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An 'Unburied Corpse': The 1798 Rebellion in Fiction 1799–1898

Jim Shanahan

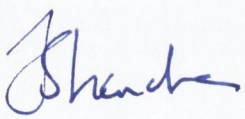
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Doctor of Philosophy

April 2006

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Declaration

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This is for you, Mam.

Dedicated to the memory of my mother,

Breda Shanahan (née Egan)

who always believed.

Summary

The 1798 rebellion is arguably the most significant historical event in modern Irish history. It is an analogue not only of the contentious nature of Irish history but of the Irish historical experience itself, and its interpretation remains a controversial issue today. This thesis is concerned with novels written about the 1798 rebellion in the period 1799-1898. It argues as a general principle that these novels have a value as historical artefacts and as cultural snapshots, both of changing interpretations of 1798 and of the society that produced them. It traces the ways in which the rebellion was represented and interprets the novels within the context of their own times and as a narrative thread in the 'matrix of memory' of 1798.

The rebellion was the most popular Irish historical topic of the nineteenth century in fiction. Traditionally, outside of a small number of canonical writers and texts, comparatively little attention has been paid to the nineteenth-century Irish novel and its writers, and this has led to a situation where the work of non-canonical novelists has been dismissed as irrelevant, unimportant or as an inferior precursor to the literature of the Irish Literary Revival. In showing that these novels have something significant to say about the 1798 rebellion, questions must inevitably be raised about the Irish literary canon itself.

The earliest fiction about the rebellion, written before the advent of Walter Scott's *Waverley*, tended to portray 1798 as inspired by the evil doctrines of the French Revolution, making no allowance for the particular historical circumstances of Ireland. Enlightenment writers placed varying degrees of emphasis on historical context but where a historical consciousness was evident, it manifested itself largely as a suspicion of the motivations of historians. There is also evidence in the early decades of an assertive Catholic voice, although this was broadly conservative in tone. In contrast, the 1820s saw attempts by Irish novelists to put the rebellion into an historical context, but the Scott historical model forced writers to look for resolution and compromise where there was none and highlighted the difference between the Irish and British historical experience.

Catholic emancipation introduced some element of resolution into Irish history and retrospectively validated one of the key reasons for the rebellion, but it also created concern among some who were unsure what emancipation would ultimately bring. One

dominant consequence of this was that writers with these concerns interrogated the novel form, rejecting the thesis of compromise put forward by both the national tale and the Scott historical novel. These concerns also allowed for the development of the 'alternative rebellion' strategy, where an idealised rebellion was put forward in place of the actual one. Such narratives reflected an uneasy feeling that a glorious opportunity to address the problems of Ireland had been missed in the 1790s, and it also provided an outlet for a form of eighteenth-century patriotism that survived Union and the political and social crises of the nineteenth century.

By 1870 the first unapologetically nationalist accounts of 1798 had appeared in fiction and the three decades up to the centenary saw the emergence of a new orthodoxy about the rebellion. This orthodoxy assumed that the nationalist interpretation of the rebellion was correct. The main historiographical conflict evident in this period is between competing nationalist interpretations of the rebellion, which broadly reflected the tensions between the Fenians and the Catholic church. Unionist novels confirmed the existence of this new consensus by largely avoiding grand narrative accounts of the rebellion, concentrating instead on personal experience and on suggesting strategies for Ireland's future within the Union. Presbyterian writers of this period also evinced no desire to write themselves out of the rebellion narrative, reminding readers that they were part of the Irish nation too, while also stressing that the reasons for rebellion in 1798 no longer existed.

An analysis of these novels reveals them to be, if not good history, then good historical material, in that they were engaged in playing out alternative scenarios, highlighting the good and bad elements of the rebellion, and suggesting strategies for the future. Arguing that it was essentially a political genre, this thematic study demonstrates that the great strength of the Irish nineteenth-century novel was the many and various uses to which it could be put, and that the novel form itself played a vitally important role in reflecting the way that historical events like 1798 were remembered, in that it was the ideal vehicle for conjoining history, tradition and imagination into one narrative whole.

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I have already had occasion, in remarking upon some extracts from a Journal, kept by one of my ancestors in the great Rebellion of 1641, to compare briefly the events of that period with those of 1798, and to show the family resemblance that existed between the two Rebellions. Both born in the perfidy of the government, and both nurtured into strength by its cruelties, they each ran the same career of blood, and each, in expiring, left its unburied corpse, to poison the two parties that still sullenly contended over it.

Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824)

PREFACE

Ardent Partisans? Fictional Histories and Historical Fictions

L'histoire est un roman qui a été; le roman est de l'histoire qui aurait pu être. (*'History is a novel that happened; the novel is history as it might have happened'*)

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Idées et Sensations* (1866)

Ardent partisans ... yielding to a political bias ... coloured narratives of these distracted times, and detailed events, rather as they wished they should have been, then in reality as they were.

William Hamilton Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* (1845)

The distinction between history and fiction may seem to be obvious – until one is forced to define it. In endeavouring to make a distinction the brothers Goncourt, for example, really only succeeded in reinforcing a relationship between history and the novel by defining one in terms of the other. While the use of imagination might be seen as the critical factor, historians, as William Hamilton Maxwell implies, are just as likely to create fictional histories as novelists are to create historical fictions.

Maxwell can at least claim to have made a distinction, for he was the author of both the *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* (1845) and a 1798 novel, *O'Hara* (1825). His novel is an exuberant vision of 1798 as a kind of American Revolution, luxuriating in the thrilling exploits of the rebel leader who was the eponymous hero of the novel. Maxwell's *Irish Rebellion*, written two decades later, is an altogether more sober affair, loyalist in tone and scathing of the rebels and their actions. The latter may have been the product of an older, more conservative writer, worried about the rise of nationalism and New Ireland, but the former work stands testament to a vision of 1798 as perhaps the younger Maxwell would have liked it to have been.

Which of these works best represents Maxwell's views? This thesis would suggest both of them, serving as they do different functions at different times. *O'Hara* cannot be regarded as a 'history' of the rebellion, but it is historical evidence of Maxwell's imaginative view of it at the time he wrote the novel. In this sense the novel is an historical artefact, and it plays a part in establishing the *mentalité* not just of individual writers, but of the ages in which they wrote.

The 1798 rebellion is a pivotal moment in modern Irish history: an explosive eighteenth-century *conjoncture* of radical and conservative influences that resulted in a summer of death and destruction that had few if any parallels in Europe during the Napoleonic period. In the two hundred years since, the rebellion has proven to be the clearest example of the contentious nature of Irish history, capable of sustaining a range of often directly contradictory interpretations. The malleability of the past can be seen in the fact that both militant Irish republicanism and Orangeism, and their concomitant historical narratives, trace their origins to this period, and the unknowable nature of the future is clearly evident in that the eventual inheritors of those traditions would scarcely have been identified as such at the time.

In the nineteenth century the rebellion itself and the various interpretations placed upon it served not only as an indicator of how Irish history was a contested area, but also of the different ways in which history itself could be represented. As the century progressed, the dominant interpretation of 1798 moved from a view of it as a sectarian *jacquerie* rebellion towards what would become the standard nationalist interpretation as a glorious episode in the inexorable struggle towards national self-determination. The latter interpretation remained largely unchallenged in the first half of the twentieth century, but 1798's importance in current historiographical debates lies in the fact that, to paraphrase Kevin Whelan, it has never passed out of politics and into history.[1] How we interpret 1798 has an impact on how we view the past and on how we construct and interpret the present.

The notion of the present being in a dialogic relationship with the past is clearly shown in the controversies surrounding the bicentenary celebrations in 1998. Allegations were made by some historians that the official government interpretation of the 1798 rebellion was influenced by a need to construct a version that would facilitate and reflect the demands of the peace process on the island. One of the assumptions made by this thesis is that there is a dialogic relationship not just between the present and the past but

[1] 'The interpretation of 1798 was designed to mould public opinion and influence policy formation: the rebellion never passed into history, because it never passed out of politics'; see Kevin Whelan, ''98 After '98: The Politics of Memory', in Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp. 133-75; p. 133. This essay remains the most comprehensive account of the historiography of the 1798 rebellion and the most forceful articulation of the 'post-revisionist' interpretation of the events of the 1790s. As such, it will be referred to and quoted from extensively in this thesis.

with a whole succession of pasts – the period that makes up what can be described as historical memory – and that there is a fundamental difference between the event of the 1798 rebellion and the subsequent interpretations of it.

In recent years historians of all shades of opinion have written extensively about the history of memory and the politics of commemoration and what that has added to our understanding of how we 'remember' historical events.[2] Comparisons can now be drawn between the 1898 and 1998 commemorations of the rebellion. These events have become important evidence in tracing the influence of memory, in all its different manifestations, on our perception of the past in Ireland. As Ian McBride observes, the commemorations themselves have become historical forces in their own right.[3] McBride argues that 'Our understanding of such key moments as the 1798 rebellion, the Famine and the Great War is not static, but has been shaped by a complex interaction of individual actors, cultural patterns, social forces and technological developments'.[4] There is a growing consensus that the literature of any given period is vital to any comprehensive understanding of both the cultural dimensions of historical experience and intellectual patterns.[5] Historians are increasingly adopting a more holistic approach and are moving beyond traditionally utilised sources and investigating the impact of anniversary celebrations, public monuments, folk memory, ballads and literature on perceptions of the past. In this regard Neil McCaw has described prose fiction as 'an important cultural arena within which the revival, celebration, and invention of tradition can be witnessed'.[6]

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[2] As well as Whelan's ''98 After '98', two particularly relevant collections of essays on this topic in an Irish context are Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Laurence M. Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001). Joep Leerssen's *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) examines the importance of memory in Ireland in the nineteenth century while Tom Dunne's *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2004) explores the relevance of memory in the specific context of the 1798 rebellion. Roy Foster's essay 'Remembering 1798' appears in both McBride (ed.), *History and Memory* pp. 67-94 and Foster's own collection of essays, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (2001; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), pp. 211-34.

[3] Ian McBride, 'Introduction: Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland', in McBride (ed.) *History and Memory*, pp. 1-42; p. 2.

[4] Ibid., p. 3.

[5] See Dunne, *Rebellions*, p. 96; Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 2.

[6] Neil McCaw, 'Voicing Rebellion in Victorian Fiction: Towards a Textual Commemoration', in Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance*, pp. 159-74; p. 159.

It has been observed that the 1798 rebellion was 'fought twice: once on the battlefields and then in the war of words which followed'.[7] However, it is perhaps more correct to say that '1798' has continued to be fought repeatedly and on different fronts, using not just historical narratives but ballads, broadsheets, plays, newspapers, magazines, novels, visual art and civic monuments. The nineteenth-century idea of history as an objective discipline capable of recovering the 'true' past has gradually been replaced by a view that sees that past as essentially unrecoverable and as a constantly shifting construct. In this context novels are important as cultural snapshots of attitudes and perceptions of the time in which they were produced. If history is anything it must be a weave of many different threads, including historical fact, tradition and memory, allied to an imaginative input that allows meaningful connections to be made and reasonable conclusions to be drawn. The novel is a particularly effective device for conjoining tradition, memory, and imagination with historical narrative.

The 1798 rebellion was the most common Irish historical subject in novels of the nineteenth century.[8] This thesis studies the ways in which the 1798 rebellion was represented in novels from the period directly after the rebellion to the centenary of the rising in 1898. It is partly a recovery project, concentrating in the main on little-known or seldom-read texts, as it was in these that the topic tended to be addressed directly. Content, rather than any narrow judgement of literary merit, is the criterion for inclusion. This kind of thematic approach has also been used recently in areas such as the Union and the Famine, and James H. Murphy has argued that 'other topics, from rebellion to religion would repay equal attention'.[9]

There has been some work done on the way the rebellion has been represented in nineteenth-century fiction. Tom Dunne's 1990 article, 'Representations of 1798 in

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[7] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 133.

[8] The evidence for this claim comes from the database compiled by Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber for their forthcoming *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650-1900* (Dublin: Four Courts, forthcoming 2006); Stephen J. Brown's *Ireland in Fiction; A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances and Folk-lore* (1910; new ed. Dublin: Maunsell, 1919); and Eileen Reilly's 'Fictional Histories: An Examination of Irish Historical and Political Novels 1880-1914' (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1997).

[9] James H. Murphy, *Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History, 1791-1891* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003), p. 159. For thematic approaches to the Union and the Famine see Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870: Politics, History, and the Family from Edgeworth to Arnold* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Chris Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); and Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine 1845-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002).

Literature', concentrates on the major writers of the first decades of the nineteenth century, most of whom do not address the rebellion directly. Dunne stresses the coded nature of many of the references to 1798 in literature of the time, most notably in what he calls the 'secret sigh' in the poetry of Thomas Moore.[10] Dunne has rightly maintained that historians have neglected potentially vital literary evidence, and he has also investigated previously ignored Irish-language sources.[11] Eileen Reilly has adopted a 'non-canonical' approach in her study of Irish political and historical fiction published in the 1880-1914 period, and has published articles on fiction about 1798.[12] While Reilly in her work has endeavoured to trace the uses and content of Irish historical and political novels in general over a number of decades, this thesis is the first attempt to trace the representation of a single historical event of Irish history in fiction over an entire century.

For practical reasons, novels that were published outside of Ireland and Britain, with two exceptions, are not included in this study, primarily because there is no evidence that Irish or British editions of them were ever published. Accordingly, this study concentrates on 49 of the 61 known full-length novels in English that engage directly with the 1798 rebellion published up to and including the centenary year of 1898.[13] In all

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[10] Tom Dunne, 'Representations of 1798 in Literature', in F.B. Smith (ed.), *Ireland, England and Australia: Essays in Honour of Oliver MacDonagh* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1990), pp. 14-40; p. 28. Dunne concentrates on Maria Edgeworth, Charles Maturin, Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan), Thomas Moore and John Banim. Another article that reads the rebellion through a text that does not directly address the rebellion directly is Kathryn Kirkpatrick, 'Putting Down the Rebellion: Notes and Glosses on *Castle Rackrent*, 1800', in *Éire-Ireland*, xxx, 1 (Spring, 1995), 77-90.

[11] Tom Dunne, 'Subaltern Voices? Poetry in Irish, Popular Insurgency and the 1798 Rebellion', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxii, 3 (Nov., 1998), 31-44; '"Tá Gaedhil Bhocht Cráidthe": Memory, Tradition and the Politics of the Poor in Gaelic Poetry and Song', in Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance*, pp. 93-111; *Rebellions*, op. cit., pp. 172-80, 243-6.

[12] Eileen Reilly, 'Who Fears to Speak of '98? The Rebellion in Historical Novels 1880-1914', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxii, 3 (Nov., 1998), 118-27; and 'Rebel, Muse and Spouse: The Female in '98 Fiction', in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxiv, 2 (Summer, 1999), 135-54. These articles overlap with this study in the last two decades of the nineteenth century; see also her 'Fictional Histories', op. cit.

[13] This list of sixty-one novels is drawn in the main from a bibliographical list supplied by Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber from their database. Four novels known to have been published in Britain and Ireland during this period have not been considered as copies were not obtainable: J.J.R. Mountpleasant's *William Clarke. A Story of Ninety-Eight* (London, 1831); Anon., *Castle Martyr: A Tale of Old Ireland* (London, 1839); W.T. Townsend, *Wildfoot the Wanderer of Wicklow* (1875; repr. London, 1900); and James Murphy, *The House in the Rath* (Dublin, 1886). The other eight novels include one published in Australia, the anonymously-authored *Rebel Convicts: An Australian Novel* (Melbourne, 1858); and seven published in the USA: Adam Douglass (attrib.), *The Irish Emigrant: An Historical Tale Founded on Fact*, 2 vols. (Winchester VA, 1817); Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *Eva McDonald: A Tale of the United Irishmen and Their Times* (Boston MA, 1844); Anna Argyle [Margaret Wolfe Hungerford], *Olive Lacey: A Tale of 1798* (Philadelphia, 1874); C. O'Leary [Peter McGorry], *The Irish Widow's Son; Or, The Pikemen of '98. A Story of the Irish Rebellion, Embracing an Historical Account of the Battles of Antrim and Ballinahinch*

cases the editions used are the earliest available. Occasionally, subsequent editions are used for comparative purposes. Although this thesis resists the temptation to apply historical and literary theories mechanically, and cannot be read through any particular theory as such, it is informed by the broadly New Historicist notion that literature can be at its most enlightening when put into its own socio-historical context. It sees these texts not only as cultural artefacts, but as 'literature *in* history .... as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making, and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions of history'.[14] In particular, this thesis endeavours to consider these fictions as a narrative thread in their own right, weaving their way through both the history of the Irish novel and the historiography of the 1798 rebellion respectively. It also acknowledges, however, the concerns about the suitability of the nineteenth-century novel form as a means of expressing the Irish historical experience.

Given that this thesis deals with the representation and portrayal of a single historical event in a developing literary form over a century, it is divided into two parts. The first part provides important contextual information. Chapter one is an account of the causes, course and consequences of the rebellion, while chapter two considers the major historical narratives of the past two hundred years that have shaped the historiographical debate about the rebellion, together with an assessment of the major issues and controversies facing 1798 historians today.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with the novels themselves, opening with an introduction that considers the impact of the 1798 rebellion on the development of the nineteenth-century Irish novel, and outlines key developments in the critical assessment of the Irish novel of that period. The three following chapters divide up the one hundred years chronologically, the divisions occurring at moments deemed to be significant by the content of the novels themselves. Chapter three ends in 1830, the year after the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act: an event that symbolically, at least, challenged the prevailing notion of Irish history as circular and unresolved. This chapter is divided into two main sections, initially concentrating on novels written before the

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(Boston, 1869); John Frederick Smith, *Redmond O'Neill; Or, The Substance and the Shadow* (New York, 1875); Mary Andrews Denison, *Erin Go Bragh!* (Washington DC, 1879); and Frederick Whittaker, *Seamus O'Brien: A Tale of 1798* (New York, 1880).

[14] John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 3-4.

influence of Walter Scott's Waverley novels became apparent, and subsequently examining the influence and the difficulties of Scott's model in an Irish context. Chapter four examines the period 1831-69, ending in the year that the Church of Ireland was disestablished and another building-block of ascendancy rule was removed. The final chapter runs from 1870, the year the Home Rule Party was established and the first Land Act was introduced, up to the 1898 centenary. Finally, a conclusion considers the contribution of the rebellion novel in the context of the centenary commemorations and on the major rebellion fictions of the twentieth century.

Three major difficulties present themselves in relation to any work of this sort. The first is the relationship between nineteenth-century perceptions of history and its relationship with literature; particularly, in this case, with the novel. Central to this is the question of whether history was a scientific or a literary pursuit. Broadly, the nineteenth-century debate can be seen in terms of a tension between the scientific argument, as put forward by historians such as Leopold Von Ranke and J.B. Bury, and those who allowed for a greater imaginative element in historical narrative, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle. The 'scientists' stressed the primacy of historical documents, and believed that it was the object and achievable intention of history to see the past 'as it really was'. The 'imaginative' approach was defended by the great English historian G.M. Trevelyan, who argued that in its most important elements 'history is not a scientific deduction, but an imaginative guess at the most likely generalisations'.[15]

The polarity of these views was complicated by a number of factors. In reality it was impossible to make such a clear distinction. Arthur Marwick has observed that the desire to see the past 'as it really was' (in Ranke's famous phrase) had been one of the aspirations of the romantic imagination.[16] Marwick writes that the historical novels of Walter Scott had a 'profound direct influence' on Ranke and other historians.[17] There was actually a broad consensus that both scientific and literary elements were part of the historical process, and this is the assumption made about history in the nineteenth century here. The debate was primarily about the weight to be put on both elements. It is important to draw a distinction between what was perceived as good history then and

[15] Quoted in Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History* (1970; 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 67.
[16] Ibid., p. 40.
[17] Ibid.

what is useful to us now. While historians may never entirely agree that novels are good history, this does not stop novels being good historical material.

The second difficulty relates to the perception of how history works. The 1798 rebellion threw into relief the essential difference between the Irish and British historical experience, and whatever about the nature of history as a discipline, Ireland itself had no *agreed* history. Conservatives and radicals, unionists and repealers, Catholics and Protestants, antiquarians and 'scientific' historians, all differed in fundamentals. Resolution, agreement and compromise, cornerstones of the historical novel that Walter Scott gave to the world, were notable absentees from Irish historical debate in the nineteenth century. Indeed, bearing in mind the continuing controversy over the legacy of 1798 and the vastly different interpretations of the event, it is reasonable to argue that, just as 1798 never passed out of history and into politics, 1798 fiction never became 'historical' and remained 'political'.

A third obstacle is the relatively low status in Irish literary studies of the nineteenth-century Irish novel. Largely ignored by the Irish Literary Revivalists, who both dominate and helped to shape the Irish literary canon, the Irish novel was condemned as 'colonial' by many cultural nationalists. The absence of a truly great Irish novelist in the nineteenth century is often taken as confirmation that there is little of value to be gained from studying novels. Yet these assumptions are premature, to say the least. The work done by critics such as Katie Trumpener, Jacqueline Belanger, Claire Connolly, Ina Ferris and others on the early decades, and James H. Murphy and Eileen Reilly on the last decades of the nineteenth century, have revealed a deep and rewarding seam of material to be studied, not least for what it tells us about the society from which it emerged. However, as W.J. McCormack has acknowledged, there is still a lot of work to be done on Victorian Ireland,[18] and it may be premature to make generalised statements about writers who have yet to be the subject of sustained critical attention.[19]

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[18] W.J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* (1980; 2nd ed. Dublin: Lilliput, 1991), p. 250.

[19] It is important to acknowledge the recently published book of essays edited by Jacqueline Belanger, *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Facts and Fictions* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005), which contains contributions by Jacqueline Belanger, Ian Campbell Ross, Joep Leerssen, Claire Connolly, Emer Nolan, Margaret Kelleher, Norman Vance, Joe Cleary, Terry Eagleton, and David Lloyd, among others, and that has identified and opened up new and fruitful fields of enquiry. The volume was, however, published too late to merit a full consideration in this work.

Certain recurring themes and strategies do become apparent in the course of this study. The 'legitimacy' of both the rebellion and its leadership was a perennial concern, although the basis of and assumptions about this legitimacy changed as the century progressed. This concern merely reflected a much broader European political crisis in the nineteenth century. In the novels written directly after the rebellion, legitimacy was rooted in pre-French Revolution visions of society: in royalty and in the tacit authority of aristocratic cultures. These fictions correspond broadly to Michael McKeon's notion of conservative narratives, where 'inborn worth' is elevated to a higher status than talent.[20] For McKeon, the major movement of conservative narrative consists in 'a retrograde series of disenchantments with all putative revolutions'.[21] This remained the basis for many conservative and unionist perspectives on the rebellion in the nineteenth century. One of the ironies is that many nationalist or liberal fiction writers also used elements of conservative narrative to legitimise their versions of 1798: in these cases aristocratic legitimacy relied on a nationalist assumption that authority was vested in the old Gaelic aristocracy of Ireland. This was a view that could sustain nationalist, conservative and Jacobite sympathies. By the end of the nineteenth century, the nationalist version of legitimacy was the orthodox one.

The other clear strategy was largely employed by those who inclined towards a more progressive view, but who were concerned about a perceived lack of legitimacy for the rebellion that actually occurred. This was the 'alternative rebellion' strategy, which took two broad forms. The first form involved simply presenting a rebellion other than that which had actually taken place. The second form was more complex and involved a proposed alternative rebellion that for some reason failed to come to pass and in failing, created a vacuum in which the actual rebellion occurred. The alternative rebellion strategy allowed fiction writers to avoid uncomfortable questions about the 'actual' rebellion and to project onto the event their own idealised version, usually to suit their own political concerns. Such a strategy was able to contain many different impulses, and reflect many different political opinions. It was here that the 're-imagination' element of historical process becomes most disconnected from the more scientific 'reconstruction'

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[20] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 213.
[21] Ibid., p. 231.

function. It is difficult to make a case for these fictions as 'historical' novels: 'political' may be a more appropriate term, in that they were often concerned with making political rather than historical points. Ultimately, however, this thesis considers the novels discussed as products of their own particular historical moments and, collectively, as a significant element in what has been called the 'matrix of memory'[22] that surrounds the rebellion of 1798.

[22] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 135.

Part One: The Rebellion

CHAPTER ONE

The 1798 rebellion

Success attend you, sweet County Wexford/Throw off the yoke and to battle run;/Let them not think we gave up our arms/For every man has a pike and gun.

'Father Murphy' (*c.*1798)

To guard the faith which Luther preached/The rights which William won, /The Orangeman relies upon/His bible and his gun;/He prays for peace, yet war will face,/Should rebels congregate;/Like the brave Orange Yeomanry/Who fought in Ninety-Eight!

'The Orange Yeomanry of '98' (1882)

The road to rebellion

The 1798 rebellion remains a – perhaps *the* – pivotal moment in modern Irish history. It marked the culmination of a process of identifying the causes and potential remedies for the ills of Ireland produced by the Williamite settlement. It was also the starting point for many of the movements and modes of political thinking that came to dominate the politics of Ireland up to the present day.[1]

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[1] The most important recent general histories of Ireland referred to here include three volumes of *A New History of Ireland*: T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan (eds.), *A New History of Ireland IV: Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); W.E. Vaughan (ed.) *V: Ireland Under the Union, I: 1801-70* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) and W.E. Vaughan (ed.) *VI: Ireland Under the Union, II: 1871-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). Though dated in some aspects, these remain authoritative. The definitive one-volume history is R.F. Foster's *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (1988; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989) which in turn was influenced by J.C. Beckett's *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), as well as two other landmark works that shaped the direction of historical enquiry: L.M. Cullen's *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900* (London: Batsford, 1981) and F.S.L. Lyons' seminal *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971). Also useful as a general survey is T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin (eds.), *The Course of Irish History* (1967; rev. ed. Cork: Mercier, 2001). Another key work on the revolutionary period is R.B. McDowell's *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), and the period after the rebellion and up to the famine is well covered in Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh's *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848* (1972; repr. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990). There are very few modern histories of 1798 that deal with the rebellion in its entirety, and the account of the origins, progress and consequences of the events of 1798 that follows will necessarily reflect the interest (and prejudices) of the writer. In an attempt to minimise any particular bias this account will use a number of different sources that reflect the wide spectrum of opinion about the rebellion. Chief amongst these texts are Thomas Bartlett, Kevin Dawson and Dáire Keogh, *The 1798 Rebellion: An Illustrated History* (Boulder CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1998), one of the best accounts of the rebellion and its genesis, and Thomas Pakenham's *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (1969; repr. London: Orion, 1992). Attacked by some historians as too reliant and accepting of Sir Richard Musgrave's account and on official army reports, Pakenham's work remains the standard and the most complete account of the rebellion itself in its various spheres. Two other sources are extensively used here: Ruan O'Donnell's *1798 Diary* (Dublin: Irish Times, 1998), useful for its chronological approach to the rebellion, and Daniel J Gahan's *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798* (1997; repr.

The rebellion itself was the product of a series of factors that can be divided broadly into internal and external influences, and long and short-term events. The Williamite settlement of 1691 – the so-called 'Treaty of Limerick' – left Ireland essentially in the hands of a Protestant elite and came in the middle of a period that saw a massive change in land ownership from a mainly Catholic base to an almost entirely Protestant one.[2] This was facilitated both by land confiscations in the wake of the Jacobite wars and by the operation of a succession of Acts – the 'penal laws' – designed to reduce the influence and wealth of those who insisted in adhering to the Catholic religion and, to a lesser extent, those Protestants who refused to conform to the rites of the established church.[3] The question of how rigorously the penal laws were enforced and

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Dublin: O'Brien, 1998). The latter, as the authorised book of the National 1798 Visitor Centre in County Wexford, and as a joint publication of *Comóradh '98* and Wexford County Council, is the nearest to an official account of the rebellion. There are also several key studies concentrating on the various theatres of activity: for the rebellion in Wexford the standard work is Daniel J. Gahan's *The People's Rising: Wexford, 1798* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1995), while Liam Chambers' *Rebellion in Kildare 1790-1803* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998) concentrates on activity in that county. Wicklow is served by Ruan O'Donnell's *The Rebellion in Wicklow, 1798* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), while the northern rebellion is dealt with in detail in A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Summer Soldiers: The 1798 Rebellion in Antrim and Down* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1995). Where facts, figures and circumstances differ, alternative views will be highlighted in footnotes. Useful books of essays on the United Irishmen and 1798 include David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993); Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (eds.) *The Mighty Wave: The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts, 1996); Cathal Póirtéir (ed.), *The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Cork: Mercier, 1998), and the most recent landmark contribution to 1798 historiography, Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003), which contains thirty-three essays written by prominent historians of the period and which runs to over seven hundred pages. Other important works by Marianne Elliott, Nancy Curtin, Jim Smyth, Tom Dunne, Daniel Gahan and A.T.Q. Stewart will be cited at a later stage. It would be remiss here not to recognise the contributions of R.B. McDowell, Louis Cullen, Kevin Whelan, Ian McBride and Tom Dunne who, in a range of influential books and articles, have also shaped and influenced our understanding of the dynamics of the 1790s and the complex series of relationships involved and who have also helped to frame the parameters of the debate. See the bibliography for a comprehensive list of relevant articles.

[2] By the time of the Treaty of Limerick the percentage of Irish land owned by Catholics had already dropped from ninety percent at the end of the Tudor period in 1603 to just fourteen percent, a figure which was to drop to a mere five percent by the time of the relaxation of the penal laws in the 1770s. The chief reasons for the dramatic drop in the 1600s were the Ulster and Cromwellian plantations; see Ruth Dudley Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History* (1973; 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 177-8.

[3] The term 'Protestant' is problematic, sometimes serving as a generic term for the non-Roman Catholic Christian population, or alternatively serving to describe a member of the established (Anglican) church, as opposed to other non-Catholic Christian denominations. Attempts at consistency are not helped by the rather haphazard and inconsistent way it is often used both by the writers featured here and in the novels to be studied. It should be clear which particular group is being referred to from the context. Similarly, 'Dissenters' can be generally understood to refer to non-Anglican Protestants, who in the context of the 1798 rebellion are generally, but not always, Presbyterians. Where there is a clear need for a distinction it shall be made.

how effective they were on the ground is still a matter of debate amongst historians.[4] As the eighteenth century progressed these laws gradually fell into desuetude through a steady process of repeal and relief.[5] However, they had the effect of creating a three-tier society. At the top was what would become Jonathan Swift's 'Protestant nation', comprising those who had power, wealth and influence to varying degrees according to their station, and who were members of the established church. Occupying something that could be termed 'middle ground' was a second group, affected to some degree by penal legislation, who would become crucial, however, in the development of political radicalism and reform in the years to come. These were the Protestants who did not conform to the established church, the Dissenters, principally corresponding to the Presbyterians of the north of Ireland, but also including groups such as Quakers, Baptists, Independents, Huguenots, Palatines and other smaller sects.[6] The third grouping was the Catholics, comprising roughly 70% of the population, amongst whom even the elite could be potentially humiliated before the law.[7]

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[4] See Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), pp. 17-29 for a summary of differing views on the purpose and efficacies of the penal laws; see also Maureen Wall, *The Penal Laws, 1691-1760: Church and State from the Treaty of Limerick to the Accession of George III* (Dundalk: Dublin Historical Association, 1961); S.J. Connolly's *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982) and his *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

[5] From 1719 on a series of temporary acts granted a legal toleration to Dissenters. Thomas Bartlett writes that the penal laws were generally a failure from the 1730s on, becoming 'little more than an intolerable system of petty oppression'; see Bartlett, *Fall and Rise,* p. 29.

[6] See Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1996) and T.P. Power and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990). See also J.C. Beckett, 'Eighteenth Century Ireland', Introduction to Moody and Vaughan (eds.) *A New History of Ireland IV*, pp. xliv-xlv: 'in Ulster a large part, probably more than half, of the protestant population consisted of presbyterians of Scottish extraction; and there were substantial, though very much smaller, presbyterian bodies in other parts of the country. There were some protestants of other denominations also. A few congregations of baptists and independents had survived from the commonwealth period; and the Society of Friends (quakers) attracted attention both by their contribution to economic life and by their refusal to pay tithe or take oaths. But the combined membership of these minor denominations was, in numerical terms, insignificant; and so far as contemporaries were concerned, the term "protestant dissenter" was normally used as equivalent to "Presbyterian"'.

[7] Although the implementation of the penal laws was patchy at best, they were still on the statute book and were occasionally enforced in times of national crisis. They were aimed primarily at the Catholic aristocracy and gentry, most of whom conformed in this period. They had little practical effect on Catholic mercantile and manufacturing classes and although Catholic tenants suffered some disadvantage, they did not prevent the emergence of a Catholic leasehold interest amongst farmers and middlemen or the growth of a Catholic tenant farmer class. Central to the debate about the reason for the penal laws is the question of anxiety and how large a part the fears of the elite played in the forming and implementation of the laws. Historians such as Thomas Bartlett and Maureen Wall argue strongly for anxiety as a major factor, while

The Irish parliament, as a result of these laws, was almost exclusively Anglican, with Catholics excluded by law and Dissenters largely excluded by social and economic realities.[8] The 'nation' represented by the parliament was as little as seventeen percent of the population.[9] As the century progressed, a feeling of resentment at the subservient nature of a parliament that was amongst other things subject to its London equivalent by Poynings' Law – which gave London the power to veto or approve proposed legislation to be introduced in the Dublin parliament – and the 1720 Declaratory Act – which asserted the right of the Imperial parliament to make laws binding in Ireland – helped to create and foster a form of Irish 'patriotism', that was refined as the century progressed.[10]

This patriotism was given an extra impetus by a series of disputes with London, such as the 'Wood's halfpence' controversy (1722-5) – when the patent to produce coins for the Irish treasury was given to an Englishman, William Wood – and the increasingly bitter question of the trade restrictions imposed on Ireland by a London parliament perceived as being unwilling to allow Irish manufacturers to compete on equal terms with British industry. The notion that Ireland was being ruled in London's interest led to calls for a more independent Irish parliament, free from the shackles of England, with patriotic factions of various hues being led in the course of the eighteenth century by Archbishop William King, Jonathan Swift, Henry Flood, Lord Charlemont and Henry Grattan. The gradual waning of the penal laws and an increasing sense of the need for reform led

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Sean Connolly maintains that eighteenth-century Ireland has to be seen as an *ancien regime* society with a ruling elite and as a confessional state in the European tradition. As such, Connolly argues, 'this image of a ruling class tortured by a constant sense of its own insecurity' belongs essentially to the later period of the French Revolution and the campaign for Catholic emancipation: 'Irish Protestants in the early and mid-eighteenth century did not ignore the threat from an unreconciled Catholic population and its continental allies. But their most characteristic outlook was … a wary confidence in the face of a real, but containable, threat'; see Thomas Bartlett, 'The Origins and Progress of the Catholic Question in Ireland', in Power and Whelan (eds.), *Endurance and Emergence*, pp. 1-19; and Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power*, p. 3. Also see S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (1998; 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 462. *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* will henceforth be cited as *OCIH*.

[8] Although Presbyterians were allowed to sit in parliament, the Sacramental Test, the major penal obstacle to Dissenters, effectively excluded them from sitting on urban bodies such as town corporations, which returned many MP's. As a result the number of Dissenters in parliament was negligible. The Sacramental Test itself was not repealed until 1780; see *OCIH*, p. 522.

[9] Bartlett, Dawson and Keogh, *1798 Rebellion*, p. 4; henceforth this source will be cited as *1798 Rebellion*.

[10] Poynings' Law (1494), named after Sir Edward Poynings, lord deputy of Ireland 1494-5, was initially introduced to restrict the autonomy of the king's representative in Ireland rather than to curb the law-making authority of the parliament itself. It stated that the lord deputy and council needed to seek the king's permission to summon an Irish parliament and his prior approval of proposed draft bills. In practice the law could be used as a delaying tactic by the parliament and as a weapon against the Irish legislature by a lord deputy; see *OCIH*, pp. 481-2.

eventually to the emergence of the Catholic Association (1750), a body comprised mainly of Dublin-based Catholic businessmen concerned primarily with commercial privileges. This organisation became the Catholic Committee ten years later.[11]

Ireland's inferior position was confirmed for many in the 1770s when the country was left virtually defenceless to the prospect of a foreign invasion by the withdrawal of four thousand Irish troops to assist Britain's war effort in America. The government, for financial reasons, resisted calling out the militia. As a response, the Irish Volunteers were founded in 1778 by 'patriotic' citizens to provide an armed body capable of defending Ireland from invasion. Membership was drawn primarily from the Anglican elite and Dissenters – although some companies permitted Catholics to join – and at its height the Volunteers boasted 100,000 members.[12] Unlike the militia, who were subject to the control of the crown, the Volunteers were in reality a private army, funded primarily by the members themselves. As the threat of invasion receded, the organisation began to take on a role as a political body, providing a focus for patriotism, and adopting a rudimentary political programme. In November 1779 the Dublin Volunteers gathered before the statue of King William III in College Green to demand 'Free Trade or a Speedy Revolution'. The London government, under pressure in America, acceded to these initial demands and by February 1782 the Ulster Volunteers' meeting in Dungannon adopted a definite programme that asserted the sole right of the king and Irish parliament to make laws for Ireland. A change of government in Westminster resulted in a repeal of the 1720 Declaratory Act and what is known as 'Grattan's Parliament' came into being. Although the Volunteers never fired a shot in anger, they did demonstrate that the threat of physical force could effect change.

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[11] The Catholic Committee was initially a more broadly-based but still moderate lobby group for Catholic emancipation founded by the antiquarian Charles O'Conor (1710-91) and the writer John Curry (*c.*1710-80). It was only sporadically active up to the 1790s when it became more militant under the leadership of wealthy merchants John Keogh (1740-1817) and Edward Byrne (*c.*1735-1803?), leading to the secession of a conservative faction under the leadership of Ireland's leading Catholic peer, Lord Kenmare, in Dec. 1791. Several of the Catholic Committee leaders had links with the United Irishmen and this helped Wolfe Tone to become the Committee's secretary in 1792. In December of that same year they established the Catholic Convention, which directly petitioned London with their demands, bypassing the Dublin government. The Committee was dissolved in 1793 after the passing of the Relief Act of that year, reappearing briefly in 1795 with the appointment of Earl Fitzwilliam as viceroy. A new Catholic Committee was established in 1808 before being suppressed in 1811; see *OCIH*, pp. 78-9.

[12] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 18.

The Irish parliament of 1782-1800 may have achieved a measure of independence for Ireland but it still represented almost exclusively the old Protestant nation. For many patriots and Volunteers this level of reform was enough and was as far as they were prepared to go along the road of political change. For others, though, the events in America and the success of the Volunteers opened up a whole new range of possibilities and the potential for much more radical reform. Chief among the changes perceived by radicals and many liberally-minded people was the need for some kind of parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation.[13] The catalysts for change were the American and French revolutions.

The American Revolution of 1776-83 had a profound impact in the north of Ireland, particularly amongst Presbyterians. It is estimated that in the period 1769-74 as many as 40,000 people emigrated from the north of Ireland to North America, the vast majority of whom were Dissenters.[14] These 'Scots-Irish' made up almost seventeen percent of the white population of Pennsylvania in 1790, and were a considerable presence in the other new states. The impact of a transatlantic correspondence between Ulster and the American colonies cannot be underestimated. The writings of figures such as Co. Down–born Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), one of the fathers of the Scottish Enlightenment, and his pupil Francis Alison (1704-79) were crucial in creating and intellectualising revolutionary thought and rhetoric in the colonies.[15] In addition, most

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[13] Ireland remained a profoundly sectarian state with a parliament in which 234 of the 300 seats were controlled by patrons. Only the 64 county seats (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland's only university, also elected two members) could be considered in any way contestable, and these were the real barometer of opinion in Protestant Ireland. Prior to 1793 in no county, with the exception of Co. Down, was the electorate over 4,000. Needless to say, these were all Protestants. Where there were contestable seats, the make-up of the electorate depended on local eligibility rules linked to property. The scope for any kind of political change was further limited by the fact that up to the passing of the Octennial Act in 1768, which set the maximum term of a parliament at eight years, Irish Parliaments only needed to be dissolved on the death of the monarch, and only met every two years on average; see *OCIH*, pp. 421-2.

[14] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 13.

[15] For consideration of the role of Irish Dissenters in the development of American revolutionary thinking and the Revolution itself see David Noel Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America, 1760-1820* (Cork: Mercier, 1981), chapters 4 and 5, especially pp. 77-93 and 109-37; for the impact of the Revolution on Irish politics and political thinking see chapter 6. Hutcheson was a liberal Presbyterian who studied at Glasgow University and returned to Dublin in 1710, mixing with government critics such as William King . He returned to Glasgow as professor of moral theology in 1730. It was he, rather than Jeremy Bentham, who coined the phrase 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. The notion that this should be the function of government and that the victims of unjust regimes had the right to rebel was a key contribution to the ideology of the revolution in Ireland and colonial America; see *OCIH*, p. 265; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 214n.; and Doyle, op. cit., pp. 113-15. Francis Alison was a student of Hutcheson in Glasgow

Presbyterian clergymen travelled to Glasgow, a great centre of Enlightenment thinking, to take their degrees. Letters home from America describing events in the 'New World', together with a clergy and other men schooled at centres of Enlightenment thinking, coupled with membership of a church that was already egalitarian and democratic in structure, made the Dissenters of the north of Ireland the most receptive group of people to the notion of reform, and a vital element in the development of radical political movements of the future.

For radical Presbyterians one great obstacle existed to notions of equality and fraternity, however. There was a widely-held mistrust and suspicion of the motives of Catholics and Catholicism. Supposed Catholic support for the Jacobite cause and the autocratic structure of their religion seemed to suggest to many that Catholicism was a religion of despotism and tyranny, and that Catholics themselves could not be trusted in matters of liberty and democracy.[16] A key element of Protestant unity was the belief that there could at any time be a repeat of the massacres of Protestants seen in the rebellion of 1641, an event that remained at the centre of Protestant mythology as a Catholic conspiracy to exterminate all Protestants, with the numbers of dead wildly exaggerated. Roy Foster estimates a figure of 2,000 murdered and regards the figure of 4,000 cited by the great Irish historian, W.E.H. Lecky, as too high.[17] In contrast, Sir John Temple's

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and emigrated to the colonies in 1735, where he founded what would become the College of Philadelphia, and had 'a virtual monopoly on higher education in the middle colonies'. Described by Doyle as the conduit of Hutcheson's philosophy, he preached to the Continental Congress during its revolutionary deliberations and drew up a declaration of independence for Pennsylvania: 'It is not exaggerating to say that it [his influence] coloured the whole definition of Pennsylvania's severance from England'; see Doyle, op. cit., p. 114. During the Revolution itself there were at least four generals of Ulster birth in the Revolutionary army: John Clarke (Antrim), William Irvine (Enniskillen), Walter Stewart (Derry), and Andrew Lewis (Donegal). At least three signatories of the Declaration of Independence were Irish born: Matthew Thornton (1714-1803), George Taylor (1716-1789), and James Smyth (1719-1806).

[16] For a history of Irish Jacobitism and its longevity in the eighteenth century, see Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685-1766: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002).

[17] Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 85. Foster also argues that the leaders of the 1641 revolt were not dispossessed natives but the Ulster gentry of Irish origin, and that throughout the rising of 1641 'the emphasis fell on threats to land titles, the depredations of the new-style government and – most importantly – a residual loyalty to the King'; see Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 85-7. The fact that the Old English of the Pale joined with the native Irish and that religious freedom was mentioned as one of the formal demands helped contemporary writers to portray it as a Catholic conspiracy and an element of an international Catholic drive to destroy Protestantism. Commemorative church services, thanking God for the deliverance of Protestants, were held from 1662 up until the nineteenth century, enshrining the event in Protestant mythology. Temple's *History* was regularly republished in times of crisis, and served as a barometer of the level of Protestant anxiety. It was republished nine times by 1812. For an account of the importance of 1641 in the Protestant psyche, particularly in relation to the 1798 Rebellion, see James Kelly, '"We Were

History of the Irish Rebellion (1646) estimated the Protestant dead at over 100,000, and the event became institutionalised both as an example of Catholic treachery and the suffering of Irish Protestants worthy of inclusion in later ('updated' and unofficial) versions of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which put the figure at 150,000.[18]

It was the French Revolution in 1789 that proved to many that Catholicism was not synonymous with tyranny. Catholic France, the most powerful nation on earth, had thrown off the shackles of despotism and embraced the principles of liberty, equality and brotherhood. This seemed to suggest that there was nothing intrinsically despotic about Catholics and that there was no limit to the progress that could be expected. It seemed to open the door for a 'brotherhood of affection'. If the American Revolution provided the kick-start for radical politics in the north, it was the French Revolution, and Thomas Paine's great defence of it in *The Rights of Man* (1791-2) that provided the fuel. The success of Paine's work was unprecedented: an initial Irish edition of 10,000 copies was sold out by May and the first cheap edition ran to 20,000 copies. In November 1791 Paine himself claimed sales of 40,000 in Ireland that year.[19] Although this figure is probably an exaggeration, the sheer number of editions produced in Ireland, many of which were subsidised by groups such as the whigs of Dublin and the United Irishmen, and the extensive extracts printed in the papers of the period, meant that the effect of

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All to Have Been Massacred": Irish Protestants and the Experience of Rebellion', in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.) *1798*, pp. 312-30.

[18] John Milton, writing about the massacres, compounded matters by uncritically accepting the figure of 154,000 deaths in Ulster, and then assumed a similar number of deaths in the other three provinces of Ireland, giving a total of 616,000. By the mid-Victorian period, Foxe's *Martyrs* stretched to eight volumes, 6,000 pages and four million words. G.A. Williamson observes that it was designed to be 'propaganda for the Protestant cause and to extract the last ounce out of the theme of martyrdom. Much of what Foxe had written – and his matter was very varied indeed – was omitted, new martyrdom-stories [including the massacres of 1641] were added, and new illustrations, lurid and unauthentic, provided'. Eirwen Nicholson writes that *Martyrs* provided for English Protestants what Temple's *History* did for Irish Protestants, adding 'but the Irish Massacre may have had an English impact, rhetorical and iconographical, equivalent to, and perhaps even greater than, the [English] Marian persecutions'; see John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* edited and abridged by G.A. Williamson (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965), 'Introduction', pp. ix-x; and Eirwen Nicholson, 'Eighteenth-Century Foxe: Evidence for the Impact of the *Acts and Monuments* in the "Long" Eighteenth Century', in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Scholar, *c.*1997), pp. 143-77, esp. pp. 165-7; see also John Milton, 'Upon the Rebellion in Ireland', in Frank Allen Patterson (ed.), *The Works of John Milton*, 18 vols. (New York: Colombia University Press, 1932-8), v, p. 188.

[19] David Dickson, 'Paine and Ireland', in Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen*, pp. 135-50; esp. p. 137.

Paine's writings in 1790s Ireland cannot be underestimated, and it was an important element of United Irish propaganda.[20]

In 1791 a pamphlet was produced by the Catholic Committee – still at this time a moderate grouping of respectable and affluent Catholics lobbying for repeal of the penal laws – entitled *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland.* The content stressed the narrowness of the reform programme and the need for a radical alliance. It was written by Theobald Wolfe Tone, a young Protestant lawyer later employed by the Committee as secretary.[21] The pamphlet caused a sensation and so impressed a group of young, mainly Presbyterian, radicals in Belfast that they invited him to come to the city to witness the forming of a new society that he suggested they call the United Irishmen. A month later a Dublin branch of the society was formed. Initially it appears that the society's twin aims were parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. To what extent violent revolution, separation from England and the establishment of an independent Irish republic were initial, if secret, aims of the organisation, remains a matter of debate but there is little doubt that it was in the minds of at least some of its membership.[22] The United Irishmen engaged in an active propaganda war, promoting a

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[20] For an account of the various propaganda tactics used by the United Irishmen and the range and scope of their newspapers see James. S. Donnelly Jnr, 'Propagating the Cause of the United Irishmen', in *Studies*, lxix, 273 (Spring, 1980), 5-23.

[21] Although Tone was only peripherally involved in the actual rebellion, the cult that has surrounded him is due in large part to his own writings and those of early historians of the United Irishmen such as R.R. Madden. Although Tone features extensively in general histories of Ireland, the United Irishmen, and of the eighteenth century, there are comparatively few major studies of him. In terms of more recent work, see Frank MacDermot, *Theobald Wolfe Tone and his Times* (1939; repr. Dublin: Anvil, 1980), which, although now somewhat dated, is still useful, and particularly good on French internal affairs. The classic modern work is Marianne Elliott's *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Also important is Thomas Bartlett's short but scholarly study *Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Dundalk: Historical Association of Ireland, 1997), and Henry Boylan's *Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), part of the Gill's Irish Lives series. For a broadly post-colonial view of Tone see Tom Dunne's *Theobald Wolfe Tone, Colonial Outsider: An Analysis of his Political Philosophy* (Cork: Tower Books, 1984). With regard to his writings themselves there are two main modern collections: Thomas Bartlett (ed.) *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone: Complied and Arranged by William Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1998) and T.W. Moody, R.B. McDowell and C.J. Woods (eds.) *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, 2001).

[22] See *1798 Rebellion*, p. 36, where Bartlett, Dawson and Keogh argue that 'this was clearly Tone's intention from as early as July 1791', but it is difficult to draw this inference from his journal writing of that time. However, James Quinn, in his biography of Tone's great friend Thomas Russell, argues that Russell's journal entries of March 1791 show him speculating on the possibility of Ireland breaking its political ties with Britain, although Russell concluded that people were for the time being unwilling to take the risks involved; see James Quinn, *Soul on Fire: A Life of Thomas Russell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002), p. 30. Also central to this argument is how one interprets William Drennan's famous letter to Samuel McTier of 21 May 1791, proposing a new society with a 'general real end' of 'real independence to

message of universal brotherhood and a stated aim of replacing the terms Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with the common name of Irishman.[23] Using the new rhetoric of universal and fundamental rights, the United Irishmen looked to the future rather than to the past for inspiration, attempting to transcend the divisive and sectarian politics that had gone before.

The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 removed most of the principal restrictions on Catholics' owning land and practising their religion, and the Relief Act of 1793 extended to Catholics the right to vote on the same terms as Protestants, enfranchising those who held freehold property rated at forty shillings and over. In one important sense this was a revolution, turning the electorate into a mainly Catholic one. Most of these concessions were wrung out of a government desperate to avoid domestic troubles, and the prospect of a discontented Ireland was a worrying one in wartime, as Britain was finally drawn into a war with Revolutionary France in 1793, and all pro-French activities – such as Bastille Day commemorations – were frowned upon. However, the more one placated liberal opinion the more one antagonised the conservatives. Many conservatives saw the granting of the franchise to Catholics as the slippery slope to full emancipation and subsequent domination. John Foster, the Speaker of the Irish parliament, acknowledged that it was 'vain to imagine that admission to the elective franchise does not draw with it the right of representation'.[24] The Conciliation Act of 1793 emphasised the fact that no more concessions would be made, and organisations such as the United Irishmen were proscribed and the Volunteers were suppressed.

In fact, the Volunteers had already dwindled into insignificance, riven asunder by the same political tensions that threatened to divide the old Protestant nation as a whole.

Ireland, and republicanism its particular purpose'; see Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 43. Curtin tends to follow the traditional line that such notions were not part of the United Irishmen's initial aims; see also her article 'The Transformation of the Society of United Irishmen into a Mass-Based Revolutionary Organisation, 1794-6', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiv, 96 (Nov. 1985), 463-92, esp. 465.

[23] As well as newspapers such as the *Northern Star* and the *Press*, United Irish propaganda included pamphlets, meetings, cheap and abridged copies of works by Paine, Locke, Godwin, Voltaire and others, cultural events, ballads and pageantry. For an account of the relationship between the United Irishman and popular culture, see Mary Helen Theunte, *The Harp Re-Strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994).

[24] Quoted in *1798 Rebellion*, p. 41.

They represented, in Grattan's words, the 'armed property of the nation'.[25] Less grandly and less charitably, they could be seen as the representatives of a 'small, selfish and corrupt oligarchy'.[26] As such they represented all that was good and bad about eighteenth-century Irish patriotism. Of those with a liberal and radical frame of mind, some went on to become United Irishmen, while some others, whose chief concern was the advancement of what was termed the 'Protestant interest' in Ireland, eventually became members of the Orange Order.

The rising tensions within Ireland were fuelled by widespread agrarian unrest, some of it as a result of the economic slump in the wake of Britain's war with France from 1793 onward, but much of it was a nuanced continuation of a tradition of agrarian secret societies stretching back at least to the 1760s. Organisations such as the 'Whiteboys', 'Rightboys', and the Protestant 'Hearts of Oak' or 'Steelboys' had a long tradition of taking militant action in support of local grievances. These were often sectarian in substance and nature, particularly in the north. As Catholics were increasingly seen to be benefiting from piecemeal reforms of the penal legislation there developed a fear amongst some that land and estates might be restored to Catholics, and this often provoked Protestant societies such as the 'Peep-O-Day Boys' to engage in a policy of burning or frightening Catholics out of their homes. In response, a Catholic society called 'The Defenders' came into being around 1784, and this quickly developed into a society with a conscious, if ill-defined, political agenda, that ranged from the redress of local grievances right up to the bringing down of the existing social order.[27] Tensions ran particularly high in Armagh, a county that had practically equal numbers of Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters, and which has been described as 'the cockpit of

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[25] Quoted in *1798 Rebellion*, p. 18.

[26] Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty*, op. cit., p. 26; henceforth cited as *Year of Liberty*.

[27] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 25. R.B. McDowell's somewhat reductionist view of the Defenders as 'rural rioters' motivated by economic grievances is refined by Tom Garvin. Louis Cullen makes a case for them having a more sophisticated political vision than the one with which they are normally credited. Nancy Curtin sees them as evolving from a Catholic protection society to a traditional agrarian society, with the important caveat that in Dublin they assumed a more political and republican aspect. She also stresses their importance as an *entrée* for the United Irishmen into rural, Catholic, Ireland and into the militia; see McDowell, *Age of Imperialism*, op. cit., pp. 462-75; Tom Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground Political Networks in Pre-Famine Ireland', in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 219-44; and L.M. Cullen, 'The Political Structures of the Defenders', in Hugh Gough and David Dickson (eds.), *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Blackrock Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), pp. 117-38; and Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, op. cit., p. 63.

strife' in Ireland.[28] The 1790s saw thousands of Catholics forced to flee their homes, most settling in Connaught and north Leinster, travelling with stories of sectarian oppression. As a result Defenderism spread, and was identified in 1795 as being present in thirteen counties in the north, west and midlands.[29] The same year saw an engagement near Loughgall in Armagh that became known as the 'Battle of the Diamond', between Defender and Peep-O-Day forces, and victory for the latter saw the formation of the Orange Order. The Order was initially an organisation of lower-order members of the established church fearful both of the Defenders and the non-denominational message of the United Irishmen.

The United Irishmen by this time had transformed themselves from a public organisation with the aims of parliamentary reform and equal rights for all into a secret revolutionary organisation. Moreover, in an attempt to broaden its membership base, it had sought to make common cause with the Defenders, whose vague professions of support for France and social reform made it a potential, if unreliable, ally. Quite apart from the question of whether the Defenders was essentially a defensive or offensive organisation, the sectarian nature of the Defenders was bound to alienate some potential United Irishmen. In the ensuing propaganda war both the United Irishmen and Orange sympathisers were able to accuse each other of naked sectarianism, with the Orangemen claiming – quite illogically in the light of actual United Irish membership – that it was the objective of the United Irishmen to kill all Protestants. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the United Irishmen rather cynically – and perhaps disastrously – circulated for recruitment and propaganda purposes bogus Orange Order oaths that gave their objective as the extermination of all Catholics.[30] Such perceptions were to live long in the public mind.

In tandem with 'unofficial' responses to the worsening political situation in Ireland there was a series of official responses. In 1793 a Militia Act established a series of county militias designed to help police the country. These consisted in the main of Catholic rank-and-file, chosen by ballot, and Protestant officers. The hostile reaction to these militias was evidenced by a series of riots in which over two hundred people were

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[28] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 24.
[29] Ibid., p. 56.
[30] Ibid., pp. 44, 82.

killed. One of the areas where opposition to the militias was strongest was in County Wexford. In the light of the 1793 concessions to Catholics, the conservative *junta* that was the *de facto* government of Ireland embarked on a policy of repression. The appointment as viceroy of the liberally-minded William Wentworth, Earl Fitzwilliam (1748-1833), in 1795 created consternation amongst conservatives and expectation amongst liberals. He favoured emancipation and set about a vigorous programme of reforms – including the dismissal of his Irish cabinet – that in the eyes of conservatives threatened to destroy Protestant oligarchy in Ireland. His recall to London after barely two months in the job, engineered by the conservatives and their allies in London, was for many the last hope that constitutional methods could achieve the necessary reforms or that the old Irish parliament was capable of reforming itself. The appointment of John Jeffries Pratt, Earl Camden (1759-1840), as his replacement was a clear signal that there was to be a retrenchment and rallying of all those committed to the 'Protestant interest' in Ireland. It is no coincidence that on 10 May 1795 the United Irishmen was rededicated as a secret revolutionary organisation with the adoption of a new constitution. From 1795 onwards, rebellion was in the air. The government introduced an Insurrection Act in March 1796 that permitted peacetime laws, such as *habeas corpus*, to be suspended, and allowed whole counties to be proclaimed in a state of rebellion as well as providing for the death penalty as punishment for administering an unlawful oath.

The rebellion

From 1793 onwards the United Irishmen tried to enlist French aid for their cause. The arrest and trial of a Presbyterian clergyman and agent of France, the Revd William Jackson, in April 1794, uncovered a memorandum written by Wolfe Tone on the state of Ireland militarily and politically and appealing for French assistance by way of an invasion force. Though the memorandum constituted a clear act of treason, Tone's general popularity and good connections meant that he was allowed to leave the country in lieu of any more severe penalty. Before he left, in an iconic gathering at the historic location of McArt's Fort on Cave Hill, above Belfast, Tone joined Thomas Russell, Henry Joy McCracken and others in a solemn vow never to desist in their efforts until

Ireland was free. Tone travelled initially to America, where he obtained letters of introduction, and then headed for France, to try to convince the French Directory that Ireland was ripe for revolution and that a French invasion of Ireland would be the easiest and most effective way of striking a mortal blow to their great enemy and rival. With the help of Nicholas Madgett, an Irishman working in the French foreign ministry, Tone made contact with Lazare Carnot, then the director with responsibility for war, and General Lazare Hoche, convincing both of them of the viability of his plan. By June 1796 the Directory had approved a plan based substantially on Tone's proposals.[31]

In December 1796 a fleet consisting of seventeen ships of the line, thirteen frigates, twenty transports and almost 15,000 battle-hardened veterans under the command of Hoche broke out of Brest and headed for Ireland, arriving at Bantry Bay on 22 December. Bad weather and poor seamanship – a problem for the French navy since the Terror – resulted in only a handful of the ships arriving. The bad weather prevented a landing, much to the frustration of Wolfe Tone, sitting disconsolately on board ship. The fleet, afraid of being trapped in the bay, set sail for France again on 27 December. Never again would the French travel in such force. Although their Dutch allies were commanded to prepare a second invasion fleet in the Texel, a British victory at the naval battle of Camperdown on 11 October 1797 effectively destroyed the Dutch fleet and removed the threat of invasion from Holland. When French help did come, in the form of small invasion fleets in September 1798 it was too little and too late. Although they could not know it, the United Irishmen would have to rely on their own resources if a rebellion was to be successful.

The lucky escape at Bantry alerted the government to the fact that the danger of invasion was a real and pressing one, and that the army of Ireland, in terms of both the numbers and discipline of the troops and the competency of its commanding officers, was inadequate for the task of defending the country. General Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734-1801), an experienced and conscientious officer who had opposed the American war, was appointed commander-in-chief of the Irish army, replacing Henry Lawes Luttrell, Earl Carhampton (1743-1821), who in 1795 achieved notoriety for his role in the suppression of the Defenders and the pacification of Connaught. Abercromby was appalled by what

[31] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 52.

he saw, and antagonised the ruling conservatives by issuing the oft-quoted order of 26 February 1798 in which he stated that the Irish army was 'formidable to everyone but the enemy'.[32] He soon resigned his position in frustration.

Amongst the leadership of the United Irishmen was one man who had the capacity to lead a successful domestic rebellion. Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-98), younger brother of Ireland's foremost peer, the Duke of Leinster, had military experience gained with the British army in North America. He also was a man of considerable charisma and popularity. A Francophile, he was enthusiastic about the ideals of the French Revolution, and was married to Pamela, ward of famous writer and courtesan Madame de Genlis and rumoured to be the illegitimate daughter of Henri, duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XVI and one of the few nobles to embrace the French Revolution. As such, Fitzgerald had impeccable revolutionary credentials. He caused a sensation in Dublin by relinquishing his title – although the practical effect of such a measure in Dublin was virtually meaningless – preferring to be addressed as 'citizen', wearing a red kerchief around his neck, and cutting his hair in the short revolutionary style. Affectation aside, he does appear to have been genuinely popular and his social standing would have given him influence and a status that would have made him a figure to rally around in the event of a rebellion. Though his subsequent glamorous and romantic image may have disguised the fact, he was a hard-headed revolutionary, quite prepared to kill and be killed.[33] Although he favoured waiting for French help he was prepared to act without it, and as commander-in-chief of the United Irishmen up to his capture, the United Irish plan for rebellion was almost certainly his.[34]

Throughout 1797 the major danger of rebellion appeared to be in Ulster, where the United Irish organisation seemed to be most effective and overt. What has been described as 'a wholesale policy of military terror' was instituted in Ulster, following the proclaiming of large areas of counties Down and Armagh in late 1796.[35] House burnings, indiscriminate floggings, and mass arrests were features of the time. The government forces were assisted in their activities by the Orange Order, of whom the government

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[32] Quoted *1798 Rebellion*, p. 86; *Year of Liberty*, p. 54.
[33] *Year of Liberty,* p. 38
[34] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 95.
[35] Ibid., p. 69.

were initially suspicious, but whom, in the light of the scare at Bantry, were given virtually *carte blanche* to hold the loyalist line. In September 1797 William Orr, a Presbyterian farmer from Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, became the first man to be tried and convicted under the Insurrection Act of administering an illegal oath. His case, and the dignity with which he pleaded it, became a *cause célèbre* and a vehicle for debate on government policy both within Ireland and in the British House of Commons. His execution, in October 1797, gave the United Irishmen a martyr. The slogan, 'Remember Orr!' became both a rallying cry and a critique of the excesses of government.

The action of government forces was having an effect, however, and the United Irish network in Ulster was gradually thrown into disarray. Large numbers of senior figures in the society were taken up, and vast quantities of arms were seized. A purge was carried out of the various militia units with twenty men being put to death in the summer of 1797, and more were flogged and transported. The Monaghan militia destroyed the press and offices of the *Northern Star* newspaper in Belfast the day after four of its members were shot for admitting membership of the United Irishmen. Like the United Irish organisation in general, the Ulster body had its fair share of spies and informers. An extensive network of informers and double agents was only part of a counter-intelligence response by the government under the auspices of a secret committee of the Irish House of Commons that had been set up in April 1797 under the control of Edward Cooke (1755-1820), the under-secretary for civil affairs. Ostensibly the committee's aim was to investigate the origins and purpose of the conspiracy in Ireland, but its secret aim was to provide clear-cut and unambiguous evidence of the deep-seated and extensive nature of the conspiracy. This would provide a justification for government tactics and also, by the use of informers, to avoid the need for show trials, the outcome of which was never entirely certain.[36]

By early 1798 the Ulster Directory was calling for an insurrection before their entire organisation was destroyed but this was resisted by the Leinster Directory, knowing as they did the poor state of organisation in the rest of the country. Gradually, however, even those who favoured waiting for French help began to see that they could no longer put the rebellion off. The Leinster Directory was dealt a hammer blow in

[36] *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 75-6.

March 1798 when most of its delegates were captured in a raid on the house of Dublin merchant Oliver Bond in Bridge Street. This robbed the Leinster body of most of its potential leaders. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, however, had not been present and remained at large. Significantly, perhaps, in the light of subsequent events, the delegate from Wexford also arrived late and avoided capture.[37]

On 19 May, Lord Edward Fitzgerald was captured at a house on Thomas Street by Town Major Sirr after a struggle that left a Captain Ryan, of the militia, mortally wounded. Fitzgerald appeared initially to be only slightly injured, but died of his wounds on 4 June, his death leading to accusations of a government-inspired assassination. The night of his capture, amid various attempts to rescue him by both the United Irish organisation and various mob elements from Patrick Street and the Liberties, martial law was proclaimed in the capital.[38] The next day the Sheares brothers, who had attempted to fill the leadership vacuum, were arrested and subsequently tried and hanged. A proclamation calling on the 'Citizens of Erin' to rise up and avenge themselves on their oppressors and to give 'no quarter' on any who 'turns his sword against his Native Country' was discovered in Henry Sheares' desk and was allegedly in the handwriting of his brother.[39] This, and the testimony of a Captain John Warnesford Armstrong that the brothers had tried to intrigue with the military forces of Lehaunstown (now Loughlinstown) camp was enough to condemn both men to the gallows. Fearing the worst, the rump leadership of the United Irishmen hurriedly agreed to set the date of the rising for the night of 23 May, and quickly sent out envoys with that message to the

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[37] The question of whether there was an extensive United Irish presence in Wexford remains a matter of contention, and goes to the heart of the fundamental debate about whether the rebellion in Wexford was planned or spontaneous. Some argue that the reason Wexford gives the impression of being largely unorganised is that the Wexford delegate, Robert Graham, would have had the up-to-date figures for the county on his person and so they never fell into the hands of the authorities. Louis Cullen, Kevin Whelan and Tom Bartlett have argued strongly for the existence of an extensive United Irish network in the county while others remain sceptical, preferring the standard view that Wexford was not widely organised. For the classic argument for an extensive United Irish network see L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford: United Irishman Organization, Membership, Leadership', in Kevin Whelan (ed.), *Wexford: History and Society. Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1987), pp. 248-95, and 'The United Irishmen in Wexford', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave,* op. cit., pp. 48-64. For a more sceptical view see Tom Dunne, *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2004), pp. 180-6, esp. p. 183; and his article '1798 and the United Irishmen', in *Irish Review*, 22 (Summer, 1998), 54-66.

[38] *Year of Liberty*, p. 94.

[39] *Year of Liberty*, p. 96; Ruan O'Donnell, *1798 Diary*, op. cit., p. 50. The latter will henceforth be cited as *1798 Diary*.

surrounding areas. On that night, the counties of Kildare and Wicklow were alive with rebel activity. The 1798 rebellion had begun.

The original plan, as conceived by Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the United Irish leadership, focussed on the taking of the capital. It was not without merit. Rebel forces would take certain strategic locations in the city and be reinforced with troops from the surrounding areas. Uprisings in the rest of the country would then break out, providing a distraction from the main business in the capital. This would give valuable time for the new provisional government to get up and running, and provide a focus for the rest of the country to defeat a government force that, by this stage, should be suffering from mass desertions and a shortage of supplies. However, by 22 May the rebel plan was known to the government, and the militia and yeomanry gathered at the proposed mustering points, hamstringing the rebellion before it even began. As a result the subsequent rising, apart from the initial attacks in counties Kildare, Wicklow and Carlow, was largely an uncoordinated response to subsequent events.[40]

The night of 23 May saw rebel forces attack a number of towns in Kildare, including Kildare town, Naas, Prosperous, Ballymore Eustace, Rathangan and Clane. While hundreds of their number were killed the rebels did have some success, especially at Prosperous and Old Kilcullen. Captain Richard Swayne of the Cork militia was shot, piked, and trampled under a horse's hooves and his body was then burnt in a tar barrel.[41] Between 24-29 May the rebellion erupted in the counties directly surrounding Dublin. Over 300 rebels were killed in a failed attack on Carlow town, and a similar number were killed in an engagement at the Hill of Tara, with little or no loss to the government side.[42] On 28 May General Sir Ralph Dundas, the commander of the midland district, negotiated the surrender of a large group of some 3,000 rebels at the Curragh, and was endeavouring to negotiate the surrender of a larger group when the rebels were attacked from behind by a force of dragoons and militia under the command of Sir James Duff returning from Limerick. At least 350 unarmed rebels were killed by Duff's force who were maddened

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[40] For different versions of the plan, see *Year of Liberty*, pp. 108-10; *1798 Diary*, p. 50.

[41] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 101. Swayne was notorious for his pitch-capping activities. Pakenham describes the burning of his body as a 'ghastly sort of carnival'; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 117.

[42] *1798 Rebellion* suggests 300 dead at Carlow and 350 at Tara, pp. 103-4. Daniel Gahan in *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798*, op. cit., states 'hundreds' dead at Carlow, p. 41; *Year of Liberty* has 'Frightful slaughter' at Carlow and 350 dead at Tara , pp. 135, 160; *1798 Diary* has 350-400 killed at Carlow, p. 212. Gahan's *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798* will henceforth be cited as *Rebellion!*

by the piking to death of a young lieutenant, William Giffard, by rebels on the first day of the rising. He was the son of a popular and influential officer in the Dublin militia that made up Duff's principal force.[43] Some reports – including Duff's official dispatch – suggest that Duff's force was fired upon, possibly in an act of bravado by a surrendering rebel, but in any event the massacre served to disperse the rebels and to reverse the process of pacification. Duff was praised by government extremists and Dundas' attempts at conciliation were widely ridiculed. Whatever chance there was of a relatively peaceful resolution was destroyed.[44]

By now the rebellion had spread further south, to Wexford. Word of the execution by the garrison in Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow, on 24 May of at least thirty and possibly as many as forty-three Catholic yeomen whose loyalty was suspected, and at least twenty-eight prisoners at Carnew, on the Wicklow/Wexford border the following day, convinced many that there was an official government policy of extermination.[45] On 27 May a group of rebels destroyed the North Cork militia at Oulart Hill, and the following day they captured the town of Enniscorthy. Two days later the rebels walked into Wexford town virtually unopposed. The United Irishman, Bagenal Harvey, who had been arrested along with two other United men, Edward Fitzgerald of Newpark, and John Colclough of Ballyteigue, was released from prison and appointed commander-in-chief of the Wexford army. Whether he accepted such a commission willingly or not is still a matter of debate, but what is not in doubt was his unsuitability for the task.[46] A committee of public safety was established, composed equally of Catholics and Protestants, and its main tasks were to regulate the food supply, keep order, and protect loyalists from summary retaliation.[47]

The Wicklow rebels' advance was stopped at Newtownmountkennedy and the government adopted a policy of containment in south Leinster and vigilance in Ulster and Munster.[48] The Wexford rebels' policy after the taking of Wexford town was to break out

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[43] *Year of Liberty*, p. 163. Pakenham refers to him as 'Gifford', although most sources say 'Giffard'.
[44] *Year of Liberty*, pp.161-4; *1798 Rebellion*, p. 106.
[45] *Year of Liberty* pp. 135-6 states twenty-eight dead at Dunlavin and the same number at Carnew; *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 110-11 has the figures at thirty-four at Dunlavin and thirty-five at Carnew; *1798 Diary*, p. 212 gives the Dunlavin figure at forty-three. Daniel Gahan's book on the Wexford rising agrees with Pakenham's figure of twenty-eight for Carnew and 'over thirty' for Dunlavin; see Daniel J. Gahan, *The People's Rising*, op. cit., p. 11.
[46] See *Year of Liberty*, p. 193; *1798 Rebellion*, p. 117; *1798 Diary*, p. 200.
[47] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 116; *Year of Liberty*, p. 189.
[48] *1798 Diary*, p. 53.

of the county and link up with rebel forces in Wicklow and Carlow and to find reinforcements in Kilkenny and Waterford. The Wexford rebel army was thus split in three, with groups heading north, north-west, and west. On 1 June an attempt to break out of Wexford at Newtownbarry (now Bunclody) was repulsed after an initial success.[49] The same day, forty-one prisoners were shot by the garrison at Carnew, Co. Wicklow, the second such massacre at Carnew in a week.[50] Three days later, at Tubberneering, an inexperienced and rash commander led his soldiers into an ambush in which fifty-four soldiers were killed, injured or taken prisoner.[51]

Such victories kept up the momentum of the rebellion and garrisons in Gorey, Carnew, Arklow and Tinahely abandoned their posts.[52] Non-combatants who had the means fled Ireland for Wales, Liverpool and London. On 5 June came the turning point in Wexford: a force of between ten to fifteen thousand rebels, under the command of Bagenal Harvey, attacked New Ross in an attempt to break out of Wexford to the west.[53] Maddened by the shooting of their emissary, Matthew Furlong, who was offering terms of surrender, the rebel army rushed the main gate of the town, suffering heavy casualties. Despite the chaos and the lack of discipline, the rebels were very nearly successful, but the defenders of Ross were allowed to retreat across the bridge and regroup, and the rebels were eventually driven out of the town. By the end of the day at least one thousand rebels were dead, much of the rebel army had fled and Harvey's force was reduced to perhaps as few as two thousand.[54] Retreating rebels, in an act that became infamous in the loyalist version of the incident and an atrocity that ranked beside any committed by government forces, set fire to a barn at Scullabogue that contained over one hundred and forty loyalists, almost all of whom were Protestants.

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[49] *Year of Liberty*, pp. 193-4.
[50] *1798 Diary*, p. 56.
[51] *1798 Diary*, p.56; *Year of Liberty*, pp. 181-2; *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 117-8.
[52] *1798 Diary*, p. 56.
[53] *1798 Diary*, p. 56 estimates fifteen thousand men in the rebel army at Ross; *1798 Rebellion*, p. 119, puts the figure at ten thousand; *Year of Liberty* p. 194 does not give a figure but describes the rebel army strength as 'quite overwhelming – at least twenty times as numerous as the New Ross garrison'. Gahan estimates between ten and fifteen thousand in *The People's Rising*, p. 121.
[54] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 120; Gahan writes that they were 'a tattered remnant of 2,000 or 3,000', in *The People's Rising*, p. 132. The total dead may have been over two and a half thousand: that is the estimate given by James Alexander, an inhabitant of the town who had responsibility for removing the bodies, in his own account of the battle quoted in *Year of Liberty*, p. 209.

The defeat at Ross essentially put an end to any hopes that the Wexford rebels had of breaking out of the county westwards, and a further defeat to the north at Arklow on 9 June, when the rebels retreated just as the fourteen hundred-strong garrison of the town was running out of ammunition, put the rebels on the defensive. Slowly but surely the government forces were regrouping and being reinforced, although a defeat to the Wicklow rebels at Mount Pleasant was a timely reminder that victory was not a foregone conclusion.[55] The Wexford rebels began to abandon their strongholds and collect at Vinegar Hill, overlooking the town of Enniscorthy. Before leaving Wexford a rogue band of rebels piked to death between seventy and a hundred loyalist prisoners on the bridge, providing another incident that was to pass into loyalist and conservative folklore as an example of the savage and sectarian nature of the rebellion.[56]

On 21 June a force of some ten thousand men, half of the total force available to the new commander-in-chief, General Gerard Lake, attacked the rebel camp at Vinegar Hill.[57] In hindsight the hill was a poor position from which to mount a last stand, open as it was to artillery fire.[58] The rebels, expecting close combat, had not dug in or prepared any defences. The battle itself was a foregone conclusion, although the rebels made more of a fight of it than the soldiers expected, and were able to retreat in reasonably good order as General Needham, arriving from Gorey, was delayed and as a result Vinegar Hill was not entirely surrounded.[59] Most of those killed on the rebel side were camp followers rather than combatants, including many women.[60] That same day Wexford town was retaken and, in an incident that may have been meant as a retaliation for the massacre at Scullabogue, fifty-seven wounded rebels were burnt in a makeshift hospital in Enniscorthy.[61] The remaining rebels attempted on a number of occasions to break out of Wexford and had a number of small victories over government forces at Goresbridge and Castlecomer under Fr John Murphy, before eventually being defeated at Scullogue Gap

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[55] *1798 Diary*, p. 60.
[56] The authors of *1798 Rebellion* give an estimate of seventy dead; Pakenham, in *Year of Liberty*, ninety-seven; see *1798 Rebellion*, p. 136; *Year of Liberty*, p. 254.
[57] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 130; *Year of Liberty*, p. 256.
[58] *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 130-1.
[59] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 130; *Year of Liberty*, p. 256.
[60] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 131.
[61] *1798 Diary*, p. 218.

on the Carlow side of the Kilkenny border on 26 June.[62] Other rebels, led by Edward Fitzgerald and his cousin Garret Byrne, pressed northwards to continue the struggle from the Wicklow mountains, with the assistance of Joseph Holt's Wicklow rebels. It is here that men such as Holt and Michael Dwyer held out for the longest period, fighting a guerrilla war against government forces.[63]

Although there remained sporadic – and often successful – activity in parts of Kildare and Wicklow, Vinegar Hill essentially signalled the end of the Leinster rebellion as a full-scale military operation. Rebel leaders Matthew Keogh and Fr Philip Roche were executed on Wexford Bridge on 25 June, and Fr John Murphy was taken and flogged, executed and dismembered in Tullow, Co. Carlow, on 2 July. Ironically, his identity was not known to his killers, and he was simply another victim of a 'mopping up' campaign that probably claimed more victims than the rebellion itself. Even General Lake, who was not known for his reluctance to indulge in harsh measures, was moved to write that his own soldiers' determination to destroy everyone they considered a rebel 'is beyond description and wants much correction'.[64] Charles, Lord Cornwallis (1738-1805), who succeeded Camden as viceroy and was also appointed commander-in-chief of the army on 20 June, introduced a policy of what has been called 'measured severity', as he demanded that all sentences handed down be referred to him for approval.[65] Although such a policy undoubtedly reduced the number of people executed and punished through official channels, it probably had no effect on the number who fell victim to the summary justice of local squires, yeomanry and militia. In all some fifteen hundred rebels were tried and sentenced for their role in the rebellion in the eighteen months after July 1798, with one source suggesting that the fate of at least as many was not recorded.[66]

In Ulster, news of the rising reached the Ulster Provincial Council of the United Irishmen on 29 May.[67] The failure to capture Dublin and the non-arrival of the French, both of which were major parts of the original plan, meant that twenty-one of the twenty-

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[62] Ibid., p. 62.
[63] Holt was allowed to emigrate to New South Wales with his family in December 1799, while Dwyer held out for over five years, participating in Emmet's rebellion in 1803, before eventually accepting terms of exile for life to New South Wales in December of that year.
[64] Quoted in *1798 Rebellion*, p. 134.
[65] Ibid., p. 136.
[66] Ibid.
[67] *1798 Diary*, p. 214; *1798 Rebellion*, p. 123.

three United Irish colonels refused to act.[68] Henry Joy McCracken, up to this point a relatively junior member of the organisation, was one of the few ready to take action.[69] He succeeded Robert Simms as commander-in-chief of the Antrim rebels and a new executive formulated a plan of action. On 6 June McCracken issued orders for the Ulster United Irishmen to rise. The following day the main rebel army gathered on Donegore Hill.[70] The level of Catholic support was low, perhaps reflecting a mutual distrust fostered by government accounts of atrocities in the south of the country, something that was to become a factor in the northern theatre. In the meantime mixed groups of Defenders and United men attacked and occupied most of the major towns in north and east Antrim including Randalstown, Ballymena, and Larne.

Thanks to an informer, Nicholas Magin, the United Irish plan was already in the hands of General Nugent, the commander of the Northern District, and two groups of reinforcements were already on their way to Antrim town.[71] The main army attacked and took the town before being eventually beaten back. Reinforcements from Blaris camp near Belfast were initially repulsed and the retreating dragoons literally ran into rebel reinforcements arriving from nearby Randalstown, under the command of a brother of William Orr. The sight of the retreating soldiers apparently unnerved Orr's men, resulting in their retreat, and the ensuing panic spread to the other rebels.[72] With the arrival of the main body of reinforcements under the command of Colonels Clavering and Durham the rebels' fate was sealed. An artillery bombardment helped to clear the town, and, with the exception of a small party of men later remembered as the 'Spartan band', under the command of Jemmy Hope, who mounted a heroic rearguard action in the churchyard, the soldiers re-entered the town to find the rebel army had fled. The Antrim rebellion was essentially over after this engagement, and, as in other parts of the country, the army began a rather brutal mopping up operation. The most notable casualty of the battle of Antrim was Lord O'Neill, governor of the county and a generally popular figure who supported Catholic emancipation, who was piked to death in the streets of the town.

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[68] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 124.
[69] *Year of Liberty*, p. 171.
[70] Pakenham's estimate is that it was initially 'at least three thousand and with every hour more rallied to the standard', while O'Donnell suggests eight thousand; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 219 and *1798 Diary*, p. 57.
[71] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 124; *Year of Liberty*, p. 173.
[72] *Year of Liberty*, p. 222.

One of the major reasons for the failure of the United Irish strategy in Antrim was the fact that the expected rebellion in Down did not occur, and as a result the roads were open. The day before the rising in Antrim was ordered the Revd William Steele Dickson, the designated leader of the rebellion in Down, and all his colonels were arrested on Magin's information, throwing their plans into disarray. Only one member of the Down High Command survived the arrests.[73] Despite this, news that a rising had commenced in Antrim filtered through and groups of rebels began to become active, particularly in the north-east of the county and on the Ards peninsula, with the result that 'at the very moment the Antrim rising collapsed, the Down rising began'.[74]

On 10 June – 'Pike Sunday' – the various rebel groups begin to gather at Saintfield, where United forces had defeated a strong body of York Fencibles on the previous day. Command eventually devolved upon Henry Munro,[75] a Lisburn linen merchant and freemason of Scottish extraction, who had held no position in the United army previously, and now found himself in command of as many as seven thousand men.[76] The rebel army marched on towards Ballynahinch, a short distance to the south-west. They made camp on Windmill Hill, which overlooked the town. The hill was on the estate of Lord Moira, who was one of the leading liberal peers, a supporter of Catholic emancipation and a prominent critic of the Irish government. Serious differences of opinion and mistrust amongst the United Irish leadership emerged, that centred both on the tactics to be used and the desirability of making a stand at all. Once again the turn-out of Catholic Defenders was disappointing, and their morale would not have been helped by suggestions that Munro was fighting to establish a Presbyterian state.[77]

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[73] Ibid., p. 225.
[74] Ibid., p. 224.
[75] The spelling in various accounts differs from 'Munro' to 'Munroe' and 'Monroe'. In the absence of any agreed modern spelling, the most common spelling – Munro – is the one that will be used.
[76] *Year of Liberty*, p. 226. *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 126-7 adds that he was aided by a Defender by the name of Magennis, who does not feature in Pakenham's account. He was presumably the leader of the Defenders who left the rebel camp the night before the battle of Ballynahinch.
[77] '... on the night before the Battle of Ballynahinch there was a revealing incident when the rebel commanders, Munro and Magennis, disputed the overall command. Munro finally drew his sword and allegedly "did declare aloud his intention was to establish a presbiterian [*sic*] independent government after the begun revolution would become compleated"'; *1798 Rebellion*, p. 128. Pakenham is more circumspect on this point, merely observing that according to one account, the Catholics, 'even accused Monroe of trying to establish a Presbyterian state'; *Year of Liberty*, p. 228. The source for this information is the testimony of an F. Conroy in the Rebellion Papers in the National Archive (620/40/140); see *Year of Liberty*, p. 386, n. 45.

