, for the existence of the Protestant religion in Ireland. [...] Moore selects the authorship of this as the most pleasing and appropriate title under which he can now address them, when he steps forward to vindicate and defend their religion.⁵⁹

McGhee was right to insist on this connection between *Rock* and the *Travels*. None of the English reviews noticed that these two very different works are part of a single project. They represent an examination of cause and effect. According to Moore, the cause of Ireland’s chronic disloyalty had been the political application of Protestant superiority; the *Travels* attacked this issue upon its fundamental tenets. The effect of this policy towards Ireland had already been shown in *Captain Rock*: misrule based on penal oppression inspires insurrection and violence at every opportunity. Political equality for Catholics was the ultimate *desideratum* of both

⁵⁸ *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. II, p. 101. While Moore’s early, amorous verses are disapproved of, most of the censure is reserved for Moore’s prose, connected or unconnected with Ireland: ‘...the latest and most popular of his productions in prose, before he favoured the world with this edition of his “Travels” is scarcely less objectionable, in a religious and moral point of view, than the earliest exhibitions of his licentiousness in poetry – we allude to his *Life of Lord Byron*’ (p. 103).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 105 – 06.

works. But the crucial difference between them lay in their relationships to the passage of Catholic Emancipation. *Captain Rock's* inherent promise of quiescence if Emancipation became a reality was out-dated by the time of the *Travels*. As Moore recognised, thanks variously to the Repeal movement and the Second Reformation, Irish politics had by 1833 evolved into a confessionally riven activity. Disheartened by the contemporary political scene, he all but abandoned the ecumenical principles that had allowed him to be a fellow traveller of the Whigs for so long. The dedication of the *Travels* showed Moore equating Irish liberty exclusively with the cause of Catholicism:

To the People of Ireland
This Defence of their Ancient, National Faith
Is Inscribed By Their Devoted Servant,
The Editor of "Captain Rock's Memoirs."

The *Dublin University Magazine* was outraged by such presumptuousness:

Here we have O'Connell out-O'Connellled. He allows that there are a few poor Protestants out of the millions. But Moore does not allow that there is such a thing worth even mentioning. Who are the people of Ireland? "The Catholics – professors of the ancient national faith," saith Tommy. Are there no Protestants? "O, none worth speaking of; the Catholics alone are the people of Ireland." We just point this out as a specimen of the impudence and falsehood that characterises this work throughout.⁶⁰

Interestingly, part of the *Magazine's* animus seemed to stem from disappointment, a regret for what might have been. Certainly Moore's genius and attraction were amply attested to:

...if ever there was a man, in whose breast science, and literature, and a cordial, and generous reception from Protestants could have extinguished the fires of Popish superstition, that man was Thomas Moore; – the cultivated – the classical – the literary – the convivial – the refined – the witty companion – the constant associate of the nobles – of the literati of the day – the universal appendage at the table, the drawing-room, and the boudoir – telling his stories – singing his songs

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 107.

– the very beau ideal of literature – of anecdote – of poetry – of music.⁶¹

McGhee also quoted the conciliatory sentiments of a number of the *Melodies*:

‘Come send round the wine and leave points of belief,’ and,

Erin! thy silent tear shall never cease,
Erin! thy languid smile ne’er shall increase,
Till, like the rainbow’s light,
Thy various tints unite,
And form in heaven’s sight
One arch of peace!

McGhee, the *Dublin University Magazine*, and its constituency clearly adhered to these sentiments, and consequently felt betrayed when Moore neglected them in favour of pro-Catholic pronouncements. Of Emancipation McGhee wrote: ‘during the long struggle for this concession the whole aim of Roman Catholicism was to prove by every indirect and plausible argument, and where it could be done by every direct assurance, declaration, and oath, that their opinions and sentiments as to intolerance were totally changed.’ Moreover, ‘of all the Roman Catholics who laboured to produce this impression on the public mind, the first and foremost was Thomas Moore.’⁶² This was the Moore of the quoted verses. But to McGhee *et al* the prose works were of a different complexion. These texts gave the lie to the verses, and Moore was charged with having played ‘the sycophant and the liberal’ in order to dupe the establishment into the granting of a measure such as Emancipation. Once that was granted Moore could reveal his true colours in prose:

Here is the enlightened patriot – the pink of the march of the intellect of the 19th century, who scoffs at “the absurd decrees of old councils and popes,” ... when their dogmas and infernal decrees might impede Popish Emancipation. But then, when Popery has gained her object – then, when it is her time no longer to fawn and to impose – when she has grasped her power, and thinks it is the juncture to use it ... then

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶² Ibid., p. 107.

this little Jesuit stands forward and flings off the mask – the convivial lyre of Anacreon – the soothing lute of Orpheus – the paunch of the friar – the liberality of the patriot are all forgotten, and in the plenitude of Popish anathematisation he pronounces the doom of perdition on us all.⁶³

For the *Dublin University Magazine* and for the Protestant establishment as a whole, Moore's prose betrayed the promise of the *Irish Melodies* – the *Travels* representing the high point of this betrayal. To his detractors, Moore had essentially joined O'Connell's rowdy faction. Certainly Moore had now identified himself exclusively with the Catholic cause, but his was an idiosyncratic sort of allegiance, as the *Travels* was an idiosyncratic sort of book.

Conclusion

The *Travels*, for all its similarity to *Captain Rock*, is less successful than that work. The ironic framing narrative ranks with the best of Moore's prose, but it is all too infrequent, and the theological disquisitions that swell out the volumes are invariably tedious.⁶⁴ The unevenness that provides *Captain Rock* with so much of its vitality only serves to mar the *Travels* – though readers in 1833 appeared to have no such qualms about this problem.⁶⁵ Perhaps the work's chief value lies in its demarcation of the end of the conciliatory element in Moore's politics. In the political and cultural climate of 1833 the mental and emotional energy required for Moore's former diplomatic stance seemed like a poor investment. Distanced by the Whigs, and unimpressed by the opposition, Moore had – politically speaking – little to lose in

⁶³ Ibid., p. 111.

⁶⁴ 'Hard at work transcribing notes to swell out my First Volume, the Second having exceeded it in bulk by near fifty pages', *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1530.

⁶⁵ John Hennig compares its 'quaint interweaving between solid theological discussions with humorous fiction' with the works of Anton Guenther, an Austrian priest (*Irish Monthly*, Vol. 75 (1947), p. 119). Only the *London and Westminster Review* struck the modern note, commenting of the unevenness that, 'it has not one object but two ... half the book was by a poet, half by a priest; it is a mixture of the inspirations of Maynooth and Helicon.' But this is not a particularly successful mix; the one 'intended to produce conviction without a laugh, the other to raise a laugh without conviction', Vol. 3 (Vol. 25 of new series), no. 2 (April – July 1836), p. 429.

publishing the *Travels*. The usual voices would have been raised against him no matter how tempered his arguments were. On the other hand, when it came to Ireland and the Catholics, his reputation could only be enhanced by the work. In this sense, then, the *Travels* is a self-consciously populist appeal to the masses. For all its intellectualism, the work is a *cri-de-coeur*, fully aware of its own limitations: ‘Though my reason had been so fully, so abundantly convinced, was that worst source of error, “the blindness of the heart,” yet removed?’⁶⁶

A similar blindness of intent afflicted Moore’s last major work, the *History of Ireland*. Despite his best intentions, the *History* was always going to be a partisan project, but it remains to be seen why this was a partisanship in flux.

⁶⁶ Moore, *Travels*, Vol. II. In an important sense the *Travels* fails to be fully ‘populist’. It has what Jordan calls a ‘basic structural fault’: ‘Having dedicated it to the people of Ireland, he pleasantly imbeds the theological argument in a narrative structure, but the argument itself is too recondite for these same people of Ireland, hence the work does not coalesce’, *Bolt Upright*, p. 529. It is, however, populist in the sense of its influence, as the *Christian Examiner* noted: ‘it is a book that, though unread, will be lauded, and as we are informed it has had the honour of being quoted by a Protestant member of the House of Commons ... we shall not think a few pages thrown away in seeking to put our readers in the possession of enough to enable them to judge equally of its will and its power to do mischief’, Vol. 2 (1833), p. 421.

Chapter Five

History of Ireland (1835 – 46)

As we have seen, *Captain Rock*, the biographies of Sheridan and Fitzgerald, and the *Travels* functioned as partial histories of Ireland. It was no surprise then that Moore should subsequently attempt a general history of Ireland in a more conventional format. The *History of Ireland*, published in four volumes between 1835 and 1846, was Moore's last, longest, and most difficult production. It was also a comparative failure. This chapter attempts to account for this unprecedented failure by examining the *History* in a series of contexts. First, the immediate background to the commission of the work will be outlined. Second, the *History* will be considered with regard to the dominant modes of history-writing of Britain and France. Third, the work's negotiation of obstacles peculiar to the Irish context will be explored. Particular attention will be paid to a number of controversial issues that crystallised attitudes to Irish history in the period. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the shaping effect of Moore's domestic circumstances on the *History*.

Genesis of the *History*

Moore's writings, both his poetry and his prose, invariably coincided with the fashions of the marketplace. This was no less true of his *History of Ireland*, which,

though it eventually proved to be to no one's taste, was originally a response to the reading public's new appetite for encyclopaedias.

Encyclopaedia-style reference books dated from the time of Aristotle, but the Enlightenment success of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (28 volumes, 1751 – 1772) gave a new impetus to the form. In England a group of scholars was inspired to produce the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which was begun in 1768 and completed in one hundred instalments by 1771. A second edition soon followed, appearing between 1778 and 1783, this time including biographies. The *Britannica* style was the template for the profusion of encyclopaedias that followed in the nineteenth century. According to a history of the form, 'This was perhaps the most creative period in the history of English language encyclopedias, during which great strides forward were made in both the compilation of the works and their technical production.'¹

The new relative ease of production made encyclopaedias the form of choice in the drive to educate the masses – for example, the *Penny Magazine* and the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, both launched by the improving MP Baron Brougham (1778 – 1868), founder in 1825 of the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge'. As this type of self-education proved popular, it also began to prove profitable, and others, such as Dionysius Lardner, an eccentric polymath, were inspired to launch their own series.²

¹ S. Padraig Walsh, *Anglo-American General Encyclopedias, A Historical Bibliography, 1703 – 1967* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1968), p. x.

² Steam enthusiast, mathematician, and scientist, the Reverend Dionysius Lardner (1793 – 1859) was a well-known contributor to Irish intellectual life in the nineteenth century. A graduate of Trinity College, he had taken holy orders before extra-marital embarrassments precipitated a move to England. He lectured in science at the newly-founded London University and was elected to the Chair of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy in 1827. His combination of industry, ubiquity and eccentricity made him a soft target for satiric jibes from the likes of Francis Mahony (Fr Prout), Charles Dickens, and W.M. Thackeray, the latter styling him as 'a literary quack advertising his cyclopaedia at dinner-parties.' According to the *Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (1996), he was the father of Dion(ysius) Lardner Boucicault, for whom he acted as 'guardian' (p. 298). Although the *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* was regularly criticized, S. Padraig Walsh considers Lardner did 'an excellent editorial job', *Anglo-American Encyclopedias*, p. 17.

Taking its name from the small, handy-sized format of the volumes, Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* was an instant success – the encyclopaedia historian S. Padraig Walsh has described it as, 'One of the most remarkable encyclopedias ever published in the English language.'³ Lardner, general editor of the 133 volumes produced between 1829 and 1849, strove to commission the best authorities for contributions; he was, according to the title pages, '*Assisted by Eminent Literary and Scientific Men*'. Thomas Moore was his choice for a general history of Ireland.

The project was first mooted in 1829, when Moore was still working on his *Byron*. The Longmans, publishers of the venture, proposed that Moore and Sir Walter Scott should collaborate on a history of Ireland and Scotland, each of them writing a volume. Moore was to be offered £500 for the work. When he declined, they came back with a new offer: Moore and Scott would write a single volume each on Ireland and Scotland respectively, and the MP Sir James Mackintosh would produce three on England.⁴ The fee was also raised to £1000 for each volume. Moore agreed that if the others consented then he 'should be most proud to join them.'⁵

Despite this agreement, Moore published five other works before the first volume of the history appeared. Though he was referring to it as 'the long-promised Irish History' as early as 1832, it was not published until 1835.⁶ Neither Mackintosh nor Scott experienced any delay in their productions. Volume I of the *History of England* was published in 1830 and nine more followed.⁷ Scott dispatched *Scotland*

³ Walsh, *Anglo-American Encyclopedias*, p. 17.

⁴ For more on Sir James Mackintosh (1765 – 1832), see Patrick O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh: The Whig Cicero* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), and Mark Salber Phillips, 'James Mackintosh: The Historian as Reader', in *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740 – 1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 193 – 219.

⁵ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 623.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 742. The five other works were *Byron* (1830 – 31), *Fitzgerald* (1831), the *Travels* (1833), the tenth number of *Irish Melodies* (1834), and *The Fudge Family in England* (1835).

⁷ These histories were dangerous undertakings. Mackintosh wrote only the first three volumes of *England*. A publisher's advertisement explains that he had reached 'to the 211th page of the Third Volume of his 'History of England,' when literature and his country were deprived of him by his

in two volumes, in quick succession, in 1830 and 1831 respectively. The speed with which these histories were produced throws into relief the tardiness of Moore's first volume. By the time it was finished Moore's *History* had expanded to four volumes. The intervals between volumes had also increased: there were two years between the first and second volumes, three more before the next one in 1840, and finally six before the last instalment in 1846.

Three factors in particular explain these increasing delays. First, as Irish historiography was in its infancy, Moore could not benefit from an established model for the successful narration of Ireland's problematic historical experience. Rather, the *History* oscillates between the mutually antipathetic models of Britain and France. Compounding this difficulty was the second factor: the unresolved nature of many antiquarian arguments about the Irish past, in particular those concerning the nature and function of the round towers, the authenticity of Ireland's Milesian origins, and contemporary sectarian responses to the introduction of Christianity into the country. Moore's third problem was in many respects the most intractable: there were long stretches of the Irish past for which Moore had no information whatsoever, often because the relevant documents were only then in the slow process of being traced, catalogued, and published. Lastly, we shall see how domestic tragedies drained Moore's energy for dealing with these problems.

Moore's *History* and history-writing in Britain and France

As Stephen Bann has pointed out, to cover the emergence and development of historical-mindedness in nineteenth-century Britain and France would require 'a truly

lamented death'. Scott, working himself to exhaustion to pay off his creditors, died in 1832. Howard Mumford Jones has suggested that the *History of Ireland* was equally fatal, that because of it Moore 'was to kill himself in her [Ireland's] service as truly as did Emmet or Fitzgerald, except that death was merciful to them and came quickly, whereas in Moore's case it was to be protracted over interminable years' (*The Harp That Once* – , p. 306).

encyclopedic amalgamation of sources.’⁸ Nevertheless, in order to give a sense of the erratic nature of Moore’s *History* it is useful to outline some of the methods and philosophies that were in circulation in the period. Most important perhaps, in terms of the general context, was the work of G.W.F. Hegel (1770 – 1831), who delivered his influential *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in the period 1822 to 1831.⁹ Hegel’s teleological approach to history, in which successive phases of what he calls the Spirit, or *Geist*, cohere into a developmental sequence, has definite echoes in the work of some of the writers to whom I will refer, especially Michelet in France, Carlyle in Britain, and Davis in Ireland. However, as J.W. Burrow has commented of William Stubbs, ‘We may if we wish speak of this underlying metaphysic as Hegelian, provided that we recognise that in doing so we consult our own intellectual convenience rather than refer, so far as we know, to an immediate influence.’¹⁰

But if Hegel did not dominate questions of history in the early nineteenth century in Britain and France as he would in the twentieth century, there was nonetheless a widespread understanding that history could be written in a variety of ways and with a variety of political implications. The historical experience of both countries seemed to determine the actual mode of history-writing that should be employed. Ceri Crossley writes:

As the nineteenth century unfolded the English idea of progress, like the Whig interpretation of history, became identified by many with a belief in the inevitability of gradual improvement. In France, by the very nature of things, the idea of progress was more directly linked to

⁸ Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 3.

⁹ For analysis, see Shaun Gallagher, ed., *Hegel, History, and Interpretation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997). A more approachable and recent text is Joseph McCarney’s *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁰ J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 147.

political struggles for individual and collective freedom and to the seemingly inevitable oscillation between revolution and reaction.¹¹

The result, says Crossley, is that 'British history is reformist whereas French history is revolutionary.'¹² Taking these as the poles of historiography in the period, the Irish experience suggested a position somewhere between the two. Successive episodes of violence in Irish history – in particular 1798 – seemed to ally the country with the French experience. On the other hand, those who strived to align Ireland with the British experience deemed these eruptions aberrant and instead emphasised the continuity afforded by the historical connection with Britain.

Put in its simplest formulation then, these trajectories represented the dominant modes of history-writing available to Moore as he sat down to produce his *History of Ireland*. Essentially, he had the choice of following a broadly French model or a broadly British model.¹³ In the end he chose both, or, more accurately, he chose not to choose, and instead incorporated elements of both modes into the narrative. Indeed, Moore's insecurity about the project, based on a number of factors

¹¹ Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3. Crossley's view of British and French historiographies is corroborated by a number of authors. For the British tradition, see Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Bell, 1931); J.R. Hale, *The Evolution of British Historiography: From Bacon to Namier* (London: Macmillan, 1967); Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*; John Kenyon, *The History Men: The Historical Profession in England Since the Renaissance* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, 1993); Jeffrey Paul Von Arx, *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics and History in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Christopher Parker, *The English Idea of History from Coleridge to Collingwood* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000); Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740 – 1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For the French tradition, see Pim Den Boer, *History as a Profession: The Study of History in France, 1818 – 1914*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Bann (1984).

¹³ A vibrant historiographical tradition had also developed in Scotland, one that included Scott's Waverley Novels. See, for example, Gladys Bryson, 'Man's Past', *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 78 – 113; David Brown, *Walter Scott and The Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); James Anderson, *Sir Walter Scott and History, with other papers* (Edinburgh: The Edina Press, 1981); V. Hope, ed., *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984); Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British Identity 1689-c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707 – 1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). However, for the purposes of the present study this tradition is considered sufficiently close to the mainstream Whig tradition, and will not be dealt with separately.

to be addressed below, led to this inconsistency of narrative modes, and ensured that, in the end, the *History* would express his innate conservatism. What I will discuss in this section is the manner in which these modes were antipathetic and served to transform an initially promising book into a failure.

That Moore was familiar with the major British historians and thinkers of the period is not surprising. However, he was also knowledgeable about the French tradition, particularly the works of Augustin Thierry and François Guizot.¹⁴ He had been familiar with Thierry's *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre* since 1834. Though he did not admire that work greatly,¹⁵ he continued to have correspondence with the author: in November 1838 Thierry sent Moore a copy of his *Dix ans d'études historiques*; Moore duly sent Thierry an appreciative letter and a copy of the *Irish Melodies*. The following February Thierry replied:

Votre poësie patriotique me parut, il y a bien des années, non seulement le cri de douleur d'Irlande, mais encore le chant de tristesse de tous les peuples opprimés. C'est de la vive impression qu'elle fit sur moi après nos désastres de 1815, qu'est venu, en grand partie, le sentiment qui domine dans l'histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre.¹⁶

If this work of Thierry was influenced by the *Melodies*, its other Irish connection was in shaping the historical thought of Thomas Davis and other Young Irelanders.¹⁷ Davis exalted Thierry above 'any other historian that ever lived.'¹⁸

¹⁴ During a 1837 trip to Paris, Moore visited Guizot who quizzed him on the efforts made to bring him into parliament and 'expressed his wonder & regret' at the refusal (*Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1881). The following year the historian and statesman sent Moore a number of his recent pamphlets as 'hommages', *ibid.*, p. 2026.