In the meantime General Nugent advanced on the rebels with his forces from Saintfield, and another column advanced from Downpatrick to the south-east. Nugent's first action on arriving in Ballynahinch on the evening of 12 June was to launch an artillery bombardment on the rebel position. Matters came to a head when Munro refused to launch a night attack on government forces, many of whom were drunk or sleeping after pillaging the town. The decision not to take advantage of the night to attack was the final straw for some combatants, particularly the Defenders, and many – perhaps as many as two thousand – participants slipped away from the rebel camp under the cover of darkness, including most of the Catholics. Munro's decision is often portrayed as being a chivalrous one, although, given the fact that he was commanding a relatively undisciplined and inexperienced force, it may also have been the practical one.[78]

As soon as it was light, Munro sent his pikemen down into the town where their weapons and weight of numbers could be used to best advantage, but a constant barrage and attacks by dragoons on the flanks eventually took its toll and the rebels were put to flight. As usual, it was the subsequent pursuit that yielded the most casualties, as fleeing rebels were cut down by dragoons or shot in open country. Estimates of the dead range from four to five hundred.[79] Amongst the dead was a young woman by the name of Betsy Gray, who had fought alongside her brother and her lover at the battle, and who was shot along with both men by the pursuing yeomanry. Her name would rival William Orr's as a great martyr of Presbyterian radicalism. Munro was captured and hanged outside his own shop in Lisburn on 16 June, and Henry Joy McCracken suffered the same fate in Belfast on 17 July, having been arrested in Carrickfergus ten days earlier.

Although the battle of Ballynahinch essentially marked the end of the northern rebellion, rebel activity in Leinster continued sporadically during the month of July and into August. The battle of Ballygullen on 5 July was the last engagement fought in Wexford, but Wexford rebels under Edward Fitzgerald spurned amnesty terms and retreated to the Wicklow mountains.[80] A four-thousand strong army of Wicklow and Wexford rebels pushed into Meath via Kildare where they attacked, but failed to take, the

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[78] This is Pakenham's view; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 230.
[79] Pakenham says 'about four hundred' in *Year of Liberty*, p. 231. O'Donnell writes '300 fall during the battle and 200 more in the rout phase', in *1798 Diary*, p. 59.
[80] *1798 Diary*, p. 219.

village of Clonard on 11 July. The difficulty of provisioning such an army in the field allied to the fact that victory was now virtually impossible meant that surrender with decent terms became the best that they could hope for. After setbacks at Knightstown Bog in Meath and Ballyboghil (Ballyboughal) in Dublin they eventually negotiated an armistice at Sallins, Co. Kildare, on 18 July, on behalf of the rebels of Wexford, Wicklow and Kildare.[81] Edward Fitzgerald was ultimately permitted to go into exile on the Continent, and he and William Aylmer, the leader of the Kildare rebels, became the first captured leaders since the outbreak of the rebellion to avoid the gallows. Garret Byrne, who surrendered on 20 July, received a conditional pardon. The 'state prisoners' in Kilmainham and Newgate prison in Dublin, including many of those arrested in Oliver Bond's house in March, agreed to deliver a 'memoir' of United Irish plans and objectives in return for being sent into exile.[82] Leaders in the field were not so fortunate: Anthony Perry and Fr Mogue Kearns, prominent in Wexford, were executed in Offaly on 21 July; Dublin United Irish leader John McCann was executed for high treason outside Newgate prison on 24 July; the following day William Michael Byrne, one of those who was arrested in Bond's house in March, was executed; and on 28 July Bagenal Harvey and Cornelius Grogan were executed in Wexford.[83] Byrne's fate undoubtedly contributed to his fellow state prisoners' decision to compose the memorandum.[84]

Just as it seemed that things were beginning to settle down once again the long-awaited aid from France arrived. On 23 August a small force of three frigates, a brig, and around eleven hundred French troops, landed at Killala Bay, Co. Mayo. It was the most unlikely of locations from a United Irish point of view. Under the command of Vendée veteran General Jean Joseph Humbert (1755-1823), they entered and occupied Ballina on 25 August, encountering little resistance. Humbert's party was merely a part of a much larger invasion force under the overall command of General Jean Hardy that remained blockaded in the ports of Brest and Dunkirk. Distributing some three thousand muskets and one thousand uniforms to local allies, they marched south to Castlebar, where many

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[81] Ibid., p. 71.
[82] See chapter two p. 34.
[83] *1798 Diary*, pp. 220-1.
[84] *Year of Liberty*, p. 288.

of the outlying garrisons had retreated.[85] Utilising local knowledge, Humbert decided to take the mountain road rather than the main road, outflanking the waiting crown forces. In the meantime General Lake arrived to take over command. Although the French took a pounding from the artillery, the battle-hardened veterans of the Vendée and Italian campaigns did not flinch. The crown forces, comprised mainly of militia, Scotch Fencibles, some dragoons, a few yeomanry and some men from a regiment of the line, were unused to facing troops of this calibre, and eventually turned and ran.[86] Many did not stop until they reached Tuam, and some went as far as Athlone. This embarrassing defeat went down in history as the 'Races of Castlebar' and proved to be the greatest success of the French invasion, although it has been described as an 'empty triumph' as it did not inspire a general uprising.[87] On 31 August a twelve-man Directory was established in Castlebar, with John Moore, of Moore Hall, proclaimed as President of the Provisional Republic of Connaught.[88]

In the week that followed it became clear to Humbert that his Irish allies were woefully inadequate for the task ahead. They were undisciplined and inexperienced in warfare. This, to some degree, was to be expected. Perhaps more serious was the fact that very few of the 'better sort' of people came forward to volunteer their services in the name of liberty.[89] Rebels appeared to come and go as they pleased, many only staying long enough to procure a weapon or some clothing or other booty, and then departed. Humbert knew the only hope for success was to link up either with the rest of Hardy's invasion force, or another army of rebels. There was some rebel activity in the midlands, where rebels attacked Edgeworthstown, Granard, and briefly threatened Mullingar, but there was no general uprising. The country had had its fill of rebellion for that year.

In the meantime an army of some twenty thousand troops was closing in on Humbert and his men. General Nugent, based around Enniskillen, blocked access to the

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[85] *1798 Diary*, p. 83. Pakenham suggests that about 'five thousand odd volunteers' had been issued with arms; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 308.
[86] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 138.
[87] Ibid., p. 139.
[88] *Year of Liberty*, p. 316. He features in Thomas Flanagan's novel *The Year of the French* (1979); see Conclusion, p. 303.
[89] Among the exceptions was a Colonel John Joseph McDonnell, whose father was a Catholic squire and had been a distinguished member of the Volunteers, and who became a 'general' of a rebel regiment; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 317.

north, Adjutant-General Hewett oversaw a large army from the south and south-east at Portumna, and, from the west, Colonel Crawford (or Craufurd), part of Lake's advance guard, dogged Humbert's footsteps.[90] Cornwallis and his forces waited at Tuam. His cautious approach was designed to ensure that the rebels would not achieve a morale-boosting second victory.[91] Humbert initially attempted to go north, hoping to link up with Hardy or with northern rebels. A skirmish at Collooney, Co. Sligo, with a small force of Irish militia under the command of a Colonel Vereker, cost him about fifty casualties, and may have convinced him that the militia did not always run once the first shot was fired. With as small a force as his, he could not afford too many engagements like this one.[92]

News of the midlands uprising encouraged Humbert to turn east and head inland, and his new aim was to link up with the rebels at Granard, and head for Dublin, in the hope of outflanking much of Cornwallis' force on the way.[93] Estimates of the numbers involved in the midlands vary, with one estimate putting the rebel army in Westmeath at seven thousand, with a thousand less at Granard.[94] News of a French landing and victory had encouraged some to turn out, but once again 'respectable' leadership was absent, and there was no clear plan of campaign. An attack on Granard on 7 September, led by an ex-yeomanry officer and his brother, Hans and Alexander Denniston, who both reputedly fled before the battle, was repulsed with great loss.[95] Official government casualty estimates, never entirely reliable, put the figure at four hundred, but it may have been many more.[96] Thousands returned home, but what was left of the rebel armies joined Humbert's camp at Cloone, Co. Leitrim.

The next day, 8 September, the pursuing armies caught up with Humbert and his allies at Ballinamuck, Co. Longford. Humbert's forces numbered about eight hundred and fifty French soldiers and a thousand rebels.[97] Cornwallis's force of five thousand men and a dozen cannon blocked the Dublin road and Lake's forces were nearly as strong. In Humbert's report to the Directory later he claimed that he was facing thirty thousand

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[90] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 139.
[91] Ibid., p. 140.
[92] *Year of Liberty*, p. 323.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., p. 324.
[95] Ibid., p. 325.
[96] Ibid.
[97] *Year of Liberty*, p. 326; *1798 Diary*, p. 90.

men.[98] This figure is certainly an exaggeration, but was unlikely to be less than half that number. After a thirty-minute engagement that satisfied French honour Humbert surrendered. While Humbert and his men were treated with all the courtesy of prisoners of war, their Irish allies were not so fortunate. Unable to surrender, they fled the field and at least half of them were cut down by the chasing dragoons. Lake insisted that no insurgents were to be taken alive and over four hundred rebels detained after the battle were killed. More than three hundred others were hanged at Ballinamuck, Ballinalee and Carrick-on-Shannon.[99] General Trench, the most junior of the generals present at the fiasco at Castlebar, was entrusted with the task of mopping up the remnants of the French army at Castlebar and Killala, and it was another two weeks before Killala was liberated and the last vestiges of the 'Provisional Republic of Connaught' finally removed.

The rebellion was now virtually over, but there were two postscripts, one largely comic and one tragically symbolic. On 16 September the corvette *Anacréon*, with James Napper Tandy (1740-1803), a prominent ex-Volunteer and radical United Irishman, arms for several thousand, and reinforcements of two hundred and seventy French soldiers on board, sailed into Rutland Harbour in Co. Donegal. The postmaster at Rutland, who happened to be a friend of Tandy's, confirmed that the Mayo rebellion had been crushed and Humbert and his men taken prisoner. Tandy spent the night drinking with his friend, and the ship made sail for France the following morning, with guns, troops and Tandy still on board.[100]

A month later, on 12 October, a French man of war, the *Hoche*, eight frigates, a schooner, and 2,300 men that had escaped from Brest were engaged in battle by Rear Admiral John Borlase Warren's superior force off the south-west coast of Donegal.[101] On board the *Hoche* was General Hardy, the commander of the Irish invasion force, and Wolfe Tone. After a ten-hour struggle against superior odds, the French surrendered. Tone, who had been given the opportunity to escape on one of the faster vessels, elected to stay on board and participated in the battle. On 3 November he was brought ashore at Lough Swilly where he was recognised by an old acquaintance, Sir George Hill, a

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[98] Quoted in *Year of Liberty*, p. 326.
[99] *1798 Diary*, pp. 90-1.
[100] *Year of Liberty*, pp. 331-2.
[101] *1798 Diary*, pp. 101-2; *Year of Liberty*, p. 338.

member of parliament and captain of the Derry city cavalry.[102] He was subsequently brought to Dublin for court martial on the charge of high treason, where he was defended by the renowned advocate and orator John Philpott Curran (1750-1817), a friend of many of the United Irishmen, and who later became Master of the Rolls.[103] Although Tone argued that he was entitled to be treated as a prisoner of war due to his rank of adjutant-general in the French army, he was convicted of high treason and sentenced to death by hanging. His appeal to be shot as befitted a soldier was also rejected. On 12 November Tone was found half-dead in his cell with his throat cut, apparently in an attempt to take his own life and avoid a public hanging. It has also been suggested that his suicide attempt may have been merely a delaying tactic until a meaningful appeal against his execution could be lodged, something that was being worked on furiously by his friends.[104] Whether it was an unsuccessful suicide attempt or an all too successful attempt to delay his execution, Tone lingered on until 19 November, when he finally succumbed to the wound and died. Although the country was by no means at peace, and bands of rebels were still involved in guerrilla activities all over the country, Tone's death is at least the symbolic ending of the rebellion of 1798.

The reasons why the rebellion failed are generally clear and widely accepted.[105] The primary cause was that the government, through its network of spies and informers, knew who the leaders were and had advance warning of the plan. The original scheme depended on the rebellion succeeding in Dublin, with the other theatres being merely a distraction until the capital was secured. Without Dublin the rebellion lacked a focus. The arrest of practically all the main leaders in Leinster and Ulster meant that when rebellion did break out, there was little or no central coordination or communication, and leadership devolved to peripheral – and in many cases inexperienced and incompetent – individuals who were often not United Irishmen. Local issues and score-settling could not fail to become important in such a situation. The lack of timely and substantial French

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[102] Pakenham asserts that Tone's identity was already known to the government and that he made no effort to conceal it; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 344.

[103] He was also the father of Sarah Curran, Robert Emmet's beloved and an icon of romantic nationalism.

[104] *1798 Diary*, p. 113. However, Pakenham states that an attempt by Tone's friends at the Dublin bar to get him acquitted on a technicality was 'apparently unknown' to him; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 345.

[105] What follows are broadly the conclusions drawn by Bartlett, Dawson and Keogh in *1798 Rebellion*, pp. 141-4.

assistance, and the discipline and encouragement that such assistance may have provided, undoubtedly contributed towards the rebellion's ultimate failure.

More generally, the fact remains that on the whole Catholic Ireland declined to support the rebellion. Few of the major United Irish leaders were Catholic, and if total United Irish membership was around the half-million mark, as suggested by the United Irishmen themselves, only a tiny fraction of those were actively involved in hostilities.[106] The Catholic church as a body was entirely opposed to rebellion and to secret societies. Bishop James Caulfield of Ferns' famous comment that the clerics involved in the 1798 rebellion were 'the very faeces of the church' gives some sense of the level of feeling in official Catholic circles.[107] In any event, the Catholic clerics who were involved in the rebellion were a tiny minority, and most of those were not involved in parish or church work at the time.[108]

The clearest immediate consequence of the rebellion was the Act of Union of 1801, which abolished the Irish parliament and absorbed the country into the British state. Ireland had shown herself to be ungovernable, and not just because of the actions of the rebels, but also because of the government response. For many, conservative and liberal alike, the actions and policies of the Dublin government and its agents were at least as responsible for the rebellion as the United Irishmen, indeed perhaps even more so, when one considered that the rebellion that actually occurred was practically leaderless. Suspicions that the rebellion was deliberately provoked by a cabal for their own selfish purposes lingered long into the nineteenth century, although it is largely discounted today.[109] In addition, Ireland had again shown herself to be a dangerously

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[106] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 144.

[107] [James Caulfield], *A Vindication of the Roman Catholic Clergy of the Town of Wexford During the Late Unhappy Rebellion* (Dublin, 1799), p. 18.

[108] See Kevin Whelan, 'The Role of the Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Kevin Whelan (ed.), *Wexford: History and Society*, op. cit., pp. 296-315.

[109] The notion that the rebellion was deliberately provoked in order to facilitate the Act of Union was a view put forward to various extremes by many of the most popular histories of Ireland in the nineteenth century. Most common was the view that the rebellion was either deliberately or prematurely provoked in order to facilitate plans for a legislative union. This view was propounded by A.M. Sullivan's *The Story of Ireland* (1867) which, although intended for young people, remained the most widely-read history of Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, running to dozens of editions (twenty-five by 1888 alone). Pakenham challenges this view, stating that rather than being government policy the rebellion was the result of a failure by the British government to have *any* policy for Ireland; *Year of Liberty*, p. 13. R.B. McDowell believes that the repression worked both ways: 'Probably, in fact, the government's repressive measures hardened the determination and cohesion of some United Irishmen and frightened others away

vulnerable weak-link on Britain's doorstep. The havoc caused by a mere one thousand French troops, coupled with memories of the lucky escape at Bantry Bay, made it clear that something would have to be done to reduce the potential threat of Ireland to the security of Britain.

Within Ireland, the broad coalition who welcomed Union included many who were delighted to see the end of the old unreformed parliament – and the ruling *junta* that controlled it – on College Green, judging it to be incapable of effecting change from within. It also included those Catholics who felt that they would get more equitable treatment as an insignificant minority in the British state than as a dangerous majority in an Irish one, and those who saw opportunities for personal advancement in business, the civil service and politics. Very few people were in favour of Union from any genuine desire to be more closely linked to Britain *per se*, and indeed the notion had been universally unpopular throughout the eighteenth century. In the end the most vehement defenders of the Irish 'nation' were those who saw their own sectional interests best served by the retention of the Irish parliament and institutions. This included groups such as the Orange Order and others who felt that 'Protestant ascendancy' (the term dates from this period) was at risk, particularly as Catholic emancipation was widely expected to be either a part of the Union or to follow in a relatively short time. The measure was passed in the Irish parliament in 1800 thanks to a process of corruption, bribery, and intimidation that was characteristic of the parliament as a whole; with new peerages, sinecures and sometimes hard cash helping to persuade those whose consciences impelled them to waver regularly between sides. The general confusion is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Richard Lovell Edgeworth, generally regarded as a man of principle, voted against Union not because he was ideologically against it – on the contrary, he was very much in favour of the measure – but as a protest against the manner of its passing.[110]

The crushing of the rebellion also saw the end of the grand brotherhood of affection fostered by the ideals and activities of the United Irishmen. Although it

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from direct action'; see Moody and Vaughan (eds.), *New History of Ireland IV*, p. 353. Nonetheless, many former United Irishmen in America promoted this view, and nineteenth-century figures as diverse as Daniel O'Connell and Karl Marx, for their own equally diverse reasons, believed that it was deliberately provoked; see David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 165.

[110] For an account of Edgeworth's views on the Union see Brian Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing: Language, History, Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 41-2.

continued to exist up to Robert Emmet's 1803 rising, the heart had been essentially ripped from the organisation. In the aftermath of 1798, many Presbyterians, including many United Irish participants, joined the yeomanry and/or the Orange Order to both disassociate themselves from the rebellion and to protect themselves from reprisals.[111] Events in Wexford and the obvious mistrust between the United Irish and Defenders during the northern rebellion also helped to persuade many Presbyterians that their common cause with the Catholics of Ireland was a sham. As the nineteenth century progressed, and as Catholics began to assert themselves politically, socially and religiously on the island, Presbyterians came to see their interests as being best served within the political context of the Union. There remained, however, enough independence of mind within Presbyterianism for it to emerge again in what Ian McBride terms the 'Ulster Scots revival' of the early-twentieth century.[112] Over the nineteenth century the republican tradition passed almost exclusively into Catholic hands as the cause of Ireland, and the cause of the Catholics of Ireland, began to merge into one. The issues of Catholic emancipation, the payment of tithes, repeal of the Union, the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and the land question, together with disasters such as the Famine and large-scale emigration, fused the issues and concerns of the Catholics with that of the 'national' cause. Although it was not necessary to be a Catholic to be a nationalist, no form of Irish nationalism could now be contemplated that did not address Catholic concerns and issues.

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[111] *1798 Rebellion*, p. 146. However, the common view that Presbyterian radicalism disappeared after the rebellion is challenged by James G. Patterson in his article 'Continued Presbyterian Resistance in the Aftermath of the Rebellion of 1798 in Antrim and Down', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxii, 3 (Nov., 1998), 45-61.

[112] See Ian McBride, 'Reclaiming the Rebellion: 1798 in 1998', a landmark review article in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxi, 123 (May, 1999), 395-410; 402; and 'Memory and Forgetting: Ulster Presbyterians and 1798', in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *1798*, pp. 478-96.

CHAPTER TWO

The Historiography of the 1798 Rebellion

I cannot think that the publication of these memoirs, at the present day, can injure the prospects, or endanger the peace of any living being.

William Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (1826)

'For faith and fatherland': The nineteenth century

Recent scholarship places great stress on the bitter and sophisticated propaganda war that followed 1798.[1] Eyewitness accounts and 'histories' of the rebellion appeared almost immediately. A memorandum written by Thomas Addis Emmet, William MacNeven and Arthur O'Connor as part of the deal struck by the jailed United Irish leadership with the government, meant that at a very early stage there was a detailed account of the aims, organisation and intentions of the United Irishmen in the public domain.[2] Early histories were chiefly concerned with either apportioning blame or exonerating the Catholic population in general from responsibility for the rebellion.

The most important and influential 'instant history' was Sir Richard Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801). It was a remarkable early success: the first edition of 1,250 copies was sold within two months, and a second edition of a similar number was published later in the year. By 1802 a cheaper third edition was published in two volumes.[3] Despite the title, the work concentrated almost exclusively on the 1798 rebellion, with an introductory chapter of thirty-five pages that focused on placing the 1798 rebellion in a historical context that portrayed it as merely the latest in a

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[1] The most complete account of this 'war' is found in Whelan, ''98 After '98', op. cit., pp. 133-75.

[2] *Memoire; Or, Detailed Statement of the Origin and Progress of the Irish Union: Delivered, to the Irish Government by Messrs. Emmett, O'Connor, and M'Nevin; Together with the Examinations of these Gentlemen before the Secret Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons, in the Summer of 1798* ([Dublin?], [1800?]).

[3] The sales figures are Musgrave's own; see Sir Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, from the Arrival of the English: Also a Particular Detail of that which Broke Out the XXIII of May, MDCCXCVIII; with the History of the Conspiracy which Preceded it, and the Characters of the Principal Actors in it. To this Edition is Added a Concise History of the Reformation in Ireland, and Considerations on the Means of Extending its Advantages Therein* 2 vols. (1801; 3rd ed. Dublin, 1802), i, p. i. The term 'instant history' is used by David Dickson in his foreword to the 1995 fourth edition; see Sir Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, from the Arrival of the English: Also a Particular Detail of that which Broke Out the 23D of May, 1798; with the History of the Conspiracy which Preceded It*, Steven W. Meyers and Delores E. McKnight (eds.) and with an Introduction by David Dickson (1801; 4th ed. Fort Wayne IND: Round Tower, 1995), p. i.

long line of Irish Catholic rebellions against Protestants and Protestant authority.[4] As such, *Rebellions* was also meant to defend both the government and its agents from accusations of blame for the rebellion.[5]

Kevin Whelan has persuasively shown how *Rebellions* was closely modelled on the earlier narratives of Protestant polemicists such as John Temple and William King, so that it would fit seamlessly into the tradition of the 1641 rebellion. To do this Musgrave adopted Temple's model of collecting authenticated affidavits by Protestant victims and observers, along the lines of the depositions of 1641.[6] Musgrave's intention was to portray the rebellion as a sectarian uprising by a Catholic *jacquerie* and some clerics, aided by a few misguided and godless Protestants, and a smattering of radical and reckless Presbyterian republicans. His sectarian view of the rebellion is reflected by the weight he gives to the various theatres of activity. As David Dickson has demonstrated, in the two-thirds of *Rebellions* devoted to the rebellion itself, fifty-nine percent of the text is devoted to events in Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow and Kilkenny; seventeen percent to Humbert's invasion and the rebellion in the west; sixteen percent to action in Meath, Kildare and adjacent areas; five percent to events in Dublin and a mere three percent – corresponding to just eighteen out of almost eight hundred pages of text in the 1802 edition – to the rebellion in the north.[7] This is in spite of Musgrave's assertion that the conspiracy 'had been more alarming in the north than in any other part of the kingdom, as numbers of presbyterians concerned in it there had more improved intellects, more courage, and knew better the use of arms, than the inhabitants of Leinster and Munster'.[8]

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[4] Musgrave, *Rebellions*, 3rd ed., i, pp. 1-35.

[5] In the immediate wake of the rebellion Musgrave, under the pen-name 'Camillus', had issued a pamphlet that sought to absolve the magistracy and other government forces from responsibility for the rebellion by listing a series of public order disturbances, outrages and demonstrations of support for revolutionary activity since 1791, the year of the establishment of the United Irishmen; see 'Camillus', *To the Magistrates, the Military, and the Yeomanry of Ireland* (Dublin, 1798).

[6] Whelan, ''98 After '98', pp. 135-6. William King (1650-1729), Archbishop of Dublin 1703-29, four times Lord Justice 1714-22, was a proto-patriotic zealous defender of Irish national interests against English authority. His *The State of the Protestants Under the Late King James' Government* (1691) has traditionally been seen as the great defence of the actions of Irish Protestants in withdrawing their allegiance from a legitimate king. Sean Connolly, however, makes the point that King voted against most of the penal laws and condemned the incomplete ratification of the Treaty of Limerick; see *OCIH*, pp. 302-3. For Temple, see chapter one, pp. 7-8.

[7] David Dickson, 'Foreword' in Musgrave, *Rebellions*, 4th ed., p. vii.

[8] Musgrave, *Rebellions*, 3rd ed., ii, p. 93.

Musgrave's motivation for writing *Rebellions* has been much speculated upon. David Dickson stresses Musgrave's own particular background as a Protestant magistrate in west Waterford, an area that Dickson claims was an early victim of Protestant decline.[9] Stories of Musgrave attempting to throttle his – subsequently estranged – wife in his sleep thinking she was a popish rebel and his willingness to take on the task of whipping those sentenced to be punished when no one else was prepared to do so are often taken as examples of his dangerous fanaticism, as are his willingness to excuse in print even the worst excesses of Orange and government forces. Jonah Barrington's acerbic and much-quoted comment that Musgrave was 'generally in his senses, except on the abstract topics of politics, religion, martial law, his wife, the Pope, the Pretender, the Jesuits, Napper Tandy and the whipping-post' has become a familiar stick with which to beat Musgrave and discredit his work.[10] In his portrayal of events in both the north and south of the country Musgrave firmly laid the blame for the 1798 rebellion at the Catholic door, whether it be in the guise of Defenders or United Irishmen. In his account, the formation of the Orange Order, yeomanry and militia were merely defensive reactions to the prospect of another massacre of Protestants along the lines of 1641.[11]

A second major loyalist account of the time was George Taylor's *History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford*, the first edition of which was published in 1800. Taylor was a Methodist minister and his account, like Musgrave's, was ultra-loyalist and anti-Catholic in tone. Taylor portrayed the Catholic population of Wexford as essentially disloyal and cruel, with an insatiable hatred of Protestants.[12] In his account, the rebellion was not spontaneous, but the result of careful planning. He is vague however on the precise link between the United Irish plan

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[9] Dickson, 'Foreword', p. iii.

[10] Quoted in Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 146, and Dickson, 'Foreword', p. iii. It is important however that Musgrave is not entirely dismissed as an authority: Tom Dunne describes Musgrave as an 'astute commentator, behind his tedious eruptions of anti-Catholic polemic'; see Dunne, *Rebellions*, op. cit., p. 102.

[11] '... the Orange association...was not instituted till the defenders manifested their hostile designs against protestants of every description, in most parts of the kingdom'; Musgrave, *Rebellions*, 3rd ed., i, p. 86.

[12] 'I rejoice, however, to state, that there were some bright exceptions to the general character for cruelty which marked the conduct of the Romanists at this general period'; see George Taylor, *A History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford, in the Year 1798. To which is Annexed the Author's Account of his Captivity, and Merciful Deliverance* (1800; 3rd ed. Dublin, 1829), p. 108. The republication of Taylor's *History* in 1829, the year of Catholic emancipation, may have reflected a conservative unease about the measure and its potential consequences.

and the outbreak of the rebellion in Wexford.[13] True to his analysis of the rebellion as an entirely sectarian one – albeit under the auspices of the supposedly non-sectarian United Irish organisation – he writes that Fr John Murphy, 'priest of Boolavogue, was the first that marched out to proclaim that "the hour of liberty had arrived"'.[14] The rebels, according to Taylor, 'made no secret of their United oaths'.[15] Atrocities committed on the government side are almost entirely ignored. The notorious magistrates, James Boyd, Hawtry White, Hunter Gowan and Archibald Hamilton Jacob, are described by Taylor as 'gentlemen of respectable characters and distinguished loyalty', while there is only the briefest mention of the fact that the yeomanry – 'the military saviours of their country, and the bulwark of the Irish nation' – were occasionally reduced to the 'disagreeable necessity' of flogging prisoners in order to get information, something 'painful to humane men'.[16] Taylor's paranoia can best be seen in his estimation that the rebel armies in Wexford contained, by his calculation, over 100,000 men 'under arms'.[17] An account of his own time as a captive of the rebels suggests an intensely religious man, and the dating of his account, on 18 July 1798, only a few weeks after the end of the Wexford rebellion, may explain some of the partisanship of the historical account and the paranoia about Catholics and Catholicism.

Central to both Musgrave's and Taylor's accounts of the rebellion was the notion that the rebellion was both sectarian in nature and planned, and therefore not spontaneous. Furthermore, despite the similarity in their assessment of the origins, purpose and progress of the rebellion, there was a considerable difference in content and tone between the two accounts. Equally, it must be acknowledged that it would be wrong to make the assumption that the ultra-loyalist and sectarian interpretation was widely accepted, even by those who were conservative, Protestant and hostile to both Catholics and Catholic rights. Accounts of the rebellion published either before or around the same time, such as those written by liberal Protestant clergymen such as Joseph Stock, bishop of Killala, an eyewitness to the French landing in Mayo who had published his *Narrative*

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[13] 'The time arrived, when destruction and assassination laid the forsworn robe of deep hypocrisy aside, and stepped forth to quench the thirst of diabolical passions in the blood of Protestants!'; Taylor, *History*, p. 26.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 84.
[16] Ibid., pp. 83, 45, 25.
[17] Ibid., p. 171.

in 1800, and James Bentley Gordon, an Anglican clergyman based in Wexford during the rebellion there, were at pains to stress the essential loyalty of the vast majority of the Catholic population.[18] Both men entirely disapproved of the rebellion and the French revolutionary principles that they saw as lying behind it, but their apparent fairness and lack of a political agenda made their accounts more palatable and acceptable than Musgrave to both liberals and Catholics.

The first Catholic account of the rebellion in Wexford was Edward Hay's *History of the Insurrection in the County of Wexford* (1803). Hay was secretary of the Catholic Committee and possibly a United Irishman. He had two brothers in leadership roles in the rebellion and had himself been accused of being a rebel leader. Hay had been in Wexford during its occupation by rebel forces and had been in contact with many leaders of the rebellion, including Bagenal Harvey, John Colclough and Edward Fitzgerald. He was careful to portray the Wexford rebellion as a spontaneous and unplanned uprising by an essentially loyal people driven to desperate measures by the actions of government forces and by fears of extermination by Orange extremists. This became the respectable Catholic interpretation of the rebellion. These 'unforeseen occurrences' forced Frs Michael and John Murphy into the field, drawing themselves into a '*political vortex*, which, from all the information I have been able to collect, they undertook under the apprehension of extermination'.[19] Adamant that it was not a United Irish rebellion, Hay nonetheless acknowledged that there were *some* United Irishmen in Wexford, albeit less than in any other county in Ireland. He was at pains to stress that the involvement of United Irishmen in leadership roles was entirely as a result of coercion or as a consequence of a desire to use their popularity among the people to moderate the

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[18] [Joseph Stock], *A Narrative of what passed at Killalla, in the County of Mayo, and the Parts Adjacent, during the French Invasion in the Summer of 1798. By an Eye Witness* (Dublin, 1800) and James Bentley Gordon, *History of the Rebellion in Ireland, in the Year 1798, &c. Containing an Impartial Account of the Proceedings of the Irish Revolutionists, from the Year 1782 till the Suppression of the Rebellion. With an Appendix to Illustrate some Facts* (Dublin, 1801). Another eye-witness account, James Alexander's *Rise and Progress of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford* (Dublin, 1800), is described by Tom Dunne as the 'fullest and best eyewitness account' of the Battle of Ross, and a crucial text for later historiographical interpretations of the rebellion; see Dunne, 'Subaltern Voices? Poetry in Irish, Popular Insurgency and the 1798 Rebellion', in *Eighteenth-Century Life*, xxii, 3 (Nov., 1998), 31-44; 31.

[19] Edward Hay, *History of the Irish Insurrection of 1798, giving an Authentic Account of the Various Battles Fought between the Insurgents and the King's Army, and a Genuine History of Transactions Preceding that Event* (1803; repr. Dublin, 1847), p. 80. It was originally published under the title *History of the Insurrection in the County of Wexford, A.D. 1798.*

behaviour of the rebels. According to Hay's account, his own brother, John Hay – later executed for his role in the rebellion – was compelled by 'the most violent threats' to assume a leadership role.[20] Upon being brought to Vinegar Hill, John Hay met several other gentlemen 'who had been summoned thither out of their beds as unexpectedly as himself'.[21]

Hay's account of the rebellion was attacked both at the time and subsequently as a piece of propaganda as calculated in its own way as Musgrave's *Rebellions*, and equally as dangerous to the delicate and conciliatory policy of the post-Union administration.[22] Not surprisingly in the light of the accounts by Musgrave and Taylor, Hay was particularly keen to exonerate Catholics in general – and that included himself – from responsibility for the rebellion. He argued that much apparent collusion by Catholics was for exactly the same reason as Protestants, and suggested that the perception that Catholic support for the rebellion was widespread was an example of sectarian prejudice. In his view an equal generosity of spirit should have been extended to Catholics as appeared to have been extended to Protestants:

> With cordial satisfaction I acknowledge it perfectly just, that Protestants have been generally exculpated of treason, on the ground of the urgency of circumstances, but why Catholics should be excluded from the like charitable consideration, will not be fairly or easily answered by those who would fain exhibit the unfortunate contest of this period – a war of religion, which, upon the whole, had but very little to do in it, till forced into action by the upholders of prejudice.[23]

Other influential books that challenge the sectarian view of the rebellion published around this time include the English Catholic Francis Plowden's *Historical Review of the State of Ireland* (1803) and two books by United Irishmen: William MacNeven's *Pieces of Irish History* (1807) and William Sampson's *Memoirs* (1807) both published in New

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[20] In contrast, Kevin Whelan writes that John Hay may well have given the actual command to rise to the Wexford rebels; see Whelan, 'Reinterpreting the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave*, pp. 9-36, p. 23.
[21] Hay, *History*, p. 90.
[22] For a summary of the reactions of some of Hay's contemporaries – including Musgrave – see Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 160.
[23] Hay, *History*, p. 103.

York.[24] Plowden's *Historical Review* tends to be seen nowadays as a deliberate and calculated intervention sponsored by the Addington administration to ensure Catholic acceptance of the Union, promoting the line that the rebellion was a defensive response to provocation of various kinds and stressing Catholics' natural tendency towards loyalty and obedience.[25] This two-volume work ran to over 1,700 pages, not including almost 800 pages of appendices, with over half the text relating to the period between 1782 and 1798, including 135 pages on the rebellion itself.

Throughout his *Historical Review*, Plowden shows those who are seen to represent Catholic interests in a good light, stressing the patient and constitutional methods employed by the Catholic Committee, Catholic leaders, and politicians such as Henry Grattan. He stresses the fact that the United Irish leadership was almost entirely Protestant and is critical of what he sees as the hypocrisy of many of those leaders, particularly Arthur O'Connor, and of the organisation in its revolutionary form. A distinction is made between the initial attacks on Naas and other points in Wicklow and Meath, and the subsequent rebellion in Wexford. The former could be seen, in Plowden's view, as part of the United Irishmen's 'plan of attack formed by Lord Edward Fitzgerald [which] had been communicated to most of the rebels; for their first open acts of hostility, though apparently fortuitous, irregular, and confused, bore evident marks of a deep laid scheme for surprizing the military by separate, though simultaneous attacks'.[26]

Plowden also reiterates the notion that Wexford was 'but very recently and but partially organized' and whether there would have been a rebellion in Wexford or not if it had not been for the 'acts of severity … committed by the soldiery, the yeomen, or their supplementary associates' is 'a question which no man can positively answer'.[27] He goes on to say with reference to Musgrave's account, that it is 'a fact necessary to be known, that before the breaking out of the rebellion in Wicklow and Wexford not one Roman Catholic clergyman ever entered into the united association, except one Roach [Fr Philip Roche], who was under ecclesiastic censures, and interdicted from the exercise of his

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[24] David Wilson writes that Sampson's book was very popular in America and elsewhere, numbering Thomas Jefferson and English radicals Horne Tooke and Francis Burdett amongst its admirers; see Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, op. cit., p. 165.
[25] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 148.
[26] Francis Plowden, *An Historical Review of the State of Ireland, from the Invasion of that Country Under Henry II to its Union with Great Britain*, 2 vols. (London: 1803), ii, p. 687.
[27] Ibid., ii, pp. 710-11.

spiritual functions'.[28] Thus Plowden is careful to separate the United Irish interest from that of Catholics in general. If Catholics were in rebellion it was the lower classes only, and that rebellion was essentially the product of intolerable provocation by government sources.

MacNeven's *Pieces of Irish History* re-echoes the conservative line seen in the *Memoire* of the United Irishmen, which, considering that it also contains chapters written by Thomas Addis Emmet, is not entirely surprising.[29] In an account of his own examination before the secret committee, MacNeven asserts that the rebellion was caused by the 'house-burnings, the whippings to extort confessions, the torture of various kinds, the free quarters, and the murders committed upon the people by the magistrates and the army', sentiments later endorsed by Thomas Addis Emmet.[30] *Pieces* was written very much with an eye to equating the actions of the United Irishmen with those of the patriots of the American Revolution, and to defend themselves against the attacks of pro-British lobbyists in America, particularly Rufus King, the American minister to Britain, who felt the United Irishmen should not be allowed to stay in the United States. The 1807 publication date may have been no coincidence: in that year many United Irishmen based in America, including Sampson, MacNeven and Emmet, were involved in a successful campaign to prevent King from being elected to the US assembly.[31]

Thus the major publications of the first years after the rebellion were primarily concerned with apportioning responsibility and blame for what had *actually* taken place in 1798, rather than what *might* have happened. Members of the United Irishmen, such as MacNeven and Thomas Addis Emmet, and those associated with them, such as Hay, had good reason to attempt to disassociate themselves from the rebellion that had actually

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[28] Ibid., ii, p. 716.

[29] MacNeven is more an editor than writer of *Pieces*. The book includes the *Memoire* as well as the examinations of MacNeven and Emmet before the secret committee of the Lords and Commons of the Irish parliament. Emmet contributes part of an essay, 'Towards the History of Ireland', which is actually a history of the 1790s and the development of the United Irish movement up to 1795, as well as his letters to Rufus King (see below). Also included is an introduction to a proposed digest of the 'Popery Laws' written by Simon Butler, another United Irishman.

[30] William J. MacNeven, *Pieces of Irish History, Illustrative of the Condition of Catholics in Ireland: Of the Origin and Progress of the Political System of the United Irishmen; and of their Transactions with the Anglo-Irish Government* (New York, 1807), pp. 241, 261.

[31] See Maurice J. Bric, 'United Irishmen and America', in Michael Glazier (gen. ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America* (Notre Dame IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 917-19; and Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, pp. 64-8.

broken out. Catholics and those sympathetic to their cause had excellent reasons for portraying the rebellion as a spontaneous one against intolerable oppression, and a wholly sectarian interpretation such as that of Musgrave's needed to downplay the aims of the United Irishmen while at the same time providing evidence of a widespread Catholic conspiracy. The two extreme viewpoints – the spontaneous versus the planned sectarian interpretations – both called for a downplaying of the role and influence of the United Irishmen and their stated ideals. It has been argued that this was done to some degree with the tacit complicity of those United Irishmen who had escaped death; understandably, perhaps, those who had cut a deal with the authorities wished to paint their activities as United Irishmen in the best possible light.[32] This is an important factor when one comes to assess the reliability or otherwise of early accounts of the rebellion.

A notably unhelpful voice at this time was that of Walter ('Watty') Cox's *Irish Magazine* (1807-15). Cox was a United Irishman who had produced the *Union Star* newspaper until he was forced to flee the country. On his return he set up the *Irish Magazine* and continued to edit it even after being jailed for seditious libel in 1811. Usually scurrilous, often libellous and always polemical, the magazine continued to keep alive the controversies and enmities of 1798. The magazine's full title, *The Irish Magazine, and Monthly Asylum for Neglected Biography*, gives some clue to its general purpose and content. It specialised in recounting the deeds of forgotten Irish heroes of the past and promoted the cult of the dead United Irish leadership – particularly Wolfe Tone – while recounting tales of rebel heroism and government outrage and oppression. It also heaped opprobrium on figures associated with both the Protestant ascendancy and the government such as Major Sirr and Sir Richard Musgrave, and notorious figures from the 1798 era, such as Edward Hepenstall (also spelt 'Hepenstal' or 'Hempenstall') the 'walking gallows', and his accomplice Jemmy O'Brien; various informers and 'traitors'; and magistrates such as Judkin Fitzgerald and Hunter Gowan. Aggressively Catholic, anti-Union and anti-English, the magazine also took an active role in the Veto controversy that erupted in 1808.[33]

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[32] Whelan, ''98 After '98', pp. 156-7.

[33] The notion that Catholic emancipation might be more palatable if the British government had a power of veto over episcopal appointments, thereby ensuring a 'loyal' hierarchy, had first been proposed in 1782. It was proposed again in 1808, 1810 and in Henry Grattan's Relief Bill of 1813. The majority of Irish

The content of the *Irish Magazine* strongly suggests that the later interpretation of 1798 as a Catholic 'national' rebellion was in fact established at quite an early stage, a view that is backed up by the contents of ballads from the period.[34] Despite its undoubted popularity, the magazine was somewhat of an embarrassment to respectable Catholic opinion and was execrated by its enemies. This fact, combined with suspicions that Cox was himself a government *agent provocateur* and informer, has led to the magazine's influence being either ignored or seen as an elaborate attempt to undermine growing Catholic concerns about the delay in emancipation and the wisdom of Union. However, it is difficult not to see in the *Irish Magazine* the beginnings at least of a militant Irish Catholic nationalism and a familiar Catholic nationalist interpretation of the events and the personages of the United Irishmen and 1798.[35]

In contrast, an indicator of the sensitivity with which the 1798 rebellion was generally treated by Catholic writers and general readers was evident in the controversy

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Catholics were opposed to the measure and the controversy provided an opportunity for a radicalising of Irish Catholics under Daniel O'Connell, and also divided them from English Catholics and sympathetic Protestant liberals. This radicalisation of Catholic politics prepared the way for O'Connell's militant emancipation campaign of the 1820s; see *OCIH*, p. 609 and Brendan Clifford, *The Veto Controversy* (Belfast: Athol Books, 1985).

[34] The actual content of ballads is notoriously slippery and lyrics change over time and according to circumstances, but there is evidence of ballads in circulation very shortly after 1798 that highlight Fr John Murphy's role and portray 1798 as a glorious national rebellion. It is perhaps interesting to note that the ones that praise Murphy tend to portray the rebellion in either local or sectarian terms. One of the most famous ballads is called 'Father Murphy' or 'Come All You Warriors', a song considered by G.D. Zimmerman to date from 1798 and by Terry Moylan as being in circulation 'within a couple of years after 1798'. There is no mention in this song, usually considered to be the ballad that inspired P.J. McCall's famous 'Boolavogue' a century later, of the rebellion as a national or United Irish affair. The last four lines are interesting – and ominous – in that they are indicative of a spirit that defeat has not entirely crushed: 'Success attend you, sweet County Wexford/Threw [*sic*] off the yoke and to battle run;/Let them not think we gave up our arms/For every man has a pike and gun'; see G.D. Zimmerman, *Songs of Irish Rebellion: Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs 1780-1900* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1967), pp. 142-3, and Terry Moylan (ed.), *The Age of Revolution:1776 to 1815 in the Irish Song Tradition* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2000), pp. 50-1. Other well-known ballads, such as 'Dunlavin Green', 'Billy Byrne of Ballymanus', 'The Song of Prosperous', 'General Munroe', 'Rody McCorley' and 'The Croppy Boy' all have versions dated '1798' in Zimmerman, with the famous ballad 'The Wearing of the Green' dated as '*c.*1802'. Moylan tends to be more cautious, rarely committing himself to a definite date, acknowledging that the earliest versions of 'The Croppy Boy' appeared soon after the rebellion, and that 'Dunlavin Green' appeared before 1820. The first printed version of 'The Wearing of the Green' does not occur until 1855 as far as Moylan is concerned. None of this precludes the existence of now-lost printed versions from an earlier period, or, of course, oral versions of these songs long before the published date.

[35] See Brendan Clifford, *The Origin of Irish Catholic-Nationalism: Selections from Walter Cox's "Irish Magazine": 1807-1815* (Belfast: Athol Books, 1992) and Séamus Ó Casaide, *Watty Cox and his Publications* (Dublin: Bibliographical Society of Ireland, 1935) and 'More about Watty Cox', in *Irish Book Lover*, xxvii, 4 (July, 1940), 228-30.

surrounding Thomas Moore's *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1830).[36] Coming as it did in the wake of Catholic emancipation and in the year of the July revolution in France, as well as being in the shadow of the Reform Act of 1832 and the start of O'Connell's repeal agitation, the biography was seen by many, despite Moore's half-hearted protestations to the contrary, as an unhelpful intervention into contemporary politics. Moore's Whig friends, back in power for the first time since 1808, saw it as an importunate and ill-advised work. Conservatives, such as the Irish Anglican evangelical the Revd Samuel O'Sullivan – who with his brother Mortimer was to become a mainstay of the *Dublin University Magazine* for the first two decades of its publication – reviewed the work in *Blackwood's Magazine*. O'Sullivan accused Moore of 'encouraging insane political hallucinations', and lamented that all of Fitzgerald's policies were coming into effect with the proposed Reform Bill.[37] Reviews in the *Athenaeum*, the *London Gazette* and one by the poet Robert Southey in the *Quarterly Review* were all hostile. Not entirely unexpectedly, there were favourable notices in the whiggish *Edinburgh Review* – where Richard Lalor Shiel wrote that it was 'an example of the fatal policy pursued with regard to Ireland' – and *Westminster Review*.[38] Moore portrayed Fitzgerald as an Enlightenment patriot, placing less emphasis on his political radicalism and his militarism and more on his humanity and social conscience. By portraying the 1798 rebellion as being fundamentally about Catholic emancipation, Moore was able to retrospectively validate Fitzgerald's impulses, if not his actions. As Ronan Kelly suggests, it was 'how to justify a rebellion and yet deny the forces it unleashed'.[39] Such a tactic would become popular in novels about 1798 in the mid-nineteenth century.

The 1820s and '30s also saw the publication of a series of memoirs by participants in the 1798 rebellion, beginning with the publication of the *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (1826) in Washington DC, edited by his son William, and followed by Charles Hamilton Teeling's *Personal Narrative* (1828), another *Personal Narrative* by Thomas Cloney (1832) and T. Crofton Croker's heavily-edited *Memoir of Joseph Holt* (1838). The 'personal' in Teeling's *Personal Narrative* was important as he claimed to be

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[36] Thomas Moore, *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, 2 vols. (London, 1830).
[37] 'Moore's Lord Edward Fitzgerald', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, xxx (Oct., 1833), 631.
[38] I am grateful to Dr Ronan Kelly for this information; see his '"History's Muse": The Prose Writings of Thomas Moore' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, T.C.D., 2002).
[39] Kelly, '"History's Muse"', p. 129.

solely interested in relating events with which he was personally acquainted. Teeling established a direct connection with Lord Edward Fitzgerald's plan by pointing out that the Kildare element of the rising was led by William Aylmer, described as Fitzgerald's 'youthful friend'.[40] He accepted the conventional view that Wexford was not known as a hotbed of United Irish activity, but was provoked into rebellion: 'what the parent societies might not have effected in years, the injustice of government accomplished in an hour', he wrote.[41] Teeling entirely played down the clerical involvement in the rebellion, mentioning only one Catholic priest – Philip Roche, who had reputedly been a United Irishman – and then not specifically as a priest but as one name among others involved in the leadership of the Wexford rebellion. 1798 was seen very much as a United Irish rebellion: no mention was made of religious tension amongst the rebels in the north, or the sectarian nature of the Wexford rebellion. United Irishmen such as Harvey, Colclough and Fitzgerald featured prominently, as did Thomas Cloney, and Teeling was generally uncritical of all United Irish leaders. Even Munro's unpopular decision not to launch a night attack at Ballynahinch was portrayed as a product of his 'romantic character'.[42] Teeling's *Personal Narrative* was a romantic nationalist attempt to show the leadership of the United Irishmen as brave, idealistic and heroic patriots.

In contrast, Thomas Crofton Croker in the Preface to his *Memoirs of Joseph Holt* portrayed Holt as a reluctant rebel, 'unjustly denounced' as being a United Irishman.[43] Croker also performed some logical gymnastics in his description of the nature of the rebellion itself, suggesting that while on the one hand the rebellion was not intended to be sectarian, given that it was primarily planned and led by Protestants, there also 'can be no question' that for the rebels, the 'grand bond of union which held them together was the Roman Catholic religion, and that they were engaged in a confederacy against all within what was regarded the heretical pale of the Protestant Church'.[44]

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[40] Charles Hamilton Teeling, *Personal Narrative of the 'Irish Rebellion' of 1798* (London, 1828), p. 153.
[41] Ibid., p. 131.
[42] Ibid., p. 256.
[43] Joseph Holt, *Memoirs of Joseph Holt, General of the Irish Rebels in 1798, Edited from his Original Manuscript, in the Possession of Sir William Betham, Ulster King-at-Arms of All-Ireland, Keeper of the Records of Ireland, Etc.*, edited by T. Crofton Croker, 2 vols. (London, 1838), i, p. xi.
[44] Ibid., i, pp. vi-vii.

This irony was explained away by asserting that the Protestant leaders were Deists or Atheists 'like the Jacobins of France'.[45] Again, the initial leadership of the rebellion was seen not to have been the actual leadership in the field: 'their places were supplied by weak, ambitious, and irresolute men, who soon found themselves supplanted by fanatics and cowards'.[46] The overall impression Croker gave of the rebellion was of one that was initially proposed by the United Irishmen but that became in essence a sectarian rebellion led by unsuitable individuals who were not themselves United Irishmen. He described Holt as 'perhaps the most enterprizing and distinguished leader of the Irish rebels in the field', and portrayed him as a victim of circumstance, a pious Protestant forced into leading a Catholic rebellion, with not the least of his achievements being his ability to command total obedience among men who 'while they detested his creed, loved the individual even before the ministers of their own religion'.[47]

Croker did suggest that Holt was prone to exaggeration and that he had 'suppressed certain passages in his life'.[48] However, Croker's own claims to being an impartial editor have also been questioned. Peter O'Shaughnessy has calculated that there are one hundred and sixty passages of Croker's own invention or interpolation in the text and more than eighty passages where names and expressions of opinions were censored or cut from the manuscript text. The purpose of these amendments seems to have been to amplify Holt's assertions that he was an essentially loyal man who became a reluctant rebel, when in fact Holt was probably a United Irishman long before the time he stated in his memoirs.[49] Once again we see clear attempts to control the interpretation of the rebellion, both by Holt himself and Croker, whom O'Shaughnessy describes as 'flagrantly dishonest'.[50] Given the scale of Croker's intervention in the narrative, it is difficult to see Holt's memoirs as anything other than a carefully calculated attempt to manipulate both the image and history of Holt and the interpretation of the rebellion itself, casting it in a broadly conservative interpretation as essentially a sectarian *jacquerie* rebellion.

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[45] Ibid., i, p. vii.
[46] Ibid., i, p. vi.
[47] Ibid., i, pp. v-viii.
[48] Ibid., i, p. xx.
[49] See Peter O'Shaughnessy, 'Editor's Introduction', in Peter O'Shaughnessy (ed.), *Rebellion in Wicklow: General Joseph Holt's Personal Account of 1798* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998), pp. 17, 25-28; esp. p. 28.
[50] Ibid. p. 18.

The single most important publishing event since the histories of the early 1800s was undoubtedly the publication of the first series of R.R. Madden's *Lives and Times of the United Irishmen* (1842-60) in 1842. Two more series followed in 1843 and in 1846, and a 'second edition' in 1857-60.[51] Madden's work was the first comprehensive history and collection of biographical information about many of the leading figures of the rebellion. Indeed, *Lives* can be seen as establishing the pantheon of 1798 heroes, including the major figures such as Wolfe Tone, Arthur O'Connor, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Henry Joy McCracken and Thomas Emmet, as well as less well-known figures such as William Hamilton Rowan, William MacNeven, Samuel Neilson, William Sampson and Edward Hay.[52] Interestingly, Fr John Murphy merits only a passing mention, while Cloney and Holt are not included at all. The first volume contained a comprehensive account of the development of the United Irishmen, portraying them as men of vision and courage with a clearly articulated political agenda rooted in the particular misfortunes of Ireland. Madden put forward the view that the rebellion of 1798 would probably have taken place whether the French Revolution had occurred or not, and little or no attention is given to its influence on the United Irishmen.[53]

For Madden, the rebellion was the natural result of the effects of bad government and oppression on virtuous and moral men, an assessment not that dissimilar to Thomas Moore's portrayal of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Madden was also at pains to stress that the rebellion was not a sectarian one. Kevin Whelan has drawn attention to the symmetry of Madden's listing of United Irish leaders according to religion and the fact that it results in three almost equal columns of Anglicans, Presbyterians and Catholics. Similarly, his list

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[51] R. R. Madden, *The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times*, 11 vols. (1st series, 2 vols. London, 1842; 2nd series, 2 vols. London, 1843; 3rd series, 3 vols. Dublin, 1846; 2nd ed., 3 vols. Dublin, 1857-8, 1 vol. London, 1860). In keeping with Madden's haphazard approach to organising his material, the publishing history of his *Lives* is confusing, with 'second editions' published in 1857-60 bearing no resemblance to the three-series 'first edition' of 1842-46. All in all, the *Lives* contained eleven substantial volumes together with his *Literary Remains of The United Irishmen* (1887). The best outline of the publishing history of the *Lives*, together with a list of contents and an alphabetical index of the seventy-three United Irishmen included, is contained in C.J. Woods, 'R.R. Madden, Historian of the United Irishmen', in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *1798*, pp. 497-511. For an assessment of Madden as an historian and writer see Woods op. cit., and also Leon Ó Broin, 'R.R. Madden, Historian of the United Irishmen', in *Irish University Review*, ii, 1 (Spring, 1972), 20-33.

[52] The 3rd series contained biographies of, amongst others: James Napper Tandy; Theobald Wolfe Tone and Matthew Tone; Bartholomew Teeling; James ('Jemmy') Hope; William Putnam McCabe; Revd James Porter; Henry Munro; James Coigley; and Thomas Russell.

[53] Madden, *Lives*, 1st series, i, p. 178.

of clergymen 'implicated, or accused' of involvement in the rebellion comprised of two equally-sized columns of Presbyterian and Catholic clergy.[54] The second volume of the first series was devoted substantially to the story of John and Henry Sheares, which was outlined in detail by Madden for the first time, and that provided novel writers and dramatists with an archetypal Victorian melodrama. It is no coincidence that from this time on the Sheares brothers begin to feature regularly in novels and plays about the rebellion. In Madden's opinion, a 'full and faithful history of the rebellion yet remains to be written' and Madden himself avoided the task, preferring instead to tell the tale by outlining the heroism and self-sacrifice of those who were 'actors in that struggle'.[55]

Madden's great contribution to Irish historiography was as a collector of material and as a Romantic historian. *Lives* is haphazard in its organisation and presentation, and he left himself open to the charge of being careless and partisan. Nevertheless, his work was a great inspiration to the members of Young Ireland, who saw themselves cast from the same heroic mould as Madden's United Irishmen. Thomas Davis, in Young Ireland's newspaper the *Nation*, first published a few months after Madden's first series, mounted a vigorous defence of the work after a particularly savage review in the *Dublin University Magazine*.[56] This review in itself tells us something about the kind of anxieties a work such as Madden's created in the conservative breast. The Revd Mortimer O'Sullivan, a mainstay of the *Dublin University Magazine* in the 1840s, attacked the work on a number of grounds, including the fact that Madden's sources appear to be either the individuals concerned or their family or friends, while 'enemies to the accused party have supplied the evidence by which the government is sought to be convicted'. This was, he said, not a novel approach by many Irish historians: 'They know their readers and are bold'.[57] O'Sullivan's admission that there was an audience receptive to Madden's type of historiography reinforces the notion that there was a constituency at this time able and willing to see the 1798 rebellion and the United Irishmen in an heroic light. After attacking Madden's sources and defending the actions of those described as 'traitors' –

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[54] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 168; see Madden, *Lives*, 1st series, ii, p. 342.
[55] Madden, *Lives*, 1st series, i, p. 379.
[56] See Ó Broin, 'R.R. Madden', 28-9.
[57] 'Lives and Times of the United Irishmen', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xx, 118 (Oct, 1842), 485-508; 485. Mortimer O'Sullivan is identified as being the author of the review in Walter E. Houghton (ed.), *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, 5 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966-89), iv , p. 253. *The Wellesley Index* will henceforth be cited as *Wellesley*.

such as the Sheares' nemesis Captain Armstrong – O'Sullivan went on to lament the lack of a decent conservative history of Ireland, and complained that any Englishman interested in Ireland is eventually forced to '*add Plowden to his library*'.[58] Neither side yet had a satisfactory history of Ireland, it seemed.

The *Dublin University Magazine* reviews of the second and third series were written by Mortimer's brother, the Revd Samuel O'Sullivan, and he used the opportunity to attack O'Connellism and the repeal movement.[59] He was slightly more generous to the memory of the United Irishmen than his brother, stating that 'much as there was to condemn, there was little to despise', in comparison to the 'big beggarmen' and 'gasconading poltroons' who today 'take advantage of a diseased state of the public mind to enter upon the work of sedition with the basest personal views, and who, when the hour of peril comes, shrink appalled from the echo of their own hollow words of treason'.[60] For Samuel O'Sullivan, Madden was 'nothing worse than a blinded political bigot, for whom history has been written in vain, and who cannot see his way out of the delusions and the fallacies to which the rebels of '98 fell victims'.[61] In his opinion had the United Irishmen been able to write their own memoirs they would have acknowledged the errors of their ways, a stark contrast to Madden's attempts to glorify their mistakes. He described Madden's work as 'a conservatory of treason'.[62]

As the O'Sullivan brothers feared, for many of Madden's most enthusiastic readers the great attraction of the *Lives* lay in the fact that they were partisan. In Madden's case, however, it was a form of honest partisanship. He did rely on statements from those United Irishmen still living, including William MacNeven, Jemmy Hope and the Emmet and Sampson families in America, but in doing so he collected a body of original material that might otherwise never have been gathered. He assiduously collected statements and narratives from figures such as Nicholas Murphy, in whose house Lord Edward Fitzgerald was captured, and even from a Captain Mason, who had been a friend of the Captain Robert Henry Surgeon who had married Sarah Curran, Robert Emmet's

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[58] 'Lives and Times of the United Irishmen', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xx, 118 (Oct., 1842), 506.
[59] The reviews are credited to Samuel O'Sullivan in *Wellesley*, iv, p. 257.
[60] 'Madden's United Irishmen – Second Series', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xxii, 132 (Dec. 1843), 685-700; 685.
[61] 'Madden's United Irishmen – Third Series', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xxvii, 167 (Nov. 1846), 536-550; 536.
[62] Ibid., 537.

fiancée.[63] Ironically, the attacks by Samuel O'Sullivan on what he would have seen as the venality of O'Connellism were sweet music to the ears of the Young Irelanders, who perceived O'Connell to be wrong in his categorical rejection of physical force. O'Sullivan's contemptuous contrast of O'Connellism with what he would have regarded as the wrong-headed but admirable idealism of the United Irishmen would help them in constructing themselves in the image of Madden's portrayal of the United Irishmen. As such Madden's work provided an important link between the hitherto rather nervous and circumspect Catholic portrayals of the 1798 rebellion and the celebratory mode of both the Young Irelanders and, later, the Fenians. Most importantly from the point of view of this particular study, Madden's unprecedented collection of material, which concentrated primarily on the moral rather than political qualities of the United Irishmen, provided an imaginative treasury of material for future writers in fiction, drama, poetry and song.

Another important if less enduring contribution to 1798 historiography in the 1840s was William Hamilton Maxwell's *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* (1845), which initially appeared as a part-work. Maxwell, an Anglican clergyman who was a popular writer of military novels and a highly successful life of Wellington, is best remembered today for *Wild Sports of the West of Ireland* (1832), a book that was republished regularly in both English and in an Irish translation, until the mid-twentieth century. He also wrote one of the novels central to this study: *O'Hara; Or, 1798* (1825). The fact that Maxwell's youthful and rather reckless brand of old-fashioned Irish patriotism was eclipsed later in his life by his abhorrence of O'Connellism and the Young Irelanders may have had at something to do with the fact that he never formally acknowledged his authorship of *O'Hara*. His *Irish Rebellion* reflected his later, more conservative, views.[64]

In his history he portrayed the United Irishmen as springing out of an alliance between northern republicans and the Catholic Committee of the time. Catholics, in the guise of Defenders, were seen as the aggressors in the north in the 1790s and the

[63] See Ó Broin, 'R.R. Madden', 24-25.

[64] A pamphlet entitled *The Irish Movements: Their Rise, Progress, and Certain Termination; With a few Broad Hints to Patriots and Pikemen* (London, 1848) published shortly before Maxwell's death in 1850 outlines the true level of his animus towards the developing strands of nationalism. An article, 'Leaves from the Journal of a Deceased Pluralist', in *Dublin University Magazine*, vi, 33 (Sept. 1835), 308-12; gives some idea of his views on the tithe question. Although he had supported Catholic emancipation, he was appalled at what he saw as the whiggish dismantling of Protestant privileges.

leadership of the rebellion in the south was described as being 'generally confined to priests and farmers … ignorant, bigoted and sanguinary, the violence of their followers was rather encouraged than repressed'.[65] His account of the rebellion in Wexford was derived primarily from Musgrave, with the more liberal Gordon as his next most frequently used source, although he also made use of Jonah Barrington's *Personal Sketches* (1827-32), Taylor, Teeling and Madden – despite calling the latter 'the apologist for the United Irishmen' – on at least one occasion.[66] As a result, the Wexford rebellion was portrayed as both premeditated and sectarian, literally igniting on the signal of Fr John Murphy after a period of unnatural calm in the county. Military enthusiast that he was, Maxwell was unimpressed by the actions of a peasantry that were in his own words, 'as a mob, probably, the least formidable in Europe'.[67] In his view, considering their numbers and the fact that they were fighting with the motivation of having experienced 'in many instances … real wrongs, and in more, fought under the impulse of religious bigotry', they should have been more effective.[68] Their defence of Vinegar Hill he described as 'contemptible'.[69] For Maxwell, the leaders of the United Irishmen – both those who had led the organisation and those who had led in the field – were all men who had serious defects of character, or were men of 'dissipated habits and ruined fortunes'.[70] He was not inclined to believe that priests in general were widely involved in the rebellion, and echoed the official Catholic Church view that those who were already had tainted characters.

Maxwell did not slavishly follow the Musgravian line, however. He criticised Musgrave for what he saw as his tendency to exaggerate both the number of rebels involved and the number of people killed on both sides. He wrote that the fact that 'rigid principles of British law were grossly departed from, cannot be disputed'.[71] While he reluctantly accepted the need for spies and informers, he drew a distinction between their

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[65] William Hamilton Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798; with Memoirs of the Union, and Emmett's Insurrection in 1803* (London, 1845), pp. 21-2.
[66] Ibid., p. 321.
[67] Ibid., p. 316.
[68] Ibid., p. 317.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., p. 318.
[71] Ibid., p. 322.

use to obtain information and their use to secure convictions.[72] He criticised General Lake, calling him 'this vain man' and Major Sirr's 'wretched emissaries', describing the fact that Sirr himself escaped assassination as a 'marvel'.[73] Ultimately for Maxwell, the rebellion was fomented by men 'with a little brief authority', who antagonised the people into participating in the United Irish plan for rebellion.[74] More than one novelist was to take such an analysis as his theme.

Although Maxwell was squarely in the unheroic and sectarian school of interpretation as regards the rebellion, he was no Musgrave, and it is somewhat ironic perhaps that his history is primarily remembered today for the series of twenty illustrations engraved by George Cruickshank – one of the most popular engravers of the age and Charles Dickens' early illustrator – that the history contained. These plates – illustrating such events as the attack at Prosperous, the massacre at Scullabogue, the pikings on Wexford Bridge and other murders, as well as chaotic scenes at the camp at Vinegar Hill and in the various houses captured by the rebels – depicted the insurgents as having simian features and carrying religious paraphernalia. Their victims and opponents were all handsome and dashing, and the effect was that of a grotesque and horrific yet strangely comic nightmare. Undoubtedly this was intended to be the effect, with the apparently comic antics of the half-human rebels helping to inspire an even greater degree of horror on the realisation that real human beings are being killed. The message of the engravings, at least, was clear: the rebels were sub-human sectarian savages who massacred clearly English-looking, Protestant, victims. The constant reproduction of these plates in subsequent histories helped to reinforce this interpretation, and Cruickshank, who had never even been to Ireland, produced arguably the most powerful visual representations of the rebellion in the nineteenth century. Even when other publications included the illustrations to demonstrate how the rebellion was misrepresented, the images presented an interpretation of the rebellion that the accompanying text, no matter how critical of them, could not easily dispel.

The last great memoir by an actual participant in the 1798 rebellion appeared in Paris in 1863, with the publication of the *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*. Byrne had been a

[72] Ibid., p. 320.
[73] Ibid., pp. 321, 325.
[74] Ibid., pp. 328-9.

young man of just eighteen when he fought at the battles of Oulart, Enniscorthy, Arklow and Vinegar Hill. He later fought with Holt and Dwyer in Wicklow before escaping to France, where a thirty-five year career as an officer in the French army left him uniquely qualified, perhaps, to comment on the military tactics and strategies of the rebels.[75] The first of his three volumes was devoted to events in Ireland from 1798-1803. Byrne's portrayal of the rebellion challenged earlier accounts by Hay, Gordon, Taylor, Cloney and others, often undermining them. Most importantly, perhaps, he totally rejected the notion that the rebellion was spontaneous or sectarian, or merely a peasant uprising, always emphasising the key role of the United Irish organisation in its planning and execution. Indeed Byrne claimed to have been from the beginning – precisely dated to 10 January 1797 – not a rebel in arms in Ireland, but a soldier of France.[76] As Kevin Whelan has observed, Byrne's view of the rebellion as one that was coherently organised with considerable public support, carefully planned and deriving its mandate from an overwhelming popular will, was understandably appealing to the Fenians, who reprinted the work in their newspaper the *Irish People*: 'Young Fenian activists could now adduce compelling evidence of the historically-rooted claims of militant Irish republicanism'.[77]

However, the single most influential account of the 1798 rebellion published in the nineteenth century was initially issued as a small 120-page book in 1870, and in an enlarged second edition four years later. Fr Patrick Kavanagh's *Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798* (1874) is still the fulcrum around which the historiography of 1798 revolves, establishing as it did an interpretation of the rebellion that would remain the popular understanding for almost a hundred years.[78] Kavanagh built on popular Catholic interpretations – such as Hay's – of the rebellion as a spontaneous reaction to intolerable provocation by Catholic victims of sectarian oppression, and in the process, 'salvaged

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[75] See Thomas Bartlett, 'Miles Byrne: United Irishman, Irish Exile and *Beau Sabreur*', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave*, pp. 118-138; esp. p. 119.
[76] Ibid., p. 126.
[77] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 169.
[78] Much of the biographical information and publishing history relating to Kavanagh and his work comes from Whelan, ''98 After '98', pp. 169-73; Anna Kinsella, '1798 Claimed for Catholics: Father Kavanagh, Fenians and the Centenary Celebrations', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave*, pp. 139-55; and Anna Kinsella, '"Who Fears to Speak of '98?" The Nineteenth-Century Interpretation of 1798' (unpublished M.Litt. thesis; T.C.D., 1991). Whelan writes that 'Kavanagh silenced the competing voices: his perspective dominated the interpretation of 1798 both in the lead-up to the centenary and in the creation of the new state itself'; see Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 170.

1798 for the Catholic Church'.[79] Kavanagh's great achievement was to reconcile Catholicism and nationalism, something the activities of a secret society such as the Fenians was beginning to sunder. Officially the Church had disapproved of the activities of the small number of priests who had participated in the rebellion, and it continued to disapprove of oath-bound secret societies such as the United Irishmen and, later, the Fenians. The increasing prominence of members of the clergy in political life over the previous half-century, exemplified by their activities in the O'Connellite movements for emancipation and repeal, had created a situation where the Church had developed for itself a considerable level of political power and influence. This power and influence was being attacked and undermined by more radical groups such as the Fenians, whose aims, activities and manner of organisation were not compatible with Catholic teaching. Kavanagh's *Popular History* has to be seen in the context of attempts by the Church to reassert control over Irish nationalism, and one of the crucial battlegrounds in this regard was the past, and in particular the period from which the radicals drew inspiration. Essentially, the Church needed to assert ownership over the 1798 rebellion, something difficult to achieve if the United Irishmen – a radical, multi-denominational, pluralist, republican oath-bound secret society – were credited as the instigators and planners. Kavanagh's achievement was to create a rebellion that the Church could, if not officially endorse, be relatively comfortable with.

The controversy in 1877 surrounding the refusal of the local parish priest at Boolavogue to allow the erection of a monument to Fr John Murphy in or near church property underlines the rather confused nature of the Church's relationship with the rebellion. Kavanagh did eventually succeed in his task, however, building on the traditional provocation notion by adding an overtly sectarian element.[80] The rebellion became an essentially Catholic reaction to intolerable sectarian provocation. Kavanagh turned Fenian admiration of the United Irishmen on its head and used it as a weapon against them by portraying the United Irishmen as at best a dubious and peripheral influence. In doing so he was able to utilise conservative perceptions of the United Irishmen to his advantage, portraying them, like Croker and Maxwell did, as drunken,

[79] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 172.
[80] For the Boolavogue controversy, see Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 169; Kinsella, '1798 Claimed for Catholics', pp. 146-7 .

ineffective, and deeply flawed individuals. Such a view was an implicit comment on the self-styled inheritors of this republican tradition, the Fenians, and another example of both the immorality and ineffectualness of secret societies in general. Ironically, Musgrave's sectarian interpretation of 1798 became a useful resource: Whelan writes that Kavanagh 'reverts almost totally to the old Musgrave interpretation, except with his value-system inverted'.[81]

One of Kavanagh's key contributions to 1798 historiography is his elevation of local and family tradition to a position of unimpeachable authority. In an Advertisement to the second edition of the *Popular History* he writes (in a defensive third-person style):

> Born in the centre of the district where the contest was most fiercely waged, many of those who took part therein were his own near relatives, and from their lips he learned much of what he now narrates. He was, from the information thus obtained, enabled to discern whatever was erroneous in works previously written on the same subject.[82]

Once again, however, Kavanagh's willingness to accept local tradition and eyewitness accounts was selective. He dismissed Miles Byrne's recollections of the rebellion, and ignored the work of Christian Brother Luke Cullen, who had gathered an extensive body of eyewitness accounts and recollections in the 1840s and 1850s.[83] The end result of Kavanagh's work was to push the clerical involvement in the rebellion to the forefront, and to portray the rebellion as a spontaneous reaction to persecution led by their priests – the natural leaders of the people – especially Fr John Murphy from Boolavogue, who died a martyr's death in the process. Those leaders who were not Catholics were portrayed as sympathetic patriots, not United Irishmen.

Naturally, Kavanagh's interpretation was only tenable if one downplayed the significance of the rebellion in the north and, to a lesser extent, the west. The respective weighting of the events of '98 in Kavanagh is very similar to that of Musgrave, and they ensured that the rebellion would be interpreted in the light of what actually occurred

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[81] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 171.

[82] Revd Patrick F. Kavanagh, *A Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798: Derived from Every Available Written Record and Reliable Tradition* (1870; 2nd ed. Dublin, 1874), pp. iv-v. The book was originally published as *The Wexford Rebellion*, but this edition is rare; the revised, enlarged and re-titled second edition is the standard text. Further editions were produced in 1884, 1898 (a 'centenary' edition), 1913, 1916, 1918, 1923 and 1928.

[83] Whelan, ''98 After '98', pp. 169-70.

rather than what should have occurred. Whelan argues that by the time of the centenary, Kavanagh's interpretation of 1798 was the preferred one.[84] The dominance of Kavanagh's interpretation, however, does not adequately explain why one hundred thousand people would turn up to the unveiling of a plinth for a proposed statue of Wolfe Tone, a Protestant United Irishman, in an event designed to be the highlight of centenary celebrations in August 1898.[85] Kavanagh's *Popular History* encapsulated not only the essence of the 'faith and fatherland' philosophy, but also the tensions between 'faith' and 'fatherland' that were inherent within it – tensions that became particularly apparent in the fictional treatments of the rebellion at the time.

The controversy in the 1890s over the legacy and interpretation of 1798 and the 1790s in Ireland was not merely an exclusively domestic example of navel-gazing, but was also a fundamental element in wider perceptions of the Irish people and their history in the nineteenth century. Another great historiographical controversy in the years preceding the centenary of the rebellion was evidenced in the differing interpretations of the period put forward by two of the greatest historians of the age, the Englishman James Anthony Froude and the Irishman W.E.H. Lecky. Both men had been heavily influenced by Carlyle, and had been members of his circle, but while Froude tended towards Carlyle's intense dislike of the Irish and what Donal McCartney describes as 'the benefits to be derived from an enlightened despotism', Lecky was more selective, admiring Carlyle's clear denunciations of corruption, but not his 'worship of force' or his 'tendency to reduce all history into biographies'.[86] Froude, in *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1872-4), devoted all of its third volume to the rebellion, repeating the Musgrave line. Lecky, although a friend of Froude, regarded the views expressed by Froude as 'mischievous and misleading' and his own great work, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth-Century* (1892), devoted three of its five volumes to the 1790s.[87]

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[84] Ibid., p. 171.
[85] See Conclusion, pp. 296-7.
[86] See Donal McCartney, *W.E.H. Lecky: Historian and Politician 1838-1903* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1994), pp. 64-5. For an account of the impact of Froude's views see Donal McCartney, 'James Anthony Froude and Ireland: A Historiographical Controversy of the Nineteenth Century', in *Irish University Review*, i, 2 (Spring, 1971), 238-57.
[87] Quoted in McCartney, *Lecky*, p. 66.

The battle of Froude and Lecky for the hearts and minds of a primarily English readership, with the former promoting an essentially racist view of the Irish as an inferior people and an aggressively imperialist view of history, and the latter articulating and defending a broadly liberal and Gladstonian interpretation, had as its main battleground the 1790s. Lecky, a unionist by inclination, became for many the great defender of the nationalist interpretation of 1798, and Froude merely confirmed many nationalists in their views on English opinion.[88] The 1798 rebellion became, therefore, not just important in the context of Irish history, but also central in the debate about how history itself should be written and interpreted. In a late nineteenth-century Irish context, the question of how 1798 should be interpreted was not just important in terms of the rebellion and its immediate aftermath, including the Union, but also dictated how one interpreted the events of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

'Contested terrain': 1798 in the twentieth century

The influence of Kavanagh's *Popular History* persisted well into the twentieth century. If anything, it became even more a part of the official history of the new Irish state, and there was no significant challenge to its hegemony until the 1960s. The '1798 rebellion' came to mean mainly the rebellion in Wexford. The 150th anniversary commemorations in 1948 were celebrated along traditional Kavanagh lines, with a degree of lip-service being paid to Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The most important ceremonies were held at Vinegar Hill, the most potent symbol of the futile heroism of the Catholic peasantry. The rather uncontroversial nature of 1798 historiography in the first half of the twentieth century is seen in the fact that when Charles Dickson published *The Wexford Rising in 1798* (1956) he felt a need in his Foreword to 'justify the appearance of yet another book about county Wexford in 1798', despite the fact that 'practically all publications on this subject are long out of print and the best of them are becoming difficult to obtain'.[89] In what appears by now to be a standard observation by every 1798

[88] McCartney, 'Froude and Ireland', 256.

[89] Charles Dickson, *The Wexford Rising in 1798: Its Causes and its Course*, with an Introduction by Michael Nicholson (1956: repr. London: Constable, 1997), 'Foreword', p. ix. Dickson also wrote two other 1798-related works: *The Life of Michael Dwyer: With Some Account of his Companions* (1944); and *Revolt in the North: Antrim and Down in 1798* (1960).

historian, he accused previous histories of being 'violently partisan' or 'merely propagandist' and, in what may be an implicit criticism of Kavanagh, stressed the need for an account 'without a trace of conscious bias, sectarian or otherwise'.[90]

In a series of short chapters designed to address the major historiographical controversies – such as the role of the yeomanry and militia in fomenting the rebellion, and the role of the United Irishmen and the Catholic Church in organising and waging it – Dickson portrayed the rebellion as being basically spontaneous, and the result of a deliberate government policy to provoke prematurely a rebellion before a French invasion. He accepted that the United Irishmen were not extensively organised in Wexford. As to the involvement of the Catholic Church and its clergy, he rejected the Musgravian thesis that the rising was a premeditated sectarian rebellion as 'not only wholly false, but absurd as well'.[91] He drew attention to the fact that while eleven Catholic priests were involved in the rebellion in Wexford, eighteen Presbyterian ministers were implicated in the rebellion in the north.[92] Overall, the style of Dickson's history was one in which every action was placed in a wider context, a technique that suggested rigorous historical enquiry, but that in effect often led to obfuscation and vagueness. Ultimately, while Dickson may have approached the subject with more intellectual rigour than Kavanagh, the latter's basic thesis remained largely intact.[93]

The definitive narrative of the rebellion as a whole is still Thomas Pakenham's *The Year of Liberty*, first published in 1969. It is an indication of the fractious nature of 1798 historiography and the durability of traditional interpretations of the rebellion that *The Year of Liberty* can be acknowledged to be the most comprehensive survey of the entire rebellion yet published and yet also regarded as being seriously in error.[94] The history followed a broadly Musgravian line, portraying the rebellion – in Wexford at least

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[90] Dickson, *Wexford Rising*, 'Foreword', p. ix.
[91] Ibid., p. 15.
[92] Ibid., p. 17.
[93] An example of the durability of the Kavanagh thesis was that a key school history book from the mid-1960s suggested that Wexford (and Wicklow) was 'an unexpected quarter' for the most serious fighting of '98. Fr John Murphy was seen to be the key figure: the burning of his church at Boolavogue was cited as the start of the Wexford rebellion, and the 'last stand' of the rebellion was also made by him, as he attempted to rally fresh support in Kilkenny and Carlow. Bagenal Harvey was described merely as having 'United Irishman sympathies'; see Norman Atkinson, *The Capture of the Land* (Dublin: Folens, *c.*1966), pp. 133-4. This text was used extensively in Christian Brothers' schools for over twenty years.
[94] Kevin Whelan describes it as 'fundamentally wrong on the meaning and context of 1798', in ''98 After '98', p. 174.

– as an out-of-control *jacquerie* rebellion with a definite sectarian edge, motivated primarily by local grievances. Pakenham rejected the notion that the rebellion was deliberately provoked in order to pass the Union, but he was severe on the 'grotesque colonial partnership' that ruled Ireland.[95] He did not downplay the atrocities committed by either side, and was careful to factor in both the activities and the influence of the United Irishmen – something that cannot be omitted or downplayed in any general account of the rising. Interestingly, in a comment that prefigured the views of a later generation of 1798 historians, he did observe that a report given to government by the informer Leonard McNally in early 1798 suggesting that strict instructions had been given to members to avoid all incidents that might provoke the government into more severe counter-measures, posed a problem because 'If the report meant anything, it must mean that the United Irish movement was strongest where there was *least* disturbance'.[96] Unknowingly, perhaps, Pakenham identified a strategy of enquiry into not only the substance but also the silences surrounding the rebellion that would be adopted by later historians.

Pakenham's history as a general account of the rebellion as a whole has never really been superseded, although there have been many excellent and influential accounts of the various theatres of activity.[97] This in itself is probably the result of a historiographical shift towards an appreciation of the complex network of causation and the specific characteristics of each theatre of activity. The *jacquerie* rebellion interpretation has remained resilient however, and R.B. McDowell enshrined it in Irish historiography when he described the rebellion as 'a rural riot on an enormous scale' in *A New History of Ireland*.[98] The same writer, in a review of *The Year of Liberty*, acknowledged the need to stress the intellectual background of the Irish radicals involved in the rebellion, but also suggested that since it was largely a peasant rising like those in Germany and England in the sixteenth-century, 'it would have been useful to have

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[95] *Year of Liberty*, p. 13.
[96] Ibid., p. 37.
[97] See chapter one, pp. 1-2n.
[98] R.B. McDowell, 'The Age of the United Irishmen: Revolution and Union 1794-1800', in Moody and Vaughan (eds.), *A New History of Ireland IV*, p. 355.

considered the rebellion in the light of these movements as well as comparing it with the more recent jacqueries in France'.[99]

The last three decades have seen a process of reaction to the *jacquerie* interpretation and much of the current work being published by historians of this period is in direct contradiction to the Pakenham/McDowell revisionist interpretation of the rebellion. Perhaps the supreme articulation of the revisionist interpretation of 1798 is in what Whelan describes as the 'crudely reductionist dismissal' by Roy Foster of the origins of the rebellion as due to 'an increase in taxes, land-hunger and sectarianism'.[100] Foster's 'project', according to Whelan, aims to 'explode the unitary narrative of Irish nationalism, in the service of an equally (but adversarial) politicised reading of Irish history'.[101]

The post-revisionist school, of which Whelan claims to be a member, is characterised by a suspicion of the early post-rebellion accounts of 1798, regarding them as either propagandist or self-serving, and by a desire to interpret the 1790s 'on its own terms'. For post-revisionists, politicisation is the central theme of the period.[102] This school disregard what they see as the rather simplistic notion that the 1798 rebellion was some kind of 'spontaneous combustion' of forces, insisting to a greater or lesser degree on the existence of a complex and hitherto unappreciated network of relations that have been either deliberately ignored or under-appreciated by successive generations of historians. The chief battleground in this regard is in the interpretation of the Leinster rebellion, and central to this interpretation is the question of the extent and influence of the United Irish organisation. Louis Cullen, for example, suggests that the penetration of United Irish members and ideology into Wexford may have been more extensive than previously thought or admitted.[103] In this regard, the work of Luke Cullen has been accorded a new importance and significance. Br Luke Cullen's accounts, which were

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[99] R.B. McDowell, review of Thomas Pakenham's *The Year of Liberty* and Raymond Postgate's *The Story of a Year: 1798*, in *Irish Historical Studies,* xviii, 69 (March, 1972), pp. 107-9; p. 108.

[100] Quoted in Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 174. Whelan also describes Pakenham's interpretation of the rebellion as 'crude reductionism' in 'Reinterpreting the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave*, p. 30.

[101] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 174.

[102] See Whelan, *Tree of Liberty*, 'Preface', p. x; ''98 After '98', p. 174.

[103] L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 Rebellion in Co. Wexford', in Whelan (ed.) *Wexford: History and Society*, pp. 248-95; 'The United Irishmen in Wexford', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.) *The Mighty Wave*, pp. 48-64.

made available to Madden but were largely ignored by him, were not published until the 1950s. They indicate a level of political awareness amongst the rebels that suggests the rebellion was not just a spontaneous reaction to local provocation or agrarian or sectarian issues.

Other work that has been done in recent years has suggested a much more complex picture than can be explained by the rather simplistic agrarian/sectarian revisionist interpretation. This work includes reassessments of the Defenders and the Orange Order; the highlighting of the role of the Freemasons in the development and thinking of the United Irishmen; the identification and examination of the ideological struggles within the United Irishmen and the consequences these differences have for how we interpret the writings of the individual United Irishmen themselves; and major studies of the yeomanry and militia.[104] Whelan offers the most succinct summary of the post-revisionist position:

> This [the new writing] has led to a far more sophisticated understanding of the nature of sectarianism in the 1790s, of the interplay of high and popular politics, and of counter-revolutionary as well as revolutionary mobilisation. In turn, the United Irishmen have been restored to their 1790s context and thereby rescued from the manipulative manoeuvres of their post-rebellion interpreters.[105]

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[104] For the United Irishmen, see the previously mentioned work by Marianne Elliott and Nancy Curtin as well as Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.) *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*, op. cit., and Keogh and Furlong (eds.) *The Mighty Wave*. Kevin Whelan's *Fellowship of Freedom: The United Irishmen and 1798* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), is the companion volume of the Bicentennial exhibition of the National Library and National Museum of Ireland. Another significant contribution to our new understanding of the 1790s is Jim Smyth's *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (1992; repr. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998). Other important and relevant studies include Dáire Keogh's *The French Disease: The Catholic Church and Radicalism in Ireland 1790-1800* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts, 1993); and Paul Weber, *On the Road to Rebellion: The United Irishmen and Hamburg 1796-1803* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1997), that complements David Wilson's look at United Irish activity and its contribution on the other side of the Atlantic in his previously mentioned *United Irishmen, United States*. Allan Blackstock has also added to our understanding of the yeomanry in his book *An Ascendancy Army: The Irish Yeomanry, 1796-1834* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998). J.M. Barry's work *Pitchcap and Triangle: The Cork Militia in the Wexford Rising* (Cork: Sidney Publications, 1998) is a study of one of the most notorious militias involved in the rebellion. A.T.Q. Stewart's *A Deeper Silence: The Hidden Origins of the United Irishmen* (1993; repr. Belfast: Blackstaff, 1998) is an interesting and persuasive account of the influence of Freemasons and Freemasonry on the United Irishmen. The previously mentioned bicentenary collection of essays in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *1798*, has also provided a comprehensive re-evaluation of many aspects of 1798 and suggested many fruitful new topics and approaches.