¹⁵ He found it 'a showy, superficial book – built upon a theory, too, which though imposing and perhaps borne out at the commencement of the history, becomes ridiculous, from its forced application, as he goes on', *ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 1622.

¹⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 2040: 'Your patriotic poetry has seemed to me for many years to be not merely the pained cry of Ireland, but the song of sorrow of every oppressed people. It is from the vivid impression it has made upon me after our disasters of 1815, that has in large part come the presiding spirit of the *Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre*.'

¹⁷ Charles Gavan Duffy praised Thierry in his *Young Ireland: A Fragment of Irish History, 1840 – 45* (London, 1896), p. 167.

¹⁸ Malcolm Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature*, p. 46. Thierry's lessons for Davis were not to be extracted by mere analogy with France, for the Frenchman had written specifically about Ireland.

Thierry's new type of history was defiantly national and expressly popular. In his *Dix ans d'études historiques* he stated, 'The history of France, such as it has been written by modern authors is not the true history of the country, the national, the popular history.'¹⁹ His new history would be what he called 'l'histoire des citoyens, l'histoire des sujets, l'histoire du public, l'histoire de la masse.'²⁰ Thierry was thus avowedly nationalist and populist in his historiographical style and intent.

Davis encouraged this sort of nationalist historiography in Ireland. In his attempts to popularise Irish history by any possible means, Moore's *History* was grudgingly endorsed – its principal attraction being its ready availability.²¹ However, only the first and second volumes of the *History* were serviceable to Davis. They featured certain iconic moments from ancient Irish history that had the quality of vividness that Davis demanded of history. The narrative of these volumes is episodic as Moore advances from one subject of debate to another.

From the outset, Irish difference from Britain is stressed, a distinct destiny and identity is posited: 'The Romans continued in military possession of Britain for near four hundred years, without a single Roman, during that whole period, having been known to set foot on Irish ground. [...] The system of Whitaker and others, who, from the proximity of the two islands assume that the population of Ireland must have been all derived from Britain, is wholly at variance, not merely with probability, but with actual evidence.'²² Moore's focus on an Irish people from the earliest times is at

Davis published Thierry's comments in *The Nation* on September 16, 1842: "the Irishman's 'unconquerable obstinacy never to despair' in seeking to repossess his nationality 'was perhaps the greatest example that a people had ever given,' more glorious than even that of the Jews under captivity."

¹⁹ Quoted in Crossley, *French Historians*, p. 45.

²⁰ Quoted in Ann Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three Nineteenth-Century Histories of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 5.

²¹ See Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 149; also, *The Nation*, 15 April 1843: '...the general histories of Leland, Moore, O'Halloran, Keating, &c., are less valuable, but easier to get', p. 426.

²² Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. I, p. 2.

points tantamount to anthropomorphism, implicitly likening the course of the history of the Irish to that of the individual of the Romantic quest. Granted, at no time does he reach the explicitness to be found in a John Mitchel or A.M. Sullivan,²³ but their aims at least are pre-figured, however faintly.

The later volumes are completely different. Here, Moore struggled with a dearth of material, and the narrative only advances coherently by virtue of the royal lineage attached to each section in which chapters are divided on a reign-by-reign basis. This capitulation to royal lineage as the marker and measure of the flux of time was of course anathema to Davis. It suggests that the remains of the Irish experience are so fragmented that they can only gain narrative coherence if they are fitted to the apparent solidity and continuity of the regal chronology.

Since the necessary records simply did not exist, Moore had to abandon his French-style narrative of the fortunes of the native populace, replacing it instead, however grudgingly, with the evidence their rulers left behind: 'The reader has already been prepared, on entering into this Anglo-Irish period, to find the people of the land thrown darkly into the background of their country's history, while a small colony of foreign intruders usurp, insultingly, their place. So lamentably is this the case, that it is only in the feuds and forays of the English barons that the historian – if he may claim to such a title – can find materials for his barren and unhonoured task.'²⁴ The work thus comes to express the traditional British ideal of a historical progress that is evolutionary, natural, and governed by the sort of continuity celebrated by Burke in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).²⁵

²³ See R.F. Foster, *The Story of Ireland: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before The University of Oxford on 1 December 1994* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 8 – 12; see also his *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), pp. 1 – 2.

²⁴ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. III, p. 38.

²⁵ Burke wrote: 'Thanks to our sullen resistance to innovation, thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character, we still bear the stamp of our forefathers. [...] In England we have not yet been

The metatextual evidence for this shift in historiographical approach is even more obvious. After the first two volumes, the work is no longer divided into relatively self-contained scenes and events. Instead, progress is charted, and chapters divided, into the reign-by-reign chronology of traditional English history, beginning in Volume III with King John and ending, in Volume IV, with Charles I. In the absence of sufficient native material for Romantic narrative, Moore turns to a more familiar model, grafting the solidity and continuity of English chronology onto the fissiparous Irish experience.

Although it was the specific problem of a want of materials that largely forced the abandonment of the French style in favour of the 'old reliable' British model, it is clear that Moore did not have a philosophy behind his *History*.²⁶ He attempted an introduction, but, like the *History* itself, it too threatened to become unmanageable, as there was no controlling philosophy behind it: 'With respect to the extent of the work, I cannot even yet say how far I shall be able to bring my Introduction within limits; as the speculation & research into which it invites me is infinite, and, if indulged in, would easily fill the First Volume.'²⁷ Instead of a single controlling philosophy then, the *History* has a complex mix of British and French historiographical modes, each with mutually exclusive philosophical and ideological implication. Although Moore employs the revolutionary inspired romantic-nationalist mode in the first volumes, he

completely embowelled of our natural entrails. [...] We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is *natural* to be affected', *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (1790: London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 181 – 82.

²⁶ Unlike Moore, both of his fellow historians in the *Cabinet Cyclopaedia* series outlined specific aims in their respective prefaces. Mackintosh's *History of England* was a consciously didactic work intended to 'lay open the workings of the minds who have guided those of their fellow-men – and, most of all, to strengthen by the exercise of them on the personages conspicuous in history.' Scott had essentially written the history of Scotland before, in his *Tales of a Grandfather, Being Stories taken from Scottish History* (1828). The preface to the *History of Scotland* was principally a Unionist expression of Tory fealty.

²⁷ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 769.

replaces it with the conservatism of the British model in the later ones. While each individual philosophy was destined to displease some quarter, the mix of the whole could please no one.²⁸

These conflicting impulses lay bare the fact that, as we have seen, Moore conspicuously lacked, from the beginning, a strongly held philosophy of history with which to guide his work – hence his inability to prepare a satisfactory introduction as Mackintosh and Scott had done. Theirs were individual interpretations of histories that had been written before in various guises. Because of difficulties peculiar to aspects of Irish historiography, Moore, on the other hand, was unable to predict accurately or declare authoritatively what would be his aim, method, or philosophy.

Moore's *History* and history-writing in Ireland

In the early nineteenth century the Irish past was a largely undiscovered country.²⁹ It was, according to Joep Leerssen, 'obscure and imperfectly understood, neglected or misrepresented by previous generations of historians, accessible only through the medium of scarce sources, which were themselves only beginning to be inventorized and which were couched in the hermetic medium of the Irish language.'³⁰ Of course, there did exist a range of explanatory histories of Ireland, but these were self-evidently didactic in their aim of justifying the English conquest of the

²⁸ Moore's failure of direction is illuminated by the application of what Hayden White calls the 'deep structure' of history in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore-London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). In White's terminology, the romantic-nationalist French model Moore begins with is recognisably 'Romantic', whereas the conservative, British model he turns to is essentially 'Comic'. While 'Romance' and 'Comedy' have shared features – their stress on the continuous emergence of new forces, for example – their 'ideological implications' are radically different: 'Romance' has an 'elective affinity' with anarchism, but 'Comedy' is similarly naturally aligned with conservatism. Moore's models are thus ideologically antagonistic.

²⁹ For an account of Irish historiography in the preceding half-century, see John Patrick Delury, 'Ex Conflictu Et Collisione: The Failure of Irish Historiography, 1745 – 1790', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Vol. 15 (2000), pp. 9 – 37.

³⁰ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 69 – 70.

country.³¹ The other type of history-writing practised in Ireland was more antiquarian in its method. While ‘history’ might be described as a narrative that attempts to take note of ‘the transitions, changes, disruptions, developments, causalities and filiations which between them differentiate the past into a succession of events’³², ‘antiquarianism’ was the study of aspects of the past purely for the sake of their age and difference from the present. The antiquarians’ pursuits were often obscure and unrewarding³³, but their currency was such that no historian in the period could avoid engaging with their debates, and for this reason they bulk large in Moore’s *History*. Accordingly, a brief note on Irish antiquarianism is required here.

Antiquarianism flourished in Ireland in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was a gentlemanly pursuit, its investigations of the past being considered a ‘philanthropic, public-spirited effort to improve the state of general knowledge and to enhance the nation’s standing by elucidating its ancient origins’.³⁴ This was commonplace throughout Europe, where it had differing degrees of political significance.³⁵ The most celebrated Irish antiquary was Colonel (later Major-General) Charles Vallancey, an English-born military engineer, and an advocate of what is

³¹ Such as the work of Giraldus Cambrensis and later Elizabethan-Jacobean apologists including Fynes Moryson, Edmund Spenser, Edmund Campion, Sir John Davies and others. For analysis, see Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development, and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp. 254 – 383, *passim*; also R.F. Foster, ‘History and the Irish Question’, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, pp. 2 – 3.

³² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 68.

³³ On the dangers of excessive antiquarianism, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: ‘The horrid spectacle is seen of the mad collector raking over all the dust heaps of the past. He breathes a moldy air; the antiquarian habit may degrade a considerable talent, a real spiritual need in him, to a mere insatiable curiosity for everything old; he often sinks so low as to be satisfied with any food, and greedily devours all the scraps that fall from the bibliographical table’, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (Indianapolis: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949, 1957). For an application of Nietzsche’s discussion of ‘monumental’, ‘antiquarian’ and ‘critical’ history to contemporary Ireland, see Kathleen Nutt, ‘Irish Identity and the Writing of History’, *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 29, no. 2 (summer 1994), pp. 160 – 72.

³⁴ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 71.

³⁵ For the European context to Irish antiquarianism, see Peter Burke, ‘The Discovery of the People’, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), pp. 3 – 22. For the important contribution of Macpherson’s *Ossian* to these developments, see Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland’s Past: the Celtic Revival, 1830 – 1930* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), and Terence Brown, ed. *Celticism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996).

known as the Phoenician model of Irish origins. This theory was in opposition to the Scytho-Celtic model.³⁶ As we shall see, questions of Ireland's connection with the Orient form an important aspect of Moore's *History*.

Although antiquarianism had traditionally been an apolitical avocation, this difference over Ireland's ancient origins had political consequences. To endorse the Phoenician model was to posit an ancient and glorious native Irish civilisation. This was inherently anti-English, as it intimated that the arrival of the English and the Vikings into Ireland was destructive of an earlier, nobler order. The Scytho-Celtic model, on the other hand, bespoke a belief that 'Ireland was primordially a barbaric country where all traces of culture were introduced by outside influences such as the Vikings or the English'.³⁷ The former model was popular with the Patriot element in Irish life, whereas the latter found favour in more conservative, anglophilic quarters.³⁸ The political dimensions of this division were significantly increased by the 1798 rebellion. In the conservative view, the native Irish once again demonstrated that they were puny in the figurative sense only. The bloodshed had the effect of vilifying the Punic model of ancient Irish civility. Moreover, its proponents were suspect for having indulged the murderous natives with their dangerous Phoenician fantasies.

Similarly, as Donal McCartney has demonstrated, '[f]ew of the writings on the more modern history of Ireland, written in the period between the union and the granting of Emancipation, may be said to have been the result of original

³⁶ The Phoenician model held that the earliest inhabitants of Ireland were of eastern Mediterranean origin, that they had voyaged, over time, from Phoenicia (now the coastal areas of Syria, Israel, and Lebanon) to Carthage (near present-day Tunis) and on to pre-Roman Spain. The original Gaelic ancestors were the sons of Milesius, a late Latinization of *Míl Easpáine* meaning 'the Spanish one' – from whom the term Milesian is derived. The Scytho-Celtic paradigm maintained that the first inhabitants of Britain and Ireland had migrated west through mainland Europe.

³⁷ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 73.

³⁸ For example, the Patriot leader Henry Flood, who left a bequest for the study of the Irish language, nominated Vallancey for his endowed chair in Trinity. The principal advocate of the Scytho-Celtic model was the Church of Ireland minister Edward Ledwich, whom Leerssen considers a 'narrow-minded and illiberal Celt-hater', *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 100).

investigation.’³⁹ The period’s leading general histories⁴⁰ relied heavily on the works of eighteenth-century historians⁴¹ or upon the questionable authority of Giraldus Cambrensis, Edmund Spenser, Geoffrey Keating, Archbishop Ussher, and others.

Nonetheless, in these immediate post-Union decades certain Irish historians – inspired by Edward Ledwich’s *The Antiquities of Ireland* (1804) – increasingly adopted an enlightened approach to their subject.⁴² Certain societies and institutions, such as the Royal Irish Academy, the Gaelic Society, the Ibero-Celtic Society, and the Irish Record Commission, embraced this new question of authentic sources and its attendant concern with documentary evidence.⁴³ As a result, prejudices based on class, creed, or politics came to matter less as researchers began to share methodological ideals and to value dispassionate criticism. History, it was generally held, should be based on written records from the past, and if an epoch did not provide documentary evidence of itself then it was disqualified as a subject for the modern historian.

However, this enlightened principle did not prevent historians from using their histories as vehicles for the promulgation of their political beliefs. Since it was

³⁹ Donal McCartney, ‘The writing of history in Ireland’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 10, 40 (September 1957) 347 – 62; p. 347. The article is misattributed to ‘Donald MacCartney’. On a related note, the same Donal McCartney is the author of ‘Writings on Irish History in the early nineteenth century: a study in Irish public opinion 1800 – 1830’ (unpublished thesis, University College Dublin, August 1955), however the author is given as ‘Daniel McCartney’. Texts to be referred to henceforth as McCartney (1955) and McCartney (1957).

⁴⁰ Such as James Bentley Gordon’s *History of Ireland*, 2 vols. (1805), Denis Taaffe’s *Impartial History of Ireland*, 4 vols. (1811), John Lawless’s *A Compendium of the History of Ireland* (1814), and Samuel Burdy’s *History of Ireland* (1817).

⁴¹ Such as Thomas Leland, Alan Warner, David Hume, or John Curry.

⁴² McCartney identifies Ledwich as ‘the great name among those who give us an enlightened definition of what history should be.’ He goes on, nevertheless, to point out certain inconsistencies in Ledwich’s work, such as his discussion of ancient Irish texts that were, by his own admission, indecipherable. Ledwich, McCartney writes, ‘was an enlightened historian by choice,’ but ‘a romantic by inclination’ (1955), p. 5.

⁴³ For the activities of the Royal Irish Academy in this period see G.F. Mitchell, ‘Antiquaries: the Rudiments, 1785 – 1840’ in *The Royal Irish Academy: A Bicentennial History, 1785 – 1985*, gen. ed., T. Ó Raifeartaigh (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1985). The Gaelic Society (founded 1807) and the Ibero-Celtic Society (founded 1818) both furnished translations of Irish-language material. The Record Commission (1810 – 30) was the training ground for many of the scholars involved in these societies.

equally widely held that the past was studied in order to instruct the present, histories were necessarily informed by contemporary political positions, and those politics were equally ineluctably anchored in historical arguments.⁴⁴ As the promised measure of Catholic Emancipation failed to materialise, the Union was added to the list of native Irish grievances in an openly confessional manner. These grievances were amplified when juxtaposed with images of pre-Norman Irish glory and civilisation. It was therefore the case that to praise the ancient Irish in any way in these years was ‘akin to adopting the politics of the anti-unionists, or the pro-Catholic Emancipationists.’⁴⁵

By 1835 then, certain debates of the antiquarians, such as Ireland’s eastern origins, were being addressed once again, this time by practitioners of the new scientific methodologies, but these debates were also being conducted with a renewed sense of political urgency. Therefore, while the *History* was being modern and scholarly in examining these ancient debates, it was also unavoidably entering upon contemporary political discussions.

The *History* and round towers

From the licentiousness of *Anacreon* and the *Thomas Little* verse to the more recent debates over the *Travels*, Moore courted and thrived upon controversy. In order to drum up public interest in the new work – and to inspire himself to write⁴⁶ – Moore cast about for a suitably generative controversy. In February 1834 he came

⁴⁴ The instructive nature of the past is not an exclusively Irish idea. According to McCartney, ‘[d]espite the solidity of the learning of a Lingard, a Hallam or a Macaulay, all of them felt they were working in the interests of their party. It was the one point where Southey reviewing Hallam’s Constitutional history could agree with the whig author that all knowledge of the past is principally valuable in its application to modern times’, (1955), pp. 45 – 46.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁶ As noted in Chapter Four, an *Edinburgh Review* article on German Protestantism rehearsed aspects of the *Travels*.

across the ideal vehicle: he would write a review of Henry O'Brien's recently published *The Round Towers of Ireland*.

The round towers, as Joep Leerssen has demonstrated, were of vital importance in nineteenth-century debates about the Irish past. They came in time to 'form the main battle-ground for two different ways of viewing the Irish cultural tradition.'⁴⁷ As a first principle of their historical speculations, scholars identified the towers as either prior or posterior to the advent of Christianity in Ireland. Those who dated the towers to a pre-Christian era – such as Vallancey, Betham and Henry O'Brien – used them to expound their exotic theories of oriental Irish origins. George Petrie led those who identified the towers as medieval, ecclesiastical defensive structures that had been erected during the Christian epoch. This position inherently refuted the idea of eastern, Phoenician provenance for ancient Irish culture.

In many respects, the Phoenician argument ought to have disappeared with the turn-of-the-century discrediting of Vallancey and the demise of antiquarian speculation, but this was not the case. The theory proved strangely enduring, despite the growing evidence against it. Leerssen offers two incentives for Irish intellectuals to adhere to the Phoenician idea. First, the advances of Indo-Europeanism seemed to endorse the model, however superficially: from where, if not the east, could Ireland's civilisation – the westernmost in Europe – have originated? Secondly, it was a matter of patriotism, since 'the non-Oriental, intra-European, Teutonic model that was so much in vogue in the neighbouring country ... seemed to function largely as a discursive means of stigmatising and denigrating the Celtic past.' The exoticism and

⁴⁷ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 108 – 20; p. 109.

romance that the Phoenician theory conferred on Ireland was understandably difficult to relinquish.⁴⁸

Henry O'Brien was firmly of the Phoenician school. In 1830 he was publicly humiliated when his essay for a Royal Irish Academy prize was beaten by Petrie's ecclesiastical argument and Phoenician refutation. Nevertheless he chose to publish his essay, expanded to book-length, in 1834. It was greeted with scathing reviews, including one by Moore in the *Edinburgh Review*.⁴⁹

For Moore to rubbish O'Brien's work was to attempt to distance himself publicly from the old-style Vallancey-esque, oriental speculation and to declare his allegiance to the scholarly sobriety of Petrie and the positivists.⁵⁰ He opens the review by ridiculing the whole eastern school:

We were beginning to fear that the good old race of etymologists and antiquarians were all extinct; and most sincerely should we have lamented their loss. For, next to the fairy tales of our childhood, in nothing have we ever half so much delighted as in the lucubrations of these grave twisters of words, – these searchers after syllables through the vast night of time.