[105] Whelan, ''98 After '98', p. 175.

Central to post-revisionism is the belief that the appearance of spontaneity accorded to the rebellion is primarily due to the failure of the Dublin element of the rising. The other theatres were intended to be sideshows, and could only have been truly effective if the Dublin plan had succeeded. It is the failure to capture Dublin that creates the appearance of a disjointed series of half-exploded risings.

Post-revisionism has been challenged in turn by those who see it as trying to re-impose the nationalist linear narrative on the revisionist interpretation of the rebellion. Ian McBride challenges the post-revisionist project, suggesting that it can be seen as yoking together 'a number of distinct preoccupations and arguments which are not necessarily interdependent'.[106] Chief among his concerns is that while the post-revisionists attempt to construct a 'bottom-up' interpretation to topics such as the United Irishmen and political radicalism, they adopt a 'top-down' approach to the Orange Order and the yeomanry.[107] Implicit in McBride's criticism is the sense that the post-revisionists employ whichever device suits their broadly linear nationalist approach. He also highlights the fact that the work of the historians of the Ulster Liberal Revival that reached its peak during the Scots-Irish Revival of the early twentieth century, does not fit into the 'heavily schematic' approach of the post-revisionists to the historians of the past.[108] These Ulster historians, who attempted to 'reconcile the heritage of Presbyterian radicalism with their defence of the British connexion do not fit easily with the historiographical categories favoured by the post-revisionists'.[109]

The variety of positions adopted by respected historians highlights the fact that 1798 continues to remain a matter of contentious historical debate, and a topic that not only reflects our view of the past but also forces us to confront our own view of the present. The latest major collaborative contribution to the historiography of the rebellion and the 1790s, *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (2003), gives some sense of both the range of approaches being adopted and the breath of subject matter being investigated. Such a collection may suggest that it is unlikely or impossible that any kind of convenient consensus can ever be arrived at, but this is not necessarily a bad thing.

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[106] McBride, 'Reclaiming the Rebellion', op. cit., 396.
[107] Ibid., 407.
[108] Ibid., 401.
[109] Ibid., 402.

More serious are the accusations made by Tom Dunne in his recent book *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798* (2004), which provides an unparalleled account and analysis of the battle of Ross and the Scullabogue massacre, utilising new sources, including largely ignored Irish-language material.[110] Dunne also launches a blistering attack on the politics of commemoration, suggesting that the official bicentenary interpretation of the event of 1798 was tailored to suit the needs of the Irish government and the ongoing peace process, and that respected 1798 historians were complicit in this action. While this tailoring of interpretations to suit present needs may well be 'bad' history, it is also nothing new. The temptation to simply follow a convenient narrative thread or sequence of events often left other important considerations unacknowledged. Whatever individual historians may think about the manner in which 1798 was interpreted in the past, or the motivations of those who seek to challenge or propose new interpretations in the present, all seem to be agreed that the events of the 1790s, up to and including the rebellion, are more complex and nuanced than allowed by many earlier historians. As McBride observes:

> The 1798 rebellion was a complex event which saw the fusion of all the tensions – Catholic disaffection, Presbyterian radicalism, anti-English patriotism, agrarian discontent, loyalist anxiety, plebeian sectarianism – which lay beneath the surface of eighteenth-century Ireland. Ultimately it is this explosive mixture, rather than the smokescreen of post-rebellion propaganda, which explains why the 'year of liberty' continues to be contested terrain.[111]

While this comment ignores the question of large-scale politicisation and may understate the significance of post-rebellion propaganda in shaping the political debate about 1798, it does stress the truism that the roots of '98 are contained in the run-up to the event, and not in the subsequent narratives constructed about it. Thus there must always be a distinction between the *event* of '98 and the subsequent *debate* about it.

This thesis recognises an essential distinction between the event of 1798 and that subsequent debate. It was a debate that ranged far beyond the narrative histories and specialist studies featured above. Central to the debate about 1798 were the ballads, broadsheets, magazines, plays and novels that featured representations of the rebellion.

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[110] See also his 'Subaltern voices? Poetry in Irish, Popular Insurgency and the 1798 Rebellion', op. cit.
[111] McBride, 'Reclaiming the Rebellion', 410.

This study explores the intense, vigorous and sophisticated debate that took place in fiction in the nineteenth century about how to use, explain, portray, and sometimes justify, the events of 1798. This debate embraced many different and various qualities, and, even as the century progressed, wide and disparate audiences, with the novel form lending itself with particular effectiveness to a conjoining of local tradition and imagination with historical narrative. Like the histories, the novels of 1798 were necessarily products of their own times, providing interpretations of the rebellion that reflected and helped shape the prejudices, needs and even the politics of their day. Most of all, the novel, as a genre, offered writers and readers an imaginative space in which the conflicting personal, social, and political concerns might be incorporated into a single narrative whole.

Part Two: The Novels

INTRODUCTION

1798 and the Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century

Before and after the rebellion

In order fully to understand the representation of the 1798 rebellion in nineteenth-century Irish novels, we need first to look briefly at Irish fiction of the previous century. It is important, for instance, to note that most features formerly thought characteristic of early nineteenth-century Irish fiction were already evident in the novels of the previous century. So, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800) was far from being the first Irish novel, and Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) was not the first Irish novel to attempt to explain Gaelic culture and Irish history to the wider reading public. Ian Campbell Ross describes the fifty years or so before 1800 in Ireland as presenting a 'substantial and varied body of fiction', and asserts that 'there is almost no feature of the early nineteenth-century Irish novel which is not significantly anticipated somewhere in the eighteenth century'.[1]

Even if the most reductionist of definitions is applied, and the Irish novel is defined as a genre entirely concerned with Ireland and Irish-related subject matter, Ross can still point to William Chaigneau's *The History of Jack Connor* (1752), as being preoccupied with issues of national and cultural identity. In addition, Thomas Amory's *The Life of John Buncle* (1756-66), with its interest in Irish language and culture, provides a view of Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Ireland that predated Owenson and Edgeworth by at least four decades.[2] Aileen Douglas draws attention to the distinction stressed in

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[1] See Ian Campbell Ross, 'Fiction to 1800', in Seamus Deane (ed.), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, 3 vols. (Derry: Field Day, 1991), i, pp. 682-7; p. 682; and his article 'Rewriting Irish Literary History: The Case of the Irish Novel', in *Études Anglaises*, xxxix, 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1986), 385-99. For a differently-focussed account of eighteenth-century Irish fiction, see Aileen Douglas, 'The Novel Before 1800', in John Wilson Foster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2006). I am grateful to Dr Douglas for allowing me to see this essay in typescript.

[2] Ross, 'Fiction to 1800', p. 683. Ross observes that *Jack Connor* is 'especially noteworthy for its detailed examination of the question of national identity at a time when little cogent discussion of such matters was to be found anywhere'. In another approach Catherine Skeen links the development of the novel in Ireland with the notion of the Irish Protestant 'projecting' tradition, where the novel form becomes another area where experiments can be carried out with few political or social consequences. She argues that 'by inventing, eliding, extending, and unravelling both what it means to be "Irish" and what it means to be a

Jack Connor between the Irish of Protestant Ireland and the 'native' Irish, writing that 'Acts of positioning, literary and geographical, of readers as well as characters, are crucial to eighteenth-century fiction', and adds: 'Use of the adjective "Irish" clearly required distinctions'.[3]

Although the term 'Irish' remained problematic, as early as 1716 there are signs of a more pluralistic Irish identity in fiction. Sarah Butler's *Irish Tales* combines a recounting of the Irish legend of Murchoe (son of Brian Boru) and Dooneflaith, the daughter of Maolsheachelvin [*sic*], and the story of Brian Boru's victory over the Vikings of Dublin at the Battle of Clontarf. In *Irish Tales* one can see clearly the presence of a strong antiquarian interest that becomes an important element of Owenson's national tales and Walter Scott's historical novels.[4] *Irish Tales* reflects a desire to validate Irish culture and history by drawing on a glorious past that is verified by extensive footnoting and supporting evidence from authorities acceptable to a British public. These are the characteristics that Clare O'Halloran in *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations* (2004) identifies as being at the heart of the antiquarian project from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

The Irish past was a crucial battleground in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 'Patriotic' and Catholic antiquarians tended to see the Irish past as containing a 'golden age' which validated Gaelic culture and identity, while some Protestant antiquarians argued that the native Irish were a barbaric people, thus strengthening a Protestant sense of separateness and justifying Protestant hegemony in Ireland. Clare O'Halloran argues that the inability of Irish antiquarians and historians of all perspectives

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"novel," they become Irish novels. They established a novel tradition distinct from the English one...'; see her article, 'Projecting Fictions: *Gulliver's Travels*, *Jack Connor*, and *John Buncle*', in *Modern Philology*, c, 3 (Feb., 2003), 330-59; esp. 338.

[3] Douglas, 'The Novel Before 1800', p. 1.

[4] Sarah Butler, *Irish Tales: Or, Instructive Histories for the Happy Conduct of Life* (Dublin, 1716). It was published posthumously by Charles Gildon, so it may have been written some time before. In her Preface Butler writes that she gives the name Dooneflaith to her heroine even though she is unnamed in all the accounts of the story that she has read, and that she chose that name because it was the name of her heroine's mother: 'I therefore was the more willing to imagin [*sic*] I should not err so much from Truth, as if I had given her a feign'd one, to give that to her Daughter'. This establishes a policy of scrupulous honesty regarding her story and its sources that sets the tone for the Preface and story: 'although I have cloath'd it with the Dress and Title of a Novel; yet (so far I dare speak in my own behalf, that) I have err'd as little from the Truth of the History, as any perhaps who have undertaken any thing of this Nature'; see *Irish Tales*, 'Preface', pp. [i-ii]. For a more extensive account of Butler and *Irish Tales* see Ian Campbell Ross, '"One of the Principal Nations in Europe": The Representation of Ireland in Sarah Butler's *Irish Tales*', in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vii, 1 (Oct., 1994), 1-16.

and religious backgrounds to come up with a historical narrative of the country that could command the support of liberal and enlightened Catholics and Protestants alike, had a destabilising and divisive effect. This failure was at least partly due to the fact that Catholic antiquarians tended to use the idea of a glorious past to criticise implicitly the intervening period and the subsequent colonisation, while their Protestant counterparts used it to help create a shared national identity. For liberal Protestant antiquarians this identity was a shared Irish one with their Catholic fellow-countrymen, whereas for others the identity created was one that reinforced the separateness of the Protestant community from the barbarous native Irish. Both Catholic and Protestant, however, used the past to 'validate the rights of their respective communities'.[5] The lack of an agreed history was something that could be clearly discerned later both in relation to the historiography of 1798 and the ability of Irish writers to use the form of historical novel developed by Walter Scott.[6]

Among eighteenth-century patriotic novelists a cultural insecurity remained apparent, even in novels that promoted an aggressively patriotic and anti-English sensibility, and that did not rely on antiquarian material to bolster national self-esteem. Louisa Mortimer, the heroine of *The Triumph of Prudence Over Passion* (1781) is a patriotic, independently-minded and self-possessed young woman. She exhibits an intense dislike of England and the English, preferring everything Irish. *Triumph* was published in the year before the establishment of 'Grattan's Parliament' in 1782, and at the height of patriotic optimism about the future of the Protestant Nation. However, despite a condemnation of a 'selfish, illiberal' England that 'repine[s] at another's prosperity', the author is careful to inform us that Louisa Mortimer is descended from

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[5] Clare O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c.1750-1800* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), p. 7. Conflicting antiquarian claims that the ancient Irish were descended from the barbaric Scythians or the civilised Phonecians, for example, are examined by Joep Leerssen in *Remembrance and Imagination*, op. cit., pp. 68-77.

[6] How Ireland's past was perceived would have profound implications, as we have seen, for historians seeking to explain the behaviour of Catholics in the 1640s and the underlying Protestant suspicion of Catholic motivations. If the Catholics of Ireland were descended from a barbarous people then the rebellions of the past would probably happen again, and no reforms or relief would change that fact. On the other hand, if they were not naturally barbarous then Protestants must take some of the blame for what happened in the past and for what could happen again.

'one of the oldest families in England'.[7] The fact that this observation is made by an Englishwoman, Catherine Freeman – her surname is surely both an ironic comment on how the English saw themselves and on the rights Irish patriots aspired to have – may simply be a comment on what she considers important. But it may also hint at the same colonial anxiety seen in antiquarian work: the need to establish a pedigree that is unimpeachable by English standards. While Mortimer, in choosing Irish patriotism over her distinguished English ancestry appears to be making a potent statement about the value of Irish identity, the implication is that this identity needs to be validated ultimately from an English perspective.

Long before 1800, therefore, Irish novels demonstrated an interest in questions about Irish identity and culture, used antiquarian material, and addressed Irish political issues of the day. The need to explain and justify Ireland and the Irish to an outside readership can be clearly discerned, even in the most determinedly patriotic work. To a significant degree, questions of identity were forced upon those writers who engaged with Irish material.

It is important to note, however, that Irish-related material was only one element of Irish fiction. Ian Campbell Ross has also identified a number of general traits in Irish novels of the eighteenth century that serve as indicators both of a sensibility that goes beyond Irish issues and of an Irish style of writing that is not limited to Irish-related content. These include sentimentalism – 'the single most significant influence on Irish fiction from the 1760s to 1800 and even beyond' – and a cosmopolitanism that allowed Irish writers to confidently place their writing in a broad European perspective.[8] The third – and perhaps least tangible – trait Ross identifies is an 'insistence on the complexity of often intractable experience and a corresponding mistrust of systems of all kinds, disallowing facile solutions to the problems experience raises'.[9] The latter 'characterize[s] a notable line of conservative Irish writing in English from Swift to Burke'.[10] This 'notable line' of conservative Irish writing needs to be distinguished from

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[7] Anon., *The Triumph of Prudence Over Passion: Or, the History of Miss Mortimer and Miss Fitzgerald. By the Authoress of Emeline*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1781?); i, pp. 149-50; ii, p. 64. The date of publication is misprinted as 'mdccxxxi' (1731).
[8] Ross, 'Fiction to 1800', p. 685.
[9] Ibid., p. 686.
[10] Ibid.

a more extreme form of conservatism, as ultra-conservative – and indeed ultra-radical – writers of both history and fiction had no difficulty in applying a simplistic analysis to the 1798 rebellion. However the notions relating to the complexity of experience, a mistrust of systems and a reluctance to apply facile solutions to difficult problems provided a template for many liberal fiction writers who explored 1798 in the nineteenth-century.

The pluralistic and cosmopolitan nature of much Irish writing of the eighteenth century was challenged by the events of the 1790s, the turmoil of Union and early nineteenth-century politics.[11] If Union created a market for and an interest in Ireland and Irish-related fiction, it was the rebellion that provided the immediate crisis that needed to be addressed in that fiction. The early-nineteenth century saw the emergence of a form of romantic Irish fiction called the 'national tale' that was to have a profound influence on both the development and perception of the Irish novel. What is remarkable is that while the 1798 rebellion was a major theme of nineteenth-century fiction, very few 1798 fictions claimed to be national tales. In national tales 1798 always had to remain

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[11] 1798 and Union also had broader implications for Irish writing. Rolf and Magda Loeber identify the 1798 Rebellion and the Act of Union as the two 'pivotal events' that affected the decline of the Irish publishing and printing industry in the 1790s and early 1800s. The extension of British copyright law to Ireland effectively meant the end of a lucrative trade in unauthorised editions of British-published material. In addition, the departure of a significant number of the political and monied elite to London as a result of the constitutional changes reduced the domestic book-buying public. The 1798 rebellion itself also had a traumatic effect on the publishing industry: at least sixty-two Irish bookmen emigrated to America at the time of the Union, many of whom had been members of the United Irishmen and involved in the 1798 rebellion; see Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, 'The Publication of Irish Novels and Novelettes, 1750-1829: A Footnote on Irish Gothic Fiction', *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 10 (June 2003). Online: Internet (06/01/05): <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc10_no2.html>; Murphy, *Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History,* op. cit., p. 136; and Richard Cargill Cole, *Irish Booksellers and English Writers 1740-1800* (London: Mansell, 1986), p. 156. For accounts of United Irish bookmen such as John Chambers, Patrick Byrne, Richard Cross and John Stockdale, see Mary Pollard, *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade 1550-1800* (London: Bibliographical Society, 2000), pp. 99-101 (Chambers); 73-5 (Byrne); 552-3 (Stockdale). Stockdale (1764-1813), who joined the United Irishmen in 1792, was identified as the printer of the United Irishmen in 1794, and he probably printed the proceedings of the United Irishmen. He produced editions of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1793), a composite volume of Paine's works in 1796 and was later indicted for 'seeking "to destroy and overturn the lawful government"'. Brian Inglis identifies Stockdale as the printer of the United Irish newspaper the *Press* in 1797, and in February 1798 he was arrested, fined £1,000 and sentenced to six months imprisonment for printing a less-than-flattering article about Lord Glenthworth. Stockdale thereby missed being directly involved in the rebellion itself but was back in trouble in 1803 when imprisoned on suspicion at the time of the Emmet rebellion; see Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Irish Novels and Novelettes'; Brian Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland 1784-1841* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 99-100, 103-4; and Pollard, *Members of the Dublin Book Trade*, pp. 552-3. Stockdale was also the printer and one of the publishers of the 1801 Dublin reprint of *The Rebel* (1799), the first full-length novel about the 1798 rebellion. Since the novel is scathing about the United Irishmen and the rebellion, it seems clear that Stockdale did not let his own political views interfere with his business projects.

subordinate to Union, and is therefore always a peripheral issue. While Union can be seen as an attempt to normalise Ireland within a wider British state, the 1798 rebellion threw into relief the essential difference between the Irish and British historical experience.

Critical approaches

Modern literary interest in the Irish nineteenth-century novel tends to be concentrated on the early and late parts of the century, which corresponds roughly to the period from 1800-30 – the era of the national tale – and from 1870 onward, particularly the period of the Irish Literary Revival, with a perceived literary and cultural hiatus in between. Four broad critical approaches can be discerned in the way the nineteenth-century Irish novel has been assessed over the past two hundred years. The earliest was a focus on the content of the novels that gradually came to question the suitability of the form itself, and this was followed by a search for some kind of tradition that explained the emergence of a great modernist novelist such as Joyce. The late twentieth century saw two new approaches, utilising new methodologies. The first focuses on the national novel, and stresses the Irish novel's importance in the development of the novel form itself; and the second is a broadly thematic approach that incorporates a scepticism of the received canon. The latter approach involves recovering and re-evaluating largely neglected texts, considering them in the context of their own times and in relation to each other: a process that seeks to understand the cultural environment that inspired them. Most critics adopt a mix of approaches, as does this work, but it is to the latter category that this study most readily belongs.

Initial early nineteenth-century criticism tended to concentrate on how accurately novels reflected the manners and history of Ireland. Novels that dared to move beyond the domestic or family sphere were invariably judged on how faithfully or appropriately they represented the Irish past or present. In this sense, almost every Irish novel was a 'historical' or 'political' novel in some way or other. This school of criticism contained both politically conservative and radical wings and as the century progressed, an increasing nationalist element.[12] Charles Gavan Duffy, who denied to Charles Lever the

[12] Evidence for a changing market for Irish novels and fictions and the increasing popularity of nationalist material may be seen in the fact that while several major Irish publishing and printing firms went bankrupt

title of a national novelist,[13] typified the ethos of the *Nation* newspaper, which railed against the kind of 'beastly trash' that taught English readers 'to regard us as a race of blundering servent [*sic*] men scarcely fit to deliver a message, and utterly unfit for anything better'.[14] The scorn reserved by Young Irelanders for the novels of writers such as Charles Lever and Samuel Lover was a contributory factor in the novel form itself being undermined as a vehicle for both nationalist sentiment and the portrayal of the United Irishmen.[15] Instead, the United Irishmen and the rebellion of 1798 were commemorated primarily in poems and ballads. However, some ex-Young Ireland activists, such as Dennis Holland with *Donal Dun O'Byrne* (1869), Charles Halpine with *The Patriot Brothers* (1869), and D.P. Conyngham with *The O'Mahony* (1879) and *Rose Parnell* (1883), did write 1798 novels.

Consequently, it was not only on the content of novels that broadly political judgments were made in the nineteenth century. As the century neared its end the reputation of the Irish nineteenth-century novel, already undermined by Young Ireland suspicion, was affected by dismissals of the form as not 'Irish' enough. Gaelic Revivalists, Irish Literary Revivalists and nationalist critics shared a low opinion of the novel. The impulse to create an Irish national literature, as reflected in the Irish Literary Revival, embraced poetry and drama, but largely ignored the novel form. Later critics such as Daniel Corkery, who was broadly hostile to the values of the Irish Literary Revivalists, also branded many of the most popular Irish novelists of the nineteenth century as producers of 'colonial literature'.[16] Such views helped to consign the majority of popular nineteenth-century novelists to the 'un-Irish' category. Novelists who wrote about Ireland for a market other than a domestic one – which was most if not all of those who aspired to making a living from writing – or who endeavoured to 'explain the

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in the 1840s, including Andrew Milliken (1844), the printing company J.S. Folds (1845) and Richard Coyne and William Curry (1847), the 'most conspicuous survivor' was James Duffy, whose business was based on what Charles Benson describes as 'the triple pillars of Catholic piety, schoolbooks and nationalist literature'; see Charles Benson, 'Printers and Booksellers in Dublin 1800-50', in Robin Myers and Michael Harris (eds.), *Spreading the Word: The Distribution Networks of Print 1550-1850* (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1990), pp. 45-59; p. 59.

[13] Charles Gavan Duffy (attrib.), 'Mr. Lever's "Irish" novels', in the *Nation*, i, 35 (10 June, 1843), 554.

[14] *Nation*, i, 2 (22 Oct., 1842), 24.

[15] This was an attitude that went beyond nationalists and Young Ireland sympathisers: see, for example, William Carlton (attrib.), 'The "Dublin University Magazine" and Mr. Lever', in the *Nation*, i, 52 (7 Oct., 1843), 826-7.

[16] Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1931), p. 2.

quaintness of the humankind of this land, especially the native humankind, to another humankind that was not quaint, that was standard, normal ...'[17] were essentially colonial peddlers of the Irish experience. Corkery wrote: 'The same note is found everywhere in Kipling's Indian books'.[18] Many of the major Irish novelists of the nineteenth century, such as Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, Charles Maturin, Samuel Lover, Charles Lever and Sheridan Le Fanu – all Protestant, and extremely popular in their day in Ireland and overseas – were seen at best to be out of touch or sympathy with the Irish people. At worst – as in the case of Lever and Lover – they were seen as exploiting and perpetuating the image of the Irish as a race of drunken irascible buffoons.

Circumstance may have played its part in this impression: significant early Catholic voices, such as John Banim and Gerald Griffin, who might have helped to establish an alternative tradition to the broadly Protestant one that characterised novels in the first half of the century, died young, and the apostasy of the other great 'native' voice, William Carleton, moved him out of the sphere of Catholic writers. As a result, with the notable exception of the above, and northern Presbyterian writers such as John Gamble and James McHenry, the vast majority of the significant novelists of the first sixty years or so of the nineteenth century were drawn from what can be broadly termed the ascendancy tradition. Although this was no barrier for many of the most successful poets and dramatists, who also came largely from this class, it seemed that no matter how earnest their motives or patriotic their intentions, to nationally-minded critics of the late-nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century these novelists could at best be seen as fellow-travellers and sympathisers. They were using an alien and colonial form of literature to plead Ireland's case with their predominantly English readers, and guilty of trying to squeeze the Irish experience into an imperial measure.

If one is to accept the current literary canon as an indication, then with the partial exception of Sheridan Le Fanu it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that any more significant Irish novelists surfaced, the tremendous popularity of Charles Joseph Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1879) notwithstanding. Then, in the guise of the landlord George Moore, and the ascendancy figures of Edith Somerville and Violet Martin (aka

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[17] Ibid., pp. 7-8.
[18] Ibid.

Martin Ross) – who were accused of portraying Irish life in the same style as Charles Lever or Samuel Lover – their social class and perspective seemed to confirm that the novel was essentially a borrowed form.

By the mid-twentieth century the unsuitability of the realist novel form as a vehicle to reflect Irish reality became an important element in critical approaches, as the difficulty with form and the question of an Irish novel tradition moved centre-stage. The pioneer in this field was Thomas Flanagan, whose *The Irish Novelists: 1800-1850* (1959), concentrated on the major figures (as he saw them) of the first half of the nineteenth century: Edgeworth, Owenson, John Banim – to whom he credited Michael Banim's 1798 novel, *The Croppy* – Griffin and Carleton. Flanagan's conclusion was that these writers created no nineteenth-century novel-writing tradition that was useful to Joyce or other twentieth century authors. However, he did pave the way for future critics by suggesting that the history of the Irish novel was 'one of continuous attempts to represent the Irish experience within conventions which were not innately congenial to it'.[19]

The Irish novelist's problem with form was also recognised by John Cronin in *The Anglo-Irish Novel* (1980). Cronin saw the 1840s in Ireland as producing not just famine but a literary holocaust as well, with the deaths of Griffin, John Banim, and Thomas Davis, and the deportation and exile of John Mitchel, William Smith O'Brien and Thomas Francis Meagher. Carleton, whose best work was behind him by 1850, was described as the only 'native' writer to survive the Famine.[20] In a sense this literary holocaust, along with Flanagan's view that the novel's development was cut short by the despair and silence in the wake of that terrible event, may explain the relative lack of literary activity in the years after the Famine. The lack of a tradition, however, is only unhelpful if one is seeking to trace a linear or developmental progression in the form of the nineteenth-century Irish novel and trying to find within it the antecedents of work to come, such as a potential influence in terms of the Irish Literary Revival or, in the case of the Irish novel, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is unimportant in a thematic study like this one, where the theme selected creates a linear progression of its own.

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[19] Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelists: 1800-1850* (1959; repr. Westport CT: Greenwood, 1976), p. 334.
[20] John Cronin, *The Anglo-Irish Novel. Volume One: The Nineteenth Century* (Belfast: Appletree, 1980), p. 15.

Surprisingly, perhaps, James M. Cahalan's *The Irish Novel* (1988) is the only book exclusively devoted to the development of the Irish novel to date. Cahalan's intended purpose was to provide a 'starting point for more in-depth study' and he acknowledged that 'critics have examined the Irish novel only in bits and pieces'.[21] However Cahalan did not escape from one of the facts that he tried to avoid: the notion that 'one effect of the Joyce industry has been to block attention to many other worthy Irish authors – and also to neglect, ironically enough, an adequate understanding of the place of Joyce's own novels within their most obvious context, the development of the Irish novel itself'.[22] Challenging Flanagan's conclusion, Cahalan attempted to identify an Irish novel tradition, developing steadily from the late-eighteenth century and having at its fulcrum the writings of Joyce. Of its three hundred pages of text, only a third of *The Irish Novel* was devoted to developments before Joyce. If Irish history was for Joyce a nightmare from which he was desperately trying to awake, then Cahalan's approach suggested that Joyce himself had become the lens through which the Irish novel was doomed to perpetually see itself. However, this Joyce fixation appears to miss the point that an inability to trace a coherent and progressive tradition in the nineteenth century demonstrates that the great strength of the Irish novel in this period was the multifarious uses made of the form by writers endeavouring to cope with a succession of crises and political upheavals in the country.

In this regard Terry Eagleton has put forward the view that the Irish novel did not succeed because it was essentially a *bourgeois* form, and that Ireland lacked the social, cultural and material base as well as the political stability for the nineteenth-century novel, especially the realist novel, to thrive.[23] Some of the characteristics of realism he identifies, such as an aspiring to a unity of subject and object, and liberal impartiality, were difficult in Ireland. Indeed Irish reality was almost *too* real, and the pressures of presenting an accurate and – if nationally-minded – a positive picture of Irish life and the Irish people led inevitably to a distortion of reality. Such a dilemma meant that the

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[21] James M. Cahalan, *The Irish Novel: A Critical History* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), pp. xx, xix.
[22] Ibid., p. xviii.
[23] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 147-9.

Anglo-Irish novel was, in Eagleton's phrase, only 'ambiguously realist'.[24] The Irish experience essentially tore apart the nineteenth-century realist novel, laying bare its artifice, and in the process destroyed one of the key conceits of realism: that it represents reality. As such, Eagleton argued, the Irish novel lends itself more obviously to modernism.[25] This tendency to see both the Irish experience and Irish writing as tending towards modernism is, while valid, another example of the downward pressure exerted by the Joyce industry to create a linear history of the Irish novel that leads to *Ulysses*. It ignores the fact that many conventional novels concerned with Irish life and issues were published in Ireland in the nineteenth century, many of which were extremely popular in their own time, and which, with some decoding, can tell us much about the times in which they were written.

There has been a renewed interest in the early nineteenth-century Irish novel in the last decade by critics such as Katie Trumpener, Ina Ferris, Tom Dunne, Claire Connolly and Jacqueline Belanger. Trumpener, in her seminal book, *Bardic Nationalism* (1997), identifies the romantic national tale as originating in Ireland in the writings of Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, and Charles Maturin. She sees the national tale as being crucial in the development of the romantic and historical novel, the latter of which she argues is the paradigmatic novel of empire, in that it is able to contain within itself both nationalist and imperial impulses and sentiments. The 1798 rebellion can be seen to have inspired the national tale: its shadowy presence in *Castle Rackrent*, *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maturin's *The Milesian Chief* (1812) is testament to its powerful hold on the romantic and historical imagination.[26] The impulse to explain why such a thing could happen in Ireland, and, by extension, explain Irish history and culture to a sceptical English audience is obvious. However, 1798 could not be satisfactorily contained within the conventions of the national tale. Ina Ferris draws attention to the fact that attempts to write about the 1798 rebellion resulted in the national tale 'modulating into the novel of insurgency'.[27] Although her view that 1798 only became a persistent and direct topic of

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[24] Ibid., p. 154.
[25] Ibid., p. 148.
[26] For a reading of *Castle Rackrent* in this context see Kathryn Kirkpatrick, 'Putting Down the Rebellion: Notes and Glosses on *Castle Rackrent*, 1800,' op. cit.
[27] Ina Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 135.

fiction in the 1820s is not borne out by the content of the novels examined in this thesis, what is clear from her work is that 1798 remained an uncomfortable presence in the generally conciliatory plots of the national tale. As a result, in key national tales that are set in the 1790s, such as Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* (1827), the 1798 rebellion does not feature directly, and in Maturin's *The Milesian Chief*, the rebellion that occurs is not specifically identified as that of 1798.

The 'Union of Hearts' trope, where national novels end with a marriage that is usually between two main protagonists of different backgrounds, is at once both the strength and weakness of the national tale. In one sense the marriage has echoes of the uneasy national 'marriage' that has taken place with the Act of Union of 1801 – it is a literary expression of hope and trust that with mutual understanding and genuine affection long-standing differences and misunderstandings can be overcome – but on the other hand it can also be seen as an overly optimistic and unrealistic solution to the real and complex difficulties it spends so much time in outlining.[28] Claire Connolly writes that the novel form itself is often seen as a vehicle of Union, a syncretic or problem-solving genre, and that competition of voices is a characteristic of post-Union Irish fiction.[29] What is clear, however – and the 1798 novels bear this out – is that the 1798 rebellion is the very opposite of Union: it implies rupture and irresolution and, as Ferris implies, it cannot be satisfactorily contained within the conventional national tale. Indeed, only Mrs Kelly's *The Matron of Erin* (1816) and Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More* (1837) of the novels examined here describe themselves as 'national' novels, and this thesis will argue that Charles Lever's novels about the 1798 rebellion, *The O'Donoghue* (1845) and *Maurice Tiernay* (1852), specifically challenge and undermine the conventions of both Scott's historical novel and the national tale.

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[28] Tom Dunne has also suggested a third variation in relation to Sydney Owenson, where in her four Irish novels there are national marriages resulting in the return of the dispossessed land to the 'original' owners. Dunne argues that Owenson, a supporter of the *status quo*, portrays in all cases the Gaelic partner as having an important, but subordinate role, mirroring Owenson's whiggish vision of an Ireland in the control of a truly 'national' aristocracy that clearly has a Protestant Anglo-Irish hegemony; see Tom Dunne, 'Fiction as "the Best History of Nations": Lady Morgan's Irish Novels', in Tom Dunne (ed.), *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), pp. 133-59.

[29] Claire Connolly, 'Completing the Union? The Irish Novel and the Moment of Union', in Michael Brown, Patrick M. Geoghegan and James Kelly (eds.) *The Irish Act of Union, 1800: Bicentennial Essays* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), pp. 157-175; p. 161.

The unsuitability of Scott's novel form is not surprising when one considers the influence of the national novel on the form of historical novel developed by Scott. That Scott was profoundly influenced by the national tale is a central plank in the reasoning that resituates the Irish novel at the centre of the development of the English novel form. Ferris, in *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels* (1991), argues that Scott's historical novels were primarily responsible for giving a gravitas to a literary form that was up to then dominated by female writers. The irony for Irish writers was that they played a key role in creating a gradually respected literary form that turned out to be unsuitable for their own needs. Cahalan, in *Great Hatred, Little Room* (1983) – still the only book on the Irish historical novel – shows how Irish writers struggled to use Scott's model, predicated as it was on the notion of a resolved and agreed past, in an Irish situation that was anything but resolved or agreed. Once again the spectre of 1798 threw into relief the fundamental difference between the Irish and British historical experience. If nothing else, attempts to historicise the 1798 rebellion provide perhaps the clearest example of how and why Irish novelists struggled with the novel form.

The 'middle' years of the Irish nineteenth century – in this study corresponding to the years 1830-1869, but generally referring to the period from after the Famine and up to the start of the Irish Literary Revival – have been largely ignored by literary critics until recently, and are usually seen as a fallow period by literary historians. W.J. McCormack, in *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* (1991) – one of the few studies of the period – argued that the study of Anglo-Irish literature was still at an 'infantile stage, obsessively concerned with certain prominent and influential figures – Yeats, Joyce, Synge – but neglectful of the larger body of writing amongst which the masters must ultimately be placed'.[30] He noted that this 'uneven application of scholarship has particularly affected the Victorians, for their achievement (flawed and awkward though it

[30] McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*, op. cit., p. 266. Notable other works dealing specifically with Victorian Ireland include Joep Leerssen's, *Remembrance and Imagination*, op. cit.; Terry Eagleton, *Scholars and Rebels in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); David Lloyd *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (London: University of California Press, 1987); and Eve Patten, *Samuel Ferguson and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004).

was) was rejected as irrelevant by the exponents of cultural nationalism'.[31] Despite these observations, which appeared to be a plea for the Victorian period to be taken more seriously by scholars, he himself questioned the relevance of even the major literary figures – including Le Fanu himself – of Victorian Ireland and rejected the notion of an Anglo-Irish tradition in fiction.[32] What he termed the 'apparent solidity' of the novel tradition in Ireland was dismissed as 'largely an illusion generated in the minds of recent historians', adding, 'If we leave aside the ephemera of the day, it is difficult to point to a period when more than two or three novelists of any ability were at work simultaneously'.[33] Such a dismissal again concentrated on perceived literary quality rather than on the existence of a large corpus of Irish novels. Indeed, McCormack acknowledged this by entering a caveat of his own, admitting that we have so little information about the producers of this so-called 'ephemera' – their publishing history, and the reading habits, critical standards and preconceptions of their reading public – that 'it is premature and impertinent to declare any of them irredeemably ephemeral and worthless'.[34]

Amongst the 'ephemera' he named Eyre Evans Crowe and William Hamilton Maxwell, both of whom wrote 1798 novels examined here, and both of whom were extremely popular writers in their day. This muddying of the water, decrying the tendency to see and interpret Irish literary history purely in terms of the big names and yet simultaneously undermining the significance of once-prominent figures in a specific period, and describing as 'ephemera' writers and writing that have yet to be the subjects of sustained critical attention, illustrates the essentially defensive nature of much critical work on the nineteenth century. It also clearly demonstrates the need for general surveys concentrating primarily on the content and context of Victorian literature like this one,

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[31] McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 266.

[32] McCormack summed up the Irish Victorian dilemma as follows: 'With only Carleton and Lever on hand as witnesses, it is not possible to speak of an Anglo-Irish tradition in fiction. And, as Le Fanu's initial contract with Bentley [the publishing house] revealed, the absence of a native publishing industry placed the writer at the mercy of the English market .... Not only did his society lack any outstanding literary mentor, it had never experienced the impact of any major critical intelligence – no Carlyle or Newman or Arnold had ever analysed the state of civilisation in Ireland. Even at the political level, Ireland's role in the United Kingdom found no coherent expression during Le Fanu's lifetime'; McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 238.

[33] McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 250.

[34] Ibid.

which link work over a substantial period and trace the development of debate and modes of thinking.

Irish Victorian society's lack of an 'outstanding literary mentor' or the analysis of a 'major critical intelligence' as McCormack put it,[35] merely created a vacuum for other writers, including novelists, to fill. Whatever traumas the major writers of the Victorian period may have experienced, McCormack saw them as mainly useful in that they prefigured what he termed the 'infinitely greater crisis' of the Parnellite period, that produced 'a vigorous and modern literature'.[36] McCormack slips into the process of not judging the mid-Victorian period on its own terms, but as an inferior precursor of the modern. This view is re-echoed by Norman Vance, who, in a chapter on Victorian Ireland in his book *Irish Literature Since 1800* (2002), states that the mid-Victorian period was 'an almost invisible category in Irish literary history, a fairly sparsely furnished anteroom to the Irish Literary Revival'.[37]

It is important to acknowledge at this stage that modern evaluations of the nineteenth-century Irish novel, particularly those novels that dealt with historical events, may be based in part on a dichotomy that would not have been recognised by the novelists, readers, and reviewers of the time. As has been suggested in the Preface, a strict distinction between history and literature would not necessarily have been made, or understood. Joep Leerssen has observed that 'to study this reading culture, it is necessary to transcend the compartmentalization of the academic disciplines of literary criticism and historiography'.[38] Furthermore, many of the novels examined here contain obviously fictional, and sometimes fantastic, versions of the rebellion – what is termed in this study the 'alternative rebellion' strategy. This was a tactic generally employed by writers not openly hostile to the notion of a rebellion, but covered a range of opinion that stretched from a vaguely patriotic nostalgia for an American-style revolution that never occurred – as in novels such as William Hamilton Maxwell's *O'Hara* (1825) and the anonymous *The Rebels of Glenfawn* (1852) – through an attempt to pre-write the United Irishmen

[35] Ibid., p. 238.
[36] Ibid., p. 250.
[37] Norman Vance, *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), p. 65. He goes on to describe the Victorian period as an 'annexe' of the patriotic nationalism of Thomas Moore and his generation, thereby re-emphasising the notion that there was some kind of mid-century hiatus with regard to literary creativity in Victorian Ireland.
[38] Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 3.

into a long Fenian tradition – as in James Murphy's *The Shan Van Vocht* (1883) – to a novel such as Agnes Fraser's *Shilrick, the Drummer* (1894), which attempted to reconcile nationalism within a benevolently unionist framework. Novels written about the 1798 rebellion were often historiographical interventions in a wider political debate, and, from a narrowly literary perspective, unsatisfactory as novels for that reason. James Murphy's *The Forge of Clohogue* (1885), for example, was written partly as a response to the fact that Irish history was not being taught in schools.

Subject to a large degree to the demands of a non-Irish readership, it is perhaps not surprising that novels about a specific event in Irish history would have to be prefaced on many occasions with long and often intrusive historical introductions or interjections, which served to obscure the often subtle political points being made, or alternatively elevated the more obvious opinions to the level of vulgar propaganda. In the circumstances, given the unpromising political, critical and publishing contexts of the time, it may be considered surprising how many 1798 novels were in fact written. It may also explain why the most interesting interpretations of 1798 are often contained in the more obscure and, from a narrowly 'literary' perspective, less impressive novels. The Victorian inclination towards melodrama and sentimentality also found rich pickings in the idea of the 1798 rebellion as a project ultimately doomed from the start – works such as Madden's *Lives* provided plenty of pathetic situations, tragic heroes and pantomime villains. *Lives* was a resource utilised to the maximum in novels such as C.G. Halpine's *The Patriot Brothers* (1869), W.G. Lyttle's *Betsy Gray* (1888) and Margaret Pender's *The Green Cockade* (1898). It was difficult for novelists to avoid slipping into such forms, which were popular in their own time, but which had less attraction for twentieth-century readers and critics.

In this regard, Seán Ryder has asserted that the 'moral formalism' of the 'Great Tradition' school of criticism and the values of New Criticism that dominated much of twentieth-century scholarship were 'poorly qualified to recognise or appreciate the achievement of a great deal of nineteenth-century Irish writing'.[39] New critical approaches that are suspicious of hierarchical discriminations between high and popular

[39] Seán Ryder, 'Literature in English', in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Guide to Recent Research* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), pp. 118-35; p. 120.

art – such as feminist theory, post-structuralism, post-colonial theory and new forms of historicism – have all encouraged scholars to investigate beyond the established canon. Joep Leerssen, Seamus Deane, Terry Eagleton and David Lloyd, to name just a few, have all used non-canonical writing to make connections across genres and to explore more fully the culture of nineteenth-century Ireland. Indeed, Ryder points to the debate between the 'historical fact and the historical imagination' in Joep Leerssen's *Remembrance and Imagination* as being at the heart of the 'discursive instability' that is so often seen as a weakness in nineteenth-century Irish writing.[40] If the key issue in Irish culture of the nineteenth century *was* the debate between historical fact and the historical imagination, then the 1798 novel must be centre-stage in this debate. The negotiability of the past, and its scope not just for reinterpretation but reinvention and rediscovery is a powerful factor in nineteenth-century Ireland, and this is clearly reflected in the novels of the period. Leerssen's notion of autoexoticism – 'a mode of seeing, presenting and representing oneself in one's otherness'[41] – as applied to Owenson and others is useful in that it provides a rationale for a post-colonial interpretation of their work. The distinction Leerssen draws between patriotism and nationalism is also pertinent, although his assertion that patriotism essentially disappeared after 1798 and Union can in one important sense be contradicted.[42] Novels about 1798 and Union, most notably in the writings of William Hamilton Maxwell and Charles Lever, continued to be vehicles of patriotic sentiment at least into the 1840s, and in a milder form up to *Shilrick, the Drummer* in the 1890s.

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[40] Ibid., p. 123.

[41] Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 37.

[42] Leerssen argues that eighteenth-century Irish 'Patriotism' (he distinguishes it by using a large 'P') should not be considered as 'a mild, non-virulent form of nationalism', but as a form of good citizenship that was anti-absolutist, philanthropic, politically conservative, and protective of its own social prerogatives. 'Patriots' also favoured devolution of power and were above all constitutional. Therefore, for him, the abolition of the Irish parliament was 'a veritable guillotine to Irish Patriotism'. Whatever else the revolutionaries of the 1780s and 90s were, in Leesssen's view they were not 'Patriots' in the classical sense of the term; see Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, pp. 12-20. However, the definition of 'patriot' – and by extension 'patriotism' and 'patriotic' – used in this study will of necessity be much wider, and is shaped primarily by the content of the novels examined in this study. 'Patriots' here incorporate Leerssen's grouping but also include those who prioritised Irish concerns over imperial ones, up to and including those who would be considered 'nationalists' in the nineteenth-century. The reasons for this are threefold: (i) the wide remit of the term as employed in the fiction examined in this study; (ii) the usefulness of the term in describing a form of nostalgia for the possibilities of the 1780s and '90s that continued to exist throughout the nineteenth century; (iii) the use of the word 'patriot' and 'patriotic' by individuals (including nationalists) to describe themselves and their activities in the period of this study.

One of the other significant factors that must be taken into account in assessing 1798 novels is that hardly any of them fit into David Lloyd's definition of 'minor literature', that is, as literature written deliberately to be outside of the established canon, or written with a mind to establishing an alternative or new canon. In the Irish situation, this would mean writing that was consciously trying to establish a canon that reflected an Irish identity.[43] If they are 'minor', they are only so in the narrow sense of literary quality. Many of the writers themselves were not marginal or minor figures in society but were prominent in other fields – the law, journalism, politics, science, mathematics – and their forays into the world of novel-writing has to be seen both as evidence of intellectual fluidity and that the novel was perceived as an appropriate tool with which to intervene in public debates. Far from wanting to be subversive or marginalising themselves, these writers were engaged in appropriating the dominant literary mode and discourse for their own use. The increasing use of the traditional novel form – whether it was or was not suitable to their endeavours – by Catholic and nationalist elements in society was a clear indication that the political tide was turning, as the *bourgeois* literary form came to be increasingly the preserve of the new *bourgeoisie*: the rising Catholic middle-class that provoked scorn in so many of the Irish Literary Revivalists.

It is not surprising then that the work of James H. Murphy and Eileen Reilly on the last decades of the century paints a picture of a busy period in novel publishing and of a deliberate public debate in the pages of novels. Both Murphy and Reilly adopt a broadly New Historicist and thematic approach to the study of the novels published and the society in which they were conceived, and agree on several fundamental points. They both accept the value of novels as historical artefacts and as indicators of the social attitudes and mentality of the classes from which they emerged. Murphy argues that fiction writing 'was often used in a plainly partisan or polemical way to advocate new ways forward for society'.[44] He contends that until the 1890s Catholic fiction tended to be written by members of the Catholic upper middle-class and reflected their outlook and aspirations, which basically involved trying to normalise Ireland within the values of

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[43] David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature*, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
[44] James H. Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland, 1873-1922* (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1997), p. 1.

Victorian culture.[45] Instead of writers sympathetic to the Catholic Irish endeavouring to demonstrate and explain why the Irish are different in the national tale, Irish Catholics of a certain social status were busy trying to show English readers how respectable and Victorian they were. This attempt at normalisation explains, for Murphy, much of the blandness of this writing[46] and may also explain why no 'great' novelist emerged. The rise of a Catholic lower middle-class with an 'unashamed pride' in Catholicism and a 'particular equation between Irishness and Catholicism' created tension with upper middle-class Catholics who 'imagined a restrained and socially responsible Catholicism, designed to win Victorian approval'.[47] Murphy's impression of Catholic lower middle-class views equates in historical terms with the 'faith and fatherland' notion of Irish identity. However, the rebellion novels of this period tend to undermine this view by highlighting the tension between the 'faith' and 'fatherland' elements that Murphy sees as synonymous with a Catholic lower middle-class identity. The 1798 rebellion inspired the most extreme views and a novel such as M. Louise O'Byrne's *Ill-Won Peerages* (1884) managed to be both aristocratic and 'faith and fatherland', ultimately propounding a view of Irish identity that was so exclusivist that practically nobody qualified. It managed to be triumphal about a form of Irishness that no longer appeared to exist.

Eileen Reilly's extensive survey of historical and political novels published in the 1880-1914 period identifies fifty-six novels set in eighteenth-century Ireland, of which thirty dealt with 1798.[48] That such a large number of them deal with 1798 is in itself an indicator of what inspired the Irish historical imagination about the eighteenth century. Reilly addresses the question of the historical value of these novels, and argues that they have to be seen in their own right as histories of a kind, quoting Paul Ricoeur's view that both fiction and history share a common structure and both 'cross upon the basic historicity of human experience', while herself admitting that 'the art of narrative became supplemented to the didactic discourse'.[49] Reilly's most important contribution, however, from the point of view of this study, is her conclusion that Irish historical and political novelists were engaged in a deliberate debate and were consciously examining and

[45] Ibid., p. 6.
[46] Ibid., p. 25.
[47] Ibid., p. 51.
[48] Eileen Reilly, 'Fictional Histories', op. cit., p. 26.
[49] Ibid., p. 12.

adjudicating on Irish history and politics, particularly for their relevance to continuing political, cultural and social issues. This thesis takes this observation as a working assumption. Interestingly, from the perspective of this survey, she points to Randal McDonnell's novel *When Cromwell Came to Drogheda* (1906), as producing what she terms a 'fresh alloy of Irishness' through the experience of persecution and oppression.[50] As we shall see, such a view had already been proposed in John Bernard Trotter's novel of 1798, *Stories for Calumniators* (1809), almost one hundred years earlier.

This recognition of the historical, social, and political value of Irish novels of the nineteenth century, and a view of the novels as, if not always good history, at least as historical artefacts in their own right, leads inevitably to a questioning of the rationale and the purpose of the Irish literary canon itself. The canon is not, and never has been, exclusively an indicator of literary worth, and, as such, changing political considerations and tastes invariably feature in the bestowal of canonicity on any particular literary work. As James H. Murphy has observed, the pre-eminence in Irish literary studies of canonical writers has led to a situation where nineteenth-century fiction writers have been 'studiously or even blithely ignored by most critics who have tended to work out of the categories of what became known as Anglo-Irish literature'.[51] Murphy sees the nineteenth-century canon as being constructed in two particular phases: a 'metropolitan' phase and a 'Yeatsian' one. The first was created by English publishers, English critics and English readers, among whom interest in Ireland and Irish issues waned in the 1850s, and did not re-emerge until the 1880s. The 'Yeatsian' phase reflected Yeats's dislike of the new Catholic middle-classes and his preference for Celticism, heroism and aristocracy over baldly-stated nationalism, which in turn led to a marginalising of popular fiction writers and their work. If Murphy is correct, this 'metropolitan' phase may explain why there was a mid-century literary hiatus in Ireland, and the 'Yeatsian' one reveal why an extremely prolific and popular writer such as Rosa Mulholland – author of the 1798 novel *Hester's History* (1869) – who was described by Yeats himself in *Representative*

[50] Ibid., p. 55. Randal McDonnell also wrote *Kathleen Mavourneen* (1898), one of the novels featured in this study.
[51] Murphy, *Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History*, op. cit., p. 158.

Irish Tales (1891) as 'the novelist of contemporary Catholic Ireland', is today an almost unknown figure.[52]

Like James H. Murphy, I believe that the thematic explorations of non-canonical material can lead to a body of work that 'bypasses rather than augments the old canon'.[53] Such explorations, I argue in the chapters that follow, allow us to break out of modes of thinking that are conditioned by the literary canon as presently constituted. This study of the representation of the 1798 rebellion in a century of Irish fiction, 1799-1898, has then two complementary aims. Firstly, it offers a new and much fuller understanding of how the rebellion was remembered, used, and occasionally abused, in the nineteenth century. Secondly, and more modestly, it argues for – and aspires to contribute to – a necessary reassessment of the Irish literary canon itself.

[52] W.B. Yeats (ed.), *Representative Irish Tales*, compiled, with an Introduction and Notes by W.B. Yeats, 2 vols. (New York, 1891), ii, p. 281.
[53] Murphy, *Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History*, p. 159.

CHAPTER THREE

National Tales and National Histories: 1799–1830

Nationality, in the Anglo-Irish Dictionary, means Treason, – and unluckily, has had no other meaning for the last six hundred years. That spirit of resistance to England, which in Scotland was loyalty and patriotism, has, in Ireland, always been rebellion.

Thomas Moore, 'Irish Novels', in *Edinburgh Review* (1826)

The 1798 novel, like the rebellion itself, did not emerge out of a vacuum or without any reference points or templates for its interpretation. As with any major crisis, the rebellion generated a wide range of responses in its immediate aftermath, not all of them necessarily internally consistent or based in fact. The most immediate fictional responses understandably utilised existing narrative and philosophical paradigms: chief amongst these modes being the novel of sentiment, and anti-Jacobin, gothic and national tales. However, these forms were not always used in the manner and for the reasons intended by their chief exponents. It was not until the 1820s that Irish writers began to use the historical model developed by Walter Scott in his novel *Waverley* (1814), and even then, despite the close relationship between the national tale and Scott's historical romances, the historical model did not prove particularly appropriate for their purposes. This was only partly because 1798 was not yet distant enough in time to be historical – the Irish historical experience in fact actually facilitated 'historical' interpretations of recent events – but because, as many critics have observed, Irish history, particularly in the period up to Catholic emancipation in 1829, was not perceived as being resolved. If the rebellion itself had not passed from the realm of politics into the sphere of history, then one can argue that the historical novel form used in the nineteenth century, predicated as it was on the notion of an agreed past, remained inherently unsuitable for any meaningful historical interrogation of 1798.

Nicola Watson argues that the novel of sentiment, which was the pre-eminent literary form of British and Irish fiction in the eighteenth and for much of the nineteenth centuries, was closely allied to radical politics in the post-Revolutionary era. Seduction and revolution were both seen by conservatives as following the same logic, with

sentimental novels 'seducing its readers into infidelity on all levels'.[1] The novel itself, therefore, in its principal manifestation, was inherently a vehicle of revolution. One reaction to this tendency was the anti-Jacobin novel, which flourished in the 1790s, reaching a production peak in the 1797-1800 period. These were ideological novels in which, as M.O. Grenby observes, the French Revolution was seen as a catastrophe of 'quasi-biblical proportions, not as a series of political incidents but as a great moral offence against virtue, nature and God', and also as 'a gestalt with no set definition, and thus ... the perfect basis for the sense of crisis which developed and perpetuated itself in the 1790s and early 1800s'.[2] Elements of the anti-Jacobin can be clearly seen in the first three novels examined here, broadly termed reactionary novels, and particularly in the second one written by Charles Lucas, who was a prominent anti-Jacobin writer.

For Watson and Grenby the 1798 rebellion is primarily an analogue for the French revolution, although Grenby does acknowledge that 1798 was 'the starkest portent a novelist could brandish in front of his or her too nonchalant readers'.[3] However, for the Irish writer and reader the rebellion was literally an event closer to home: something that had a direct effect on their lives and the country in which they lived; indeed in some cases – notably with Maria Edgeworth and Edward Mangin – something to which they had been an eyewitness. Liberally-minded writers and readers would also have been aware of the incongruity of presenting Ireland as analogous to Britain in terms of issues of social and political justice and/or historical experience. It was such a realisation that provided one of the main impulses behind the development of the national novel: the desire to demonstrate that incongruity by explaining Ireland's particular social, cultural, political and historical differences from Britain to a predominantly English readership.

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[1] Nicola J. Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the English Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 2.

[2] M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 7.

[3] Ibid., p. 59. Specifically anti-Jacobin novels that use either the 1798 rebellion, rebellion in Ireland, or the figure of the United Irishman, not examined in this thesis, include Anon., *Dorothea; Or, A Ray of the New Light*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1801), where a Bastille fall re-iteration is set in a vague 1790s Ireland; Robert Bissett, *Modern Literature,* 3 vols. (London, 1804), where a rogue character, Roger O'Rourke, adopts United Irish credentials 'for purely plot-assisting motives'; the Irish-born Eaton Stannard Barrett's *The Heroine; Or, Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader*, 3 vols. (London, 1813), in which one of the Irish characters has participated in the 1798 rebellion; and Lady Caroline Lamb's notorious *Glenarvon*, 3 vols. (London, 1816); see Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel*, pp. 58, 60-1. Since none of these novels feature any sustained attempt to either portray the rebellion or to deal with the question of Ireland at any length they do not feature as part of this study.

Ironically, the most famous national tales – those of Sydney Owenson and Charles Maturin – do not address the issue of the rebellion directly, and although only one of the novels featured here, Mrs Kelly's *The Matron of Erin* (1816), describes itself as a national tale, many attempt to plead Ireland's case, and to put forward the argument for Catholic emancipation. In addition, a major change is seen in the 1820s, when the Scott model begins to be used by Irish writers. However, the unresolved nature of Irish history meant that these writers were compelled to look for elements of resolution and grapple with a different perception of history and historical experience.

I

The 'Falsehood and Perversion of History': before *Waverley* 1799–1819

Reaction: 1799–1810

Anti-Jacobin feeling and the anti-Jacobin novel provided a ready-made paradigm to interpret the 1798 rebellion. The earliest full-length novel written against the background of the 1798 rebellion, *The Rebel: A Tale of the Times* (1799), can be seen to fall into the anti-Jacobin category. Published originally in Southampton in 1799 and reprinted in Dublin in 1801, the year of Union with Great Britain, its early publication date might explain why the rebellion itself was only sketchily described. It is far more likely, however, that the actual events of the rebellion were unimportant to the novel's general purpose, which was didactic and moral. It is mainly set in Wicklow during and immediately after the rebellion. Undoubtedly influenced by the writings of Ann Radcliffe, *The Rebel* features mysterious underground passageways, pseudo-supernatural appearances, and verse inserts.[4] Radcliffe's 'banditti' were replaced in this case,

[4] Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) was perhaps the most popular gothic novelist of her time. Novels such as *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Italian* (1797) and, perhaps most of all, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), established her reputation. Exotic locations, vivid descriptions of landscape – in the main gleaned from paintings rather than life – and pseudo-supernatural occurrences are the main characteristics of her work. Unlike other gothic novelists such as Matthew 'Monk' Lewis, all the supernatural occurrences in Radcliffe's novels turn out to have a rational explanation, and are usually the product of an overactive imagination. Radcliffe makes a cameo appearance in one of the novels in this study, Mary Damant's *Peggy Thornhill* (1887). Ireland's chief exponent of the gothic novel was Regina Maria Roche (1764?-1845); see Natalie Schroeder, 'Regina Maria Roche and the Early Nineteenth-Century Irish Novel', in *Éire-Ireland*, xix, 2 (Summer, 1984), 116-30.

however, by rebels. The writer takes a very simplistic view of the rebellion: it was utterly and totally wrong and those involved on the rebel side, with one important exception, are without any redeeming qualities whatsoever. The rebels are portrayed as sectarian, crazed, savage and inhuman, murdering Protestants indiscriminately, and tossing children on their pikes. Those who rebelled for modest or understandable motives are despised and murdered by those more savage than themselves. An incident at the rebel camp sees one rebel murder another in cold blood for the latter's assertion that he was as good as him, and only wanted 'not to pay tythes, to plough and reap on my own land, and get meat on a Sunday, instead of salt herrings and potatoes'.[5]

This incident contains everything that the author wants to say about the United Irishmen and the rebellion. The rebels have returned from looting, pillaging, and murdering innocent Protestants. The main character, 'Strap' – the rebels have no given names – is referred to as 'my Lord Judge'. All the rebels have such nicknames in a grotesque parody of the main offices of church and state and, thereby, the traditional order of things. This reflects an anti-Jacobin suspicion that the rebels merely wanted to replace those in power, and not to reform the system: they do not have an objection to the structure of society *per se* but are essentially motivated by jealousy and greed. In addition, their grossly sectarian toasts completely undermine the United Irish aim of fostering better relations between people of all denominations on the island, and their conflicting calls for 'equality' and 'superiority' reflect their ideological confusion (p. 72). Indeed, their directly contradictory cries both reduce the aims of the United Irishmen to gibberish and also suggest that the real aims of the rebellion are the direct opposite of the professed ones. For the anxious conservative, 'liberty', 'equality' and 'superiority' could also have been seen to be the aims of post-Revolutionary France, which was at the time expanding its borders and taking most of continental Europe into its power.

The camp murder noted above also emphasises a tension between the extremists and those who feel they have genuine grievances. It is the only part of the novel where it is suggested that there might have been tangible reasons for general discontent in Ireland. The modest motives for rebellion offered by one rebel – resentment at paying tithes, the

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[5] 'A Lady', *The Rebel: A Tale of the Times* (1799: repr. Dublin, 1801), p. 72; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

landlord system and poverty – are claims that could also have been made by any English peasant, however. Without any attempt at explaining the very specific circumstances that existed in Ireland at that time these reasons would seem inadequate to an English reader, and as such merely serve to render the outbreak of rebellion even more horrific and inexplicable. 'Strap', here the personification of extremist, unthinking rebellion, is portrayed as a satanic figure. The man he kills is despised for the modesty of his motives, and the moral is that once rebellion breaks out there is no room for moderation or principle. Ironically, the moderate rebel is killed for adopting an attitude that is explicitly republican, grounded in a belief in the equality of man, when he refuses to take orders from Strap. His assertion of equality is seen as provocative rather than a reiteration of principles that should be held dear by any true United Irishman. Extremism is seen to triumph over moderation. The murdered rebel's refusal to take orders from Strap impresses upon us the idea that the principle of equality leads to anarchy, and that anarchy leads to violence and death.

The United Irish organisation is portrayed as having a diabolical influence on its members. After the rebel camp is attacked by a party of regular troops – described as 'the saviours of our country' (p. 73) – a dying rebel who is racked with guilt and remorse describes his career as a United Irishman:

> I was sworn an united Irishman more than two years before the rebellion broke out, by our parish priest; and having received a liberal education, I was made secretary to a meeting, which was held twice a week, from that period to the present time: I was likewise treasurer to the committee for some time, and swore in many an ignorant booby, to become one of us, promising in the name of our chief, that they were for ever to be emancipated from labour, and to enjoy some of the first situations in the state: they were duped, and have now paid the forfeit of their credulity (p. 75).

This description of United Irish activity makes a number of suggestions about the nature of the United Irishmen, suggesting that they were essentially sectarian, and that Catholic priests were active recruiters for the cause. Many of the members sworn in were attracted by false promises of leisure and situation. The organisation, therefore, had a particular attraction for the lazy and avaricious. The use of the term 'emancipated from labour', seems to imply that this was the kind of emancipation that interested most new recruits.

The fact that these promises were made in the name of 'our chief' suggests that this approach had official sanction. None of the professed aims of the United Irishmen are mentioned.

The nefarious nature of the United Irishmen is underlined in the revelation that this rebel had murdered his father in order to protect his inheritance. This not only invokes a parallel with the regicide in France, but also demonstrates how United Irish teaching subverted what should be the son's primary allegiance to his father. His father's property was marked for destruction by the United Irishmen as he was a loyalist and a Protestant, as was the rebel's sister. This rebel was motivated purely by mercenary considerations: 'this [destruction] I opposed, as being my future property' (p. 75). It is implied, but never stated, that he was a Catholic, and a point is stretched to ensure that there is a sectarian element: 'my father and sister's death, (as being protestants) was the medium by which my property was to be saved: I consented, and villain as I was, I undertook the task!' (p. 75). It is hard to avoid the impression that the murder of his father and sister was some kind of test or evil initiation ceremony into a diabolical brotherhood. This account is followed by a lurid and graphic description of the murder of his father. Only a seemingly supernatural vision prevented him from murdering his sister. His actions unhinged his mind and he was tormented by his evil deed: 'I have never been able to remain alone, one moment since, and have now met with the deserved death of a murderer and a traitor!' (pp. 77-8). He dies 'in the greatest agonies' (p. 78). The equation of murder with treason makes it clear that both crimes are seen as equally serious. In addition, the notion of a Catholic killing his Protestant relations in order to save his inheritance can be seen as a microcosm of the entire rebellion.

All of the central characters in *The Rebel* have something to be remorseful for, and in turn, a need to be forgiven; and it is possible to see the novel as promoting the idea that a willingness to forgive the personal indiscretions of others who are truly contrite should be mirrored by a willingness to forgive those involved in the rebellion who have expressed contrition. This impression is created primarily by the fact that the key plot in *The Rebel* relates to a United Irishman – Henry Wilmot – who is seeking a pardon from the authorities. However, forgiveness for all is not the theme. In the first place, Henry Wilmot was forced to become a United Irishman and a rebel under duress, and was

compelled at knifepoint to sign a seditious and incriminating letter by his 'father'. His good deed in saving the life of George Hamilton, one of the loyal Hamilton family central to the main plot, clearly displays where his true allegiances lie. In addition, with the exception of Wilmot, no contrite rebels escape punishment in *The Rebel*. Those who express regret, such as the rebel who killed his father, or Henry Wilmot Snr, are not forgiven: they die in torment. The latter describes himself as 'a dying victim of ambition; I was hurled headlong into my ruin – I have provoked both God and man, and though I have hastened my death, I am not prepared to meet it .... I have been like a serpent creeping among the most innocent animals, to lure them to destruction, and now retribution grasps me' (p. 122). He dies, in his own words, 'unlamented and despised' (p. 122). Again we see the connection with the diabolical – the serpent image – and his provoking of 'God and man', in this case, the pre-ordained order of things.

The message of *The Rebel* is hard-line: treason is an unpardonable crime, no forgiveness can be given and no concessions made. George Hamilton, in relation to a captured rebel, says: 'Any thing but a villain I could forgive, but he sought our lives and is a rebel to his king and country' (p. 225). One of the main characters, Mr Benfield, observes of the aforementioned rebel who had killed his own father, that 'The stimulaters [*sic*] of his offence, have broken the ties of nature and of law' (p. 110). The shock of the rebellion would not wear off quickly. Benfield asks, 'what confidence can be put in a people, who would, if in their power, have overturned the government, and crushed their king?' (p. 110). The immediacy of this novel to the events of the rebellion is seen when Benfield reminds us in an ominous tone that while the country 'at present appears tolerably quiet … the leaves wear a russet hue, and I dread the approaching winter' (p. 111).

Benfield also attacks the ideological basis of the rebellion, albeitly rather inconsistently. We are told, for example, that very few of the rebels knew what they were fighting for, yet such was the power of these ideas that they could turn the 'least spark of disaffection' into open rebellion (p. 110). The ideas themselves, therefore, are the real threat. Benfield's assertion that the military had done 'justice to the badge they wear' (p. 110) is one that no modern historian, and precious few of Benfield's contemporaries, would have shared; but his reference to the 'powerful constitution' (p. 110) that had been

threatened by the rebellion is the clearest indicator that the novel had some political purpose. Although the discordance between the willingness to forgive personal but not political indiscretions is ultimately unsatisfying, it does highlight the paranoia and genuine fear of the aftermath of the rebellion. It is, after all, 'a tale of the times'.

An interesting comparison is *The Infernal Quixote: A Tale of the Day* (1801), by Charles Lucas (1769-1854), a Wiltshire clergyman and one of the best-known anti-Jacobin novelists.[6] The title itself suggests that combination of misguided idealism and secularism perceived as so dangerous by conservatives, and the novel was an altogether more sophisticated, if not particularly subtle, attack on the liberal ideas of writers such as Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. The rebellion in Ireland is portrayed, as in *The Rebel*, as an example of what can happen if dangerous ideas of democracy and equality are allowed to go unchallenged. The narrative begins in England and the plot revolves around two boys born on the same day. The first, James Marauder, was blessed with all the advantages that life can offer, while the other, Wilson Wilson, was born of solid yeoman parents and had nothing but his Christianity – in this case, his Protestantism – to help him in life. They came into contact with each other as young boys and conceived a lifelong antipathy to each other that blossomed into hatred on the part of the former.[7] Marauder reads Godwin – whom Lucas describes as a 'contemptible writer' – and Wollstonecraft.[8] He derives pleasure from seducing and ruining impressionable young women with Godwinian notions of free love and open marriage, ideas seen to fail miserably in the novel. Throughout the early part of the narrative it is made clear that Marauder's personality was susceptible to 'modern philosophy', in that he displayed a cruel and selfish nature from a young age.

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[6] Lucas was a writer of novels and religious poems. Curate of Avebury, Wiltshire, from 1791 to 1816, he later moved to Devizes, where he spent the rest of his life; see A.F. Pollard, 'Lucas, Charles (1769-1854)', rev. M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online: Internet (01/06/05): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17125>. The author should not be confused with Charles Lucas (1713-1771), the Irish patriot of the same name.

[7] The allegorical nature of the battle between Catholicism and Protestantism at the heart of Marauder and Wilson's enmity is further highlighted by the fact that Marauder is christened 'James' while Wilson, although christened 'Wilson Wilson' by mistake, was supposed to have been christened 'William'. It is also worth noticing that Wilson is the son of a carpenter while Marauder is increasingly seen as a Satanic figure. The fact that the mistake in naming Wilson was due to the impatience of an Anglican clergyman who was in a hurry to get back to the hunting field suggests that the author was also being critical of a complacent and worldly clergy.

[8] Charles Lucas, *The Infernal Quixote: A Tale of the Day*, 4 vols. (London, 1801), i, p. 153; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

As in *The Rebel*, the use of diabolical and Satanic imagery is important. The use of the word 'Infernal' in the title of the book indicates the author's view of Marauder's nature and beliefs. The Introduction draws on *Paradise Lost*, and features Satan seated in council at Pandemonium discussing methods to pervert the world, proclaiming that the reign of the Antichrist had begun, 'Thanks to the daring, restless sons of France, inspired by me and mine!' (i, p. iv). Catholicism is seen to be a vehicle of the Devil's work, a point reinforced by the fact that Marauder converted to Catholicism so as to stand a better chance of succeeding to the estate and title of his uncle, who was a Catholic. When his ambitions in this regard are thwarted by the revelation of his uncle's secret marriage, Marauder, once so keen to become a member of the aristocracy, vows in Miltonic style to make 'the hell of democracy my heaven' (ii, p. 29).[9]

It is very clear that Lucas saw the new liberal ideas being promulgated at the time as particularly attractive to young men who already had certain flaws in their character. Marauder is described as being ambitious, restless, underemployed, quick-minded, decisive, daring, high-spirited, artfully tempered and contemptuous. One senses, however, that to Lucas his greatest fault was that his 'grand virulence' was directed against the clergy (iii, p. 42). Lucas made no distinction between being a Defender and being a United Irishman, and Fahany, the 'leader' of the rebellion in Ireland, is described as not only being a Roman Catholic landowner but a Defender (ii, p. 96), which was highly unlikely given his social standing. It is clear that Lucas saw any concession of rights, described, perhaps ironically, as 'indulgences' (ii, p. 97), to Roman Catholics as a mistake. Fahany tells Marauder that the strategy of the rebels heretofore was to await concessions that would make the Catholic position stronger before striking.

Fahany himself is, of course, debauched, having lost his polished manners, health, fortune, wife and family because of his lack of religious and moral principles (ii, pp. 87-9). In addition – and this is seen to be a very dangerous tendency – 'novelty, in any form, had irresistible charms for him' (ii, p. 89). Fahany is seen to be motivated by mercenary considerations, and in his plan 'to separate Ireland from this country', he 'particularized the ease with which it might be achieved, and the glory, wealth, and power which must

[9] 'The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n'; see John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Scott Elledge (1975; 2nd ed. London: Norton, 1993), p. 16.

necessarily accrue to the daring leaders of the multitude' (ii, p. 96). Both Marauder and Fahany are willing receptacles of perverted ideas and activities. Their fatal flaw was not so much in actually being corrupted but in being, thanks to the inadequacies of their character and religion, *corruptible,* and that they are themselves corrupters.

As part of their plan to foment rebellion Marauder travels to his Irish estate in Tipperary, pretending to be his own cousin.[10] Forming a loyal group of volunteers ostensibly to protect the local area, he gradually corrupts or intimidates the group into becoming United Irishmen. He uses them to set himself up as a local warlord wreaking havoc and death upon those in the locality who do not share his views. Following the rebellion's failure, Marauder escapes back to England to resume his true identity. He eventually dies when, being chased by Wilson and others, he leaps off a precipice. The comparison with Satan in *Paradise Lost* is given extra emphasis by referring to the gorge as 'the deadly abyss' (iv, p. 358), and the Latinate description of the sight that awaited the chasing party: 'The haughty Marauder was no more. That turbulent and fiery spirit, which spurned the laws of God and man, had fled his harassed body; – dashed to pieces by the tremendous fall, it lay deformed, and scarcely to be known, upon the beach!' (iv, p. 359).[11]

Marauder's capacity for evil was a reflection of Lucas's fears about the spread of dangerous ideas. For Lucas, ideas themselves must be attacked and defeated by the use of reason and the promotion of Christian principles. Like other conservatives he saw revolution as a disease capable of infecting and spreading as long as it could find a 'carrier'. Lucas's abhorrence of such ideas is reflected in the notion that nothing was impossible for the 'right' man once corrupted by these principles. Marauder, for example, is blamed for ruining any chance of peace between France and Britain. Lucas describes how a French commissioner arrives in London, ostensibly to arrange for prisoner transfers but also perhaps, Lucas writes, to negotiate a peace. A conversation with

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[10] The name he adopts – McGinnis – is also purported to be the name of the Defender leader in the northern rebellion at the battle of Ballynahinch; see chapter one, p. 24n.

[11] The following lines from *Paradise Lost* could almost be Marauder's epitaph: 'To set himself in glory above his peers,/He trusted to have equaled the Most High,/If he opposed; and, with ambitious aim/Against the throne and monarchy of God,/Raised impious war in heav'n and battle proud/With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power/Hurled headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky/With hideous ruin and combustion down/To bottomless perdition, there to dwell/In adamantine chains and penal fire,/Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms'; see Milton, *Paradise Lost*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

Marauder, however, is seen to encourage the commissioner into thinking that rebellion in Ireland is imminent and likely to be successful.

Although this may merely be the personification of a view that Irish revolutionaries helped to prolong the war with France, it is also a powerful, if somewhat paranoid, demonstration of the notion that one determined individual of little political power, 'infected' with 'evil' ideas, could destroy any chance of peace between the two most powerful countries in the world. It also demonstrates the fragility of the existing order. This order is portrayed as a virgin-like state, capable of being destroyed by the actions of one individual, and thus Marauder's assaults on the virtue of women mirror his assaults on the body politic. Stressing this essential fragility and purity allows a hard-line message to be put across. As in *The Rebel*, no quarter can be given, no concessions can be made and there can be no tolerance for pernicious ideas. Both *The Rebel* and *The Infernal Quixote* represent a hard-line spirit of reaction not only to the 1798 rebellion, but to the ideas that are seen to have inspired it. Both use the rebellion to draw universal lessons and ultimately neither one attempts to make allowances for the particular circumstances of Ireland.

Reactive and conservative narratives like *The Rebel* and *The Infernal Quixote* were not confined to the immediate aftermath of the rebellion. *The Soldier of Pennaflor: Or, A Season In Ireland* (1810), is very much in the anti-Jacobin vein. The writer endeavours to extol the virtues of religion, devotion to duty and what she sees as moderation in all things. *Pennaflor* is essentially a romantic novel centring on Alfred and Zabellina Sedley, two first cousins, and the obstacles and misunderstandings that they must surmount before they can marry. A considerable portion of the novel is located in Ireland, where Alfred Sedley goes as an army officer and fights with distinction at the battle of Vinegar Hill and later in the west, earning the title 'the hero of Ballinamuck' (i, p. 300).[12] Although real battles and place names feature, there is still an air of unreality about the portrayal of the rebellion itself. This is chiefly effected by representing the

[12] 'A Lady', *The Soldier of Pennaflor: Or, A Season in Ireland. A Tale of the Eighteenth Century*, 5 vols. (Cork, 1810), i, p. 300; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text. From the descriptions given of the city of Cork and Mallow, it seems likely that the author was either a native of, or very familiar with, the area. That it was written for a wider audience than Ireland is certain: the action takes place in England, Ireland and Wales, and Cork is described as 'The Bristol of Ireland' (iii, p. 303), an entirely unnecessary appellation for Irish readers.

motivations and actions of those on the loyalist and government side as being entirely chivalrous and philanthropic. In a direct challenge to liberal or radical interpretations, the rebellion is portrayed not as a reaction to rights denied, but as an attempt to subvert the rights enjoyed by others.[13]

Even allowing for the hyperbolic nature of the narrative, there is more than mere hyperbole behind the portrayal of Sedley as a hero: his heroism strengthens the inherently conservative view of aristocracy and breeding as the basis of legitimacy. The novel itself evinces a strong mistrust of the lower classes, both in Ireland and elsewhere.[14] The ideal relationship between the classes is seen when Sedley is given a large reward for the capture of a rebel chief. He refuses it, saying that it should be divided equally amongst his company, 'the companions of my labour' (iii, p. 157). They, to a man, refuse, saying he is entitled to it all as their inspiration and deliverer, and Sedley is quite overcome (iii, pp. 157-8). 'Obliged' to take a portion of the reward, 'he sought out the widows and children of the men who had fallen in the action; and to the last mite shared the money he had received amongst them, sighing in commiseration, as he offered the lowly substitute for a father and a husband' (iii, p. 158). Here we see the ideal relationship between the classes: the higher classes are the inspiration and deliverers of the lower; they receive the monetary rewards, and it is within their gift to distribute those spoils as they see fit. The good and virtuous person will do this fairly and discreetly. As with the earlier anti-Jacobin novels, the answer to social ills was not revolution and the redistribution of wealth, but personal virtue and discreet private charity.

The captured rebel chief was one of only two rebels to be portrayed in *The Soldier of Pennaflor*. Again we see the use of Satanic imagery in his depiction. He is a demonic, animalistic figure, devoid of any human characteristics. While Sedley is described as looking like 'the Youthful Deity of Justice, fighting for the laws and rights of humanity',

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[13] Sedley's motivation in going to Ireland, apart from wishing to prove himself a hero to Zabellina, is to help Ireland by 'Asserting its privileges; – chastising its oppressors; – vindicating its honor; – and restoring its rights', against the 'demon of discord' (iii, p. 26).

[14] Alfred and Zabellina's love is constantly undermined by the actions of Sedley's trusted servant O'Donnell, who is secretly in the pay of Lady Augustinus Brodrick, who does not wish them to marry. When Lady Brodrick dies in prison she is interred by torchlight on a Saturday night, 'in consequence of a dread of the mob' (v, p. 341). Alfred's welcome from the servants when he returns from Ireland as a hero delights Zabellina: 'What happy attractions are thine, when the very menials homage their magnetism! Any man may elicit the friendship of his equals, but 'tis only such a one as my Alfred that can command the hearts of his inferiors!' (v, p. 377).

the rebel is described as being taller, stronger, and athletic, while his 'hollow eyes' were 'peering in flames through their red circlets', reflecting the cause of 'anarchy, murder and devastation' (iii, pp. 155-6). The rebel was stripped of all human features, including the power of speech. Sedley was not fighting a person, but the maleficent forces of revolution.

A rather different personification of rebellion is seen when a second captured rebel is discovered to be a woman. Sedley and the other officers present are shocked by the ferocity of her language and sentiments when she is informed that her fate is to be decided by a military tribunal.[15] At the end of what is portrayed as the ramblings of a woman driven insane by hatred she calls them 'venal murderers', and 'legalised assassins' and stabs herself, with the 'polluted word Liberty! still quivering on the lips that had violated it' (iii, p. 163). *She* is seen to have been the violator of liberty, and for her to die with that word on her lips merely highlights the delusion that she was under. Sedley and his fellow officers are shocked not only by the sentiments expressed, but by the fact that they were held by a woman led astray by notions of 'democratic bigotry and misguided enthusiasm' (iii, p. 164) by the male members of her family. It is left to another officer to elucidate the moral both of this incident and of rebellion in general, when he states that we 'need to examine well every sentiment ere we rashly adopt it, not to speculate on what judgment pronounces impossibilities, to remember that vice can never overthrow a building whose basis is virtue, and to curb every excess of heart, of mind as well as of action, as we would seek for peace, respect and security' (iii, p. 164).

This benediction is a summary of the conservative attitude of *Pennaflor* and these conservative narratives in general: rebellion is an evil error. It is impossible that good may come of evil, and the evil of rebellion is seen both in the unspeaking demon captured by Sedley and in the effect that it can have on a woman who, in their eyes, should have been an ornament to her sex. Portraying the rebellion as essentially evil removes the causal element from it: like the Devil it seen to exist in its own right, and will flourish

[15] '"The laws of my country!" indignantly and distractedly repeated the captive, "are they not destroyed, tortured, trampled on, by a set of English miscreants? who call our principles disloyalty, our associations sedition, our struggles to free ourselves from their despotic bondage ... Rebellion! – They seize, they bind, they wound us, then laugh at the stripes they inflict ..."' (iii, p. 161).

wherever it can find hearts and minds receptive to it. Eternal vigilance and personal virtue are needed to defeat rebellion and anarchy, not radical social change.

Reflection: approaching the historical, 1806–09

The novels discussed so far can be described as broadly anti-Jacobin in character, concerned largely with matters of good and evil and showing little inclination to put the rebellion into any kind of historical perspective. There are two reasons for this. First, and most obviously, a short period of time has elapsed since the rebellion. Second, the primary function of the novels considered above was to demonstrate that the rebellion was an unnatural perversion of the laws of God and Man. However as early as 1806, when Edward Mangin's *Oddities and Outlines* was published, there were signs of a more utilitarian and pseudo-historical consciousness among some writers. A clergyman, Mangin (1772-1853) had attended Trinity College, Dublin, and was an acquaintance of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the Sheares brothers and the Emmets. He was an observer at the French surrender at Ballinamuck. Interestingly enough, he was also an acquaintance of George Blake, who was executed as a rebel leader after the Ballinamuck engagement.[16]

Oddities and Outlines is an epistolary novel, consisting of a series of letters divided into the story of Charles Beaver, a young Irishman who returns to Ireland in the midst of the rebellion, and an account of the writer's travels in French-dominated Europe in 1803. It displays, for the first time, an ambiguity or ambivalence about the rebellion that would become a characteristic of later novels. Unlike later novels, however, there is no sense of the gothic or romantic: the rebellion is not sensationalised, nor are there any 'heroic' figures depicted. Mangin is an admirer of Jonathan Swift, and Charles Beaver is a misanthrope in the Swiftian sense, esteeming individuals but disliking the human race. At first Beaver's story and the account of the writer's travels seem entirely separate, but as the novel progresses the writer's observations on the results of the revolution in France acquire a particular significance when taken in tandem with Beaver's account of the 1798 rebellion. The novel attacks or pokes fun at the more fanciful aspects of antiquarianism,

[16] F.S. Bourke, 'The Reverend Edward Mangin (1772-1853)', in *Irish Book Lover*, xxxi, 2 (June, 1949), 28-31. According to Bourke, Mangin lived for some time in Toulouse, staying there until the resumption of hostilities between Britain and France in 1803. Presumably the travel elements of the book are based on his own experiences there.

and demonstrates an unease about both the motives of historians and the accuracy and purpose of historical discourse, ultimately attempting to reach beyond what is seen as the venality of the written word to a non-human oral perspective.

This is achieved by employing the conceit of a talking ring.[17] One night the ring related its story to Beaver, its current owner, beginning in Cromwellian times. Displaying two attitudes that were certainly pertinent to developments in Ireland, the ring disapproved of Cromwell and, in what seems certain to be a comment in relation to 1790s, 'the calamitous effects of civil war, the contention of parties inflamed by religious and political prejudices, and the various ills arising to a nation from an unsettled or an arbitrary government'.[18] The ring confirms the view held by Beaver that 'history records more bad actions than good ones, and more lies than truth' (i, p. 27). The ring's final words, based on its two centuries of existence were, 'how much greater was the proportion of vice and folly, in this planet, than that of virtue and wisdom' (i, p. 48). It is not clear whether this story is a dream or not, but it does give Mangin a device to bypass the historians he so distrusts. The very incongruity of this tale suggests the difficulty Mangin encounters in trying to create an impartial and reliable historical voice.

Oddities and Outlines is essentially misanthropic. It argues that ideas are not good or bad in themselves, and that it is the actions of humanity that are the cause of misery and turmoil in the world. As a result, it is not history *per se* that is attacked but historians, as they 'perpetually mislead ... in assigning effects to non-existing causes, and in mistaking the motives of human conduct; whereby they utterly defeat the great end and object of historical relations' (i, p. 32). It seems, however, they mislead because the great motivators of human conduct are not public service and patriotism but self-interest and aggrandisement, particularly in the higher echelons of society, as Mr Dartley, Beaver's

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[17] It was not uncommon for inanimate objects to tell their stories in novels of the eighteenth century, although it was rare in the nineteenth century. Bank notes, corkscrews, hackney coaches, watches, canes, and pins all featured as eponymous characters in novels in the period 1770-96; see James Raven, 'The Novel Comes of Age', in Peter Garside, James Raven and Rainier Schöwerling (eds.), *The English Novel 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), i, pp. 15-121; p. 31.

[18] 'E.M.' [Edward Mangin], *Oddities and Outlines*, 2 vols. (London, 1806), i, p. 38; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

guardian, observes.[19] Thus we find in the novel that the wrong motives are constantly ascribed to people's actions, from the seemingly trivial, such as the reasons why Dartley declined to marry, to the motivations of the revolutionaries in both France and Ireland.

While Mangin also addresses Enlightenment questions relating to the natural man and natural education, his chief concern is the uses to which learning such as historical knowledge is put.[20] One of his characters, Sir Charles Stately, is a bore who uses historical research not to learn more about the past but as a personal entertainment and as something to reinforce his pride in the achievements of his ancestors: as Stately observes, 'there is *such* a satisfaction in reading what one knows already' (i, p. 112). This is the opposite of learning and is an example of how an ostensibly worthwhile pursuit can be perverted by a human vice such as pride. In contrast, Mangin's letter writer is essentially a modernist, in the sense of his interest and enthusiasm for 'new' ideas. Heroes, however, are seen to have feet of clay. On his travels he visits the homes of both Rousseau, whom he describes as an 'illustrious being' (ii, p. 151), and Voltaire. His admiration of Voltaire is tempered somewhat by a Jesuit whom he encounters, who turns out to have been a friend of Voltaire and describes him as 'but a meteor; – a man to admire for *ten minutes*, but by no means permanently witty or agreeable in conversation' (ii, p. 158).[21] This technique of allowing other people to be judgmental or to express the extreme view helps to create an ambivalent or ambiguous tone that is a characteristic of later 1798 novels.

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[19] 'You will be told that every man should fill a station in society, and serve his country to the utmost of his power; but this language is in general the cant of hypocrisy: nor have I, in the course of a long life, met a single instance of a person in the middle or lower ranks of the community who has been regulated by any such principle; and the higher orders do not even affect it' (i, p. 170).

[20] Unlike James Marauder in *The Infernal Quixote*, Beaver is a man of little worldly knowledge, and, having been educated in a 'natural' manner by not being sent to an academy, his actions, untainted by convention and artifice, are likely to be misconstrued by those familiar with society and its ways. Similarly, the unspoilt personality of another character, Louisa Mason, leads to her being called – in a pointed and topical reference – 'the wild Irish girl' (i, p. 176), by the snobbish Diana Stately. Significantly, when asked to sing, Louisa chose not to 'scream' (i, p. 135) an Italian song as Diana Stately had done, but sang 'an old pathetic Irish song' (i, p. 140). It is in the singing of this song that Beaver's love for Louisa is first stirred. Charles Mason, her father, is equally iconoclastic: when asked by Sir Charles Stately, who is obsessed by the age and history of his family, about his own ancestry, Mason's answer might have been from the mouth of Jonathan Swift himself: he 'took it for granted he had nearly as many ancestors as most other persons; and that a man who had nothing else to boast of but dead great-grandfathers, resembled a potatoe [*sic*] whose most valuable part was under ground' (i, p. 177).

[21] The Jesuit disliked Voltaire's '*unphilosophical* hatred of Christianity, declaring that he not only kept infidelity alive, but that his breath first blew the flame of revolutionary principles in Europe' (ii, p. 158). It is important to note that this disapproving tone is the Jesuit's, not Mangin's, and although Mangin as an Anglican clergyman could also be expected to disapprove of Voltaire's attitude to Christianity, he need not necessarily disapprove of Voltaire's revolutionary ideas.

The spectre of the French provides an interesting crossover with the anti-Jacobin novel. Whatever about Jacobin ideas, the notion of the French invader appears to be a unifying factor and a reassuring sign that, for all the trouble and dissent on the island, there was still enough common ground for people to unite against a common threat. In an era when Britain was in an almost continuous state of war with France and when the threat of a French invasion was ever present, portraying any character as anxious to assist the French was to place him amongst the irredeemable. The French, therefore, have a complex role in the representations of 1798. Taking up arms in a civil conflict is one thing, and can even be admired in certain circumstances and rationalised as not necessarily treasonous. Taking up arms to assist an invading Other, however, is a different matter. The attitude to French assistance for any domestic efforts to effect change becomes the ultimate test of loyalty.

This is given further definition in *Oddities and Outlines*. Charles Mason describes himself as a patriot who has resolved never to 'draw a sword in this disgraceful and calamitous quarrel, unless (which is very improbable) compelled to the dreadful necessity, by the circumstance of an invasion from France' (ii, p. 43). Mason's fear is that a 'military despotism' would result (ii, p. 44). This can be seen to be the bedrock of loyalty, and the level below which no self-respecting Irishman of any persuasion could go. While this may seem to condemn the United Irishmen as traitors it also suggests that revolutionary activity at home is not unacceptable as long as it is 'internal'. The general sentiment expressed by Mason is pacifistic: civil disturbance is wrong and uncivilised. It seems clear that Mason intends to fight against the French if they invade, but his fears of despotism may not necessarily be simply a consequence of a French victory. He has already experienced the consequences of martial law in Ireland before and during the rebellion. The 'dreadful necessity' that Mason mentions may be the fact that he will feel compelled to fight on the French side if they invade. However unlikely this may seem, it is given some credence by the position that Mason finds himself in. His reluctance to get involved in a civil war has exposed him to more danger from loyalist sources than from rebel ones. He does not fear the rebels or the neighbouring peasantry, 'but [I] cannot tell the hour when the troops of government may come hither in search of arms or fugitives; and my death or imprisonment will probably be the consequence, having long been a

suspected person' (ii, p. 42). Mason's position highlights a truism in civil war situations – those who observe a studied neutrality are more likely to be regarded as rebel sympathisers than loyalists.[22] At the very least, any man prepared to remain neutral during a major civil disturbance of uncertain outcome demonstrates a marked ambivalence to the fate of the existing regime.

Mason may simply be the epitome of the rational enlightened man in *Oddities and Outlines*, a man squeezed between the extremists on both sides. But if this is so, why not simply portray him as an enlightened loyalist? The fact remains that Mason embodies all the contradictions to be found in *Oddities and Outlines*. He is a pseudo-rebel: a man who shares many of the rebels' views but not their methods. He is first and foremost devoted 'to the cause of human freedom' (ii, p. 100), an ambiguous term in the circumstances. He embodies all that is noble about the rebels and their ideals and he shares their fate to some degree, in the sense that his property is destroyed and he is forced to live abroad. In the end, although his reputation is restored he cannot or will not bring himself to return to Ireland. Mangin's inability or reluctance to portray Mason in a more straightforward light is in itself a commentary on the complexity of post-rebellion Ireland and the conflicting ideas and emotions that pervade this most curious novel.

As noted above, Mangin uses the broader canvas of post-revolutionary Europe, as seen through the eyes of his correspondent, to prepare the reader for an understanding of Mason and the rebellion in general. Like the anti-Jacobins, Mangin constantly highlights the unpleasant difference that exists not only between theory and practice, but between a deed in the abstract and the reality of that deed. For example, the correspondent describes a botched execution that culminated with the executioner having to tear the victim's head

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[22] The danger of being moderate or neutral in a civil war situation can be seen in Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* (1809), where Lord Glenthorn is kidnapped in order to serve as the local leader of the rebels. Since Glenthorn had not actively persecuted his tenants, they assumed he was on their side; see below pp. 106-7. This particular episode in *Ennui* is based on Maria Edgeworth's experiences during '98. Her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, alienated many of the Longford gentry by recruiting Catholics into his yeomanry corps, so that when the rebellion finally broke out his corps was left without weapons and he was so widely distrusted that he was almost hanged as a French spy; see R. L. Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth: Begun by Himself and Concluded by his Daughter, Maria Edgeworth*, with an Introduction by Desmond Clarke, 2 vols. (1820; facsimile edition Shannon: Irish Academic Press, 1969), ii, pp. 211, 238. Brian Hollingworth observes that 'we should realize that, during the invasion, the Edgeworths felt themselves to be in more physical danger from the loyal Protestant landowners than they were from the French, or the Irish rebels'. Maria herself, in a letter to her cousin, wrote 'Because my father was not an Orangeman, they [local landowners] concluded he must be a rebel'; see Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing*, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

off with his hands (ii, p. 33). He is not trying to make the point that execution is a barbaric and uncivilised act, merely that it can be so in practice. Actions which are just in the eyes of the law, such as the execution of a murderer, may be in reality horrific spectacles.

In a similar vein Mangin's correspondent meets another man, who in his assessment of the effect of the Revolution admitted that 'democratic zealots, by fanaticism and wanton cruelty, had sullied the brightness of the revolution, and brought into disrepute a mighty effort to be *free*', but he denied that 'every fact which the annalist might choose to call barbarous, was actually such' (ii, pp. 30-1). The man defends this point of view by recalling an incident when a prefect ordered the guillotining of three young women merely for wearing royalist ribbons on their dresses. He argues that the young ladies were guillotined so that 'what was *more* dreadful might be avoided: by the punishment of the ladies, the party within was intimidated, and the town was preserved' (ii, p. 32).

These incidents, in addition to the earlier attack on historians who ascribe spurious and inaccurate causes and reasons to events, prepare us for the utilitarian observation made by Mangin's correspondent on the consequences of the French Revolution. He writes that while 'Every virtuous man will lament to find, that, in the course of revolutionary proceedings, it should be thought necessary "*to do evil that good may come of it;*" ... they who please, may console themselves by believing, as I do, that, upon the whole, more benefit than injury has accrued to the mass of the French people' (i, p. 123). The idea that good can spring from an ostensibly 'evil' act is in complete contrast to both *The Rebel* and *The Infernal Quixote*. As a result, the following analysis of the situation in France does not rely on the idea that it was the revolution itself that inevitably led to despotism:

> The French, in speaking of this period, call it invariably "the time of terror:" mention the *Jacobins* with abhorrence; and smile at the recollection that all or most of them were sent headless to their graves. Yet it is certain that to this fierce and enterprising body of men the French owe everything. The fury of their onset, their unsparing use of the axe and of the sword, confused the aristocratic party, and spread dismay among their ranks. There would otherwise have been no *emigration*; [and] of course, *no reform* .... During this tremendous struggle for the dearest rights of mankind, instances of patriotic devotion, of heroic suicide, and

> the most generous valour, were frequent among the lowest of the soldiery .... But – the nation should not have nodded, and dropped asleep, as she has done; nor have allowed Bonaparte to steal upon her in slumber, and load her with the fetters of *despotism* (i, pp. 124-7).

In this analysis it was a lack of vigilance, not the revolution itself, which resulted in France slipping into dictatorship. Desperate, violent and cruel men and actions are sometimes necessary for the greater good. Mangin's phrase, 'the dearest rights of mankind', is a telling one, as is the assertion that acts of valour and generosity are not just the province of the higher or wealthier classes. The lower classes are not merely rabble or the 'ignorant boobies' portrayed in *The Rebel*. These ideas were radical enough in themselves, but when transferred to an Irish context they become an explosive contrast to conservative representations of 1798. However, a Swiftean element persists, rooted in a despair that humankind seems incapable of effecting rational and reasoned change without resorting to violence, which in turn unleashes both the best and worst aspects of humanity.

Whatever view one ultimately takes of *Oddities and Outlines*, the novel represents a significant move away from the dogmatic and simplistic didacticism of *The Rebel*, *The Infernal Quixote* and *The Soldier of Pennaflor*. The very fact that it leaves the reader with doubts as to whether it is an extended satire on the petty moralising of the educated classes, or an earnest attempt to tease out and put in some kind of historical and social context the upheavals of the revolutionary era, is in itself a measure of the novel's significance. It is the first important novel about the 1798 rebellion in that it does not provide any easy or simplistic answers to the issues it raises.

It is no surprise, given the moral and didactic potential of the 1798 rebellion, that one of the finest literary moralists of the time, Maria Edgeworth, should also make use of it. It features in her 1809 tale *Ennui*. Given Edgeworth's own direct experience of the rebellion, it is surprising how little it features and how vaguely it is represented.[23] However, this merely demonstrates an important difference between Edgeworth and the other didactic novelists, in that while others essentially use 1798 to highlight flaws in the character of individuals that make them particularly susceptible to rebellion, Edgeworth

[23] See above, p. 103n.; Maria and her father also visited the battlefield at Ballinamuck after the defeat of the French; see Hollingwood, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing*, pp. 40-1; and Conclusion, p. 303.

concentrates on the grand picture. She does not reject Enlightenment ideas: on the contrary, she embraces them, and this is precisely why any representation of the rebellion in her work is vague. To Edgeworth, mere events are not significant, it is the underlying reason for those events that is important. As a moralist and educationalist, Edgeworth saw the essential problems of Ireland as being a combination of inadequate education and an abrogation of responsibility. The solution was to educate both landlord and tenant to an understanding of their respective responsibilities. Such ideas are central to *Ennui* and her other fiction, including *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *The Absentee* (1812) and *Ormond* (1817). As a result, absentee landlordism was not, of itself, the cause of problems, and forcing landowners to live on their estates would not solve Ireland's difficulties: educating them to understand why it was necessary to stay on their estates was the answer. In classic Enlightenment fashion, the Edgeworthian analysis saw the application of universal principles and laws as the great solution to society's ills. The fact that the rebels are seen to be essentially leaderless is significant in downplaying the importance of mere events.

As a result, in *Ennui* Lord Glenthorn's ignorance of the possibility of rebellion relates not to any misunderstanding of the political or historical situation in Ireland, but to his expectation that the Irish situation was similar to that of England: 'Having been used to the regular course of justice, which prevailed in England, I was more shocked at the summary proceedings of my neighbours, than alarmed at the symptoms of insurrection'.[24] In the context of *Ennui*, the rebellion is primarily used to provide a temporary respite for Glenthorn from his 'habitual *inertia*' of 'mind and body' (i, p. 229), but the way that the rebellion is used gives us some understanding of Edgeworth's analysis. The standard description of discontent as an 'epidemic infection' also suggests that disaffection is transmitted almost unknowingly, thereby distancing it from specific causes and incidents. Glenthorn, used to a country where the rule of law predominates, makes no provision for 'the peculiar circumstances of the country' (i, p. 225). In trying to uphold English standards of justice he merely alienates his neighbours and convinces the rebels of his secret sympathy: 'The disaffected themselves, as I afterwards found, really believed, that,

[24] Maria Edgeworth, 'Ennui', in *Tales of Fashionable Life*, 3 vols. (London, 1809), i, p. 224; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

as I had not begun by persecuting the poor, I must be a favourer of the rebels; and all that I did to bring the guilty to justice, they thought was only to give a *colour to the thing*, till the proper moment should come for my declaring myself' (i, p. 229).

Like Charles Mason in *Oddities and Outlines*, Glenthorn discovers that he lives in an environment where reasonable and fair behaviour become grounds for suspicion, and this suggests, in contrast to the message of the anti-Jacobin novels, that private virtue alone was not the answer to Ireland's ills. In this regard, therefore, Edgeworth differs from earlier – and indeed, later – moralists. *Ennui* also addresses some of the implications in *The Rebel* and *The Infernal Quixote* that there is something in the Irish, or Catholic, character that makes them particularly susceptible to rebellion. In *Ennui* we see that things are different in Ireland because the people of the country are *treated* differently. The inference is that if Ireland was administered like England, and people enjoyed the same rights and entitlements, then Ireland, and the Irish, would be more like England and the English. Because Ireland is *not* treated like England these appalling and unimaginable things happen. It would be wrong, however, to see this as being necessarily a plea for massive reform. It is merely an assertion that the application of the right educational principles will have a beneficial effect. With proper – and appropriate – education, that which is right and just will be evident to all.

Ennui removes 1798 from the sphere of individual morality and, like *Oddities and Outlines*, puts it in a wider context. The fact that Edgeworth, who was described in a contemporary review of *Ennui* as 'having done more good than any other writer, male or female, of her generation',[25] chose not to make straightforward didactic capital of the event, would certainly have helped to challenge simplistic and conservative interpretations of 1798.

The seeds of what would become the dominant mode of Irish nationalist thought in the nineteenth century can be seen in another 1809 publication: John Bernard Trotter's *Stories for Calumniators*. Trotter (1775-1818), was private secretary to Charles James Fox until the death of the latter in 1806. Later, Trotter wrote a biography of Fox and reputedly idolised him.[26] As the private secretary to the English politician who was seen

[25] Anon. 'Tales of Fashionable Life. By Miss Edgeworth.', in *Edinburgh Review*, xiv, 28 (July, 1809), 376.
[26] 'Note on John Bernard Trotter', in *Irish Book Lover*, ii, 4 (Nov., 1909), 41-2. A cousin of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Charles James Fox (1749-1806) was widely suspected of being a French sympathiser during

as being closest and most sympathetic to the United Irishmen and their ideals, one would expect his novel to give an interesting perspective on the rebellion. A biography of Trotter suggests that the central character was based on himself and his own life experiences, and that the other characters in his novel are based on real people.[27] If this is so, then *Stories for Calumniators* suggests that Trotter was an intelligent and humane, though perhaps overly-romantic figure.

The full title itself gives some indication of the purpose of the novel: *Stories for Calumniators: Interspersed with Remarks on the Disadvantages, Misfortunes, and Habits of the Irish.* It is a corrective: an attempt to explain why the rebellion occurred and to defend the damage done to the Irish character as a result of it. As such it can be described broadly as a national tale. However, while it seeks to redress the damage done by calumniators, Trotter seems to accept that much of his pleading will be ineffective. The title also suggests that no matter what he may write, those who wish to find fuel for calumniation will do so.

Like *Oddities and Outlines*, *Stories for Calumniators* also gropes towards the historical: this time by highlighting historical grievances. Trotter states that 'History itself must be disagreeable if it treat of recent matter; but truth is the origin of all good, whether in a private or public sphere, and the good of the community is best promoted by its elucidation'.[28] The novel is the first to put the rebellion into an Irish historical context. Interestingly, this context is a Catholic one. The root cause both of the unrest and, Trotter hints, the less savoury side of Irish – in this case akin to 'Catholic' – character, are broken promises and government abuses of the constitution. In stating this he essentially shifts all the blame for the rebellion to the British and Protestant side. In the novel, the main character, Edward Fitzmaurice, meets an old man on his travels who offers an

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Britain's ongoing conflict with post-revolutionary France. He was one of many Whigs who had initially welcomed the French Revolution and he continually maintained that it degenerated into violence and terror only as a result of the interference of domestic and other European royalty. Fox had been an active supporter of Catholic emancipation and a constant critic of British policy in Ireland. In the aftermath of the rebellion he was perceived by many in England as having actively encouraged sedition; see L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 124.

[27] Anon., 'Memoir of John Bernard Trotter', in John Bernard Trotter, *Walks through Ireland in the Years 1812, 1814 and 1817; Described in a Series of Letters to an English Gentleman* (London, 1819), pp. i-xxxvi; p. xiv.

[28] J.B. Trotter, *Stories for Calumniators: Interspersed with Remarks on the Disadvantages, Misfortunes, and Habits of the Irish*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1809), i, p. [v]); further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

historical explanation for the situation in Ireland. The man traces it to the broken promises of the Treaty of Limerick (i, p. 22).[29] He also attacks English historians for perpetuating the idea that the Irish are a 'new and ferocious people' (i, p. 24). The narrative goes to great lengths to portray the Irish as not only an ancient people, but an ancient people with a separate history. The old man attacks the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser's proposals for dealing with the Irish as 'a compound of severity and folly' (i, p. 26). Spenser, of course, also provides a perfect example of how a man famous for the beauty of his poetry, and supposedly 'civilised', can also be capable of the kind of barbarous thoughts contained in his ultimate solution to the problems of Ireland.[30] In citing Spenser, the old man was attacking the perceived moral superiority of the English, something particularly necessary in the wake of the rebellion. The history lesson has an enormous effect on Fitzmaurice: 'Edward actually stood up while the old man spoke. His imagination for a moment figured to him an old chieftain complaining of the wrongs of his country' (i, pp. 24-5). In a later incident the playing of a harpist sent Fitzmaurice into a reverie in which the 'history of ancient times seemed to come alive'. His experience of hearing the music of the Irish harp gave him 'an insight into the venerable records of history, and [he] thought that he felt his love for his country increase, from fancying that he had witnessed her miseries, and participated in her dangers' (i, p. 206).[31]

This incident has profound implications when we come to consider the tenor of the novel as a whole. It seems that history and that body of people who consider

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[29] The Treaty of Limerick, signed as part of the settlement following the end of the Williamite wars (1691) was intended to guarantee to Irish Catholics certain rights and entitlements. Practically all of these were later rescinded by the Irish Parliament; see *OCIH*, pp. 330-1.

[30] Spenser essentially proposed that the very atmosphere of Ireland had a corrupting influence on the English who went there and that the native Irish were incapable of being 'civilised'. As a result, he came to the conclusion that extermination of the native Irish and their replacement with English settlers was the only solution; see Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, edited and with an Introduction by Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 'Introduction', pp. xvii-xxii.

[31] 'the clang of battle rung in his ear; contending monarchs and chieftains fell before him; religion with saint-like aspect arose; discord shook her fatal torch, and civil war ravaged. Poetry on the mountain side, or in the sequestered valley, survived, and in the rich language of Erin, sung in lofty strains the events of war, the deeds and the fall of the great, or breathed the sweeter notes of pastoral love, and all its joys' (i, pp. 202-3). This presumably mirrors a similar incident in Trotter's own life: 'It was always his opinion, that music had considerable influence on the national character of a people, and that it was no less wise than patriotic to cherish and promote the practice of it'. Trotter was the founder and secretary of the National Harp Society, dedicated to 'reviving the race of the *Irish Bards*, which was then nearly extinct in the country'. Apparently it was the money he spent in the promotion of this society that ultimately forced him into penury and contributed to his early death in 1818 at the age of forty-two; see Anon., 'Memoir of John Bernard Trotter', op. cit., pp. xiv-v.

themselves a nation through a shared sense of history, emerge from adversity. Fitzmaurice's love for his country is increased by an understanding of her miseries and dangers. The Irish nation, therefore, can be seen as the oppressed people of Ireland. This does not necessarily mean that only the Catholics or others affected adversely by history form the Irish nation, but it does seem to suggest that those out of sympathy with the oppressed cannot be part of it.[32] This is a very important development, and is certainly a considerable change from the old Protestant 'Irish Nation' idea of the eighteenth century.

Trotter's notes at the end of volume one of the novel sum up the thrust of *Stories for Calumniators*, which is to put the ball firmly back in the British court by establishing Ireland's right to be considered, not only as a nation, but as a nation wronged, stating that it is 'idle for Great Britain to boast of her laws and constitution at home, if she violates the most sacred of all laws, the Law of Nations, elsewhere'. He sees the Treaty of Limerick as a 'covenant between nations' and asks 'does the breach of it excite no reprobation in the breasts of English statesmen?' (i, p. 259).[33] The first volume of *Stories for Calumniators* is an attack on government misrule and British injustice in Ireland. The old man's factory was burned down and his son was taken away and executed without trial by the local militia. He was forced to leave his native home and move to a new area, earning his living first as a schoolmaster and afterwards as a farmer. He was an innocent victim of the abuse of power, an abuse made possible, in an argument that echoes Thomas Paine's in *Common Sense*, by the very remoteness of centralised power, and the 'danger of acting on rumour' (i, p. viii).[34]

Trotter also describes the penal laws as a 'childish and pernicious policy' (i, p. x) and attacks the moral complacency of Protestant Ireland by claiming that it has been 'a fundamental part of Protestant education to instill hatred against the *papists*' (i, p. xi). Readers more used to reading about Catholic bigotry might have been rather discomfited

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[32] This idea is very similar to the notion of the 'traumatic paradigm' put forward by Joep Leerssen, '1798: The Recurrence of Violence and Two Conceptualisations of History', in *Irish Review*, 22 (Summer, 1998), 37-45.

[33] Trotter's view that the Treaty of Limerick was 'a covenant between nations' raises all sorts of questions. Presumably it is based on the Jacobite notion that just because William of Orange had usurped or been invited to assume the English throne did not mean that he had a right to the separate throne of Ireland. It also seems to suggest, though, that the 'Irish nation' in this case corresponds to the Catholics of Ireland.

[34] 'A minister far distant from the country he governs, should be most of all men cautious in resorting to experimental delegation of power over the persons and property of its inhabitants. He cannot himself observe the operation of the experiment, nor does he ever receive a fair and impartial statement of it' (i, p. 122).

to have allegations of sectarianism thrown back at them. Although Trotter claims that a common-sense attitude and extension of the same rights and privileges to all the people of Ireland will ensure Ireland remains an 'impenetrable bulwark of the throne' (i, p. xiii), there is a discordance between the language he uses and the sentiments he expresses. He claims, like other national writers, that his 'design and hope' is 'to present the Irish people to the English, even in the most unhappy times, in a dignified and exalted point of view' (i, p. xii), but what he does is much more than that. Rather than merely *present* he in fact *asserts* the Irish people's rights, and also defines Ireland, and its history, less in terms of the 'haves' and more in terms of the 'have-nots'.

There is a marked contrast, however, between volume one and volume two of *Calumniators*, in that the second volume is less didactic and more moderate. The first volume is largely constructed of anecdotes about the state of Ireland and the experience of its people. This allows Edward Fitzmaurice – a name so reminiscent of Edward Fitzgerald as to surely be no coincidence – and the reader to form opinions that can be further refined in volume two. The principal character in the second volume is a young woman named Sophy, who appears to be a representation of Ireland, particularly an Ireland flirting with revolutionary ideas.[35] Her experiences also reflect the anti-Jacobin correlation between seduction and revolution. The daughter of an 'unfortunate gentleman', Sophy became an Ophelia-like character, driven to madness by the duplicity of suitors: 'I have suffered from the want of principle in man, and doubt its existence. To be made the sport of their passions, to be one day idolized, another abandoned and neglected, mortifies and plunges into misery' (ii, p. 82). She was adopted by a peasant family, and was loved and protected by her foster-brother Richard, who personified Trotter's idea of the true patriot. At the end of the novel Sophy is reunited with her real sister, Eleanor. Their father, a clergyman, had also been a 'true' patriot. Deploring the breaking of the rule of law, he spoke out against atrocities and was hanged as 'a martyr to his feelings of honour, and to the madness of the times!' (ii, p. 103). He was executed because he sheltered the son of a friend without enquiring into his guilt.

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[35] Fitzmaurice, as the earlier incident with the harp suggests, is also a version of Trotter, and Fitzmaurice's companion, Frank, is based on a young man that Trotter groomed, in Rousseauesque fashion, to be his companion and friend. Furthermore, the story of Sophy is allegedly based around a story told to him by a young woman who had been 'the victim of much calumny'; see Anon. 'Memoir of John Bernard Trotter', pp. xiv, xiii, viii.

Fitzmaurice underlines the heavily allegorical nature of the novel by saying to Sophy and Eleanor: 'I know not how to express my feelings, but you and your sister seem to me the children of the country, and entitled to protection and reverence from its inhabitants' (ii, p. 104). Significantly, Fitzmaurice also says that their father, 'a man of letters and of genius, might, by pursuing a selfish or sychophantish line of conduct, have ensured his own tranquility; but feeling for his unfortunate countrymen, though misguided, he counselled, and did not betray' (ii, pp. 104-5). It seems from this observation that solidarity is the highest virtue. Furthermore, there is an ambiguity apparent: *who* exactly is misguided, the people or the father? In either case, however, the effect is the same: a clergyman of the established church stands by the downtrodden, and by doing so creates, in the shape of his two daughters, 'children of the country'. It is this solidarity and sacrifice that allows him to become part of Trotter's Irish nation and a part of its history.

Frank, Sophy's suitor, can also be seen as a personification of the downtrodden Irish nation. Although he temporarily sinks into depravity through excessive drinking, care is taken to portray him as essentially a good person. He at last comes to his senses, recognising how badly he has treated Sophy. In healing her he heals himself and ultimately they marry. His later falling out with Fitzmaurice and their subsequent reconciliation suggests a coalescing of the two parts of Ireland that Frank and Edward appear to represent: Catholic Ireland and liberal Protestant Ireland. Their affection and regard for each other symbolise a coming together of the nation and a 'union of hearts' of sort.

Apart from the allegorical plot the novel contains a strong defence of Catholicism and the Irish character, with Fitzmaurice, Frank, and a Catholic priest, Fr O'Neill, marveling at the gratitude, patience and loyalty of the people, while acknowledging that the 'same feeling carries them into excesses' (ii, p. 159). It is a significant but necessary caveat in the wake of the 1798 rebellion. The essentially conservative nature of Catholicism is seen in Fr O'Neill, who, reminiscing on his time in France, recalls an incident that is profoundly similar to Edmund Burke's famous description of Marie Antoinette:

> 'I remember the French court in its splendour, when Louis XVI. and his queen seemed secure from every thing which can diminish or interrupt human happiness, or threaten superior exaltation .... I sighed over the bloody fall of that charming being, whom I had seen like the fairy vision of the east, appearing among the dancers at St. Cloud, resplendent with beauty and intelligence' (ii, pp. 148-50)'.[36]

The similarity with Burke's passage was obviously intended to establish O'Neill as a reliable and conservative figure whose views on other matters can be trusted. This is important when he outlines the essential difference between the English and the Irish situation: 'we shall find that England conquered us, but did not, or could not impart her laws and their benefits; the first of which is ... vindicating the rights of the poor as well as the rich' (ii, p. 137). The Irish peasant, too, cannot be entirely blamed for his situation as he 'has not the independence of the English farmer, because he has not so much to defend' (ii, p. 138).

As well as defending, or at least explaining, the Irish character, Trotter, in a manner reminiscent of Edward Mangin's attempts in *Oddities and Outlines*, addresses the historical in a direct way, by including a living history book in the form of the old woman of Clough-Skilt. From the information given it appears that she was born in 1690, the year of the Battle of the Boyne, and the year before the fateful Treaty of Limerick. This would mean that she had lived through what would have been the crucial period in Trotter's historical analysis of the problems of Ireland. Trotter's distrust of historians was once more made apparent in Fitzmaurice's observation that that he had imagined her as 'a monument of antient days, more valuable than history, in so much as she could answer the interrogatory of the moment, and search in the storehouse of memory for facts, and opinions relating to our ancestors' (ii, pp. 186-7). Frank states that the woman 'has not the motive of many historians to colour her statements. She is no politician or partizan,

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[36] The similarity is hardly coincidental: 'It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, – glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour and joy. Oh! What a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers'; see Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*, edited and with an Introduction by Conor Cruise O'Brien (1790; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 169-70.

but narrates simply and conformably to what happened' (ii, p. 187). Like Charles Beaver's talking ring, the old woman is an attempt to get behind history, and at the 'truth'. In presenting a character who has lived through the contentious issues of Ireland's eighteenth century, Trotter is trying to escape from the textuality of history. Rather than simply attempting to rewrite history, Trotter presents something, as Frank has observed, 'more valuable': a living testament to the past. In doing so he re-emphasises his scepticism about the value and purpose of historical narrative.

Trotter's novel is the first to attempt to look beyond 1798 and contextualise it as another element in the historical experience of the downtrodden – the historical 'losers' up to that point. It goes beyond mere discussions of ideology and its impact on the disaffected, or Edgeworthian notions of education, and tries to deal with the root of the disaffection itself. Behind its rather pious supplications is a hard edge. Trotter sets out to demonstrate indisputably that Catholics – described by him as '*that slandered people, whom it has been a trade, a science to calumniate for centuries, through their ancestors*' (ii, p. 282) – and others *have* been badly treated and misgoverned, promises *have* been broken, and the powers that be *have* been guilty of disregarding their own constitution with regard to Ireland. All of these things are shown to be true. Rather than merely seeking forgiveness for the Irish people as a whole, Trotter's Preface puts forward the view that the rebellion was the inevitable result of the errors of those in power: 'Folly completed what injustice began' (i, p. x). He writes that Catholics have borne 'a series of injustices with unparalleled constancy and patience' (i, p. x) and goes further: 'There is now, therefore due to the catholics a full participation of civil rights as a compensation for the past and a security for the future' (i, p. x). There is no sense here that what is being looked for is a concession: on the contrary, it is a demand.

Trotter's last observation underlines the subversive nature of *Stories for Calumniators*: Catholic loyalty is and was conditional and cannot be guaranteed, nor indeed should it be expected if concessions are not made. Rather than ignoring the reasons for disaffection or claiming that the few concessions made in the first place caused the rebellion, Trotter presents the reader with a situation that is the product of history. Furthermore, his recasting of the Irish historical landscape as one that reflects a history of adversity means that the nation is seen as the oppressed and those whose

sympathy is with the oppressed, and as such effectively excludes all those who do not share this view. In addition, his earlier highlighting of the difficulties experienced by a minister who is 'far distant from the country he governs' (i, p. 122), is more than merely a criticism of the form of government: like Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*, it implies that government closer to home would be more effective.

Stories for Calumniators, therefore, is a subversive novel. Although it pleads for understanding and forgiveness, and decries the introduction of 'unpracticable' (ii, p. 309) revolutionary ideas to Ireland, it does so on the basis that any people faced with the same circumstances would react in the same way. It lays the blame for the rebellion firmly at the feet of the government and the successive injustices done to the people of Ireland. It steers clear of any detailed description of the rebellion itself. All the outrages described – torture, destruction of property, imprisonment and execution without trial – were committed by government forces. Perhaps its most important subversion, however, is in the transforming of Catholic Ireland from the traditional aggressors of 1641 in the ultra-loyalist accounts, into the victims of history. Cromwell is condemned as 'brutal and tyrannical .... Blood marked all his steps. Confiscation and massacre were his instruments' (ii, p. 189), and the 'falsehood and perversion of history' (ii, p. 282) is redressed. This change allows the 'nation' to be seen as something in opposition to existing modes and principles of government without necessarily being revolutionary. The 'real' Irish nation is formed out of an alliance between those who were victims of the situation and those who recognise the inequity of it. Although it would be wrong to ascribe this idea solely to Trotter, this concept of the nation takes root and flourishes in Irish fiction as the nineteenth century progresses.

Defenders of the faith: Catholic novels, 1816–19

Two significant Catholic novels appeared in the second decade after the rebellion. Published in the wake of the Veto crisis and a perceived radicalising of Catholic opinion, they provide an interesting shift of emphasis and reflect a middle-and upper-class Catholic attitude that attempted to find some form of resolution by realigning the forces at work in Irish society. They used the rebellion to show how and why Catholic emancipation was not just a sectarian issue, but a social and property one as well. They

also reflected an assertive Catholic viewpoint of a kind not seen previously. However, these novels are radical only in the sense of their desire to shift the divide in Irish society from religion to class, and to defend Catholics and their religion from blame for 1798.

The Matron of Erin: A National Tale (1816), is the first 1798 novel to consciously proclaim itself a national tale. However, it does not attempt to exoticise Irish history, culture or Catholicism in the manner of Sydney Owenson's national tales, and in fact explicitly sets out to portray the Catholic people and the religion they profess in a way that suggests that upper-class Catholics had far more similarities with Protestants – particularly the landowning members of the established church – than differences. The novel's tacit disapproval of the more fanciful portrayals of Sydney Owenson can be seen most obviously in the title: a 'matron of Erin' being a far more dignified, mature and respectable appellation than a 'wild Irish girl'. The novel eschews the historical and embraces the domestic for its moral and didactic purposes.[37] This merely highlights the perpetual difficulty writers who preach against the evils of rebellion had in suggesting alternatives for the redress of the very real injustices that existed in Irish society.

This dilemma is exemplified by debates between Sir Denis Westmond, a Catholic landlord of moderate views, and his Protestant son-in-law, Charles Delwyn. The latter, in order to further his own ambitions, becomes a United Irishman. In Sir Denis' view it is Ireland's own internal disunity that keeps it in 'slavish dependance [*sic*]' upon England (i, p. 89). He dismisses the notion of Ireland becoming dependent on any other nation: 'it would then be ten times worse you may rely on it' (i, p. 89). Having no real alternative to rebellion to put forward, the best he can do is to play down the practical importance of the remaining penal laws, describing the situation as essentially 'more wounding to our feelings as men, than prejudicial to our interest; they affect but little the general body, and principally militate against the aspiring spirit of a few individuals, who look to places of honour and distinction' (i, pp. 91-2). While Catholic emancipation is desirable, and should be pursued by the petitioning of parliament and the publication of pamphlets

[37] 'It was in that never to be forgotten year [1798] commenced this simple narrative of domestic woes, which though not worthy to be recorded by the pen of the historian, is not the less deserving the attention of the moralist, as it may serve to establish the axiom: *That happiness consists not in exemption from suffering, but in perfect conformity to the Divine Will, in every change of situation*'; Mrs Kelly, *The Matron of Erin: A National Tale*, 3 vols. (London, 1816), i, p. 97; further volume and page references will appear parenthetically in the text.

designed to influence public opinion, Catholics such as Sir Denis are portrayed as having too much to lose to flirt with notions of rebellion. In *The Matron of Erin* Delwyn murders Sir Denis in order to encourage his tenants to take part in the rebellion. Delwyn is partly redeemed by the goodness of his wife – the 'matron' of the novel's title – and children, but he pays for his crimes when he is mortally wounded by a man whose family was ruined by the rebellion.

Stressing the themes of virtue, and the necessity of religion to be at the root of all philosophy – itself a link with earlier, more reactionary tales – the novel also addresses Edgeworthian notions of education and the importance of 'suitable' education. Delwyn ascribes his errors to the 'false impressions made on my mind in a faulty education' (iii, p. 302), and Colonel Brunehault, the personification of loyalist extremism in the novel, is propounded as an example of what can happen when one is educated above one's station. Education, it seems, does not suit everybody, and is dangerous: not only can an unsuitable education pervert and distort the individual, but individuals of a certain personality type can pervert and distort education.[38] The only safeguard against these dangers appears to be education grounded solidly in religion and religious principles.

The Matron of Erin, like *The Soldier of Pennaflor*, evinces a deep distrust of the lower orders and the growing democratisation of education and ideas. Although some attempt is made at cross-class solidarity in the face of sedition and danger, class barriers are still rigidly enforced. In the end it is Maurice, a servant of Delwyn, who pays the price for Delwyn's activities, emphasising the fact that it is the lower classes that pay the heaviest price for rebellion: a warning to both the lower classes and those who would lead them.

Above all, however, the book is a plea for order. Henry, Delwyn's son, observes that 'Liberty ... is only valuable as it is subordinate to order, and reduced to certain modifications conformable to the laws established' (i, p. 261). His mother calls order 'the

[38] Brunehault was taken from his mother as a child and educated in the company of a young nobleman where he was often beaten in his companion's stead (i, pp. 290-3). It is suggested that these experiences shaped his character. Dareall, a United Irishman, is described as being naturally intelligent but with certain weaknesses of character that, combined with an education, 'tended only to make him an apostate to the Religion of his ancestors, and a sceptic with regard to all established maxims of nature and Revelation, of reason and of grace' (ii, p. 98). Another example of the dangers of education can be seen in the person of a militia officer captured by Delwyn who had received 'an education much superior to the circumstances of ... [his] family' and this education made him unfit for anything other than a military life (ii, p. 17).

principle of perfection, and the source of happiness through out the intire [*sic*] universe' (i, pp. 261-2). *Order*, in this case, meant the present *system* of government and society: abuses in the administration of the system and inequities in the treatment of certain groups – such as Catholics – should be highlighted and changed, but only by and within the existing social system. Sir Denis Westmond's comment on Catholic emancipation begins to make more sense when one sees Catholics not as an homogenous body but as containing the same broad social distinctions as society itself. Thus, emancipation was irrelevant in practice to Catholics in the lowest orders of society *and* in the very highest echelons of society where social standing accounts for more than mere religious persuasion.

Although the overall tone of *The Matron of Erin* is moderately loyalist, the right to criticise the current regime is reserved. In his analysis of the cause of the rebellion, Henry lays much of the blame on the actions of a government that forced the people into the hands of demagogues.[39] He accuses the government of provoking the expected rebellion 'by the exercise of the most wanton outrage' (ii, p. 193), aided by magistrates 'influenced in innumerable cases by angry passions, and swayed by inveterate prejudices', and a 'rapacious soldiery' led by 'wild, profligate, and riotous young officers' (ii, p. 194). Perhaps most tellingly of all, he alleges that many who surrendered their arms were '*foully butchered*' and 'betrayed into concessions by promises never kept' (ii, p. 194).

Henry, his sister Eudocia, his mother Paulina, and Sir Denis Westmond, are all Catholic, as are their neighbours the Nugents. Henry's Catholicism is seen to be essential to his being: 'It ... preserved me from the wild profligacy of the sceptic, who fearing nothing, hesitates at nothing; or from the various errors into which the enthusiast, without rule or guide, wanders, driven about as Saint Paul expresses it, by every wind of doctrine' (i, p. 267). The word 'enthusiast' suggests a criticism of both Presbyterianism and other Dissenting sects, and the author appears to be forging an alliance between Catholicism

[39] 'What a dangerous and pernicious expedient it may prove, in an oppressive government, to rouse by reiterated and cruel injuries, the angry feelings of a generous people; when firm, but lenient measures, adopted with prudence, and persevered in with humanity, would undoubtedly have softened the ferocious, and tamed the untractable spirit! .... By this means, an unhappy people are thrown into the power of designing men, who, in pursuance of their ambitious scheme, or in gratification of their revenge, lead them on to the most guilty excesses, and which shall hereafter plunge them into utter ruin' (ii, p. 183).

and Anglicanism, the two religions that primarily represented the landed interest in Ireland. Indeed, Henry suggests that Catholics enjoy 'a considerable landed interest' (i, p. 269).[40] The overtly Catholic nature of the novel comes as a surprise after the exoticised or unsympathetic representations of Catholicism in earlier novels.[41] Catholicism is not seen as a vehicle of ignorance and poverty, but as a system of belief that fosters virtue and probity, both religious and civil. Even Delwyn, as he is dying, appears to embrace the Catholic notions of intercession and prayers for the dead: 'Pray for me then, Paulina, dearest Paulina! Oppressed with crimes, abhorrent to nature, – it is only through your prayers I can hope to be forgiven' (iii, p. 267).[42]

This assertive Catholicism suggests that some wealthier Catholics, at least, felt that the time had come to put forward their point of view, to assert the virtues of their religion, and to disassociate themselves from a general blame attached to Catholics for the rebellion. The widespread fear of atheistic ideas meant that religious differences could be put aside in favour of a coalition of those who would defend religious principles as the basis of social order. 'We must not' says Henry, 'confound religion with the vile passions of mankind, nor impute to it the crimes of those who disgrace it. Every system of religion whatsoever, possesses a code of morality that sternly interdicts such crimes; and which morality, if practised in the spirit that inculcates it, would tend to make us all much better men' (iii, p. 289). Catholicism, so often used for gothic effect as the religion of superstition and oppression, is portrayed here as the religion of orthodoxy and order. The devotion of Catholics to their faith should prove their capacity for loyalty, especially to the king. The result is that Catholics, far from being a threat, should be, as John Bernard Trotter suggests, a bulwark to the existing social order.

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[40] The extent of this landed interest has been the subject of much work in recent years, most notably by Louis Cullen; see L.M. Cullen, 'Catholics under the Penal Laws', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, i, 1 (1986), 23-36; and 'Catholic Social Classes Under the Penal Laws', in Power and Whelan (eds.) *Endurance and Emergence*, op. cit., pp. 57-84. For a more general account of Catholic life in the eighteenth century, see Maureen Wall, 'The Rise of a Catholic Middle-Class in 18th Century Ireland', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xi, 42 (Sept., 1958), 91-115.

[41] For example, Lucy, a maid trapped in Lord Chatterville's Scottish hideaway, hoped to escape 'with the assistance of the blessed Virgin, who never fails to help virtuous maidens whom bad men would lead astray' (iii, p. 206). There is no overt disapproval of such a view, or any hint of the exasperated amusement to which many writers who would have seen themselves as sympathetic and indulgent of Catholicism were prone.

[42] This interpretation is given added veracity by the fact that Delwyn requests Fr Layton, rather than a Protestant clergyman, to attend him on his deathbed.

The Matron of Erin, then, brings together anti-Jacobin, Enlightenment, and Romantic ideas in a broadly conservative and didactic national tale. In its espousal of upper-class Catholicism and its values, *The Matron of Erin* actually seeks to remove the religious element from the political equation. The potential that existed for social and political upheaval is seen to have less to do with religious differences and much more to do with abuses in the administration and the spread of ideas that did not have their root in any religion. In doing so, *The Matron of Erin* tries to prepare the way for Catholic emancipation by portraying any such move as not only just but sensible and in the interests of the ruling class. It also attempts to undermine any attempt to see Catholics as a monolithic block. It suggests the existence of a coalition of interest that transcends perceived barriers and reflects not only a more complex society, but a more complex social structure than hitherto portrayed in 1798 novels.

The other Catholic novel in this period was published anonymously in 1819. *The United Irishman, Or, The Fatal Effects of Credulity* adopted the stock device of a series of letters written by an Englishman, Augustus Tranton, to a friend. In these letters he describes his trip to Ireland and his meeting with an Irishman, Gerald O'Brien, who is in hiding after the rebellion. O'Brien turns out to be a United Irishman and his story forms the basis of the book. In the end Tranton, through political contacts, obtains an official pardon for O'Brien. *The United Irishman* shares many of the characteristics of *The Matron of Erin* in that it too concentrates on the effect of rebellion on the Catholic landowning classes. It too appears to have been written by a Catholic, albeit one extremely proud of the achievements of Protestant Ireland.[43] The novel highlights the complex legal and, to a lesser degree, social, situation in which Catholic landowners of the time found themselves. The O'Briens forfeited their lands as a result of information given to the authorities by a Protestant who had seen their title deeds. Under the penal statutes then in existence the informer was entitled to the land (i, pp. 75-6).

Like *The Matron of Erin*, *The United Irishman* is essentially conservative in its tenor. Although the recipient of the O'Brien lands, James Mackle, is obviously a

[43] This can be seen in the description of Dublin's public buildings given by 'Tranton': 'I felt my heart thrill with a new sensation; good God! thought I, what souls must this people possess! how little do we in England know or estimate their worth'; Anon., *The United Irishman, Or, The Fatal Effects of Credulity; A Tale Founded on Facts*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1819), i, p. 8; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

Protestant, the crucial point is that he did not come from the traditional landowning classes, but like Jason Quirk in *Castle Rackrent*, had advanced himself by education and knowledge of the law. Mackle, irrespective of his religious denomination, is the type of dangerous 'new' man who is a threat to the old order. This concentration on the individual, especially an individual who is not part of the traditional elite, seems to suggest that the best reason to rescind the remaining penal laws is to prevent their being abused by those who either reject or fail to appreciate the subtle understanding that exists between the Catholic and Protestant landowning classes with regard to the restrictions imposed on Catholics.[44] To remove the penal laws therefore, would not be a defeat for one side and a concession to another, but a prudent move to maintain the *status quo*. Preserving this *status quo* is at the heart of the landed Catholic argument in favour of emancipation, and this is the crucial idea put forward in *The United Irishman*. In seeking a pardon from the existing authorities Gerald O'Brien is, in effect, applying to be re-admitted to the ruling classes.

The United Irishman is radical, however, in one crucial respect. Although O'Brien is seeking a pardon for his role in the rebellion, nowhere in the text is it suggested that the rebellion was wrong. Despite the fact that his father was killed leading the rebellion, that his brother is forced into exile after obtaining a pardon and that his best friend is hanged, O'Brien is, in general, unrepentant: 'Great as my misfortunes have been, I have this gratification they did not proceed from any fault of mine; if it was wrong to be an United Irishman, I was one from principle, and no man can be accountable for his feelings' (ii, p. 13). The account of the rebellion itself in *The United Irishman* is vague, and is centred entirely around the Wicklow and Wexford areas. O'Brien states that some forty thousand men were involved and suggestions of rebel atrocities are brushed over with vague generalities.[45] The novel appears to be implying that the rebellion itself was not intrinsically wrong: outrages may have occurred but neither O'Brien nor the author make any negative comments in relation to the morality of rebellion.

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[44] From the Catholic perspective this often involved getting a Protestant friend to register the land deeds in his own name. The risk involved in this enterprise is obvious: such an arrangement is seen not only in *The United Irishman* but also in Matthew Archdeacon's *Connaught* (1830).

[45] 'Had our men conducted themselves with the least prudence, we would eventually have been masters of Ireland. But they unfortunately intoxicated with success, began to drink and commit outrages disgraceful to humanity' (i, pp. 198-9).

The United Irishman succeeds in showing two different views in parallel: that of the Catholics involved in the rebellion and that of the loyal establishment, without passing judgment on either. Thus the loyal soldiery are seen in a good light and all the aristocrats featured in the novel are good.[46] The real odium in *The United Irishman* is reserved for men such as James Mackle, who abuse laws and circumstances for their own benefit and to the detriment of others. These people, inevitably, come from outside the existing governing classes. *The United Irishman* is therefore a vindication of the landowning classes: expressive, like *The Matron of Erin*, of the view that landowning Catholics and Protestants have far more in common with one another than they have to divide them; and that the abuse of unfair laws is a threat not only to Catholics but to the entire structure of society.

Just as in *The Matron of Erin* and many other novels published in this period, *The United Irishman* propounds the notion, epitomised in its closing line, that 'In virtue alone true happiness is found' (ii, p. 286). However, as we have seen, the novel has a harder edge in its unapologetic portrayal of the rebellion. The character of Diarmuid O'Brien – Gerald's brother – is in this instance the most interesting and complex, and reflects the general tenor of the book. Through the intervention of the Earl of B., Diarmuid obtains a pardon and is forced into exile. When he returns he has inherited a fortune and he marries Lady Jane, a sister of the Earl of B.. At first glance this may appear to be another 'union

[46] The 'Earl of B.', whom O'Brien's sister Harriet saves from death on the battlefield, obtains a pardon for O'Brien's brother Diarmuid. The earl's mother is described as having ' all the elegance of high rank' and 'a heart that would enrich the bosom of a queen; kind, benevolent, and feelingly alive to all the miseries of her fellow creatures' (i, p. 248), which suggests that the writer is no Jacobin. Signs of tension remain however. An exchange between Diarmuid and the chaplain of the O'Brien family, on the question of the Earl of B. obtaining a pardon for him, outlines both the tension that still existed and also the reason why both points of view could be accommodated without necessarily having to be reconciled: 'This earl is no doubt worthy, indeed I believe him deserving; but he belongs to that party who have been the destroyers of my house, and sent my dearest relatives to the cold and silent tomb; yet you advise me to seek his interest to obtain my pardon: never, never! the lofty soul of an O'Brien will never stoop to solicit pardon from an enemy. No, no! the narrow precincts of this dreary cavern, a mouldy crust and a bed of rushes first! The Abbé shook his head, saying, your prejudice is imbibed from nature, and never can be eradicated. – From that time, he never mentioned the subject more' (i, pp. 293-4). This exchange, taken in tandem with Gerald O'Brien's earlier comment about being a United Irishman from principle and not being responsible for his feelings, suggest that the differences between those who were inclined to rebellion and those who remained loyal are down to innate differences in perspective occasioned by nature and feeling. Nature and feeling are seen to be outside the control of the individual, and as such, the individual cannot be held responsible for his or her reaction to a given situation. However weak this may seem in practice, it does essentially mean that those who are oppressed or discriminated against are inclined to be disloyal while those who receive the benefits of the same oppression or discrimination are inclined to be loyal.

of hearts' between Protestant and Catholic, symbolising both the reconciliation needed on the island of Ireland and also mirroring the new constitutional arrangement between Great Britain and Ireland. Diarmuid is fully reintegrated, it seems. However, Diarmuid is portrayed in the novel as an unapologetically committed patriot: 'he loved his country, and to promote its welfare, he would have unhesitatingly sacrificed his life' (i, p. 243). The Earl of B. observed Diarmuid's reluctance to leave Ireland, and assumed that it came from a reluctance to give up the fight, even though it was clearly lost (i, pp. 245-6). Tranton writes: 'I cannot discover whether Diarmuid's principles are changed; on politics he never speaks' (ii, p. 236). Tranton's assessment of the marriage also raises questions: 'I think they bid fair for permanent happiness: their union was founded on esteem and love, while sense, moderation and well regulated passions will support its basis, and lead them smoothly through life' (ii, p. 269).

Diarmuid and Lady Jane's marriage provides a classic example of the parallel meanings that are at the centre of the novel. It is, on the one hand, the 'ideal' union and, in the context of the Anglo-Irish Union, the required one. It is both a guide and a warning. The emphasis on esteem, sense, moderation and well-regulated passions reminds us that Anglo-Irish affairs have seldom demonstrated these qualities. Diarmuid's past and his silence about his present views remind us that the situation is not yet resolved and Catholics are still in the same position as they were before the rebellion. Emancipation did not come with Union, and so the potential for a further rebellion remains. Read in this way, *The United Irishman* becomes a quietly subversive text.

One final aspect of the novel emphasises this subversive quality. Influence, interest, and personality are used continuously to short-circuit the established system of justice. Thus Gerald O'Brien receives his pardon as a result of Tranton's influence with Sir Edward Elbe and Elbe's influence with the powers that be. Diarmuid's pardon is obtained by the influence of the Earl of B., and Harriet O'Brien is released after taking Diarmuid's place in jail because of her beauty and manner.[47] The one person who resorts

[47] Harriet helps Diarmuid to escape from jail by exchanging clothes with him while on a visit. She was later committed to trial for her actions: 'Her beauty, her modesty, her evident distress, and the nobleness of mind she evinced in saving her brother's life, interested them [the magistrates] all; they commiserated her sufferings, and told her she was at liberty and might go where she pleased' (i, p. 232). Such an incident reinforces the arbitrary nature of justice, the reasonable expectation she and Diarmuid had that her sex and breeding would save her, and the essential humanity of the law enforcers; all important elements of this story.

to due procedure, Mackle, is universally execrated. It seems that not only are the penal laws unjust but the law itself is undermined by them. Further weight is given to this view by the circumstances of Tranton himself. In the subplot we discover that Tranton is haunted by his past. He abandoned his betrothed, Mary Corvelle, for another woman, Adelaide, who later turns out to be a cousin of the O'Briens. Mary Corvelle died of a broken heart and Tranton subsequently killed her brother Hugh, his best friend, in a duel: 'I gave myself up, stood my trial, and was, through interest, acquitted of his murder' (ii, p. 51). Once again the justice system is perverted. It is however important to note that Tranton is ultimately deprived of his reward: Adelaide marries another and is subsequently 'widowed'. When Adelaide and Tranton agree to marry some years later, their wedding is halted by the reappearance of her husband at the ceremony. This event, coupled with his ongoing remorse for the deaths of Mary and Hugh Corvelle, eventually unhinges Tranton's mind and at the end of the book he is seen as insane and unlikely to live.

The final letter in the novel is written by Gerald O'Brien, and the roles of Tranton and O'Brien have been reversed. It is a fitting end in the context of this reading of the novel. Not only does Gerald O'Brien finally take direct narrative control over the story, changing it into a tale about Tranton narrated by O'Brien, rather than a tale about O'Brien narrated by Tranton, but the outcome of this story is exactly the opposite to that of *The Rebel*, even if the moral is the same. In *The United Irishman* all those involved in the rebellion – who survive – are either pardoned or never prosecuted. It is Tranton, guilty of a civil or moral, rather than a political, wrong, who is punished. Political errors – if that is what they were – are not ultimately punished. Neither Gerald or Diarmuid ever express contrition for what they have done, and the clear inference is that there is no need. The contrast with *The Rebel*, where personal and private wrongs are forgiven but political ones are not, could not be stronger.

The subversive nature of *The United Irishman* even extends to the novel's subtitle: *The Fatal Effects of Credulity*. While this might seem to suggest that the novel is about the futility of the rebellion and the gullibility of those who engaged in it, the credulity referred to is that evidenced by Gerald O'Brien's father in trusting Mackle, and the O'Brien family's credulity in trusting Captain Hartstrong, the man who betrayed them

to the authorities.[48] *The United Irishman* is the clearest example in this period of the two parallel experiences of the rebellion existing in Irish society at that time, and does not try to reconcile what is unreconcilable. It recognises the right of those who are loyal to the state to be loyal and those who labour under an unjust system to try to do something about their situation. In this sense *The United Irishman* can be seen as a model for novels to come.

II

A 'New School of Invention': the *Waverley* Influence 1820–30

None of the novels considered up to now could be called 'historical' in the modern sense. This is not so much because the events referred to bordered upon the contemporary, but mainly because the historical novel, as we understand it today, only emerged in the wake of the series of titles that became known as Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels: the first of which, *Waverley; Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, was published in 1814. Georg Lukács' identification of Scott as the inventor of the historical novel, and his championing of the events of the period 1789-1814 as crucial to the creation of a true historical consciousness, remains largely unchallenged by modern critics. For Lukács, influenced as he was by Hegel and Marx and writing in a broad context of European literature, the historical novel before Scott was 'mere costumery', lacking what he termed the 'specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age'.[49] The sheer enormity of the historical changes witnessed in the 1789-1814 period helped to make history a mass experience and for Lukács 'enormously' strengthened the feeling 'first that there is such a thing as history, second that it is an uninterrupted process of changes and finally that it has a direct effect

[48] 'remember Mackle! – remember Hartstrong! how they assumed the spotless garb of virtue, to steal insidiously into my father's unsuspecting heart; and, when they had successfully wound themselves into his affections, in the very moment of fond confiding friendship, hurled him headlong into that gulf, his blind infatuation opened to receive him, and left him a miserable example of the fatal effects of credulity' (i, pp. 294-5). 'Hartstrong' is clearly based on John Warneford Armstrong, the informer who betrayed the Sheares brothers to the authorities. This would of course invite comparisons between the Sheares' and the O'Briens.

[49] Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (1962; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 15.

on the life of every individual'.[50] Lukács identifies Scott as essentially anti-Romantic and as a writer in the epic tradition where personality is subject to event, something reflected in his use of average or mediocre gentlemen as his central protagonists rather than Romantic hero figures or historically-important personages.[51]

More generally, Ina Ferris has argued in *The Achievement of Literary Authority* that *Waverley* was the first 'serious' novel, in the sense that it was the first one to be taken seriously by what was then the new science of literary criticism. The novel, at least as written by 'The Author of *Waverley*' – a term used by some critics to distinguish the anonymous author of the time from his subsequently revealed identity – was established as a worthy and useful vehicle for artistic, literary, and, of course, political expression. This is not an achievement to be taken lightly. It was not until the Author's Edition of the Waverley Novels, published between 1829 and 1833, that Scott formally acknowledged his authorship of them.[52] That the novel became, in a few short years, such a significant and useful device for exploring the past is due more to the ability and influence of Sir Walter Scott than to any other individual.

In recent years, critics such as Katie Trumpener have highlighted the influence of Irish writers and the national tale on the development of the novel genre.[53] In *Bardic Nationalism* (1997) she posits the theory that the development of the modern 'English' novel was inspired by developments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as cultural nationalism sought for a means to express itself. Trumpener explores the relationship between the national tales of Irish writers such as Sydney Owenson and Charles Maturin, and Scott's subsequent creations.[54] In her analysis Scott's historical novel, with its

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[50] Ibid., p. 20.
[51] Ibid., pp. 33-4.
[52] In a General Preface to the Author's Edition Scott acknowledged that his original motive for anonymity was the consciousness that 'it was an experiment on the public taste which might very probably fail'. It is difficult not to see behind this a lingering mistrust of whether public taste would endure: the novel could still be thought of as a ephemeral, trivial, thing, however well constructed and written. It seemed that the founder of this 'new school of invention' did not have full confidence in his creation; see Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*; *Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, edited and with an Introduction by Claire Lamont (1814; repr. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 355.
[53] Trumpener writes of a dialogical relationship between the national tale and the historical novel in 'National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the age of *Waverley*, 1806-1830', in *English Literary History*, lx, 3 (Fall, 1993), 685-731.
[54] 'In the early nineteenth century, the rethinking of the nature of Britain, in the wake of the United Irishman rebellion and of Ireland's 1802 [*sic*] Union with England [*sic*], catalyzes a resurgence of nationalist literature, first in Ireland and then in Scotland. Yet within this literature, paradoxically, nationalist and unionist sentiments often appear side by side more amicably than ever before, and the

emphasis on progress, became the paradigmatic novel of empire, appealing to nationalist, imperialist and colonial readers alike. In contrast, James Cahalan's earlier work *Great Hatred, Little Room* (1983) – the only book entirely devoted to the Irish historical novel published to date – argues that Scott's model, predicated as it was on the notion of history as progressive and resolved, created problems for Irish writers. Cahalan argues that the Irish historical novel's initial development can be traced from early Scott imitators who gradually disengage from and adapt his model.[55] Apart from a brief reference to Maria Edgeworth's initial influence on Scott, the national tale and its potential is completely ignored by Cahalan. Indeed, in trying to make Scott central to the development of the Irish historical novel, Cahalan merely mirrors the dilemma of Irish writers, who could not ignore Scott, but whose own historical experience meant that they could not use his model as he did.

The national tale came into its own in the way it came to both influence and reflect the Irish historical experience. Time, and the historical process, are both seen to work differently, not just in the national tale, but in Irish history itself. In a Foreword to the latest edition of *The Wild Irish Girl*, Kevin Whelan describes the national tale as allochronic, and Ireland as a chronotope, where the pace of change slows as one moves from the centre (corresponding to the Anglo-metropolitan world) to the edges (corresponding in national tales to the Gaelic world).[56] In fact, as one moves to the very edges, as occurs in Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and Charles Maturin's *The Milesian Chief* (1812), time appears to stop entirely, and what Trumpener calls the

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permanence of national differences is recognized only to be overridden .... Now, for the first time, the novel becomes a prime genre for the dissemination of nationalist ideas'; Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 13.

[55] He also equates the development of the Irish historical novel with the development of Irish nationalism, and asserts that this nationalism is primarily Catholic in nature. Two important elements in the novels featured here, Protestant patriotism and what might be termed Protestant novel-writing, are given little attention or excluded from his analysis. Cahalan cites a number of differences between Scott and those imitators, primarily their substitution of a partisan hero for Scott's passive one, and what he sees as Irish authors' inability to make what he calls the 'crucial transition' to using adventure, heroism, love and war in a realistic manner – 'to abandon an ideal world for a real, historical world' – as he claims Scott was able to do; see Cahalan, *Great Hatred, Little Room*, op. cit., pp. 10, 14. The overall impression he gives is that Scott was only of limited use to Irish novelists, and he does not allow for the possibility that these early writers may have had influences other than Scott.

[56] Kevin Whelan, 'Writing Ireland, Reading England', in Sydney Owenson, *The Wild Irish Girl*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Claire Connolly and Stephen Copley, and with a Foreword by Kevin Whelan (1806; repr. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), pp. ix-xxiv.

'unchanging national world' becomes a kind of eternal present.[57] The effect of these two novels is to show that the consequences of Irish history are not seen to have created one people, or one present, but to have had an effect on two distinct cultures and different 'presents', which can exist in almost total ignorance of each other.[58] There is, therefore, no 'solution' or resolution in Irish history, only consequences. Just as Irish gothic deals primarily with the present or the near present because the circumstances and instability of the country allow it, in a similar way the Irish 'historical' novelist of this period did not need to write about the past in order to write an historical novel. The essential factors that helped to create something like the 1798 rebellion remain unchanged and unresolved. The history of Ireland was always the politics of the present and the politics of the present was always the history of the past. The national tale, therefore, did not need to be set in the past, it merely had to identify certain essential 'constants' of Irish history and represent them in a contemporary setting. The static nature of the Irish situation did not create the need for an historical consciousness of the kind developed by Scott: experience of the present was, to a significant extent, experience of the past.

Certainly it is not a large step from the notion of an eternal present to the idea that Irish history is cyclical and repetitive. This is essentially the argument used by conservatives such as Sir Richard Musgrave and also those advocating change. Katie Trumpener argues in *Bardic Nationalism* that 'If Scott's novels depict the process of cultural erasure under the violence of history, Maturin's and Owenson's historical

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[57] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 142. The perception of Irish history as unresolved and Ireland itself as existing in an eternal present permeates both *The Wild Irish Girl* and Maturin's *The Milesian Chief.* While *Waverley* is written with the benefit of hindsight, these national tales are set in contemporary or near-contemporary times. Viewpoints and attitudes had not changed, and therefore the type of voyage of discovery undertaken by Scott's hero Edward Waverley, framed in an historical context by Scott, could take place in an Ireland of the 'present' day. *The Wild Irish Girl* is only *historical* in the sense that it teaches the reader something of the history and culture of ancient Ireland and those who are products of, and adhere to, that culture. Trumpener describes *The Milesian Chief* as 'arguably the single most important source for *Waverley*', and as the novel which 'straddles the divide between *The Wild Irish Girl* and *Waverley*'; see *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 141, 147. *The Milesian Chief* is essentially about the effects of injustice on the 'national' character, and suggests that Union, without justice, cannot work.

[58] Owenson (by then Lady Morgan) wrote the best example of the national tale: *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys; A National Tale* (1827). At times almost unreadable in its complexity of style and plot, it contrasts the triviality of court life at Dublin Castle in the 1790s with the rich mix of tradition and culture in the west of Ireland; examining the complex relationships that exist between the various traditions, as well as the many historical, social and religious elements that make up the culture of the west. Significantly, perhaps, the novel is primarily set in the period immediately before the rebellion and concludes after the rebellion, but it does not directly address the rebellion itself.

Gothics describe a historical and political repetition compulsion'.[59] She identifies the transition of the novel form from the world of the national tale 'toward the dislocations of the historical novel' as the birthplace of 'a new literary schizophrenia'.[60] Nowhere is this schizophrenia more obvious than in the writings of Thomas Moore, considered Ireland's national poet in the nineteenth century. While Moore's poetry generally reflects a benign strain of Romantic Nationalism, he also wrote *Captain Rock* (1824), an anti-Romantic extended rant that portrays Irish history as uniquely unresolved and cyclical.[61] Essentially, nothing ever changes in Ireland. The present is always a re-enactment of the past and the past is always a reflection of the present.

We can see, therefore, two impulses contained within the national tale: the impulse to see history as a series of parallel narratives existing in some kind of a continuous present, and the impulse to see history as cyclical. The parallel narrative demonstrated why general lessons never seemed to be learnt: the 'lessons' of history remained confined to their respective narrative 'threads' and were not shared. The historical dilemma that faced Irish novelists, particularly those writing about a recent event like 1798, was whether one viewed Irish history as a series of parallel narratives all existing in a continual present or as a cyclical process where the same mistakes and consequences were repeated over and over again, there was no space within either process for change. Yet 1798 *was* clearly different from previous Irish rebellions: the involvement of both Catholics and Protestants on the rebel side saw to that. The result however was the same: stasis. The old national tale form could deal with non-resolution: it was the influence of Scott that forced novelists towards resolution, and the closer they got to some kind of resolution, the more "Scottian" their novels became.

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[59] Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 152.
[60] Ibid., p. 142.
[61] 'while the progress of time produces a change in all other nations, the destiny of Ireland remains still the same – that here 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! While a principle of compensation is observable throughout the fortunes of all the rest of mankind, and they, who enjoy liberty, must pay for it by struggles, and they, who have sunk into slavery, have, at least, the consolation of tranquility – in *this* unhappy country it is only the *evil* of each system that is perpetuated – eternal struggles, without one glimpse of freedom, and an unrelaxing pressure of power, without one moment of consolidation or repose!'; see Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of his Ancestors. Written by Himself* (London, 1824), p. ix.

Irish fiction writers of the 1820s, therefore, found themselves trying to balance an essentially pessimistic and static view of Irish history with a new form that stressed the historical process as progressive and resolved. Scott's model, with its characteristics of extended scene-setting, the use of real historical characters – albeit in a background role – and historical causation, forced a new approach. In the 1820s, for the first time, real historical personages, historical introductions and historical detail were features of portrayals of the rebellion. The understandable anti-Jacobin paranoia about republicanism and the threat from France was largely gone: Napoleon had been defeated and France was once more a monarchy. The French influence was far from ignored, but it could now be treated with some kind of detachment. New factors and influences began to be recognised, and new aspects of 1798 began to be tackled. For example, all of the novels in the 1820s devoted considerable space to the background of the rebellion. As a result the Volunteers, hardly mentioned in the pre-1820 novels, began to assume a hitherto unacknowledged significance.

The expansion of the historical background allowed the rebellion to be seen as the end of a long process rather than merely an uprising incited by ruthless and ambitious men. This broadening of the historical base allowed writers, for the first time, to address the thorny and difficult question of the rebellion in Ulster, which had also been ignored up to this point. The simplistic representation of the rebellion as being a reaction to ongoing sectarian warfare did not explain what motivated many Anglicans and Presbyterians to take up arms with their supposed enemy against government forces. Causation, therefore, became an issue. The more sophisticated questions raised by the rebellion, about issues such as patriotism, identity and ideology were, if not answered, at least addressed. Indeed, of the six novels in the 1820s that actually deal with the rebellion, four of them are primarily about the rebellion in the north.

However, the crucial difference between the national tale and Scott's historical novel for the 1798 novelist was that they were *historical* in different ways. While Scott dealt with events in the past, the national tale primarily dealt with the contemporary world. If Scott's Waverley novels could be seen as an evocation of a lost Scottish way of life, superseded by manners and society better suited to the changing world, the national tale is about an existing alternative way of life: an alternative, parallel, history. In Scott's

novels history is seen as a progression, a successive replacement of one order with another: an almost proto-Darwinian view of the development of society. Thus, the clan system in Scotland is eventually replaced by a more modern society, better suited to the times. In the process, certain admirable qualities are lost, and society may be the poorer in some respects, but the view is very firmly that, in general, things are the way they are today because they could not have been any other way. Scott's tendency to highlight the things that were lost at the expense of what was gained often appears to take the form of nostalgia for the past, when he is actually outlining the *process* by which things change, develop, or are superseded by other things. He does not make a moral judgment. Jacobitism is not celebrated or condemned; it is not seen to be defeated because it is intrinsically right or wrong, but because it has been superseded by other developments. D.D. Devlin observes that, in Scott's novels, Jacobitism fails because it has become 'impossible'.[62]

Scott, according to Devlin, saw history as a compromise, a middle way. He describes Scott as 'supremely the historian of the recent past'.[63] In his analysis Scott 'merely uses any historical moment when men felt that a glory had passed (or was passing) away ... to focus attention on the nature of inevitable historical change, the price, in human terms, that has to be paid for it, and the need always to adapt and survive such change with skill and honour.'[64] Scott, therefore, provided the novelist of the 1820s with a device to identify, celebrate, or to be nostalgic for an historical event – or a people

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[62] D.D. Devlin, *The Author of Waverley: A Critical Study of Walter Scott* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 63. The truth of this observation is seen in the novel that stands at the other end of Scott's series of novels about Scotland: *Redgauntlet* (1824). While *Waverley* is about the very real Jacobite rebellion of 1745, *Redgauntlet* is centred on a fictional Jacobite rebellion in 1765 that eventually never occurs. This 1765 rebellion could not have succeeded as circumstances had changed and this is, in essence, the message of Scott's historical novels. They do not explicitly state that there was only ever one possible outcome in a given situation, but in following the historical thread that leads to the present day, Scott's novels provide an analysis of the historical factors that have led to the present-day situation. In *Redgauntlet*, Darsie Latimer, who is eventually revealed as Arthur Redgauntlet, is held captive by a man who later turns out to be his uncle. Both men share a different vision of the past and the present, but both have the same understanding of the historical process. Both use the metaphor of the train of events (what will, presumably, in the future be regarded as 'history') as being a current, sweeping men along, against which they are powerless to resist. Latimer resolves to 'wait the course of events, to struggle against which is opposing my feeble efforts to the high will of fate'. His captor advises him to 'Beware ... of struggling with a force sufficient to crush you, but abandon yourself to that train of events by which we are both swept along, and which it is impossible that either of us can resist'; see Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet: A Tale of the Eighteenth Century*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Kathryn Sutherland (1824; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 181, 186.

[63] Devlin, *Author of Waverley*, p. 48.

[64] Ibid., p. 44.

– that distanced it from moral or political issues of right and wrong. It provided a means to lament that which was noble and good while recognising that changing circumstances often rendered such people, ideas or culture obsolete. It was largely a non-political way of looking at the past, but in an era where little had actually been resolved Scott's model merely forced Irish writers to look for resolution where they could find it, and this influenced how they interpreted and presented the 1798 rebellion.

'Patriotic', is the term that most adequately describes the approach taken by the novelists of the 1820s to 1798, in that these novels in their various ways reflect and require a paradigm of interpretation that went beyond religion or social class. The writers profess to have, at their heart, a sincere desire for that which they deem to be in the best interests of Ireland, as opposed to what would be in the best interests of Great Britain, or the 'new' United Kingdom, or any other country. Within this framework, it was possible to be broadly unionist or nationalist, conservative or radical, reactionary or revolutionary, in fact any combination of the above, and yet still claim to be a patriot.[65]

It is no coincidence that four of these novels deal primarily with the rebellion in Ulster, previously ignored by 1798 novelists. It has already been suggested that *Waverley* provided a new and more sophisticated model for dealing with the complexities of the past in general and of rebellion in particular, and this finally allowed writers to tackle the difficult task of explaining why many Protestants of various denominations rose against the forces of the crown and government in 1798. The rather unsophisticated representations of the rebellion presented in novels prior to the publication of John Gamble's *Charlton* (1823) could not have accommodated the northern rebellion except in the observation that the Dissenters of the north – especially the Presbyterians – were, due to the democratic nature of their churches, particularly susceptible to 'French' notions of democracy and republicanism. In acknowledging this, however, writers were also admitting that 1798 was about more than gothic savagery, agrarian warfare, revenge and a latent but ever-present desire among Catholics – particularly of the lower order – to kill all Protestants. This alliance of Catholic and Protestant in common cause separated 1798 from the rebellions of the past and made it different and new: something that was less a product of what we might term the 'traditional' past and local circumstances, but that was

[65] See Introduction, p. 81, 81n.

more a result of the recent past. To acknowledge this meant having to confront the recent past and its consequences. Explaining 1798 in the north meant having to address the eighteenth century rather than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It also meant having to address the consequences of 1798 – and that included Union.

'A new and inexpressable sensation': the Presbyterian view

Charlton (1823), by John Gamble (*c.*1770-1831), is the first novel to outline the Presbyterian involvement in the 1798 rebellion. A medical doctor by profession, Gamble was also a popular writer.[66] In his preface to *Charlton*, Gamble states that of the three classes of people in Ireland the group that he calls the 'Scotch-Irish' – essentially the Presbyterian people of Ireland – were 'by far the most industrious, and possibly ... the most enlightened body'.[67] In the north of Ireland it was this middle class of people who united the other two 'to a certain degree, correcting their errors, and softening their hatreds' (i, pp. viii-ix). The Scots-Irish, therefore, are portrayed as the middle ground between gentry and peasant, Anglican and Catholic and – presumably – Orangeman and Defender.[68] In a sense, they *are* the historical compromise, marrying both reason and religion. Gamble states that their reading of the bible made them 'great reasoners', and their weaving lifestyle, 'more favourable to happiness and morality' (i, p. ix). However, in describing them as 'ardent lovers of liberty' he also goes on to say that it was the 'irregular expansion of this spirit which in a great measure caused the rebellion' (i, p. x), suggesting a willingness amongst Scots-Irish Presbyterians in the 1820s to at least accept a share of responsibility for the rebellion and to indicate that even at this stage there was no universal desire amongst Presbyterians to write themselves out of the history of 1798.

What is most remarkable about Gamble's depiction of the atmosphere in Ulster prior to the rebellion is its total contrast to the ominous foretidings of rebellion in other works. Most of the pre-rebellion expressions of liberty in *Charlton* are seen to be jocular,

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[66] Gamble's *Sketches of History, Politics and Manners: Taken in Dublin, and the North of Ireland, in the Autumn of 1810* (London, 1811), was one of the most popular Irish books of the early nineteenth century. He also wrote *Sarsfield; Or, Wanderings of Youth: An Irish Tale* (1814); see 'Dr. John Gamble', in *Irish Book Lover*, i, 1 (Aug., 1909), 20-21.

[67] John Gamble, *Charlton: Or, Scenes in the North of Ireland; A Tale*, 3 vols. (London, 1823), i, p. viii; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

[68] It was only after the rebellion that Presbyterians began to join the Orange Order in significant numbers; see chapter one, p. 33 and *1798 Rebellion*, p. 146.

and the work of what Gamble describes as 'merry rather than mischievous groups' (i, p. 82). The following extract gives some sense of the atmosphere:

> There was spread abroad a hilarity of heart and confidence of success almost universal, and revolution was regarded as an affair of sentiment, and by many as a matter of merriment, rather than of trouble and of danger. Accustomed as, since the days of volunteering, the people of the north of Ireland were to have their wishes complied with, they never dreamed of the possibility of failure, nor if they had, would they in all probability have much heeded it; for they had never hitherto had experience of a government in wrath, and most likely imagined that at the worst they would only have to lay down their pikes, and that too as easily as they would lay down their pitchforks (i, p. 82).

Gamble's analysis concentrates not on the disabilities of Catholics and Presbyterians, nor the activities of the Peep-O-Day Boys and their Catholic rivals, the Defenders, but rather he suggests that the people of Ulster almost unwittingly wandered into rebellion. Two points are particularly noteworthy of attention: the remarkably open spirit of rebellion in evidence and the link made with Volunteerism, which increasingly came to be stressed as a factor in the development of the United Irishmen, and indicative of the involvement of many people of the 'respectable' classes in the rebellion.

Also worthy of note is the spirit of optimism and confidence of a people who, unlike their Catholic brethren, 'had never hitherto had experience of a government in wrath'. The good-humoured nature of the spirit of liberty among the Scots-Irish is emphasised by the number of songs that feature in *Charlton*. The potent mixture of song, sentiment and drink is seen to be a powerful recruiting tool, with one character referring to a 'new and inexpressible sensation' of unity (i, p. 175). Although it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such a 'sensation' often had more to do with the amount of drink consumed than any genuine political conversion, Gamble does convey quite effectively the optimistic spirit that he claims prevailed at the time and the ease with which one could suddenly find oneself a United Irishman. Even Charlton, the eponymous hero of the novel, is not immune, especially if the company is attractive.[69]

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[69] 'Erin go bragh, Unite and be Free and Paddy's Resource, were sung with rapture; and our youth [Charlton], who, for the moment perhaps was intoxicated with the young ladies' charms, chorused as loudly as if he had been Napper Tandy himself. He was no enemy to government, as we have seen; but he probably thought it would not fall a whit the sooner for the weapons they were then attacking it with' (i, pp. 178-9).

The character of Charlton is straight from the *Waverley* school of passive heroes, having 'much gentleness of disposition, some indecision perhaps of character, but little of high resolve' (i, p. 29). By inclination a loyalist, he is also a Presbyterian, and is carried along by a vague sense of loyalty to his co-religionists. Like Edward Waverley, he is the medium by which all parties to the novel are connected. He is friendly with both Lord Eglamour, who represents a strain of benevolent aristocratic loyalism, and the Revd Moseley, a Presbyterian clergyman, United Irishman, and onetime Volunteer. Charlton moves to the town and district of Eglamour in order to set up practice as a doctor, but finds he is an object of suspicion on all sides. The United Irishmen suspect him of being a government agent while the loyalists suspect him of being an *agent provocateur* for both the United Irishmen and the French. His lack of strong conviction adds to the general suspicion. Eventually he is tricked into becoming a United Irishman when he swears an oath which he assumed to be merely one not to inform on others (i, p. 242).[70] He then attends a meeting of United Irish leaders where he discovers, to his surprise, that the United Irishmen were mostly young men, in Gamble's words, 'in a respectable condition of life', and not 'a motley group of the country people, met with little object, and brought together at random' (i, p. 243).

Central, however, to the plot of *Charlton* and of Gamble's representation of the rebellion itself is the fact that although Catholic and Presbyterian appeared to be united in common cause, Presbyterians were fighting for principle while Catholics were fighting for their very existence. This contrast is highlighted in a farcical scene as the rebellion gets under way when Dimod, the leader of the northern rebels, is unable to converse in Irish, and his colonel, a Catholic, is unable to speak French, and so both have to resort to English, their common language (i, p. 254). Inherent in this little cameo is the notion that French, the language of liberty and revolution, is incompatible with Irish, the language synonymous with the Catholics and the 'native' Irish. It is English, the language of the rule of law and the constitution, that makes sense of both. The two groups are literally speaking different languages. It is at this point that Charlton himself has an insight into the fundamental difference between the two groups, when he realises that the Catholics

[70] This appears to be a rather clumsy way of ensuring that Charlton is a United Irishman in fact but without making him one in principle, thereby retaining him as a link to both sides involved in the rebellion.

are 'in earnest', while the Presbyterians are 'only acting!' (i, p. 254). This realisation also brings with it a fear best expressed by Moseley, the first of a succession of soothsayers in 1798 fiction, who recognised that an alliance of idealistic Presbyterians and desperate Catholics would not solve Ireland's woes:

> 'The wrongs of Ireland may be – it is beyond may be – they are many; but these are not the persons who are to right them; they have neither the means, the ability, nor the courage, as in their hour of trial, they will to their sorrow find .... I tell you that in less than six weeks, the unsubstantial pageant will have vanished into air – into thin air. But should it be otherwise; should, contrary to all expectations, to all chance even, our revolutionists prevail, how could it be the better for them, or for you! They are not, you are not, of the sect that would govern; and the one which should, has yet the hard, the hardest of all lessons to learn – how to govern itself!' (i, pp. 264-6).

Moseley's own background and his speech to Charlton codifies Gamble's interpretation of both the rebellion in the north and the role of the Presbyterian people in it. Inspired by the success of the Volunteers, who achieved their aims in 1782 without ever firing a single shot, the attractiveness of the ideas of liberty, republicanism and the rights of man, to a people with a long tradition of independent thought and democracy in their church affairs was undeniable. It was the 'irregular expansion' of this spirit of liberty which caused the rebellion. By outlining the reasons for this 'expansion', especially in contrasting the mood among Presbyterians to that amongst Catholics both in the north and, presumably, the rest of Ireland, Gamble establishes a clear separation of motive that allows him to both write in and write out Presbyterian involvement in the rebellion as he sees fit. Thus in the shape of Moseley we see both the history of Presbyterian liberalism and the ultimate fear of Presbyterians: that by following their consciences they would merely help to replace one form of oppressive government with another; that is, a Catholic one. In doing so they might worsen their own position rather than better it. Moseley's reference to 'the sect that would govern' is a clear reference to the possibility that in a democratic Ireland, Catholics, unused to governing in the first place, would also gather all the power and privilege to themselves.

There are two other ways that Gamble attempts to separate the Presbyterian attitude from the Catholic. The first is in relation to the prospect of help from France. Moseley is dismissive of French help: 'They will do with us as they did with the Scotch

... tempt us into rebellion, and then leave us to shift for ourselves' (i, p. 266). The second area is in relation to rebel atrocities. Dimod urges his men to spare the lives of the fallen: 'I am a Christian minister, as well as a soldier; and in the name of that God whom I serve, I tell you, that vengeance is his, and he has said it; and that only one vengeance on your fallen enemy is permitted you – spare and pardon him!'(i, p. 255). This may be Gamble's attempt to draw a distinction between the actions of the Presbyterian clergy and those of some of the Catholic ones, particularly those who were involved in the Wexford rebellion.[71] Ultimately it is Moseley who is the moral voice of the northern rebellion, and he voices the melancholy observation that it is pointless fighting for those 'misgoverned and misguided countrymen' who do not understand what freedom is or how to avail of it (i, pp. 266-7).