Moore is clearly up-to-date on his subject. He refers knowledgeably to the Royal Irish Academy prize and Petrie, and he labels O'Brien a follower of Vallancey

⁴⁸ Moore profited from it in *Lalla Rookh*, and Byron paid tribute to the supposed similarities between Ireland and the Orient in his dedication to Moore of *The Corsair* (1814). A century later it was still a serviceable literary trope: Norman Vance has noted Joyce's use of it in *Ulysses* to 'reinforce his connections between Homeric-Mediterranean myth and Irish realities.' There are also Finnegan-Phoenix-Phoenician puns in *Finnegans wake*, and in his lecture 'Ireland, island of saints and scholars' Joyce paraphrased Vallancey to impress his Trieste audience, telling them that Irish language and culture was Phoenician in origin ('Celts, Carthaginians and constitutions: Anglo-Irish literary relations, 1780-1820', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, no. 87 (March 1981), p. 227).

⁴⁹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 121; Moore, 'O'Brien's Round Towers of Ireland', *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 59 (April 1834), pp. 143 – 54. Moore had had previous dealings with O'Brien. It seems certain that an 1833 correspondent of Moore's wishing to sell information on the round towers was O'Brien, who would have known of the work that Moore was preparing. In his *Reliques of Father Prout*, Francis Mahony referred twice to correspondence between Moore and O'Brien (see Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 263 – 64, n. 157). Moore declined the offer (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 763).

⁵⁰ Articles in the *Edinburgh* were of course anonymous, but Moore's authorship was heavily hinted at several times. For example, his Fudge Family satires are invoked in his comments on O'Brien's discussion of 'Palahver, or Court language': 'we confess our own learned researches would have suggested to us the Phoenician term, *Phudge*, as the most fitting and appropriate for them' (p. 151).

and an untrustworthy scholar: 'all Mauritania may be transported to Connaught, or vice versa, just as it may suit his purpose.'⁵¹ But even as he humorously attacks the antiquarians, Moore is deliberately presenting himself as a serious and respectable authority: 'It can hardly be necessary, we trust, to say, that no deficiency whatever of reverence for the high and authentic claims of Ireland to antiquity, nor to any want of deep interest in her history, is the light tone we may seem to have indulged, in the preceding remarks, to be attributed.' Having advertised himself as a serious commentator on the subject, Moore then proceeds to advertise his own future comments, presenting his work in the context of the best in recent scholarship:

By the work of the late venerable librarian of Stowe, the authenticity of the Irish Chronicles is placed beyond dispute; and the essay of Mr. Dalton on the religion, learning, arts, and government of Ireland, abounds with research on these several subjects, alike creditable to his industry and his judgment. Let us hope that the same service which these and other sensible Irishmen have achieved for their country's *ancient* history, will be effected also for the *modern*, by the work which is now expected from Mr. Moore.⁵²

O'Brien took the review badly – to Moore's delight: 'A Letter from Moran ... telling me that O'Brien (author of Round Towers) is going about London, foaming at the mouth with anger, in consequence of the Article on his book, in the Edinburgh, which he suspects shrewdly to be mine – Is preparing a furious attack on me'.⁵³ O'Brien's attack did not materialise. Instead, a series of attacks on him in Irish publications such as the *Dublin University Magazine* and, in particular, the *Dublin Penny Journal* served to unhinge completely his already precariously balanced mind. Driven insane, he died in June 1835, aged twenty-seven.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 59 (April 1834), p. 143; p. 150.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁵³ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1603.

⁵⁴ For more on these reviews, see Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 121. Leerssen states that, in 1842, 'Moore was to recall with mixed feelings that his review probably hastened O'Brien's death' (p. 123). In fact, Moore wrote: 'I heard at the time that the poor man took it [the review] very

The *Edinburgh Review* article had nevertheless served its function, whetting appetites and encouraging Moore himself to make some progress. However, when the first volume of the *History* appeared in 1835, its discussion of the round towers was disappointing:

How far those pillar-temples, or Round Towers, which form so remarkable a part of Ireland's antiquities, and whose history is lost in the night of time, may have had any connection with the Pyrolatry, or Fire-worship, of the early Irish, we have no certain means of determining.⁵⁵

Moore's own conjecture essentially recants his earlier review, backtracking from the positivist position towards the oriental model. He writes: 'the notion that these towers were originally fire-temples, appears the most probable of any that have yet been suggested.' And to underline his orientalist point, Moore notes their similarity with towers 'near Bhaugulpore, in Hindostan.'⁵⁶

There is no clear explanation for this change of position. Though he ridiculed it in his review, Moore knew that the Orientalist model still held attractions for many. It was a quintessentially romantic notion, and one that Moore had previously invoked in the Erin-Iran confluences of *Lalla Rookh*. The confident dismissal of the theory in the *Edinburgh Review* notwithstanding, for Moore to jettison such a cherished myth in his avowedly populist *History* would have been rash, for as Leerssen writes, the debate at this stage remained 'formally unresolved.'⁵⁷

Certainly, Moore did not believe O'Brien's theories, and he was convinced by Petrie's prize-winning argument. But the evidence that would clinch the debate and allow him to formally advocate a theory in his *History* was still unavailable. This was Petrie's *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland* (1845). Leerssen outlines Moore's

much to heart, and even threatened personal vengeance for the liberty I had taken in laughing at him – but as to its having had any share in *killing* him, I don't believe a word of it', *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 2227.

⁵⁵ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. I, p. 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29; p. 30.

⁵⁷ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 125.

predicament: 'Petrie was still reworking, expanding and improving his prize essay, despite the growing impatience of the public, despite the fact that, while the essay was silently being improved, other works like Moore's *History* could not take cognizance of it and were, perforce, driven to the established Oriental model of O'Connor of Stowe, Lanigan and D'Alton.'⁵⁸

The failure of the *History* to break new ground on the round towers can thus be attributed to a mix of scholarly caution and a lack of original research. Moore's last word on the subject is correspondingly weak:

...the truth is, that neither then nor, I would add, at any other assignable period, within the whole range of Irish history, is such a state of things known authentically to have existed as can solve the difficulty of these towers, or account satisfactorily, at once, for the object of the buildings, and the advanced civilisation of the architects who erected them. They must, therefore, be referred to times beyond the reach of historical record.⁵⁹

In private, Moore knew that his treatment of the round tower question was far from satisfactory. In August 1836 he confessed as much in his journal:

Among my letters was one from a R.C. clergyman proposing the erection of a Round Tower, on the model of the ancient ones, at *Blarney*. Thought it at first a hoax, more particularly as he is pleased to say that I have done more to elucidate the history of these structures than any other antiquarian, whereas the real truth is I have but left them where I found them.⁶⁰

Having dismissed the Phoenician theory in his review, Moore tentatively rehabilitated it in the book's discussion of the round towers. This sort of indecision

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 125 – 26. Petrie's delay was not solely due to his love of detail, as he later explained: he had been 'preparing it for publication by every means in the power of a man who had to sustain a large family solely by the daily practice of his profession as an artist. [...] When that work [with the Ordnance Survey] ended in 1842 I have allowed myself no leisure for enjoyment or exercise. In my devotion to it, I have reduced myself to poverty, and injured my constitution, perhaps irretrievably.' Quoted in G.F. Mitchell, 'Antiquities: The Rudiments, 1785 – 1840', p. 96. When the cost of the publication exceeded the Academy's budget, Petrie himself financed its printing.

⁵⁹ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. I, p. 35.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1813.

reduced the authority of the *History* – especially when Moore then went on to deny the related and cherished myth of Milesian descent.

The *History* and the Milesians

By July 1834 Moore had begun work in earnest on the *History*. The more he learnt about the Irish past, in particular its earliest periods, the more he was obliged to interrogate his preconceptions: ‘Alone & hard at work – Have returned again to the commencement of my history, and am (for the fourth or fifth time, I believe) remodelling and reconstructing.’ Much of this rethinking and reworking centred on received wisdom concerning the first Irish inhabitants. What he had previously taken on faith no longer seemed acceptable: ‘Have seen reason to alter my views, too, respecting the *Milesian* colonization. All this will occasion immense difficulty &, worst of all, delay’.⁶¹

The decision to reject the Milesian origin was not taken lightly – it was, as we have seen in Chapter Two, a cherished nationalist myth. In his journal Moore explained his logic: ‘after much thought upon the subject, I have seen reason to abandon entirely the old Milesian story, which is not tenable, I find, in any way (except as to the general tradition of an early Eastern colonization) and to adopt very much the views of Pinkerton and others, in considering the Scots as a Gothic colony.’ Moore also understood the controversial nature of his new direction: ‘This is very far from being the popular view of the subject; but much as I like to be popular in Ireland, still “magis amica veritas”’.⁶²

To state this more clearly, Moore came to the conclusion that the Milesian story was untenable and that it was Northern European Gaels, who had received their

⁶¹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 1609.

⁶² Moore had good reason to worry about what his controversial new stance would do to his reputation in Ireland. He had recently risked public opprobrium over a poem in the tenth number of *Irish Melodies*, ‘The Dream of Those Days,’ a pointed critique of O’Connell and his methods.

civility through Phoenician trade contacts and a possible pre-Celtic, Oriental settlement, who must have settled Ireland.⁶³

Given the sensitivity of the issue, Moore's rebuttal of the Milesian myth in the *History* is, not surprisingly, apologetic:

It is a task ungracious and painful, more especially to one accustomed from his earliest days to regard, through a poetic medium, the ancient fortunes of his country, to be obliged, at the stern call of historical truth, not only to surrender his own illusions on the subject, but to undertake also the invidious task of dispelling the dreams of others who have not the same imperative motives of duty and responsibility for disenchanting themselves of so agreeable an error.⁶⁴

Conscious of his reputation as the author of *Captain Rock* and the *Melodies*, Moore is here attempting to demonstrate his impartiality as a historian. He sacrifices his inherited sympathies for the sake of historical accuracy. His diagnosis of the attraction of the myth is almost psychological. It has served an embattled people as imagined compensation for their present circumstances:

So consolatory to the pride of a people for ever struggling against the fatality of their position has been the fondly imagined epoch of those old Milesian days, when, as they believe, the glory of arts and arms, and all the blessings of civilisation came in the train of their heroic ancestors from the coasts of Spain, that hitherto none but the habitual revilers and depreciators of Ireland, the base scribes of a dominant party and sect, have ever thought of calling in question the authenticity of a legend to which a whole nation had long clung with retrospective pride, and which substituting, as it does, a mere phantom of glory for true historical fame, has served them so mournfully in place of real independence and greatness.⁶⁵

But even as Moore recognises the importance of the Milesian myth in Irish culture, he ostentatiously sacrifices it in the name of serious historical scholarship: 'When brought near the daylight of modern history, and at the distance of nearly a

⁶³ This is the conclusion to which Leerssen also comes, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 122.

⁶⁴ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. I, p. 88.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88 – 89. This paragraph is quoted at length as it will recur in the discussion of the *Dublin University Magazine*'s review of the *History*.

thousand years from their pretended progenitors, it is plain these Milesian heroes at once shrink into mere shadows of fable.’⁶⁶

Like Petrie and the historians he admires, and unlike the discredited antiquarians, Moore feels that his first duty as a historian is to separate fact from fable. But to do so was to alienate those who still clung to the myth, such as the correspondent who wrote to express his concern at seeing Moore ‘praised in an English Newspaper for having discarded the old Milesian story of the Irish.’ He also felt ‘some apprehensions’ for Moore’s future fame and considered that ‘further sacrifices were about to be made to English feelings in the intended history’.⁶⁷

Moore was proud of his dismissal of the Milesian fable. Indeed, in later years he vigorously defended his originality on the matter, saying: ‘I am the first real Irishman who has ever ventured to protest against our Milesian pedigree and relieve the real antiquities of the land from the incubus of that dull fable.’⁶⁸ He therefore countered his accuser by writing to say that the English newspaper in question was reprinting an article from ‘an Irish Liberal paper (the Dublin Evening Post)’ and that ‘both the Northern Whig, & the Freeman’s Journal, two other Liberal Irish Papers, had taken the same manly & sensible view of my manner of treating the Milesian fable’.⁶⁹ Moore could therefore rest assured that his commitment to the rigours of serious historical scholarship had not jeopardised his standing with the Irish masses.

One might expect that the risk Moore ran of alienating his Catholic-nationalist readerships should have endeared him to a Protestant-unionist audience. However, the *Dublin University Magazine*, as mouthpiece for the latter, found Moore’s *History*

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

⁶⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1690.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 2263.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Vol. IV, p. 1690.

unacceptably pro-Catholic, even if it did welcome the abandonment of the Milesian myth. Its reviewer wrote:

This passage is remarkable on more accounts than on its length. It exhibits a fair specimen of the author's graceful and pointed style, and it displays his intractable prejudices and temper: it takes away, by the testimony of a reluctant witness, all credit from the writers whom he cites with praise, and it utters rash invective against those whose truths he pays the tribute of a constrained and tardy acknowledgment. It pronounces the received story of the Milesian origins a fable; declares that the attempt to uphold it has been an utter failure; describes the evidence on which it rests as of a kind which could not impose on any man of ordinary intelligence and honest intention; and it denounces as the 'habitual revilers and depreciators of Ireland – base scribes of a dominant sect and party;' the only writers who had the good sense to detect or the courage and honesty to expose the groundless and inconsistent fable.⁷⁰

The discussion of the Milesian myth is therefore deemed a smoke-screen disguising the propagation of a more serious issue: 'He gives up the innocent Milesian fictions, and in return for the sacrifice he reiterates the mischievous fable of a papal supremacy.'⁷¹

The Catholicism of the *History*

For the *Dublin University Magazine*, any production from the author of *Captain Rock* and the *Travels* could only be a piece of Catholic-nationalist propaganda. But how fair was this judgment? Moore's discussion of the introduction of Christianity into Ireland revolves around Saint Patrick and his mission. The *Dublin University Magazine*'s chief difficulty with Moore's sketch of the period is that it is not made clear that neither Saint Patrick nor the early church in Ireland had any link with Rome, especially concerning Patrick's appointment and his Irish destination. In fact, Moore repeatedly implies, in equivocal language, that there existed a direct link

⁷⁰ *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. V, no. 30 (June 1835), p. 615. The reviewer was the twenty-two year old Isaac Butt, and the swingeing attack on the Catholic-nationalist Moore was surely designed to win favour with his elders. Nevertheless, it is characteristic of the *Dublin University Magazine*'s attitude to Moore.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

between Roman authority and the patron saint. The reviewer, however, made it abundantly clear that no such link existed.⁷²

However, the most comprehensive objection to Moore's characterisation of the early Irish church was Henry J. Monck Mason's *Primitive Christianity in Ireland: A Letter to Thomas Moore, Esq.* (1836).⁷³ This 144-page pamphlet was a painstaking *exposé* of Moore's errors and obfuscations. Mason had two points to prove:

First, That the account which you have given of the first introduction of Christianity into Ireland is erroneous:

Secondly, That the opinion you have advocated, of the doctrines inculcated by the first missionaries, teachers, and saints in that country, is, with scarcely a single exception, mistaken.⁷⁴

Mason made clear that the *Letter* was not part of any specialists' controversy.

In Ireland, this sort of historical endeavour was a part of current debates – especially when as famous a figure as Moore was involved:

The question between us is, my dear sir, one of the very highest importance, and not by any means one of merely antiquarian research: it is, both directly and indirectly, of great magnitude in its influences – directly, as it is that of religion in Ireland; indirectly, because the name of religion is, in that country, unhappily interwoven with every political question, and with almost every circumstance of the present day.⁷⁵

⁷² 'We could quote more largely from the proofs afforded by Mr. O'Sullivan, that the church of Ireland was not of Roman origin, if we were not persuaded that to our readers it would be unnecessary. We may observe that every argument, advanced by Mr. Moore, has been anticipated and refuted in them, and that strong testimonies have been adduced in defence of the independence of our national church, to which he has not found it comfortable to his plan to pay the least attention', *ibid.*, p. 626.

⁷³ Henry Joseph Monck Mason (1778 – 1858), *Primitive Christianity in Ireland: A Letter to Thomas Moore, Esq. Exhibiting His Misstatements in His History, Respecting The Introduction of Christianity Into Ireland, and The Religious Tenets of the Early Irish Christians* (Dublin, 1836). Mason was a versatile scholar who, unlike Moore, knew Irish, a skill he employed for the religious instruction of the Irish lower orders. He was well connected, knowing Moore as a student at Trinity and also from the Kilkenny theatricals; he also knew Robert Southey. In 1816 he married Sir Robert Langrishe's daughter Anne.

⁷⁴ Mason, *Primitive Christianity*, p. 2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2. Mason was an admirer of the *Melodies*. He writes of waiting 'anxiously ... for a promised number of your melodies', but he regretted their divisive effect: 'I do not condemn your nationality, but would only wish that you had exhibited it with a more truly national feeling; and not ... have agitated the settling minds of the people, roused with your martial music the slumbering rancour

This recalls Moore's comment on the *Travels*, which, 'though as regards the rest of the world theological, is in its bearings on the popular cause of Ireland deeply political'.⁷⁶

Moore's *History*, therefore, is necessarily controversial because the issues it explores were still current in 1835. The three areas of controversy with which Moore engaged were necessarily part of contemporary political debates. We have seen that opinions on ancient Ireland had come to express pro- or anti-English sentiments. In fact, just to discuss events prior to the twelfth century arrival of the Normans had a political subtext. If, *pace* the unionists, the civilisation of Ireland depended always and only upon the British connection, then authentic history only began at this moment. Conversely, any discussion of pre-Norman Irish civilisation was inherently reductive of the importance of England's role in advancing Irish life. Similarly, any discussion of the history of Christianity in Ireland was read in the light of 'the politico-religious question of the relationship between a Protestant state and a penalized Catholic people.'⁷⁷

Audiences considered Moore's politics to be well known – he was a Whig, a pro-Catholic, and an Irish nationalist. Previous chapters have shown how Moore's relationship with most of these positions requires judicious qualification. Nevertheless, reviewers expected the *History* to demonstrate these affiliations. So intertwined were opinions on history and religion that for many readers the *History* had more in common with the controversies of the *Travels* than it had with the historical nature of Moore's previous prose works. The *Belfast News Letter* said that Moore had 'forgotten the duties of the historian amidst the partialities of the

of the Irish against the Saxon name, and fanned the dying embers of national and religious jealousy to a devastating flame (p. 140; p. 138).

⁷⁶ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 787.

⁷⁷ McCartney (1955), p. 109.

controversialist,⁷⁸ and when he discussed the tenets of the ancient Irish Christians, *The Athenaeum* thought that “‘The Traveller in search of a Religion” now usurps the place of the historian.’⁷⁹

Confirmation of the Catholic bias of the *History* came from an Irish priest based in Italy who remarked: ‘If there be any class of Irishman to whom such an impartial History as yours can bring especial delight, that class, I think, must be the Catholic clergy’.⁸⁰ In discussing nineteenth-century Ireland it is dangerous to rely upon any simple binaries, whether it is sectarian (Protestant-Catholic), social (landlord-peasant), or national (English-Irish). However, the reviews of Moore’s *History* did just that: because the *History* was not contemptuous of ancient Ireland it was necessarily considered a Catholic history. Moore regretted this assumption, but his clearly pro-Catholic depiction of early Irish Christianity only confirmed his prejudice.⁸¹

The *History* and research

For all its shortcomings and clear Catholic bias, Moore’s *History* was a pioneering effort. The demise of the antiquarian model, coupled with the rise of

⁷⁸ Quoted in Jones, *The Harp That Once* –, p. 307.