Gamble's *Charlton* manages to portray Presbyterian involvement in the rebellion as essentially philanthropic by suggesting that Presbyterians had little to gain and potentially much to lose by their involvement. Contrasts are indirectly made with the rebellion in the rest of the country and, it is implied, with Catholic United Irishman activity in the north, particularly in relation to the pre-rebellion atmosphere, the role of the Presbyterian clergy and the attitude to assistance from France. By stressing this philanthropic and disinterested stance, and allying it with a carnivalesque depiction of pre-rebellion Ulster, Gamble both defines a distinctly Presbyterian view and also aids the healing and re-integration process. The rebellion becomes an over-zealous difference of opinion, albeit one with tragic results. There is no sense of the festering resentment that may be expected to live on in the Catholic mind. The rebellion was a process of education, a lesson in what was possible and what was impossible, and, ultimately, an endorsement of a conservative middle way. In representing 1798 as both the culmination

[71] The role of the Catholic clergy in Wexford has been much debated. Priests such as Michael Murphy, John Murphy of Boolavogue and Philip Roche were undoubtedly amongst the leaders of the insurrection in Wexford once the rebellion broke out, and as such were seen as being guilty by association, at least, where atrocities were committed. Ultimately, however, the role of Catholic clergy seems to be exaggerated. Nine of the 'priests' involved in Wexford were, at the time of the rebellion, either unemployed or suspended. The image of the 'patriot priest' appears to be largely a creation of the later nineteenth century. This view is supported by the fact that even anti-Catholic polemicists such as Samuel and Mortimer O'Sullivan, writing in the *Dublin University Magazine* in the 1830s and '40s, accepted that on the whole, the Catholic clergy played little part in the rebellion, and, if anything, were a restraining and conservative influence; see Samuel O'Sullivan's review 'Madden's United Irishmen – Second Series' op. cit., 699. For a fuller account of the role of priests in the rebellion see Kevin Whelan, 'The Role of the Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Whelan (ed.), *Wexford: History and Society*, op. cit., pp. 296-315.

and termination of Presbyterian political radicalism in Ireland, it can at least represent some part of history as resolved. In this sense *Charlton* is the most Scottian of the 1798 novels, but, in attempting to sketch this middle way and finding resolution, it resorts to merely following one of the threads of the 'parallel narrative'.

James McHenry's *O'Halloran; Or, The Insurgent Chief*, is the second Presbyterian analysis of 1798 in Ulster in this period. McHenry (1785-1845) was, like Gamble, a medical doctor. He emigrated to the United States in 1817 and settled in Philadelphia in 1824, the year *O'Halloran* was first published. It is both a complement and a contrast to Gamble's work. Altogether darker than *Charlton*, the tone of the book is ambiguous, often to the extent of mystification. The following extract from the Preface (dated Sept. 1, 1820) is a case in point:

> The conspiracy and insurrection of the United Irishmen were undeniably of the most interesting, and, perhaps, of the most important character of any that ever agitated a country. Its leaders exhibited a combination of talents, courage, and disinterested patriotism, which has but seldom been equalled, and which, in conjunction with the generous nature of the principles for which they contended, could not, and did not fail to attract towards them the admiration and sympathy of all classes of men in Christendom, without excepting even those against whose authority their arms were wielded. Their enterprise failed, whether fortunately or unfortunately for mankind, it is not the business of the novelist to inquire; but had it succeeded, and the designs they had formed for the advantage of their country been realized, what epithets of praise would have been considered too high for their deserts? Their cause would have been called holy, and their efforts glorious. Even as it is, all parties admit that they were zealous for their country's good. The purity of their motives is not denied; it is only the accuracy of their views, and the soundness of their principles that are called in question. Whatever our own judgment on this subject may be, we have refrained from expressing it; and in writing the following narrative, which, we seriously assert, contains numerous *facts* that have never yet appeared in print, the course we prescribed for ourselves was that of strict impartiality not only in relating the events, but in detailing the opinions, and delineating the characters of the different parties. The United Irishmen and the loyalists are permitted to express their sentiments with equal force and freedom. The fanatical and the fierce on either side are painted as such, while the moderate and lenient, we hope, have ample justice done to the rationality of their views.[72]

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[72] [James McHenry], *O'Halloran; Or, The Insurgent Chief. An Irish Historical Tale of 1798. By Solomon Secondsight* (1824; repr. Chiswick: C.S. Arnold and Simpkin and Marshall, 1824), pp. v-vi; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text. It was originally published under the title *The Insurgent Chief; Or, O'Halloran. An Irish Historical Tale of 1798* (Philadelphia, 1824) and re-printed under that title in London by A.K. Newman the same year. The most extensively revised edition of the

This passage is an extraordinary example of historical tightrope-walking. At first glance it is pure Scott: anxious to give credit to all those who deserved it and to celebrate that which was noble and good, especially in that which is gone. It also, like Scott, sanctifies the present: if the United Irishmen *had* succeeded their cause would have been 'holy', but since they did not, it is not. The unstable nature of this sacredness of the present is reinforced by the statement that it is not the business of the novelist to speculate on alternative outcomes, which he then goes on to do anyway. McHenry's portrayal of the United Irishmen's 'talents, courage, and disinterested patriotism' (p. v) is a long way from the diabolical ideologues who are so often a feature of earlier novels. However, the United Irishmen are damned with faint praise: while the 'purity' of their motives – itself a questionable enough observation – is lauded, 'it is only the accuracy of their views, and the soundness of their principles that are called in question' (p. vi). In other words, their entire world view.

The neutral role McHenry claimed for himself appears to be an attempt to find a middle way and, as such, can be seen to be an imitation of Scott. However, the capacity to be fair and objective is a function of a resolved history, a projection back from a certain present to the noblest aspects of a past source of conflict. How one finds a middle ground between a group of people on one hand who wished to create a separate and independent republic and a group who wished to retain all existing links and legislation on the other is the dilemma that McHenry faced. He solved this problem by diluting the aims of the United Irishmen and by portraying the rebellion as being against a tyrannical government rather than against the existing order of things. Thus the United Irishmen are described as existing for 'the redress of those grievances which the volunteers had failed to obtain' (p. 29) and that 'at its origin, was hardly considered in any other light than as a substitute for that [the Volunteers] which had been so arbitrarily and unwisely

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story was published in Belfast in 1853, and contained the author's revisions, his admission of authorship, and an appendix that identified the real-life personages on whom the fictional characters were based; see James McHenry, *O'Halloran, Or, The Insurgent Chief; A Tale of the United Irishmen. To Which is Added an Appendix, Containing Biographical Memoirs of the Principal Characters, and Descriptive of the Scenery of the Work* (1824; rev. ed. Belfast: J. Henderson, 1853). *O'Halloran* was one of the most popular novels about 1798 published in the nineteenth century, and many unauthorised reprints were produced. An edition without the author's preface or subsequent revisions was published as late as 1905; see James McHenry, *The Insurgent Chief; Or, The Pikemen of '98. A Romance of the Irish Rebellion* (1824; repr. Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1905).

suppressed' (p. 30). These 'grievances' are listed as reform in the representation of the Commons, Catholic emancipation, and – importantly from a Presbyterian perspective – amelioration of the tithe system.

McHenry claims that the actions of the lord lieutenant, Camden, 'irritated' people into rebellion and he states that had the reforming Earl Fitzwilliam not been withdrawn the United Irishmen would have been dissolved (p. 30). The veracity of the last statement might be widely queried but McHenry goes on to assert, in the guise of a mysterious recluse who provides much of the political analysis in *O'Halloran*, that the general spirit of disaffection was seized upon by 'Ambitious men, in the interests of France', and that they sowed the seeds of insurrection (p. 31). A crucial distinction, therefore, is drawn between the United Irishmen as a respectable body formed by patriots of the old Volunteer kind and its subsequent infiltration by republican and Francophile revolutionaries. In *O'Halloran* it is the actions of the government, particularly the passing of the Insurrection Act and the army's enforcement of it, that provided the spark for revolution. The catalyst is the trial and execution of William Orr for allegedly administering the oath of the United Irishmen to a soldier who later turned informer. His 'martyrdom' is at the centre of McHenry's portrayal of the reasons for the rebellion, and this action 'severed the last remaining link of the chain which had hitherto bound thousands of the presbyterian community in the North, to the side of government' (p. 124).[73]

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[73] *O'Halloran* is also a manifesto of sorts, a vindication of the character of the people of the north of Ireland and the 'motives, designs, and transactions' of those who are called, perhaps significantly, 'the Northern United Irishmen' (p. xiv). In his Preface McHenry states that the novel was written as part of the stipulation of an inheritance left to him by an eccentric aunt, who was particularly upset at the portrayal of northerners by Sydney Owenson in *The Wild Irish Girl*, 'for she thought that an Irishwoman, at least, ought not to have been so wilfully and unjustly abusive of any portion of her countrymen, even if they did not happen to be descended from Milesian ancestors, and were unable to speak the original language of the country .... She ought, especially, to have spared her attacks upon that portion, to whose activity and intelligence the nation is chiefly indebted for whatever it possesseth of either prosperity or importance' (p. xiv). The peevish tone of this observation illustrates the problem encountered by anyone trying to reflect the Presbyterian involvement in the rebellion: the Presbyterian people of northern Ireland *were* different and were seen to be different, not only from Catholics, but also from the more privileged Anglican population. In fact, there was no 'aunt'. In an appendix to the 1853 edition of the novel, McHenry reveals that the aunt is based on a Miss Jane Houston, a woman he knew as a child and who held the kind of views attributed to the aunt in the preface; see McHenry, *O'Halloran* (Belfast, 1853), op. cit., p. 272. The notion that he wrote the novel as part of the stipulation of an inheritance from a fictitious aunt is another example of McHenry both owing and disowning the work, and this is characteristic of *O'Halloran* as a whole.

All that is noble in the United Irish cause is manifested in Henry O'Halloran, the eponymous hero of the novel. O'Halloran is a Presbyterian landlord of some wealth, his surname indicating a Gaelic origin.[74] He stands for the old Volunteer values and aims, and is a patriot in the eighteenth-century sense of the word. It seems clear that O'Halloran's speech from the dock after the failure of the rebellion is designed to appeal to Presbyterians of the 1820s as it tackles two main areas of the 1798 rebellion that could have been regarded as a betrayal: the connection with France – especially as in 1798 Britain had been at war with France since 1793 – and what could have been seen as the promotion of the Catholic religion. His speech ultimately provides a context in which radical Presbyterianism can function. O'Halloran states that he became a United Irishman 'because I considered it my duty to my country, to join that portion of her people who had resolved to vindicate her rights and break those shackles of oppression with which strangers had long kept her in bondage' (p. 304).[75] He makes clear his opposition to 'the establishment of a French influence in the government of this country', saying: 'In our conversations, we have often agreed in the sentiment, that if we must yield to a foreign connexion in matters of state, it should be a connexion with Britain, in preference to any other country' (p. 307). He also finds it necessary to deny that the United Irishmen ever had any intention to establish Catholicism as the national religion stating 'should the absurd and inhuman doctrine of extirpating heresy have again become the fashion of the day, I would have withdrawn from my ill-fated country, and lamented her delusion' (p. 308).

What O'Halloran defines in the end is a settlement, and a context in which all could live happily:

> 'The form of government I should have preferred would have been a republic of the democratical kind; but so constituted, as while it allowed the people their just ascendancy in the national affairs, it would have afforded strength and energy sufficient to the executive for every useful purpose, whether external or internal. Should the attainment of this desirable species of government have been impracticable, the state of things that I would have next preferred, would have

[74] His religion is never made explicitly clear, perhaps to make O'Halloran a more universally attractive character. However he does receive a letter, which when referring to his support for Catholic emancipation, mentions ' you and the other presbyterians who have lately espoused their [the Catholics'] cause' (p. 110).
[75] The rhetoric of vindicating Ireland's rights is precisely the same as that used by Alfred Sedley in *The Soldier of Pennaflor* (1810) for exactly opposite reasons; see below p. 97n.

been British connexion without British authority. I should have no objection for the king of Great Britain to be our king, constitutionally limited, and without the power of appointing any foreigner our viceroy, if it were found that such a state of things would be necessary to the preservation of peace between the two countries' (p. 307).

O'Halloran's primary concern is the method of governance in Ireland, and if this can be remedied he would be happy, but he feels it is Ireland's fate to be eternally misgoverned.[76]

O'Halloran is a skilful synthesis of various political ideas and ideals, allowing each just enough space to breathe but not to germinate fully. Scott's implied middle way is identified, but, as O'Halloran himself fears, it will never come to pass. Once again, the cyclical idea of Irish history gains the upper hand. McHenry's problem, like that of every other Irish historical novelist, is that he is not looking back from a resolved, stable present and tracing a middle way into the past: he is trying to trace a middle way from the past into an agreed present, and since it does not exist, the novel, were it to end there, would simply be another 'wail for a lost cause'.[77]

Instead, desperate for some kind of resolution, the novel resorts to antithesis. Throughout the novel there are equal and opposite representations of persons, views and actions. Thus although the novel is entitled *O'Halloran*, the real hero is a young man named Edward Barrymore who is a loyalist from a well-connected Whig family. Rescued from drowning by O'Halloran, his feelings of gratitude towards him, coupled with his growing love for O'Halloran's grand-daughter, prevent Barrymore from turning him in as a traitor and he becomes a witness to all that is good and bad about the United Irishmen. Reluctant to reveal his true family name to O'Halloran for fear of being identified as a friend of government, Barrymore assumes the suggestive moniker of Edward Middleton, implying that his is the middle way. The portrayal of Barrymore would seem to suggest that liberal loyalism is the correct and most 'patriotic' approach, or at least the one

[76] 'But it is now over. She [Ireland] is destined longer to wear the chains; and I fear that they will be more firmly than ever riveted around her. Every prospect of deliverance from her evil destiny is now far distant. Long, long will it be ere she shall lift her head among the nations, proud and independent as she ought to be. But although I expect not her independence, yet, if I could hope that her stronger and victorious neighbour would treat her with that kindness and justice which true policy would dictate, I should die satisfied; for she then might be prosperous and happy as a British island, although she should never be great and glorious as an Irish nation' (p. 308).

[77] Charles Gavan Duffy's description of the poetry of Thomas Moore, quoted in Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 148.

deemed most Scottian and, perhaps, most acceptable to readers. A competition at a St Patrick's Day ball to see who can produce the most the most patriotic statement includes the real-life personages of Robert Emmet, Thomas Russell, Henry Joy McCracken and Samuel Nelson. O'Halloran himself also participates, along with a mysterious stranger who turns out subsequently to be Barrymore in disguise. Needless to say Barrymore, without uttering a single word in which he does not sincerely believe, is adjudged by Ellen O'Halloran to be the winner and, as such, the most patriotic. Barrymore's statement: 'O! may that God who alone can rescue her from misery, grant her a speedy and permanent deliverance, and render her children happy and worthy of happiness' (p. 167), *is* certainly ambiguous, and censorious: a fact not unnoticed by the other competitors.[78]

This tendency towards ambiguity and antithesis highlights the difficulty of providing an alternative, acceptable, 'patriotic' view. However anxious McHenry is to stress the essential patriotism of Barrymore, he cannot avoid the fact that his brand of patriotism is insipid and, by the time *O'Halloran* is published, ineffectual. There is no room in *O'Halloran* for either French involvement or the more radical and anti-religious aspects of revolutionary thought.[79] In Barrymore's view the only real problem Ireland has is in relation to the manner, rather than the method, of government and the only solution to that problem is legislative change.[80] This analysis would require government and parliament to legislate against itself and its supporters, something it had shown itself singularly unwilling to do.

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[78] '...some of them, thought that they could perceive in it an implied censure on their confederacy. It called upon heaven to deliver the country from its calamities; but it did not discriminate the party from which these calamities had sprung. Nay, it even insinuated that the people were in the fault; for while it prayed for their happiness, it took care to express a wish for their amendment, that they might deserve it' (p. 168).

[79] There is a French character in *O'Halloran*, who is a representative of the French Directory. He is portrayed as a ruthless scheming individual, allied to the more extreme wing of the United Irishman. He, too, falls in love with Ellen and is involved in a scheme to abduct Barrymore and transport him to France.

[80] Letters from Barrymore to O'Halloran outline his solution to Ireland's problems. Although Barrymore describes himself as 'no enemy to Catholic emancipation', he does not accept that repressive legislation was not needed against Catholics in the past (p. 110). He also rejects the idea that Britain has stifled Ireland's trading potential: 'As well might Middlesex oppose the prosperity of Lancashire, and the authorities of Edinburgh adopt measures to prevent the growth of Glasgow' (p. 111); 'My politics are the politics of the whigs of 1688, who expelled despotism from the throne; and, by placing in its stead a limited monarch, gave the last finish to our excellent constitution'. He continues: 'The abuses that have crept into our government ... I would endeavour to reform ... by legal means .... The corruptions of the constitution, I would purify ... [by] *parliamentary interference*, which by persevering and energetic applications from the people will always be procured' (p. 112).

The antithetical nature of *O'Halloran* is what helps to provide the novel with a balance that is on occasion so scrupulous as to be mystifying. Thus the noble but misguided O'Halloran is contrasted with the equally noble but ineffectual patriotism of Barrymore, and the good and noble northern rebellion is balanced by the French-inspired western rebellion – in which Barrymore fights with distinction on the government side – and the humane and moderate Cornwallis is contrasted with his predecessor as lord lieutenant, Camden. Even this, however, is not enough. O'Halloran is saved from the gallows by Barrymore's intervention with Camden, who is a friend of the Barrymore family. In keeping with McHenry's attempts to show everyone in the best possible light, Camden's pardoning of O'Halloran in his last action as lord lieutenant is seen to be an humane and conciliatory one: 'in despite of all that has been said of the cruelty and harshness of my administration, I shall end it with an act of clemency' (p. 330).

If McHenry's aim in *O'Halloran* was indeed to propound the idea that Ireland's best hope for the future was in a government and parliament that would internally reform itself then it is an idea that is seen to have failed. O'Halloran is saved by the personal intervention of Camden, whereas many others less culpable than O'Halloran paid the ultimate price with their lives. There is no sense in *O'Halloran* that this is in any way unfair, and the arbitrary nature of the justice meted out sits uncomfortably with the notion of the rule of law. It is this paradox that makes *O'Halloran* ultimately unsatisfying as an analysis of the 1798 rebellion, but immensely interesting as an example of the complex Presbyterian attitude towards it.

In keeping with the novel's attempt to both heal and bring the events of 1798 to some kind of closure, even the most fanatical of the United Irishmen is seen to have some kind of epiphany. McCauley, one of the United Irishmen who had tried to abduct Barrymore, escapes from the northern rebellion and turns up on the battlefield at the climax of the western rebellion.[81] There he is mortally wounded by Barrymore, but his

[81] For some reason best known to himself, McHenry chose not to make Ballinamuck the site of the final battle of the 1798 rebellion, instead suggesting it was at a site near Tuam, some sixty miles or so from Ballinamuck (p. 385). In view of the scrupulous accuracy of his previous descriptions of the rebellion in the north and the west, this is surprising. The fact however that he suggests that the rebel force at Tuam numbered some twenty thousand (p. 385) – Pakenham in *Year of Liberty*, p. 373, suggests as little as seventeen hundred – and that victory was achieved 'with far less bloodshed then from the numbers arrayed on both sides, previous to the engagement, could have been expected' (p. 390), leads one to the conclusion that McHenry deliberately replaced Ballinamuck with a more impressive and proportionally less bloody engagement than the one which actually took place.

death has a touch of nobility about it.[82] In the end, McCauley's motives are seen to be entirely patriotic. His references to Barrymore as 'an honourable man' (p. 392), serve as a counterbalance to any partisan feelings McCauley's patriotic rhetoric might evince in the reader.

O'Halloran tries to end on an upbeat note. McHenry stresses that 'the great lesson for the inculcation of which it has been written', is that 'intimidation and vengeance are, and ever will be, unsuccessful in preserving the peace of a country; whereas conciliation and kindness will scarcely ever fail' (p. 412). From the Presbyterian perspective the return to normality restored confidence in government, and produced tranquility and industry. There is a coy warning however: 'human fears commonly yield to resentment and exasperation; and although disunion, or want of warlike means, may deprive the persecuted of all hopes of success, their very despair, which will be thus excited, may become dreadful, perhaps fatal to their adversaries' (p. 414). Apart from these morals, *O'Halloran* in the end has little to offer by way of exegesis. However, it does attempt to portray the manners and feelings of the time, and show how different impulses worked upon different people in different ways. In this way it is very much in the style of Scott. The problem, however, is that the solution offered – essentially good government – may appease northern Presbyterians, but it did not resolve the fundamental problems that created the United Irishmen and the 1798 rebellion. In this sense both *Charlton* and *O'Halloran*, however interesting and valuable in themselves, are unable to look beyond the fact that, for them, 1798 was part of a resolved past.

Two Anglican views: Eyre Evans Crowe and William Hamilton Maxwell

There is an echo of the notion of Presbyterian philanthropy in Eyre Evans Crowe's story, *The Northerns of Ninety-Eight* (1829). A journalist by profession, Crowe (1799-1868) was a conservative Anglican, a Tory in political views, and a vehement critic of the Irish

[82] 'Here, said he, is the most honourable place for me to die, and I rejoice that my death has been occasioned by honourable hands .... I have not always squared my actions by the rules of conduct or the notions of morality generally adopted by men. An instinctive perception – some might call it the impulse of feeling, but I have flattered myself that it was the dictate of conscience that generally directed me in my path, and pointed out what I should do .... it is a death I rejoice in; the death of a Hampden, on the field of glory, in my country's cause, and by the hand of an honourable man. What can be a happier consummation? But, oh! farewell. Tell O'Halloran that I died blessing my country' (pp. 391-2).

ascendancy.[83] His blunt analysis of the causes of the 1798 rebellion laid the blame squarely with Protestants in general and Presbyterians in particular. He disliked Catholicism but supported Catholic emancipation, and he penned a strident defence of Catholic involvement in the rebellion, describing them as 'universally the sufferers and the dupes'.[84] It is almost impossible to imagine such an observation being made twenty years earlier. Crowe's analysis spares no one. Among Protestants, Crowe is particularly scathing of Dissenters and Orangeism, but all share the blame. Volunteerism, lauded by other authors, is blamed for showing Catholics that intimidation, 'the language of menace and of faction' (iii, p. 4), was all capable of extracting concessions from what he describes as 'the weakness of the English and Anglo-Irish Governments' (iii, p. 3).

Crowe is at pains to stress the moderation of Catholics, stating that 'no country, calling itself free, ever presented so numerous a body of malcontents, – malcontent with reason – who for so long a space kept within the bounds of submission and allegiance' (iii, p. 4). The 'altogether Protestant' Volunteers are blamed for teaching Catholics to arm and resist and for spawning a spirit that resulted in the United Irishmen *and* the Orange Order (iii, p. 5). Crowe's distrust of any religion other than Anglicanism is seen by his reference to the final piece of his jigsaw as 'an intriguing knot of Dissenters and No-Religionists, bitten with the mania of imitating France, who goaded and induced the poor Catholics to precipitate themselves into rebellion' (iii, p. 5). Crowe agrees with McHenry about the original aims of the United Irishmen being merely reform and emancipation, and that 'treason and separation from England was an after-thought, and a corruption of their first principle' (iii, p. 10).

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[83] Born in England to an Anglo-Irish family, Crowe was educated in Carlow and at Trinity College, Dublin. He worked for *Blackwood's Magazine* and served as Paris correspondent of the London *Morning Chronicle* and was editor of the London *Daily News* (1849-51). As well as being a novelist, Crowe was also an historian, writing *A History of China to the Present Time* (London, 1854), and a five-volume *History of France* (London, 1858-68).

[84] 'One barbarian produced another; but the poor Catholics are wrongfully made to bear the blame of all. Oppression and misrule, aided no doubt by the vices of their religion, made them barbarous, and of course sowed in them the seeds of ferocity. And anon came republicans and conspirators, Protestant all, who bade them rise, sword in hand, then deserted them utterly, and left them to use their swords as they listed, and to be hanged as they were caught. Guilt, whether of oppression, or cruelty, or guile, lies upon all parties; but, if we are to class men by sects, as it is the fashion and the course of the day to do, we must avow that Protestants were the instigators and avengers of the rebellion of ninety-eight, as Catholics were universally the sufferers and the dupes'; Eyre Evans Crowe, 'The Northerns of Ninety Eight', in *Yesterday in Ireland*, with an Introduction by Robert Lee Wolff, 3 vols. (1829; facsimile ed. New York: Garland, 1979), iii, pp. 118-9; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

Crowe's anger is reserved not only for those who incited and then deserted the rebellion, but also for those who wrote about it. He attacks what he refers to as 'judicial torture' (iii, p. 208), especially pitchcapping, which he describes as being 'invented by the Orangemen of the day, as an improvement upon hanging' (iii, p. 208) and, barely concealing his contempt, he continues: 'An historian of the Irish Rebellion, Musgrave, very placidly regrets, that the whole North had not been so served; he having, no doubt from experiment, discovered the mode to be the only efficacious preventive of insurrection' (iii, pp. 208-9).[85]

What is unusual in Crowe's story is the absence of any suggestion that government policy may have helped to incite the rebellion. The actions of the army, or the application of the Insurrection Act, which form such an important part of other accounts of the rebellion, particularly in Ulster, are not mentioned. The most severe criticism of the government is that it was 'vacillating' and 'timid' in the face of rebellion (iii, p. 75). All of Crowe's anger is directed at the non-governmental bodies that contributed to the rebellion: Volunteerism, Orangeism, Peep-O-Day Boys, the United Irishmen, and Defenderism. Also attacked are the non-state religions: Dissent, with its susceptibility to democracy and republicanism, and Catholicism, with its superstition and bigotry. Worst of all perhaps, was atheism, which rejects Christianity, 'the great principle which humanized man, and civilized nations' (iii, p. 22). The overriding impression one gets from Crowe is that if everyone had been an Anglican, the rebellion could not have happened. Apart from its obvious conservatism, it is this idea that makes *The Northerns of Ninety-Eight* a profoundly Anglican interpretation of the rebellion.

A different Anglican perspective can be seen in William Hamilton Maxwell's novel *O'Hara; Or, 1798* (1825). While Crowe's perspective can be seen as that of the pious and committed Anglican, Maxwell's contribution can be seen as more of a reflection of a set of values often associated with the Anglican ascendancy in Ireland. *O'Hara* is a rollicking tale that predates Maxwell's later military novels: works copied by Maxwell's protégé, Charles Lever, and parodied by William Thackeray in *Barry*

[85] There are accounts of Musgrave, a Waterford captain of yeomanry during the rebellion as well as a magistrate, having to carry out his punishments himself; see 'Anecdote of Sir R. Musgrave Bart.', in *The Irish Magazine* (Feb., 1808), 67-8.

Lyndon.[86] Maxwell (1792-1850) was a career clergyman who by dint of patronage obtained a living in Balla, County Mayo, a parish that contained virtually no Anglican community and, as a result, few pastoral duties. This allowed Maxwell plenty of time to indulge in his favourite activities of hunting, riding, fishing and socialising. In this sense Maxwell represented everything perceived to be wrong about Irish society and the established church, and yet *O'Hara* is remarkably open in its admiration of the rebels.

The novel calls for Catholic emancipation and condemns the Act of Union. In complete contrast to *The Northerns of Ninety-Eight*, *O'Hara* eulogises the Volunteers, and it is this old-fashioned pre-Union patriotism that fuels the novel. It is also, not surprisingly, the most 'gung-ho' depiction of 1798, reflecting its author's role in the creation of the 'military novel'.[87] *O'Hara* is best when describing military engagements, which it does in great detail. Its good-humoured indulgence of Irish foibles allows scope for tolerating a wide range of different behaviour. Orangeism, execrated in *The Northerns of Ninety-Eight*, is seen here in a more benign light. In Maxwell's world there is room for different shades of opinion, as long as these do not interrupt the serious business of hunting, carousing, and fighting. The only real venom in *O'Hara* is directed at upstarts who try to infiltrate the ascendancy class, informers (on both sides), cowards, and those who betrayed Ireland by voting for or supporting the Act of Union.

O'Hara starts, significantly enough, during the American Revolution, where Frederic O'Hara, the father of the eponymous hero, distinguishes himself fighting for the British against the American rebels. This does not stop the older O'Hara, or Maxwell, from being fulsome in praise of the rebels' bravery or the justness of their cause.[88] In the world of *O'Hara*, and the world of Maxwell's novels, bravery makes all causes just and

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[86] Maxwell appears to have never officially acknowledged authorship of *O'Hara*. One reason may be that Maxwell's views underwent a considerable change as he got older: his writing, particularly his pamphlets, became more bitter. Particular targets were Daniel O'Connell and the Young Irelanders. At the root of this, one might suggest on reading *O'Hara*, was a resentment that control of Irish patriotism had been wrested from the ascendancy class.

[87] W.J. McCormack credits Maxwell as the inventor of the sub-genre known as the military novel; see W.J. McCormack, 'Irish Gothic and After', in Deane (ed.), *Field Day Anthology*, ii, pp. 831-854. He describes Maxwell's writing as 'a kind of fiction in which rollicking narrative incorporated incidents of military life and harmless picaresque scenes .... responding to death with frivolous irresponsibility instead of endlessly reiterated excess'; ii, p. 834.

[88] Henry Edwards, O'Hara Snr's kinsman, dying at the battle of Bunker Hill, says: 'It was a noble battle for America; and those who can fight so well for freedom, deserve it'; William Hamilton Maxwell, *O'Hara; Or, 1798*, with an Introduction by Robert Lee Wolff, 2 vols. (1825; facsimile ed. New York: Garland, 1979), i, p. 57; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

all sins can be washed away by a noble death. The O'Haras are Presbyterian landowners of 'aboriginal' (i, p. 9) stock whose crumbling stronghold, Castle Carra, is a testimony to their former glory. O'Hara Snr loses his army rank because of his sympathy with the United Irish cause, and his subsequent arrest and hanging compel Henry O'Hara, his son, to take command of the northern rebel army. In *O'Hara*, 1798 is both the rebellion that the Volunteers never engaged in – a sort of 'last hurrah' for pre-Union patriotism – and a matter of honour, revenge, and personal loyalty. Ideological matters are of little import: personal relationships are key in *O'Hara*.[89]

The complex network of personal relationships that underlie the ruling class in Ireland, allied to a code of honour and behaviour, permeate the novel. Henry O'Hara, for example, had seen military service with post-revolutionary France and his uncle had seen service in the Austrian army. What is important is not that they were loyal subjects of the king goaded into rebellion, but that they were military men, and thereby subject to a code of behaviour that differed from other individuals. Henry's primary reasons for being a rebel involve a sense of duty to his dead father and a desire for revenge, not just for the execution of his father, but for his father's perceived disgrace in being stripped of his military rank. The clearest example of this code of honour is seen in an incident where, back in his old *alma mater* Trinity College, Dublin, Henry reveals his identity to a student who had helped to rescue him from the police. Although the student is 'a true Orangeman and a loyal subject', he agrees to help O'Hara, out of respect for his bravery, and because his dead cousin was one of O'Hara's hunting friends:

> '... though not personally acquainted with you, I have heard much of you from my poor kinsman, M'Donald – you knew him well. (Henry bowed.) And a better fellow never broke his neck at a fox hunt:' and the recollection of the untimely fate of his favourite cousin brought tears to his eyes. 'Report speaks of your family as disaffected to the Government, and consequently you are an enemy of mine, for I boast myself to be a true Orangeman and a loyal subject. Accident has

[89] Henry's best friend, William Thornton, although a loyal Protestant and a man who regards O'Hara's activities as treason, helps him to escape to the continent with Lady Constance Loftus, a lady he also loves. Whatever guilt may attach to Thornton in the mind of Maxwell's readers, it is clear that Maxwell intends it to be fully paid for by the knowledge that, shortly after the rebellion, Thornton entered military service, serving under Abercrombie, until he was killed in the Peninsular War: 'He fell at the head of his national regiment, the gallant 8–, leading the column to the assault; and a beautiful monument, erected by his townsmen, in the church of Newbridge, records the battles where he bled, and the victories he witnessed' (ii, p. 294). This is the ultimate honour in *O'Hara*.

> made you my guest; the world say [*sic*] you are a brave man, and I know that you are an unfortunate one. Sit, Sir, refresh yourself, for you need it; you have much to go through tomorrow; as far as I can, I will assist you to effect your journey; in doing this, I am aware that I shall expose my motives to misrepresentation, and my character to slander; but John Stamford can maintain his honour when it is assailed, and put a stop to impertinent conclusions;' he glanced his eye at a case of pistols, which hung opposite him, carefully wrapped in green baize cases, and stretching his hand out to O'Hara, he bade him an honest welcome (ii, pp. 124-5).

In a nutshell, this is Maxwell's view of Irish life: the hospitality, the feeling of duty to friends and relatives, the hunting, the admiration of bravery in whatever quarter, and the sense that should one's own honour be questioned, there is always a way to vindicate one's actions, as long as one were brave enough to take it. In effect, *O'Hara* can be seen as a plea for unity amongst the ascendancy class, reflecting the idea that all differences can be forgotten around the dining table, or in the field.[90] In the context of 1820s Ireland *O'Hara* can be seen as indicating a hope that whatever may happen in the future, the hard-riding country elite will stick together and survive.

The Northerns of Ninety-Eight and *O'Hara* present two very different Anglican perspectives on 1798. The first, rigidly constitutional and earnestly concerned with justice and truth, was not afraid to lay blame wherever it was felt to lie; and the second, more conciliatory and good-humoured in tone, was a plea for unity amongst the ascendancy class and for the continuance of their way of life. The irony is that the former was written by a layman and the latter by a cleric.[91]

'Cruelty and oppression': the Catholic view

In contrast to the other novels studied so far, it is perhaps not surprising that Michael Banim's *The Croppy* (1828) should be less assertive in putting forward its view of who was primarily to blame for the rebellion. Banim (1796-1874), along with his brother John and Harriet Martin made up the 'O'Hara Family', who were probably the first major Irish

[90] Although it can be ascertained from the novel that O'Hara is a Presbyterian, his other characteristics link him very much with the landed elite in the country. In this sense he is like the hero of a gothic novel who, while nominally a Catholic, acts and thinks like a Protestant. Making him a Presbyterian also associates him with the radical element of Protestantism and also distances the rebellion from the ascendancy class.

[91] It should also be added that, as Crowe did not live in Ireland, he had both more freedom to be critical of the ruling classes and, perhaps, less personal experience of them.

Catholic novelists.[92] Not only was *The Croppy* the first novel about 1798 known to be written by a major Catholic author, but it was also the first to deal in detail with the rebellion – and the rebels – in Wexford, which was widely perceived to have been the bloodiest and most sectarian theatre of action. With Catholic emancipation still a live issue, any attempt to stir up old sectarian animosities could have had a detrimental effect on the prospect of that measure being adopted. As it happens, both John and Michael Banim were O'Connellites, and their abhorrence of violence was probably more pronounced than at least some of the other writers – such as Maxwell, for instance – who tackled the subject.

The deferential tone of *The Croppy* is largely explained by this need to avoid unnecessary controversy. Protestant writers could call openly for emancipation and be strident in their applications of blame, but a Catholic, particularly one committed to the constitutional politics of Daniel O'Connell, had to be more careful, particularly when writing about the events in Wexford. The nakedly sectarian portrayal of the rebellion is not really challenged by Banim, but he does try to explain why it had this character. Thus, *The Croppy* focuses to a greater degree than any other novel so far on the actions and impulses of ordinary people. This is seen in the stories of Bill Nale, supposedly a northern Catholic forced to flee from what would today be called ethnic cleansing in Armagh, and John Delouchery, a blacksmith known as Shawn-a-Gow, maddened into fanaticism by the murder of his son by the yeomanry.[93] This concentration on ordinary people is important as one of Banim's central arguments is that ordinary people, on both sides, were essentially motivated by sectarianism. In relation to the situation in the north of Ireland in the 1780s and '90s he writes: 'Between reasoning men of the rival

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[92] See Robert Lee Wolff, 'The Fiction of the O'Hara Family', in Michael Banim, *The Croppy; A Tale of 1798*, with an Introduction by Robert Lee Wolff, 3 vols. (1828; facsimile ed. New York: Garland, 1978), i, pp. v-liii, p. v.

[93] The character of Rattlin' Bill Nale ostensibly represents one of the main ways that Defenderism as an idea spread from the north to other parts of the country. Fleeing Catholics brought stories of atrocities committed on Catholics by the Peep-O-Day Boys and the newly formed Orangemen, thereby inciting sectarian tension; see chapter one, pp. 11-12. In *The Croppy* however, it turns out that Nale is not only a government informer but also the father of Belinda St John, one of the principal characters in the novel. Thus it appears that he is an impostor.

persuasions a philosophical feeling of brotherhood rapidly went on; – their inferiors were, meantime, cutting each others' throats' (i, p. 18).[94]

Banim traces the development of the United Irishmen directly to the Volunteers.[95] Of the Belfast and Dublin United Irish clubs he states: 'Their members, in both places, may emphatically be termed the last of the Volunteers' (i, p. 9). Banim is careful to draw a distinction between the membership of the United Irishmen before 1794, the year before the organisation was proscribed, and that of the subsequent, secret, organisation, while simultaneously admitting: 'It can scarce be doubted that their leaders contemplated, even in the outset, a separation from England' (i, p. 9).[96]

Banim's careful analysis of 1798 tries to be all things to all people. He describes 1798 as a 'partially exploded' conspiracy (i, p. 1). Moreover, Banim is careful to stress that it was only in 1795 that influential – that is, wealthy, titled and landed – Catholics, driven to desperation by the failure of all constitutional efforts, joined the United Irishmen, and that the 'lower orders' of Catholics did not join until the end of 1797: 'Hence, it will at once be suggested, that the Catholic gentleman and the Catholic peasant were not urged into the conspiracy by the same causes, or with the same views or feelings' (i, p. 17). Banim therefore, achieves at a very early stage in *The Croppy* one of his primary objectives: to absolve middle and upper-class Catholics from any connection or blame for the atrocities carried out by the Catholic peasantry. That resolved, the respectable Catholic reader could settle down to enjoy the rest of the novel.

The deferential tone can also disguise some pointed remarks. The faintly ridiculous figure of Peter Rooney, a mild-mannered tailor who is a recruiting officer for the United Irishmen, is transformed by suffering. The 'diminutive but resolute being, with what would have been called heroism in another cause' (ii, p. 204) bore hundreds of lashes without revealing any information, 'and the very words which escaped his lips

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[94] Michael Banim, *The Croppy; A Tale of 1798*, with an Introduction by Robert Lee Wolff, 3 vols. (1828; facsimile ed. New York: Garland, 1978), i, p. 18; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

[95] Banim's professed admiration of the Volunteers eclipses even Maxwell's. He credits them with effectively creating the Irish nation and states that the Volunteers 'scared away' the French from invasion (i, p. 3). He writes: 'such was the steady though chivalrous spirit of military ardour, pervading the country from north to south, that, in any struggle with an invading enemy, Ireland must have triumphed' (i, p. 2).

[96] Sir Thomas Hartley, undoubtedly based on Bagenal Harvey, states that his support for the United Irishmen ceased, 'At the moment when our proceedings for our country's good changed from open, public remonstrance, into more secret and disguised plans' (i, p. 274). This appears to be the acceptable limit of patriotism in *The Croppy*.

were, (we quote truly,) "it's all nothin' to the sufferin's of Him that died to save us"'(ii, pp. 204-5). Immediately following this incident we see the interrogation of Tim Reily, a servant of Sir Thomas Hartley, who is induced to incriminate his master. Threatened with the same punishment as Peter Rooney, Reily assumed a manner which 'in a person of more consideration, might be called dignity' (ii, p. 206), and turns to Hartley and says: 'if the boy that ate your bread, aud dhrank your dhrink, an' slept undher one roof wid you, masther, sence the day his ould father left him starvin' an' naked – if he ever open his lips to do a hair o' your head hurt or harum, may the horned duoul have him, body an' sowl, for a rascal an' a thrator! amin, I pray God' (ii, p. 207).

Reily's willingness to be tortured for the sake of his master, allied with his description of it being 'the greatest day of Tim's life' (ii, p. 207) can be contrasted with a later incident when a rebel, maddened at the shooting of his master when he was carrying a flag of truce, kills an army officer who was trying to negotiate with the rebels and avoid bloodshed: '"Now, masther, there's a life for your life!" cried the young assassin, bounding high in ecstacy: "it wasn't to see you killed widout a life for id, that you brought me up undher your roof"' (iii, p. 256).[97] Thus the same impulse – loyalty – can result both in acts of heroism and of cowardice. In drawing a distinction and a comparison between the thoughts, acts and feelings of the lower classes and those of 'respectable' society, Banim manages not only to absolve respectable society from blame for the excesses of the rebellion but also to give the lower classes a certain dignity. By stressing that the actions of Tim Reily and Peter Rooney would, in other circumstances be regarded as dignified and heroic, he makes them so.

It would be a mistake to regard *The Croppy* as an aristocratic novel, however. Within *The Croppy* there is also a critique of the middle and upper classes of society. Eliza Hartley, the daughter of Sir Thomas, and the nominal heroine of the story, is prissy and insipid.[98] It is not just because she is a woman that she is helpless: throughout the

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[97] This is a reference to the shooting of Matthew Furlong, the rebel emissary who was killed as he was bringing a letter with surrender terms under a flag of truce to the garrison at Ross; see chapter one, p. 20.

[98] Scandalised at Kitty Delouchery's flirtation with a young dragoon at the gates of New Ross, Eliza Hartley assumes that Kitty intends to keep an appointment with the soldier. Eliza's reply when informed by a shocked Kitty that it was merely a device to gain entry to the town is evidence of her mentality: 'Well, Kitty, I must overlook your departure from the truth, so much less an error than I supposed you guilty of, out of gratitude to your motive; though I believe no necessity warrants us to say *the thing that is not* [my italics], or to promise without intending to perform: and indeed I wronged you by so quickly supposing you a wicked girl' (iii, pp. 214-5). The *thing that is not* is, of course, straight from Gulliver's visit to the land of

novel Eliza is protected or dominated by other women such as Kitty Delouchery, 'Nanny the Knitter', Mrs Jennings, Mrs Nelly and Belinda St John. It is her class that makes her helpless. This lack of faith in the leadership abilities of the respectable classes extends to males as well, and is rooted in a belief that the upper classes failed the peasantry in their hour of need.

This failure can be seen primarily in the fact that *The Croppy* is a novel with no hero. Sir William Judkin, the man who wins Eliza's love, is already married – albeit in a legally doubtfully ceremony – to Belinda, whom he thinks he has murdered. Both the child Belinda St John was bearing and her own mother are dead, however, as a direct result of Judkin's cruelty.[99] Attracted by Eliza's beauty and the fact that she is heir to a considerable estate, he obtains Eliza's consent to marriage, thus disappointing her long-time suitor, Harry Talbot. The conflict between these two men is at the heart of *The Croppy*. When the rebellion breaks out, Talbot immediately sides with the loyalists and Judkin, conscious of the fact that Talbot has learnt his secret and driven on by 'thoughtless determination' (ii, p. 243), becomes a rebel commander in order both to destroy Talbot and to locate Eliza. At the end of the novel, a wounded and contrite Judkin dies lying on the grave of his dead child. Talbot, although rejected and suspected by Eliza throughout the novel, turns out both to have been protecting her all along and to have saved Sir Thomas's life. Two years later, Eliza and Talbot marry, when Eliza could 'tutor her heart to return to her early affection for her first lover' (iii, p. 316). It seems like a rather low-key and sombre marriage, one of duty rather than affection on Eliza's side at least. As such, it can be seen to be a rather unsatisfying end, rather like the unsatisfying end to Ireland's brief period of independence. From this it may appear that Talbot is the hero of the novel, but he is too shadowy a presence in the novel as a whole, and it is clear that Banim does not entirely approve of his actions. In a similar way the real heroine of the novel is Belinda St John. She is driven almost to insanity in her attempts to revenge herself upon Judkin. It is, therefore, a novel with an anti-hero and an

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the Houyhnhnms, and is Houyhnhnm-speak for a lie; see Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, edited with an Introduction by Paul Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 237. Eliza Hartley thinks like a Houyhnhnm, and suffers from the same tendency towards absolutism and didacticism that becomes redundant in crisis situations.

[99] It may be significant that one of the most notorious commanders of yeomanry in south Tipperary in the years preceding 1798 was Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald. The name 'Judkin' may be intended to bring such a character to mind; see chapter five, p. 224 and chapter two, p. 42.

anti-heroine: the real heroes of the novel are the ordinary characters such as Kitty Delouchery, Nanny the Knitter and Tim Reily.

The subtle nature of Banim's approach can also be seen in his implied criticism of the Protestant population. As well as spending a considerable time explaining that Catholics of the lower classes were wrong to regard 'Protestant' as synonymous with 'Orange', he writes:

> Previous to the insurrection, almost every Protestant, whether sworn or not, chose to be considered as an Orangeman; by skilful management, in able hands, the badge of that party became a necessary symbol of loyalty; few of the established religion, therefore, from motives of choice or of prudence, as the case might be, appeared abroad without it. The Catholic peasant confounded all the late adherents of his abhorred enemies with the first and worst who had persecuted him; Protestant and Orangeman became, in his mind, synonymous words; and in this delusion he caught up his rude and formidable pike, when, without time being afforded him to reflect, he was precipitated, by United Irish emissaries on the one hand, and by monstrous and wanton outrage on the other, into the *melée* of civil strife (i, p. 23).

The 'monstrous and wanton outrage' referred to here is, of course, that committed by the Orange societies and assorted government forces on the Catholic population, and Banim, in closing his historical introduction with this observation, suggests that the Protestant population in general, in not disassociating itself more clearly from these actions, brought at least some of the subsequent horror upon themselves.

Ultimately, the most Catholic thing about *The Croppy* is its emphasis on suffering as a means of redemption, and the theme of suffering is central to the novel. Thus the ordinary people are seen at their most dignified when they are undergoing torture: Shawn-a-Gow's wife suffers by going insane, while Talbot, Judkin, Eliza and Belinda all suffer in their own ways, either by disappointment in love, betrayal, or by being consumed and driven mad by hate and a desire for revenge. This is in total contrast to William Hamilton Maxwell's view of redemption by a brave and noble death. In the less chivalrous world of the Wexford rising, Maxwell's solution was inadequate. The message, therefore, of *The Croppy* is simple and powerful: all who have suffered should be forgiven. The presence, however, of Saunders Smily, one of the most ruthless members of the militia, at the hanging of Fr 'General' Rourke – a representation of

Philip Roche – at the very end of the novel, is a reminder that all has not been resolved.[100]

An interesting contrast is Matthew Archdeacon's novel *Connaught in 1798* (1830), which was the first novel about 1798 published after the passing of Catholic emancipation in 1829. Archdeacon (*c.*1800-53), lived in Castlebar and ran an academy in the town.[101] With the passing of the Emancipation Act one of the chief grievances of the Catholic population was removed, and it seems that almost immediately 1798 was treated more as a feature of a resolved history. Early in the novel we are given a very clear example of the unfairness of the penal laws as they had existed, but the penal laws are now in the *past*, and can for the first time be portrayed as such. Coming as it did some months after the crushing of the northern and the Leinster rebellions, and being sparked by the landing of a French force at Killala, the rebellion in the west is allowed to have its own particular character. The many and various factors that contributed to the rebellion are best synthesised in a scene where a local assembly of United Irishmen is addressed by three people: Alic McDermott, son of a local Catholic landowner, who stressed patriotism, the size of the United Irish army and the prospect of imminent French assistance; a priest, Fr Myles McKeon, who stressed the prospect of Catholicism being restored to its 'ancient splendour'; and Denis Mahon, a United Irishman who addressed the meeting in Irish and concentrated on local grievances. He concluded his speech with the following:

> 'Instead of being driven to hell or to connaught, the day is coming when we shall drive from connaught to hell, the dogs that now possess the houses and lands that should belong to us; and with these again in our own hands, and every man as good as another, we shall live the rest of our lives in ease and jollity, without king or parson, or taxes or tithes'.[102]

This fiery rhetoric, a mixture of republicanism, sectarianism, and an appeal to history, is no more than an extreme variant on the first two speeches, albeit with some rather

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[100] In case the point is missed Banim also makes a reference to the subsequent Union and 'a promise of advantages which have not yet been conceded', on the very last page of *The Croppy* (iii, p. 316).
[101] See D.J. O'Donoghue, *The Poets of Ireland: A Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of Irish Writers of English Verse* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1912), p. 12.
[102] Matthew Archdeacon, *Connaught in 1798: A Historical Tale* (Dublin, 1830); pp. 82-3; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

unrealistic promises added; but it also highlights the contradictions and tensions within the coalition of individuals gathered under the United Irish banner. Mahon's reference to living without parsons or tithes may be more than simply an allusion to religious equality: it could equally mean to live without any religion, as both he and McDermott despise religion of any kind. In its generalities and its appeal to the baser ideas of revenge and idleness, it is dangerously destabilising rhetoric. The author, although he professes an unwillingness to get involved in tracing the causes of the rebellion, does make what he terms 'two passing remarks':

> the cruelty and oppression, resorted to by the Agents employed to extinguish the united system in its incipiency, were much better adapted to accelerate, than to crush it; and that the general feeling among those who were "up, and doing," during the French invasion, many of whom are now as peaceable, and loyally inclined subjects, as his Majesty is blessed with, seems to be, that they could not have proceeded so far, without the connivance of the government, in order to procure the union (p. 164).

As we have seen, the view that 1798 was provoked in order to push through the Act of Union was not a new one, but used in conjunction with an observation that many people involved are today loyal subjects of the crown, it suggests that those who got involved were not necessarily the most culpable. Referring to the rebellion in the west as 'the French invasion', puts another factor between the government and the local participants. Subsequent dissatisfaction with Union allows one to see 1798 as both a defiance of Union and, paradoxically, part of the conspiracy that led to it. 1798 therefore, rather than being a political or historical issue with all the controversy, blame, and baggage that that entails, becomes a trope for bad government. The use of the jocular-sounding term 'up and doing' as a euphemism for being a rebel, also suggests that some of the bitterness and rancour associated with 1798 had disappeared. In this regard, *Connaught in 1798* has something of the sense of *O'Halloran* and *Charlton* in treating 1798 as an historical curiosity not to be repeated.

In fact, there is considerable unity of purpose in *Connaught*. There is very much a sense that the novel is a collaborative work by and for the people of Mayo. William Hamilton Maxwell (then prebendary of Balla) and Sydney Owenson (by then Lady Morgan) were among a long list of subscribers. In Archdeacon's own words there was

'scarcely a family of any respectability in this extensive county [Mayo], one member, or more, of which is not to be seen' on the subscribers list. As regards those he calls 'the humbler classes', he writes that he has 'received an equal support, with, in many cases a warmer zeal for my success'.[103] One suspects that the 'success' alluded to was that of providing a view of the 1798 rebellion in the west from the perspective of the people of the west; be they Protestant or Catholic, rich or poor, rebel or loyalist. *Connaught* is an attempt to put the oral traditions of the 'real' rebellion into a permanent, printed, form and to counteract some of the misconceptions perpetuated by historians, especially Sir Richard Musgrave, the author of what was still the most well-known account of the rebellion. The function of such a work, as well as telling the 'truth' about the events of 1798, would be to bring the entire episode to a close. That such a work was perceived to be needed as late as 1830, says something about the long-term effects of "the time o' the Frinch" (p. [iv]).

As a result, the plot of *Connaught* often takes second place to the minutiae of the rebellion, and the novel is full of references to local characters and incidents that would only be of limited interest to the general reader.[104] Archdeacon's main purpose seems to be to correct and clarify the account of the western rebellion given by Musgrave.[105] With this in mind *Connaught* often appears to be a historical narrative with a background plot rather than the other way around.

It is a mark, however, of Archdeacon's skill that it is very difficult to detect any partiality in *Connaught*, apart from an obvious disapproval of the penal laws, civil disturbance and any perversion of the law. Archdeacon was a Catholic, and the overall

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[103] Archdeacon, untitled foreword to *Connaught*, p. [i].

[104] For example, in a footnote to an account of the brief skirmish that preceded the taking of Killala by the French we learn that 'the only person slain was Mr. Smyth, a yeoman, the father of Mr Charles Smyth a respectable merchant at present in Killala' (pp. 168-9). There is a 'Charles Smyth' listed amongst the subscribers. Similarly, in what is a complete digression from the matter in hand, Archdeacon pays a generous tribute to James Moore O'Donel, captain of the Burrishoole yeomanry, 'whose humanity in withdrawing from prosecuting the infatuated rebels, when his country was no longer in danger, was equally creditable to his character, as his gallant exertions during the rebellion, which were borne honourable testimony to by his commander' (p. 209). Three O'Donel's (hardly a common spelling) appear amongst the subscribers.

[105] Although he rarely quotes or contradicts Musgrave directly, the incidents he highlights, and the details he concentrates on, not to mention the similarity of the accounts, suggest that Musgrave's book was his model for *Connaught*. An example is a footnote on p. 212 of *Connaught*: 'Musgrave speaks of but five pieces of cannon altogether on the side of the British [at Castlebar], but the "gudefolk" here who remember that "wondrous day" assert that the English artillery was, in number, and position, as above stated [eight cannon on the road and two on the hill]. Indeed the French accounts claim 10 field pieces among the spoil of the day, while the English themselves allow the loss of nine'.

moral tone was moderately loyalist.[106] As such it lay somewhere between the views of Fr O'Reilly, the parish priest of Rossdhu, who is totally opposed to violence of any kind and does not believe that Ireland can exist as an independent country, and those of his nephew, who is the nominal hero of the book. Edward O'Reilly is a typical Scottian hero: of 'an ancient and respectable family' (p. 25) he is rather lukewarmly on the United Irish side, being 'Without any very strong party feeling' (p. 116). He is committed to the cause only because of the respect he has for the McDermott family, and more particularly because of his love for Harriet McDermott, a fiercely patriotic woman in the Ellen O'Halloran/Flora MacIvor mould. What essentially motivates Edward is the prospect of a prominent position in any new Irish republic, a position that would make him worthy of Harriet, who, as the daughter of a well-off Catholic landowner, was seen as socially above him.

Edward and Harriet escape to America after the failure of the rebellion, and we are told that it is on a return visit many years later that Archdeacon meets them and decides to write a novel based around their story. The learning process undergone by Scott's heroes is also apparent here: 'O'Reilly', in conversation with Archdeacon (in 1828), expresses the belief that the administration of Peel and Wellington would show 'little kindness' (p. 391) to Ireland, but concludes with 'the most fervent aspirations, that no exasperation or grievance, however great, would tempt his country, after the horrors of the last, to embark in another insurrection' (p. 392).

Above all, and most importantly for this analysis of the novels in this period, *Connaught* is a book of the *now*. Its O'Connellite rejection of violence and celebration of the Emancipation Bill in the most fulsome terms capture the sentiments of liberal and Catholic Ireland in a unique moment of triumph.[107] Published just after emancipation and before O'Connell's repeal movement was founded, it was written in an unprecedented moment of resolution. Things could, and seemingly had, changed for the better.

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[106] Archdeacon's religion is apparent from the Preface to his novel *Shawn Na Soggarth, The Priest Hunter* (Dublin, 1844).

[107] In a footnote Archdeacon describes the passing of the Emancipation Bill as 'a measure as bountiful as unexpected'. He praises 'the dauntless perseverance of our patriotic countrymen' (a reference to the Catholic Association perhaps?) and states that Wellington and Peel's action will 'place them for ever high among the saviours of nations'. Emancipation will both improve conditions for Catholics and give stability to the Empire 'by shutting out, for ever more, from foreign nations, all hope of converting Irish discontent to their own selfish purposes' (pp. 391-2).

Connaught could be benevolent in its judgments, conciliatory and optimistic in its tone, Catholic in its perspective and unionist in its politics. Only time would tell if such optimism could last.

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The novels written in the two decades following the 1798 rising demonstrate the beginnings of a debate about the rebellion, and about how to represent the participants in it, especially those on the rebel side. The points of view range from the utterly hostile, as in early novels such as *The Rebel* (1799) and *The Infernal Quixote* (1801), through a more thoughtful period, represented by *Oddities and Outlines* (1806) and *Stories for Calumniators* (1809), to a more assertive Catholic viewpoint as represented by *The Matron of Erin* (1816) and *The United Irishman* (1819). There is no evidence at this stage of the sort of historical scene-setting that came into vogue with the advent of Scott's Waverley novels. The link between the Volunteers of the 1770s and 1780s and the United Irishmen, so common in the Scott-influenced novels of the 1820s, is not made.[108] Similarly, there is no attempt to introduce any real historical personage into the narrative, with the brief exception of General Lake in *The Soldier of Pennaflor*.[109] Populated entirely by characters created by the various authors, and operating on a timescale and in a landscape very much designed to suit the author's own didactic, moral, philosophical or romantic purposes, the rebellion is seen less as an event with a basic historical integrity and more as a reference point. Thus it is seen less as having an historical genesis and more as being a moral crisis to the moralist, a philosophical dilemma to the philosopher, a mysterious and terrifying aberration to the romantic novelist, and so on. Although the authors seldom stray beyond the parameters of historical reality that does not mean that they felt in any way constrained by it.

This is not to say that there were no attempts to put the rebellion into an historical context. As we have seen, the talking ring in *Oddities and Outlines* and the old woman of Clough-Skilt in *Stories for Calumniators* are attempts to get beyond the perceived

[108] The nearest we get is Charles Lucas's highly improbable assertion that Fahany, the leader of the United Irishmen in *The Infernal Quixote*, was a Defender; see below, p. 94.

[109] Sedley goes to join Lake's command in Wexford (iii, p. 126). Later he is congratulated by his commander, but it is not expressly stated that this was Lake (iii, p. 157). There is also a brief reference to 'lord C.' [Cornwallis] in *The Rebel* (p. 108).

limitations and prejudices of the historian. In both cases longevity allows them to relate events and impressions first-hand, beyond the period of a 'normal' lifetime. Thus they have both the first-hand experience *and* the benefit of historical perspective, and they are both participants and interpreters. That such devices were considered necessary says something about the unease felt by these novelists about history and historical discourse, particularly in the wake of the 1798 rebellion. However, we must be cautious in drawing the conclusion that this is evidence that these novels are proto-historical: these attempts to bypass written history may in fact be an expression of a deep distrust of *any* attempts to portray history, not only in fiction, but in written form. The only thing we can say for certain is that they show evidence of an historical consciousness. The juxtaposition in *Oddities and Outlines* of tales of the French Revolution and post-revolutionary France with a story set during the 1798 rebellion cannot but help to invite comparisons and to encourage readers to see one in the light of the other. This is, at the very least, an attempt to see 1798 in *an* historical context, albeit a near-contemporary one.

As a general rule, the earliest novels use the 1798 rebellion either to provide a suitably dramatic and gothic background to standard romantic plots or as an example of what can happen when dangerous ideas or emotions are entertained. However, some of the novels, such as *Oddities and Outlines*, *Stories for Calumniators* and *Ennui*, explore the underlying political and philosophical questions at the heart of rebellion, albeit in very different ways. Taken as a whole, these novels do provide a comprehensive – if not all-encompassing – critique of 1798. For example, while *Oddities and Outlines* explores the necessity and morality of violent revolutionary change, *Stories for Calumniators* serves as a contrast by concentrating almost exclusively on state violence. In their treatment of 1798, later novels such as *The Matron of Erin* and *The United Irishman* give an insight into a landed Catholic perspective that highlights the complexity of the totality of relationships within Ireland. In a time when Irish identity and politics had yet to fully break down on a sectarian basis, the novels discussed represent parallel interpretations of the situation and do not always try to reconcile opposing positions. This parallelism presents problems for the more historically-conscious novelists of the 1820s and beyond. As they tried to put the 1798 rebellion in an historical context the differences in these interpretations became something that could not be ignored.

The period from 1820 to 1830 straddled what might be termed a lifetime in political terms, and a watershed in social terms. The years before Catholic emancipation were resonant with the possibility of another rebellion and the novels featured here, in their various ways, reflect that possibility. The problem of form, and the adoption of Scott's historical techniques, forced novelists to look for resolution of some kind. Gamble and McHenry found resolution of a sort by focusing on the Presbyterian experience. Maxwell found it by concentrating on a code of honour that allowed individuals both to justify and pay for their actions. Crowe, in clearly apportioning blame on those in power and their allies, and by stressing that it was the essential weakness of government, rather than the institutions of government that caused the rebellion, finds resolution in the continuity of those institutions. Banim finds what little resolution he can in showing how those involved in the rebellion suffered, but that ultimately the only real resolution will be emancipation. Only Archdeacon, writing after the passing of the bill, can find any real closure in the Scottian sense. Interestingly, Union is clearly, though not always explicitly, rejected as a resolving issue: its literary reflection – symbolic union in the form of marriage – is only totally successful in *O'Halloran*; other symbolic marriages are seen to be sombre affairs, as in *The Croppy*, or they involve emigration, as in *O'Hara* and *Connaught*.

Ultimately, two major generalisations can be made about the novels of the 1820s. First, these fictions are essentially about protecting interests and reputations. In their various ways they protect the Presbyterian interest (Gamble and McHenry), the ascendancy or aristocratic interest (Maxwell), the constitution (Crowe), 'respectable' Catholicism (Banim), and the people of Mayo (Archdeacon). Second, all the novels reflect a view that there were understandable and valid reasons for the rebellion, even if the authors themselves did not agree with them, or with each other, as to what precisely those reasons were. This in itself is a major departure from the earlier novels and demonstrates the operation of a new historical consciousness, intent on dragging 1798 out of the gothic and into history. One final observation can also be made: as with the novels of the first two decades, the tenor and content of the novels themselves suggest that issues of nationality, patriotism, and politics had not yet broken down along the kind of lines that were to become more familiar and predictable as the century progressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Memory of the Dead: 1831–1869

If historians would only state what they knew to be facts, truth would run in a freer channel from age to age. From the extension of literature, the present age lies under a heavier responsibility, than any age since the world began for the transmission of truth to posterity.

James 'Jemmy' Hope, in a letter to R.R. Madden

The passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 was a rare moment of resolution in Irish history, but its importance was largely symbolic. 'Emancipation' effectively meant little more than that Catholics had the right to sit in parliament, as most other rights had already been obtained in piecemeal concessions over the previous fifty years. Catholics were still precluded by law from holding certain positions, mainly relating to offices needed to maintain and ensure the keystone of the 1688 settlement, the Protestant succession.

Emancipation, moreover, came at a price. As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has pointed out, the 1829 Emancipation Act was the only legislation affecting the franchise in British history that had the effect of reducing the size of the electorate.[1] In removing the franchise from the large body of forty-shilling freeholders in Ireland, the Irish electorate was reduced by some eighty percent. This was calculated to take away with one hand what was being offered by the other. While Catholics could now, in theory, take a seat in parliament, the huge reduction in the overwhelmingly Catholic electorate meant that non-Catholic voters were now a large percentage of the electorate to whom they had to appeal. Such a move hinted at a fear widely held not only by opponents of emancipation but also by some who supported it out of a sense of justice and fairness: that emancipation was not the end of Catholic agitation, merely the beginning. These fears would be confirmed for some by Daniel O'Connell's initial moves towards a repeal of the Act of Union in 1831. Organising his campaign along the same lines as the Catholic

[1] Comment made in keynote address at Royal Irish Academy conference 'Ireland After the Union – a Cultural Desert?', at the Royal Irish Academy, 19 April 2001. The Irish electorate shrank from approximately 100,000 to around 16,000. For an account of the practical effect of emancipation see Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848* (1970; repr. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), pp. 74-9.

Association and appealing to the same constituency, it was easy to see emancipation as being merely the first step along the road to a Catholic-dominated Ireland.

Certainly emancipation did consign one of the major grievances that led to the 1798 rebellion to history,[2] but whether that allowed writers more or less freedom in their portrayals of 1798 remained to be seen. What is clear, however, is that 1798 as a subject was far less attractive to writers in the years following emancipation than in the years preceding it: perhaps as few as twenty novels concerned with 1798 were published in the forty years following the Act. It was ironic that as the electorate contracted, cheaper printing methods meant that the reading public in Ireland was expanding. Future writing, including novels, would have a wider and, in Ireland's case, a more Catholic readership. Instead of novels being written for a 'known' audience, corresponding to a small middle and upper-class readership, in the future novelists would be writing for an increasingly unsought mass audience.

Samuel Lover, Charles Lever, and the *Dublin University Magazine*

Anxiety about the consequences of emancipation is most clearly seen in this period in the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine,* first published in 1833. The presence of cultural nationalists such as Samuel Ferguson and later home rulers such as Isaac Butt amongst its contributors should not blind us to the fact that in the first twenty years of its publication the magazine also provided a platform for some of the most reactionary writing in post-emancipation Ireland, particularly from the pens of the brothers Mortimer and Samuel O'Sullivan. A good indicator of the sort of material in the *Dublin University*

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[2] It does seem that initially emancipation was seen by many who called for it as an end rather than a beginning. In a letter to his Whig friend Lord John Russell, the future prime minister, Thomas Moore wrote: 'I consider my own politics entirely at an end – nothing can ever conjure up a spirit in me like that which the Duke [of Wellington] has now laid'; see Wilfred S. Dowden (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), ii, pp. 634-5. However, the sincerity of these comments is questioned by Ronan Kelly, given that Moore went on to publish his deeply political *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* (1830). The controversy surrounding the publication of *Fitzgerald* in 1830 provides some idea of the kind of conflicting emotions that emancipation stirred up. Its title, in giving Fitzgerald's death equal billing with his life, was bound to be controversial in itself. Many of Moore's Whig friends, now in power, urged him not to publish, stressing the animosity and analogies such a book would inspire. Moore, both in order to demonstrate his political independence and also, undoubtedly, because he needed the money, went ahead with publication. *Fitzgerald* could be justified by portraying the 1798 rebellion as being primarily about Catholic emancipation, now a 'dead' issue. Since emancipation had been achieved, Lord Edward Fitzgerald could now be properly commemorated and celebrated, having received posthumous validation by act of parliament; see Kelly, ' "History's Muse"', op. cit., p. 108; and chapter two, pp. 43-4.

Magazine at the time was a letter printed nearly ten years after Catholic emancipation about law and order in Longford. It painted a picture of electoral fraud and intimidation, of murderers being acquitted by Catholic juries and of the county being in the hands of 'a deluded and priest-ridden peasantry', where 'murder for political purposes was an almost every day occurrence, and a conviction for such a crime unheard of'. Significantly, the letter opened with the observation that 'Previously to the memorable year 1829, and till after the passing of the Emancipation bill, no county in Ireland enjoyed more uninterrupted tranquillity'.[3] Emancipation was clearly identified as being at the root of this evil, and the presence of Catholics in parliament and on juries was regarded as leading to the breakdown of society and the rule of law.

The very same issue of the *Dublin University Magazine* contained a devastating review of Samuel Lover's novel *Rory O'More*, which had been published the year before, in 1837. Lover's reputation has arguably suffered more than any other writer from a subsequent nationalist backlash against the portrayal of the Irish as simpletons and the perpetuation of the image of the 'stage Irishman'. There had always been a body of opinion that had entertained a low opinion of Lover's work, and Lover himself never claimed to be profound: as he himself wrote of one of his most popular works, *Handy Andy* (1842): 'it was never meant to be a work of high pretension – only one of those easy trifles which afford a laugh, and require to be read in the same careless spirit of good humour in which they are written'.[4] If, however, Lover was merely a writer of humorous books, why take him seriously at all? The answer lies in *Rory O'More*.

The name 'Rory O'More' would not have been unfamiliar to nineteenth-century readers. It would have been particularly resonant to conservatives and others who shared the Musgravian interpretation of 1798 as the name of the principal plotter and participant in the 1641 rebellion. Lover's decision to give that name to his central character was

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[3] 'Insurrectionary State of the County of Longford', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xi, 61 (Jan., 1838), 121-3. Such descriptions bore a great similarity to accounts of Ireland pre-1798, except on those occasions it would have been Protestant juries and militia or yeomanry outrages. The writer described Daniel O' Connell as the 'disturber of his country', and the 'demon of Ireland', and stated that 'the county Longford this day presents a picture of the most frightful state of disorganization, and suppressed rebellion, and is but a fac simile of every other county in Ireland'.

[4] Samuel Lover, *Handy Andy*, edited with an Introduction and notes by D.J. O'Donoghue (1842; repr. New York: Brentano's, 1900), 'Address, London, 26th July, 1854', p. x.

either an act of provocation or a parody of conservative equations of 1798 with 1641.[5] In this novel the eponymous hero is a young man of peasant stock who befriends a gentleman called Horace De Lacy, who turns out to be an Irishman by birth and an officer in the French army. Although *Rory O'More* contains much that is trivial and clichéd, to see it as merely a set of comic incidents held together by a flimsy plot would do Lover a disservice. The novel contains many observations on the condition of 1790s Ireland and Lover makes Rory on occasions an articulate spokesman for the oppressed. Indeed, it is these very non-comic qualities that attracted the *Dublin University Magazine* reviewer's particular displeasure. The review challenges some of Lover's historical content, and after pointing out a few historical discrepancies, concludes that 'We may dismiss, without further notice, his claim to be considered an authority on the state of Ireland'.[6]

It is not too difficult to see just what might have irritated a *Dublin University Magazine* reviewer in *Rory O'More*. In Horace De Lacy, Lover created a character whose observations and opinions are meant to be relied upon by the reader. Initially sent to England to see whether there was any possibility of a rebellion being successful in that country, he outlines in a lengthy memo to the French Directory the reasons why he feels one would be impossible. 'Let the reader mark the calm and judicious observation of the man,' wrote Lover, 'for in due time *another* letter of his will appear, describing the state of Ireland; and the influence of that letter will be the greater by remembering the foregoing one, and bearing in mind that the same man, exercising the same observation, and with the same desire to ascertain the *real* probability of success in a revolutionary movement .... found in the misery and misrule of Ireland the ready materials for a country's convulsion'.[7] The establishment of De Lacy as a reliable witness is

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[5] Rory O'More (1620-52) initiated the conspiracy behind the rising of 1641 and is identified as the chief link between the Gaelic and Old English elements on the rebel side. O'More portrayed the rebellion as an attempt to defend the king and save Catholicism; see *OCIH*, p. 410.

[6] 'Mr. Lover's Rory O'More', in *Dublin University Magazine*, xi, 61 (Jan., 1838), 71-86; 85. *Wellesley IV*, p. 235, lists the reviewer as 'Unidentified'. Given that *Wellesley* is usually quite certain in identifying the various contributions of the O'Sullivan brothers we must conclude that it is not by either of them, although the sentiments expressed in the review, and the comprehensive nature of the arguments made by the reviewer, are consistent with their approach. Certainly it is not by Charles Lever, another potential candidate, who was a close friend of Lover.

[7] Samuel Lover, *Rory O'More: A National Romance*, 3 vols. (1837; 2nd ed. London, 1837), i, pp. 145-6; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

fundamentally important as it creates an authoritative figure whose outrage and frustration at the state of Ireland can be appreciated and shared by the reader.

Rather than making fun of 'Irish' character, the novel turns out to be in fact a spirited defence of the 'native' Irish. De Lacy, in a reply to the Frenchman De Welskin's observation that the Irish are full of 'finesse', argues that they are 'driven to it by ages of misrule and oppression ... it is their only protection against the heartless persecutions they are open to on every side', and praises their noble traits of generosity, courage and devotion, and their 'high sense of honour' (ii, p. 157). In his letter to the French Directory about Ireland De Lacy is more scientific, stressing that Irish society has but two elements, 'those who inflict, and those who suffer' (ii, p. 181) with a 'mongrel middle rank ... consisting of too few to constitute anything like a class' (ii, p. 181), and concludes that 'never was there a country more ready for revolution, nor more needing it' (ii, p. 188).[8]

De Lacy's views differ from Lover's only in that the former advocates revolution: in their analysis there is no discernable difference. However, Lover generally deals with religious questions using either the authorial voice or Rory's. On the question of sectarian differences, Rory is quick to point out what he perceives as the real reason for Catholic oppression: 'Oh, in throth, there's many a dirty turn and many a cruel thing done on us; and thim that does the thing is ashamed to own to the right cause, and so they lay the blame on the Popery. By my sowl! they ought to be obleeged to Popery for giving them sitch a convanient excuse for not havin' things called by their right names' (ii, p. 134). The authorial voice, in turn, defends Rory's bitter animosity towards converts from Catholicism to Anglicanism. Lover himself betrays his feelings in an earlier reference to

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[8] 'while in England society consists of many grades, sinking slightly the one beneath the other, but presenting no startling difference in the descent; in Ireland there are but two, – the upper and the lower. There is a sort of mongrel middle rank, but consisting of too few to constitute anything like a class, in comparison with the others .... the *cementing* portions of society are wanting; the wholesome links that bind it together exist not here; – in short, Ireland may be comprised under two great heads, – those who inflict, and those who suffer .... the time will come when the Irish landlord shall bitterly lament, that the only bond which held the peasant to his master, was his chain .... The most active of their persecutors are the mongrel middle class ... *Squireens* they are called by the people .... They are generally the descendants of Cromwell's or William's troopers, and, of course, are the fiercest upholders of the ascendancy which gives them all they have .... From this class are all the minor fry of government officers selected, and in their hands is the magistracy throughout the country vested .... never was there a country more ready for revolution, nor more needing it .... There is no middle to anything. The very column of society is broken – the capital and base alone remain: the shaft is shattered, and the two extremes are in ruinous separation .... with these two parties, religion is a badge, and not a blessing' (ii, pp. 181-8).

Sweeny the apothecary's conversion to Anglicanism: 'the Roman catholics [in the area] were the more jealous of this defection, because they never had any converts from the protestants in return, and for the best reason in the world, – *there was nothing to be made by it*' (i, pp. 150-1).

Lover welcomes Catholic emancipation, and the Duke of Wellington's role in bringing it about. In doing so, however, one can discern one of the issues around emancipation that most worried Protestant writers, even amongst those who most keenly advocated it: the Catholic attitude to the measure's eventual adoption. Lover evinces the optimistic hope that the Duke of Wellington will be remembered with gratitude and fondness by his Catholic fellow-countrymen and that this gratitude will engender a general feeling of goodwill and contentment among Catholics.[9] Conservative Anglican opinion, however, as represented by many writers in the *Dublin University Magazine*, saw Catholic emancipation not as an end in itself, but as a major step along the road to a dismantling of Protestant ascendancy and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. They argued that Catholics would not stop there: far from being grateful for a measure essentially wrung from an unwilling Wellington/Peel administration, they would go on to demand more constitutional changes that would further undermine the Protestant position in Ireland. O'Connell's interest in a repeal of the Union merely confirmed this suspicion.

In his attempts to portray a more flattering picture of Catholics and Catholicism, Lover also attacks the 'ultra' or Musgravian interpretation of the 1798 rebellion. He writes in relation to De Lacy: 'in common with all the leaders of the political movement then going forward in Ireland, [he] desired to shun by every possible means any contact with the priesthood .... and the Irish Roman Catholic priests, so far from countenancing the introduction of revolutionary principles into Ireland, had refused absolution to "The Defenders"' (ii, pp. 35-6). He then goes on to attack Musgrave's interpretation of the rebellion, challenging the notion that the rebellion was intended to be sectarian, stating that 'to credit the Orange account of the affair, we must believe that the Protestants

[9] 'Thanks to God! the days of persecution are past; and fair fame to England in cancelling from her statutes the unjust and unholy penalties that man, in his bigoted profanity, had dared to interpose between the worship of the creature to the Creator! .... for when many a victory he [Wellington] has won shall cease to be remembered, the emancipation of his country from the bondage of bigotry will never be forgotten; and soothing be the thought in the hero's last hour, that though many of his achievements have evoked the curses of a foreign land, this greatest triumph of his life will be remembered with blessings by his countrymen!' (ii, pp. 122-3).

originated the ingenious device of organising a revolution to murder themselves!' Lover concludes: 'The truth is, the revolution then contemplated was *purely political*' (ii, p. 36). The phrase, 'then contemplated', is important as even Lover cannot argue that the ensuing rebellion did not, in Leinster at least, have sectarian overtones. However, he does strike a blow at Musgrave's general thesis. It is also interesting to note that as late as 1837 Lover still refers to those with Orange sympathies as the 'dominant party' (ii, p. 36). Samuel and Mortimer O'Sullivan, and many readers of the *Dublin University Magazine*, might have begged to disagree.

Overall, Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More* and its reception in the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine* emphasised a rift between optimistic and good-humoured Protestant progressivism and conservative Protestant anxiety about the future. One of the key issues of contention was differing interpretations of the recent past. In this battle, the 'comic' nature of *Rory O'More* assumes a central significance. The most controversial incident occurs towards the end of the novel when Rory, on his return from France, is arrested and charged with the murder of Scrubbs, a local land agent who had not been seen since the day both men disappeared. Although all the evidence is circumstantial, the trial goes badly for Rory and conviction looks certain when Scrubbs suddenly arrives in town and is brought to the courthouse to prove Rory's innocence. The judge, 'Lord A--n--e' [Avonmore] asks the jury, as a matter of form, to return a verdict, and he is shocked when they return a verdict of guilty, despite the presence of the allegedly murdered man in the courthouse. When challenged by an incredulous Lord Avonmore for an explanation the foreman replies:

> 'We should be sorry, my lord, to dispute any point of law with your lordship; but the fact is, my lord, you don't know this country as well as we do, and we can swear upon the oath we have taken this day, that the prisoner *ought to have been hanged long ago*, and we say, Guilty, my lord!' (iii, p. 252).

Upon the quashing of the verdict by Lord Avonmore the members of the jury are, in their turn, exasperated, with one juror suggesting that if a jury cannot hang a man as they see fit, it is 'an end of our glorious Constitution if these things are permitted to go on!' (iii, p. 255). Lover turns logic on its head by having another juror suggest that there is a real danger to the constitution 'if such a daring proceeding as a judge daring to presume to

refuse a verdict is dared to be permitted in such times as these, with popery and slavery, brass money and wooden shoes, staring us in the face!' (iii, p. 256). A third juror asks: 'You know, if property is not represented, what becomes of the country? And here *is* twelve men of property, and a rebel judge refuses to take their verdict ... and if property is not represented, what becomes of the British connexion – I should like to know that!' (iii, p. 256).[10]

Lover is here highlighting in a comic manner the systematic abuses and arbitrary justice that was prevalent before, during, and after the rebellion of 1798. The cant and misquotations of the jurors appear even more ludicrous in the light of the absurdity of the situation. The *Dublin University Magazine* reviewer, perhaps with more than the past on his mind, declines to take it in this spirit, and spends a considerable part of his review detailing exactly why such an incident could *never* have taken place, highlighting inaccuracies and inconsistencies, and challenging the need for its inclusion at all, rather humourlessly pointing to the hanging of another character without trial and asking: 'Why, in the case of Rory O'More, they preferred the tedious formalities of a judicial, to the promptness of a military murder, we are not told'.[11] The perceived need to explain in detail why a trial such as Rory's could not possibly have occurred rather than merely dismissing it as a piece of comic hokum suggests both an insecurity on the part of the reviewer about the past and also an understanding of the point that Lover was trying to make: the reviewer is both dismissive of *Rory O'More* as a 'national romance' and yet simultaneously takes it seriously enough to question plot decisions. All told, *Rory O'More* was an uncomfortable read for Anglican conservatives.

The conservatives may have been right, however, for if one is in any doubt as to how the comic elements in *Rory O'More* are to be treated one need only refer once again to De Lacy, whose attitudes we have already established are close, if not identical, to Lover's. Through De Lacy, Lover explicitly rejects the comic. On hearing of the verdict of the jury De Lacy says: 'One might laugh at the absurdity of the act, only for its atrocity: but here, really mirth is reproved by horror, and the smile gives place to a

[10] Lord Avonmore (Barry Yelverton) was perceived by some conservatives as having been overly sympathetic to the United Irishmen. He was a close friend of John Philpott Curran, who had defended many of the United Irishmen and other opponents of the government.
[11] 'Mr. Lover's Rory O'More', op. cit., 76.

shudder' (iii, p. 266). The mask of comedy slips and the full horror of the condition of Ireland is revealed. De Lacy rejects his original idea of settling in Ireland, where he had hoped to form around him 'a circle of dependants whom he should render faithful and attached by kindness, and as the chance was past of bettering their *political* position, he would at least make their condition less wretched by affording them the protection and relief of which he had witnessed their want. If he could not prove a patriot on a grand scale, he would become a benefactor on a small' (iii, p. 120). Now even that utopian dream is shattered, and he renounces his 'romantic speculations'. He resolves to emigrate to America, the final straw being the perversion of the rule of law to convict an innocent man to satisfy the 'demon of party hate' (iii, p. 267).

By this reasoning, emigration becomes the act of a patriot. Rory agrees to accompany De Lacy as in his opinion, 'the poor counthry is ground down to powdher, and will be worse, I'm afeard' (iii, p. 285). As the boat leaves Cork, Rory's sister sings 'The Land of the West', a sentimental song written by De Lacy about Ireland. De Lacy's 'romantic speculations' have been crushed in Ireland, and if *Rory O'More* is a 'national romance', as its title states, it is only one insofar as the 'romance' inferred can only be found in a free country. In this sense the comic elements of *Rory O'More* begin to take on a new and terrible significance. They accentuate the awfulness of the Ireland portrayed, and recount incidents so horrible they can only be represented in comic terms.[12] For all its flaws, *Rory O'More* does not deserve to be dismissed as a mere 'comic' novel and Samuel Lover does not deserve to be remembered as merely a comic writer, even if that was his own expressed opinion of himself.

Lover's friend, Charles Lever (1806-72), editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* from January 1842 to February 1845, wrote two novels closely concerned with the rebellion and the events leading up to it. These novels were *The O'Donoghue* (1845),

[12] This applies even to the most horrific event in the novel, the hanging of the tinker Solomon Slevin on an upturned cart shaft. There is a grim irony in the fact that although he was guilty of many crimes that would have deserved capital punishment in those days, 'he died at last on suspicion of one of the few crimes he had never committed' (iii, p. 178-9). Similarly, Lover employs Dublin Castle *reportage* to comic effect when he uses it to describe the burning down of Rory's cottage by the local yeomanry (ii, p. 291). When De Lacy receives a letter from Phelim O'Flanagan, asking him for help for the O'Mores, its lack of punctuation and overblown classical phraseology causes De Lacy's friend to observe that 'while gloom sits on the one [side of his face], mirth is twitching at the other' (iii, p. 208).

and *Maurice Tiernay* (1852).[13] Set in the south-west of Ireland, *The O'Donoghue* has as its centrepiece the arrival of the French invasion fleet to Bantry Bay in the winter of 1796, but is essentially about the tripartite relationship between the traditional feudal chieftains, the peasantry, and the new, 'improving' landowners. 'The O'Donoghue', in this case, is the old feudal chieftain of the Glenflesk area of Kerry. Old and selfish and mired in debt, he endeavours to maintain a lifestyle that he can no longer afford, and which is facilitated by the willingness of the local tenantry to be rackrented, the loyalty of the family retainers, and the unwillingness of his creditors to press for settlement of his debts. In the meantime Castle Donoghue crumbles around him. The new 'owner' of the lands is the English landlord Sir Marmaduke Travers, and The O'Donoghue exists as a glorified middle man in a rent structure of such complexity that no one is sure who owns what or owes what to whom. Unlike the novels featured in the previous chapter, which use and uneasily adapt the Scott model for the particular circumstances of Ireland, in *The O'Donoghue* Lever uses the Scott model specifically to reject its thesis of compromise, process and progress.

The narrative focuses on The O'Donoghue's sons, Mark and Herbert, their French-educated cousin Kate, and their relationship with the Travers family – Sir Marmaduke, his daughter Sybella and son Frederick. Mark, the heir to the 'estate', with little education or experience of the wider world, is destined to perpetuate the life of The O'Donoghue. Mark gradually becomes involved with the United Irishmen and their plans for a French invasion of Ireland. In contrast, Herbert, under the influence of his Scottish Uncle Archy and the Travers', goes to study at Trinity College, Dublin, eventually becomes a Protestant, and marries Sybella. The other love story in *The O'Donoghue* revolves around the trio of Mark, the fiercely patriotic Kate, and Frederick Travers.