⁷⁹ *The Athenaeum*, no. 388 (4 April 1835), p. 258. The article continues: ‘We have not read this volume with the pleasure we anticipated; the antiquarian discussion of legendary history in one half of it, and the religious controversy in the other, are topics that cannot be rendered agreeable even by the charms of Mr. Moore’s fascinating style.’

⁸⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 2220.

⁸¹ *The British Magazine* took issue with Moore’s editor for allowing ‘Mr. M.’s lucubrations go forth under the name of “*History*.” They expressed the hope that ‘the Doctor will either abstain in future from making his “Cabinet Cyclopaedia” the repository of such unsophisticated fiction, or else give his Protestant subscribers due notice that he *intends* to give currency to popish fables’, Vol.9 (1 December 1835), p. 397; p. 291. *The Christian Examiner*, Vol. 4 (new series), no. 45 (June 1835), began its review with similar prejudices: ‘A History of Ireland, and from the hands of the author of the “Memoirs of Captain Rock,” and of “The Travels of an Irish Gentleman,” must be looked on with great suspicion by any one who may be called a Conservative in his politics, and a Protestant in his religion: and such truly might be led to consider Mr. Moore about as capable a person to write history calmly or impartially, as Sir Isaac Newton to compose the “Loves of the Angels”’, p. 381. The remainder of the review was much less hostile than this introduction might suggest, though there was allusion to Moore’s ‘known character as the Papist and politician’ (p. 382). Practically every line of the *Dublin University Magazine*’s review excoriated the Catholicism of the *History*, for example: ‘everything that could be tortured into an acknowledgment of Roman sway may be with that view skilfully misinterpreted, and a conclusion may be wrought in the minds of incautious readers that the cause of popery and Ireland is one’ (p. 629).

scientific methods in specialized areas, led to widespread dissatisfaction with the existing general histories of Ireland. In fact, by the time Moore began to prepare his first volume, there was general agreement across the spectrum of Irish sympathies that a genuine history of Ireland had yet to be written. This was the first point the *Dublin University Magazine* made in its review: 'We have been, for some time, persuaded that the history of Ireland is yet to be written'. A Catholic-nationalist counterpart, the *Dublin Penny Journal*, concurred, musing on 'that long-sought desideratum, a faithful and accurate history of Ireland,' and expressing enthusiasm to learn how Moore would approach 'a subject so difficult, and which had baffled the learning and genius of so many'. For *The Athenaeum*, the history of Ireland had not been written because it was 'the most hopeless of all subjects'. The *Christian Examiner* agreed: 'we altogether despair of ever seeing any thing like an impartial history of our peculiarly circumstanced isle'.⁸²

Moore himself was aware of the novelty of the project. He voiced this in a preface that he had intended to publish in the first volume. Unfortunately, pressure from the Longmans to provide copy as fast as possible forced him to abandon this plan, and the preface was never published. However, he recorded his intended sentiments in his journal:

I then proceeded to say that, as far as this volume was concerned I felt a hope that my labour would not appear to have been misemployed, and having shown how much had been already written on the subject of Irish antiquities, and still how little was yet known of them, from the scattered & undigested state in which all this information lay, I came to the conclusion that in laying these materials in a collected & intelligible form before the public I was supplying what might be called a want in historical literature, and then meant to add that "to be

⁸² *Dublin University Magazine*, p. 613; *Dublin Penny Journal*, Vol. 4, no. 157 (4 July 1835), pp. 2 – 4, p. 3, p. 2; *The Athenaeum*, p. 257; *Christian Examiner*, p. 381.

able, in these times, to produce a book that is really wanted, is one of the rarest of all the triumphs of literary success...”⁸³

As he had just published the first volume of the *History*, Moore could afford to be optimistic about the utility of his work.⁸⁴ In reality, however, the ‘scattered & undigested state’ of his source-material turned the *History* into a nightmare project that was doomed to failure.

A number of the reviews anticipated this problem with Irish history.⁸⁵ The *Dublin Penny Journal* was the most searching in its diagnosis of the difficulties facing the prospective Irish historian:

...this brings us to what we consider to be the great difficulty in the way of the Irish historian – a difficulty insurmountable by the exertions of any individual, and which can be overcome only by the well-directed energies of numbers, employed for years. The scarcity of accredited material, the want of accessible authorities, are, we think, the real obstacles to the obtaining that long-sought desideratum, a faithful and accurate history of Ireland. At present, so few, and so difficult of approach, are the sources whence the inquirer into these subjects must derive his knowledge of the former annals of his country – and so contradictory are they, as well in the statement of fact as in their general state of the island – that the historian, unprovided with the means of deciding between their clashing testimony, either refuses

⁸³ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 1677.

⁸⁴ From the start, however, Moore was never particularly optimistic about the *History*. Only a month prior to this entry in the *Journal* he had been complaining: ‘for the first time, in my literary life, [the *History* is] making me feel myself a thorough *hack*’, *ibid.*, p. 1656.

⁸⁵ The *Dublin University Magazine*, for example, thought the whole project premature: ‘We doubt whether the time has arrived when it is reasonable to hope for an impartial historian, and are quite sure that matters which are the indispensable pre-requisites for an exact and authentic narrative of Irish affairs have not yet been provided’ (p. 613). The article continues: ‘We have no right to hope for a good history of Ireland until we have taken all the proper pains to fix a knowledge of the language in which its annals have been written’ (p. 614). The *Westminster Review* opined that Moore had been largely successful considering the significant obstacles his sources presented: ‘To have written a work of good historical criticism, when the materials are already arranged, and the degree of credit to which they are entitled pretty well known, is generally looked on as a service to literature, and an achievement deserving fame. If the subject, however, is such, that the author has been obliged to search for the proper materials amidst a mass of confusion, - that he has found no men who have gone before him capable of separating the true from the false, and has had to do it himself, - then, if he has in the end produced a well-arranged clear, elegant and judicious book, his merit as a benefactor to science is not far behind that of the men who have made themselves famous by their beneficial discoveries in the more exact sciences. The subject matter of the present work, is characterized by a chaotic discordance of materials, the outward appearance of which has caused many to turn hopeless from the attempt to reduce them to order. It cannot be said that no portions of the subject had been investigated and made clear beforehand, or that Mr. Moore has satisfactorily settled all the questions he has discussed; but it must be admitted that here is, for the first time, presented to the world, a rational, well-written, and critical account of the early history of Ireland.’

credit to both, or yields implicit confidence to the one, totally despising the evidence of the other. [...] These circumstances, which would themselves deprive this work of the character of a complete and standard History of Ireland, will, in like manner, render futile any similar attempt, until the deficiencies we have pointed out be supplied – until the bardic and historic records of Ireland, which now uselessly encumber the cabinets of many public and private libraries throughout the United Kingdom, be examined and published under the care of competent editors. Until these secret receptacles of knowledge be broken up and opened to the world, it will be equally vain to expect, or to attempt a trustworthy History of Ireland.⁸⁶

Through the remaining three volumes, but especially in the last two, Moore's awareness of his lack of materials becomes a refrain in the work. In contrast to the early work, by the time he reached the twelfth century and the reign-by-reign chapters that begin with King John in Volume III, he was experiencing a serious shortage of source-material. From this point on want of material from which to construct a narrative becomes the thematic lodestar of the *History*. So Henry III's time on the throne is dispatched as follows: 'In the year 1272, this long reign – the longest to be found in the English annals – was brought to a close; and the few meagre and scattered records which have been strung together in this chapter comprise all that Ireland furnishes towards the history of a reign whose course, in England, was marked by events so pregnant with interest and importance.'⁸⁷ A mere two pages later the same complaint is lodged: 'The reign of Edward I, which forms so eventful a portion of England's history, and combines in its course so rare and remarkable a mixture of the brilliant and the solid, the glorious and the useful, presents, as viewed through the meagre records of Ireland, a barren and melancholy waste – unenlivened even by those fiery outbreaks of just revenge, which, at most other periods, flash out from time to time, lighting up fearfully the scene of suffering and strife.'⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Dublin Penny Journal*, pp. 2 – 3.

⁸⁷ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. III, p. 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Moore then was lost without the opportunity to play the works of other historians against one another. The first two volumes had been swollen with argument and counter-argument on matters of Irish antiquity gleaned from the work of recent researchers. So much so, in fact, that some reviewers expressed concern that after three-hundred-and-twenty-one pages the work has only reached the end of the seventh century. As the work of others dried up Moore was thrown on to his own, virtually non-existent, first-hand research. From this point on the footnotes and references that had been so important in the first two volumes become increasingly rare. The strongest sections of the *History* concern (the better-documented) events in England, and Moore regularly attempts to justify their inclusion: 'The intention expressed, in a preceding chapter of this work, to pass rapidly over the reigns of the first English kings of Ireland, it has not been in my power to accomplish. Though wanting in almost every quality that lends grace and glory to history, this period of my narrative, I found, could hardly be thus despatched without doing injustice to the demands of the subject.'⁸⁹

Similarly, a few pages after a lively concise history of the War of the Roses, Moore is reduced to trawling through legal records for genuinely Irish material. Typically, he tries to make a virtue of this necessity, extolling the impartiality of what is really a last resort: 'Scantily supplied, as the historian finds himself, at this period, with the two great essentials of the historic scene, events and actors, his only resource for the means of acquiring any insight into the condition of the country lies in the materials supplied by its legal records; and, perhaps, in most cases, it is the state of the law among a people that affords the least fallible means of forming a judgment

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 117 – 18.

respecting their moral and social condition.’⁹⁰ Unfortunately, these records uncover very little in the way of useful material and are soon abandoned.

A sense of the desperation Moore suffered because of the sheer lack of material coupled with the ongoing imperative to supply copy can be seen in the following: ‘The important affairs in which this prince [John Cade] was subsequently concerned fall mostly within the province of English history. But as he remained to the last connected with Ireland, and still carried with him the good wishes and sympathy of her people, a few of the more important stages of his course may not irrelevantly be noticed.’⁹¹ Moore stretches these notices over the next four full pages, each of which is more irrelevant than the last. Ironically, as time wore on, and Moore’s only wish was to complete the project, the absence of source material proved a bonus: ‘Found the books that remained to be consulted by me, (at least in the present stage of the task) far less numerous than I had supposed, which was no small relief’.⁹²

For the fourth volume Moore plundered the State Paper Office and assorted caches of private papers such as those of Viscount Wentworth, later earl of Strafford. He claimed in a letter that these efforts throw ‘some new & curious lights’ on Shane O’Neill and the flight of Tyrone, but in both cases his discoveries are nugatory.⁹³

As Moore was dealing with these massive lacunae in his research, the work of Petrie and others was demonstrating just how much material was still untapped. In 1837, having just begun work on Volume III, Moore remarked upon his fatigue with the *History* in a conversation with Robert Lemon of the State Paper Office: ‘Explained to him how I was situated with respect to my History, being now more than ever aware that in less than two volumes more I should not be able to do justice

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 147 – 48.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 179 – 80.

⁹² Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1969.

⁹³ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 887.

to my subject'.⁹⁴ All this had a demoralising effect on Moore⁹⁵, an important instance of which was recounted by Eugene O'Curry:

In the year 1839, during one of his last visits to the land of his birth, he, in company with his old and attached friend Dr. Petrie, favoured me with an unexpected visit at the Royal Irish Academy. I was at that period employed on the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, and at the time of his visit happened to have before me on my desk the *Books of Ballymote and Lecain*, *The Speckled Book*, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, and many other ancient books, for historical research and reference. I had never before seen Moore, and after a brief introduction and explanation of the nature of my occupation by Dr. Petrie, and seeing the formidable array of so many dark and time-worn volumes by which I was surrounded, he looked a little disconcerted, but after a while plucked up courage to open the *Book of Ballymote* and ask what it was. Dr. Petrie and myself then entered into a short explanation of the history and character of the books then present as well as of ancient Gaelic documents in general. Moore listened with great attention, alternately scanning the books and myself, and then asked me, in a serious tone, if I understood them, and how I had learned to do so. Having satisfied him upon these points, he turned to Dr. Petrie and said: "Petrie, these huge tomes could not have been written by fools or for any foolish purpose. I never knew anything about them before, and had not the right to have undertaken the *History of Ireland*."⁹⁶

Leerssen has cast doubt on the veracity of this story,⁹⁷ but as Matthew Arnold quoted it *verbatim* in his lecture 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' it was clearly an

⁹⁴ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1904.

⁹⁵ In March 1835 the project was 'my plaguy history'; November 1836 saw him sighing, 'Were it in my power, indeed, to reverse the present order of my operations, - to write Romance now, while there are some few gleams of sunlight still left me, and take to History when the night of old age sets in, it would be all very well'; in October 1843 he was complaining yet again of the weight of it, longing to 'shake the incubus off me as soon as I possibly can.' *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 791; p. 806; p. 879. By the end of 1841, Moore was even wondering if he would live long enough to complete the project (*Journal*, Vol. V, pp. 2211 - 12).

⁹⁶ Eugene O'Curry, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861), p. 154. Moore's distance from the cut-and-thrust of Irish antiquarianism was demonstrated in September 1838 when he witnessed an argument between Petrie and Sir William Betham, an antiquary of the old school, and afterwards noted: 'Was little aware ... of the heart-burnings there have been on the subject of Irish antiquities lately', *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1997.

⁹⁷ Leerssen writes: 'O'Curry misdates this [Moore's visit] to 1839 (when Moore did not visit Ireland), and his account is contradicted by the evidence of Moore's journal, which never once mentions O'Curry, never once mentions a mortified confession of ignorance, and merely records, during the 1838 visit, pleasant and instructive meetings at the Ordnance Survey and the Academy with Petrie and Todd; the underling O'Curry was evidently beneath Moore's notice', *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 129.

influence in discrediting Moore as a historian.⁹⁸ In any case, it is an evocative depiction of the difficulties that the 'scattered & undigested state' presented to a historian in the period. Moore's conscientiousness and commitment to 'do justice' to his subject meant that he felt obliged to engage as best he could with this wealth of new research. However, the constantly evolving, contradictory, and generally unstable nature of this research made doing justice to the Irish past a far more difficult task than Moore or anyone else had envisaged. It seems that the *Dublin University Magazine*, for all its prejudice, was right: a history of Ireland at this stage was a premature endeavour.

Conclusion

The *History of Ireland* ruined Moore in several ways. He was never financially secure and, despite being awarded a controversial civil list pension in 1835, the years of its composition were among the most difficult.⁹⁹ That same year he wrote to Lord John Russell, saying: 'That I want help is but too true. I live from hand to mouth, and not always very sure there will be anything in the *former* for the *latter*.' The terms agreed with the Longmans were proving inadequate to support a family including a number of Irish dependents. To Russell he continued: 'You may have some notion of my means of my going on when I tell you that for my last published volume [the first volume of the *History*] I received £750., and that I was two years and a half employed upon it.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R.H. Super, 5 vols. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960 – 65); Vol. 3, pp. 314 – 15. This posthumous discrediting of Moore as anything other than a poet is dealt with more fully in Chapter Six.

⁹⁹ The pension was still controversial two years later when it was discussed in parliament. An Irish M.P. asked whether it was granted to Moore for 'making luscious ballads to love-sick maidens of for writing lampoons upon George IV, of blessed memory'; in reply the Chancellor justified it as 'reward for distinguished talent in literature' – to approval from the House (quoted in *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1945, n. 1).

¹⁰⁰ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 793.

In 1837, fearing that he would be bankrupted by the project, Moore wrote to the Longmans hoping to alter the terms. A series of legalistic letters were exchanged before it was agreed that Moore would get £750 for the final volume instead of £500.¹⁰¹ The following year Moore sent a squib to the *Morning Chronicle* and resolved to ‘complete about half a dozen of these things ... in order to get a little money, which I sadly want’.¹⁰² This is particularly poignant when one considers that Moore’s was still a famous name – indeed, a successful Covent Garden farce hinged upon his celebrity.¹⁰³

But in 1839 matters were still bad. Commitment to the *History* forced Moore to decline a proposal for a collected works: ‘It is too provoking to think that while I have been now nearly two years at work at the 3rd. Volume of my History (not even yet finished) for which I am to receive but £500, I should be thus obliged to refuse the same sum for a light task, which I could accomplish with ease in three months!’¹⁰⁴

Some who were not privy to Moore’s financial state were curious about his devotion to the thankless *History*:

I have seen Mr. Moore day after day, most carefully toiling through dusty manuscripts and antiquated books in the reading-room of the British Museum, in search of materials for it. I have often been surprised how a man of his talents, reputation, and independent circumstances, could thus have reconciled himself to the drudgery of wading through almost undecipherable manuscripts and old-fashioned books, which in many instances had not been disturbed ... for a long series of years. In fact, had he been a literary journeyman, depending

¹⁰¹ Moore’s side of the correspondence as well as extracts from the Longmans’ replies are the *Journal*, Vol. V, pp. 1908 – 13.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 1962.

¹⁰³ *The Irish Lion* by J.B. Buckstone. Moore, greatly amused by this, wrote in his journal: ‘A new farce brought out at Covent Garden, under the name of “The Irish Lion” of which I have the honour to be the hero, and which (thanks to Power’s acting) appears to have had prodigious success. A common Irish fellow, whose name is T. Moore, being mistaken for me, is introduced to an assembly of ridiculous Blues (the scene being laid at Devizes) by whom every thing he says is received as oracular, and pronounced by a Dandy of the party to be “dem’d foine”’, *ibid.*, pp. 1986 – 87.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2039.

for his daily bread on his daily toil, he could not have worked with greater industry.¹⁰⁵

The educations and careers of Moore's sons, Tom and Russell, were particularly expensive, and in 1842 Moore was considering selling letters received from Byron in order to pay their expenses. Like their three sisters, the boys preceded their parents to the grave.¹⁰⁶ Russell died in December 1842 after being nursed at home for almost a year. Tom, serving in the French Foreign Legion, died in Mostaganem, on the Algerian coast, in 1846. Editing Moore's *Memoirs*, Lord John Russell commented on the effect this had: 'The death of his only remaining child, and his last and most beloved sister, deeply affected the health, crushed the spirits, and impaired the mind of Moore. An illness of an alarming nature shook his frame, & for a long time made him incapable of any exertion. When he recovered, he was a different man – His memory was perpetually at fault, and nothing seemed to rest upon his mind.'¹⁰⁷ Little wonder that the *History*, still not completed at this time, should have lost its early dynamism and faded into an uninventive adjunct to standard histories of England.

Having clearly decided to cut their losses on the benighted project, the publishers illustrated in their preface to the final volume of the *History* just how far the work has strayed from its early controversies:

On considering the nature of the work they had undertaken, the Publishers were not long in adopting the conviction that a History of *modern* Ireland was but little wanted; that already, in all the popular Histories of England, ample summaries of Irish affairs are to be found.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ James Grant, *Portraits of Public Characters*, quoted in Jones, *The Harp That Once –*, p. 606.

¹⁰⁶ Ann Jane Barbara (1812 – 17), Anastasia Mary (1813 – 29), Olivia Byron (1814 – 1815), Thomas Lansdowne Parr (1818 – 46), John Russell (1823 – 42).

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in *Journal*, Vol. VI, p. 2411.

¹⁰⁸ Moore, *History of Ireland*, Vol. IV, 'Advertisement by the Publishers'.

Moore, who had spent his career educating his readers about Ireland – the culmination of which ought to have been the *History* – was past worrying about the implications of this sort of statement. Leerssen holds that the *History*, ‘though undertaken by the most famous Irish man of letters at a time when there was a growing demand for a work like this, left the questions of the Irish past much as it found them.’¹⁰⁹ The state of knowledge on the Irish past rendered this outcome likely from the start, and Moore’s private sorrows made it inevitable by the end. It was nevertheless a high-profile demonstration of a palpable lack in Irish intellectual life.