The character of Uncle Archy, along with the counterpointing of Mark as the romantic and tragic hero and Herbert as the 'self-made' man who makes his way in the modern world, give *The O'Donoghue* its Scottian characteristics. Archibald McNab is the brother-in-law of The O'Donoghue, and he lives in Castle Donoghue now that his own

[13] As well as *The O'Donoghue* and *Maurice Tiernay*, in Lever's *Tom Burke of 'Ours'* (London, 1845) there is a description of a fourteen-year-old boy witnessing the brutality of the yeomanry after 1798. Lever also wrote a novel that dealt with Irish affairs directly after 1798: *The Knight of Gwynne. A Tale of the Time of the Union*, (London, 1847), which begins in 1799.

wife is dead. Archy is a former Jacobite for whom 'experience had taught ... the fallacy of many opinions, which owe any appearance of truth or stability they possess, to the fact, that they have never advanced beyond the stage of speculative notions, into the realms of actual and practical existence'.[14] Archy predicts the 1798 rebellion – a none too difficult task in a novel written in 1845 – and warns Kate about the dangers of simple solutions to complex problems:

> 'This country ... is on the eve of some mighty struggle; the people have abandoned many of their old grudges and seem disposed to unite .... The gentry ... are better satisfied to live under a government they dislike, than to be at the mercy of a rabble they despise. I ha'e lived langer then you in this dreary world, lassie, and trust me, the poetry of patriotism has little relation to the revengeful fury of rebellion. You wish freedom for those who cannot enjoy the portion of it they possess. It is time to outlive the evil memories of the past, we want here – time, to blunt the acuteness of former and long-past sufferings – time, to make traditions so far forgotten as to be inapplicable to the present – time, to read the homely lesson, that one half the energy a people can expend in revolt, will raise them in the rank of civilized and cultivated beings' (p. 199).

'Time', however, is the one thing that Ireland does not appear to have, and the one thing that impatient young people find impossible to grant. Kate, despite – or perhaps because of – her foreign education, cannot forget, nor indeed does she want to. As she herself says at a later stage: 'Equality for the future, even if we obtained it, cannot eradicate the memory of the past' (p. 231). This view, coupled with her admiration of all things martial, is a deadly combination: 'All she had ever seen of foreign society, partook of this character. For, strangely enough, on the ruin of an aristocracy [after the French Revolution], a new and splendid chivalry was founded – a chivalry, whose fascinations covered many a wrong, and made many a bad cause glorious by the heroism it evoked! The peaceful path in life was, then, in her estimate, the inglorious one' (p. 236).

By the end of the novel, although Kate has seen treachery and betrayal sully the cause she once espoused so publicly – particularly in the person of Captain Hemsworth, the Travers' land agent who pretended to be a patriot for personal aggrandisement and in order to win her love – she still cannot bring herself to compromise. She rejects Frederick Travers' marriage proposal, saying:

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[14] Charles Lever, *The O'Donoghue; A Tale of Ireland Fifty Years Ago* (Dublin, 1845), p. 66; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

> 'there were disparities wider than those of rank between us, and if I can now see how greatly these were exaggerated by the falsehood and treachery of others, yet I know that our opinions are too wide apart, to make agreement aught else than a compromise between us .... this is the losing side ever, and my nature is a stubborn one – it has no sympathies save with those in misfortune; but we can be friends ... friends firm and true, not the less strong in regard, because our affections have not overcome our convictions' (p. 406).

Travers, echoing Archy's solution, suggests that time will help them to overcome false impressions and misrepresentations, and allow him 'the opportunity of becoming more worthy of your esteem' (p. 406). But Kate's answer is firm and final:

> 'While I should become less so,' interrupted Kate, rapidly; 'no, no; my duties are here,' and she pointed to the old man [The O'Donoghue], who, with an expression of stupid fatuity, sat with his hands clasped, and his eyes fixed on vacancy .... 'Besides,' added she, with a smile, 'you are too truly English to suggest a divided allegiance; we are friends; but we can never be more' (pp. 406-7).

Kate eventually marries Mark – who is essentially the male counterpart of herself – after he obtains a pardon for his involvement in the United Irish movement thanks to the money and influence of his Scottish uncle. Archy himself remains at Castle Donoghue, a Scottian progressivist trapped in an historical dead end.

The novel ends with a jump forward to 1815, the year in which Napoleonic France is finally and fatefully defeated, and the arrival in Glenflesk of a couple who, although we are not explicitly told so, are Mark and Kate, greatly changed in appearance. Castle Donoghue is a ruin and the lodge where the Travers family once lived is in a legal limbo owing to the complicated land issues connected with it. Amongst the ruins of the old inn-house where the United Irishmen hatched their various plots they meet Mary McCarthy, the one-time owner of the establishment. Whereas once Mary would not take money for food and drink from Mark because he was an O'Donoghue, now she will not take alms from him because 'it isn't by a purse full of gold you'll ever make up for desarting the cause of ould Ireland' (p. 410). Fr Rourke, the parish priest of Glenflesk, has the final cryptic lines of the novel. He asks the couple to pardon Mary's rudeness: 'she has met sore trials, and may well be pardoned, if, in the bitterness of her grief, she

looks at the world with little favour or forgiveness. She has mistaken you for another, and hence the source of her anger' (p. 410).

How this last comment is to be read depends on what assumptions we make about Rourke, and whether he recognises Mark or not. In either event, it seems clear that Mark is regarded as having left the people – in the person of Mary McCarthy – down. He was 'mistakenly' regarded as a patriot and a deliverer of his people. In this sense it is a warning to those who take on grand projects that the failure to deliver upon them can have even worse consequences for their followers. There is no nostalgia here, only bitterness, regret, and failure. The one solution offered – time – is seen not to have worked. Most damning of all, progress, as represented by Herbert O'Donoghue, is seen to fail also. Initially an Irish MP in Westminster, he later becomes a judge in India. His espousal of Scottian progress is of no benefit to Ireland. As Mary McCarthy says, Herbert 'was the only one that ever prospered, because he was a heretic, maybe' (p. 408). Even Fr Rourke – portrayed in the novel as a kindly, educated man opposed to revolutionary ideas – regards Herbert's conversion as a 'dishonour'. He cannot bear to be near his former pupil: 'Leave me, young man – go; this is a poor and an humble roof; but never till now has it sheltered the apostate' (p. 375).

Like Scott, Lever identifies three main character types in *The O'Donoghue*: those that cannot change, like The O'Donoghue himself; those that have change thrust upon them, such as Mark and Kate; and the progressives, such as Archy, Herbert, and to a lesser degree, Sir Marmaduke Travers. Unlike the Scottish situation where the progressives represent the coming men, in *The O'Donoghue* they are isolated and impotent figures, with little direct influence on events. There is no progress, only the destruction of what was there. It is in this vacuum that the vast majority of people live, and their reaction depends on their level of education. Thus they become either like Mary McCarthy, and wander, bitter and half-maddened, among the ruins of the past, or they become like Fr O'Rourke, sadder and wiser, but unable to move on. The only remaining certainty is the landscape around them. In this sense *The O'Donoghue* challenges the conventions of both the national tale and the Scottian historical novel.

It is in *Maurice Tiernay* (1852), originally serialised in the *Dublin University Magazine* from April 1850 to December 1852, that Lever's most profound challenge to

the traditional national tale form is to be found. Taking as his hero a young Frenchman of Irish ancestry, Lever moves from the simple Ireland-England binary found in the national tale and creates something completely different, a sort of 'supra-national' tale. The Irish portion of the novel is included as merely one element in the extensive European and North American travels of the hero, much, though not all of it, in a military capacity. Tiernay is therefore qualified to put his experience of living and fighting in Ireland into a context that includes his military activities on the Rhine, at the siege of Genoa, in the Low Countries and in Austria. In addition, he moves from being a Catholic as a boy to a series of different religious incarnations. These include a rejection of religion as a child of the French Revolution and time as a member of a Mennonite community in North America, before arriving at what might be described as a pragmatic religious viewpoint probably not incompatible with a vaguely Anglican outlook. Tiernay's experiences allow him to compare and contrast Ireland, the Irish and, especially, the French invasion of Ireland in 1798, with a vast frame of reference. *Maurice Tiernay* can be read as an 'anti-romantic' novel in that it attacks a retrospective glamorisation of historical events. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in what the novel has to say about the 1798 rebellion. *Maurice Tiernay* also undermines Irish notions of what Joep Leerssen calls 'autoexoticism'.[15] As such it seeks to destabilise the form and content of the national tale.

In this regard, one of the main features of *Maurice Tiernay* is how little England features in it. Tiernay only sets foot in England when a ship bringing him from North America docks at Liverpool. There he is press-ganged into the British navy, escaping overboard in the Bay of Genoa with important information for the French army under siege in the city. 'England' appears primarily in *Maurice Tiernay* as the 'enemy', but Tiernay's attitude to the English oscillates throughout the novel. During the preparations for the invasion of Ireland his hatred of the English is derived from General Humbert's attitude to them, whereas at an earlier point in the book, he is more evasive, or less equivocal.[16] Later, however, during the 1798 invasion, he and his fellow Frenchmen,

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[15] See Introduction, p. 81.

[16] For example, early in the novel when Tiernay is asked his opinion of the English by his French commandant he replies: 'My grandfather certainly did not love them, sir'. Asked if he feels wronged by the English, as a result of the Tiernay ancestral property having been confiscated, he replies proudly that he can 'scarcely deem that an injury … which has made me a French citizen'; see Charles Lever, *Maurice*

finding themselves with little in common with their Irish allies, refer wryly to ' Nos âmis l'ennemis' [*sic*], and he stresses how 'every day drew closer the ties of this comrade regard and esteem' (p. 200).

Tiernay is used by Lever as a cipher of French attitudes and expectations of Ireland. Once informed of French plans for an invasion of Ireland, he burned with desire to be involved.[17] Like other Frenchmen, he is taken in by unrealistic and optimistic reports of the condition and readiness of Ireland by United Irish agents – including Wolfe Tone – in Paris.[18] However, the reader is alerted at an early stage to the fact that the French were receiving a rather distorted picture. Tiernay writes of the many men enlisted in the cause: 'the great union of all appear[s] to be a society called "Defenders," whose oath bound them to "fidelity to the united nations of France and Ireland!"' (p. 146). Even the credulous Tiernay is slightly concerned: 'one lurking sense of doubt alone obtruded itself on my reasonings. Why, with all these guarantees of victory, with everything that can hallow a cause, and give it stability and strength – why did the Irish ask for aid? .... The answer to all such doubts, however, was "the Irish were deficient in organization"' (pp. 146-7). United Irish memorandums are portrayed as elaborate and exaggerated ruses to tempt the French into invading.

Lever is also at pains to point out the self-delusion and trumpery of the United Irish movement in the Paris of the time. Paris is portrayed as being caught up in a general enthusiasm for Ireland and Irish freedom, all of which is tinged with an air of unreality. The splendid military uniforms of the 'Army of Ireland' had already inspired artistic representations:

> the "Irish Volunteer of the Guard" was to be seen in every window, in all the "glory of his bravery." The heroic character of the expedition, too, was typified

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Tiernay, The Soldier of Fortune (1852; repr. London: n.d. [1854?]), p. 143; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

[17] '"Ireland" never left my thoughts; her wrongs and sufferings were everlastingly before me; all the cruelties of centuries – all the hard tyranny of the penal laws – the dire injustice of caste oppression – filled me with indignation and anger; while, on the other hand, I conceived the highest admiration of a people who, undeterred by the might and power of England, resolved to strike a great blow for liberty' (p. 145).

[18] Of the writer of one such report, Nicholas Madgett, (see chapter one, p. 14) Tiernay writes: 'he, I concluded, must know them well, being, as it was asserted, one of the ancient nobility of the land, and who now desired nothing better than to throw rank, privilege, and title into the scale, and do battle for the liberty and equality of his countrymen. How I longed to see this great man, whom my fancy arrayed in all the attributes he so lavished upon his countrymen, for they were not only, in his description, the boldest and the bravest, but the handsomest people of Europe' (pp. 145-6).

> by a great variety of scenes, in which the artist's imagination had all the credit. In one picture the "jeune Irlandais" was planting a national flag of very capacious dimensions on the summit of his native mountains; here he was storming "Le chateau de Dublin," a most formidable fortress, perched on a rock above the sea; here he was crowning the heights of "La citadelle de Cork," a very Gibraltar in strength; or he was haranguing the native chieftains, a highly picturesque group – a cross between a knight crusader and a South-sea islander (p. 148).

Such imagery is taken directly from French representations of their own revolutionary history, and are more akin to images such as Eugène Delacroix's 'Liberty leading the People'.[19] Irishness, in Lever's portrayal of the United Irishmen, seemed to consist of being 'not English'. Paris is seen to be full of Irish émigrés: 'some were men of good position and ample fortune; some were individuals of considerable ability and intelligence. All were enthusiastic, and ardent in temperament – devotedly attached to their country – hearty haters of England, and proportionally attached to all that was French' (p. 147). Only General Kilmaine, an Irishman in the French army, brings an air of reality to matters, stating that he wished 'that so good a cause had better leaders ... Irishmen of character and capacity, tried soldiers and good patriots' (pp. 149-50).[20] Lever is suggesting that the United Irish leadership was none of these things. Tiernay, at La Rochelle, writes of the 'gross ignorance and shameless falsehood of some of the Irish leaders of the expedition, whose boastful and absurd histories ended by disgusting every one' (p. 161).

It is in his description of the invasion itself, however, that Lever echoes some of the most reactionary accounts of the rebellion. Tiernay discovers that he is due to accompany the invasion force as a guide, an ominous prospect given that he has never been to Ireland, and he outlines his disappointment after his initial contact with the Irish peasantry when they ask what the French will give them for joining up: 'If I did not translate the demand with fidelity to my colonel, it was really that a sense of shame prevented me. My whole heart was in the cause; and I could not endure the thought of its

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[19] In fact Lever is projecting subsequent images of French revolutionary activity back to the 1790s. 'Liberty Leading the People' is in fact a representation of the July revolution of 1830, as one can tell by the date of composition, and is an event that would have been more familiar to Lever himself.

[20] Charles Edward (Ch-Edouard Saul) Jennings de Kilmaine (1751-99) was born in Ireland but brought up in France. Made a general in May 1793, he commanded the occupation army in Italy and in March 1798 was appointed to Napoleon's Army of England. He resigned in January 1799 due to a terminal illness; see Colin Jones, *The Longman Companion to the French Revolution* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 357-8.

being degraded in this way' (p. 173). If Tiernay's 'whole heart' was in the cause it did not stop him observing that the printed proclamations brought with them for distribution were read out 'with droll commentaries' on the ship (p. 176).

The technique that Lever uses in his description of the French invasion is worth investigating. Anxious to portray it essentially as a farce, Lever must also invest it with enough chivalry and excitement to make it interesting and acceptable to the reader. Hence he writes:

> There was something so heroic in the notion of that little band of warriors throwing themselves fearlessly into a strange land, to contest its claim for liberty with one of the most powerful nations of the world; there was a character of daring intrepidity in this bold advance, they knew not whither, nor against what force, that gave the whole an air of glorious chivalry (pp. 180-1).

Lever's interpretation could only be sustained by elevating the French to the position of philanthropic idealists and denigrating the local Irish. Thus the French troops, described earlier in the novel by Tiernay as a 'Legion Noir'[21] suddenly, in an Irish context, become the only protection the loyal inhabitants of Mayo had against their marauding Irish allies:

> The real truth was – but we only learned it too late – all those who joined us were utterly indifferent to the great cause of Irish independence; their thoughts never rose above a row and a pillage. It was to be a season of sack, plunder, and outrage, but nothing more! That such were the general sentiments of the volunteers, I believe none will dispute .... Never was seen such a scare-crow set! Wild-looking, ragged wretches, their long, lank hair hanging down their necks and shoulders, usually bare-footed, and with every sign of starvation in their features; they stood in groups and knots, gesticulating, screaming, hurraing, and singing, in all the exuberance of a joy that caught some, at least, of its inspiration from whiskey (pp. 185-6).

Quite how they differ from the Parisian wretches who participated in the storming of the Bastille is not made clear, but the real point being made here seems to be encapsulated in Tiernay's observation that 'I must own that distance lent its wonted illusion to the scene, and proximity, like its twin-brother familiarity, destroyed much of the "prestige" my fancy had conjured up. The line of march, so imposing when seen from afar, was neither regular nor well kept' (p. 181). Tiernay applies a micro-analysis to the events of 1798

[21] One character says, 'A thousand louis and a thousand muskets would not pay for the damage of these vagabonds each night they spent in the town [of La Rochelle]' (p. 151).

that he does not apply to the more 'prestigious' historical events that he subsequently becomes a part of.

His account of the famous victory over government forces at Castlebar echoes loyalist historians such as Musgrave: 'if the Royalists had kept their ground in support of their artillery, we must have been driven back with loss' (p. 198). He is even reluctant to give his French comrades any credit: 'Such was the "fight" of Castlebar; it would be absurd to call it a "battle;" a day too inglorious for the Royalists to reflect any credit upon us; but, such as it was, it raised the spirits of our Irish followers to a pitch of madness; and, out of our own ranks, none now doubted in the certainty of Irish independence' (p. 199). It is when the hopes of the local peasantry were at their zenith that Tiernay felt his keenest sense of disappointment:

> we were thoroughly, bitterly disappointed in the character of those we had come to liberate; and, making the egregious mistake of confounding these semi-civilised peasants with the Irish people, we deeply regretted that ever the French army should have been sent on so worthless a mission .... If the feeling between us and our allies was something less than cordial, nothing could be more friendly than that which subsisted between us and such of the Royalists as we came in contact with .... Upon one subject both sides were quite agreed – that the peasantry never could aid, but very possibly would always shipwreck, every attempt to win national independence .... The troops, wearied with a march that had begun on the midnight of the day before ... were obliged to be under arms for several hours, to repress pillage and massacre .... I began to conceive a very low opinion generally of popular attempts at independence, and a very high one of the powers of military skill and discipline. A mob, in my estimation, was the very lowest, and an army about the very highest, object I could well conceive .... The safety of the town and its inhabitants was entirely owing to the handful of French who held it ... (pp. 199-202).

Yet Tiernay's viewpoint is full of inconsistencies, something that becomes clearer in the context of the novel as a whole. He writes about one ruffian who was made a town-mayor in error, as having a squad of men who 'were indeed as great a terror in that little town [Castlebar] as I had seen the great name of Robespierre in the proud city of Paris' (p. 204). The epithet 'great' seems inappropriate in this circumstance. Later in the novel, when Tiernay is being driven through northern Italy – 'a country teeming with abundance' – as an Austrian prisoner, he sees everywhere 'poverty, misery, and debasement, ruined villages, and a half-naked, starving populace [who] met the eye at

every turn. There was the stamp of slavery on all, and still more palpably was there the stamp of despotism in the air of their rulers' (p. 335). He continues:

> It never can be the policy of a government to retard the progress and depress the energies of a people beneath its rule. Why, then, do we find a whole nation, gifted and capable as this, so backward in civilisation? Is the fault with the rulers? or are there, indeed, people whose very development is the obstacle to their improvement; whose impulses of right and wrong will submit to no discipline; and who are incapable of appreciating true liberty? This would be a gloomy theory; and the very thought of it suggests darker fears for a land to which my sympathies attach me more closely! (p. 335).

This passage evinces a suspicion about the lower classes, an attitude summed up by Colonel Serasin [Sarrazin] on the Irish expedition when Tiernay reported him as saying: 'Let the Directory send thirty thousand men and make it [Ireland] a French province, but let us not fight an enemy to give the victory to the "sans culottes"' (p. 220). A comparison between Tiernay's account of the French Revolution and his account of the invasion of Ireland highlights the slippage of ideals within the French Republic. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity now only apply to those with sufficient understanding of them. If one cannot conceive of liberty and national independence, one does not deserve it. It is in this light that Lever's account of the rebellion in the west should be viewed.

What becomes clear from these novels is that Lever not only rejects Scott's thesis of compromise, but, in attempting to draw a line under the past, eclipses even Scott by claiming that Irish nationality was essentially abolished with Union. Tiernay's description of Dublin in the years after the rebellion concludes: 'To such as were indifferent to or could forget the past, it was a brilliant period. It was the last flickering blaze of Irish nationality, before the lamp was extinguished forever' (p. 268). Lever draws a line under the past with the passing of the Act of Union, and becomes a writer about Ireland's 'national' character who believes Irish nationality no longer exists. It is no surprise, therefore, that much of Lever's writing is concentrated in the period either before the Union, around the Union, or inhabits that mutable period directly after the Union. Lever's preoccupation with things martial may be related to the fact that Ireland's military relationship with the rest of Britain was the easiest and clearest relationship to

understand and to relate: Irishmen, had, did, and would in the future join the British army. It was, in many ways, the least problematic aspect of Union.

It would be easy to see Lever's assertion that Irish nationality no longer existed as being merely a reference to the old 'Irish Nation' of the eighteenth century. However, that would be an oversimplification. As we have already seen, Tiernay, thanks to his experiences in Ireland and in Italy, speculated as to whether some nationalities were by their very natures incapable of development. In *The O'Donoghue*, Lever portrays relationships in pre-Union Ireland as essentially feudal in nature, and 'improvement' – which generally meant substituting a new set of relationships for old – merely destroyed the fabric of 'national' society. Feudal societies can absorb invasions, usurpations and confiscations: one does not have to love one's masters, or even accept them, one merely has to accept the system. As Lever himself writes in a preface to a 1877 edition of *The O'Donoghue*:

> While I thought over the endless contrarities of this mysterious national character, where good and evil eternally lay side by side, I wondered within myself whether the new civilization of latter years was likely to be successful in dealing with men whose temperaments and manners were so unlike the English, or were we right in extinguishing the old feudalism that bound the peasant to the landlord before we had prepared each for the new relations of mere gain and loss that were in future to subsist between them?[22]

What we see here is the idea that a mutual dependency between peasant and landlord was at the heart of 'national' society: 'Between the great families – the old houses of the land and the present race of proprietors – there lay a couple of generations of men who, with all the traditions and many of the pretensions of birth and fortune, had really become in ideas, modes of life, and habits, very little above the peasantry around them'.[23] This is a mingling of Spenserian fears and Yeats' 'natural declension of the soul'.[24] Lever himself observes: 'Survivors of everything but pride of family, they stood there like the stumps, blackened and charred, the last remnants of a burnt forest, their proportions attesting the

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[22] Lever, *The O'Donoghue: A Tale of Ireland Fifty Years Ago. New Edition, with a New Autiobiographical Introduction* (1845; new ed. London, 1877), p. 2.
[23] Ibid.
[24] 'And what if my descendants lose the flower/Through natural declension of the soul, /Through too much business with the passing hour,/Through too much play, or marriage with a fool?'; W.B. Yeats, 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', in *Yeats' Poems*, edited and annotated by A. Norman Jeffares with an appendix by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 311.

noble growth that had preceded them'.[25] Such a system included both old Gaelic nobility such as The O'Donoghue, and more recent Elizabethan and Cromwellian landowners, but could not include newer 'improving' landlords such as Sir Marmaduke Travers.[26] Improvement, in Lever's analysis, is inconsistent with Irish 'nationality'.

If one accepts such a thesis, then one sees how Lever could claim that Irish nationality was extinguished, even if one could argue whether or not such a change actually occurred. It does mean, however, that Lever goes beyond even Scott in terms of the finality of the past and totally against the idea portrayed in national tales of the past as an ever-present, recurring event. It is in these terms, coupled with his unheroic and unsanctified descriptions of historical events, that Charles Lever can be considered a writer of 'anti-national' tales. The weaknesses and contradictions inherent in Lever's work, especially in *Maurice Tiernay*, complicate these conclusions and confuse the issues. *Tiernay* certainly shows signs of a hasty and haphazard composition but it seems clear that while Lever's unionist sympathies undoubtedly have something to do with the portrayal of the French invasion, its other purpose, aside from its Irish interest, seems to be to highlight inconsistencies and slippage in French revolutionary attitudes. The French attitude to the '*sans culottes*' of Mayo reflects both Lever's horror of the mob and the softening of the idealism connected with the French Revolution, culminating in a return to monarchy, albeit in the form of Napoleon. Ultimately the message it conveys is a comforting one: civilised peoples such as the French will eventually return to civilised forms of government. Uncivilised, or partly civilised 'nationalities' – which in Lever's case seems to correspond to 'societies' – like Ireland's, will ultimately be 'extinguished'. It is not difficult to see why the novels of Charles Lever, for all their liberal posturing, would have been acceptable to the readers of the *Dublin University Magazine*.

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[25] Lever, *The O'Donoghue*, new ed. (1877), p. 2.

[26] Although Lever was born in Dublin, Lever's father was from Lancashire. His mother's family name was Candler, a family who settled in Kilkenny in Cromwellian times. Hence, perhaps, his desire to include Elizabethan and Cromwellian influences in his Irish 'nationality'. Sir Marmaduke Travers is the new landlord in *The O'Donoghue*. In the Preface to an 1858 edition of *The O'Donoghue*, Lever writes about his portrayal of Sir Marmaduke: 'I own to have felt it no uncongenial task to display the workings of a philanthropy totally unsupported by all knowledge – a benevolence so self-satisfied that it rejected every thought of the instincts, the traditions, and the nature of those it assumed to relieve'; Lever, *The O'Donoghue: A Tale of Ireland Fifty Years Ago* (1845; repr. London, 1858), p. iv.

'New' histories: *The Rebels of Glenfawn* (1852) and *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* (1866)

Perhaps the single most significant novel published about 1798 during the period 1830-69 was *The Rebels of Glenfawn: A Romance of the Last Century* (1852). It was the most successful attempt up to that time to draw together all strands of opinion and to try to delineate and reconcile the different impulses and issues that existed at the time of the rebellion and – almost uniquely in this period – those that were current when it was published. Although subtitled *A Romance of the Last Century*, the real 'romantic' element in it is in what might have been, and the novel has a utopian aspect that remains just within the realm of the possible.

The Rebels of Glenfawn centres round the fictional village of Glenfawn in County Cork, where George Phepps, a nephew of Dr Galen Bazzy, the genial leader of the local militia, brings home a friend from college, Gerald Fenton, to stay for the holidays. Another newcomer to Glenfawn is Abner Grimm, an elderly man of military aspect. Under the influence of Fenton, Phepps has become a United Irishman, although his uncle entirely disapproves of the idea of a rebellion. 'Abner Grimm', is in fact the erstwhile Lord Roche of Fermoy, returned to Ireland from America with his grandson, who is 'Gerald Fenton', to help in the organising of a proposed rebellion. Roche had been forced to sell up his property and emigrate when, under the penal statutes that existed at the time, his younger son 'turned Protestant' and claimed a third of his father's possessions. The son was only persuaded to give up his claim of succession to the property by the intercession of a mutual friend. Emigrating from Ireland to America with his eldest son, Roche became a famous general in the American revolutionary army, while his younger son left Ireland for Europe. In Dublin, Phepps and 'Fenton' are heavily involved with the United Irish leadership and also make the acquaintance of Villiers Unthank, a character very much in the mould of James Marauder from Lucas's *Infernal Quixote* (1802), being described as 'like the fallen archangel of Milton'.[27]

As a result of the treachery of Unthank and others, the carefully planned rebellion of Roche and Lord Edward Fitzgerald begins prematurely in March of 1798, and

[27] Anon., *The Rebels of Glenfawn: A Romance of the Last Century*, 3 vols. (London, 1852), ii, p. 173; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

involves one large-scale military engagement near Glenfawn. The battle is inconclusive, although the rebels put up the better and more chivalrous performance. The ultimate result, however, is that the noble and idealistic rebellion fails and is replaced by a sectarian and Jacobin one in May. Unthank turns out to be Roche's youngest son and, upon finding out 'Grimm's' true identity, dies of shock. Roche later dies of wounds received and requests to be buried beside his son in the traditional burial ground of the Roches. Phepps, 'Fenton', and others, weary and disheartened by the religious intolerance and poor governance of post-rebellion Ireland, decide to leave for America, with 'many farmers about the neighbourhood joining them' (iii, p. 303). There, in the words of Sir Richard Fleming (the father of Fenton's wife, Amy), they resolve to 'make a new Glenfawn, and hardly miss the old one' (iii, p. 304).

What makes *The Rebels of Glenfawn* significant is that it pioneers the 'alternative' or 'ideal' rebellion technique, thereby obviating the need to justify or challenge the conservative view of the actual events of '98. This meant that all strands of opinion could be outlined and accommodated within the one narrative without having to resort to convoluted plotting and ambiguous generalities. In this sense *The Rebels of Glenfawn* builds upon the kind of approaches seen in James McHenry's *O'Halloran*, with its sanctification of the present and William Hamilton Maxwell's *O'Hara*, which nudges towards portraying an idealised rebellion. Both of these approaches owe something to the influence of America: *O'Halloran*, as we have seen, was first serialised and published in the United States in 1824 and the idealistic aims of O'Halloran, and his vision of a future Ireland, was undoubtedly meant to resonate with American readers. Maxwell, too, chose to begin *O'Hara* during the American Revolution.

Linking 1798 with the American Revolution obviously highlighted both what 1798 was and what it was not, and it also revealed the existence of an unarticulated 'wish-fantasy' for a proper, 'respectable' rebellion, like that which had occurred in America. This impulse, which had been brought to a head by the spirit of Volunteerism in the eighteenth century and was fed by its links to old-fashioned patriotism, was frustrated by the split in the Volunteer movement, war with France, the polarisation of patriot politics in the 1790s, and, ultimately, the *jacquerie* that occurred in its place. The spirit did not die, however, and perpetuated into the nineteenth century, fed by

disappointment over the passing of the Act of Union, the further developments in Ireland in the first half of the century, and – of course – a fear of what was yet to come. These often conflicting impulses were processed differently by different individuals, and affected repealer and unionist, Catholic and Protestant, radical and conservative alike. What emerges is a vague sense that, unlike what had happened in America in the 1770s and '80s, a great opportunity to improve the condition of Ireland was missed in the 1780s and '90s.

In the novels under examination here, this sense of lost opportunity manifested itself primarily in a glorification of the potential martial might of the Volunteers. The 1798 rebellion could never take the place of the drive for self-determination that should have been spearheaded by the Volunteers, but the historical 'moment' could be used to outline what sort of revolution Ireland *could* have had. Ideally it would have been a rebellion that brought respectable Catholics and Protestants with it, rather than the mob-orientated sectarianism represented by the likes of Daniel O'Connell and his mass-membership organisations, and the forms of nationality and nationalism represented by the *Nation* and Young Ireland. These sentiments, however radical they may appear, are essentially conservative. Furthermore, *The Rebels of Glenfawn* also highlights once more the contrast between the kind of historical analysis developed by Walter Scott for Scottish history, and the sort deemed appropriate by Irish authors for Ireland. Whereas in *Redgauntlet* Scott demonstrates that Jacobitism is dead by showing how support for a third Jacobite rebellion did not exist despite the best efforts of those involved, in *The Rebels of Glenfawn* a fictitious rebellion is used to demonstrate the shortcomings of a real one.

As the fictitious leader of a fictitious rebellion in a novel full of real historical personages, Lord Roche (alias Abner Grimm) is the key figure. In him we see the ideal rebel leader: an older, wiser, more moderate Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who is portrayed as Roche's second-in-command. Roche had proven himself as a successful general against the British army in America and he takes the best qualities of the United Irishmen and makes them his own. At a United Irish meeting in Cork he outlines the necessity for a rebellion. He stresses the American experience and uses that to make a comparison with the ruin of Ireland's trade and manufactures, the lack of encouragement of local industry,

the abuses of the church establishment, the agrarian tensions, the 'shameful prostitution' of government patronage, the failure to obtain redress by petition or remonstrance, and the 'gross injustice' of the civil disqualification of Catholics and Dissenters. Roche finishes by saying, in the author's words, that 'the only possible mode of effecting any good for their common fatherland ... was to break all connection with Britain, erect a republic on the ruins of monarchy, like France and America: and commence for Ireland and her people a new history' (i, p. 175).

This 'new history' was not only the re-echoing of a United Irish desire to draw a line under a past that created so much division in Ireland, but was also a statement of intent by the author, who did in fact attempt to create a 'new history' by inserting a fictitious rebellion a few months before the actual one. On a personal level, Roche blames the penal laws for the actions and character of his youngest son and also condemns the effects of the law on Catholic character in general:

> 'The law ... took from the young and ardent all outlets for honourable ambition or lofty aspiration, closing up the army, the bar, the senate: flinging back upon themselves the volcanic elements of youth, and intellect, and passion – that unnatural law was alone to blame. That law which, disregarding the very morality of instinct, held forth to the child a premium for rebellion against his parent; and for desertion of his natal faith' (i, p. 237).

Here, the penal laws are blamed for having turned Unthank into a product of what would be seen as the worst excesses of Voltairean and Rousseauistic thought. Gerald Fenton observes to George Phepps after a discussion of philosophical ideas amongst the three of them that Unthank is

> 'a clever observer and speculator; but, I fear, both an immoral and perhaps unhappy man ... [with] much of the polish and intellectual glitter so peculiarly French; and I fancy he also has the bad qualities of the same school, heartlessness and utter selfishness .... He admits he is not a Christian, nor does he admire the doctrine, which he considers antiquated, and only fit for the unenlightened. But what does he take up instead? a sort of modified materialism, on which with the curious ingenuity of a clever but bigoted mind, and much earnestness, he plausibly endeavours to found the Helvetian doctrine, of self being the moving-spring of universal man: and therefore, in *all* its developments in individuals, no matter how excessive or uncharitable, perfectly excusable, and in accordance with primaeval decrees' (i, pp. 275-6).

This selfish 'modified materialism' leads Unthank to betray the rebels and, unknowingly, his father and nephew. Everywhere the penal laws promote unhappiness: Unthank's wife, Alice Avery, is trapped in a marriage with Unthank because of the fact that she, a Catholic, had married Unthank in a ceremony conducted by a Catholic priest, and mixed marriages were not only forbidden under the penal laws but also meant a sentence of death for the officiating priest. As a result, she could only escape from her marriage at the expense of the priest's life.

The vision of the proposed rebellion to come is outlined by Roche at a meeting in his own house, attended by most of the United Irish leadership. Roche's true identity is first revealed at this meeting. Lord Edward Fitzgerald says that Roche has 'done more for this society, both in its organization civil and military, and in extension of its views, than perhaps all its other friends besides' (ii, p. 286). Roche stresses the importance of fighting for ideals rather than as 'desperate men of fortunes broken, eager from confusion to pluck forth wealth – for such things have been said; but as men who, seeing their rights as citizens clipped and cancelled, their rights as rational beings abrogated; their homages to God reviled and interdicted; have at length stood forth for the freedom of their natal soil' (ii, pp. 300-1). Sectarianism is described by him as the 'last fell stratagem of our common enemy' to rule the country by division. A sectarian revolution would be, in his words, 'worse than vain, unjustifiable, wicked; which would transfer, not abolish, the tyranny and injustice from which I personally have suffered so keenly' (ii, p. 304). Roche proposes the motto *'in utrumque paratus'* ('prepared for either event'), allowing for the possibility of failure, but in relation to that possibility he says:

> 'sure I am the day will come, should we fail, when at least the sons of those who now in their blind abandonment stay from us, looking on squandered patrimonies, on embarrassed acres; for kingly or ministerial bounty outlasts not the completion of kingly or ministerial ends, while prodigality and licentiousness outlast all sources of legitimate supply; when these sons, I say, will read aright our motives and our deeds!' (ii, pp. 307-8).

Once again Roche's role as soothsayer is stressed, as he looks forward to a time when the sons of those who will have nothing to do with them now appreciate their motives better. The suggestion of 'kingly and ministerial bounty' and 'kingly and ministerial ends' seems to be a reference to the machinations that surrounded the eventual Act of Union,

which would have been a very prescient observation were Roche not such a retrospective sage. Comments about 'squandered patrimonies' and 'embarrassed acres' although nothing new in Ireland, are probably a reference to the position in which many landlords found themselves in post-Famine Ireland.[28] Primarily, however, it conveys two main ideas that lie at the core of *The Rebels of Glenfawn*: a strong sense that the 1790s was the time, and the United Irishmen were the body, to have brought about change for the better; and an implication that had more people of the respectable classes been prepared to be involved, as in America, the 1798 rebellion would have been a very different kind of revolution.

Evidence for the second point is found in the fact that the outlook and attitude of the main characters of the novel are primarily aristocratic. The author, in his assessment of the popularity of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, attributes at least some of this to the fact that 'the Irish people are, after all, essentially feudal in feeling, and they venerate titles, far descended and of ancient blood' (i, p. 88). He draws a distinction between the pride of the truly noble, in which prosperity 'softens the attribute into amenity and kindliness', and that of the 'under-bred', where it 'exaggerates the sickly germ into insolent assumption and truculent desire of domineering all less rich' (ii, p. 9). Sir Richard Fleming and Dr Galen Bazzy also agree on the necessity for good breeding: 'Nature does certainly sometimes turn out a gentleman without at all troubling his ancestors on the matter; but I must confess 'tis rare' (ii, p. 245). Amy Fleming says of her father: 'old blood he certainly does almost superstitiously venerate' (iii, p. 60).

This aristocratic – or perhaps more correctly, patrician – attitude is made even more explicit by Roche's important clarification: 'Mark! we fight for a Republic, *not* a democracy' (i, p. 239). On hearing of the arrest of the Leinster Committee at Oliver Bond's house in Dublin, Roche exclaims that the cause is lost: 'If they should fight, which Heaven send they won't! – 'twill be a mere *jaquerie*, a peasant war, leading to much useless slaughter, but nought beside – nought beside!' (iii, pp. 268-9). The rebellion which does occur in May 1798 is not Roche's rebellion. Roche becomes the

[28] Later references in the novel to the Encumbered Estates Acts, which were passed in 1848 and 1849 to facilitate the transfer of bankrupt estates to more responsible landlords, would provide strong evidence for this interpretation.

repository of everything noble and decent about the United Irishmen, and his death keeps those ideals pure.

The great centrepiece of *The Rebels of Glenfawn* is the battle that takes place near Glenfawn in March of 1798, two days after the capture of the Leinster Directory but before Roche and his men were made aware of the fact. Approximately 2,000 men were involved on the rebel side and 70 were killed – although we are told that subsequently this was exaggerated to 10,000 and 500 respectively. The rebels, having been betrayed by Unthank and the real-life informer, Thomas Reynolds, are surprised by government forces while they are out on manoeuvres. The writer does everything possible to bring dignity and honour to the proceedings. Roche himself is seen as a Napoleon-like figure, a man of destiny, wearing a 'grey overcoat, cocked hat and large jack-boots, not unlike those affected by a great warrior of the time through all his fortunes' (iii, p. 142).

To add legitimacy to proceedings Roche is wearing a sword that was struck at Hastings by Sir Reginald Victor de la Roche, 'one of the followers of the Norman William' (iii, p. 143). Gerald Fenton's sword provides legitimacy in a specifically Irish context, having been worn in the service of both Charles I and II, and at the battles of the Boyne, Aughrim, Limerick, Ramillies, Fontenoy and in America.[29] Captain Thornell, the local militia commander, had been tipped off by Unthank that the prospective leader of the rebellion would be in attendance on that night and, upon spying Roche and 'seeing him mounted and occupying the place of chief commander, they [Thornell and Unthank] had no doubt from these circumstances, and the skill with which the rebel force was handled, that he must be the great leader they were in search of' (iii, pp. 172-3). During the battle the rebels are disciplined, brave, organised and effective, but the result, although the battle is shaded by the rebels, is that the element of surprise has been lost for the rebellion itself. The author describes it as a 'short, obstinate and fatal encounter …

[29]The battle of Ramillies took place on 23 May 1706 during the War of the Spanish Succession, at the village of Ramillies in modern Belgium, between the allied (Anglo-Dutch) forces under the Duke of Marlborough and a French army commanded by Francois de Neufville, duc de Villeroi. Victory for the allies led to the capture of the whole north and east of the Spanish Netherlands. Gerald's sword seems to be associated with glorious failure, with the notable and perhaps deliberate exception of America. The date of the Battle of Ramellies, 23 May, is also the same date as the start of the 1798 rebellion proper, hardly a coincidence given the symbolic importance of the other battles mentioned. The 'Battle of Glenfawn' took place on the 15th of March: the notorious 'Ides'.

which may be termed, though elsewhere unrecorded, the first of the outbreak' (iii, p. 175).

This battle, and the arrest of the Leinster Directory, effectively ended the American-style 1798 rebellion. The government, in order to maintain their advantage, 'thought it requisite to suppress, as much as they could, all allusions to the affair' (iii, p. 183), which explains its absence from the history books. Afterwards, the author explains, it was difficult to contain the rebels: 'partial small explosions were occurring here and there' (iii, p. 184), and, perhaps broken by the arrests, the premature start of the rebellion and the treachery of his youngest son, 'it was soon after the event now recorded, apparent that the mind which ruled and animated the multitude either had itself deteriorated, or was altogether absent, or had in a considerable degree, lost its influence' (iii, p. 184).

There is some form of redemption for Unthank, who dies of shock and shame upon hearing that the commander of the rebels he betrayed was his own father. He is buried 'amid the relics of his race, amid the ruins which shrouded their ashes, himself a ruin of squandered genius, of reckless passion, of final remorse, of intolerant selfish legislation; this child and victim of the awful PENAL LAWS!' (iii, p. 229). Some time after, Roche is fatally wounded by a raiding party of yeomanry, and his death is the final act of, and extinguishes the last hope of success for, the fantasy rebellion: 'a scheme proof against all but treachery, for subtlety and closeness unmatched in the world's history' (ii, p. 275).

The idea that Roche's plan was 'unmatched in the world's history' adds to the sense that his rebellion was a missed opportunity. But the author ensures that Roche had not been without misgivings and doubts about the entire enterprise. He had qualms of conscience – 'How many an evil deed will mingle with the good we propose!' (ii, p. 66) – and he had a dream in which a man turned into a fox and then a rat as he repeated the United Irish oath (ii, p. 68).[30] These misgivings, however, merely add an element of reality to the proposed rebellion and prepare us for the overall moral of the novel: 'how

[30] Roche and the other United leaders are portrayed as being under no illusions that all United Irishmen are involved for purely altruistic reasons. Opportunism, tithes, the penal laws, private vengeances or personal ambitions are all cited by the author as reasons for involvement, 'while perhaps, fewest of all were those who, better instructed, as all were becoming now, had in their rude way strong love of country, and tolerably accurate notions of liberty, religious and political' (ii, pp. 79-80). The generally upbeat portrayal of the United Irishmen is maintained however, by the idea that 'all' were becoming better educated in this regard.

awful is the responsibility of those who, on the one side stir up to rebellion and violence the unthinking populace .... while those to whom the common weal is committed, are surely most guiltily answerable when, for selfish purposes, sectarian or predial, they pervert the delegated power entrusted for good purposes' (iii, pp. 277-8).

The Rebels of Glenfawn is one of the few novels to address explicitly and draw comparisons with the time in which it was written. Speculating on 'how vast an evil is spiritual or sectarian intolerance, combined with secular predominance and power' and 'how beautiful a thing is charity in its widest sense', the author continues:

> It hath afforded a contrast very favourable to our own time, too, when, except perhaps among a few veterans who still linger 'superfluous on the stage,' we no longer, in Ireland, witness that rancorous anti-christian bigotry which once poisoned and restricted the springs of human intercourse (iii, p. 307).

Turning towards what is presumably a reference to the recent events of 1848, the beneficial results of education, just government and equalisation of civil rights are seen to have had an effect:

> for at no remote date, have we not seen, that notwithstanding singular ability, high enthusiasm, and, as we believe, sincere conviction on the parts of the advocates of civil commotion, the mind of the nation was sufficiently enlightened to withstand the tempting counsels of its violent and mistaken advisers (iii, p. 308).

This is the nub of *The Rebels of Glenfawn*. Rebellion and revolution in 1848 did not occur because progress had been made in education and civil and religious rights. Had the same been the case in 1798 not only would the rebellion not have occurred, it would not have been needed. As in Moore's *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, the concession of these rights has retrospectively justified the authors of the 1798 rebellion, if not the actions of the rebels. The message, however, is double-edged, like so many of the messages in *The Rebels of Glenfawn*. Education has produced a more civilised society, and consequently the injustices visited on that more civilised society seem all the more acute.

To end, the author looks to the future, and in particular at the land question. Admitting that many evils still exist, the author suggests that

> The sale of estates hopelessly encumbered, by a legislative act, rendered imperative at the will of a creditor: though in particular instances dealing harshly with individuals, must ultimately do vast good, by substituting a *real* for an imaginary proprietary – this in turn will lead to a just arrangement of the respective rights of landlord and tenant; the want of which at present appears to be almost the sole cause of homicidal crime in Ireland (iii, p. 309).[31]

Seeing a solution to the land problem, the author ends on an upbeat and progressive note. Describing the present as a 'transition state', the author avers that on its passing, 'a fair half-century's progress will have been made, speaking intellectually and politically, since "The Rebels of Glenfawn" lived, and moved, and had their being' (iii, p. 309).

The Rebels of Glenfawn, published almost exactly in the middle of the nineteenth century, and primarily about the end of the eighteenth, draws on ideas and attitudes from both. It looks back into the past and forward into the future, providing both an interpretation of the former and proposals for the latter. Significantly, it also engages with its own present. It is still too early for the unambiguously nationalistic portrayals of both the rebels and the rebellion that were to come: the best the author could do was to create a fictional leader and an alternative rebellion. Ultimately *The Rebels of Glenfawn* is a patriotic rather than a nationalistic representation of 1798, and it relates the rebellion to the issues and events of the nineteenth century rather than to the eighteenth century and previous Irish rebellions. In that sense, *The Rebels of Glenfawn* is a landmark novel.

Elizabeth Hely Walshe's novel *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* (1866), was one of two evangelical novels featuring the rebellion published during this period.[32] Walshe (1835-68) was from a Limerick family and was a Sunday School teacher, writing a number of novels on broadly religious themes.[33] Her intentions are clear from the outset:

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[31] The Encumbered Estates Acts also conferred indefeasible titles on the new owners, clearing up much of the title confusion seen in a novel like *The O'Donoghue*; see A. Norman Jeffares and Peter van de Kamp (eds.), *Irish Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Volume I* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 22.

[32] Another evangelical tale, Sidney O. Moore's *The Family of Glencarra; A Tale of the Irish Rebellion* (1851?; repr. Bath, 1858), though set in Ireland during the rebellion, was primarily an attempt to interest religious philanthropists in the condition of the people of the west of Ireland, and in doing so fund an evangelical mission to rescue them from what the author saw as the vices and errors of Roman Catholicism.

[33] The novel, originally serialised in *Leisure Hour*, 'a family journal of instruction and recreation', which was published monthly in London from 1852, was republished at least twice, in 1888 and 1906. Walshe died of consumption while convalescing on the Isle of Wight in 1868. Her other novels included *Cedar Creek* (1863); *Golden Hills: A Tale of the Irish Famine* (1865); *Under the Inquisition: A Story of the Reformation in Italy* (n.d.); and *Within Sea Walls; Or, How the Dutch Kept the Faith* (1880), as well as *The Manuscript Man; Or, the Bible in Ireland* (1869), all of which were published by the Religious Tract

'It is the strong conviction of the writer, produced by long and intimate acquaintance with the Irish people and their history, that the superstition and priestcraft of Roman Catholicism form the chief cause of the troubles of that most beautiful yet most unhappy island'.[34] Despite this unpromising premise, *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* is a rather fine conception with a grand scope. The novel traces the political developments in Ireland in the late-eighteenth century, and portrays a good sense of the disappointment felt by many after the defeat of Grattan's Repeal Bill in 1795 and the replacement of Fitzwilliam with Camden in the same year.

Set in Wexford in the period from 1793-98 and with a final chapter set in 'present-day' Ireland, at the centre of the novel is the relationship between two foster-brothers: Myles Furlong, a blacksmith; and Captain Gerald Butler, son of the ultra-loyalist local squire and landowner, Colonel Butler.[35] Furlong becomes a United Irishman, and is caught at a United Irish meeting. Gerald Butler's failure to prevent him receiving the lash, and thereby bringing disgrace on his own foster-family, earns him Furlong's undying hatred. His determination to be revenged on Butler drives him to become more involved with the United Irishmen in the years running up to 1798. Other characters in the novel include Dr Armstrong, the rector of Doon, a liberal loyalist, and his son Fergus, a young barrister who becomes a United Irishmen. Fergus is in love with Evelyn Butler, Gerald's sister. Among the real people who appear are Bagenal Harvey, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, William Putnam McCabe, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, Wolfe Tone, and Fr John Murphy of Boolavogue. The trial of William Jackson and Rowan's escape from Ireland also feature, as do accounts of Wexford town under the rebel occupation and events on Vinegar Hill.

Although Fergus Armstrong was heavily involved with the United Irishmen up to the rebellion, a growing disillusionment with the reality of revolutionary activities and

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Society; see Tina O'Toole (ed.), *Dictionary of Munster Women Writers, 1800-2000* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), p. 94. *Golden Hills* is explored in Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), pp. 66-74.

[34] Elizabeth Hely Walshe, *The Foster-Brothers of Doon: A Tale of the Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1866), p. 6; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

[35] 'Foster-brothers' in this sense means two unrelated children suckled by the same nurse, as in Edgeworth's *Ennui*, which may have provided some of the inspiration for the story. However, in Gaelic Ireland fostering had a significance which went beyond this, and implied some kind of special relationship and mutual responsibility. Butler's rejection of this 'barbaric' custom fuels much of Furlong's hatred of him and provides a good metaphor for the differences in perception and expectation that are seen to bedevil class and religious relations in Ireland.

the illness of his father keep him from any involvement in the rebellion itself. During the rebellion Gerald Butler is captured by Furlong and he is piked, with many others, on Vinegar Hill. Gerald is only badly wounded, however, and is rescued by Furlong's mother and brother. His experiences bring him more in touch with the sufferings of ordinary people. Furlong himself is thought to have been killed in the rebellion, but manages to escape to America. Many years later, his son arrives in Doon filled with all the preconceptions and hatreds instilled in him by his father.

The Foster-Brothers of Doon demonstrates a number of qualities that link it with some of the novels that preceded it. It shares with *The O'Donoghue* and *Maurice Tiernay* some of the iconoclastic character of an 'anti-national' tale and it also manages, like *The Rebels of Glenfawn,* to engage directly with issues and concerns of the day. The inherent anti-Catholicism of the author means that, rather than seeing Catholicism as a mysterious and ancient part of native Irish culture – like Sydney Owenson and other 'national' writers – she blames it for all Ireland's ills. Peasant superstitions are at worst execrated, and at best viewed with a sarcastic Protestant eye.[36] Perhaps the most interesting – and shocking – aspect of the novel is that instead of portraying the 1798 rebellion as part of an inevitable slide towards Union and the extinction of Irish nationality (as in Lever), it was portrayed as a regeneration:

> Yet, as out of evil Divine Providence can bring good, even that season of crime and wretchedness was productive of beneficial results hardly to have been achieved otherwise. It was a storm of thunder and hail and fire along upon the ground; but it cleared the national atmosphere wonderfully. Class drew nearer to class in the pause that ensued; the common heart of human brotherhood was heard beating, and its claims began to be recognised as men grew calm (p. 388).

It is difficult to see how such a claim can be justified until one realises that Walshe is writing in a purely Protestant context. The regeneration being referred to was a coming together of Protestant opinion – opinion that had been divided throughout all the controversies of the late-eighteenth century. Colonel Butler, the ultra-conservative, Dr Armstrong the liberal loyalist, Fergus Armstrong the idealist and Gerald Butler, previously prone to *ennui*, all learned valuable lessons. In Gerald's case 'adversity had

[36] 'Even yet it is a current superstition with the most ignorant of Irish peasants, that to "wake" a man's clothes is as good as "waking" himself, and attended with equally beneficial results as to purgatory: which this writer does not mean to deny' (p. 387).

been to him full of "sweet uses"' (p. 388). The estrangement between the families was repaired, and Fergus weds Evelyn Butler in a marriage that represents a different kind of symbolic union than the one between Protestant and Catholic normally portrayed in national tales. Here, the union is between church and state: 'The bonds of friendship between the Rectory and the Castle were reunited, and welded for ever in the furnace of suffering and danger' (p. 388). The author is not interested in a union, symbolic or otherwise, between Catholic and Protestant. Such a union would confer a validity on the Catholic religion that the author is not prepared to give, and which would go against the author's fundamental belief that Catholicism is at the root of all Ireland's problems. The unifying institutions in Ireland are the state and the established church, and Irish 'unity' depends on conversion, not conciliation, equality, or tolerance.

The necessity for unity between church and state, and the necessity for Catholics and nationalists to come around to that way of thinking, is made explicit in the final six pages of *The Foster-Brothers of Doon*. Set in 1853, it involves the visit to Ireland from America of Myles Furlong Junior, who has been brought up on his father's stories about Ireland, which were told 'with all the bitterness of an exile who can never believe that his country has improved in the least since she cast him forth' (p. 389). Myles Jnr visits Doon, where he meets Una Furlong, his half-sister, and her husband, a comfortable farmer. What follows is a defence of the *status quo*, mainly from Una's husband. Myles Jnr learns that tenants are now protected from eviction without notice and rackrenting, and that tithes are no longer paid by tenants. As to having his own property, and having no rent to pay, Una's husband replies: 'Ask me would I like to be the King of Spain or Emperor of Roosia. God Almighty didn't put me in that position of an estate-owner, but gave me head and hands to work for myself. Why should I want what belongs to another man? That's only a robber's thought' (p. 392).

Una states that misinformation is not only to be found in America, but in Ireland too, 'mostly by them that wants to breed discontent for their own purposes, and don't stick at a few lies' (p. 392). Una's husband continues:

> 'But I want to tell ye, Myles, once for all, to put out of your head tee-totally all yer father's descriptions of Ireland. I was only a very young boy at the time of the Rebellion, and I grant you there was something to complain of then. But now

> there isn't a penal law in the statute-book, and the Catholics are full equals of the Protestants, and more so, for there's such a many of them that they're half the magistrates an' the judges, and much more than half the corporation-folk in the towns, besides plenty of members of parliament' (p. 393).

As to the question of repeal of the Union, Una's husband expresses disgust about the fact that those, like himself, who had contributed to the Repeal 'rent' were never able to find out what became of the money, 'though it went by thousands a-week to the Repeal Association in Dublin' (p. 393):

> 'And when I read in the history-book what sort our own old parliament was, I can't for the life of me see why we should want 'em back again. I've come to think it's a long sight better to belong to a great big empire, and share its prosperity and be sheltered by its power (ay, and sometimes be supported by its money too, like in the famine seven years ago), than to be trying to govern ourselves on separate interests, and squabbling like a set of Kilkenny cats' (pp. 393-4).

They all agree to travel to the great exhibition in Dublin, the 'Industry of all Nations'.[37] While there, Myles is particularly impressed by the enthusiastic welcome accorded to Victoria, who is described, deliberately it seems, as 'Queen of England': 'Not a man of all the millions congregated in Dublin during that triumphal procession but seemed proud to feel that the fair Lady was his Queen also; and the full chivalry of the Celtic heart clasped about her throne' (p. 394). Finally, Myles Furlong Jnr, having seen the evidence for his own eyes, 'declined thenceforth to see and hear through the organs of interested demagogues' (p. 394), and the novel ends with an exhortation that all Irishmen would follow his example.

Una's husband, described by Myles as 'a regular Britisher' (p. 394), is a mouthpiece for a new progressive Ireland. *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* could claim to be the first 'Victorian' 1798 novel as it appears to embrace wholeheartedly progress and empire, and it projected an imperialistic view of Ireland's position in the modern world. The 'Industry of all Nations' exhibition is portrayed as the moment when Ireland drops repeal and embraces the Union – and, by extension, the empire – in the form of Queen

[37] For an account of the origin and impact of the Dublin exhibition see A. Jamie Saris, 'Imaging Ireland in the Great Exhibition of 1853', in Leon Litvak and Glenn Cooper (eds.) *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000), pp. 66-86.

Victoria. The novel also addresses the land situation by suggesting that no reasonable person could want more than had already been given – the aforementioned 'robbers thought'.

There are, however, several inconsistencies and contradictions in the vision of Ireland propounded. If Una's husband's comments are to be taken as indicative of Walshe's views, then 'equality', as it is portrayed here, seems to relate to an equal sharing of opportunity and power between Catholic and Protestant rather than equal opportunity for the individual.[38] Return to an Irish parliament is rejected on the grounds of the memory of the old parliament rather than any sense that it would be a new, reformed, one. The past is seen as retrograde. It is also interesting to note that being part of the United Kingdom is seen to have been an advantage during the famine period.

An inherent tension exists also with regard to the role of the established church. The evangelical nature of the novel strongly suggests that it is a modernising, civilising and progressive influence. On the other hand, it is also a powerful agent in the 'old' Ireland. The only way to resolve such a conflict is to suggest that the ultimate solution is for Catholicism to be rejected and to wither away, and for all to convert to the established church. Ideally, this should mean that Una and her husband are Protestants, but their religion is never made explicitly clear. Indeed, despite his importance to the end of the novel the husband remains a shadowy figure, without even the dignity of a name. The conundrum is this: if they are Protestants, simple arithmetic disqualifies them from representing the majority of the people, and if they are Catholic, then their views obviate the necessity for conversion. Hence the first principle of the novel – that all of Ireland's problems spring from the religion of the people – causes the moral of *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* to collapse under the weight of its own logic.

The novel is also a message aimed at Irish-American opinion, and particularly to those who support the Fenian movement. This is clear from the portrait given of Myles Furlong Jnr. In the Preface the writer stresses that the novel was written before 'the present Fenian agitation', and that the descriptions of the 1798 rebellion cannot 'without the grossest violation of truth and good faith, be pleaded as justifying the incendiary

[38] See above, pp. 196-7. Catholics are 'half' the judges and magistrates, 'much more than half' the membership of corporations, and have 'plenty' of members of parliament. In a truly equal society, one would expect those percentages to be higher.

projects which are now once more disturbing the peace of Ireland' (p. 6). Later, while attacking the patriotism of Wolfe Tone and other United Irishmen, the Fenian movement is explicitly attacked, being described as 'half a score wrong-headed Celts' (p. 292),[39] and contemporary historians are also criticised for portraying Wolfe Tone as an 'earnest, disinterested, humane man', when he had 'worked with might and main to bring the sorest of all calamities on the land – invasion and war' (p. 293). Ultimately, though, *The Foster-Brothers of Doon* is a conservative novel with a progressive message, but this progressive message is inspired by the traditions of the past. Ireland's primary problem is that it is not Britain, and the anxiety present lies in the fear that it does not seem to want to be part of Britain, upbeat ending notwithstanding. These inherent contradictions are tacitly recognised by the author, and so the novel ends in a state of uneasy optimism.

'Insurrection a duty': patriotic novels of the 1860s

After the comparative silence of the decades following emancipation and the Famine, the 1860s was to become the most prolific decade to date in terms of 1798 novels, with at least eleven full-length novels published during this time. The end of this decade saw the emergence of the first unambiguously nationalist interpretations of the rebellion, but the novels of the early years of the decade did highlight some concerns and issues not entirely unconcerned with the political and social developments of the times.

Agnes Arnold (1860) is set, like *The Foster-Brothers of Doon*, primarily in Wexford and also features William Putnam McCabe, albeit in a more flattering light.[40] William Bernard MacCabe (1801-91), the author, was a journalist who worked in both Dublin and London. *Agnes Arnold* is the first novel to put the incidences at Boolavogue (here called 'Boolyvogue' and, later, 'Ballyvogue'), such a staple of later nationalist interpretations of 1798, at the centre of the story. The eponymous heroine of the story is

[39] 'We may be thankful that this exaggerated and mistaken patriotism has ceased to exist, except among perhaps half a score wrong-headed Celts, who have chiefly found shelter on the other side of the Atlantic, and succeed in deluding a few dupes occasionally into deeming them (the wrong-headed Celts aforesaid) the greatest and wisest of mankind' (p. 292).

[40] Portrayed as a demagogue and troublemaker in *Doon*, here McCabe is portrayed as a true and ardent, if perhaps over-zealous patriot, and as a man wronged, having been arrested on his return to Ireland in 1818, and held in custody for two years without charge. The novel is said to have been inspired by conversations with him; William Bernard MacCabe, *Agnes Arnold. A Novel*, 3 vols. (London, 1860), 'Introduction', p. iii; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

the ward of John Kirwan, a liberal Wexford Protestant landlord. Kirwan has two orphan nephews who are half-brothers: John Williams, a lawyer with United Irish sympathies, and James Williams, whose mother was 'considered to be the handsomest woman, of her colour, in Jamaica' (i, p. 20).[41] James is a lieutenant in the Durham Fencibles, a militia regiment present in Wexford at the time, and he embraces the Orange Order as a way of seeking revenge on his uncle and half-brother for what he perceives as his less favoured status. He is thwarted in his plans to murder his uncle and half-brother and to force Agnes to marry him. Despite the fact that he murdered an old woman, James is allowed to escape to protect the Kirwan name, and he eventually becomes one of the *aide-de-camps* of Lord Camden's household.

Anxious to preserve life and avoid unnecessary bloodshed, Kirwan, despite his disapproval of secret societies, is forced to accept command of the local rebels when the rebellion breaks out. After the failure of the rebellion, McCabe procures a passport for Kirwan that allows him to escape to England. James Williams, while attempting to follow and kill Kirwan's party, is himself killed by Ned Reddy, a villain in his employ. Kirwan eventually returns to his estate, Abbeylawn, where he 'employed his wealth in mitigating the evils that overwhelmed his poorer neighbours in consequence of the rebellion' (iii, p. 243). John Williams and Agnes marry.

The novel itself, like so many other representations of 1798, is comprised of extremes. The moderate view is represented by Kirwan and John Williams, and by their loyal servant Pat Kinchela, whose mother is the old woman murdered by James Williams. What is unusual is that the moderate loyalist view is not represented by any major character. The inference seems to be that there can be no moderate view that involves doing nothing about the condition of Ireland. To advocate doing nothing, taking into account the pressing need for change of some sort, is an extreme view.

Kirwan's views are not entirely moderate, but are contained within safe and respectable historical parameters. He is not without his contradictions however. He supports the 'publicly declared' aims of the United Irishmen: Catholic emancipation, just amelioration of tithes for non-Anglicans and a reform of parliament. The House of

[41] The full names of the brothers are John Kirwan Williams and James Kirwan Williams, but to prevent confusion with John Kirwan, the 'Kirwan' element has been dropped here.

Commons should be, in his view, 'representative of the tax-payers in Ireland' (i, p. 48). He talks of the United Irishmen resolving to achieve these aims by force of arms 'as we, in Ireland, won our legislative independence by the embodyment [*sic*] of the volunteers; and, as the Americans have established for themselves a Republic, separate and independent of the Crown of Great Britain' (i, p. 50). He does not appear to have a difficulty with force of arms *per se*. Like Charles Mason in *Oddities and Outlines*, however, he does not agree with seeking help from France, as that would make them rebels:

> 'I am not prepared, for the choice of obtaining political changes which I consider desirable, to abjure that loyalty which every subject owes to his Sovereign, and in so doing to lose my life as a traitor .... That which is a constitutional demand, I will never seek for by unconstitutional means .... I am placed between two violent parties. I refuse to identify myself with those who, professing, "liberty," are seeking to deprive their sovereign of his kingdom of Ireland – and I decline to co-operate with those who, calling themselves "loyalists," are seeking to imbrue their hands in the blood of their Catholic countrymen' (i, pp. 51-3).

Kirwan's chief concern is to see that the rule of law is upheld, and he is concerned for Agnes in an Ireland where the law is abused by all parties: 'Here, I, my two nephews, and my servants, are your only protectors; but in England the law is your guardian, and every man who can wield a weapon a supporter of the law' (i, p. 60). This last comment is the key to Kirwan's position: it is right and proper to wield a weapon in support of the law, and constitutional rights are part of the law. Therefore it is acceptable to use force, like the Volunteers and the American revolutionaries, to protect and – it is implied – to assert constitutional rights. This can only be done, however, within the rights already conferred by the British Constitution. American taxpayers were denied the right of parliamentary representation, therefore it was right and proper that they established their own form of representation. However, Ireland had its own parliament, so reform to include representation of all the taxpayers of Ireland was just and fair. In this way one could justify the use of force domestically, and yet still maintain that working with outside help was treason. It is essentially a conservative view, satisfying Burkean notions of organic, internal, change. 'Unconstitutional means', in this analysis, would include outside help.

The narrative is structured around three bilateral relationships: those of Kirwan and Fr Murphy of Boolavogue; Jack Hope and William Putnam McCabe; and Ned Reddy and James Williams. The pairings represent those who were caught up in events, those who fomented and planned events, and those who tried to use events to their own advantage, respectively. In each case the second person is the more extreme figure. For the first time in a novel Fr John Murphy of Boolavogue is portrayed as something other than a rabble-rousing demagogue full of sectarian hatred. Kirwan describes him as his 'particular friend ... as the Roman Catholic pastor of this parish, unceasing in his labours to maintain his flock in a due obedience to the laws; and the proof that he has not laboured in vain is to be found in the fact, that there is not an United Irishman in the entire district' (i, p. 184). Murphy and Kirwan meet at the battle of Oulart Hill, where Murphy justifies his presence at the head of the rebel army by claiming it was a defensive move 'in obedience to the first law of nature – to protect one's life, and defend one's own existence as long as we can' (iii, p. 103).[42] This is the first defence of Murphy to be found in the novels surveyed to date and it purports to come from his own mouth. It was perhaps still too early for a narrator to defend explicitly what had been seen up to recently as the indefensible. However, he is defended by others. John Williams, speaking as a lawyer, agrees that Murphy was justified in his actions, and comes close to a justification of the rebellion as a whole by testing Murphy's actions against the British Constitution:

> 'The loyalty of every British subject is conditional. His allegiance is due to the crown, so long as the crown protects him in life, liberty, and property, but when the crown arms men to deprive the subject of life, liberty, or property, then the ties of allegiance are broken, rebellion becomes a virtue, and insurrection a duty. To punish crimes, such as those committed in Ballyvogue [*sic*], it is incumbent

[42] 'I did not expect to see you here – as, indeed, I never calculated upon being in such a position myself. But for me, there was no other alternative .... At Boolyvogue had I presented myself unarmed before the Orangemen [the North Cork militia], they would have hung me, because I am a clergyman in front of my own chapel. What then was I to do? Patiently to see them destroy a place of public worship, and unresistingly permit them to place their murderous hands on my person; or – to punish them for their sacrilege and their murders, and so – prolong my life? You know, Mr. Kirwan, how willingly I co-operated with you in discountenancing all secret societies – how urgent I was with my flock to obey the law; and – fool that I was! – I promised them – for I believed that I was stating the truth – that if they did so, their lives would be safe, and their little properties secure. The very quietude of my parishioners was mistaken for cowardice, and the murderous Orangemen supposed they could terrify them into submitting to every cruelty that might be practised upon them. Hence they perpetrated such crimes as would thrill you with horror to hear of' (iii, pp. 103-4).

> upon every man who can wield a sword to betake himself to arms, and never to lay them down, until condign punishment is inflicted upon the sacrilegious murderers' (iii, p. 108).

Despite these words, neither Williams nor Kirwan takes any active part on the rebel side in the rebellion.[43] That was possibly asking too much of *Agnes Arnold*'s readers.

William Putnam McCabe and John ('Jack') Hope represent two aspects of what might be called the idealistic wing of the rebels.[44] McCabe is portrayed as being adjutant-general to Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and as a man who genuinely believes that it is the grand intention of England and the English to exterminate the Irish people. He cites Spenser, Cromwell, Ludlow and others as evidence for this,[45] and claims that anti-Irish prejudice in England is not purely linked to dislike of the Catholic religion: 'this was a universal feeling – a purely English feeling – not a mere sectarian feeling ... the most distinguished Roman Catholics [in England] partook of it' (i, p. 150). Hope is seen to be more moderate than McCabe, and rejects history for personal experience, displaying a less dogmatic form of patriotism and political idealism. Hope professes himself to be a Christian, and not a disciple of Thomas Paine.

In one area they are agreed, however, and it is a point re-echoed throughout the partial re-writing of the rebellion that occurs in many novels of this time. It is the idea

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[43] Kirwan was taken into custody almost immediately after agreeing to lead the rebels of his locality, but since he had not led them for any length of time, nothing can be proven against him.

[44] Hope is a representation of James ('Jemmy') Hope (1764-*c.*1846), a Presbyterian weaver and linen-worker of humble origins who worked as a United Irish organiser and was closely involved with many of the leading figures of the organisation, including Samuel Neilson, Henry Joy McCracken, Thomas Russell and, later, Robert Emmet. The real Jemmy Hope, like the author of *Agnes Arnold*, was concerned that posterity should place the actions of the rebels of '98 in their proper context and take into account the circumstances of the time: 'Volumes have been written, recording the crimes and cruelty of mankind, but the causes from which they spring, is often overlooked, of which the circumstances in which men are placed appear to have a prominent share, and historians often have some reasons for avoiding their delineation, sometimes interest, and sometimes ignorance'. Hope also defends the idealistic rebels from the opportunists on both sides: 'We had bad men with us, and so may they [the government side] have amongst them; but no good cause requires the support of bad men. The bad men who joined us had to play the hypocrite; they had the enemy's ranks for a retreat, whenever they feared detection, and they then charged us with their own evil intentions'; see R.R. Madden, *Antrim and Down in '98: The Lives of Henry Joy McCracken, Henry Munro, James Hope, William Puttnam McCabe and Rev. James Porter* (London: Burns, Oates and Washburne, *c.*1900), pp. 92, 90. Both of these quotations seem to be relevant in the context of *Agnes Arnold.*

[45] 'Ludlow' is Edmund Ludlow (Ludlowe) (1616/17-1692), army officer and regicide, who was a key figure in the puritan revolution, and was sent to Ireland as a soldier and as one of the civil commissioners of the government of the country from 1651-5. He wrote the *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, eventually published in 1698-9; see C.H. Firth, 'Ludlow, Edward (1616/17-1692)', rev. Blair Worden, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online: Internet (23/06/05): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17161>.

that the rebellion that occurred was not the intended rebellion but one forced upon the organisers and one that, not being theirs, was outside their control. As such, they were not strictly responsible for it, and the responsibility for the actual rebellion and the slaughter it engendered lay firmly elsewhere. The most effective way to portray this sense is to have someone forecast what will happen, as Abner Grimm does in *The Rebels of Glenfawn*. In *Agnes Arnold* the oracle is William Putnam McCabe:

> 'I think that the general principle which actuates the Irish government is to force the people into a premature insurrection .... To compel the people so to take arms, before they are properly drilled and organised, my belief is that the government is indifferent as to what may be the crimes committed, nor in how many parts of the country perpetrated' (i, pp. 154-5).

The idea that the government provoked the rebellion is in no way new, or in no way without merit as an argument.[46] In this period, however, it gathers a new sophistication by employing soothsayers such as McCabe and Grimm to not only forecast what will happen, but to give a glimpse of what might have been. What has been thwarted was not a bloody and divisive rebellion, but a noble and idealistic one. The bloody and divisive one was the consequence of the thwarting of the other. 'If they succeed [in provoking a rebellion] ,' says McCabe, 'then they [Camden and Castlereagh] have gained all that they desire; and we are, thereby, deprived of all hope of that which we seek for – a revolution, and not a rebellion' (i, p. 157). The revolution-not-rebellion idea looks towards both the American and French Revolutions, allowing both the moderate and radical reader to take their choice of 'preferred' revolution. Rather the rebellion being merely a failed revolution it becomes an ideal unsullied by the actuality of 1798. In *Agnes Arnold* we inch ever closer towards a radical re-interpretation of that actuality.

The third bilateral relationship in *Agnes Arnold* is between the villains of the novel, James Williams and Ned Reddy, 'the red spy'. Both in their different ways are representatives of political opportunism. Williams is a pantomime villain who personifies the kind of political opportunism that drove many into the Orange Order to maintain Protestant ascendancy and to have the law on their side. Ultimately he is seen as being no better than those rebels who sought to garner property and money from the civil turmoil.

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[46] See chapter one, p. 31.

Reddy, on the other hand, ostensibly represents the even baser elements of rebellion, ready and willing to change sides when it suits. As a government spy he is seen to be at the root of much of the trouble in the novel.[47] It is he who shouts for John Kirwan to be made general of the rebels, and starts the cry of 'death to all the Orangemen in Wexford' (iii, pp. 69-70). In fact, Reddy's actions merely serve to place the conduct of the rebel leaders in a more favourable light. Another character describes him as being 'as big a rascal as ever lived ... he can talk fine patriotic sentiments as glibly, as if he was a lawyer; and he sings a rebelly-ballad in such a way, as would tempt any one that listened, and was fool enough to believe him in earnest, to hammer out a pike-head and use it' (iii, p. 239). He is not without some redeeming qualities however. Reddy refuses to kill John Kirwan when James Williams commands him to do so, describing him as 'the rich man, who is always thinking of the poor, and how he can help and relieve them, just as if he was born a poor man himself, and had only the care of his own riches, not to make use of them himself' (iii, p. 229). His purported reasons for helping James are also worth considering:

> 'you are the offspring (on the mother's side, at all events) of a race of slaves – that is, of poor people – and all poor people were, at one time, I am told, slaves – not merely the workers in the fields, but in the shops – the tailors, carpenters, masons, and such like. Now, therefore, it is that I say, that you and I are equals – we both come from the poor; and you are now engaged in doing what I would like to see the child of every poor person doing – you are trying to spoliate the rich' (i, pp. 225-6).

Later Reddy says to Williams: 'It is the way of the world, Master James – the rich for the rich, the poor for the poor. Wine, wax-doll women, and gold coaches for those who have wealth: sickness, sorrow, ugliness, broken-shoes, and the gallows for those who have not a cross to bless themselves with' (i, p. 238). Upon acquiring a skeleton key to break into

[47] 'What mad, stupid, wicked, or mischievous thing can be said, done, or proposed in the town yonder [Wexford], that I am not at the head or the tail of it? Have I not been amongst the loudest of screechers, and the most vociferous of bawlers in support of every crack-brained speech-maker who denounces Bagenal Harvey as "a drunkard," and swears that Father Roche "has the castle-money in his pocket," because he will not allow a Protestant woman to be insulted; or who vows that Father Murphy is "a half-renegade," because he will not tolerate the massacre of every soldier who is made a prisoner? Have I not been supporting every man, and every thing calculated to disgust every person of good feeling with the rebel cause, and to drive them away in despair from its ranks! Have I not been stirring up, so far as I could, factions; and have I not been doing my best to promote dissensions amongst the insurgents?' (iii, pp. 199-200).

Kirwan's safe he exclaims that it is 'the real, undoubted "philosopher's stone" .... the means whereby men can possess money without earning it .... Oh! it is a grand, a great, and a good instrument; for it helps to make the rich poor and the poor rich' (i, pp. 246-7). Reddy's rhetoric seems to be more a product of 1848 than 1798. When Williams abducts Agnes and offers Reddy her maid as his wife he is scathing: 'I am a poor man – or, rather, indeed, I ought to say, considering my past life, a poor rascal, or if you like to add to it, a poor villain, but still and all I won't do what I see rich rascals and rich villains do every day. I won't, for the sake of money, either murder an old woman, nor marry a young one, that I am sure hates the very ground I walk on' (iii, p. 216).

Ultimately the real villains in *Agnes Arnold* are those who had choices. Moderates and radicals were forced into a position where their choice was action of some kind. The only alternative was to do what the reactionary elements in Irish society wanted: nothing. In *Agnes Arnold* it is the government and its agents who dictated what kind of rebellion Ireland had: they provoked a premature insurrection, with all its consequences. They fomented trouble through spies such as Ned Reddy. James Williams was comfortably off, and greed was his motivation. Kirwan, Fr Murphy and idealists such as McCabe and Hope were left with no room to manoeuvre. This analysis, with its combination of powerlessness in the face of government oppression and a hint of what-might-have-been had the rebellion been allowed to take its 'natural' course, allied to a certain amount of social commentary, formed an important bridge between liberal views of 1798 and the more overtly nationalist views which were to follow.

Like *The Foster-Brothers of Doon*, Rosa Mulholland's *Hester's History* (1869) also reflects Irish Victorian anxiety, albeit this time from a writer more associated with Roman Catholic piety than Evangelical Protestantism. Mulholland (1841-1921) was one of Victorian Ireland's most popular and prolific authors, producing over fifty novels, books of stories, tales for children, poetry and works of spiritual reflection. She was a mainstay of the *Irish Monthly Magazine*, and was later married to the well-known historian and archivist Sir John Thomas Gilbert. Originally published serially in Charles Dickens' magazine *All the Year Round* in 1868, *Hester's History* reveals a mildly nationalist sensibility, but allies this with a conservative anxiety that reflects the dilemma of Victorian upper-class Irish Catholics. The rebellion is portrayed as a patriotic and non-

sectarian national uprising of both Catholic and Protestant, and the rebels are depicted as being essentially reasonable and decent.

In an analysis that could be applied to the political circumstances of the 1860s as much as the 1790s, the great consequence of 1798 in *Hester's History* is that the traditional ruling class forfeited its leadership role in Ireland by abrogating its responsibilities in the 1790s through a mixture of vacillation and political opportunism. Sir Archie Munro, a member of the religiously ambiguous Munro family who are at the centre of the novel, is tortured by his guilt at not having agreed to lead the rebels. As he says to Lord O'Neal,[48] who is later killed by rebels at the battle of Antrim: 'I ought to have been a leader of the rebels, and so ought you, and every man who has influence and power in the country. We have been systematically, and in cold blood, goaded to resistance. If we had all risen as a man, and resisted, we should have compelled our rulers to treat us like the rest of humanity, and the world would have looked on and respected us'.[49] This is the alternative rebellion scenario in another guise. By not giving the people 'the assistance which they had a right to expect from us' (ii, p. 169), the ruling class has sacrificed any claim to leadership that it may have had.

Munro's rhetoric takes on added significance when viewed in the light of developments in 1860s Ireland, which saw the Protestant ascendancy suffer a further loss of hegemony with the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, the rise of Fenian agitation and, beginning in 1870, a series of parliamentary acts that would finally wrestle the land from the possession of the great landowning families. *Hester's History* becomes not just a condemnation of an abrogation of responsibility in the 1790s, but a requiem for a gradual loss of power and influence that can be traced back to that period, and a further development of the alternative rebellion theme. *Hester's History* infers that had the people been led by those whom they had a right to expect to lead them, the rebellion would have been a truly national one that maintained a representative element within it. At its heart this is a conservative notion, predicated on the assumptions that there was no need to alter the fundamental structure of society, and that the enemy was

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[48] This is Lord O'Neill, of Antrim Castle, who was subsequently killed at the battle of Antrim; see *1798 Rebellion*, op. cit., p. 125, and chapter one, p. 23.

[49] Rosa Mulholland, *Hester's History*, 2 vols. (London, 1869), ii, p. 169; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

an external one: 'England'. Again, however, there is the sense that a vital opportunity had been lost.

The alternative rebellion becomes an attractive notion when compared to the reality of Union, which had resulted in a gradual – and, by the 1860s, irrevocable – decline in the power and influence of the traditional ruling class. There is a clear sense that the betrayal of patriotic principles in 1798 and 1801 had resulted in a permanent loss of power and influence. The dilemma and anxiety for Irish Catholics of the upper-middle and upper-classes was that they too were a part of that grouping. Archie's ominous comment that the people had now 'ranked under other leaders' (ii, p. 171), had a special resonance in 1860s Ireland.

The 'Good Irish reader': Fenianism and 1798[50]

At any other time, *Hester's History* would probably have seemed quite radical in its condemnation of the ruling classes and its identification of a leadership vacuum at the heart of Irish society, but 1869 also saw the publication of two novels that would introduce a new and unapologetically nationalist interpretation of 1798 into the rebellion discourse. The first of these, Charles Graham Halpine's *The Patriot Brothers*, centres round the story of John and Henry Sheares, who were thrust into leadership roles after the arrest of most of the Leinster Directory in the famous raid on Oliver Bond's house in March, 1798.[51]

The son of a Church of Ireland clergyman who had also been editor for a time of the *Dublin Evening Mail*, Halpine (1829-68), emigrated to the US where he served in the US army and was later a newspaper editor and registrar of New York county. He was closely associated with the Fenian movement in New York. From a Fenian perspective,

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[50] The words 'Fenian' and 'Fenianism' will be used in this study as a generic term not just for the members of the secret oath-bound physical-force Irish republican organisations established on both sides of the Atlantic from the late 1850s onwards, but for those people who broadly supported their aims and their methods. In organisational terms the Fenian movement included the American-based Fenian Brotherhood (est. 1858) and its successor, Clan na Gael (est. 1877) as well as their Irish and British-based equivalent, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). Fenians were generally anti-clerical, and were prepared to use any tactics they deemed expedient in furthering their aims of an independent Ireland; see Patrick Quinlivan and Paul Rose, *The Fenians in England 1865-1872: A Sense of Insecurity* (London: John Calder, 1982), pp. 1-8. A key assumption made in this thesis is that Fenianism saw itself as being part of a long tradition of periodic heroic resistance to British oppression, and that each successive attempt, however unsuccessful, added both to the righteousness of their cause and the certainty that one day freedom from British rule would be achieved.

[51] See chapter one, p. 17.

the story of the Sheares brothers seemed to contain the right ingredients for a re-interpretation of 1798 as a glorious national uprising destroyed and derailed by the perfidy of government and its network of spies and informers.[52] Their story contained the stuff of tragedy and melodrama. Three other brothers had already died tragically and according to Madden's *Lives*, in each case John Sheares, the younger of the two survivors, had blamed himself for their deaths. His great fear was that he would be the cause of the death of his last surviving brother.[53] In addition, as Henry Sheares' first wife had been initially betrothed to John Fitzgibbon – the Earl of Clare and lord chancellor of Ireland by 1798 – the scope for a Victorian-style melodrama of revenge was clear.

The *dénouement*, where Henry Sheares, the family man, is hanged because an inflammatory proclamation written by John is found in his writing desk, has all the hallmarks of classic melodrama. There is also an element of tragedy in the story as John, before his own execution, has seen his own worst fear come to pass. Add to this the presence of an unscrupulous informer in Captain Armstrong, who ingratiates himself into the Sheares' family circle, playing with the children, while all the time planning the brothers' downfall with a lord chancellor thirsting for revenge on the man who stole his fiancée from him, and the melodrama almost becomes pantomime.[54]

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[52] Even amongst conservative writers, informers and informing was seen to be worse than rebellion; see 'Peter Paradox', *The Land of the Kelt. A Tale of Ierne in the Days of the '98. From an Unpublished Manuscript*, 3 vols. (London, 1860). *The Land of the Kelt* is a rambling and digressive narrative of the anti-Jacobin and Radcliffean variety that portrays the 1798 rebellion as some kind of gothic nightmare, incorporating all the traditional tropes of the gothic: manuscripts, secret passageways, semi-supernatural events, charnel houses and graphic descriptions of stabbings, garrottings and other unpleasant deaths. The writer appears to be a Protestant who is unsympathetic to both Catholicism and the United Irishmen. No matter how hostile writers were to the aims and ambitions of the United Irishmen, a greater degree of odium was reserved for informers and the government policy of utilising them. A 'Captain Strong' – undoubtedly based on the Captain Armstrong who betrayed the Sheares brothers – is described as 'this personification of Satan'. Referring to Strong's position in the militia the writer observes that 'it cannot be doubted that nefarious in the highest degree was the conduct of the government, not in making use of him only, but in permitting him still to continue a member of that service, to which he was a disgrace and a pollution'. The futility of the rebellion is highlighted at the end of the novel by the fact that although the hero, Roderic O'Connor, was a committed republican, the local secret committee had hidden a collection of 'instruments and emblems with the object of proclaiming the Lord of the Castle [O'Connor] by the ancient title of his family – *King of Ireland* – on the successful issue of the rebellion – without giving him any intimation of it'; see *The Land of the Kelt*, ii, pp. 93, 96; iii, p. 278.