If Moore’s *History of Ireland* was a failure, its failure was to marshal aspects of the Irish past in the service of a particular ideology. The result is an often rambling, random narrative. For the researcher, the chief value of the *History* lies in its inconsistencies, as they draw attention to the conflicts, lacunae, and debatable areas that characterized Irish historiography in the mid-nineteenth century. Whereas more ideologically committed historians would sacrifice these complexities for fear of exposing the often shaky foundations of their own particular narrative drives, paradoxically, Moore’s ingenuousness as a historian serves to lay bare much of the historiographical confusion of the time. This is vital, for if there exists such a phenomenon as the ‘Irish habit of historical thought,’¹¹⁰ then attention must be paid to the conceptual and methodological anarchy that reigned in history-writing when individual interpretations of the past were hardening into political allegiances that would endure.

The *History of Ireland*, then, was complicit in ruining Moore financially, creatively, emotionally, and ultimately as a prose writer of repute. The next chapter

¹⁰⁹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 123.

¹¹⁰ Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780 – 1980* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), p. 1.

will show how Moore's reputation was posthumously shorn of his prose achievement and reduced to that of a poet only.

Chapter Six

Moore's Reputations

The condensed prose of a biographical sketch in an encyclopaedia or anthology is a useful indicator of what a generation sees as the key points in a reputation. According to the latest edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Thomas Moore is 'chiefly remembered ... for the Oriental verse romance *Lalla Rookh* (1817), which achieved a great European success; his fine *Life of Byron* (1830); and a handful of songs'.¹ But the paradoxes and inconsistencies of Moore's life carry into his posthumous reputation and preclude such an easy taxonomy for, as Joep Leerssen has pointed out, Moore's standing in Ireland has differed significantly from his place in the Anglo-American conception of the Romantic canon.² Thus the influential *Field Day Anthology* maintains that 'it was the *Irish Melodies* that won Moore his most enduring fame, just as his Persian tale in verse, *Lallah* (sic) *Rookh* (1817), gained him the most money and contemporary fame.' As noted at the start of this study, Seamus Deane's accompanying essay essentially ignores the prose, while the short biographical entry dismisses the four volumes of the *History of Ireland* ('He

¹ M.H. Abrams, gen. ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. II, 7th edn., 2 vols. (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000), p. 527.

² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 249, n. 35: 'Whereas, in Ireland, he appears primarily as the poet of the *Melodies*, he seems to be known among British critics as a minor Romantic: the friend and biographer of Byron, the Regency satirist and author of *Lalla Rookh*.'

wrote little after 1835') and the celebrated *Life of Byron* goes completely unmentioned, not even appearing in the bibliography of 'Chief Writings'.³

This study has attempted to draw attention to the popularity of Moore's non-fiction prose and to see it as an integral part of his *oeuvre*. This begs the question as to why such a project is necessary, that is to say, what happened to Moore's reputation that it should bifurcate into the very different strains cited above? How, when, and why did the biographer, novelist, controversialist, and historian become reduced to 'poet'?

Reputations are, of course, inherently subjective, but there are moments of consensus in which opinions and estimations are crystallized and bequeathed to subsequent generations. In the case of Moore there are at least five such cardinal moments of reputation formation between his nineteenth-century heyday and the early twentieth-century Revivalist reaction and dismissal.⁴ This first occurred in 1840 – 41 with the publication of the *Collected Poems*. Then again in 1852 and immediately after, when Moore's death inspired a number of evaluative obituaries often coloured by the near-contemporary appearance of Lord John Russell's eight volumes of Moore's *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence*. This work seriously affected the reputation, thanks largely to John Wilson Croker's hatchet-job and subsequent controversy with Russell. The erection of a statue in Dublin in 1857 was similarly controversial in its attempt to cast a definitive reputation. Finally, the centenary celebrations in 1879 defined Moore for a late Victorian audience in a way that made him an irresistible target for the likes of Yeats and others whose opinions would hold sway for the best part of a century.

³ Deane, 'Thomas Moore', *Field Day Anthology*, Vol. I, pp. 1053 – 69.

⁴ For an overview of Moore's later twentieth-century reputation, see Chapter One.

The Collected Poems (1840 – 41)

In 1840 Moore was sixty-one years old, on the one hand an elder statesman of literature, on the other, a relic of a distant place, Regency England. Only Wordsworth, another relic, and Moore's friend the banker-poet Samuel Rogers, remained of the generation that had come of age in the wake of the French Revolution. Their works, and those of Scott, Byron, Southey, Crabbe and Campbell, had long been available to the public in smartly produced collected editions. Not so with Moore's works; according to *The Athenaeum*, they 'had to be hunted for in strange corners, and read in every variety of form; from the splendid luxury of quarto, the fashion of his youth, to the dingy, dirty French and English piracy – the pocket edition of ours.' A complete and uniform collection, the article continues, 'weeded too and purified, cannot fail to be welcomed by the public.'⁵

As early as the 1830s Moore's publishers, the Longmans, had entertained the idea of a collected edition of the poems, but the project was strategically postponed until Moore could unburden himself of the troublesome *History of Ireland* – he journalised: 'I have no doubts that their anxiety for the termination of this work was the cause of their laying on the shelf the projected Edition.'⁶ An ambitious young publisher named Macrone gave the project a fillip when he lured Moore with the offer of £1000 for an edition of his complete poetry and prose, to be published in eight thousand copies in monthly numbers. If the works extended to fifteen volumes the fee would rise to 2000 guineas. J.M.W. Turner would illustrate the volumes, travelling, if necessary, to Ireland for the purpose.⁷

⁵ *The Athenaeum*, no. 679 (31 October 1840), p. 864.

⁶ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 1812.

⁷ Turner was an admirer of Moore. He illustrated an 1839 edition of *The Epicurean, with Alciphron, a Poem*. In 1835 he had expressed a desire to visit Ireland but thought that he should only be safe if accompanied by Moore (*ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 1670).

When Moore communicated this offer to the Longmans they ‘boggled at [it] a good deal,’⁸ but assured him that they were committed to the project. Complex negotiations ensued. Macrone would have the expensive task of acquiring the necessary copyrights; the Powers, Moore’s music publishers, owned the copyright of most of the *Melodies*, while that of *Lalla Rookh* belonged to the Longmans.⁹ Eventually Macrone had to settle for arranging to publish a Turner-illustrated edition of *The Epicurean*; it appeared in 1839, two years after his death.

In September 1837 Moore was once again solicited for a collected works, this time by yet another publisher. Once again the diverse ownership of copyrights proved a stumbling block; it did, however, serve to spur the Longmans into the acquisition of the outstanding copyrights, and by the close of the year they had made a firm offer.¹⁰ Expectations for the new work were high. Whereas an impressively optimistic one thousand sets of Southey’s ten-volume *Works* (1837 – 38) had recently been presented to the public, and Wordsworth’s *Sonnets* (1838) had sold nearly two thousand volumes, it was anticipated that the new edition of Moore would have a print run of between eight and ten thousand copies.¹¹

The *Poetical Works of Thomas Moore, Collected by Himself*, amounting to between eighty and ninety thousand lines of verse, were published in ten volumes in 1840 – 41. Despite the controversial nature of some of the squibs and satires it contained, Lord Lansdowne accepted its dedication. The Longmans invested £7000 in the production of the work¹² and many reviewers commented on its elegant

⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 1827.

⁹ ‘Moore deeded the publication rights to the *Melodies*, *Songs*, and *Airs* to the Power brothers in 1812. the copyright remained with Mrs. Power after her husband’s death in 1836’: Dowden’s note, *ibid.*, p. 2033, n. 2.

¹⁰ The deal was not actually signed until 22 November 1838. The edition was to be worth £1000 to Moore.

¹¹ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. V, p. 2016.

¹² Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 600.

presentation: 'In regard to appearance, decoration, and beauty, as well in regard to the printer's part, as to what is technically called "the getting up," it is certainly one of the most elegant volumes of this kind that has issued from the British press.'¹³ Another attraction of the work was that each volume would be prefaced by an instalment of autobiographical memoirs.

In the handsome formality of the book itself, the retrospective, nostalgic prefaces, and the scrupulous annotation, it all amounted to a valedictory enterprise. As he laboured in Wiltshire with the Sisyphean *History of Ireland*, Moore must have felt that the new edition ended a chapter in his writing life. For most of his audience, however, it closed the whole book. The reviews it generated, the early Victorian estimations of a previous generation's poetic epitome, read like premature obituaries.

Not for a decade, since the biography of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, had Moore's prose caught the wider public imagination – the controversies generated by the *Travels* and the first volume of the *History* were specialists' matters, and *Sheridan* and *Byron* were distant triumphs. The appearance of the last number of the *Melodies* in 1834 – nine years after its predecessor – drew attention yet again to a project that extended over thirty years. A year later, with the appearance of *The Fudges in England*, readers saw Moore in his old guise of the verse satirist. As the *History* advanced towards oblivion even before it was finished, these were the most recent works in the public consciousness. Thus when the curtain call production of the *Works* appeared shorn of the prose, it was confirmation that Moore was, in the end, a poet.

But *which* poet? The orientalist? The puckish satirist and Tory scourge? The sentimental melodist with a tear and a smile for Ireland? Almost every journal of the

¹³ *Dublin Evening Post*, Vol. 74 (17 October 1840).

day reviewed the *Works*, but the contents were so well known that many had little to say beyond enthusing about a popularity that dwarfed critique; instead, it was the autobiographical prefaces that attracted most attention. The *Morning Chronicle* was thus representative when it opined that, ‘We anticipate much gratification from the promised biographical notices to be given with the succeeding volumes of this edition. With the poems themselves what reader is not familiar?’¹⁴

The familiarity in question was essentially with the *Melodies*, as *The Athenaeum* noted of this portion of the works, ‘Possibly a larger amount of popularity is represented in this volume, than in any other three hundred and sixty pages.’¹⁵ In the very years that the market rewarded its new talent by pushing sales of *The Old Curiosity Shop* to one hundred thousand copies, the bestseller of almost a quarter-century previous, *Lalla Rookh*, began to look distinctly out-dated.¹⁶ Dated too were the squibs and satires, now that the personalities and controversies had passed into history: ‘The ninth volume is full of satiric and humorous poems, to many of which a few words, by way of key or introduction, would have been most acceptable, yet thirteen scanty pages comprise all he is pleased to say.’¹⁷

The *Edinburgh Review* is equally telling of this generational shift in taste. The article is by its former editor, Lord Francis Jeffrey, Moore’s most consistent champion in the literary establishment, and a friend since a retrospectively farcical duel in 1806. Clearly out of step with his contemporaries’ tastes, Jeffrey is alone, and loyally misguided, in seeing the promise of further poetry from Moore: ‘we feel that the

¹⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 7 October 1840.

¹⁵ *The Athenaeum*, no. 693, 6 February 1841, p. 110.

¹⁶ Moore is the most quoted poet in Dickens’ works, with thirty-four references, far ahead of his nearest rival, Burns, who has five. The lines are invariably drawn from the *Melodies*. See Donal O’Sullivan, ‘Charles Dickens and Thomas Moore’, *Studies*, Vol. 37 (1948), pp. 169 – 78, p. 342.

¹⁷ *The Athenaeum*, no. 725, 18 September 1841, p. 728. In all, *The Athenaeum* devoted articles in six numbers, from October 1840 to September 1841, to the *Works*, a good deal of which consisted of excerpts from the prefaces.

public has some further claims upon him, before he finally relinquishes the Lyre.’ In contrast with the other reviews, Jeffrey deems *Lalla Rookh* Moore’s ‘first work of importance, and as yet his greatest.’¹⁸ His appreciation of the satires also sets him apart in his obvious familiarity with bygone events: ‘they have the great advantage of conjuring back upon us the successive recollections of the politics of the last thirty years, more lively and more amusing than even in the works of the masters of caricatures.’ Despite these varied appreciations, the popularity of the *Melodies* cannot fail to impress: ‘there are thousands – tens of thousands – who have almost every line of the Irish Melodies and national songs constantly in their remembrances.’¹⁹

Before he had died, then, the *Melodies* were evolving into Moore’s most famous production, and the *Poetical Works* and reactions to it were instrumental in popularising this reduced reputation. His death only served to further this process.

The obituaries (1852) and the *Memoirs* (1853 – 56)

Blackwood’s Magazine, congenitally antipathetic to Moore, mourned his death by giving a brief sketch of his career in which the *Melodies* were declared the sole source of any future fame. The prose, on the other hand, was best forgotten, for when he indulged this ‘unhappy digression from the natural pursuits of a poet, Moore showed all the *monomania* of the Irish Papist.’ Even *Lalla Rookh* has fallen from favour – it ‘found its way into every drawing-room, and finally rested in every library. But there its course ended; the glitter which at first dazzled, at length exhausted, the public eye.’²⁰ The *British Quarterly Review* concurred with this estimate, although it emphasised how distant a figure Moore had become in his latter years: ‘Poor Tom

¹⁸ It is fair to acknowledge that a work such as *Lalla Rookh* remained popular and was reprinted consistently until the twentieth century. However, even as it continued to be read, it was always considered old-fashioned – it did not have that air of timelessness that readers celebrated in the *Melodies*.

¹⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 75, no. 151 (April – July 1842), p. 163; p. 164; p. 182; p. 176.

²⁰ *Blackwood’s Magazine*, Vol. 71 (May 1852), p. 568. The obituary was by a compatriot of Moore’s, George Croly (1780 – 1860), Church of Ireland clergyman and versatile yet undistinguished author.

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Moore, he had so long ceased to be one of us, that it needed his death to put us in mind of his existence in our days.’ Once again, the readers of *Lalla Rookh* are ‘becoming fewer and fewer’, while the *Melodies* retain their charm; he was, after all, ‘the best of modern English or Irish songwriters.’²¹

The occasion of the publication of Moore’s *Memoirs* in the year after he died was the forum most periodicals chose for their obituary notices. Yeats described Moore as ‘merely an incarnate social ambition’ and in so doing defamed him for a century.²² In his lifetime Moore enjoyed the reputation of a convivialist and the great houses vied for his wit and singing at their relay of Regency *soirées*. It was only after his death that this aspect of Moore’s personality came to be frowned upon rather than admired. This was largely due to the publication of the *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence* (eight volumes, 1853 – 56) and the reviews it garnered.²³ The *Memoirs* remain a valuable record not only of Moore’s day-to-day activities but also of the close interactions and vicissitudes of early nineteenth-century literary and political life. James Chandler has called them, ‘one of the best sources we have for the daily life of British intellectual elites for this period.’²⁴ They were not, however, intended for publication in this guise.

Moore kept his journal from 18 August 1817, when it begins *in medias res* – ‘Went to Bath on my way to Leamington Spa for the purpose of consulting Mrs. Lefanu, the only surviving sister of Sheridan, on the subject of her brother’s life’ –

²¹ *British Quarterly Review*, Vol. 15 (May 1852), p. 486; p. 487; p. 499. Other obituaries appeared in the *Dublin Review*, Vol. 34 (March 1853), pp. 104 – 139; the *New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 94 (April 1852), pp. 379 – 90; *Bentley’s Miscellany*, Vol. 31 (April 1852), pp. 423 – 37. In many cases obituaries were coupled with reviews of the posthumous *Memoirs* since they so quickly followed Moore’s death.

²² W.B. Yeats, *The Letters of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 447.

²³ Wilfred S. Dowden has re-edited this work in unexpurgated editions of the *Letters* (two volumes, 1964) and the *Journals* (six volumes, 1983 – 91). References to *Memoirs* refer to Russell’s edition, *Journals* to Dowden’s. A rather sour appraisal of Moore’s *Journal* and Dowden’s editorship can be found in Claude Rawson’s *Satire and Sentiment 1660 – 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in which Moore is treated ‘as a minor Boswellian avatar, rather than in his better-known guise as an unreadable poet’ (p. xii).

²⁴ James Chandler, *England in 1819*, p. 273.

until 1847, when it peters out with clearly addled, erratic entries. As Jordan has remarked, 'it was intended as a workshop for anyone who might wish to write a memoir of him' – the cover sheet for the 1823 diary bears the inscription: 'It is not my wish (in the case of any thing happening to me) that this Journal should be published or shown to any one. T.M. It may be made use of by the person who shall be employed to write a Memoir of me.'²⁵

In his will Moore directed that the person in question should be Lord John Russell (1792 – 1878) and that the 'Memoir' was meant to provide for his widow, Bessy, who was surviving frugally on a small pension secured for her through the offices of Lord Lansdowne – amazingly, Moore was not actually in debt when he died. Longmans offered Bessy £3000 for the papers and the intended biographical memoir became Russell's hastily compiled, unannotated edition. Dowden's introduction to his edition of the journal explains and justifies some of Russell's shortcomings. He had been Prime Minister from 1846 to 1852 and had to deal with the crisis provoked by the Irish famine.²⁶ Immediately after, as Foreign Secretary when he undertook the editing, he was 'fighting for his political life'; he also 'omitted many sections that he felt might shock Victorian tastes, along with others that discuss prominent personalities in a manner that Russell obviously thought would prove embarrassing if published.'²⁷

Simply not meant to be exposed to public scrutiny in this form, there is something inevitable about the negative reaction the *Memoirs* provoked. For Moore they were a daily record of who he met and where he went, and this is valuable to the scholar or researcher, for as Dowden observes, 'because many of the same people turned up again and again at the same places he did, readers feel that they are well

²⁵ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 631.

²⁶ He was Prime Minister again in 1865 – 66.

²⁷ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. I, 'Introduction', p. 11.

acquainted with them, following political battles, literary quarrels, and the great issues of the age with those who were not only involved with but were also motivators of these actions and ideas.’²⁸ But the problem with the *Memoirs* being a mere record, rather than a reflective, evaluative, speculative or critical work, is that it appears to be extraordinarily superficial – as, by extension, does the author.

This apparent superficiality was resented by the Victorian reviewers who found themselves maddeningly teased by references to the most influential writers, artists, and politicians of the era as they paraded across Moore’s pages, essentially undifferentiated from their long-forgotten dining-companions. According to Jordan, despite Russell’s admirable attempt to render Moore a posthumous service, he actually blackened his friend’s reputation. Moore ‘suddenly appeared in a new light – a vain man, proud of his associations. A wholly erroneous picture of this good, kindly man began to form until many Victorians’ comments upon him are simply a travesty.’²⁹ The important *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* was representatively acerbic: ‘Read Moore’s Journal, and then tell us what matter of interest you have found – what lesson of value you have received? Of *bons mots* and anecdotes current among the loungers of society, there are a few good, many indifferent, and a multitude heinously bad.’ It was also astute, registering disappointment at the seemingly wilful shallowness of the work:

But where are the notices of the serious struggles of life – where the aspirations of high genius elaborately working out its aims – where the traces of that self-denial and energy without which even the choicest gifts of genius are vouchsafed in vain? Of these there is no vestige. We are indeed very sorry that such a book has been given to the world; for, while it tends to lower greatly, in the estimation of all thinking

²⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁹ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 631.

men, the character of one who was at least a sparkling poet, it conveys a false impression of life, and we believe was intended to do so.³⁰

The *Westminster Review* was succinct in its censure: ‘The fact is, he wanted two great qualities of a letter writer; and the same want is even more apparent in his diary. He had not a graphic pen, nor any power of analysing character.’³¹ Illustrative of the comedown in Moore’s estimation, the *Edinburgh Review* indulged in a retrospective piece stating the once-obvious: ‘Until the appearance of this publication, it had not, indeed, been fully present to us how extensively Moore was read and relished, nor how widely his reputation, whether as a poet, as a wit, a lyric composer, or, God save the mark, a sound political writer! had circulated, in Europe as well as in the British Isles.’³² In general the Irish publications were less hostile than their British counterparts – they all allude to Moore’s faithfulness to the Irish cause – but the *Memoirs* were clearly not what had been hoped for, as the *Irish Quarterly Review* intimated:

...we are quite satisfied of the fact, that, amongst the great mass of the reading public, these two volumes have produced no small portion of disappointment. They have had placed before them – from his own pen – the heart, thoughts, feelings, hopes, and opinions of a poet of whom they have ever assumed all things poetical; but in his Correspondence and Diary, they find him only a common-place thinker and talker; a struggler against the tide of misfortune, wanting shoes and coats, and anxious to-day for the necessities of to-morrow.³³

Since both Moore and Russell were firmly of the Whig camp, many of the reviews were politically motivated, and none more so than John Wilson Croker’s hatchet job in the *Quarterly Review* and in his subsequent bilious pamphlet, *Correspondence between the Right Hon. J.W. Croker and the Right Hon. Lord John Russell on Some Passages of “Moore’s Diary”* (1854).