[53] See Madden, *Lives*, 2nd ed., iv, p. 238. It seems certain that Halpine's primary source for the story was Madden's account of the brothers in his *Lives,* 2nd ed., iv, pp. 184-390 (1860); initially published in *Lives*, 1st series, ii, pp. 1-287 (1842). In essence, *The Patriot Brothers* is a re-telling of Madden's story.

[54] One of the classic tropes of the whole 'informer' motif of the nineteenth century was the image of Captain Armstrong dandling Henry Sheares' children on his knee while all the time plotting to betray their father. Armstrong himself, in an interview with Madden, was at pains to emphasise that he had never played with any children in the Sheares' household; see Madden, *Lives*, 2nd ed., iv, pp. 368, 371-2, 378-81.

Halpine gives the story some extra melodramatic elements that are not contained in Madden, and makes a couple of significant alterations that will be considered here. Even Madden does not try to defend the content of John Sheares' proclamation, but suggests by reference to other incidences that he may have been temporarily maddened into writing it. Madden is at pains to stress the testimony of those who maintain that whatever the sentiments contained in the proclamation, neither of the Sheares brothers would be capable of carrying them out. Where Halpine differs from Madden, however, is in the suggestion that much of the proclamation was dictated to a reluctant John Sheares by Armstrong, thereby shifting much of the blame for their deaths to Armstrong's trickery rather than John's sanguinity. In *The Patriot Brothers*, Clare's agreement with Armstrong is that he must deliver both Sheares brothers to claim his reward.[55]

The melodrama and tragedy in *The Patriot Brothers* is heightened by having Mrs Steele, the mother of John Sheares' fiancée, change her mind after initially refusing to allow John to marry her daughter. Mrs Steele had been concerned about John's lack of religious belief. By the time she relents, Halpine suggests that John was too heavily involved in the organising of the rebellion to be able to withdraw with honour, and he is forced to organise and participate in a rebellion that he knows has little or no chance of success. Here again we see the hallmarks of classical tragedy – the essential worthiness of the tragic hero, and his hubris in thinking that he has avoided his fate of condemning his last remaining brother to the grave – combined with the now familiar representation of the rebellion as a missed opportunity, and a perversion of that which was intended to be glorious and worthy. In addition, John Sheares is portrayed as being ultimately a reluctant rebel, having withdrawn 'in part' (p. 111) from the society. The 'real' rebellion should have taken place in 1797, and the subsequent one, driven by despair rather than idealism, and led by men such as John, who were honour-bound to see it through, was not the visualised rebellion.

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[55] C.G. Halpine, *The Patriot Brothers: Or, The Willows of the Golden Vale. A Page from Ireland's Martyrology* (1869; 5th ed. Dublin, 1882), p. 93; further page numbers are included parenthetically in the text. Madden mentions no such deal. Although he acknowledges that it was Castlereagh who was Armstrong's employer, he says: 'I make this observation, with a full conviction in my mind that the executions of the Sheares was mainly owing to the conduct of Lord Clare, in his official capacity, and that his private feelings influenced his public conduct on that occasion'; see Madden, *Lives*, 2nd ed., iv, p. 383. Compare this with Halpine's assessment that Clare 'scrupled not to avenge his private injuries, under the faintest colouring of law' (p. 88) and 'in the matter of revenge, his patience was indomitable' (p. 89).

The last novel to be considered here is one that can be regarded as the first unapologetically Fenian account of the 1798 rebellion in novel form. The author, Dennis Holland, was a journalist who had participated in the Young Ireland rebellion in 1848. He had been proprietor of the radical nationalist newspaper the *Ulsterman*, and worked on another radical newspaper the *Irishman*, later running the *Galway American*. He was also a member of the National Brotherhood of St Patrick, a Fenian front organisation.[56] *Donal Dun O'Byrne: A Tale of the Rising in Wexford in 1798*, was published as a shilling novel and is set as the title suggests in Wexford. The eponymous hero, who at one time studied for the priesthood at St Omer – where Daniel O'Connell went to school – is driven mad by the cruel and unprovoked murder of his only remaining son by a corporal of the Ancient Britons.[57] A desire for vengeance drives him to join the United Irishmen and he quickly becomes one of the most ferocious and effective leaders of the Wexford rebellion. He eschews any official leadership role and becomes instead a one-man instrument of vengeance upon the Ancient Britons, vowing to exterminate every man who wears their uniform. O'Byrne's promise to protect the daughter of his deceased friend Philip Bassett is the only other thing that gives his life meaning. After ensuring the annihilation of the Ancient Britons, O'Byrne rescues Grace Bassett. After the rebellion fails, he escapes to France where Grace helps to sooth and cure O'Byrne of his madness, eventually becoming his wife. O'Byrne subsequently joins the Irish legion of the French army.

Initially it might appear that in portraying O'Byrne as a man driven to the brink of madness and thirsting for vengeance, the author is trying to avoid the political and ideological basis of the rebellion and disassociating his hero from an event about which the author himself may have had reservations. It soon becomes clear, however, that O'Byrne becomes for the author an instrument of vengeance that allows him to portray the 'official' rebels as moderates, and to argue that the rebellion itself fails not because it was too savage, but because it was not savage enough. O'Byrne, in his unofficial capacity as a rebel, provides an example of the kind of action needed to effect change in

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[56] See Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), p. 69.

[57] In this regard there is a certain similarity between O'Byrne and Shawn-a-Gow in Michael Banim's *The Croppy* (1828).

Ireland. The politics of the United Irishmen is pushed into the background and what emerges from *Donal Dun O'Byrne* is a physical-force manifesto for political change in Ireland that employs all the ideology and rhetoric associated with the Fenians. The inference in *Donal Dun O'Byrne* is that moderation will only be taken as a sign of weakness, and that decisive action is the only effective means of political change.

O'Byrne's friend, an old man called Thade O'Mahony, introduces the political element into the novel. He provides the first news of the rebellion, and it is he who links the current rebellion with a series of past struggles against invaders back to the Normans. He observes that O'Byrne is a direct descendant of those who led opposition to the Normans and says 'who knows? – the O'Byrnes might win back their own again'.[58] Although it is he who swears in O'Byrne as a United Irishman, Thade's appeal to history, and suggestion that O'Byrne might win back his ancestral land and status, is a far cry from United Irish ideals of republicanism and breaking with the past. The United Irishmen, emasculated from their ideological base, become merely a trope for a vague national push for freedom, and an attitude that equates Irishness with Catholicism and those Protestants who recognise the justice of their complaints. Thade O'Mahony also gives us the first description in the novel of the man identified as the leader of the rebellion:

> 'A brave, honest, quiet priest beyant there in Wexford – nigh as big a fellow as yourself – one Father Murphy, had his people insulted and his chapel destroyed by their bloody yeomen (Heaven's curse on 'em!) and soldiers; and, driven mad (quiet though he was) at the sight, he rushed out at the head of his people, and slaughtered every one of 'em. He's now on the hills, a great general, by my oath, instead of a priest; and the whole county is flocking round him' (pp. 10-11).

Murphy has also been 'driven mad' and is seen to be, like O'Byrne, the most effective leader of the rebels. It would be wrong, however, to assume that this is a precursor to Fr Patrick Kavanagh's priest-as-leader idea.[59] The author certainly echoes Miles Byrne's

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[58] Denis Holland, *Donal Dun O'Byrne: A Tale of the Rising in Wexford in 1798* (Glasgow, n.d.[1869?]), p. 11; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text. The National Library dates it as 1869: it is certainly post-1867, as it mentions W.J. Fitzpatrick's *Ireland Before the Union* as a source, a work first published that year. The publishers Cameron and Ferguson produced and republished an extensive range of Irish-related material, much of it of a strongly patriotic nature. M.H. Gill produced an edition as late as 1944.

[59] See chapter two, pp. 53-4.

sentiments in wishing that Murphy had been confirmed as overall leader of the rebellion in Wexford, but in *Donal Dun O'Byrne*, Murphy's vocation is seen to be incidental.

Indeed, one of the most striking things about the novel is the venom reserved for the role of the Catholic clergy and hierarchy in relation to 1798. Thade, in a bitter and sorrowful outburst, asserts that the ordinary people were betrayed by the clergy: a sentiment shared perhaps by many Fenians and Fenian sympathisers of the 1860s.[60] He claims that some of the priests are 'the hired spies of the bloodthirsty Government', and what he calls a 'weak and beggarly howl of peace and resignation which the best of the priests raise whilst their wretched people are being outraged, tortured, murdered before their eyes, is the pregnant curse of Ireland ... Believe me ... if we are beaten, future generations will say that it was the attitude of the bishops and priests that defeated the hopes of Ireland in 1798' (p. 97). Murphy himself, for all the good qualities attributed to him, does not escape censure. In a footnote we are told that Murphy had previously exhorted his parishioners to surrender their arms and rely on moral and constitutional means of redress, 'and then the authorities let loose the bloodhounds on the hapless peasantry. What a lesson!' (p. 108n.). We are also told that Murphy, although 'a brave and soldierly man', was 'indecisive in council, and he knew not what advice to take' (p. 127). This indecisiveness led to him abandoning his initial idea of driving northwards towards Dublin, a decision described as 'the first false step, and [which] proved finally disastrous to the cause' (p. 127).

The question of leadership is crucial to the rebellion in *Donal Dun O'Byrne*. As well as a sense of betrayal with regard to the role of the Catholic clergy in general, the author also rails against what he terms 'feeble respectability', a quality he says the Irish, to their cost, continually look for in a leader. He continues:

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[60] 'Wexford is doing bravely; and if it only holds on for a while, we shall have every county in Ireland up. Wicklow is rising. I have seen brave Michael Dwyer and other gallant boys, and you'll hear stirring news from the old county before long. Dublin is a very hell; they're flogging and hanging the people right and left, and black Beresford, in his riding-school, rides fetlock deep in the blood of the people. Curses blight them! why do not the people rise as one mass and tear them asunder? Ah! Donal, my friend, 'tis the priests – the priests – are doing all the mischief. Whilst the whole race is being slaughtered, and the country desolated, they preach of peace. My bitter curse upon such peace! Man, man, if we only had a dozen of them like brave Father Murphy, we'd soon make short work of Sassenagh rule in Ireland .... When the thing was to uphold a coward and a scoundrel like James the Second, under the cloak of religion, they [the clergy] were ready to cry war to the knife' (pp. 96-7).

> Note this, good Irish reader: feeble respectability is an abominable nuisance in great revolutions and popular struggles, and should never receive the smallest countenance or toleration except in times of peace and leisure. In times of action you should spurn it from your path without the least compunction. But a most lamentable characteristic of Irishmen is the deference (I had almost said worship) they pay to feeble respectability at all times. We shall never be safe till this most detestable weakness is eradicated from the hearts of our people (p. 129).

Describing the negotiations for the surrender of Wexford as 'an atrocious but very consistent fraud' (p. 131), he proceeds to expand on his theme:

> Because they themselves [the Irish] have been always sensitive of their honour and faithful to their word, they must fain think others are equally reliable. This is a most deplorable weakness – especially when dealing with England or her emissaries. England's treatment of Ireland for seven centuries, savage, truculent, bloody beyond comparison as it has been, has ever been even more strongly characterized by treachery and perjury than by cruelty. Think of the thousands of trustful Gaels, surrounded in friendly council, and remorselessly slaughtered by the men who had just sworn good faith to them on the Bible and the Cross! ... But why use we these words? Irishmen will go on childishly trusting to the last; feeble respectability will throw a glamour over their eyes, and vested priests will cry from the altar-steps, "Peace, peace! have hope and trust (blind, stupid, fatuous trust in treachery and falsehood), have we not their promise?' (pp. 130-1).

This seeming anticlericalism is probably more accurately a desire to see religion as subservient to the great cause of national freedom. The Irish nation, in *Donal Dun O'Byrne* is, if not quite the Catholic people of Ireland, at least a Catholic-dominated nation. The author has no time for tokenism, and is unapologetic in his desire to have the best men in the job, regardless of religious belief. He criticises the decision to make Bagenal Harvey – one of the 'feeble respectables' – the commander-in-chief of the rebel forces in Wexford, setting aside the 'gallant and enterprising' Murphy for 'no other reason, I say, than this most extraordinary one, that he was a "respectable Protestant"' and to prove that the rebellion was not sectarian (p. 133).

Such rhetoric would seem to suggest – on the surface at least – that it was a matter of great indifference to the author what religion the leaders of the rebellion were as long as they were the best available. However, it is difficult not to discern a certain

peevishness about the fact that Protestant leadership was deemed to be necessary.[61] The author's argument also pushes the United Irishmen into the background: Harvey was after all, a leading United Irishman in Wexford, and Murphy was not. It seems clear that in *Donal Dun O'Byrne* the United Irishmen have a totemic role only. Few participants – O'Byrne's deceased friend Philip Bassett excepted perhaps – in *Donal Dun O'Byrne* share their values. The significance of the United Irishmen in the rebellion portrayed here, and in the developing nationalism of the later nineteenth century, was iconic rather than generic. O'Byrne's own comments regarding Protestants reflect this increasingly Catholic hegemony in nationalism and the totemic role of the United Irishmen: 'Curse the Protestants, if they are slaves and traitors to their country! – bless them, if they rally to us like Fitzgerald and Tone! .... True Protestant patriots will rally round us, no matter who is leader .... this is not a question of creeds, – it is a question of the independence of Ireland' (p. 159). Fitzgerald and Tone's value is not in shaping the ideals and values of the United Irishmen, but in rallying round 'us'. The message is clear: the Catholic people of Ireland now set the agenda for change. Protestants are joining 'us', not the other way round. Far from it being unimportant whether the leaders of nationalism are Catholic or Protestants, it is only unimportant because whoever leads will have to accede to the will of the people, and the 'people' are overwhelmingly Catholic.

This is not to say that this form of Fenian nationalism felt that it could do without Protestant support. It was welcome, but it had to be on the terms set by the Catholic majority. Thade O'Mahony echoes this when he says: 'If our Protestant friends, whom we have never injured, will have no faith in us, they cannot expect that we should have any faith in them. The Cromwellites and Williamites exterminated the Protestant Carlists

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[61] 'This is another most extraordinary Irish craze: this hunting after respectable Protestants, as if it mattered a rush in a great national crisis of that kind whether a man was a Protestant, or a Catholic, or a Mohammedan, provided he could fight, or handle an arm in the field. It was not a Catholic or a Protestant they wanted in that hour, but an able, energetic, stern commander; and, if such a man turned out a worshipper of Mumbo Jumbo, they should have secured him all the same. But, forsooth! they wanted to prove that this was not a war of creeds; and so the foolish people (to their own undoing) chose a feeble, good-natured gentleman – a patriot, it is true – in delicate health to be their commander-in-chief – because he was a Protestant! And they made subordinate to this poor gentleman (who speedily, by-and-by, flung up the post for which he knew he was unfit) the gallant soldier-priest who had hitherto led them to victory. As if, had they elected every officer from the corporal to the lieutenant-general from the ranks of the patriotic Protestants, it would have diminished the fiendish malignity of the ruffianly yet cowardly foes who were thirsting for their blood. But you see, good reader mine, how fast blunder follows upon blunder' (pp. 133-4).

and Jacobites as readily as the Catholic Irish; and the day must come when all religious slang on this great national question must be trampled under foot, if we would save the Irish nation from utter extinction' (pp. 159-60). The author agrees, and once more demonstrates the tension that exists between some Irish Catholic nationalists and their church:

> How terribly true these words of the pedler [*sic*] were, may be seen by Irishmen of all creeds and classes to-day, who have read in the columns of a London 'Catholic'(?) paper, the *Weekly Register*, which claims archiepiscopal patronage, the ruffianly assertion that the editors of the Irish national journals should be 'killed like mad dogs.' Every man who makes the Irish question a religious or sectarian question is an enemy of Christianity and a curse of humanity (p. 160).

Donal Dun O'Byrne is a novel about the 1860s rather than the 1790s. The highlighting of tensions between Catholic nationalists and their church is designed to have a number of consequences. Chief amongst these is to situate Fenian agitation securely within a long tradition of nationalist struggle that had been consistently condemned by the Catholic church, and to reassure nationally-minded Protestants that Irish nationalism was not some kind of grand church-approved Catholic conspiracy, even if the agenda was now being set by the Catholic majority. The influence of Fenian rhetoric on the novel is made even clearer in O'Byrne's last comments on the rebellion:

> 'Though I have no faith in the men who are over us now, I *have* faith in my country and the justice of our cause. We may be defeated this time, but it is only an episode in the struggle. Three times already … in the natural order of things, we ought to have been exterminated, within two hundred years.[62] They tried it, but they failed. We may fail to-day, but our grandsons will win .... Seven centuries the Spaniards took to drive out the Moors. *But they did it at last!* Our struggle of seven centuries for the independence of Ireland has nearly seventy years to run yet. I believe in our victory at last. If we lay the seed in bloodshed and suffering, our children will reap it in the bright red sunrise of victory' (p. 161).

Seventy years from 1798 is 1868. O'Byrne's call, therefore, is for violent action to secure independence *now*. Read in this way, and taking into account the strained relationship

[62] In a 1798 context O'Byrne is probably referring to the final defeat of the Gaelic order in 1605, Cromwell's expedition in 1641, and the Jacobite War ended by the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. For 1860s readers, the Great Famine would obviously have come to mind also.

outlined between Church and rebel, *Donal Dun O'Byrne* is an unambiguously Fenian novel.

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The novels about 1798 published between 1831 and 1869 mirrored developments in Irish society in the same period. What is surprising, however, is the extent to which the novels consistently pre-empted these developments and provided opportunities for authors – who were themselves sometimes historians – to understand these changes in human terms. Changing historical interpretations that may have been fundamentally threatening were softened by using the developing, and increasingly acceptable and accessible form of the novel. The issues became humanised, and apart from a significant and perhaps understandable silence in the 1840s, the 1798 rebellion continued to be a central issue. As its role as a central crisis in modern Irish history receded – helped undoubtedly by the lack of civil turmoil during the Famine and the abject failure of the 1848 Young Ireland rebellion to attract any significant level of popular support – 1798 took on a slightly less threatening role as an event through which writers could reflect on and refract their own present. It became the archetypal historical 'moment' or historical opportunity, the consequences of which were still unclear.

As the notion of 1798 as an immediate moment of crisis in Irish history ebbed, it is interesting to consider quite what this receding tide left on the shore. On one hand, there was a continuing interrogation of the potential of the novel form in the writings of major writers such as Charles Lever, who refined and redefined the national novel genre to the extent that what he created could be called both 'anti' national tales (as in the case of *The O'Donoghue*) and 'supra' national tales (as in *Maurice Tiernay*). Samuel Lover's *Rory O'More* was an example of the potential of novels to make salient points in an ostensibly comic and trivial way using the 'stage Irishman' figure so detested by nationalists, but whose effect can be gauged by the reaction of the anonymous reviewer in the *Dublin University Magazine*.

On the other hand, Protestant – and indeed upper-class Catholic – anxiety about the consequences of Catholic emancipation and a subsequent loss of political and religious hegemony is seen to be rooted in the supreme idea that manifests itself in

relation to 1798 in this period: the notion that the 1790s was an era of missed opportunity. The subtext of this is a sense that what was missed was the opportunity to cement their hegemony in Ireland. As a result, the concept of the alternative rebellion began to make an appearance, in which a broadly conservative and 'respectable' rebellion was proposed that would, while addressing the more manifest injustices in Irish society, essentially maintain the social *status quo*. The alternative rebellion also satisfied the need to explain how and why power in Ireland was wrested from the traditional ruling elite and assumed by others. It is the essentially decent qualities of the rebel leaders that led to the failure of idealism and moderation and to the *jacquerie* rebellion that eventually occurred. Only *Hester's History* suggests that it may have been an abrogation rather than a failure of leadership. 'Leadership', in this case, is power, and the novels of this period are a requiem for the lost opportunity available to the leaders of eighteenth-century Ireland to put its own house in order.

There are two further reasons why the alternative rebellion idea was attractive to writers of this period. It provided an outlet for old-fashioned patriotism and also allowed patriotic writers, now that 1798 had been retrospectively 'justified' to some extent by the granting of Catholic emancipation, to separate and celebrate the ideals and intentions of patriots. While these figures were ostensibly United Irishmen in the fictions presented here, they were really modified versions of eighteenth-century patriots. One of the effects of this, however, was the rehabilitation of those who provided the vision for the rebellion, and the sense that had they not been manipulated and then removed from the equation by the forces of government, the rebellion might have had a very different tenor and – perhaps – a different outcome. At the end of this period we begin to see, in novels like *The Patriot Brothers* and *Donal Dun O'Byrne*, the first signs of a change in emphasis and authorship that prefigured the drastic reinterpretation of 1798 that was to come. In the decade that followed the 1860s the first commemorative monument to those involved in the rebellion was erected, but in the period 1831-69 the novels examined here can be seen as contributing, in their own ways, to the rehabilitation process involved in celebrating 'the memory of the dead'.[63]

[63] 'The Memory of the Dead' is the title of John Kells Ingram's famous ballad which begins with the memorable and oft-quoted line, 'Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?'. The last verse is particularly apposite: 'Then here's their memory – may it be/For us a guiding light,/To cheer our strife for liberty/And

teach us to unite!/Through good and ill, be Ireland's still, /Though sad as theirs your fate;/And true men be you, men,/Like those of Ninety-Eight.' It was initially published in the *Nation* on 1 Apr. 1843 and was included in *The Spirit of the Nation* later that year; see Moylan (ed.), *Irish Song Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 102-3. In attacking the tendency of respectable people to be circumspect about the 1798 rebellion, praising the sacrifice of those who died, and portraying the rebellion as both something to inspire present generations and as a yardstick for measuring one's patriotism, it very much reflects the kind of interpretations seen in the novels of this period. That such a work could come from the pen of a man who was later professor of Oratory (1852-66) and Greek (1866-77) in Trinity College, Dublin, and later librarian (1879-87) and vice-provost (1898-9), says something about the complex resonance of 1798.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Resurrection of the Dead: 1870–1898

At the present time, anything relating to Ireland has an exceptional interest; and the graphic picture of the terrible Rebellion of 1798 ... will produce a powerful impression on all who realize how little things have changed in that "distressful country" ...

Anonymous review of E.C. Boyse's *That Most Distressful Country* in the *Spectator* (1886)

With the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, another vestige of ascendancy power in Ireland was swept away. The first Land Act of 1870 was proof that an irreversible process of change was under way and there seemed to be little now to prevent a rising Catholic middle-class from seizing political hegemony in Ireland. It was somehow both ironic and appropriate that the great political leader of nationalist Ireland in this period, Charles Stuart Parnell, should emerge from the Protestant landowning class and be ultimately destroyed, in the popular mind at least, by Catholic, middle-class Ireland.

In literary terms a new Catholic self-confidence and assertiveness was reflected by an increase in the number of magazines and novels aimed at a growing Catholic readership. In novels about the rebellion, the 'alternative rebellion' trope is further developed and the theme of legitimacy, so prominent in the novels of the previous four decades, assumes if anything even more significance in a period where political and economic power moves largely from Protestant to Catholic hands. A new orthodoxy emerges, tailored to suit Catholic and nationalist perceptions of the past, that largely equates 'Catholic' and 'Irish' as one and the same. This perception is not without its own difficulties, however, and the ideals promoted by the United Irishmen were in many key ways a direct refutation of that orthodoxy. As a result, tensions can be seen even within the Catholic/nationalist paradigm known as 'faith and fatherland'.

Broadly unionist writers of this period also adopted a new strategy, and increasingly avoided the grand historical debate about the nature of the rebellion itself, except to voice scepticism about the sincerity of the spontaneous solidarity between Catholic and Dissenter during that period. Moving away from the grand historical narrative and concentrating instead on the personal experiences of individuals allowed

unionist writers to avoid political controversies and to shape their accounts of 1798 according to their own particular agendas. The major contention in this period was not between nationalist and unionist accounts of 1798 but between competing nationalist interpretations, and these accounts of 1798 reflect a battle between the Catholic church and Fenianism for the hearts and minds of Irish nationalists.

Faith versus fatherland

Fr Patrick F. Kavanagh's landmark *A Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798* set the trend for the 'faith and fatherland' historical interpretation of 1798 that endured, in various guises, well into the twentieth century.[1] In this analysis, Fr John Murphy of Boolavogue takes centre stage as the archetype: the priest who, eschewing violence and the evils of secret societies that forced individuals to swear an oath of allegiance before God, was forced into a leadership role as defender of his people after having trustingly persuaded his parishioners to surrender their weapons to the authorities.

What Kavanagh's *Popular History* succeeded in doing was not to reinvent the rebellion in Wexford, but in a scholarly way to control and condense 'popular' perceptions of what had happened into a clear narrative that served the cause of Catholic Ireland in the broadest sense. This involved strengthening the ties between people and clergy at the expense of those who most seriously threatened that relationship, particularly members of secret societies such as the United Irishmen of the past and the Fenians of the 'present'. While Kavanagh did not 'invent' the heroic Fr Murphy, the narrative that is outlined in his *Popular History* is the first positive portrayal of him in a major history of the rebellion. Henceforth, the portrayal of Murphy, and to a lesser but significant extent other Catholic clergy involved in the rebellion in Wexford, became the major indicator as to a novel writer's political viewpoint.[2] Ironically, the 'faith and fatherland' interpretation propounded in Kavanagh's *Popular History* was a reworking of the Musgravian view of the rising as a rebellion of Catholic Ireland and its allies against 'Protestant' Ireland and government forces.

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[1] See chapter two, pp. 53-6.

[2] The portrayal of Murphy indicated political viewpoint in the sense that it very clearly identified those who accepted Kavanagh's view. Less flattering portrayals of clerical involvement were not just the preserve of unionists, but also of what one might broadly label 'Fenian' novelists.

The 'faith and fatherland' notion highlights one important area of exclusion and obscures a vital area of tension. Implicit in it is the notion that to be truly 'Irish' – and by extension, a patriot – one had to be both 'Irish' – and that term included 'Celtic', 'Gaelic' and 'Norman', depending on one's own point of view – and Catholic. Non-Catholics (in the confessional meaning of that term) could not be either fully Irish or fully patriotic, since Catholicism and patriotism are seen to mutually reinforce each other. Obviously, this notion presented major problems when it came to interpreting the northern rebellion, and it was very seldom that a Catholic novelist attempted to write about it.[3] While writers across the political spectrum were sceptical about the sincerity of the alliance of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, for 'faith and fatherland' writers there was an extra dimension. In their view the failure of the alliance and of the rebellion itself owed much to the fact that Protestants and Dissenters, having not suffered in the way Catholics had, could not truly liberate that of which they were not truly a part.[4] Despite the pious sentiments expressed in Kavanagh's *Popular History* about the debt owed to those patriots who 'knelt before God at a different altar',[5] it was clear that they could only be peripheral figures in the great national project. Marginalising the non-Catholic elements of the 1798 rebellion meant essentially sidelining the United Irishmen, a task made easier by ultramontane disapproval of secret societies.

More problematic, however, was the situation for those who privileged 'faith' over 'fatherland' and *vice versa*, which produced a tension between predominantly Catholic and Fenian interpretations of the rebellion. Such tension has already been seen in novels such as *Donal Dun O'Byrne*, where although Fr Murphy is generally praised as a leader, the Catholic clergy in general are execrated for their perceived role in urging the peasantry to hand in their weaponry and to leave themselves defenceless. 'Faith' and 'fatherland' are not so easily separated, and it was not uncommon for writers to oscillate in the same works from one standpoint to the other, often seemingly unaware of the inherent contradictions of such an approach. The main 'faith and fatherland' writers of

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[3] Rosa Mulholland's *Hester's History* (1869) and Margaret Pender's *The Green Cockade* (1898) are the only novels about the northern rebellion known to be written by Catholic authors.

[4] Echoes of this view can be found even in Presbyterian novels of the rebellion as early as 1823. The notion that the rebellion was a fairly good-humoured affair for the Dissenters and Protestants and a deadly serious one for Catholics is found in John Gamble's *Charlton*. See chapter three, pp. 134-6.

[5] Kavanagh, *Popular History*, op. cit., p. v.

the 1870-98 period were David Power Conyngham, who wrote *The O'Mahony* (1879) and *Rose Parnell* (1883); James Murphy, who wrote three novels set against the background of 1798, including *The Shan Van Vocht* (1883) and *The Forge of Clohogue* (1885); and M. Louise O'Byrne, who produced what must be regarded as the ultimate 'faith and fatherland' novel in the context of the 1798 rebellion: *Ill-Won Peerages* (1884).

David Power Conyngham (*c.*1825-83), a journalist by profession, was also a novelist and historian. He was a cousin of Charles Joseph Kickham, the author of *Knocknagow* (1879), and with whom he participated in the 1848 Young Ireland rebellion. He also fought in the American Civil War, serving as a staff officer in the Irish Brigade to another veteran of 1848, General Thomas Francis Meagher. Conyngham is perhaps best known for *The Irish Brigade and its Campaigns* (1866), which immortalised the contribution of Irish soldiers to the Union cause and helped to project a positive and romantic image of post-Famine immigrants.[6] In *The Irish Brigade* he stressed the dual loyalty of the Brigade to the cause of Irish freedom and to the United States as well as the importance of Catholicism to Irish identity. In doing so he helped to define what would become the tripartite loyalty of the Irish-American identity to which the Fenians would appeal.

The O'Mahony, Chief of the Comeraghs, is aimed primarily at the American market, but not just Irish-America. Conyngham writes that he has 'endeavoured ... to lay the naked truth [of the rebellion] before the liberty-loving people of America' and that the Irish people were inspired by the 'glorious example set the world by the United Colonies in flinging off the yoke of England'.[7] Lord Edward Fitzgerald, on the British side during the revolution, 'learned to worship at the shrine they [the British] came to destroy, and returned home deeply impregnated with the new doctrine of liberty, equality and fraternity' (p. 4). This intermixing of American and French revolutionary principles and rhetoric meant that it was very difficult for any patriotic American reader not to see a similarity between the Irish problem and the former American situation.

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[6] David Power Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade and its Campaigns: With Some Account of the Corcoran Legion, and Sketches of the Principal Officers* (New York, 1867). He also wrote *Sherman's March Through the South* (1865) and two other novels: *Sarsfield: Or, The Last Great Struggle for Ireland* (1870), and *The O'Donnells of Glen Cottage* (1874).

[7] David Power Conyngham, *The O'Mahony, Chief of the Comeraghs: A Tale of the Rebellion of '98* (New York, 1879), pp. 5, 3-4; further page references will appear parenthetically in the text.

The narrative revolves around The O'Mahony, a symbol of the legitimacy of 'old' Ireland, and his difficulties with the fictional Earl of Kingston and his henchman, Sir Judkin Fitzgerald (known as 'flogging Fitzgerald'), a real historical figure.[8] The novel is set very securely in 'Irish' Ireland, a land that would have been a paradise on earth if it were not for the presence of the foreign English and their descendants. Important for the political philosophy of the novel is the transposing from the 1760s to the 1790s of one of the most famous *cause célèbre*s of the eighteenth century: the framing and execution of Fr Nicholas Sheehy, parish priest of Clogheen, Co. Tipperary. Accused of being a Whiteboy leader, Sheehy was convicted and hanged for murder in 1766. In *The O'Mahony*, in what Conyngham coyly calls a 'slight anachronism of date' (p. 5), Sheehy meets the same fate on suspicion of being a rebel leader in 1798.[9] The transposing of this celebrated act of judicial murder to 1798 ensures that there can be no doubt about the virtue of this 1798 priest and Sheehy becomes a trope for state oppression and institutional sectarianism. He was the perfect example of what James H. Murphy identifies as the 'soggarth aroon'.[10] Sheehy himself is described as being 'idolized by the poor and oppressed, and hated and feared by their persecutors' (p. 46).

Both Sheehy and The O'Mahony are examples of the 'legitimate' leaders of the people of Ireland, and correspond to a church and a state denied. Their popularity leads to attempts by Kingston and Judkin Fitzgerald to destroy both of them. In the necessarily uneasy relationship between faith and fatherland *The O'Mahony* comes down very much

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[8] See chapter two, p. 42.

[9] Fr Nicholas Sheehy (1728-66), was convicted of the murder of a man named John Bridges, a charge generally agreed to be spurious. After his execution his head remained spiked over the porch of the jail for twenty years. The evidence against him was flimsy and Bridges' body was never produced. Sheehy had spoken out against the collection of tithes. Shortly beforehand he had been arrested for complicity in Whiteboy offences, tried in Dublin and acquitted, only to be re-arrested on his return for the Bridges murder; see Alfred Webb, *A Compendium of Irish Biography* (Dublin, 1878) p. 472. The cult of Sheehy was disturbing to many conservative Protestants of the time. Musgrave describes him as 'a noted leader of the white boys, and [he] incited them to commit murder, and various outrages; and yet his memory is held in such veneration by the popish multitude, and the clay of his tomb is supposed to be endued with such supernatural powers, that various miraculous cures are imputed to it; in consequence of which, it is in such request among the popish rabble, that the sexton of the church, where his body is interred, is obliged very often to renew it'; see Musgrave, *Rebellions*, 3rd ed., (1802) i, p. 38. Initially in *The O'Mahony* he is referred to as Fr Michael Sheehy, although this is subsequently amended.

[10] The 'soggarth aroon' is the phrase used by Murphy to describe the 'loveable, self-sacrificing pastor' favoured by lower middle-class Ireland and its writers in its fiction, as opposed to the Protestant and Catholic intelligentsia stereotype of the rogueish, lascivious, dictatorial, brutal, peasant priest; see Murphy, *Catholic Fiction*, op. cit., pp. 52; 60(n).

on the side of faith. While both The O'Mahony, as a representative of legitimate secular authority, and Sheehy, as a representative of spiritual authority, are attacked, only one of them is asked to pay the price of martyrdom. Sheehy's opposition to the collection of tithes makes him a particular enemy of the local rector, Parson Hewetson. The rector is portrayed as being even more extreme than Kingston and Fitzgerald. Conyngham tries to defuse this particular situation by suggesting in a note that he does not intend Hewetson as 'a type of his reverend brethren; on the contrary, he was the exception. His persecution of Father Sheehy, we regret to say, is not a matter of fiction but of history' (p. 60).[11] While Conyngham was undoubtedly writing for a mainly Catholic audience, it was not necessarily his intention to alienate Protestant – including American Protestant – readers. His description of the church at Clogheen as a 'modest thatched edifice', and his assertion that the 'simple' peasantry needed 'no gorgeous temple to inspire their souls with true devotion, for their hearts were the temples of the Lord' (p. 44), would not be offensive to any Protestant.

In contrast, the political dimension is explained to the reader in very particularised terms. The United Irishmen, already linked more with the American revolution rather than with the French, are said to have had a 'well-digested plan' (p. 256) and Wolfe Tone is portrayed as a brave and enthusiastic patriot, but apart from the fact that a United Irish meeting in Clonmel was attended by 'respectable farmers' and 'refined and educated gentlemen' (p. 147), the organisation is damned with faint praise. Conyngham follows the Kavanagh line that the United Irishmen 'never took hold at all' in Wexford, Wicklow and Kildare (p. 170). In fact, we are told that the United Irish movement had taken 'stronger root in the North than elsewhere, simply because the Presbyterian element there was fired with the patriotic spirit' (p. 170). A subtle distinction seems to be made between the 'patriotic spirit' associated with the northern Presbyterians and the United Irishmen, and an older spiritual bond existing amongst the Catholic people of the south. We are told that 'The spirit that fired the hearts of the United Irishmen found a ready response in the breasts of The O'Mahony and his devoted followers, the brave peasantry around him, who heartily prepared to respond to the call of their leader, and longed for

[11] Musgrave writes of Hewetson that he (along with others) 'took a very active part in suppressing the white boys, for which …[they were] as much traduced and vilified, as the orangemen, yeomen, and all loyal subjects who endeavoured to put down the defenders'; see *Rebellions*, 3rd ed., (1802) i, p. 39.

the opportunity to strike a blow for the freedom of Ireland' (p. 10). Note that it is the *spirit* of the United Irishmen they share: they are not necessarily members nor do they necessarily share the aims or beliefs of the United Irishmen. The local peasantry were prepared to respond to the call of *their* leader, that is, their traditional feudal chief, and this brings us to the heart of what *The O'Mahony* is primarily about: the identification of the legitimate political and religious leaders of Ireland.

Just as Earl Kingston, Judkin Fitzgerald and their ilk were not the legitimate owners and rulers of Ireland, and Parson Hewetson and the clergy of the established church were not the spiritual leaders of Ireland, in 'faith and fatherland' terms a movement dominated by Protestants could not be called the political leaders of Ireland. If this appears to be an extreme interpretation it is given added weight by the fact that we are told that 'For centuries a bitter feud had existed between the descendants of the old chieftains, who had been despoiled of their extensive estates, and the planters or invaders who occupied them' (p. 10). The rebellion afforded the former 'a chance of ... gratifying their long-cherished thirst for revenge', while the latter saw it as a chance for them 'to destroy their enemies, devastate the country, and add more rebel lands to their already large estates' (p. 11). Seen in this light, 1798 becomes yet another land war, dominated by two sides anxious to settle the scores of the past, rather than a revolution conducted by a group that wanted to escape from it. We are also told that 'The nationalists of the time organized under the title of United Irishmen, while the landlords had concentrated their followers and retainers into some kind of military order under the name of yeomen' (p. 11). The United Irishmen are relegated to the status of a generic name for the opponents of those portrayed as the illegal and immoral occupiers of the land of Ireland.

Even allowing for a certain degree of simplification of the situation for American readers, the portrayal of 1798 as essentially a land war was hardly accidental in the 1870s. Equally, the contrast between Kingston and The O'Mahony again emphasises the distinction between them: 'The one was the inheritor of broad acres, an English title, and a savage nature; the other of princely blood, proud family associations, and unswerving devotion to God and fatherland' (p. 12). At the end of the novel we are told that the Kingston family 'gradually went from bad to worse, the race became extinct, and the castle and broad acres passed into stranger's hands, while the descendants of The

O'Mahony of the Comeraghs are still loved and honoured in the land of their fathers' (p. 268). One of the O'Mahony's sons becomes a priest and two of the major female characters become nuns, cementing the church and country connection. *The O'Mahony* was published in the US in 1879, and James H. Murphy has drawn attention to the fact that there is often a contrast between the triumphant Catholicism contained in novels written primarily for an emigrant audience and the more 'sober docility' of Catholicism contained in novels intended for a home – and a British – audience.[12] That may very well be a factor here, but it seems in *The O'Mahony* at least that the question of legitimacy demands that the true owners of the property of Ireland are the old Irish, and 'old Irish' invariably meant Catholic.

In Conyngham's other 1798 novel, *Rose Parnell* (1883), the hero is Garret Byrnes, a descendant of the chieftains 'who ruled the land long before Norman or Saxon had set foot upon her soil' and who is 'the type of the dashing, daring young Irishmen who fought and bled and died for God and fatherland'.[13] The purpose of the novel is to be 'a historical romance, which, under the pleasing guise of fiction, tries to infuse a patriotic spirit into the hearts of my readers, as well as to educate them in the duties they owe to their native country' (p. 4). The story is a rather thin one, concentrating on the adventures of Byrnes in the rebellion, his relationship with Rose Parnell and the activities of Hunter Gowan[14] and other loyalists who helped to goad the people of Wicklow and Wexford into rebellion. Again it is stressed that the United Irishmen were not a presence in south Leinster, and the novel takes its historical account of the rebellion from Kavanagh's *Popular History*. Although Conyngham relies heavily on Kavanagh he twice specifically refers to the fact that there is no adequate history of the rebellion available. In his Preface to *Rose Parnell* he writes that though there have been several histories of the rebellion, 'they are for the most part written from a prejudiced standpoint, and do not do justice to the heroic struggle sustained by gallant men for the liberty of their native country' (p. 3). Later, he writes that it is 'a noteworthy fact that we have not a popular or reliable history of the conflict in '98' (p. 208).

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[12] Murphy, *Catholic Fiction*, p. 56.
[13] David Power Conyngham, *Rose Parnell, The Flower of Avondale: A Tale of the Rebellion, '98* (1883; 2nd ed. New York: D. and J. Sadlier, 1906), pp. 24, 4; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.
[14] See chapter two, p. 42.

Given that Kavanagh's *Popular History* was supposed to be both 'popular' and 'reliable', such an observation cannot be construed as anything other than a pointed criticism of Kavanagh's work. What seems most likely in this situation is that once again the tension between balancing faith and fatherland comes to the fore, and that the reality that exists between the fact and the romantic fiction pleases or satisfies no one. Conyngham cannot pretend – even though he makes an attempt to in *The O'Mahony* – that the 1798 rebellion was a war between those who were attempting to win back their old estates and those who had taken them, and he cannot deny that patriotism and political leadership were not purely the preserve of Catholic Ireland. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *Rose Parnell*, where his fictional heroine is based on 'the late talented, patriotic, and pure type of all that is noble in womanhood … the lamented Miss Fanny Parnell' (p. 4).[15] Fanny and her brother Charles Stewart Parnell were Protestants from landlord stock and were *de facto* evidence that it was not necessary to be of 'Celtic' and Catholic extraction to be an Irish patriot. Indeed, Fanny's brother had just recently managed to unite all strands of nationalist opinion and fused the land and home rule questions in the 'New Departure'.[16] Thus Irish nationalism had also become about land, in an odd reflection of *The O'Mahony*.

In these new circumstances Conyngham extends the mantle of legitimate patriotism to include the Parnell family. The heroine's father, Sir John Parnell, describes himself as having 'scarcely a drop of Celtic blood in my veins; yet Ireland is my native land, and I love her green fields, her mountains wild, and, above all, her warm-hearted, chivalrous, but impulsive people' (p. 11). However, while the *realpolitik* of the 1870s

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[15] Frances Isabel 'Fanny' Parnell (1848-82), was the first member of the Parnell family to openly align herself with the cause of Irish independence. She wrote nationalist poetry and was, amongst other things, actively involved with the American branches of the Ladies' Irish National Land League, having moved to America in 1869. Her funeral procession in Boston in 1882, at the height of the land war and the Fenian dynamiting campaign in London, was an immense spectacle, providing a show of strength in America for Irish causes; see Anne Ulry Colman, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Irish Women Poets* (Galway: Kenny's Bookshop, 1996), pp. 184-5; also Mary Helen Theunte, 'Parnell, Fanny Isabel (1848-1882)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online: Internet (20/06/05): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21385>. 'Rose Parnell' is a fiction: her 'father', Sir John Parnell, is based on the Sir John Parnell who was the great-grandfather of Charles Stewart Parnell and Fanny Parnell. Described as 'an Irish nationalist in the Anglo-Irish sense of the word' he was a champion of the Protestant interest and an opponent of Catholic emancipation and of Union: a position that saw him dismissed as chancellor of the Irish exchequer; see E.M. Johnston-Liik, 'Parnell, Sir John, second baronet (1745-1801)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online: Internet (01/07/05): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21388>.

[16] See below, p. 279n.

demanded that Conyngham stretch a point to include the Parnells, he is not quite as generous to others, particularly those now perceived to be outside the 'faith and fatherland' paradigm. The northern rebellion is lukewarmly praised, but is seen to have failed because the northerners lacked 'the fiery zeal and hot temperament of the true Celt' (p. 200). While ostensibly praising the patriotism of the northerners, Conyngham also compares them unfavourably to their Catholic fellow countrymen, describing them as 'more cautious and calculating, and thus [they] hesitated in risking the terrible odds against them. But though slow in action, they were sincere in purpose, and at length resolved to make a gallant effort to shake off the yoke under which they had so long groaned' (p. 200).

Taken together, *The O'Mahony* and *Rose Parnell* demonstrate not just the tensions within the 'faith and fatherland' school of interpretation, but also the tensions within the 'faith' aspect. The four-year interval between them had seen in effect the worst excesses of the land war and the unifying of nationalist opinion behind one man, who happened to be a Protestant. In addition, the land issue was now firmly and securely linked to nationalism. The Parnell influence meant that a purely religious interpretation of 1798 was increasingly difficult to sustain.

In contrast to those novels emphasising 'faith', James Murphy's novels *The Shan Van Vocht* (1883) and *The Forge of Clohogue* (1885), concentrate very much on the 'fatherland' element. Together they lean towards what could be called a 'Fenian' interpretation of 1798.[17] Murphy (1839-1921) was a teacher and later professor of Mathematics in the Catholic University of Dublin.[18] In *The Shan Van Vocht* the rebellion is portrayed as a well-organised and eminently practical scheme that only needed French assistance at the right time and in the right place to have been assured of success. The novel begins in late 1796 and its hero Eugene Lefebre is the son of an Irish mother and a mysterious French sea-captain who subsequently disappeared. Lefebre is entrusted with a message for the French Directory to the effect that success would be guaranteed if the fleet landed on the east coast. He is captured on the way to France and the French fleet

[17] See chapter four, p. 207n.

[18] Murphy also wrote *Convict No. 25* (1883), *The House in the Rath* (1886), *Hugh Roach the Ribbonman* (1887), and *The Fortunes of Maurice O'Donnell* (1887); see Anne M. Brady and Brian Cleeve, *A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Writers* (Mullingar: Lilliput, 1985), p. 172.

sails for Bantry in the south-west. A large part of the novel takes place in France, where Lefebre is a witness to the unstinting work of Wolfe Tone to ensure that the French clearly understand the potential advantages of helping to liberate Ireland. Through no fault of Tone's, the rebellion begins in Ireland with no sign of French aid. Lefebre makes a plea for French assistance for Ireland, and in a statement that can be seen as a tacit approval of contemporary Fenian strategy – including the recent dynamite campaign – he argues that 'England is powerful, as Rome was, in her extremities … but strike her at home at the heart, and she collapses'.[19]

What happens in *The Shan Van Vocht* is an inversion of some of the earlier portrayals of the rebellion – such as that in Lever's *Maurice Tiernay* – where the Irish rebels let down the French invaders, either by being totally unprepared for them, totally untrained, or only interested in outrage, pillage and plunder. In this novel the rebellion has been well planned and it is the French who let the Irish down, firstly by not arriving at the right time, and subsequently by arriving in the wrong place. The great Irish historical trope of the missed opportunity is encapsulated in Napoleon's decision to head for Egypt instead of Ireland.[20] The novel makes it clear that the eventual French landings – those at Ballina and the later attempt at Lough Swilly – were merely supposed to be diversions from the major landing of 10,000 men under General Kilmaine near Dublin. This has two main purposes: it absolves Wolfe Tone from any accusation of failure and also absolves the Mayo landing from any allegations that it was a farce, as *Maurice Tiernay* would have it, or a token effort, or both. Indeed, one is left with the impression that the Mayo expedition was a spectacular success, given what could reasonably have been expected from a force of two thousand men.[21] François, Lefebre's friend,

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[19] James Murphy, *The Shan Van Vocht: A Story of the United Irishmen* (1883; new ed. Dublin, 1889), p. 223; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text. The Fenian dynamite campaign lasted from 1882-5 and a succession of bombs in London damaged railway stations (including Victoria Station), Scotland Yard, the Tower of London, and, most famously, the House of Commons.

[20] Eugene Lefebre, in the now-familiar role of soothsayer, suggests that Napoleon's decision would have dire consequences for both Napoleon and France: 'I tell you now emphatically that Bonaparte has wasted the blood and treasure of France; has shamed folly by his foolishness – and he will live to say so yet – by striking at England in Egypt instead of in Ireland' (p. 226). This supposedly prefigures a comment made by Napoleon to his Irish doctor Barry O'Meara, that his greatest mistake may have been going to Egypt instead of Ireland: 'Si au lieu de l'expédition d'Eqypte, j'eusse fait celle d'Irlande … que pouvait être l'Angleterre aujourd'hui?', quoted in Pakenham, *Year of Liberty*, p. 336.

[21] Pakenham, in *Year of Liberty*, p. 298, gives a total of 1,099 officers and men: half the total claimed by Murphy.

accompanies Humbert and says that at Castlebar they defeated 'ten times our number' (p. 280). Even the expedition to Lough Swilly is seen to have a glorious termination. Tone, stricken by the realisation that the invasion might have succeeded had it happened four months earlier, is one of the heroes of a stirring sea-battle off the Donegal coast where he takes charge of a gun battery on the *Hoche*; loading the gun himself (p. 267) in a 'gallant battle against fearful odds' (p. 271).[22]

There can be no doubt that the rebellion was reshaped to reflect a Fenian interpretation of events, and this is made even more explicit as the *Hoche* prepares to surrender to the British. Tone observes that this expedition was the 'last hope of Ireland', to which Lefebre replies: 'The last in our time … but a man's life is short, whilst that of a nation is long. The years to come will bring it round again'. Tone's reply is that of a true patriot: 'Then my future is void. I lived for this and this only' (p. 273). In the novel it is maintained that Tone was assassinated (p. 340). Upon hearing of Tone's 'assassination', Lefebre makes an observation that can be construed as a warning to Charles Stewart Parnell: 'As it is now, so it will be in future when a foe arises ever whom England fears – really fears!' (p. 341).[23] This comment appears to link Tone and Parnell in the classic Fenian way of establishing a long chain of heroic Irishmen defying English tyranny.

The most obvious Fenian reference in this novel, however, involves not so much a re-writing as a *pre-writing* of Irish-American involvement in attempts to free Ireland. While effecting their escape in a boat by sailing around the north coast of Ireland, Lefebre and François come across an American ship drifting unmanned near Rathlin Island. Upon investigating they discover an old friend who had been bringing a shipload of arms, ammunition, and funds from Boston for 'the support of the Irish cause' (p. 325). Some of the English crewmembers, who had been recruited from a slave ship at Boston, had mutinied, robbing the ship of its treasure. They had killed the rest of the crew, who are described as Irish-Americans coming over 'with high hopes, poor fellows, for Ireland and themselves' (p. 327). Indeed, of all the parties in the novel, this group get the most glowing tribute as they are buried at sea: 'Till the day when the sea gives up its dead, and the history of each one is written in words of fire that all gathered mankind shall read,

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[22] See chapter one, p. 29.
[23] Charles Stewart Parnell was incarcerated in Kilmainham gaol from October 1882 to May 1883.

their names and the story of their lives were blotted out with the waters that closed over them as they sank swiftly out of sight!' (p. 328).

Such a eulogy for an entirely fictional group of Irish-American activists is an attempt to historicise the Fenian tradition and to endorse current Fenian activities.[24] The pseudo-biblical imagery employed merely highlights the fact that patriotic sacrifice is a sanctifying act. The quiet anonymity of their sacrifice is another sanctifying factor: God, at least, will recognise and reward them. Such a view appears to bless covert activities and secret societies. Rather than having religion informing patriotism, as Conyngham's novels appear to do, this is patriotism informing religion. The sacrifice of the sailors is also inspiring. Lefebre reveals to François the fact that he is half-Irish soon after: 'Perhaps it is the poor fellows who have gone to their low bed in the deep waters – forgotten and unknown – that have caused it' (p. 330).

The question of Lefebre's true identity is also central to the romantic plot that runs parallel to the 1798 story. Papers hidden in the house of his Irish cousins reveal that Lefebre is really Henri, Prince de Joinville, and a member of the royal house of Bourbon; at that time the 'legitimate', albeit deposed, monarchs of France. Such a revelation appears at first to be a wobble from the republican sentiments of the novel, but it does serve to highlight the fact that Fenian narratives, in appealing to the past for their legitimacy, essentially conjoin conservative and progressive narratives. Irish nationalist writers who derived their claim for Ireland's right to independence from the past had to acknowledge that the past was largely feudal and monarchical. This conflict is seen throughout nineteenth-century fictional accounts of the rebellion to a greater or lesser degree. The significance of the Bourbon connection could be as a complex – and perhaps tragic – symbol of legitimacy that must be periodically asserted, even if such attempts end in failure. Lefebre's Bourbon ancestry could be seen as another way of emphasising legitimacy and ultimate success in the future, s the Bourbons did, albeit temporarily, return to the throne of France.[25]

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[24] In 1867 a ship (renamed *Erin's Hope* during the voyage) brought arms for Fenian activities from New York, arriving in Sligo Bay; see T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds.), *A New History of Ireland VIII: A Chronology of Irish History to 1976* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), p. 339.

[25] 1883 was not only the year of the publication of *The Shan Van Vocht*, but was also the year of death of Henri, Comte de Chombord (1820-83), the so-called 'miracle child' born to Caroline, Duchesse de Berry, seven months after the assassination of her husband Charles-Ferdinand, nephew of Louis XVIII. Henri was

Another Murphy novel, *The Forge of Clohogue* (1885), concentrates more intensively on the Wexford rising and its didactic and political purpose is made expressly clear from the start. The purpose of the retelling is not primarily to provide a historical record of what happened in 1798, but to increase patriotic fervour amongst young people. This is made even more explicit in a final comment in the Preface: 'If Irish history may not be taught in our schools, the next best thing is to teach it by way of story and romance'.[26] The notion that it is possible to 'teach' Irish history through stories and romances highlights the fact that for writers of a nationalist persuasion such as Murphy, the purpose of Irish history was to inspire patriotism and to promote the nationalist project. The question of how far one can legitimately twist or distort historical fact in order to suit one's own didactic purposes is an important consideration with regard to *The Forge of Clohogue*, particularly in relation to Murphy's portrayal of one of the most horrific and totemic events of the 1798 rebellion in Wexford: the burning of the barn at Scullabogue.

Quite the most remarkable thing about *The Forge of Clohogue* is the way that the Scullabogue massacre is represented. As portrayals of the rebellion evolved from the notion that the uprising was a terrible and unfortunate evil towards the idea that it was an understandable and sometimes glorious reaction to tyranny and oppression, the question of how to interpret and portray the massacre at Scullabogue began to loom large. Traditionally, Scullabogue was always the indefensible: at worst an indicator of the savagery and sectarianism of the Wexford – and by extension Irish – rebels, and at best

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the last surviving Bourbon claimant to the throne. His supporters were called 'legitimists'; see 'Chambord, Henri Dieudonné d'Artois, Count de, Duke De Bordeaux.' (2005). *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* from Encyclopaedia Brittanica Online. Online: Internet (13/12/05): <http: //search.eb.com/eb/article-9022331>.

[26] James Murphy, *The Forge of Clohogue: A Story of the Rebellion of '98* (Dublin, 1885), 'Preface', p. ii; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text. In his Preface Murphy draws together the various strands of his approach, which can be taken as the archetype for the nationalist approach to the 1798 rebellion, either as history or as fiction. First, he establishes his own credentials and the source of his information, writing 'from the fact that the stories mine ears first hearkened to were associated with it, nearly all my novels have reference to that eventful period' (p. i). Second, the relevance of the retelling is linked to the political situation of the day: 'Whether or not the freedom of our land can be achieved by peaceful means, or whether the exigencies of European conflict shall make it possible – or imperative – some day for Irishmen again to stand with arms in their hands, is alone known to God; but in any case it can do no harm, and much good, to have the story of the bold uprising of the Wexfordmen told once more' (pp. i-ii). The patriotism and self-sacrifice of the rebels is cited as an example 'worthy [of] the proudest days of ancient Greece and Rome': 'it is possible that the growing generation shall learn a brighter and bolder spirit of patriotism from the freshly-told story of those who conquered at Oulart Hill and stormed the Three Bullet Gate at Ross' (p. ii).

an example of why rebellions such as 1798 cannot be allowed to happen. It remained a blot on the reputation of the Irish peasant, the glorification of whom was an inherent part of the developing nationalism. Murphy dealt with the problem of Scullabogue in the most extreme way possible: he blamed someone else.

In *The Forge of Clohogue* the responsibility for the Scullabogue massacre is switched from the rebels to the yeomanry and placed in the context of the disaster at Ross. Word arrives at the rebel camp outside Ross of 'bad work going on near Scullabogue', where 'retreating soldiers' drove 'a crowd of terrified women and children' into the barn (p. 327). The fact that the overwhelming majority of those in the barn were Protestants is not mentioned. The scene is described later:

> The low thatched building into which they had seen the yeomen drive the people at the point of the sword, was in flames.
>
> It had been fired by the retreating soldiers. Long before they [arriving rebels] could get within reach the cries had ceased, the burning thatch had fallen in, and the holocaust was over.
>
> Scullabogue barn, long to be remembered and shuddered at of winter nights in Wexford, with its hundred inmates, had been burned to ashes! (p. 330).[27]

Thus Scullabogue becomes not the high point of sectarian savagery or an irredeemable blot on the rebel cause, but yet another instance of state oppression and cruelty.

Significantly, Murphy does not go in for graphic descriptions of other atrocities, stating simply that the rest of the rebellion became 'a narrative of suffering, ruin, and loss that our pen refuses to describe' (p. 330). Instead he concentrates on the fact that in 'little more than a month their [the rebel] cause was drowned in blood, and the bravest effort of modern times served but to add another to the long list of disappointed hopes' (p. 330). Perhaps his attempt to recast the Scullabogue massacre in another light left him with little heart to outline further tragedy and add outrage to insult. Murphy's historical gymnastics highlighted an inherent problem for the 'faith and fatherland' writers: the portrayal of the totality of Irish history as a relatively simple and recurring morality tale sometimes necessitated the tailoring of history to suit that view rather than the other way round.

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[27] Musgrave estimates that 184 Protestants were burned in the barn and that 37 were shot in front of it, making a total of 221 Protestant victims; see *Rebellions*, 3rd ed. (1802), i, p. 525.

The supreme 'faith and fatherland' novel is M. Louise O'Byrne's *Ill-Won Peerages* (1884).[28] It is a dogmatic and pessimistic view of the Irish experience, concentrating on the years leading up to the rebellion and the subsequent act of Union. O'Byrne provides the reader with an extensive historical essay at the start of the 700-page novel. She follows the Kavanagh line, suggesting that it was English jealousy of Ireland's potential as an independent country during the period of Grattan's parliament that provoked Pitt and others to engineer a situation where an act of Union would become necessary. This meant in effect fomenting a rebellion. O'Byrne's novel, in terms of structure, owes much to Sydney Owenson's *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* (1827), especially in relation to the themes explored and the attempts to show the complex interactions of Irish society at the time. However, while Owenson attempted to show how some sort of synthesis was both desirable and possible, O'Byrne's work suggests that no such accommodation could be achieved. Indeed 'Ireland', as she understood it, was lost, hopelessly diluted and distributed all over the world.

At the heart of *Ill-Won Peerages* is a largely racial view of Ireland. It is difficult not to see in this a deliberate reaction to Froude's view of the native Irish as racially inferior to the English in his *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1872-4).[29] In contrast to Froude's thesis, for O'Byrne Ireland's insurmountable difficulty is that all that made the country 'good' – that is, entitled it to regard itself as a nation – had been progressively lost through a couple of centuries of interbreeding with 'bad' blood, including Saxon, Norman, Scot, and the dreaded Cromwellians.[30] The evils of Ireland were a result of corruption of the bloodlines and the emergence of a 'half-mounted' set of people descended from Elizabethan, Jacobite, Cromwellian and Williamite forbears. Entirely aristocratic and Catholic in its tenor, the good characters in *Ill-Won Peerages*

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[28] M. Louise O'Byrne also wrote *Leixlip Castle* (1883), under the pseudonym 'E. De Celtis' and *The Baron of Belgard* (1884); *Art McMorrough O'Cavanagh, Prince of Leinster* (1887); and *The Court of Rath Croghan* (1887).

[29] See chapter two, pp. 56-7.

[30] It appears, however, that Norman blood is acceptable where it has intermingled with native Irish blood at an early period: a distinction being drawn between 'Hiberno-Norman' and 'Anglo-Norman'. The crucial test appears to be whether newcomers have adopted Irish customs and practices, including the old faith, or not.

have managed to escape bad breeding and a dubious religion, while the disreputable characters all have bad blood in them somewhere.[31]

The writer's pride in her own name – O'Byrne – is mirrored in the fact that the main protagonists in the novel are O'Byrnes; a name 'obnoxious to the ears of statesmen' for historical reasons (p. 5). Miles and Hugh O'Byrne are descendants of O'Byrnes who were in exile in France but who had returned to Ireland in the wake of the French Revolution, of which they heartily disapprove. Both Miles and Hugh are very keen to stress the 'O' in their name, and it becomes a form of insult in the novel to call them 'Byrne'.[32] A cousin, Robert Byrne, has dropped the 'O'. Although he is a Catholic he inherited what remained of his ancestral lands from his father, who had conformed to the established church to protect them. Even though he will not compromise his Catholic faith in order to gain a seat in parliament, Byrne is seen to have benefited from an act of treachery by his father, an ominous sign of things to come for the 'Byrnes'. The dropping of the 'O' and his father's apostasy are the first signs of degeneracy, but perhaps the most disturbing is that in his wife's 'Anglo-Norman' features 'might be distinctly traced her lineal descent from the ill-starred Earl of Essex' (p. 6). This appears to bode ill for their children, and the notion of children suffering for the sins of their parents becomes a trope in the novel.

Ill-Won Peerages is above all a novel about racial purity and the dangers of compromise. Miles O'Byrne counts himself as a proponent of racial purity with regard to

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[31] For example, the family name of Alphonse Fitzpatrick's guardians – Warbeck-Higgenboggan – is 'three generations ancient', having been founded by a trooper in the service of William III. The family is dying out for lack of a male heir. The Warbeck-Higgenboggans are portrayed as bigoted Protestants of the worst kind. The family name itself, with its roots of 'Warbeck', which has connotations of Perkin Warbeck, onetime pretender to the throne, and 'Higgen', perhaps an allusion to the 'Sham Squire' Francis Higgins, who also appears briefly in the novel, suggests a lack of legitimacy. The fact that the family name is dying out so soon also suggests sterility. Other 'new' families are derided: Lady Alicia Luttrell, who eventually poisons Alphonse, comes 'of a race not reputed for much', and Caroline Damer, before being revealed as the daughter of an apple-seller, is described as 'a vulgar amazon'. All these 'new-made aristocrats … parade … their dishonourable titles, like phosphoric meteors amid the constellations, lighted at a higher source and shining with a purer radiance'. The notorious Heppenstal is described as 'boor-descended'. Needless to say, all of these characters are bitterly hostile to Catholics and Catholicism; see M. Louise O'Byrne, *Ill-Won Peerages; Or, An Unhallowed Union* (Dublin, 1884), pp. 94, 95, 110; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

[32] Ironically, the name and conduct of Miles O'Byrne in the novel is remarkably similar to that of Miles Byrne of *Memoirs* fame, proving that the lack of an 'O' in one's name does not disqualify one from having a patriotic pedigree; see chapter two, pp. 52-3. However, Miles Byrne's obvious republicanism might show a level of degeneration commensurate with the truncation of his name.

the Irish race, describing those of English stock as having as much claim to be Irish 'as ill-begotten hind from nobly-descended knight' (p. 7). Just as the English settlers made a clear distinction between themselves and the native Irish, he argues that 'To save the remnant of our race from being confounded in the obloquy cast upon the land by alien infamy, we must take leave to perpetuate the distinction' (p. 7). Any suggestion that the old families of Ireland are capable of evil or vice is explained by their corruption at some stage by others: 'an evil branch, though grafted upon a good tree, will not produce sound fruit' (p. 8). The so-called 'wild Irish' are here identified as the half-mounted descendants of Elizabethan, Jacobite, Cromwellian and Williamite grantees, intermixed with some of the natives (p. 87), in an almost complete reversal of the traditional interpretation of the term.

In keeping with the Kavanagh interpretation, neither Miles nor Hugh are United Irishmen, and the rebellion in Wexford is seen to be fomented by the government to combat what is sarcastically termed 'a formidable confederacy of two hundred United Irishmen in [a] Wexford county of a hundred and fifty thousand loyal inhabitants' (p. 477). The rebellion once again is a spontaneous one, and it is Miles who articulates the rebel's programme, calling for a representative parliament – what he calls 'the representatives of a nation' – an end to tithes, the abolition of penal disabilities and – most intriguingly – to 'make the land habitable to all classes' (p. 525). The last aim falls somewhat short of land reform, or even land redistribution, and is in keeping with the generally conservative and aristocratic tenor of *Ill-Won Peerages*.

The title of the novel itself gives a clear indication that the question of legitimacy is the author's primary concern. The 1798 rebellion portrayed in this novel is an aristocratic and religious one, albeit with a socially conservative slant. Miles states that there will be no re-establishment of Tara or any other return to the glorious past: ''tis too late in the day to build castles in the air, and we must be content if we can secure for ourselves the footing of free men within the older realm of princes' (p. 526). The men of Wexford in this novel are not fighting for a republic. Their national vision is equally specific: 'the theme of many hearts, "Ireland for the Irish" – a regenerated land wherein, beneath the protecting aegis of equal law and kindly cherished human sympathies, the foeman abjuring strife, and the stranger claiming an asylum, might dwell together in

brotherly love and harmony' (p. 601). Again we see not only the preoccupation with regeneration and degeneration, but also the very definite assertion that strangers – corresponding to those not regarded as being 'Irish' – have only rights of 'asylum' in Ireland. There are some groups of people that can never be Irish.

Central to this racial vision is the virtue and pedigree of the 'true' Irish, represented primarily in this case by the peasantry, presumably because the upper-classes would have had more contact with and more reason to marry the 'strangers'. Miles defends the peasantry to Percy Esmonde, a British officer, saying that 'beneath every ragged garment heaves a bosom inspired with the *prestige* of hereditary glory, and in every vein throbs a life-stream derived from source and lineage more ancient, chivalrous, and princely than that of the best that circulates among yours' (p. 514). *Ill-Won Peerages* makes no attempt to hide its aristocratic and Catholic sympathies and does not engage in conciliation, to the extent that it openly criticises the 'degenerate' Irish people of what was then the present day. It blames Union, persecution, the Famine and mass emigration for the near-extermination of the 'Celtic' population and its replacement with 'a class whose indigenous vices and propensity to theft, deceit, drunkenness, insolence, lying, profligacy, and to defame, and in many instance [*sic*] to assault and murder their masters, makes us wish to have back again some of our banished emigrants' (p. 190).

Such a claim is the nearest M. Louise O'Byrne gets to making a conciliatory statement to non-Catholics of the same social class as herself. It suggests that it was in the interests of the upper-classes (of whatever religion) to give better treatment to those classes from which they drew their servants, and that a ruling class gets the servants it deserves. In addition it also suggests that the 1798 rebellion was a last hurrah for old, non-degenerate Ireland. Union is seen to be the final nail in old Ireland's coffin – a measure brought about in large part by those 'new' aristocrats who, owing allegiance to the state rather than the *patrie*, and professors, however insincerely, of an 'alien' creed, sold their recent and illegally-acquired birthrights for a mess of government patronage: namely their 'ill-won peerages'.

Throughout *Ill-Won Peerages* the Anglican Church – called the 'Anglo Church' – is the refuge of scoundrels, opportunists, cowards and bigots. Most venom is reserved for apostates, but there is no attempt to pretend that Anglicanism has any intrinsic merits as a

faith. One of the most dramatic instances in the novel sees the Revd Sardanaplus Pomfret vying with Fr Murphy for the soul of a dying Catholic woman. Pomfret distresses the old woman by refusing to allow Murphy administer the last rites to her, until he is thrown out of the cabin by the woman's son-in-law (pp. 275-9). The Anglican Church is portrayed as being as rapacious as any government or landlord in the collection of tithes, with the 'Thugs of the Anglo Church, wringing with unconscionable exaction and remorseless violence bread from the lips of starving peasantry' (p. 281).

In a novel with such an overtly religious agenda it is not surprising to see characters assume an almost divine significance. Michael Dwyer appears as a John the Baptist figure, his first appearance suggesting 'a bold, resolute-looking man, apparently a stranger, and one who seemed invested with the air of authority and high command' (p. 290). Dwyer appears almost as an Old Testament prophet, suggesting that the sins of the fathers have been visited on the sons:

> 'had your forefathers and mine been true to their country and themselves, we their children had not seen the day rude and fierce invaders should have left the taint of their foot upon our holy soil, and tithe and riot in Irish blood; but the time is at hand when we yet may hurl the accursed bondage, as a load of thorns, from our shoulders, if we but stand as men, and not crouch like slaves to the yoke' (p. 291).

Later, at his camp, Dwyer's credentials as a prophet are even more clearly seen in another biblical outburst: 'in my great wrath, I shouted: "Come to me, ye oppressed ones, ye persecuted, ye trampled outcasts, in the name of the God whom we serve, and the country which we love; I will be your father and protector, a shield to defend and a sword to avenge you"' (p. 300). Interestingly enough, in the previous scene Fr Murphy pleads with his parishioners not to follow Dwyer. Murphy is seen to win the debate about violence, but the men elect to go with Dwyer anyway. This, it seems, is the way round the question of the ethics of violence: the moral argument becomes redundant once oppression becomes unbearable. Such a solution also allows one to glory in the deeds of men of action. To be peaceful and passive may be 'good', but it hardly makes for exciting novels or stirring history.

Ill-Won Peerages also makes some attempt at countering the notion that the ordinary peasantry was merely motivated by a need for self-defence and a desire for

revenge. A peasant child sees a vision of Fr Murphy sitting between St Patrick and the Virgin Mary (p. 606), and Miles O'Byrne observes that 'To the squalid inmates clothed in temporary rags are given hopes and aspirations that the spacious universe cannot bound, and dreams and vistas of glory such as the Caesars in their purple never contemplated, and of which bereft they would not exchange their mud hovel to dwell in the palace of kings' (pp. 606-7). In essence this summarises the entire philosophy of the novel. The strange child and her visions personify the unarticulated greater hopes and visions of the general peasantry, a vision of nationhood formed by religious imagery and iconography, but also one that reinforces the *status quo* in terms of class, if not necessarily in terms of religion. The peasantry would rather have its visions than monetary wealth and power. Translated into nationalist terms, this can be interpreted as a longing for national freedom without wanting either a stake in the country or the desire to lead it. Such a view glorifies the peasantry and its role in '98 without suggesting that it was right and proper that it should have some tangible reward for its efforts, beyond perhaps Miles' previously expressed notion of making the land 'habitable to all classes'. In keeping with the general note of pessimism in the novel there is no happy or optimistic ending. There is some hope, however: a handful of the minor characters settle near St Louis, Missouri, and 'lay the foundation of a new city' (p. 713), something that has echoes of a new Jerusalem. All told it is a muted end in keeping with the general lack of optimism about Ireland and the future for the 'true' Irish. It may already be too late.

The novel is an extreme example of the 'faith and fatherland' view and is in fact the last novel about 1798 in this period to propound this type of perspective.[33] It is not unreasonable to speculate that some of this, at least, may be due to the fact that the excesses of the land war – at its height in the 1879-83 period – may have made the glorification and sanctification of peasant uprisings rather unpalatable to novel-readers, whatever their religion. We also see in *Ill-Won Peerages* a variation on the 'alternative rebellion' strategy seen most prominently in the previous chapter. In this case, however, instead of suggesting that the rebellion that occurred was the wrong one, *Ill-Won*

[33] A brief review of the novel in the *Irish Monthly*, a magazine that could reasonably be expected to be receptive to O'Byrne's viewpoint, confines itself to saying that she writes 'in a very patriotic spirit .... but even our desire to appreciate with more than fairness every worthy contribution to Irish literature must not hinder us from saying that the style and execution of the work fall very far short of the conception and the purpose'; see *Irish Monthly Magazine*, xii (1884), 322. The reviewer's disdain for the novel is palpable.

Peerages adopts and refines this approach by suggesting that it was the wrong place and people who were forced to rebel. Wexford is portrayed as being the least likely place for a successful rebellion, again for essentially racial reasons. The county is explicitly left out of Lord Edward Fitzgerald's plans because of its 'Saxon affinities and supposed apathy in the cause of Irish liberty' (p. 476). Wexford's population is said to be of 'mostly ... unmixed English descent, boasting succession from Strongbow, and his lion hearted companions-in-arms' (p. 476). It is this heritage that accounts for their success, as they too are uncontaminated by the blood of the later 'mongrels' and are the descendants of noble and brave ancestors. Therefore, the 1798 rebellion in Wexford was a triumph, considering the fact that the population was probably the least inclined in the country towards rebellion and national self-determination.[34] The inference is clear: 1798 was not a failure for the Catholic Irish, because it was not ultimately a rebellion of the Catholic Irish, at least not in the exclusive sense that the author intends that term. Had there been a 'real' rebellion by Irish Catholics of 'native' stock, led by descendants of the old Irish nobility with whom they had this special relationship and empathy, it could well have succeeded. Rather than considering the Wexford rebellion a failure, the novel suggests we should consider it, like the alternative rebellions featured in the previous chapter, as an indicator of what might have been.

Ultimately, *Ill-Won Peerages* itself is a failure. Its particular version of 'faith and fatherland' ideology is too exclusive, and it is further undermined both by the author's religious partisanship and her class prejudice. Her vision of Irish identity is so restrictive as to exclude practically everybody, and while the novel is useful as an indicator of one view of the past, it is useless as any kind of blueprint for the future. With *Ill-Won Peerages*, 'faith and fatherland' interpretations of 1798 run into a fictional dead end.

The 'long gathering storm': voices from the north

For northern writers who wished to write about 1798 in the 1870-98 period, particularly those of a Presbyterian persuasion, or who wrote about the Presbyterian involvement in

[34] Even Vinegar Hill is seen to be a series of small victories for the rebel army, hampered as they were by a large collection of women and children and fighting against overwhelming odds and inevitable defeat (pp. 579-84).

1798 (these last two categories comprise what will be defined as 'Presbyterian novels' in this study), there was an ever-present difficulty in exactly how to present the rebellion, given the circumstances of their own times.[35] For 'faith and fatherland' writers it was easy: they could portray 1798 as yet another link in a long history of unequal struggles against tyranny, and as yet another reason why home rule, at the very least, was necessary and desirable. For Presbyterian writers there was no such certainty. The approach of Presbyterian writers of this period to the 1798 rebellion ranged from a wary receptiveness of some kind of home rule arrangement to a nostalgic look back to the high point of Presbyterian political radicalism in the 1790s, with the important caveat that such action, though justified at the time, was neither appropriate or necessary 'today'.

The earliest Presbyterian novel in this period is Marion Clarke's *Strong As Death* (1875). Clarke also published under her maiden name Marion Doak and the pseudonym 'Miriam Drake'. Born in Dromara, Co. Down, she was married to Charles Clarke, a popular novelist, and was a sister of Margaret Doak, with whom she co-authored several volumes. *Strong As Death* manages to be both patriotic and also suspicious of the motives of Catholics in the 1790s and – it is implied in the text – 'now'. The real contempt in the novel, however, is reserved for those who unquestioningly and for their own benefit supported the ascendancy system and the proposal for Union. The novel revolves around the interaction of three Presbyterian families – the Holmeses, the Greggs and the Greys – in a thinly disguised Co. Down.

Between and within these three families can be seen the whole spectrum of Presbyterian opinion. The conservative Mr Holmes resigned from the Volunteers when they 'joined [Henry] Flood's jealous opposition, and formed a legislative assembly of their own, to overawe the Parliament sitting in Dublin'.[36] Mr Gregg acknowledges that a rebellion might have been necessary but that he could not support anything that did not have a reasonable chance of success. The outspoken opinions of Harry Holmes and Letty

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[35] The best account of the relationship between Presbyterians and the memory of 1798 in the nineteenth century is Ian McBride's 'Memory and Forgetting: Ulster Presbyterians and 1798', in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan (eds.), *1798*, pp. 478-96.

[36] Mrs Charles Montague Clarke ['Marion Clarke', née Doak], *Strong As Death: A Story of the Irish Rebellion* (1875; repr. Aberdeen, 1898), p. 115; further page numbers are included parenthetically in the text. Clarke wrote at least eleven novels. In the Dedication in the 1898 edition she calls *Strong as Death* the 're-issue of an old story'. Her publishing career, in both fiction and poetry, began *c.*1860; see Colman, *Irish Women Poets*, p. 68.

Gregg, their children, provide an alternative to the views of the older men, while the Grey family provide a poignant contrast as 'Elizabeth Grey' [Betsy Gray] is the secret betrothed of John, another of Mr Holmes' sons.[37] Another key character is Connor O'Kane, a business partner of Henry Munro. He is an idealist who believes that a United rebellion is feasible and capable of success. Mr Gregg is the voice of moderation and common sense in *Strong As Death*. He believes that social integration would have been achieved centuries ago if Ireland had been 'let alone', but he is suspicious of this 'sudden cementing of so many opposing factions', and remains sceptical about the motivations of Catholics and the nature of their religion (p. 79).[38]

Although Gregg is pushed to the fore as the voice of reason, he appears merely to be a stalking horse for the real voice of the novel, Mr Holmes. Holmes believes that 'such an alliance between Irishmen of different creeds was unnatural and unholy, and had been brought about by designing men for a sinister purpose' (p. 39). Such a view, which appears extreme when stated at the start of the novel, appears less so when articulated at a later stage by the seemingly more liberal Gregg. Holmes' youngest son, Harry, becomes a United Irish radical as a result of his father's reluctance to allow freedom of opinion in his house. Holmes execrated both the 'revolutionists' and those 'who called themselves loyalists because they loved England better than their own native land' (p. 39). When the rebellion eventually erupts Harry is captured and treated so badly that he loses some of his mental faculties – including his memory – which conveniently also clears the way for Letty Gregg, with whom he was in love, and Connor O'Kane to marry.

That Mr Holmes is the real voice of the novel is made apparent by the fact that we are told that one 'unreserved conversation' with his son 'might have served to modify his [Harry's] views' (p. 39). Holmes is punished by having his sons disobey him and his house, which had been used for United Irish meetings without his knowledge, is eventually destroyed by the Ancient Britons: 'though his words were brave, his heart was full of bitterness to see the work of a lifetime wantonly destroyed by those who should

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[37] See chapter one, p. 25. 'John Holmes' is a fictional character.

[38] 'There may be seeming unity, but there is no true union, and the pieces will fall from each other at the first strain that is put upon them .... the Presbyterians and Protestant dissenters want nothing more than fair play to all, and would submit to nothing less, had they the power to dictate; but the Roman Catholics, from the very nature of their religion, would not be content with this, but would insist on Popery being established in the seat of Prelacy' (pp. 79-81).

have protected it' (p. 489). He eventually kills a soldier who was about to murder John and Elizabeth. Holmes is punished not because he was *wrong*, but because he was too dogmatic and unwilling to brook dissention. It is difficult not to see a message in this for those who were unwilling to engage in the political debates of the 1870s. The general tenets of the novel make this point even more overtly; right from the start it is made clear that no comparison can be made between the political circumstances of the 1790s and those of eighty years later: 'It was for no good purpose that pikes were manufactured in those days, at least for no purpose that can ever be good again' (p. 6). When Letty visits Harry in prison the guard, who was a Catholic, 'could not readily forget that it was for his co-religionists, the Protestants of the north were perilling [*sic*] their necks':

> They might forget it afterwards, when a cunning policy had sown discord between them, and carefully fanned it into hate, but they could not forget it when they were working heart and hand together for the cause of liberty. For Ireland had real grievances then, and had not, as now, to seek among the records of the past, when she wished to stir the ardour of her sons by their recital (p. 366).[39]

Such sentiments clearly assert the notion that the circumstances that would have necessitated rebellion are now gone forever, but they also imply that the reasons for that false sense of unity are gone also.[40] The novel concludes that the major obstacles to unity are not the different religions of the people of Ireland but the nature of Catholicism and the power of the Catholic clergy. This meant that while 'in some happy time to come, when education and true religion had taught each party respect and toleration for the other's opinion, there might be a united Ireland but at present the cause was hopeless' (p. 495). This is the most important lesson to be learned from the past.

Strong As Death is a patriotic novel in the old-fashioned sense of the word and it urges dialogue and asserts the Presbyterian right to be considered as an essential part of

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[39] The message is re-emphasised a few pages later: 'Oh, dark days for Ireland – God be praised that they are gone for ever. May the memory of that time of violence be forgotten by her people, or remembered only as a warning against those who may ever seek, by stirring up discontent and lawless feeling, to bring back its horrors' (p. 381).

[40] Suspicion of Catholic motivation and intentions is not just confined to the characters in the book. We are also told that one of the reasons for the failure of the rebellion in the north was that 'Black news from the south unnerved their arms, and spread dismay and distrust through all the camp. The Protestants no longer trusted their Catholic brothers-in-arms when they heard of the atrocities perpetrated by their co-religionists in other parts of the country. The Romanists, feeling themselves eyed with suspicion, feared reprisals, while the ill-feeling was carefully fomented by men in the king's pay who had crept into the rebel army' (pp. 476-7). Eventually Elizabeth sees the Catholics 'sneaking away' (p. 483); see chapter one, pp. 24-5.

the Irish nation. Despite the pious references to each party respecting the other's opinion, the reference to 'true religion' makes it clear to whom the message is aimed. It is a clear rejection of the 'faith and fatherland' interpretation of both 1798 and Irish history in general, but from a patriotic perspective, accepting clearly as it does the need to dismantle ascendancy rule in Ireland.

Mary Damant's 1887 novel *Peggy Thornhill* is also set amongst the Presbyterian community of the north of Ireland. The heroine is, like her father and her half-brother Aleck, 'Episcopalian', but her mother was Presbyterian, as are most of her family and friends.[41] Although *Peggy Thornhill* is a strongly unionist novel, it shares the same broad concerns of *Strong As Death*, and the question of whether Ireland's grievances of the 1880s are real or imaginary is again aired and compared with the 1790s.[42] The importance of the oral tradition is again stressed as we are informed that the story is based on the tales told to the author in her childhood. Peggy's father, a veteran of the British army that fought in the American war, is in favour of the Orange Lodges as a countermovement to the 'unnatural union' of the Presbyterians with 'those determined enemies of all liberty, the Catholics' (p. 86). The author, however, is more circumspect, acknowledging that there was culpability on both sides.[43] As in *Strong As Death*, we see a conservative father who is suspicious of the motives of Catholics, estranged from a radical and idealistic son. The novel also features a 'Betsy Gray'-type episode: Aleck's

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[41] Peggy's older half-brother Aleck was, perhaps significantly, born in America of an American mother whose own father had been involved on the revolutionary side. He may have been as a result more susceptible to those 'mischievous doctrines' and 'wild theories of political dreamers'; Mary Damant, *Peggy Thornhill: A Tale of the Irish Rebellion* (London, 1887), p. 132; further page numbers will appear parenthetically in the text.

[42] 'At the present time, when the Irish Question is so prominently before the public, and when every Politician is endeavouring to solve it, and to decide whether the grievances of Ireland are real or imaginary, I may perhaps be excused for trying to sketch a few incidents of the stirring times of '98, when the same question was dealt with in a more lawless fashion' ('Preface', p. [i]). The Preface is dated Jan 1st 1887. The previous year had seen the introduction of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill, the defeat of which precipitated another general election in which his Liberal party were defeated, as well as rioting in Belfast and the beginnings of organised and militant opposition to home rule, particularly in the north of the country.

[43] 'These institutions [the Orange Lodges] took the fancy of the country gentry, and of such of the peasantry as had suffered from their Catholic neighbours, and they gladly recorded their hatred in the fierce and burning words of the Orangeman's oath. Thus the unnatural compact between too [*sic*] differing faiths was nullified to some extent by the zealous efforts of the newly formed Orangemen to fan the flame of bitter dislike between race and creed, which seems never destined to die out in Ireland' (p. 87). The phrase, 'too differing faiths' almost certainly does not contain, as may first appear, a misspelling of the word 'two', but is emphasising the deep difference between Catholicism and Protestantism as perceived by the author.

love, Jenny Cuthbert, and her brother Andrew are both from a radical Presbyterian family and are both killed in the rebellion. Jenny had been lending 'the powerful aid of her beauty and her spirited bearing' to the rebel cause (p. 134).

Peggy Thornhill extols the virtues of good breeding, selective education, judicious reading and rational – in this case Anglican – religion, and seeks to put Ireland and its grievances and difficulties into a wider imperial context. While moving with her father to the Isle of Wight, the sight of the British navy at the Spithead puts into perspective for Peggy the relatively small part the events in Ireland played in the grand war against the French and their political system: 'when I saw with my own eyes the very ships of the line which were about to sail for Egypt, where so many struggles had been going on between the Powers, I felt a thrill of excitement pass through me, and a sense that some of the outward and visible signs of England's greatness were now before me' (p. 183).