³⁰ *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 74, no. 457 (November 1853), p. 520; pp. 520 – 21.

³¹ *Westminster Review*, Vol. 4, new series (July to October 1853), p. 169.

³² *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 99, no. 202 (January to April 1854), p. 495.

³³ *Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3 (1853), p. 156.

Moore and Croker had a chequered relationship. Contemporaries at Trinity, they both made their marks in London during the same period, impressing different ends of the political spectrum. In 1807, under the patronage of the Chief Secretary for Ireland and future Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, Croker took a seat in the government as member for Downpatrick. When Wellesley was absent, fighting Napoleon's *grande armée* in the Peninsula, Croker deputised. His performance led to his appointment as Secretary for the Admiralty, a post he held for over twenty-one years. It was a position of power, as William Thomas has noted: 'In his years at the Admiralty, Croker was at its centre. He knew most of the officials in Whitehall, and nearly all the ministers in four successive governments.'³⁴

The power Croker wielded in the Admiralty was extended through the *Quarterly Review* to which he contributed regularly from 1811 until 1854, apart from a brief interlude from 1826 to 1831. Intended to counteract Jeffrey's Whig *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly* was the Tory organ *par excellence* with Croker as its principal ideologue. Indeed, as an editor of *The Croker Papers* points out, 'Much of the correspondence in the Croker Papers with Wellington, Peel, Bentinck, Stanley and other Tory leaders arose from enquiries by Croker for the purpose of a proposed article in the *Quarterly Review*.'³⁵ If in his professional capacity Croker had the 'unfortunate habit of writing letters that were the reverse of tactful,'³⁶ the *Quarterly* also allowed him to express devastating opinions on literary matters. His review of

³⁴ William Thomas, *The Quarrel of Macaulay and Croker: Politics and History in the Age of Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 43 – 44. It was as Secretary for the Admiralty that Croker first came into professional contact with Moore. Giving warning of the disaster of 1818 with a different deputy, there was a case of misconduct or incompetence on the part of Moore's Bermudan deputy in the autumn of 1809 – the complaints of the injured parties were addressed to Croker. According to Croker himself, there had already been 'a coolness' between the compatriots at that time, but this was soon forgotten.

³⁵ Bernard Pool, ed., *The Croker Papers 1808 – 1857* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1967), p. 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Keats's 'Endymion' in 1818 was popularly held to have been at least as fatal as the poet's tuberculosis.³⁷

Moore's relationship with Croker was much better than that of his fellow Whigs or liberal poets. That Croker was a consistent advocate of Catholic Emancipation was certainly in his favour. They socialized together, exchanged many letters, and the impecunious Moore happily availed of Croker's franking machine.³⁸ In 1823, although it had been approved by his aristocratic friends, Moore was worried about the sales of his new poem *The Loves of the Angels* – 'but all this is nothing if the d—d sturdy Saints of the middle class should take it into their heads not to buy me'.³⁹ Croker, while reminding him that they had both agreed that no friend should ever review the work of a friend, promised that, 'if he had time (which, in any event, he had not), nothing would give him more pleasure than attempting to do justice to my poem, &c. &c.'⁴⁰ Croker was also enthusiastic about the *Life of Byron*,⁴¹ and in 1835, attempted to render his friend yet another service, when he wrote to Sir Robert Peel:

I urge very earnestly upon you the endeavour to do something for literature. What makes a literary man easy and happy is often such a trifle as an individual might bestow. [...] Moore before I mentioned to you. He is a person to whom it would be creditable to give any little thing you might have, but I fear that such little things are very rare, and

³⁷ See Byron's 'Who killed John Keats?' Croker's contempt for Keats's long mythological opus was undisguised: 'Reviewers have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint and honestly confess we have not read the work. We have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books.' Quoted in Pool, *Croker Papers*, p. 8. Croker's review of Tennyson's *Poems* (1833) was no less scathing.

³⁸ According to William Thomas, when Croker spoke of his Irish roots it was without nostalgia and revealed little of his feelings (*Quarrel of Macaulay and Croker*, pp. 36 – 37). But consciousness of their shared status as Irishmen, and therefore outsiders at some level, may have contributed to a bond between Moore and Croker, as one of Moore's ironic anecdotes suggests: 'Mentioned that on some one saying to Peel, about Lawrence's picture of Croker, "You can see the very quiver of his lips;" "Yes," said Peel, "and the arrow coming out of it." Croker himself was telling this to one of his countrymen, who answered, "He meant *Arrah*, coming out of it", *Journal*, Vol. II, p. 828.

³⁹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 511.

⁴⁰ Moore, *Journal*, Vol. II, pp. 617 – 18.

⁴¹ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 683.

it would not do to single out such a Whig or Radical as he has been, for Tory favour.⁴²

As it happened, Moore was granted a controversial civil list pension that same year, and Croker's influence cannot be discounted.

But when it came to the review of the *Memoirs* a very different relationship emerges. As the attack on Keats was an indirect assault on Leigh Hunt, the attack on the *Memoirs* is essentially directed at Lord John Russell. Croker wrote:

We see him [Russell] in the political world executing the most important duties without an office, and in his literary capacity accepting a very important office without performing its most ordinary duties. He is also, we find, simultaneously editing the correspondence of Mr. Fox. Yet it evidently never once occurs to him, that one who has so many irons in the fire runs a risk of burning his fingers.⁴³

As an editor himself of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Croker had a professional interest in Russell's endeavour; he found that the *Memoirs* were 'what is called – *edited* in the most slovenly and perfunctory style.'⁴⁴

But Croker's quarrel was not only with Russell; the *Memoirs* also inspired antipathies towards Moore. According to one of Moore's defenders, his 'crime was having made a casual remark in his Diary about having found Mr. Croker, on some occasion, more vain and less clever than he had expected.' There was also the matter of a perceived snub of Mrs. Croker. What Moore deemed an 'excess of amour propre' piqued too. Moreover, the politically suspect opinions he found in Moore's dangerously popular works offended Croker's Tory sensibilities:

All of what are called his *patriotic* songs were calculated to revive and feed the spirit of the Irish rebellion; and to the very last, he seems to be proud of being considered a *Jacobin*, and even a *traitor* – which latter title is evidently viewed by *him* as equivalent to that of *patriot*.

⁴² Quoted in Pool, *Croker Papers*, p. 169.

⁴³ *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 93 (June and September 1853), p. 240.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

If in Croker's eyes Moore erroneously equated 'Jacobin' with 'patriot', in his own 'Jacobin' and 'traitor' were pseudo-synonyms for 'Whig'. It was, after all, the Whigs who had ushered in the reforms he had so vehemently opposed in 1832. Convinced, as William Thomas writes, 'that popular radicalism was a close ally of revolution, and Whigs at best treacherous friends of traditional institutions,'⁴⁵ Moore's songs and associations conjured up for Croker deep-seated anxieties about insurrection. In later life Croker claimed that his impression as a nine-year-old of the storming of the Bastille was the defining moment of his politics, but it was the more recent and local rebellion of 1798 that crystallized this impression. Since Croker maintained that he had fought the rebels in 1798,⁴⁶ Russell and Moore's celebration of this bloodshed – what Croker calls 'a rebellion of which we can scarcely say that that the ashes are yet cold'⁴⁷ – was particularly odious:

In his critical summary of Moore's works, Lord John says of his Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, that 'the character and fate of Lord Edward are made *to touch the heart of every Irish patriot*; and in speaking of the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the noble Editor affirms that it was '*wickedly provoked*' by the Government. This canonization of treason and murder as *patriotism*, and this calumny of the Government of the country, are among the legacies that Lord John has had from Holland House. [...] We need hardly say that we have very little reliance on Lord John Russell's judgment on any question where party prejudices can intervene; but that an author who has been successively Secretary of State for the Council, the Foreign, and the Home Departments, Prime Minister, and who is now leader of the House of Commons – should go out of his way to gild over rebellion as *patriotism*, and to assert so gratuitous and so absurd a slander as that the English and Irish ministers of those days had '*wickedly provoked*' the rebellion, passes our understanding.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Quarrel of Macaulay and Croker*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 38. In 1847 Croker told Lord Londonderry that he had 'actually served against the rebels in 1798'; unfortunately, he gave no details of this service.

⁴⁷ *Quarterly Review*, p. 284.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

There were responses to Croker's article and subsequent pamphlet,⁴⁹ but essentially the damage was done. The poor impression of Moore conveyed by the 'superficial' *Memoirs* was now coupled with an unseemly political squabble; the *New Quarterly Review*, for example, reviewed the *Memoirs* and the Croker pamphlet together in an article entitled 'Moore and Croker.'⁵⁰ According to Jordan, Croker, lying on his deathbed, 'gloated that he had destroyed forever the reputation of a man who had never printed a single word of satire or reproach on him during his lifetime.'⁵¹

The reputation, of course, was not destroyed. It did suffer however, and was re-aligned, especially in relation to the prose, which, if not completely forgotten, was now dimly remembered with dark suspicion. Moore's fame as a luminary of the first half of the nineteenth century came to rest almost exclusively on his poetry, as a reviewer pointed out in 1856: 'What the author of *Lalla Rookh* is to the world at large, that and infinitely more is the author of the *Irish Melodies* to Ireland.' It is in this period, during the years immediately following his death, that the focus of recognition of Moore's achievements is split by the Irish Sea. As Moore dwindled to the status of a minor Romantic in Britain, in Ireland, and among the Irish diaspora, the *Melodies* elevated him into a national icon, the ultimate Irish iconographer. This was possible because the *Melodies* – Croker's misgivings notwithstanding – were essentially unifying and conciliatory where the prose was divisive and contentious. Popular

⁴⁹ See, in particular, the very able *Remarks on the Right-Hon. J.W. Croker's Review of the Memoirs of Thomas Moore*, in 'The Quarterly.' By Nemesis (1855). See also the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 196 (1854), pp. 115 – 22; pp. 365 – 71; Vol. 200 (1856), pp. 577 – 83; and the *Examiner* (4 March 1854), pp. 131 – 32.

⁵⁰ *New Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3 (1854), pp. 153 – 59.

⁵¹ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 633. Jordan calls Croker's article 'perhaps the most venomous attack in the annals of nineteenth-century reviewing, done confessedly out of vengeance and malice.' An article in the *Irish Book Lover*, 'The MSS in the Wilson Croker Collection', shows how the *Quarterly* piece is actually toned down from earlier comments (Vol. 3 (1912), pp. 160 – 64). After the Russell-Croker controversy the fifty references to Croker in the first eight-volume edition of the *Memoirs* were reduced to only six in the single volume edition of 1860.

across the sectarian divide, the *Melodies* suggested a cultural common ground for all in Ireland, and therefore the embattled establishment sought to enshrine the melodist as an emblem of a new kind of inclusive Irishness.

The statue (1857)

This was demonstrated during the campaign for a commemorative statue of Moore in Dublin. The Moore statue is a useful *lieu de mémoire*⁵², for, as Judith Hill has argued, monuments of this kind tell of shared ideals and can point to the ideals of those in power.⁵³ The first call for a tribute to Moore was made by Lady Morgan, as she recorded in her *Memoirs*:

February 28. – On coming down, an hour back, to the drawing-room, The Times was lying on my writing-desk; I lighted on the death of the poet Moore. It has struck me home; I did not think I should ever shed tears again; but I have. The funeral attended only by strangers, to the neighbouring churchyard! Surely they will do something to honour his memory in Ireland! I will write on the subject to Saunders' *News Letter* and other papers.⁵⁴

As a proposed site, she suggested that 'some monumental testimony to Moore, Ireland's greatest poet, should be raised in St. Patrick's cathedral, Dublin.' The Dublin papers copied another of Lady Morgan's letters on the subject and it received a 'lively response,' and on 29 March a meeting was convened in Charlemont House in order to administrate the erection of a testimonial to Moore.

From the outset, the testimonial was indicative of wider cultural concerns than mere literary appreciation. If Dublin had been in terminal decline since the Act of Union, and the country as a whole had suffered the recent devastation of famine, then the Moore testimonial can be seen as a first attempt to promote a positive self-image both at home and abroad. Public statuary was the ideal forum for this to take place. It

⁵² This concept is derived from Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984 – 92).

⁵³ Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), p. 11.

⁵⁴ Morgan, Sydney (Lady), *Lady Morgan's Memoirs: Autobiography, Diaries and Correspondence*, ed. W. Hepworth Dixon (London, 1862), Vol. 2, p. 517.

was clearly a part of the quintessentially Victorian enthusiasm for monuments to the great and good, the plastic arts' equivalent of the 'exemplary life' style of biography then coming into its own.⁵⁵ So as the squares, greens, lawns and crossways of the Empire were filling with effigies of improvers and inventors, administrators and militarists, in Ireland there was a concerted effort to celebrate native-born heroes. The Municipal Reform Act of 1840 was instrumental in this regard, as it dissolved the mini-oligarchies of Protestant power existing in local government. As a consequence, moderate Catholic nationalists came to attain such posts and could implement new initiatives for – broadly speaking – nationalist monuments, the arrival of this native statuary compensating for a lack of dynamism in more conventional areas of political life.

As Hill notes, the variety of figures celebrated reflected the full range of the political debate, but the sheer profusion of memorials indicates considerable interest: 'whereas only 16 had been erected in the 120 years between 1701 and 1823, about 23 statues were erected in the 27 years between 1853 and 1880; from one in roughly every seven years to about one a year.'⁵⁶ This diversity notwithstanding, the Moore memorial, erected in 1857, was the first of a new era of Irish statuary. But despite the incredible popularity of Moore and his *Melodies*, the work was not, as Hill mistakenly claims, 'politically uncontroversial.'⁵⁷ Rather, it was the public expression of the ideals of a politically motivated section of society.

It was generally held as a matter of national pride that Moore should be suitably commemorated in his native city. The correspondent in the *Irish Quarterly Review*, discussing the existing statues in Dublin – 'the English sailor in Sackville-street,' for instance – laments that, 'in the public streets we show ourselves to be the

⁵⁵ See Chapter Three, Section 1.

⁵⁶ Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture*, p. 86.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

flunkeys and slaves of fashion, to which we have been so often compared; and he who judges of Ireland and of its people by the street-names, and by the public statues of our metropolitan city, must assume that we possess no historic name to which we can point with pride.’⁵⁸ Not only would the Moore statue rectify this situation, it would do so in a manner that would unite both reformed and recusant in an ecumenical expression of pride in a certain vision of shared Irishness.

This shared Irishness was centred on Moore as the author of the *Melodies*, to the exclusion of Moore as the author of polemical history and religious controversy. The sentiments of the *Dublin University Magazine*, the mouthpiece of that stratum of society that took up the testimonial project, made this clear. While Moore’s prose consistently exasperated and offended the *Magazine*, the poetry, in particular the *Melodies*, was usually lauded because the tragic dignity it conferred upon Ireland chimed with its patriotic project. As discussed in Chapter Four, for the *Dublin University Magazine* and for the Protestant establishment as a whole, Moore’s prose betrayed the conciliatory promise of the *Melodies*. Part of the logic behind the erection of the statue was the excision of the prose, those expressions of his ‘political rabies,’⁵⁹ from the popular reputation.

This was the ongoing project of the *Dublin University Magazine*’s discussions of Moore: to dismiss the prose while elevating the poetry, to rehabilitate and reconstruct Moore as an Irish genius, a patriot-poet, who sadly erred in prose into worthless Catholic-nationalist propaganda. A pen-portrait of 1842 ends with this point:

In fine, then, with regret for his grievous perversion to unworthy and ephemeral subjects, of powers capable and intended for the highest efforts; with some indignation, too, at the unjust insinuations and false

⁵⁸ *Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3, no. 10 (June 1853), p. 495.

⁵⁹ In a *Dublin University Magazine* review of *The Fudges in England* Robert J. McGhee commented that ‘Mr Moore’s political rabies is incurable,’ Vol. 6 (September 1835), p. 297.

statements that have fallen from his pen as a historical and political writer; but with pride for our country, – pride in spite of these alloys, heartfelt and sincere – we take out leave of the poet of Lalla Rookh and the Melodies.⁶⁰

After Moore's death this point could be made even more strongly, as in the review of the *Memoirs*, in which Moore's politics are portrayed as an affliction, never an affiliation:

The detestable politics of the Irish Catholics were Moore's perpetual torment and curse. He felt their meanness and their mischiefs, but yet he never succeeded in relieving himself from them. He thought that in his poetry they formed a part of his inspirations. It seems to us, that they greatly deteriorated his poetry by perpetual allusions, and by his never looking at his popular subject, without some reference, more or less direct, to the insane politics of Dublin and its wretched parties.⁶¹

Thus the reputation of Moore is brought to rest almost solely on the *Melodies*, a verse equivalent of the 'green spot of neutral ground, where all parties may meet in kindness, and part in peace,' that Ferguson apotheosised in his review of Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy*.⁶² The statue of Moore was intended as a permanent public rendering of this aspect of the reputation, as a long article tellingly entitled 'Testimonial to the Poet Moore' made clear:

Of this meeting [in Charlemont House], whether we regard its object, its happy combination of Irishmen of the most diversified sects and parties, its subdued tone of elegant admiration of Moore, of educated feeling and warm zeal in its particular object, we can only speak in terms of approbation and pleasure. There are, unhappily, so few rallying points for all men in Ireland, at least so few made available, that it was cheering to find one 'green spot' not in 'memory's waste,' but of actually living verdure, and almost of spontaneous growth – illuminated by the rays of chastened feeling and genial warmth – gladly seized on as a neutral ground of co-operative assembling for an ultimate purpose of national honour – that we record the day, as Romans did in their calendars their festive occasions, *cum alba nota*,

⁶⁰ 'Our Portrait Gallery – No. 29, 'Thomas Moore,' *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. 19 (April 1842), pp. 476 – 79; p. 479.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 41 (January 1853), p. 103.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Vol. 3 (1834), p. 467.

not only as a pleasing retrospect for the past, but of cheering promise for the future.⁶³

Moore's popularity is thus employed as a vehicle for a wider cultural project:

Great as is our admiration of Moore, proud as we feel of our illustrious fellow-countryman, we do confess that the erection of a testimonial to him in his native city, is fourfold enhanced in interest to us by the great opportunity it affords for all Irishmen to rally together, and to regenerate that spirit of wholesome and self-respecting nationality, which is independent of, and superior to, mere forms of government; which springs from the heart and is nurtured by the intellect; which expands instead of contracting the sphere of our brotherly affections; possessing which no people can ever be despised; without which none can ever be respected.⁶⁴

Via the statue then, the once-dangerous Moore is supposed to become a symbol of this set of patriotic-unionist values. Putting the theory of this article into practice, those who met at Charlemont House effectively sanitised the author of such incendiary works as *Captain Rock*, *Fitzgerald*, and the *Travels* for present and future mass public consumption. This was achieved under the chairmanship of the Earl of Charlemont. Many of the most influential figures in Irish life lent their cultural weight to the project, each one echoing the sentiments of the *Dublin University Magazine*.⁶⁵ The MP Maziere Brady emphasized that it was a matter of national pride that a statue should be erected: 'Where in all the world should such a memorial be erected, if not in the capital of that country whose genius he has immortalized – to the music of which he has given imperishable existence, by associating with it his unrivalled lyrics, and for whose song he has achieved that great glory and renown

⁶³ Ibid., Vol. 39 (May 1852), pp. 656 – 62; p. 657.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 658.

⁶⁵ The secretaries elected at the inaugural meeting were George Mulvany, Charles Meara, and Samuel Ferguson. Among the speakers that day were Lord Chief Baron Pigot, George Petrie, Maziere Brady MP, Thomas O'Hagan QC, Lord Talbot de Malahide, the barrister John Francis Waller, Lord Milltown, Sir George Hodson, a Mr Fitzsimon (O'Connell's son-in-law), Lord William Fitzgerald, Sir Thomas Esmond, and Sir William Rowan Hamilton. See James Burke, *The Life of Thomas Moore: Centenary Edition* (Dublin, 1879), 'The Charlemont House Meeting in 1852', pp. 234 – 45.

which in his hands it has attained (cheers)?’⁶⁶ Thomas O’Hagan concurred, adding that the Moore statue would inaugurate a new sense of Irish self-worth and self-reliance:

Unfortunately, my lord, we in Ireland have been hitherto liable to the reproach of being classed among those who have been called *incuriosi suorum* – careless of the men who have lived and laboured for us, and too prone to look beyond ourselves for objects of love and reverence. Glancing at the monuments in the streets of our beautiful city, which attract the notice of the stranger, we see great men worthily glorified; but these monuments stand forth, as it were, in silent condemnation of us for rejecting the children of our own soil; and they would seem to indicate either that there have been no Irishmen deserving of public honour, or that in Ireland the only man who ought to be unhonoured is an Irishman (loud cheers). I trust and hope the time is gone when that reproach can be applied to us.⁶⁷

According to Lord Milltown, Moore was among the first to inculcate this sense of Irish dignity: ‘While his hand struck the chords of the harp, singing the departed glories of his native land, it was not accompanied by any of the tones of the slave.’ For this reason, Moore was ‘not only a poet, but also in the truest and fullest sense of the word, an Irish patriot (loud cheering).’⁶⁸ Underlining the contention that Moore’s poems were a vital element in a much wider set of cultural endeavours in Ireland, Sir William Rowan Hamilton likened the role of his mathematical work to that of the *Melodies*: ‘Obscurely toiling, as I habitually do, in the deep recesses of science ... the aims of both of us have been, thus far at least, the same – that each has sought to draw more close the links that connect Irishmen together, by doing each what in him lay, for the fame of our common country (loud applause).’⁶⁹

The statue was finally unveiled on 14 October 1857. Its location was College Green, a diplomatically neutral spot, unlike the previous suggestions of St Patrick’s

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 238.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 239 – 40.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 241.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

Cathedral and Leinster Lawn; the *Dublin University Magazine* correspondent noting that: ‘The organisers of the present movement has wisely avoided, for the public testimonial, either cemetery or church.’⁷⁰ A huge crowd turned out to celebrate the new bloodless version of their national poet, some clambering lampposts, others fringing the roofs of the surrounding buildings, the Bank of Ireland, Trinity, and the tall houses opposite. Lady Morgan’s niece, Mrs Inwood Jones, described the scene to her aunt in London:

The inauguration of Moore’s statue was a curious sight; and I believe that in no town in Europe could there have been another like it. Conceive of a *mob* of, I should think, six thousand persons, collected, *perfectly* well disposed, and, I must say, far more *civil* and courteous than an *English* mob, for José and I *passed* through it (being separated from our gentlemen) without the *slightest* annoyance or pressure. We were at last discovered by Papa, who, in his capacity of steward of the committee, marshalled us up, with his long white wand of office, to seats near Lady Charlemont and Lord Carlisle. Conceive all this in the open streets, the gentlemen with their hats off, and the ladies in the most charming of light dresses.⁷¹

For this witness, the most impressive speaker on the day was Thomas O’Hagan; she imagined he was the equal of Curran or Grattan. In his oration he depicted Moore as one who would unite admirers across confessional and political differences in the name of inclusive Irish weal:

...though honest difference in action and manly assertion of conflicting views, on questions of public moment, may prevail amongst us, we have a common country in whose honour we have a common interest and ought to have a common pride (loud cheers). The celebration which has gathered this great assembly is of happy auspice, for it indicates the growth of a wider and healthier public sentiment, and proves that we can combine, at least to cherish the memory of genius which was all our own, “racy of the soil,” and instinct with the spirit of the people (cheers). The genius of Moore was such.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. 39 (May 1852), p. 659.

⁷¹ Quoted in *Lady Morgan’s Memoirs*, Vol. 2, pp. 538 – 39.

⁷² Quoted in Burke, *Life of Thomas Moore*, p. 247.

O'Hagan acknowledged that there were elements in Moore's *oeuvre* that were less than conciliatory – 'If we were here to criticise, some of us – and I should be of the number – would find matter to disapprove in his writings, his opinions, and his life' – but this is glossed over as a very particular version of Moore is being celebrated:

Fitly, therefore, even without reference to his achievements in other fields of intellectual action (for, in this place, and on this occasion, I choose to regard him as the poet of Ireland) do we honour him who has so honoured us.⁷³

According to Lady Morgan's reporter, 'The crowd dispersed in perfect good humour,' clearly satisfied with the new addition to the city streetscape. She herself was far less impressed: 'When all this was over, and the statue uncovered, I could not help thinking that it was the least inspiring object I ever saw. It is almost *grotesque*, and might be any one else than little Moore.'⁷⁴

Despite the public approbation and the high-minded speeches, there was a great deal of controversy leading to this unsatisfactory statue. The 1852 meeting at Charlemont House launched a competition for the Moore memorial. Two artists quickly emerged as the leading contenders, Christopher Moore (1790 – 1863) and John Hogan (1800 – 1858). Both had influential patrons. Moore was a specialist in portrait busts and had modelled likenesses of Sir Philip Crampton, the Surgeon-General, in 1833, and Lord Charlemont in 1842, both of whom were on the testimonial committee. He had also exhibited a bust of Thomas Moore in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1834, where he was a member.⁷⁵ In Hogan's corner was Lord Cloncurry, yet another a committee member. Hogan had sculpted *Hibernia with a*

⁷³ Ibid., p. 247; p. 249.

⁷⁴ *Lady Morgan's Memoirs*, Vol. 2, p. 540. Terence de Vere White mistakenly attributes these comments to Lady Morgan herself (*Tom Moore*, p. xii).

⁷⁵ Anne Crookshank, *Irish Sculpture from 1600 to the Present Day* (Dublin: Department of Foreign Affairs, 1984), p. 34.

bust of Cloncurry in 1844, a tribute to his patron's patriotism. Initially the sculptor, who had trained with the great Antonio Canova, was disinclined to enter the competition, but Cloncurry – and his money – changed his mind. On 14 March 1853 Cloncurry wrote to him:

Interest is making to erect some kind of Testimonial to Moore – perhaps a statue. His namesake has great influence with Sir Philip Crampton and others, and for a bust he is first rate. I, however, think that no person but you could do justice to a statue for the Poet of Ireland, therefore stir yourself. I will give £100 if you get the job – only £50 for anyone else.⁷⁶

Unfortunately for Hogan, Lord Cloncurry died on 28 October 1853, and the commission was awarded to his rival. Almost every commentator on the controversy has preferred Hogan's model to Moore's – for Jeanne Sheehy the winning entry, 'has deservedly been an object of derision ever since it was put up in 1857.'⁷⁷ According to the *Dublin Builder*, the public liked Hogan's model, but the memorial committee – under Charlemont's chairmanship – apparently did not.⁷⁸ The rejection is said to have broken Hogan's heart, and hastened his death the following year.⁷⁹

If Christopher Moore's statue could be 'any one else than little Moore,' Hogan's was by all accounts uncanny in its accuracy in capturing the subject. His friend, William Carleton, who had himself seen Moore in performance, was the most effusive in his praise of Hogan:

⁷⁶ Quoted in John Turpin, *John Hogan: Irish Neoclassical Sculptor in Rome 1800 – 1858, A Biography and Catalogue Raisonné* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), p. 102.

⁷⁷ Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past*, p. 52. A photograph of a plaster model of Hogan's design is reproduced on p. 56. The plaster statuette was presented to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1969. A bronze cast has since been made of it.

⁷⁸ *Dublin Builder* (1 April 1859).

⁷⁹ *The Irish Builder* (15 September 1865). According to William Carleton, 'Such was his sensitiveness to insult and what he knew to be deliberate injustice and jealousy, that, on finding his beautiful model for the Moore Testimonial rejected, he was seized with an attack of apoplexy, and were it not that the blood fortunately rushed in torrents from his nose, he would have died of their enmity (*The Life of William Carleton, Being His Autobiography and Letters; And an Account of His Life and Writings, From The Point At Which The Autobiography Breaks Off*, by Daniel J. O'Donoghue (London, 1896), pp. 269).

Whether John Hogan ever saw Thomas Moore or not I cannot say – but this I can say, that the model which he conceived and executed for his monument would have given Moore to the world in the very fervour of inspiration with which he usually concluded his own songs. He (the poet) stood, in Hogan's model, with the lyre in his hand – his eyes turned up to Heaven – his whole countenance rapt, inspired.

The intensity of Carleton's praise of Hogan is matched only by his excoriation of Moore and the committee:

Well, I need not tell the public that the clique rejected this beautiful emanation of genius, and that in its place was substituted, in the vile spirit of one of the vilest jobs that ever disgraced the country, such a stupid abomination as has made the whole kingdom blush with indignation and shame. The statue of Moore in College street is an insult to taste – to the present state of the arts – to the very progress of civilization – to his native city of Dublin, and to his country at large.⁸⁰

Another matter compounded the opprobrium Christopher Moore had to endure. Strangely, given Moore's immense popularity and the numbers that turned out for the unveiling, the subscription list for the statue itself was poorly supported. The *Irish Quarterly Review* bemoaned the fact that, though Moore's readers numbered millions, there were only 'a few thousand subscribers'. The resulting statue, it claimed, would 'stand before the world a disgrace to Ireland; not a testimony of honour to the genius of the Poet, but the recording mark of Irish ingratitude, of Irish lip homage, and of Irish apathy'.⁸¹ What this meant, in practical terms, was that there were not funds

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 267 – 68. Hogan's biographer, John Turpin, has compared his model of Moore to the work of the great John Henry Foley, apropos which, Carleton records this amusing anecdote: 'Foley always considered his statue of Goldsmith, outside Trinity College, Dublin, his best work. A friend of his who had just returned from a visit to Dublin, asked of him, –

"Is not that statue of Goldsmith, near Trinity College, one of your works?"

"It is," replied Foley.

"Well," said his friend, "I don't consider it is in your best style."

"Indeed," said Foley, "it rather pleased me."

"There is too much drapery about it for one thing," said the other.

"Perhaps there is," answered the modest artist.

"He seems rolled up in a blanket, for one thing –"

"Wait a moment," said the sculptor: "What statue do you speak of?"

A few words of explanation soon made it clear that it was the Moore statue that was being alluded to. This has no inscription upon it, the people responsible for its execution being ashamed of it.' Quoted in *John Hogan*, p. 267 n. 1.

⁸¹ *Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 3, no. 10 (June 1853), p. 495.

enough to cast the work in expensive bronze, and a cheaper substitute was found – with astonishing results, as a correspondent to the *Daily Express* revealed in 1879:

Sir – It seems to me rather surprising that the fact was known to so few of the Moore Statue being composed of zinc. Some years since, happening to be in company with some well-known archaeologists, one of the number, whose information on all matters connected with literature and public monuments, from round towers to statues, is well known, told the following about the Moore Statue – “The committee, finally despairing of being able to raise the Moore Statue fund to the required amount, closed the subscription, and were compelled to get it executed in zinc. Strange to say, poor Moore was “executed,” so to speak, more than once, for on the morning that the effigy was being hoisted on the pedestal the rope slipped up on his shoulders, and before it could be stopped had tightened round the neck and literally cut the head off. It was soldered on, and the great heat of the sun caused the solder in time to yield, and that is the reason that the head now droops forward, as you see it, looking down on you. The affair was only known to a few, and likely never will be to many. I remember well what a hearty laugh the recital caused, and the matter had escaped my memory until recalled to recollection by the letters in the public Press during the last few days.”⁸²

The centenary (1879) and after

The letters mentioned by this last correspondent refer of course to the centenary celebrations of Moore’s birth. Moore had been popular in the United States since touring there in 1803 and his memory was kept alive by Irish emigrants. His centenary was celebrated in San Francisco, Boston, and New York.⁸³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, too elderly to leave Concord, sent his regrets to the Boston celebration: ‘I cannot forget how much delight I have owed in old years to the genial verses of Moore, and he well deserves, and will long hold, his charm for his country and ours.’ In New York’s Central Park ‘The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick’ erected a bust of Moore by D.B. Sheahan.⁸⁴ In England, Samuel Carter Hall published ‘A Memory of

⁸² *Daily Express*, (5 June 1879), p. 5.

⁸³ Gustave Vallat, *Etude sur la vie et les oeuvres de Thomas Moore* (Paris, 1886), p. 231; 232.

⁸⁴ Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 636; p. 640, n. 16. The bust now stands in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

Moore’s currency among the Irish in Australia is examined by Frank Molloy, ‘The sigh of thy harp shall be sent o’er the deep’: the influence of Thomas Moore in Australia’ in Patrick O’Sullivan, ed. *The Creative Migrant* (London and Washington: Leicester University Press, 1994, 1997), pp. 115 – 32.

Thomas Moore,' the proceeds of which were added to a fund for placing a memorial stained-glass window in the church at Bromham, Wiltshire, in whose graveyard Moore is buried alongside his wife and two of their children. Other contributors to the window included Tennyson, Wilkie Collins, Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, H.R.H. Prince Leopold, the Provost of Trinity College, and the Attorney General for Ireland. The window was unveiled on 4 September 1879, the anniversary of Bessy Moore's death. A window featuring an image of the crucifixion had already been erected in her memory by a nephew; Moore's window at the other end of the church depicted the Day of Judgment and featured a quote from one of his *Sacred Songs*.⁸⁵

In Ireland, celebrations were also planned, and the inaugural meeting of the Centenary Committee took place on 20 February 1879 in the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor of Dublin presiding. Three points emerge from the Irish centenary celebrations: first, that Moore's reputation was exclusively based on the *Melodies*, the prose being forgotten; second, that despite the *Melodies*' enduring popularity, this reputation was in terminal decline; and third, that the statue that had stood for twenty-two years in College Street still deserved to be removed.⁸⁶

The *Irish Builder* printed the resolutions of the committee's first meeting, the principal one being: 'That the chief feature of the celebration shall be Irish music and the poetry of Moore.' Moore was thus seen as a quintessentially poetical, musical

Molloy also notes that a statue of Moore was erected in the city of Ballarat, seventy miles west of Melbourne. Sculpted by John Udney from Carrara in Italy, it was unveiled before 5,000 spectators in December 1889.

⁸⁵ See Jordan, *Bolt Upright*, p. 636; 'The Balfe and Moore memorial windows,' *Irish Builder*, Vol. 21, no. 465 (1 May 1879), p. 138; 'Moore, Thomas – Memorial window in Bromham Church, Wilts. Unveiled,' *Irish Builder*, Vol. 21, no. 474 (15 September 1879), p. 293; Daniel Ambrose, 'Thomas Moore: The Religion in Which He Died,' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol. 15 (January 1895), pp. 18 – 26.

⁸⁶ The *Irish Builder* reported the committee's intention that, 'if there were any funds remaining after the necessary expenses were settled, 'they should be devoted to the putting up of a new statue to Moore "if possible in substitution of that in College-street."' ('The Moore Centenary,' Vol. 21 (1 March 1879), p. 68.) The *Daily Express* of 27 May 1879 reported a similar motion. Debate ensued about the propriety of removing a monument erected by public subscription. The statue was of course never removed, although in 1859 its pedestal was redesigned (*Irish Builder*, 'Letter to the editor on the Moore testimonial. Pedestal No. 2!' Vol. 1, no. 3 (1 March 1859), p. 33).

figure, shorn of his achievements as a biographer, historian or controversialist. The programme of events for the 28 May 1879 confirmed this point:

Noon, oration [by Thomas O'Hagan, now Lord O'Hagan, the speaker who was instrumental in constructing a particular reputation for Moore in 1857], to be delivered in such public building as may be determined on. Afternoon, three to five o'clock, grand concert of music associated with Moore's works, the ode [specially composed by Denis Florence MacCarthy, and read by the Reverend Charles Edward Tisdall, Chancellor of Christchurch Cathedral] to be recited between the parts. Evening, half-past seven o'clock, a grand concert of a popular character, to consist exclusively of Moore's melodies, to be given in the Exhibition Palace.⁸⁷

In 1879 then, Thomas Moore was perceived as a musical phenomenon whose filigree verses had a non-denominational appeal.⁸⁸ As a pure poet his work was slipping from favour. He was snubbed by the Irish literary establishment, manifested in the redoubtable form of Edward Dowden. The Trinity professor declined to serve on the centenary celebration committee, opining instead that Moore was not 'in a high sense of the word "great"' nor was he worthy of 'national homage'.⁸⁹ Yet even as his reputation was reduced to that of melodist only, it stood in danger of being eclipsed altogether, for according to the nationalist *Young Ireland* magazine, 'To the generation of today Moore's Career and Works are but little known.'⁹⁰ Even the *Irish Melodies*, it declared, have gone out of fashion, 'and in upper-class circles, speaking

⁸⁷ *Irish Builder*, Vol. 21 (1 March 1879), p. 68. The *Memoir and Programme, with Book of Words* is in the Royal Irish Academy library, as is a *Catalogue of the Loan Collection of Relics of Thomas Moore* listing the letters, manuscripts, and pictures assembled for the celebrations.

⁸⁸ The emphasis on Moore's non-denominational appeal is a principal aspect of the posthumously constructed reputation. The tenor of much of the prose was inimical to such a reputation. It was therefore strategically forgotten in favour of the *Melodies*. Anyone drawing attention to this essentially sectarian element in Moore's work was quickly silenced, as a tantalising fragment in the *Irish Builder* suggests. A Professor Kavanagh is reported to have introduced 'an element of unpleasantness ... in respect to a matter which never should be alluded to at a meeting in which all, irrespective of sect or party, were supposed to be honestly exerting themselves to worthily honour Moore.' There is no evidence that any of the divisive prose in particular was referred to, only that the comment was most likely sectarian, and therefore at odds with the unifying version of Moore being invoked: 'We would conjure the celebration committee to resist to the utmost all and every attempt made to introduce mere party, political, and religious topics, so that the celebration may be truly all-embracing and national.' *Irish Builder*, Vol. 21 (15 March 1879), p. 94.

⁸⁹ Edward Dowden, *Letters of Edward Dowden and His Correspondents* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1914), p. 133, p. 135.

⁹⁰ *Young Ireland*, Vol. 5, no. 17 (26 April 1879), p. 268.

generally, he who would sing one of them must make up his mind to be received with a gentle lifting of eyebrows in polite surprise. Even among the middle and humble classes, still speaking generally, a song of Moore's is but rarely heard.'⁹¹

In order to rectify this, *Young Ireland* examined his life in eleven numbers, from 3 May to 12 July. The author of this series of articles, Thomas Sherlock, found two reasons for Moore's fall from favour. Both provided mandates for the magazine's project of inculcating Irish self-sufficiency. Firstly, English publications were flooding the Irish market and since, 'it is notorious that English literature for many years has been steadily depreciatory of Moore as a poet,'⁹² Irish opinion had been correspondingly swayed away from Moore. If the Irish publishing industry were more self-sufficient, he argued, Moore would be more popular. Thus the low esteem in which Moore was held was inherently critical of Irish people's insufficient nationalism.

The second reason for Moore's cultural diminution reflected more positively on the Irish people, but still contained an implicit warning about finishing what he started. If Moore's verses were deemed effete in comparison with the more muscular writings of 'Davis, Williams, MacCarthy, and their fervid colleagues of the Nation,' it was only because the context in which Moore wrote was completely different to that of the later writers: 'Moore was obliged to write chiefly for cold foreign readers, then even more disinclined than now to hearken to anything about Ireland unless praises of their own rule.'⁹³ Davis *et al*, on the other hand, were addressing a sympathetic native audience. Moore was therefore to be lauded for his service to Ireland, for even if he appeared timid, he nonetheless represented a first step towards a more emboldened nationalism. For *Young Ireland* then, because Moore is still the quintessential Irish

⁹¹ Ibid., Vol. 5, no. 18 (3 May 1879), p. 277.

⁹² Ibid., p. 277.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 278.

poet his standing can be read as indicative of vicissitudes in the advance of Irish nationalism.

For others, however, Moore was the antithesis of the quintessential Irish poet, and his was a baleful influence on a new type of nationalism in Ireland. John O'Leary, for example, was satisfied with Moore's demotion. In a lecture from 1886 entitled 'What Irishmen Should Know,' he said: 'Moore has, I think, been at first somewhat overrated, then in the Young Ireland period – for natural causes enough – somewhat underrated and is now, I fancy, fairly estimated.'⁹⁴

It was, however, O'Leary's would-be acolyte, W.B. Yeats, who did the most lasting damage to Moore's reputation. As John P. Frayne has noted, 'Because sentimental patriotism was his worst enemy, Yeats devoted much of his energies to dethroning Thomas Moore as Ireland's national poet'.⁹⁵ At twenty-four the self-appointed literature maven excluded Moore from an article on Irish balladeers. Knowing that this absence, and those of Charles Lover and Samuel Lever, would be remarked upon, Yeats opined that, 'They were never poets of the people. Moore lived in the drawing-rooms, and still finds his audience therein. [...] Ireland was a metaphor to Moore, to Lover and Lever a merry harlequin, sometimes even pathetic, to be patted and pitied and laughed at so long as he said "your honour," and presumed in nowise to be considered a serious or tragic person.'⁹⁶

But Yeats knew Moore was still popular in certain quarters and therefore could not strike him from the record so easily. As an activist in 1891 he almost dutifully recommended that the *Melodies* be included in a proposed Library of Ireland. The following year, however, saw the publication of 'To Ireland in the Coming

⁹⁴ Quoted in W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, Vol. 2, 1896 – 1900, gen. ed. John Kelly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 626, n. 9.

⁹⁵ Frayne, ed., *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats*, p. 36.

⁹⁶ 'Popular Ballad Poetry of Ireland,' *Leisure Hour*, November 1889, p. 38, quoted in Frayne, *ibid.*, p. 37.

Times,' a cultural credo and poetic manifesto that studiously ignored Moore as a precursor: 'Nor may I less be counted one / With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson'. By 1895 he felt brave enough to omit Moore from his lists of best Irish books published in the Dublin *Daily Express* and the *Bookman*.⁹⁷ The most significant blow came in 1895 when he published his anthology, *A Book of Irish Verse*. In the introduction, having dismissed Goldsmith, Swift, and Congreve, Yeats set about removing Moore from his new canon: 'Nor did the coming with the new century of the fame of Moore change matters for the better, for his Irish Melodies are to most cultivated ears but excellent drawing-room songs, pretty with a prettiness which is contraband of Parnassus.'⁹⁸ Only two songs are allowed merit: 'Oft in the Stilly Night' and 'At the Mid Hour of Night'.

Yeats's anthology was intended 'only a little for English readers, and not at all for Irish peasants, but almost wholly for the small beginning of that educated and national public, which is our greatest need and perhaps our vainest hope.'⁹⁹ It was thus at variance with much of the prevailing taste, as Lionel Johnson noted: 'He will certainly be massacred by a certain kind of Irish poet if he ever sets foot in Ireland again. And Moore's statue will certainly fall and crush him – or itself, which is vastly preferable!'¹⁰⁰ Johnson's quip is rich in meaning. First, it identifies Moore as the archetypal poetic irrelevancy in Yeats's conception of a new Irish literature; secondly,

⁹⁷ *Daily Express*, 27 February 1895 and the *Bookman*, October 1895. See Frayne, *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹⁸ W.B. Yeats, *A Book of Irish Verse: Selected from Modern Writers with an Introduction and Notes* (London, 1895), p. xiii. Yeats knew that he was being controversial, as an endnote makes clear. He quotes some lines from Moore's *Epicurean*, its translation into French by Théophile Gautier, and a translation back into English by Robert Bridges, saying that, 'If any Irish reader who thinks Moore is a great poet, will compare his verses with the results of this double distillation, ... he will be the less angry with the introduction to this book,' p. 250.

⁹⁹ Yeats, *ibid.*, p. xxvii.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865 – 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 146. Yeats maintained his antipathy to Moore and the Moore statue throughout his life. In 'On the Boiler' (1939) he echoed Stephen Dedalus in his reference to the testimonial as 'that cringing firbolg Tom Moore cast by some ironmonger.' Quoted in W.B. Yeats, *Explorations*, ed. Mrs. W.B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962, 1989), p. 409.

it demonstrates continuing aesthetic dissatisfaction with the statue; and thirdly, and most interestingly, it prefigures the conflation of reactions to the botched tribute with opinions about Moore's actual achievement.

Joyce, who was of course a great admirer of the *Melodies*, allows Stephen Dedalus to make such a conflation of statue, symbol and poet in *A Portrait*. The 'droll statue of the national poet of Ireland' functions as a symbol of congenital Irish wretchedness and stultification:

He looked at it without anger: for, though sloth of the body and of the soul crept over it like unseen vermin, over the shuffling feet and up the folds of the cloak and around the servile head, it seemed humbly conscious of its indignity.¹⁰¹

Stephen appears unaware that Moore's head owes its droop to an undignified accident that is more symbolic of the fissiparous nature of Irish cultural politics than it is of Moore's so-called servility. If, for Yeats, Moore had 'pitied and laughed at' Ireland, for Joyce, Moore was now the one to be pitied. But he was also to be gently laughed at, as in *Ulysses*, when Leopold Bloom mused that, 'They did right to put him up over a urinal: meeting of the waters.'¹⁰²

Patrick Kavanagh continued this conflation of statue, symbol and poet in his 1944 poem 'A Wreath for Tom Moore's Statue', in which, according to Antoinette Quinn, the statue is 'a monument to the mercenary caution of the Irish bourgeoisie'.¹⁰³ The poem is particularly apt for the present discussion because it pours scorn on the

¹⁰¹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; London: Paladin, 1990), p. 183.

¹⁰² James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922; London: Paladin, 1992), p. 205. Richard Ellmann records how the young Joyce and the Sheehys would invent new inscriptions for Dublin statues. Moore's 'roguish finger' (*Ulysses*, p. 205) inspired the legend: 'Oh! I know', *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 92.

¹⁰³ Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: Born-Again Romantic* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p. 291. Quinn notes that the original title of this poem was 'Statue, Symbol and Poet', p. 472, n. 71. Kavanagh did not edit Carleton's *Autobiography* until the end of his life, but he may well have been aware in 1944 of Carleton's discussion of the John Hogan-Christopher Moore controversy, and therefore less inclined than, say, Yeats or Joyce, to accept the statue as a reliable or at least fitting depiction of the poet.

manner in which a posthumous reputation can be employed and exploited to serve contemporary demands:

They put a wreath upon the dead
For the dead will wear the cap of any racket,
The corpse will not put his elbows through his jacket
Or contradict the words some liar has said.
The corpse can be fitted out to deceive –
Fake thoughts, fake love, fake ideal,
And rogues can sell its guaranteed appeal,
Guaranteed to work and never come alive.¹⁰⁴

What Kavanagh understood was that the Moore immortalised in College Street was an artificial figure invented by a consensus and utilised by factions in Irish culture. It is my contention that Moore's reputation has been based on this reduced version since the period immediately after his death and that this version is defined by the elevation of the *Melodies* and the expurgation of the prose. This is the version of Moore that has held sway for most of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁵ Until Moore's prose is integrated in the *oeuvre* as a whole, estimates of this most influential figure will remain, in both senses of the word, partial.

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Kavanagh, 'A Wreath for Tom Moore's Statue', *The Complete Poems*, ed. Peter Kavanagh (Newbridge: The Goldsmith Press, 1972), p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ For other, less symbolic, twentieth-century estimates of Moore's reputation, see Chapter One.

Conclusion

For the past two hundred years, consensually agreed historical narratives and historical myths have served to unite disparate groups of people into functionally homogeneous entities known as ‘nations’.¹ Not only did Thomas Moore’s life (1779 – 1852) coincide with the emergence of Irish nationalism, but also aspects of his writing became part of the rhetorical and ideological *lingua franca* of that movement, to the extent that they became ‘part of the history of Irish nationalism.’² For this reason alone, Moore is perhaps the most important and influential figure in Irish literature in English in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As we have seen, however, Moore’s legacy consists of far more than an archive of icons and emblems to be plundered for the speeches of nationalist ideologues or the banners of their audiences. Throughout history, the creation of a national consciousness and the inculcation of legitimising narratives has invariably been a complicated, fractious process. In Ireland, the extraordinary appeal of Moore’s songs was gainfully employed to smooth away some of the jagged edges of this process, but his prose, on the other hand, which consistently highlighted debates and controversies, was generally suppressed by the demands of the national narrative. As

¹ See, for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). For the case of Ireland in particular, see John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), and D.G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

² Deane, ‘Thomas Moore’, *Field Day Anthology*, p. 1053.

Roy Foster has remarked, ‘One of the marks of maturity in Irish historical studies has been a growing interest in pinpointing discontinuities rather than ironing out elisions.’³ Moore’s prose offers us a perspective on such discontinuities, and is thus of vital importance to our understanding of the complexities of the period in which he wrote.

The debates and controversies that Moore drew attention to in his prose were at once political, historical, and literary. The detailed literary history of the prose undertaken in this thesis has shown the extent to which Moore’s political allegiances infuse his ostensibly historical writings. It has been shown that 1823 was a watershed year for Moore, that after this time he was emboldened by the increasing imminence of Catholic Emancipation, and that this profoundly informed his writing. *Captain Rock*, in its explanation of Ireland’s history of rebellion and its attack upon Church of Ireland tithes, was part of, and a result of, the wider political question of Emancipation. Similarly, the biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan altered materially with changes in Moore’s politics, eventually evolving into a veiled exposition of the historical origins of Catholic discontent and a prescriptive commentary on the political situation of the mid-1820s. But as an advocate of Emancipation, Moore was not necessarily a follower of the emancipist Daniel O’Connell. Indeed, their relationship is perhaps emblematic of what might be termed the uneasy intersection of literature and politics in the period, for while the latter would quote liberally from the *Melodies* in his speeches, the many caustic remarks and asides in Moore’s *Letters* and *Journals* revealed their author’s deep mistrust of his admirer’s methods.

³ R.F. Foster, *The Oxford History of Ireland*, p. v.

The biography of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was likewise concerned with the debates of the day, in particular the questions of Reform and Repeal. Yet again, Moore's private remarks identified the individual Whig personalities behind the contemporary political issues which nuanced the work. Moore's volatile relationship with figures such as Lords Russell and Holland expressed itself not only in the politics of *Fitzgerald*, but also in the manner in which that volume marked the end of his direct parliamentary influence. In the same terms, his next important book, the *Travels*, as a direct response to the phenomenon of the 'Second Reformation', was politically motivated in its own way.⁴ So too was the *History of Ireland*, for even to attempt to write a distinct, national history of Ireland in this period was to imply seditiously the existence of an Irish nation.

But what is perhaps most interesting about the questions that Moore's prose illuminates is the fact that these debates cannot be discussed in either an exclusively Irish or British context. Moore is the intermediary figure *par excellence* for revealing the exchange, the continuities, and the subtle gradations of difference between Britain and Ireland at this time, for even as he lived close to the heart of the British establishment, he was not of it; and while his political lodestar was the cause of Ireland, he resisted the arguments of its most influential ideologues. Moore thus occupied an anomalous position, privy to the inner mechanics of the political life of the two islands, yet inclined to an outsider's view of both. As we have seen, this outsider's view found its expression not in the more famous verse, but almost entirely in the prose.

As well as encompassing a range of political issues, Moore's prose also exhibited a range of genres. The *History of Ireland* was perhaps his most orthodox

⁴ Moore, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 787: 'He [O'Connell] appears also to have forgotten my last work, which, though as regards the rest of the world theological, is in its bearings on the popular cause of Ireland deeply political, and so was viewed by enemies who understood me'.

and least successful project, due largely to difficulties inherent in Irish historiography at this time. The other prose works, however, avoided certain pitfalls in writing about the Irish past by their indirect or partial approaches to the subject. This calls into question the nature of the relationship between genre and subject, for the more Moore artfully blurred genre divisions, the more successful was his accommodation of the peculiarities of his Irish themes. Does this suggest that certain established forms were fundamentally unsuited to depicting nineteenth-century Ireland? Does this help us to account for the odd nature of the Irish novel in the period? And if a work like the *Travels* could be read completely differently in Ireland than in England, are our received taxonomies of genre still meaningful? Moore's prose sheds new light on these important questions.

Moore's negotiation of genre conventions in these works also provides alternative models for considering Irish history, for as Tom Dunne argues, 'if all history is a form of fiction, so too, all literary fictions are a form of historical evidence.'⁵ While none of the prose works examined is purely fictional, they all employ certain techniques of fiction. For example, the literary device of a transhistorical 'Captain Rock' allowed Moore to graft a structure onto a fractured Irish past. Similarly, the biographies exploited the looseness of their genre to refract a series of contemporary and historical debates through the lens of a central figure. The *Travels*, once again somewhat anomalous, was also generically innovative, freighting a satiric frame-story with a serious discussion of doctrinal issues.⁶ For this reason,

⁵ Tom Dunne, 'A polemical introduction: literature, literary theory and the historian', *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence*, ed. Tom Dunne (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), p. 3.

⁶ The technique of freighting a satiric frame-story with serious discussion was more successfully employed in *Captain Rock*. Indeed, *Captain Rock* is probably the most interesting of Moore's prose works and its increasing centrality in studies of the period surely warrants its re-publication in a modern edition with full scholarly notes and introduction.

then, these works, occupying the interstices between literature and history, provide unique and valuable historical evidence.

As we have also seen, attitudes expressed towards Moore's prose also constitute interesting historical evidence. Its existence was elided from his posthumous reputation because the version of Moore to which it attested was incompatible with the needs of various groups. Despite their political differences, these groups found the version of Moore the melodist amenable to their cultural projects in a way that Moore the prose writer was not. Thus, the literary history and genre analysis of Moore's prose undertaken in this thesis informs our understanding of at least three periods in Irish cultural history. First, it reveals Moore as a prose writer as well as a poet, and in so doing offers alternate viewpoints on a range of issues from the early nineteenth century. Second, the elevation of the *Melodies* and the concomitant suppression of the prose in the later part of the century reveal how the generations after Moore's death deliberately invented a particular canon of Irish literature to meet their own political and cultural exigencies. And third, turn-of-the-century revival writers subsequently inherited the version of Moore the melodist that had been literally put on a pedestal at College Green, only to react against what their predecessors had celebrated. The continuing demise of Moore's critical reputation in the twentieth century is thus emblematic of the influence of this group's orthodoxies, and Yeats's dicta in particular. In rejecting the received, canonical versions of Moore, this thesis invites a much fuller appreciation of the political and cultural context of which he was such a vital, ubiquitous part, but also begs the question as to which other writers have been forgotten or misrepresented in the canon-forming process.⁷

⁷ In a similar process, in *Nationalism and Minor Literature* David Lloyd uses the case of James Clarence Mangan to interrogate the criteria of the inventors of the canon of Irish national literature.

Inevitably, such a question has ramifications for Irish Studies in particular, but also for Romanticism in general. In terms of the first discipline, a new appreciation of Moore's complex achievement, one that includes both the verse and the prose, can interrogate the genre divisions that have traditionally obtained. If Ireland's 'national poet' is revealed as a prose author of considerable repute and versatility, he can perhaps serve as a paradigm for the re-examination of other writers whose 'uncharacteristic' work has been traditionally neglected. Likewise, if literary histories similar to this thesis uncover forgotten writers or, as in the case of Moore, demand a reassessment of familiar ones, this will not serve merely to invert or inflate reputations, nor will it, as Marilyn Butler argues, be a matter of enlarging the canon by one name.⁸ Instead, it will transform our appreciation of the whole Romantic canon. As Butler writes:

The relations between texts are always of crucial significance, but it was left to twentieth-century scholars to claim that only major texts and major authors have meaningful relations. Keats now communes too often with Shakespeare, Wordsworth with St Augustine, everyone with the Bible. However much an artist is indebted to the mighty dead, he or she almost certainly borrows more from the living – that is, from writers no longer available for reading except in the better libraries. In the end, evaluation itself is threatened: how can you operate the techniques for telling who a major writer is, if you don't know what a minor one looks like?⁹

Butler's example as a corrective to this process is Robert Southey, but Moore could have been chosen as profitably. In recent months, for example, Jeffrey Vail has shown that Moore was the single greatest literary influence on Lord Byron.¹⁰ Many more of Moore's relationships, personal and intertextual, with writers and political figures will emerge in the coming years if he is subjected to the sustained scholarly examination that is so long overdue.

⁸ Butler, 'Repossessing the Past', p. 83.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 70 – 71.

¹⁰ Vail, *Byron and Moore*, p. 189.

Finally, then, this study began with a quotation and finishes with the same one. Moore, wrote Wilbraham Fitzsimon Trench, ‘enjoyed such widespread contemporary fame as was seldom the lot of any poet, and then, having risen ever so high, he was afterwards to fall ever so low in the regard of later generations.’¹¹ In the light of the arguments of this thesis, Trench’s comments warrant two particular revisions. First, we have seen that Moore’s ‘contemporary fame’ was based on far more than the poetical achievement, and that the prose works were, in most cases, enormous critical and commercial successes. And second, Moore did not simply *fall* ever so low after his death; it would be more accurate to suggest that he was pushed. In the years to come, with the bicentenary of the first number of the *Melodies* approaching, the findings of this thesis must be included in the construction of a new reputation for Moore, and a revised account of nineteenth-century Irish literary history.

¹¹ Trench, *Tom Moore: A Lecture*, Preface.

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Irish Ecclesiastical Record (Dublin)

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Irish Quarterly Review (Dublin)

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Monthly Review

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