'England's greatness' dominates the political element of the rest of the novel. The country is portrayed as heroic in the face of rebellion in Ireland, the treachery of the Spithead mutiny and the constant threat of invasion from France: 'A panic of fear had apparently overcome all the Powers but Great Britain, and my father was lost in admiration of the spirit displayed by the English' (p. 183). Peggy's concern with the troubles in Ireland had blinded her to the imperial danger facing Britain. She subsequently attends Nelson's funeral at Westminster Abbey and is instrumental in ensuring that a Tory 'church and state' candidate wins the parliamentary seat on the Isle of Wight despite the sharp practices of a liberal candidate and his supporters. In *Peggy Thornhill* Ireland's place is seen as within a greater whole, and one only has to see and sample the greatness of the imperial context to appreciate that fact.

A third 'Presbyterian' novel, *Betsy Gray* (1888), can claim to be one of the most popular and widely-read 1798 novels of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, as the printing of a seventh edition by 1915 indicates.[44] Its author, Wesley Guard Lyttle (1844-96), was a popular Down-based writer whose novels were a combination of fiction and local history. His stories were usually published in serial form in the *North Down*

[44] A note in the *Irish Book Lover* suggests that the text of the seventh edition of the novel used here was 'thoroughly revised' by Francis Joseph Biggar, 'who is recognised at home and abroad as the greatest living authority on the events of that memorable year in Ulster'; see *Irish Book Lover*, iv, 7 (Feb. 1913), 128. An eighth edition of *Betsy Gray* was published in 1969 by the Mourne Observer Press.

Herald, before being published as books.[45] As the *North Down Herald* was a liberal newspaper in favour of home rule, it is not particularly surprising that this novel makes little or no concessions to the political turmoil of the 1880s, particularly around that issue. However, it is a novel aimed squarely at the Presbyterians of north Down, incorporating local details that would only really be of interest to local people and descendants of the protagonists. For example, Lyttle is at pains to point out that Betsy Gray was not born in Killinchy, as 'Numerous Irish historians describe', but at Granshaw, some miles away.[46]

The plot itself is often subject to long digressions that centre on the minutiae of the time. There is little of the guardedness that typifies the other Presbyterian novels: the rebels, including those in the south, are referred to as 'Patriots' (p. 92). The leaders of the rebellion in the north, Henry Joy McCracken and 'Harry' Munro, are eulogised, and the rebels themselves are described as being without uniform 'but most of them presented a good appearance, being dressed in the best clothes which they possessed' (p. 124). Most strikingly of all, there is no sense of worry or guilt about having created and let loose an uncontrollable monster. Upon capturing Mountstewart, the home of the absent Londonderry family – one of whom was Lord Castlereagh – the insurgents 'gambolled about the grounds like a pack of merry schoolboys' and 'A good deal of chaff was indulged in as to who should be the ultimate proprietor of the handsome house and grounds' (p. 115). There is no sense of menace or anarchy and any contention is seen to be good-humoured. Similarly, Lyttle writes that 'efforts were made to induce loyally disposed persons to join in the rising, but these efforts met with little success' (p. 116). The coercion of loyalists is here dismissed or portrayed as essentially good-natured.[47]

This tone is maintained through some of the less savoury incidents of the 1798 rising in the north. The shooting of the Revd Mortimer of Comber in an ambush describes him as being 'killed by one of the first shots. Every bullet has its billet, and that one, true to its aim, brought the reverend gentleman to the dust' (pp. 126-7). The burning of the McKee family, who are described here in less than flattering terms as 'ultra-loyalist', is

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[45] Lyttle also wrote *Daft Eddie: Or, The Smugglers of Strangford Lough* (*c.*1880) and *The Adventures of Paddy McQuillen* (*c.*1908).

[46] W.G. Lyttle, *Betsy Gray; Or, Hearts of Down: A Tale of Ninety-Eight* (1888; 7th ed. Belfast: R. Caswell and Son, *c.*1915), p. 16; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

[47] It is interesting to compare what is here described as 'chaff' with the much more sinister and deadly portrayals of the ambitions of rebels in earlier novels such as *The Rebel* (1799), pp. 6-8. The good-natured atmosphere in *Betsy Gray* is very similar to that described in John Gamble's *Charlton* (1823).

mitigated by the fact that the women of the family were portrayed as bloodthirsty amazons and that ten 'innocent' (p. 121) men were hanged for it on the authority of an informer, who happened to be the chief architect of the burning (pp. 117-23).[48] Sir Richard Musgrave is dismissed as a 'clumsy and bungling would-be historian', whose version of the battle of Saintfield is 'generally … pronounced to be the reverse of accurate' (p. 123).

In *Betsy Gray* it is the soldiery that are portrayed in terms usually reserved for the rebels. British troops in Ballynahinch 'began plundering, burning, and drinking. During the night, exhausted by their orgies, the soldiers lay helpless on the streets' (p. 135). Munro's decision not to attack at night is portrayed here as chivalrous, though a 'fatal mistake' (p. 136). The rebels who deserted the camp on the night before the battle are not identified as Catholics. Here it is merely stated that the 'best-armed division of Munro's men, numbering about seven hundred, were marched off by their leader, and many others deserted also' (p. 136). Indeed, the perceived excesses of the southern rebellion are here portrayed as being understandable, given the level of provocation endured by the people in the south, and they are expressly linked to an implied north-south solidarity: 'Little wonder that the Southern Patriots avenged these outrages with terrible ferocity!': 'Little marvel that the men of the North panted with eagerness to join in the fray!' (p. 92).

Betsy Gray does engage with one issue that was problematic for the 'faith and fatherland' writers: the difference between the northern and southern rebellions. While he does agree that the northern rebellion was let down by the 'treachery and cowardice' of its initial leaders, and that some of them 'were so base as to become informers [while] others were arrested and thrown into prison' (p. 89); Lyttle takes the traditional accusations of cautiousness and coolness and turns them into virtues, suggesting that as the northern conspiracy was a 'long-gathering storm', the 'material of its violence had the more reason to be dreaded' (p. 89).[49] Such a view was not just a refutation of 'faith and

[48] An example given of the bloodthirsty nature of the McKee womenfolk was the fact that one of them, Nelly McKee, had to be prevented from hacking off a man's head (he is named as Samuel Adams) by two soldiers (p. 118).

[49] 'An outbreak was daily, momently expected, and Government knew well that it would be one of terrible determination. The disaffection in the North was not the hasty ebullition of turbulent excitement; it had progressed gradually, slowly but surely; it was the fixed and determined antipathy with which liberal feeling regarded established institutions. The rebellion in the South might be the evanescent outburst of a

fatherland' imputations, but an implicit criticism of 'faith and fatherland' interpretations of the southern rebellion.

Betsy Gray can be seen as a nationalist novel, but it is more accurate to see it as a celebration of a patriotic spirit of resistance to oppression and tyranny wherever it is found, and an attempt to exonerate the ancestors of its readers from any accusations of treason. It makes every attempt to be conciliatory within a framework that will not brook any criticism of the motives or actions of the rebels. An example of the subtleties engaged in by Lyttle is that the line, 'And the Orange will decay', in the popular ballad 'The Shan Van Vocht', is changed to, 'And Tyrants will decay' (pp. 42-3). Indeed, the Orange Order is mentioned just twice, and only once in a manner that could be construed as negative: when Lyttle suggests that Munro had little chance at his court martial as the presiding officer was an Orangeman of 'great austerity' (p. 154).[50] The tension and fighting between the Orange Order and Defenders that preceded 1798 is never mentioned.

Importantly, however, there is no sense that 1798 should be seen in any way as sanctioning present political activity. One of the main characters in the novel, the blacksmith Mat McClenaghan, still has descendants in the Ards peninsula, one of whom is a blacksmith, and we are piously told: 'May he never find it necessary to imitate Mat's example in forging pikes!' (p. 168). Of the rebels themselves, Lyttle prefigures Yeats by suggesting that 'History should deal fearlessly with them; the present generation should speak reverently of them', and that stories would be told of their deeds 'Through all time' (p. 168).

The main purpose of *Betsy Gray* was to lionise local heroes and the ancestors of its target market of north Down. However, the dramatic imagery employed and the almost supernatural bad ends suffered by informers could undoubtedly have been used for a political purpose. The central image in the novel is that of Betsy Gray in the midst of the battle of Ballynahinch, 'mounted on a magnificent horse, dressed from head to foot

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more fiery and impetuous people, but from Northern coolness, dogged determination and unflinching bravery, more real danger was to be anticipated' (p. 89).

[50] The only reference to the Orange Order itself is more benign. A story is recounted of the popular Catholic parish priest of Lisburn, Fr Magee, who donated ten pounds towards the construction of the new Presbyterian church, and as a result was protected by members of the Orange Order when returning at night from sick calls to his parishioners (p. 144).

in green silk, and waving aloft a slender, glittering sword' (p. 139). It is an iconic image that would undoubtedly be attractive to a nationalist reader. However, the hanging of William Warwick, a young Presbyterian clergyman, gets even more lavish treatment. We are told that a violent thunderstorm marked his execution and that a white dove was seen overhead at the moment of his death (p. 166). His explicitly Christ-like martyrdom has to be seen in conjunction with the sense of divine retribution that awaited those who betrayed the heroes of 1798. Particular odium is reserved for Billy Holmes, identified as the man who betrayed Henry Munro, who was shunned and despised by 'people of every class and creed' for the rest of his life. Even death does not free him: his grave is 'unmarked yet dishonoured in Dromara churchyard', and his descendants 'to the present day ... have the slur cast in their teeth' (p. 153).[51]

This entire story, dramatic as it seems, is predicated on the phrase 'it is believed' (p. 153), and mixes the sensational with evidence of the local.[52] What the popularity of *Betsy Gray* suggests more than anything else is that far from wanting to write 1798 out of history as a mistake, the Presbyterian community of north Down was proud of its ancestors' involvement. The righteousness – at the time – of their cause was self-evident, as is the level of venom reserved for those who were either informers or particularly zealous on the government side. Nationally-minded readers would also enjoy the stirring accounts of the battles, the heroic way in which the rebels were described, and the graphic descriptions of the outrages committed by government forces before and during the rebellion. It is not difficult, therefore, to see why *Betsy Gray* was one of the most popular 1798 novels.

Strong As Death, *Peggy Thornhill* and *Betsy Gray* provide a range of Presbyterian attitudes to the rebellion and to its historical legacy. All three, however, place great emphasis on the fact that their stories are based on local information, once again

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[51] Similarly, the four yeomen who delivered Munro up to the authorities all became 'miserably poor, and the longest lived of the four died a pauper' (p. 152). James Dillon, who betrayed Warwick, was execrated wherever he went and was tormented by bad dreams until his death (pp. 167-8), and the Revd Robert Black, a government informer and spy, committed suicide by jumping off the Foyle Bridge in Derry (p. 168).

[52] There may be some significance in the fact that Dromara, where Holmes is buried, was the birthplace of the Revd Hugh 'Roaring' Hanna, a violently anti-Catholic Presbyterian minister who at the time of publication of *Betsy Gray* was a major figure in garnering support for anti-home rule activities. For an account of Hanna and his career, see Kevin Haddick-Flynn, *Orangeism: The Making of a Tradition* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1999), p. 313.

highlighting the fact that tradition has always played a strong part in interpretations of 1798. The main protagonists all demonstrate a desire to be seen to do the right thing, sometimes allied with a distrust of the motives of others; especially the Catholics. Lastly – and perhaps most significantly – there is a sense that what was done was right, or at least justifiable, at the time but inappropriate now. The beliefs and aims of the United Irishmen and the 1798 rebellion were worthwhile experiments that had failed, for many and varied reasons, amongst which was the unsuitability and unworthiness of some of the participants. *Strong as Death* and *Betsy Gray* in particular bear out Ian McBride's observation that 'Protestant attitudes were often more complicated and ambivalent than a simple repudiation of the United Irishmen would suggest'.[53]

'The unpopular side': unionist views

While the polarising terms of 'nationalist' and 'unionist' are not always useful ways to describe long and complex fictional narratives about 1798, the term 'unionist' will be used here to indicate work that ultimately saw Ireland's future within the Union.[54] 'Unionist' writing in this period constituted a diffuse body of work and is to be found under almost every heading used here, 'faith and fatherland' excepted. Some narratives were clearly unionist in tenor and philosophy, while others – the ones examined in some detail here – endeavoured to explore interpretations of 1798 that suggested strategies for the future in which patriotic impulses and some degree of social change could be facilitated within the existing Union.

Amongst the novels that can be clearly identified as unionist in sentiment, three main strategies are evident. The first and oldest strategy is in the tradition of the anti-Jacobin novel and involved attacking the ideas of the French Revolution and outlining their disastrous consequences in Ireland. Such a strategy is used from as early as 1799 with *The Rebel*, to as late as 1898 with Adela Orpen's *Corrageen in '98*. The second approach can be seen in a series of novels published in the 1880s that avoided arguing the

[53] McBride, 'Memory and Forgetting', op. cit., p. 496.

[54] An alternative term – 'conservative' – also poses difficulties, and ultimately is even less satisfying. Nationalist writers such as M. Louise O'Byrne could also be generally 'conservative' in their beliefs, and the term also creates confusion with McKeon's concept of conservative narratives. Given the fact that Irish society would ultimately become polarised along 'nationalist' and 'unionist' lines these terms seem as good as any in the circumstances.

merits and demerits of the rebellion and the motivations of its leaders and instead personalised the rebellion. In doing so they removed it from an historical context, and used personal experience to point out the inconsistencies and impracticalities of liberal or nationalist ideas and interpretations of the rebellion. For example, Eleanor de Butts' *Great Grandmother's Days* (1883) features a protagonist who moves through her own personal experience of the realities of rebellion from being an idealistic and ardent Irish patriot to a conservative and committed monarchist and unionist. No attempt is made to suggest that the novel is anything other than a personal history in the shape of a diary that allows the reader to see her naïve support for rebel activity and independence from Britain change into a mature horror of rebellion. In a preface entitled 'To my Great Grandchildren', she writes that she 'could not paint the history of the times, but could only tell a little of what touched her own life and home'. Despite her protestations that she would like to have left 'a true picture of the state and need, the condition and the requirements of her country' and her admission that 'instinctively, she has suppressed the horrors of those days', it seems clear that a 'true' account would not have served her purpose, as it would in all probability have undermined her own conclusions.[55] The degree of consensus between nationalist and liberal unionist historical narratives of the rebellion suggest that the facts of the rebellion at this time were widely accepted as irrefutable. Unionist writers, reluctant to tackle the broad historical issues, which would involve defending the activities of the government, magistracy, yeomanry, militia and army in fomenting and quelling the rebellion, retreated from the grand historical approach and drew general conclusions from individual experiences.

The third broad strategy of unionist writers in this period was to examine the legacy of 1798 and draw parallels and contrasts with the social and political situation of the novelists' own time. Their nationally-minded contemporaries saw 1798 and the subsequent political activities of the nineteenth century as an inexorable progression towards social change and some form of national self-determination. For these unionist writers the contrast between the present and 1798 merely demonstrated how much things had changed in Ireland, but this did not imply that home rule was either desirable or inevitable. This change was either positive or negative depending on where you were on

[55] Eleanor De Butts, *Great Grandmother's Days: A Tale of the Irish Rebellion* (London, 1883), p. [i].

the unionist spectrum: sometimes it was a combination of both. In Catherine Hamilton's *True to the Core* (1883), for example – a melodramatic reworking of the story of the Sheares' brothers – the novel ends with the observation that they died for using language that 'many a Land Leaguer of the present day has used with impunity'.[56] While at one level this observation suggests a sense of outrage at the treatment of the Sheares' by the authorities of the time, on another level it suggests both an increasingly tolerant society and, for conservatives, an increasingly insecure one. Both of these interpretations would be consistent with Hamilton's approach as the novel is on the whole sympathetic to the Sheares' as individuals, while being unsympathetic to their ideals and to nationalism in general. Finally, unionist novels of this period, while usually admitting in the weight of the historical evidence that the grievances that inspired the 1798 rebellion were real, would question whether such grievances had any significance by the 1870s.

One of the more significant contributions to the debate about the legacy of 1798 is Lewis Wingfield's *My Lords of Strogue* (1879). Wingfield (1842-91), was a scion of the Wingfields of Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow, and therefore a member of the ascendancy, but during his life he was an actor, artist, one of the first English speakers to travel in the interior of China, and a war correspondent of some repute as well as a prolific author.[57] The *Irish Monthly Magazine*, in a review of the novel, ventured to say that the 'spirit in which he writes is all the more remarkable when we recollect that he was the brother of Lord Powerscourt, and therefore connected with many who took part on the unpopular side in the events recorded'.[58] *My Lords of Strogue* is a difficult novel

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[56] C. J. Hamilton, *True to the Core. A Romance of '98*, 2 vols. (London, 1883), ii, p. 245.

[57] Lewis Strange Wingfield was the son of the 6th Viscount Powerscourt, of Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow. He was at one time theatre critic of the *Globe* under the pseudonym 'Whyte Tyghe'. Wingfield was present at the siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, where he transmitted his dispatches by balloon to the *Times* and *Daily News*, and helped to tend the wounded. He also travelled with General Gordon in the Sudan. His first publication was *Under the Palms in Algeria and Tunis* (1868). *My Lords of Strogue* was the third of seven published novels, the last of which was *The Curse of Koshin* (1888); see Joseph Knight, 'Wingfield, Lewis Strange (1842-1891)', rev. J. Gilliland, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online: Internet (21/06/05): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29738>; Brady and Cleeve, *Irish Writers*, pp. 250-1.

[58] *Irish Monthly Magazine*, vii (1879), 559. It also notes that the portrayal of Mrs Gillin would make the book 'unsuitable at least for the lending libraries of convents'. The same article goes on to bemoan, in a manner typical of the magazine, the lack of a writer prepared to describe what it calls 'the real peasant life of Catholic Ireland'. By 1891 the magazine is noting with disapproval the fact that Irish novelists who achieve success tend to become less 'Irish', citing Wingfield as a case in point, stating that after his 'fine picture of Ireland in the day of the Volunteers, *My Lords of Strogue*, [he] turned his back on us, and became

to pin down politically, and succeeds to a degree in being as fair as possible to all sides. Wingfield himself, in an epilogue entitled 'To The Reader' – whom he assumes to be English – writes: 'I have endeavoured to weigh the evidence in a free and independent spirit, and have come to the conclusion, as might have been expected, that both [parties] were in a measure right and both wrong, considering that both were actuated by grievances of a more or less awful character, which, being tinged by a colour of religion, drove them both to madness and excess'.[59]

Wingfield takes considerable liberties with history to make his point, chief amongst which is the pushing forward of the capture of the Leinster executive to 1797 so as to accentuate the leadership vacuum element of the tale, and the pushing forward of Emmet's rebellion to the night of the passing of the act of Union, holding that 'for the purposes of romance, the romancist may be permitted to draw events together, though he is in no case to be allowed to transpose them' (iii, p. 310).[60] Wingfield argues that the rebellion was carefully cultivated by those whose interests were best served by a Union with Britain.[61] The grand strategy was to provoke a rebellion through the offices of the United Irishmen, and then at the key moment deprive it of a leadership that could contain and control it, allowing it to develop into a rampaging *jacquerie*, and then to crush it, using it as an added excuse for legislative union.

Issues of leadership and legitimacy are fused in the person of the central character in *My Lords of Strogue*: Terence Crosbie, the second son of Lord Glandore. His brother,

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in consequence less distinguished and less interesting in his work'; see *Irish Monthly Magazine*, xix (1891), 369.

[59] Hon. Lewis Wingfield, *My Lords of Strogue. A Chronicle of Ireland, from the Convention to the Union*, 3 vols. (London, 1879), iii, p. 309; further volume and page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

[60] Much more serious in terms of historical accuracy and Wingfield's interpretation of the rebellion is the fact that he suggests that priests such as Philip Roche and John Murphy were actively involved with the United Irishmen long before the actual rebellion. Plowden has suggested that Roche was a United Irishman before the rebellion, but Murphy clearly was not; see chapter two, p. 40, and Whelan, 'The Role of the Catholic Priest in the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Whelan (ed.), *Wexford: History and Society*, op. cit., pp. 296-315.

[61] In this regard, the novel starts in 1782, at the apex of the power of the Volunteers and the establishment of Grattan's parliament, and ends with what he describes as 'the vulgarest [*sic*] and weakest of riots', the pushed-forward Emmet rebellion (iii, p. 291). Pitt, Clare and Castlereagh are all seen to be involved in a long-term plan to unite Ireland with Britain, and they use every means at their disposal to achieve their aim, including the corrupt and venal aristocracy, the vulgar 'half-mounted' middle classes, the ignorant peasantry, and the idealistic United Irishmen. The last-named group is seen to be deliberately persecuted so as to encourage its growth: 'If Tone's society had been left alone, it would have dwindled as over-virtuous for this world. It must be persecuted (so Mr. Pitt determined) till it flourished like a bay-tree' (i, p. 75).

Shane, is portrayed as the most extreme example of the hard-living, uncultured Irish nobleman. Shane becomes Lord Glandore on the death of his father, who on his deathbed gets Terence to swear an oath of loyalty to his older brother. Lady Glandore, a severe and zealous Protestant, has a marked preference for her firstborn son and is portrayed as a deeply unhappy woman hiding a secret. She is a friend of both Lord Clare and John Philpott Curran, and her home is the scene of many conversations, disputes and disagreements between the two men. Terence gradually becomes drawn into United Irish politics after failing to obtain a pardon for William Orr, on whose behalf he petitioned Clare. He is thrust into a leadership role and the alternative rebellion device is once again employed, with Terence's proposed rebellion timed for New Year's Eve, 1797. However, this rebellion is postponed due to the arrest of the Leinster Directory and the leadership vacuum is initially filled by 'ambitious but incapable' men of 'limited attainment', before they in turn were supplanted by 'furious fanatics, as ignorant but more scrupulous than they' (ii, p. 254). When the rebellion erupts they are joined by 'uncultured, ferocious' Catholic priests who were turned into 'hideous tyrants' by the burning of their churches and the desecration of their altars (ii, p. 268).

My Lords of Strogue is essentially an aristocratic novel in the broadest sense of that term, displaying a distrust of the 'jumped up' and the 'underbred' and posing questions about the nature of legitimacy. These are the clearest aspects of a novel that is a mass of contradictions. Yet within and because of these contradictions a female Ireland figure appears who symbolises an altogether more complex and arguably more tragic vision of Ireland than the traditional Cathleen Ni Houlihan. At first glance, Doreen Wolfe, the Catholic who is infatuated with Wolfe Tone and acts as the conduit of United Irish communication with France and who eventually marries Terence, appears to be the Ireland figure. The tragic Sara [Sarah] Curran, who also features, is often seen as the symbol of romantic nationalist perceptions of Ireland and her history, but here she goes mad and does not marry.[62] A case can even be made for Mrs Gillin, the vulgar but kind Catholic mistress of the deceased Lord Glandore, whose own daughter – who may be Glandore's – is raised a Protestant so as to protect what property they have. Gillin, who

[62] In reality Sarah Curran (1782-1808) later married a British army officer, Captain Robert Sturgeon, and died of consumption in 1808.

lives in the gate lodge of Strogue, is a permanent reminder to the countess of her husband's infidelity and her own shame, living literally on her own doorstep. It would not be difficult to see Gillin as representing the oppressed Catholics of Ireland who, like the poor, are always with us.

Doreen Wolfe, Sara Curran and even Mrs Gillin, then, are all potential Ireland figures in this novel, but it seems clear from the tenor of *My Lords of Strogue* that the most important Ireland figure in the novel is Lady Glandore herself. Wracked by guilt and compelled by religious bigotry to dislike Doreen Wolfe, her brother's only daughter, Lady Glandore can be seen to represent the eighteenth-century Irish state – the so-called 'Protestant nation' – in her cold forbidding indifference to everyone but her own favourite son, the archetypal hard-living Irish nobleman Shane. Her other son, Terence, is shown no love and tolerated at best. A deep friendship and affection for Lady Glandore is the only thing that the political enemies John Philpott Curran and Lord Clare have in common: she is the link between them. Similarly her brother, Arthur Wolfe, is the archetypal timeserver: a man of mediocre talent and limited intellect who progresses in the Irish administration through patronage and an ability to do what he is told; an essentially harmless man who helps to engender great harm and misery by acquiescence.[63] As such, Lady Glandore is the focal point of the novel. Her symbolic representation of Ireland is further emphasised by the uncovering of her great and guilty secret towards the end of the novel: it turns out that Shane was actually born out of wedlock, and that Terence is – literally – the legitimate heir of the Strogue and Ennisowen estates. Lady Glandore therefore, like the eighteenth-century Protestant state, is guilty of keeping the title to the land out of the hands of its legitimate owner, her 'other' son.

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[63] Arthur Wolfe, 1st Viscount Kilwarden (1739-1803), was a member of the Irish privy council and lord chief justice during the 1798 period. In the novel Arthur Wolfe is portrayed as the brother of Lady Glandore and a widower with one daughter, Doreen, who is a Catholic as a result of his marriage to a Catholic woman. In reality Wolfe left behind at his death a wife and four surviving children, two of whom were daughters, neither of whom were called Doreen; see *Burke's Irish Family Records* (1899; 5th ed. London: Burke's Peerage, 1976), p. 1222. His death on the night of Emmet's rebellion, when he and Shane Crosbie were dragged from his coach and killed by a mob, forms the tragic *dénoument* to *My Lords of Strogue*. In actuality it was Kilwarden's grand-nephew, the Revd Richard Straubenzie Wolfe, who was killed with him on the night.

This relatively straightforward interpretation of *My Lords of Strogue* is complicated by an allegorical inexactness symptomatic of the contradictions that exist in the novel, the author's complex view of the legacy of 1798, and what could be learnt from it. If the allegory was exact then Lady Glandore's favoured son Shane should represent Protestant Ireland, as it is he who turns out to be the illegitimate heir. However, since Shane is also the 'older' brother, on another allegorical level this would suggest that it is the Catholics – if we take them to be represented by the 'older' brother – who are illegitimate. Wingfield may have deliberately chosen to muddy the water somewhat: otherwise the complexity of what he had to say could not be fully appreciated. A distinction between those who have legal and those who have a moral entitlement to the land is being made. The clues to understanding Wingfield's true meaning are to be found in Terence's thoughts before he joined the United Irishmen and his actions after hearing of his parent's deception:

> No doubt it had been very improper – all those years ago – for a Protestant invader to seize, *vi et armis*, the territory of a Catholic nation – to eject the sons of the soil by force, in favour of themselves and their heirs. But really it was too late now to remedy that misfortune .... Ireland must accept the past, and pick out the thorns from the bed on which she lay as well as she could (i, pp. 256-7).

Later, when he learns from Doreen that he is the legitimate heir, and is being sent to Fort George in Scotland for his part in the rebellion, Terence resolves to 'lay up no store of evil memories' (iii, p. 215). In order to protect his mother and the family name he asks Doreen to forget what she has discovered. Terence suppresses his legal entitlement to the land in order to protect the family honour. He adopts a stoical view of both his own and his country's travails: 'The question of Ireland's fate is in God's keeping, not in ours. His decrees seem hard to our purblind vision, yet we must bow to them .... We have passed through the fire ... and bear its traces on our flesh. God grant that it has purged away the worser part from both of us!' (iii, p. 216).

All this appears to imply that it is forbearance and forgiveness on the part of those wronged rather than repentance from those in the wrong that will ultimately unite and reconcile Ireland to itself. This is most clearly seen when Terence eventually reaches out

to his mother, who has been turned into a decrepit wreck by her own guilt and the murder of Shane:

> My lady crawled along the carpet on her knees – a bundle of loose draperies – her head bent down, her white hair straggling, towards her son, who recoiled. The aspect of this piteous ruin – this soul-stricken wreck, the mainspring of whose life was broken, whose courage had ebbed quite away – suffused the heart of Terence with unutterable pity. He raised his mother in his stalwart arms, and pressing his warm lips to hers, whispered:
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> 'Hush, hush! I know all. You have but one child now. Bless me!' (iii, p. 304).

Terence forgives his mother her partiality to her other son, as Irish Catholics must forgive eighteenth-century Ireland's partiality to her Protestant population.

My Lords of Strogue is complex and not altogether satisfying for those who consider themselves 'legitimate'. Although overwhelmingly concerned with the question of legitimacy – even the plural in the title suggests contention – the novel also questions the nature of legitimacy itself. Shane had been born before the Glandores had married – even though it had always been their intention to do so – and was therefore legally illegitimate, but, as the oldest son of the Glandores, he could be seen to have at least a moral right to the land and title. Wingfield creates an allegory in which, depending on ones own particular interpretation of Irish history, Shane and Terence could represent *either* Catholic or Protestant. It could be argued, for example, that it is the Protestant settlers who have legal right to the land and the Catholics who have the moral right.

An allegorical reading of *My Lords of Strogue* allows each group to put itself in the other's shoes, and the ensuing confusion demonstrates that the rights and wrongs of the Irish situation are to a certain degree a matter of perception. This does not deny the actuality of the injustices, massacres and inhuman treatment meted out by both sides – Wingfield is very clear as to where the ultimate blame lies in that regard[64] – but, as in

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[64] Wingfield's real venom is reserved for those who let the rebellion run its course without check, and he has a special enmity for George III: 'that well-meaning stupid boor. On his shoulders and no others must be laid the horrors of '98 – of that hideous carnival which, though it took place but eighty years ago, stands without rival in the annals of human wickedness' (i, p. 77). George III's reluctance to grant full emancipation to Catholics is seen to be the reason the rebellion was fomented by Pitt, 'in order to make its suppression an excuse for political slavery' (i, p. 78). Even the responsibility for Scullabogue – 'one of those awful moments … which makes one almost believe in the existence of Lucifer' (ii, p. 274) – is laid at the door of a king who was 'consistently without mercy for the Isle which God had given to his keeping;

Lady Glandore's preference for her eldest son despite his illegitimate status and his wild and murderous ways shows, these things are not always logical and sometimes have to be accepted, as Terence accepts that he will always be second best in his mother's eyes. Reconciliation does not necessarily mean that all can and will be forgiven and forgotten, but that there is a spirit of generosity on both sides. In the 1870s and 1880s, when the land war was at its height and there was the beginning of a process that would see a vast transfer in land ownership in Ireland, *My Lords of Strogue* is a plea for tolerance and understanding. The fact that Terence eventually gets his rightful inheritance as a result of the death of Shane can be seen as an allegory for the eclipse of the ascendancy class in Ireland. Tolerance and a respect for tradition and status is important: Doreen sees Terence as a hero for protecting the family honour and not disclosing his mother's secret shame. Similarly, the moral is that the new Ireland has to reconcile itself with the old, and to treat it with affection, respect and forgiveness, despite the injustices and cruelties practised upon it; just like Terence does with his mother. The remorse and trauma of loss suffered by old Ireland is punishment enough.

While *My Lords of Strogue* puts forward the argument that there must be tolerance and understanding on all sides in the 'new' Ireland, A.S.G. Canning's *Heir and No Heir* (1890) is a novel that seems to provide a model for how a 'new' Ireland could be organised. Canning (1832-1916) was an historian and literary critic who was fully aware of the potential of historical literature to convey a complex political message. In *Revolted Ireland: 1798 and 1803* (1886), he argues that 1798 was 'chiefly planned and conducted by British descended and protestant colonists' and rejects comparisons with 1641.[65] *Heir and No Heir* is centred on the fictional village of Dalragh, situated somewhere in north-west Ulster, which Canning describes as 'a sort of Ireland in miniature, only with a far

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who was pitiless for the professors of a faith which did not agree with his own fancy; who, by reason of his policy regarding Ireland, must be held accountable for the tragedy which took place on that fifth of June within the barn at Scullabogue' (ii, p. 275).

[65] A.S.G. Canning, *Revolted Ireland: 1798 and 1803* (London, 1886), p. 13. He also wrote *The Divided Irish* (Newry, 1888). He was interested in the interaction between literature and history, writing *Philosophy of the Waverley Novels* (London, 1879); *Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London, 1883); *Literary Influence in British History* (London, 1889); *History in Fact and Fiction* (London, 1897); *History in Scott's Novels* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1905); and *Macauley, Essayist and Historian* (London: Fisher Unwin, *c.*1913). His other novels included *Kinkora* (London, 1864), *Baldearg O'Donnell* (London, 1867) and *Sir Marmaduke Lorton, Bart.* (London, 1875).

larger proportion of Protestants than was usual throughout the rest of the country'.[66] The novel is a warning to Roman Catholics against romanticising the 1798 rebellion and its leaders. He reminds Catholic readers that the Protestant leaders of the United Irishmen had 'little in common with devout Irish Catholics' and that the Catholic nobility had little to do with the United Irishmen, who 'thoroughly adopted' the views of revolutionary France, which had 'declared open war against all religion' (p. 116).

Canning suggests that the aims of the United Irishmen were the greatest threat to Catholic Ireland (p. 116). Since this argument can have no significant weight in the context of the pre-emancipation Ireland in which the novel is set, this view is aimed at the Irish Catholics of the 1890s. It warns them that their interests may not be best served by those claiming to be the successors of the United Irishmen. By stressing Catholicism as being at the heart of Irishness, Canning makes it seem all the more strange for Irishmen to be adopting republican principles that threaten a fundamental element of their own identity. Brian O'Donovan, one of the characters in the novel, is an antiquarian 'half-rebellious in his principles, and yet a thorough aristocrat in his prejudices' (p. 109): 'To him Irish Roman Catholics were, or should be, what they were in James II's time, or ever before it, thorough monarchists in principle; while Protestants, on the whole, he considered identified with foreign invasion, oppression, and cruelty' (p. 110). Although this is stressed as an extreme view, it does reiterate the notion that Catholics have been historically and temperamentally inclined towards monarchism. It also reinforces the incongruity of looking for leadership from a group such as the United Irishmen, who were largely Protestant.

Canning's solution to the 'Irish problem' of the 1890s is encapsulated in the pertinently-named village of Dalragh.[67] The village is controlled by two figures: Sir Richard Stratford, a popular Protestant landlord; and Fr O'Connor, the local parish priest, who, as a result of his own experiences in France, is bitterly opposed to the United

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[66] Hon. Albert S. G. Canning, *Heir and No Heir. A Tale* (London, 1890), pp. 3-4; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

[67] It is probably no coincidence that the name 'Dalragh' sounds and looks not unlike 'Dalriada', the fifth-century Gaelic kingdom that existed on both sides of the North Channel between Co. Antrim and part of the Inner Hebrides and Argyll, in Scotland. Originally established by settlers from Ireland (the 'Scoti'), the Irish section gradually declined, and by the mid-ninth century Dalriadic rule was established to such an extent that the whole country was known as Scotland. Dalriada's identity as a Scottish-Irish kingdom would serve as a good model for the north-east of Ireland, with its mix of Scottish and Irish influences.

Irishmen and what they stand for.[68] Working together they create an oasis of stability and peace, presenting 'a model to other towns and villages' (p. 263).[69]

Heir and No Heir makes a plea for the *status quo*, appealing to the essentially conservative nature of Catholics, their traditional preference for monarchy and order and stressing Catholicism as a fundamental element in Irish identity. Following this logic it would be nonsense to adopt a political philosophy likely to damage Catholicism in order to promote Irish nationalist aspirations. The solution put forward by *Heir and No Heir* is to let Catholic Ireland have its head, as long as there is no fundamental political or constitutional change. In proposing this, Canning is following the 'faith versus fatherland' dilemma to an ultimate conclusion, and using its arguments against itself. In the process he strategically cedes Irish identity to Catholics, and lets 'Irish Ireland' logic make his argument for him against radical political and social change.

Attempts to accommodate Irish patriotic impulses within the existing constitutional framework reached a new level in a novel that uses 1798 as a backdrop to a narrative eulogising military life and values. It manages to achieve this while at the same time warmly praising the patriotic spirit and bravery of the rebels. Julia Agnes Fraser's *Shilrick, the Drummer* (1894), stresses the performance of one's duty and the obeying of orders as the principal functions of a soldier; which conveniently removes any discretion on a soldier's part.[70] The novel's subtitle, *Loyal and True*, appropriately reflects the core idea that loyalty, whether it is to one's duty or a cause, is the highest of virtues.

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[68] O'Connor is a Burkean figure, stressing the inevitable danger of revolution and drastic change. The link with Burke is emphasised by the fact that he too eulogises the sight of Marie Antoinette at Versailles, whom he had been introduced to twenty years before. He is similar to the character of Fr O'Neill, who appears in *Stories for Calumniators* (1809); see chapter three, pp. 112-3.

[69] 'Dalragh, very unlike the usual rule in Ireland, was under the political and religious influence of a Protestant landlord and a Catholic priest who, in this rare instance, agreed in maintaining peace, justice, and harmony among its divided inhabitants .... Dalragh remained an exceptional case, scarcely affected by the excited and evil passions which for a brief period, at least, raged around it. Neither insolent triumph on the part of the loyalists, nor spiteful vindictiveness on that of the defeated rebels, was encouraged by the Stratford family or the priests. Thus the influence of both effectively controlled those bitter feelings of religious and political prejudice, which elsewhere in Ireland were almost universal .... Dalragh, happy, peaceful, contented, yet strangely isolated, and, perhaps, owing much of its prosperity to this isolation, presented almost a model to other towns and villages' (p. 263).

[70] Fraser was the daughter of Maj. Gen. Simon Fraser, 'late col. 2nd Command of the Royal Marines Light Infantry' and dedicates the novel to him 'and the gallant corps to which he belonged', calling herself a 'daughter of the corps'; see Julia Agnes Fraser, *Shilrick, the Drummer: Or, Loyal and True. A Romance of the Irish Rebellion of 1798*, 3 vols. (London, 1894), 'Dedication', p. [i]; further volume and page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

Shilrick, the Drummer manages to encompass many of the devices used in previous novels. It is part allegory: Morven O'Neill, leader of the rebels in Wicklow under the name 'Michael Cluny', is the descendant of a family that once possessed extensive estates in both Ulster and Leinster, thereby linking him with both major theatres of rebellion. He is also an O'Neill, who supplied many of Ireland's high kings. The rebellion is portrayed as aristocratic in tone and objective: O'Neill is fighting to win back the land confiscated from his father who was convicted without a fair trial of having been involved in an unspecified 'previous disturbance' (i, p. 59). Most of his followers in the 'Bold Boys of Wicklow' share his political views, and are fighting for the right to have a king and what is anachronistically called 'Home Rule' (i, p. 150). In O'Neill's case, at least, republicanism is not an option: 'We are *not republicans*, I will have no ruffians of that kind under *my* command. If there *be* any here who are really republicans at heart, let them leave us at once, for I do not intend that such notions shall be put into the heads of my men' (i, p. 288). Once again, the land issue looms and the notion of 'home rule' gives the rebellion a topical relevance. In what was becoming a standard caveat of broadly unionist writers, we are told the story is 'purely a *romance* .... sought only to impart *human interest*' (pp. [i-ii]). Although the political situation is not ignored, it is painted in the most conciliatory light possible. What Fraser's brief account of the rebellion does do, however, is securely link the rebellion with old-fashioned eighteenth-century patriotism – republican rhetoric and sentiment become the province of the more unsavoury characters in the novel.

One of the other familiar tropes used is that of the alternative rebellion, here used *after* rather than before the real rebellion. O'Neill held his men in reserve during the rebellion, ostensibly for the reasons of wanting to gain more recruits and from a sense of caution born of extensive military experience. This rather clumsy plot device does allow him to conduct a glorious, if inconclusive, encounter with the military. During the engagement he is mortally wounded by his own second-in-command, a republican and informer who wished to wrest control of the men from him for his own agenda. O'Neill had once been an officer of the very regiment he was fighting, but had resigned over some unspecified injustice done to him by military authorities. Popular with his former comrades, he is buried in a spirit of compromise and conciliation with full military

honours in a spot chosen by the local peasantry. At his burial the 'Spirit of Erin' appears but is not seen by the mourners. In an echo of the unarticulated wishes of the peasantry in *Ill-Won Peerages*, this is described as 'the dream-spirit that some of the most imaginative among the peasantry had conjured up for themselves' (iii, p. 313).

Morven O'Neill comes to represent all that was good and noble, both literally and figuratively, about the rebels and the rebellion, and his motives and actions are seen as the brightest and purest examples of patriotic self-sacrifice and idealism. Being a former soldier, O'Neill accepts that his uncle, Colonel Clinton Corrie, commander of the regiment of royal marines stationed in the area, and his former best friend Captain Armoric Annesley, are both duty-bound to uphold the government and its policies 'as they hold the King's commission and are serving with the Royal troops' (i, p. 220). The views of his cousin, Eveleen Corrie – the only one of his relatives who knows the true identity of 'Michael Cluny' and who is an ardent patriot – sums up the prevailing attitude towards Irish independence in the novel: 'More than once lately the practical, common-sense view of the Irish question had been forcibly brought before her; she had been able to see and to acknowledge the force of it, but still the patriotic side, with all its pathos and poetry, was undoubtedly the most attractive to her enthusiastic and romantic nature' (i, p. 221). Annesley, her lover, represents the 'common-sense' approach that envisages a form of Irish patriotism within the Union, and O'Neill represents the romantic view of some kind of independence.[71]

In *Shilrick, the Drummer* Eveleen struggles to maintain a relationship with both O'Neill and Annesley and one of the sub-plots involves Annesley thinking that she is being unfaithful to him with O'Neill. The allegorical significance of this young woman torn between these two men and what they represent is obvious, as is the danger of her being seduced by the romantic and dangerous. In fact, there is no danger: O'Neill is already secretly married and Eveleen's feelings for him are the feelings of a cousin. Even if she was so inclined, the impediment of marriage is already present. The 'romantic' appeal of O'Neill and what he stands for is thus seen to have a clearly defined parameter

[71] It is difficult to be specific about what exactly Morven O'Neill wants: a king and home rule are vague concepts and it is not clear whether he wants a separate king or a separate monarchy. The latter seems illogical since the novel is set in pre-Union Ireland, but the situation is complicated by what appear to be Jacobite sympathies on the part of the author.

beyond which she could not cross, even if she desired to. In the end Eveleen marries Annesley, and although she always holds a special place for her romantic cousin in her heart, she becomes a soldier's wife and a 'daughter of the corps'.[72]

Morven O'Neill's function as a representative of the past is reinforced by the fact that the 'hero' of the novel is not O'Neill. The novel is, as its title implies, about Shilrick O'Toole, a drummer boy with the marines who returns with them to his native place. Shilrick disobeys an order to reveal the identity of a person seen leaving the camp under cover of darkness in order to protect the good name of Eveleen Corrie, who was on her way to meet O'Neill. He is court-martialled for his offence, and even when the whole story comes to light he is still condemned to execution by firing squad. Shilrick's pardon arrives too late and the sentence is carried out, with the order to fire reluctantly given by Annesley, whose life Shilrick had saved earlier. Fortunately Shilrick is only wounded and is nursed back to health. He goes on to prosper in the army, eventually becoming a lieutenant in the marines. Shilrick subsequently marries Marie de Trouville, who turns out to be a cousin of O'Neill's wife, Estelle de Montmerci. In doing so Shilrick symbolically takes O'Neill's place, and replaces his romanticism with a new form of patriotism that is not aristocratic, but that is self-made, accomplished, educated and – most of all perhaps – comfortable within the British sphere.

At the heart of *Shilrick, the Drummer* is a plea for union in its widest sense: that is, a plea for unity amongst the people of Ireland, something that harkens back to the days of Grattan's parliament and the Volunteers. Shilrick O'Toole, Colonel Corrie, Annesley, O'Neill and even the Orangeman, Captain Geoghegan, are all Irishmen; and though their political viewpoints differ they are all patriotic in their own ways. The real conflict in the novel is created by the non-Irish characters. O'Neill's solution to Ireland's troubles is a greater willingness by the English, primarily, to understand Ireland and the Irish: 'before there is perfect peace in our country, the English nation *must find the key to our Irish hearts*; they must give us love for love before they can understand us, or win that trust which has been so often shaken by cruelty and indifference to the feelings of our people' (ii, p. 132). The likelihood of such an event occurring, however, is remote, as an authorial

[72] In Eveleen's association with a romantic rebel and her subsequent marriage to a British army officer there are certain similarities with Sarah Curran.

interjection reminds us that 'Englishmen are too often wont to despise, and depreciate everything that is not purely English' (ii, pp. 239-40). Complicating this are the notion and obligations of duty. The elevation of duty to a high virtue helps to foster understanding and reduce tension between the soldiery and the people.[73] This is why it was important that the sentence imposed on Shilrick O'Toole was carried out: if there was to be any scope for creative interpretation of orders, it would undermine and devalue the virtue – and the protection – of acting under orders.

Foreigners and outsiders are the main sources of conflict and tension in *Shilrick, the Drummer*. People, and not institutions, create the real difficulties. Thus Jeremiah Stalker, a civilian spy, is a cockney and Lieutenant Rochfort, a bigoted and stupid cavalry officer, is an example of the type of Englishman who will not make any effort to understand the subtleties of the Irish situation. Eveleen Corrie tries to put him right: 'You are acting as if you were dealing with two hostile nations .... The latter may have friends, even near and dear relations, among the former, and they are right – yes, perfectly right – to shield those united to them by ties of kindred and country' (i, pp. 179-80). The inclusion of 'and country' serves to re-emphasise the essential unity and separateness of the Irish identity.

It is on the rebel side, however, that the clearest examples of the dangers of foreign interference can be seen. O'Neill's band of rebels is a multi-national force in which his Irish rebels are supplemented with Scottish Jacobites, Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Spanish and Greeks: 'a small party of the vast numbers of human birds of prey who had landed in Ireland, and were thus doing their best to raise rebellion, to foster discontent, and to desolate the country with the horrors of civil warfare and bloodshed' (i, p. 147). All the nationalities are described in negative terms: 'volatile and excitable' French; 'stolid, heavy-looking' Germans; 'hot-headed' Italians; 'exceedingly lazy' Spaniards; and 'cunning, avaricious-looking Greeks' (i, p. 146).

The most potent – and, in the 1890s, contemporary – example of the danger of foreign interference and ideals comes in the shape of Thaddeus Magin, O'Neill's second-

[73] 'The peasantry had learnt to understand that the soldiers were only doing their duty, and acting under orders, which they dare not disobey; and, moreover, when they had any unpleasant duty to perform, it was always done in the kindest and most merciful manner possible, which had gone far towards propitiating a naturally warm-hearted and impulsive people' (iii, p. 79).

in-command. He is described as being a 'Yankee-Irishman' (i, p. 91) 'who, being the descendant of a mixed race, possessed, as it frequently happens, the very worst qualities of both, without any of the redeeming points of either' (i, p. 93). It is the description of the tobacco-chewing Magin and its evocation of 'Uncle Sam' that is the most striking thing about him: 'A rough, dark-blue frieze jacket was worn open in front, displaying a red and white striped shirt, which was confined at the waist by a heavy-looking leather belt, to which were attached a large bowie knife and a pistol. He wore black leather gaiters, a high, white straw hat, with a broad brim, and a red and white striped band around the crown' (i, p. 93).[74] Magin is a republican and a proponent of equality and land distribution. He plans to declare war on and conquer England, making himself governor of London (i, pp. 148-51). He is a representative of the 'half-foreign delegates' and others who were supplying money 'to rouse the Irish to rebellion ... for the sole purpose of proving an annoyance to England' (i, p. 97). However preposterous Magin's schemes may seem, it is not difficult to see him as an overt criticism of Fenianism and the importation of American political notions into Ireland. In the end Magin betrays O'Neill for money and shoots him during the battle, underlining once again how foreign interference in Irish affairs can only end in disaster, and suggesting that foreign interference is always for ulterior motives.[75]

Like *My Lords of Strogue* and *Heir and No Heir*, *Shilrick, the Drummer* is a plea for Ireland to resolve its internal differences itself in a spirit of tolerance and understanding. Colonel Corrie's dinner guests include Catholic priests, Anglican clergymen and Presbyterian ministers and religious tension barely features in the novel. The conflict in the novel is between those Irish people who feel that they have grievances, real or imagined, and those other 'patriots' who owe their primary loyalty elsewhere. The latter's situation is best summed up by Colonel Corrie:

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[74] Although 'Uncle Sam' would be an anachronistic figure in 1798, he was well-established by the 1870s on both sides of the Atlantic and was a familiar figure in *Punch* cartoons of the period. It seems inconceivable that such an outlandishly-dressed figure is not meant to evoke comparisons; see 'Uncle Sam', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online 2005. Online: Internet: (09/07/05): <http://search.eb.com/article?tocId=9074225>.

[75] The name 'Magin' also evokes an association with Francis Magan, the notorious government informer who betrayed Lord Edward Fitzgerald, of whom Morven O'Neill, with his aristocratic connections and British army experience, can be seen to be a more benign version.

> 'I, as an Irishman, feel keenly any wrongs, real or fancied, from which our people may be suffering; my heart still clings to the hope of my boyhood, that brighter days may yet dawn for Ireland, that I may live to see the restoration of her former fame and glory. I cannot close my eyes to the fatal manner in which our most unfortunate country has been misgoverned, but as long as I hold the King's commission, I am bound in all honour to keep silent with regard to the action of the English Government, under which I serve' (ii, p. 30).

In the end such sentiments are an echo of an old-fashioned patriotism that has been found to be ineffectual, and part of a rhetoric whose time appears to be gone. It is ironic that *Shilrick, the Drummer*, a novel that in general extols the virtues of those it identifies as the genuinely patriotic rebels of 1798, including Joseph Holt, Michael Dwyer and Wolfe Tone, should find its way into regimental, garrison and officers' libraries throughout Britain as an example of the virtues of loyalty and devotion to duty. The list of patrons and subscribers to the novel contains the names of the Dukes of Edinburgh, Connaught, Fife, and Marlborough; Earl Spenser, the first lord of the Admiralty; Viscount Powerscourt; Lord and Lady Iveagh; and Joseph Chamberlain MP. Also listed are various ranks of the army and navy, Catholic and Protestant chaplains, and garrison and officers' libraries throughout Britain, including Plymouth, Devenport, Chatham and Walmer, as well as various regimental libraries. For military personnel the core message is that a soldier's lot is to obey orders and act with honour even when such actions appear to be unpopular and unpleasant, or entirely wrong. That the 1798 rebellion could be used for this purpose, even in a novel with a broadly unionist outlook, outlines how far interpretations and attitudes towards the men and events of 1798 had come.

'These topsy-turvey proceedings': Modernism and 1798

In literary terms, Frank Mathew's *The Wood of the Brambles* (1896) is without doubt the best novel written about the rebellion in the second half of the nineteenth century, and prefigures Francis McManus's twentieth-century novel about 1798, *Men Withering* (1939), in its poetic and dreamy atmosphere and in its concentration on the local. Mathew (1865-1924) was a lawyer by profession and a great-nephew of Fr Theobald Mathew, the temperance campaigner. He was a founder member of the Irish Literary Society, a friend of Lionel Johnson and had been part of an editorial group under the editorship of Jerome

K. Jerome that founded the *Idler*.[76] Mathew's great friend, Katharine Tynan – herself the writer of a 1798 novel, *A King's Woman* (1902) – described his novel as a 'strange brilliant whimsical topsy-turvy book'.[77]

The Wood of the Brambles defies conventional analysis; its main contribution to the 1798 debate is the surreal and nightmarish atmosphere it creates. Like most 1798 novels, it becomes an exploration of the personality and motivations of a small number of the characters involved, but unlike most other novels there is no satisfactory or cathartic outcome: characters appear to collapse into themselves, becoming either a bundle of contradictions or a bundle of nerves, or both. What it manages to evoke brilliantly is the sense of confusion and isolation that one can only experience when one is a small part of a bigger picture that one cannot see or fully understand. There is a strong sense of disconnection throughout the novel – it is the primary theme – which is accentuated by the narration of the arrogant, sullen and ultimately rather stupid anti-hero Sir Dominick Davern. Dominick, just returned from France, had a lonely childhood growing up as the ward and heir of his grandfather, the rollicking Sir Malachi Davern, who is an outrageous example of the feckless Irish gentry: 'he shrank from annoyance and preferred to be angry without the compulsion of a reason for rage'.[78] Sir Malachi displays a marked preference and affection for Dominick's cousin, the wild and poorly educated Tony.

There is no overall narrative of the rebellion and little historical background. *The Wood of the Brambles* is almost entirely character-centred, and the inability of the characters to know and understand each other is emblematic of the inability of the rebels to share any kind of grand vision. The disconnection in the novel is continually emphasised by the characters' regular misconstruing of each other's motivations and personalities. Central in this regard is Theophilus Considine, Dominick's nearest neighbour, who becomes a rebel leader. Considine is that most dangerous of characters, an intellectual without intellect. Usually the polymaths in 1798 stories are figures of fun

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[76] Apart from his Irish stories and travelogues Mathew wrote a trilogy of intelligent historical novels set in the Tudor period: *The Spanish Wine* (London, 1898); *Defender of the Faith* (London, 1899); and *The Royal Sisters* (London: John Long, 1901). There is a short obituary in the *Irish Book Lover*, xiv, 11-12 (Nov.-Dec., 1924), 143-4.

[77] Quoted from Tynan's foreword to Mathew's posthumously-published book of poems, *A Book of Songs* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1924), p. 8.

[78] Frank Mathew, *The Wood of the Brambles* (London, 1896), p. 19; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text. The novel was reprinted in 1916.

(such as Phelim O'Flanagan in *Rory O'More* and Galen Bazzy in *The Rebels of Glenfawn*, to take two examples), and Considine, initially at least, seems to be no exception. Dominick's discovery in Considine's study of a book entitled *The Poems of Theophilus Considine* turns out to be a manuscript of poems by other authors which he would like to have been his; so Considine literally passes other people's ideas off as his own. He sees himself as an iconoclast and a non-believer, and he becomes a contradictory bundle of extreme Enlightenment thinking.[79] Considine's delusions can be seen in the fact that the 'first thing' he did, in the morning, was to 'look out of his window, and see whether dandelions had grown on the lawn in the night; and if he discovered any he whistled for Brosna [one of his retainers] with agitation, and sent him to destroy the intruders' (p. 247). This image reinforces the notion that the novel is a quasi-poetic exploration of the nature of a rebellion such as that of 1798, and is central to how we are meant to perceive Considine. It hints at his delusions and obsessions, and perhaps – in his 'agitation' about weeds on his lawn – with his own battle to remain sane. We also see that, ultimately, he gets others to do his work for him.

Two particular incidences indicate the poetic nature of the novel. In the first we see Considine at the height of his power and majesty and the writing reflects this. Dominick is walking in the woods, unaware of Considine's involvement with the rebel movement, until he sees him addressing a gathering in the wood (p. 63).[80] The grandeur of that scene, with Considine being seen at his impressive best in his fine uniform, has to be contrasted with the second incident that describes his nervous breakdown when giving a speech from the dock. His delusions are apparent when he says that 'All Europe knows I was the general' (p. 314), and he wants to die in spite of the court's inclination to be

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[79] 'I am fond of children, if I can forget they have souls. They help to furnish a house, and make it like home .... It is time to destroy the convention of a Natural love. I am writing a book on the inborn antipathy of nearest relations' (p. 245).

[80] 'The people were in a column between girls who were holding torches of the bog-fir aloft. The dusky glow of the torches was lifting the boughs to an incredible height. The fellows in the front of the crowd had pikes, but all the others, beyond them, had pitchforks or scythes. One of them had a banner, and all had bunches of green ribbon on their hats and their clothes. A great number of women and children were behind, and I saw babies in arms. The girls were all in the white dresses they had worn on Whit Sunday .... I felt as if I dreamed, when Theophilus turned with a shout of "Forward!" and rode into a gap in the thicket. The way was in the heart of the wood, and in a tangle of briars. It had been cleared, and was wide enough for the rebels to pass. As the girls were moving, the wayward light of the torches jerked the boles and the bushes out of the shadow till they seemed to be tramping in a silent procession. Then the rebels began "The Wearing of the Green," and that woeful ballad was like a song of deliverance' (pp. 63-4).

merciful. His long speech was, according to Dominick, learnt 'by heart, and it followed the tone of the theatrical heroes of the French Revolution' (p. 315). Watched with 'rueful dismay' (p. 315) by the president of the court, his voice began eventually to 'quaver and sink, as if the mighty assembly he had made believe to address was dwindling to a court-martial of enemies .... With a sting of pity, I felt he had been fooling himself by all the pomp of his life' (p. 316). His last request, for example, was to die by guillotine. In the end Considine gets a pardon, and in one of several unsatisfactory and low key outcomes the far more deserving Fr Pierce Kilclare – who had intervened to save the life of the Revd Patrick Carey, the unrepentantly bigoted rector of Enniscrone – is executed.

One of the consequences of rebellion in the novel is the redrawing of the relationships between the classes. This is manifested in two main ways, both of which are predicated upon a misunderstanding by the superior classes of their relationship with those 'beneath' them. The upper classes presume that they understand the lower classes and that there is a natural and underlying respect for them amongst their social inferiors. The rebellion proves that these views are fallacious. Considine sees himself as a George Washington-type figure, but the men under his command do not, and he does not understand what motivates the peasantry. Shamus Dhu, the local schoolmaster, puts it best:

> '[His men] are too soft to deny him such a harmless amusement as prancin' in front of them, they would tie him up to a tree if he attempted to cross them. Lord! these fools of fine gentlemen! The lads had more than a mind to kill Bagenal Harvey an' the Committee in Wexford, for interferin' to save [Lord] Kingsborough [colonel of the notorious North Cork militia] lately. But I know how to master my men. This morning I hanged one of them there. "Captain," said he, as the noose was on his neck, "I admire a man that knows his own mind."' (p. 171).

Shamus provides the link between the peasantry and the ruling classes, and now that the shoe is on the other foot, so to speak, is free to speak plainly. When Dominick suggests that the peasantry respect what he calls the 'old stock', Shamus is withering in his response:

> 'When they think it annoys the new sthock ... or if they are wantin' to soother you. An' all the time they are laughin' up the sleeves o' their waistcoats and

> thinkin', "A fine old sthock of a weed it is; an' this lad came over wid Cromwell, hardly a thousand years ago yet, an' he looks down upon one that was king of all the counthry before the mountains were made." If you were alone wid a few peasants when nobody was there but themselves, you'd be astonished to see their equality, an' critical sternness, as they talk of the king or Bonaparte, or even of you. Sometimes they are fond of a stock that is safely buried, because it can never annoy them now, an' it belongs to the past. Often the past is near as fine as the future' (p. 183).

The elemental forces unleashed with rebellion mean that those in control, both before and during the rebellion, increasingly see their authority and position as a chimera: something that is merely the product of pretence and expediency. Ironically, the message being preached is a radically conservative one, which not only suggests that sudden – literally revolutionary – changes cannot erase or re-establish power structures, but that even what we would regard as long-term power structures – 'hardly a thousand years ago yet' – are also subject to a much older rhythm and order. During the rebellion these older rhythms and order surface. In *The Wood of the Brambles* these realities, hidden as they are beneath the 'reality' of everyday life, can only be represented by the surreal.

In this regard the most surreal element in the novel, apart from the conversations and the highly stylised encounters, are what the peasantry call the 'dark men': the blind men who participate in the rebellion. The dark men are themselves a symbol of superstition and ignorance. Chief among these is 'Dark Jacob', who becomes one of the most feared of the rebels. Shamus says that he is a 'king' in the rebel camp: 'When the sthrangers see him about, they think he has the Devil inside him, and respect him accordingly .... He can charge like a bull [in the fighting], for he is blind to the danger' (p. 77). Dark Jacob uses a pike to find his way around the rebel camp, which has both comic and potentially dangerous results. He recognises people by their walk and senses when the shadow of someone he knows comes over him. Dominick, while a prisoner of the rebels, is afraid to try and escape at night in case Jacob might miss him. Dark Jacob represents the peasantry in the novel: he is inscrutable, someone to be feared, and someone who literally acts blindly but with purpose. *The Wood of the Brambles* is a novel that reflects a fear of the lower classes: a fear predominantly rooted in an inability to understand their motivations and mentality. Bagenal Harvey, at the battle of Ross,

provides an insight into the peasant mind and his own impossible situation in a discussion with Dominick:

> 'I was mad when I took sides with the rebels. The only consolation is, I would have been hanged anyway.'
>
> 'Well, that is a comfort,' I [Dominick] said.
>
> 'Who can make anything of the peasants? The more you know them, the less you understand them at all .... They forget me when the fighting begins. They stormed the Gate [the 'Three Bullet' gate at Ross] in sheer anger, while half the town was unguarded: and thousands marched away without fighting. And the peasants, in the countryside yonder, are ploughing their fields, and driving their pigs, and trudging beside their donkeys, without a look at the battle, because it is in a different county. Just look at them, will you?' he said, as if I could not believe him.
>
> Taking the glass, I saw a peasant at work on a slope on the other side of the river: he was shoving a plough, as if the land was at peace: his bent body was black on the chocolate tint of the earth (pp. 217-8).

This assessment of the peasants is really an assessment of the Irish psyche. Considine observes that if the Irish had been in the Garden of Eden they would have 'cut the Garden in unneighbourly counties' (p. 255). All of this reinforces the notion that the peasant is disposed to territorial strife and entirely concerned with and motivated by the local and the immediate, and to look for wider or more expansive motives is futile. The novel continually undermines its own conclusions, however. The notion that the peasant is working away on the other side of the river, 'as if the land was at peace', is merely Dominick and Harvey's perception of the situation, and fails to take into account the reality of life for those who do not have the time, the education, or the necessary freedom to concern themselves with wider issues. The peasant may be working because he has no choice but to work. It must also be contrasted with Shamus Dhu's earlier observation that the peasants *do* have notions of equality of a kind and opinions on the king and Bonaparte. The peasantry does not have the luxury of a code of honour like that motivating the gentry classes, and the latter regularly fail to grasp the practicalities of the situation in the same way as the peasantry. An example of this is where Fr Roche points out that surrendering and returning to their cabins after giving up their arms under an amnesty is not an option for most in the political climate of the time, as 'no one would dare to stop unarmed in a cabin' (p. 300).

Furthermore, the gentleman's code of honour is regularly shown up as hollow and destructive in the novel. Bagenal Harvey is described by Shamus as 'a shaken irritable kindly lean little man, a duellist, and a terrible talker .... An' because he is rich, he is put over my head' (p. 176). 'Duellist' is not a complimentary term. Sir Malachi's best friend, Sir Tim Desmond, shares the natural irritability of Harvey and Sir Malachi and is lonely 'because he had killed most of his friends. He had formed the habit of killing them in youth, and he could never get rid of it' (p. 250). Sir Tim turns out to be the person who burnt down Dominick's home, Davernmore. The burning was possibly the result of some form of repressed anger over the fact that Agatha, Considine's daughter, had teased him, and his perception that she favoured Dominick. Motives and motivations, both public and private, are at best vague in *The Wood of the Brambles*. These thought processes are shown to be contradictory and unsatisfactory, demonstrating that that 'higher' motives of those of the gentry classes are just as, or perhaps even more, inadequate than those of the peasantry.

Judgments as to the worth of individuals are often made on the most specious of grounds. Shamus Dhu suggests that the gentry joined the rebels because of 'Our ill-luck, and their fears' (p. 176). He describes John Colclough, one of the gentry involved on the rebel side, as 'a good an' kind man that ought to live in a convent. There is nothing against him, except that he pronounces his name as if it was Cokely' (p. 176). Ironically, given the general tenor of the book, it is the warrior priests who come out best. The rector of Enniscrone, Patrick Carey, is portrayed as severe, joyless and anti-Catholic; holding the view that there is no hope for Ireland until all the priests are hanged (p. 90). Fr Murphy of Boolavogue is described by Dominick as a 'wistful meek little man, with the look of a starved angel' (p. 54); a rather poetic description from the least poetic figure in the novel. It is Considine who gives us the popular image of Murphy as a man driven to lead his people in a war for their religion and lives, leading the way in his vestments (p. 55). Fr Philip Roche is the one individual who most clearly approaches hero – albeit tragic hero – status in the novel. When given the opportunity to escape he says: 'Even if I escaped, do you think I could live happy with the thought of the people I abandoned, or look the world in the face, as I remembered the heads of my comrades on the Court-

house beyond? Do you think I have the courage to live? But I have the courage to die … I have done with a general's part; but I can still play the man' (p. 300).

Roche becomes a key figure as the novel progresses: a mix of pragmatism and insight, but always tempered with a rough and ready humanity. He tries to spare as many lives as he can, realising that his power to do so is always at the expense of his power as a leader over the peasantry. He propounds the Kavanagh view that the rebellion was not the result of United Irish plotting or treason, but the product of the 'desperate remedies' of the government (p. 311). He also provides an analysis of the nature of power in the rebellion – and in Ireland – which is ultimately the cause, result and lesson of the rebellion: 'The drunken squireens, the poor tradesmen and farmers of our Irish militia and yeomanry, had absolute power. God pity the weak, when a peasant has a mind to be cruel! What were these men but peasants with a passing authority?' (p. 312).

Roche highlights both the dangers of absolute power – particularly when invested in squireens, poor tradesmen and farmers – and the fact that the rebellion was not a peasant uprising *per se*, but a war between peasants; each with its own leadership. The militia and yeomanry were merely peasants with power, and the same basic instincts drove both sides. The political motivations of both sides were at least secondary and probably unimportant in the grand scheme of things. However, in a manner that is typical of the novel, the very premise that is central to the above thesis, absolute power, is then undermined by being called a 'passing authority'. Thus we return to one of the central tenets of the novel, the nature of power itself, and how easy it is to both assume and lose it. Power therefore, is not *powerful*, it is in fact fragile and depends on a delicate coalition and coalescence of interests and aspirations. 'Absolute power' is a fallacy, and power itself is always subject to the tacit acquiescence of others. In the grand scheme of things, as we have seen in the novel, power is a passing thing, and the roots of its close ally, respect, are to be seen in the very distant past, as Shamus Dhu observed earlier, 'before the mountains were made' (p. 183).

The question of respect and the need to be respected is particularly important in Dominick's case. It is clear from the novel that his grandfather wants Dominick's cousin to inherit Davernmore, but during the course of the novel it emerges that the rightful heir of Davernmore is in fact Fr Pierce Kilclare through a deed that the rector, Sir Tim, Sir

Malachi and Considine all knew existed, but that had been suppressed. Thus Dominick's legitimacy is undermined both at a personal and legal level. His subsequent role in the capture of Kilclare has the appearance of an attempt to eliminate Kilclare for his own personal ends: something we know to be untrue, as he had no knowledge of the existence of the deed. Dominick's role in the capture of Kilclare results in his manservant Neligan wishing to be released from his service. Dominick's reaction to this reveals that his stoicism is but skin deep:

> I took the paper, and read something about the Viceroy and the Ulster Rebellion: but I found I was growing bitterly angry with everyone who was named in the news. So I flung it into the fender. Why should I trouble about a servant's opinion? If one of the others had chosen to spite himself by foolish ingratitude, I would not care in the least. But I had a weakness for Neligan, and I liked to be haunted by his faithful affection: in my dreams of the future I had come to imagine him as a loyal retainer (pp. 328-9).

This passage highlights not only Dominick's insecurity and his snobbery, but also the power and effect that the so-called lower classes can have. Respect cannot be expected as a right, only earned – and lost. Dominick's snobbery is in part a function of his insecurity. The surreal and nightmarish atmosphere in the novel is a manifestation in part of Dominick's inability to accept the 'new' order. While a prisoner in the rebel camp, he cannot believe what is going on: 'What risky food had made me dream I was guarded by the master of the school and the blind beggar, and condemned by a rabble, and bullied by the Considine's butler? I was dazed by these topsy-turvy proceedings. That I should be a judge of the peasants, or bully Brosna, would be only in reason; but I was wild at this preposterous change' (pp. 110-11). The nightmare for people such as Dominick is not so much the rebellion itself, but the disruption to the social hierarchy it creates.

Ultimately, *The Wood of the Brambles* highlights failure and disconnection, and it does this by showing its characters to be failures, either because of their own personalities or by circumstances, or both. Thus Dominick is seen to let himself and others down, often through no fault of his own, as in the case of Pierce Kilclare and his rightful inheritance. Dominick's character contributes to his disgrace. In his arrogance he assumes that Agatha Considine will marry him, and he is surprised when she refuses him and ultimately marries his cousin Tony. The local population blame Dominick for

Kilclare's death and despise him for seemingly cheating Kilclare of his inheritance. Moreover, when Fr Roche at his court martial calls on Dominick to verify that he had endeavoured to save a man from being executed, Dominick, although he does not doubt it, cannot in all conscience confirm it as he was not a witness to this act. Roche, who had earlier saved Dominick's life, thinks that he is simply not prepared to help: '"Ah, well!," he said, sighing, "I was wrong to appeal to him. I thought he might have stood by me now"' (p. 309). What is also galling for Dominick is the fact that it was his intention to restore to Kilclare his inheritance. In the end, Dominick too is the victim of misunderstanding.

The novel ends with Dominick leaving under a cloud for France, after a traumatic month in Ireland. In something that could be construed as a glimmer of hope – or despair, depending on one's view – in time the wild Tony Davern became Sir Anthony Davern, a 'severe and morose magistrate, and friend of the Law' (p. 462). *The Wood of the Brambles* points towards a new way of presenting and dealing with the rebellion. It is neither explicitly unionist nor nationalist in character, but concentrates instead on the immediate relationships between the characters. Dominick becomes an Alice in his own strange and frightening Wonderland, constantly escaping and being recaptured, meeting an increasingly bizarre group of characters, and engaging in increasingly surreal and disconnected conversations.[81] In the way it presents the rebellion *The Wood of the Brambles* remains a defiant one-off in the pre-1898 period, but it points to a way in which twentieth-century writers could deal with the topic.

At first glance *Ninety-Eight* (1897), by John Hill – under the pseudonym 'Patrick C. Faly' – seems to have little of the modern in it. Hill (d.*c.*1904), described as 'of the Ulster family of Hills', was a contributor to *Tinsley's Magazine* – a London-published monthly which featured light literature and regular articles of Irish interest – in the 1870s

[81] Among the range of characters that Dominick meets is Shamus Dhu's group, known as the 'Babes in the Wood', many of whom wear animal skins as clothes and as a disguise. He first encounters them as a row of rabbits' ears, peeping over a hedge (p. 362). The group are mentioned in Hay, *History of the Irish Insurrection* (1847), op. cit., p. 298; and see Daniel J. Gahan, 'The "Black Mob" and the "Babes in the Wood": Wexford in the Wake of the Rebellion 1798-1806', in *Journal of the Wexford Historical Society*, xiii (1990-'91), 92-110.

and '80s and was also author of *A Wild Rose* (1896).[82] *Ninety-Eight* appears to be aimed at the US market, although there is no evidence of an American edition. George Washington and the 'young Hercules' that is the United States are lauded, and the US is credited with being the inspiration for Irish patriots. Wexford town is called 'Wexford City' in the narrative, which may simply be to authenticate the notion that the memoirs are in the charge of an American editor, or may indicate that Hill had an eye on the US market.

A stylistic device that presents a narrative by an Irishman to what appears to be an ostensibly American readership but in reality was largely an Irish one, in the form of a manuscript edited by an American, seems to mirror the movement of US and Fenian ideas of Irish nationality and nationalism across the Atlantic. The narrative shows an acute awareness of itself as a multi-layered text, and relies on an interaction between these layers to convey the deeper meanings contained in the novel. As such *Ninety-Eight* lends itself most amenably to a postmodernist interpretation. 'Cormac Faly's' memoir can be considered as a metafiction whose full significance is only apparent when considered in conjunction with the other implied narratives in the novel: those of his own father, his son, his grandson, and his grandson's children.[83]

The full title of the novel is pertinent: *Ninety-Eight: Being the Recollections of Cormac Cahir O'Connor Faly (Late Colonel in the French Service) of that Awful Period. Collected and Edited by his Grandson, Patrick C. Faly, Attorney-at-Law, Buffalo, N.Y. and Illustrated by A.D. McCormick.* The title highlights immediately the connections that need to be made and establishes the veracity of the memoirs by presenting them in a style that suggests they belong to that tranche of memoirs and accounts of 1798 published immediately after the rebellion.[84] Indeed, *Ninety-Eight* seems to be a pastiche of the

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[82] See Brown, *Ireland in Fiction*, op. cit., p. 103; O'Donoghue describes him as a 'clever Irish novelist', who lived for some years on the Isle of Wight and in Brussels; see O'Donoghue, *Poets of Ireland*, op. cit., p. 197.

[83] 'Postmodernism' is a difficult concept to define succinctly, and it has no clear or universally accepted definition. The term is used here in a number of senses, but primarily to suggest a level of self-awareness in the text of its status as a text, and in the sense of the work as an organic whole, where not just the text but its authorship and structure must be taken into account when considering its meaning; see 'Modernism and Postmodernism', in Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (1992; 2nd ed. London: Arnold, 1994), pp. 119-24.

[84] Evidence of its air of 'authenticity' is that fact that the novel is incorrectly catalogued as a historical narrative of the 1798 rebellion in the National Library of Ireland.

memoirs of people such as Miles Byrne and Thomas Cloney, right down to the use of the adjective 'awful' in the title.[85]

Purporting to be the memoirs of 'Faly's' grandfather, Cormac Faly, *Ninety-Eight* is the first nakedly Fenian interpretation of the rebellion since James Murphy's novels of the mid-1880s. All of the classic Fenian tropes are employed: the appeal to a history and tradition of glorious rebellion; the suspicion of the church and its motives; the attempt to defend or rationalise the Scullabogue massacre; and the look to the future and a new generation of patriots to take up arms to ensure Irish freedom. Although the narrative concentrates on the adventures of Cormac Faly, the novel reaches across five generations of the family. Cormac was the son of Miles Faly, who lost his lands in Mayo to a cousin, Augustine Faly, when the latter turned Protestant. Miles subsequently emigrated to America where he fought under George Washington in the American Revolution. He was disabled in the war and returned to Europe where he went to work for a friend in Edinburgh, and it is there that Cormac was born. Cormac returns with his father to live in his native Mayo, although they hide their true identity. Cormac joins the rebels to avenge his father's death by flogging at the hands of militia in the charge of George Faly, his cousin. The stated aim of the memoirs is to 'serve to call to my grandchildren's minds the heroes, the victims, the martyrs, and the sacrifices, never to be ungratefully forgotten or superciliously minimized, ridiculed, or depreciated, and the fierce red harvest gathered in that splendid and terrible summer of Ninety-Eight'.[86]

To this end, one of the most important characters features only in the Introduction: Cormac's son, and 'Patrick's' father, Denis Faly. He is the direct link between past and present, and the direct inheritor of Cormac's revolutionary zeal. We learn in the Introduction that Denis Faly was involved in the first Fenian invasion of Canada in 1866, was a major in the army of the US and a 'Brigadier-General in the army of the Irish republic' (p. 2). He had initially been involved in buying guns and facilitating the escape of suspects in Britain and Ireland and had participated in the Young Ireland

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[85] Thomas Cloney's *Personal Narrative* has, as part of its subtitle, a reference to '*...the Awful Period of 1798*'; see chapter two, p. 44. As we see, *awful* may well have a double meaning here, including its older meaning 'to inspire awe', as the purpose of the account is to inspire others.

[86] 'Patrick C. Faly' [John Hill], *Ninety-Eight: Being the Recollections of Cormac Cahir O'Connor Faly (Late Colonel in the French Service) of that Awful Period. Collected and Edited by his Grandson, Patrick C. Faly, Attorney-at-Law, Buffalo, N.Y. and Illustrated by A.D. McCormick* (London, 1897), p. 313; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

rebellion of 1848. He ended up in the US via Tasmania with Thomas Francis Meagher and was injured at Fredericksburg while in Meagher's Brigade.[87] Such a career gives Denis Faly impeccable Fenian credentials.

Although it is never expressly stated, Denis Faly is probably named after Denis D'Arcy, Cormac's rebel colleague during the 1798 rebellion. If Denis Faly is the silent link, then Denis D'Arcy is the active link in the novel that binds Cormac to Patrick. Moreover, Denis Faly is the proof that the Fenians are the true inheritors of the spirit of '98. Indeed, *Ninety-Eight* hints that the Fenians are an even purer or more advanced version of the rebels of 1798. The evidence for this is the fact that Cormac initially became involved in the 1798 rebellion by accident and for motives of personal vengeance, while Denis's involvement was inspired by his father's actions rather than any outrage perpetrated upon himself. This suggests that in the progress of Irish history the spirit of resistance is distilled and purified, becoming more altruistic as it passes down the generations, and for that reason more worthy of praise and support. The consequence of this is to open the door again to constitutional methods as potentially the next stage in a purifying process, while still reserving the right to engage in violent actions should they be deemed necessary or desirable. The advantage of this kind of reasoning is that it allows one to see the physical force and constitutional traditions as one great whole to be gloried in, rather than two divergent approaches. Such reasoning can also be seen as essentially Parnellite in nature, echoing Parnell's 'New Departure' with Michael Devoy, the leader of the Fenians in America, and Michael Davitt, the leader of the Land League.[88]

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[87] Thomas Francis Meagher (1823-67), was born in Waterford and became one of the leaders of the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848. He was transported to Tasmania where he escaped and made his way to the US in 1852. He was a Union officer during the American civil war – raising his own 'Irish brigade' – and afterwards secretary of the Montana territory. He is also usually credited with popularising the Irish tricolour of green, white and orange. Fredericksburg, Virginia, was the scene of a major battle during the American civil war (13 Dec. 1862). The result – a crushing defeat for Union forces – was a major boost for the Confederate cause. Meagher's brigade took heavy losses at this battle and having already suffered many casualties three months earlier at Antietam (17 Sept.) never subsequently regained full strength; see Moody, Martin and Byrne (eds.) *A New History of Ireland VIII*, op. cit., pp. 323-36.

[88] The 'New Departure' was a coalition of physical force, constitutional nationalism and land reform agitation under one banner with an agreed programme of political priorities, worked out between Parnell, Devoy and Davitt in July 1879. It was agreed that land reform was the first priority and Parnell subsequently became president of the Land League, thereby giving him control over the three main strands of nationalism.

One of the other consequences of the layering of different generations in this way is that their identities, just like the physical force and constitutional traditions, seem to merge into one another and become one great amorphous whole. In *Ninety-Eight*, Miles, Cormac, Denis and Patrick Faly seem to become one person, and the injustice done to Miles's father becomes an injustice done to them all. The fact that the story is almost exclusively Cormac's adds to the illusion that they are in fact one person. They become, in a sense, another Captain Rock: a personification of a spirit of rebellion against injustices perpetrated against generations of Irishmen. The link with the dead generations is further strengthened by the fact that all the family bear the same second name – Cahir – 'in memory and in proof of our descent from Cathair Mor, King of Leinster and Ard-righ, or monarch, of all Ireland' (p. 2). The right of the Falys to be rebels is established by their descent from one of the dispossessed kings of Ireland. Once again, the question of legitimacy – and by extension, the entitlement to rebel – rears its head.

In his construction of Cormac as a character and in the legacy he leaves for the future generations, Hill employs almost every Irish nationalist trope. The Falys, descended from kings, are in reduced circumstances as a result of the unfair penal laws. Cormac himself is the son of a soldier of George Washington and a French-American mother, giving him impeccable revolutionary credentials. He is literally born as a result of anti-Catholic feeling – his premature birth being due to the shock experienced by his mother during the riots in Edinburgh that greeted the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 – and was reared as an Irish exile in an unfriendly foreign city that was also one of the great centres of Enlightenment thinking. He eventually enters the French service, thereby establishing a link with the 'wild geese'. Furthermore, in a manner that we have already seen ascribed by many 'fatherland' historians to the 1798 rebellion itself, Cormac is provoked by the actions of government forces into participating in the 1798 rebellion, managing to be involved in action in Dublin, Wexford and Mayo. His son becomes a Young Irelander and an American-based Fenian activist, and his grandson becomes an attorney based in New York state, mirroring both the increasing respectability and social mobility of the Irish in America and following in the grand tradition of men such as Thomas Addis Emmet.

This is not the end of the usage of rebellion tropes however. When Cormac is wanted by the local yeomanry for intervening to prevent a young woman, Mary Doyle, from being raped and murdered by them, he flees to join the United Irishmen and ends up hiding in an underground cave in Mayo with James Napper Tandy, and the fictitious characters of Colonel Hervey Morres; Counsellor John Corrigan, a member of the Dublin executive; and the aforementioned Denis D'Arcy. The characters in the cave are a microcosm of the United Irish leadership. Corrigan is described by Cormac as 'a man of intellect, and of greater complexity of character', than the 'brave, rough and ready, but vain' Napper Tandy; the 'alternately rollicking and sentimental adventurer' D'Arcy, who 'appealed more to the sympathies than to the intellect, though possessing plenty of common sense'; or the 'continentalized "wild-goose" soldier of fortune, Morres' (p. 96).[89] Hard-headed realists, brave but reckless individuals, sentimentalists, adventurers, and opportunists are seen to populate the United Irish leadership. Significantly, he goes on to qualify these assessments, saying that they were 'the judgments of youth' (p. 97). This is important as subsequent events show that this was indeed the mix of talents and temperaments in the United Irishmen, but that Cormac Faly, in the 'judgements of youth' ascribed the right qualities to the wrong people.

For a time Cormac falls under the influence of Corrigan, who outlines for Cormac an extremely pragmatic view of the nature of an enterprise such as that of the United Irishmen, recognising that 'things, including human motives, are not always what they should be' (p. 97). Corrigan's unromantic and mercenary assessment of the motivations of the United Irishmen, a common view amongst those antipathetic to the nationalist interpretation of the rebellion, is actually undermined in *Ninety-Eight*. It is Corrigan who is seen to be the person with the ulterior and mercenary motives as he turns out to be a government informer. Worse still, Corrigan betrays the humane Fr O'Coigly after the priest intervened to save his life. As the rebellion progresses, it is the 'sentimental adventurer' D'Arcy who shows himself to be the better and more effective soldier. Thus those who are predisposed to holding an unromantic view of the 1798 rebellion – and by

[89] Another character who features in the novel is Old Connel, a half-mad old man who was involved in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Thus yet another strand of Irish revolutionary tradition is woven into the narrative.

extension, Irish revolutionary activity in general – are highlighted as precisely the people who would betray it. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy.

As regards the rebellion itself, the novel also undermines some of the tenets of the Kavanagh interpretation. Cormac and D'Arcy are appointed by the Directory to be with Bagenal Harvey in Wexford, suggesting that the Wexford rebellion was not, in fact, a spontaneous one but part of an overall strategy. The priests involved in the Wexford rebellion are not painted in a flattering light. Philip Roche (here 'Roache'), the one 'hero' in *The Wood of the Brambles*, is here described by D'Arcy as 'a fat-headed priest … who is as brave as a lion, as conceited as the ass that wore its skin, and has no conception of warfare other than may be derived from a village pig-fair' (p. 259). Later, when the rebels have captured Wexford, D'Arcy observes that 'There is, with all respect to the Church, a d - - d sight too much priest about the staff here', and he also suggests that Roache won't like Harvey being in charge because he is a Protestant (pp. 285-6). Harvey himself gets a more favourable portrayal then is usual in 1798 literature. Described as refined, upright, liberal-minded and in delicate health after his stay in jail, his leadership of the rebel army is defended not by contrasting him with the heroic warrior priests of the Kavanagh interpretation, but by highlighting his sacrifices and comparing him to others of his social class.[90]

This defence of Harvey also highlights the great purpose and lesson of 1798 for the Fenian sympathiser. It is that people such as Bagenal Harvey and Lord Edward Fitzgerald *were* prepared to give up status and wealth and make the ultimate sacrifice. However ill-advised their actions may have been on occasion, and however poorly they may have performed on the field of battle, they were infinitely better than those who did nothing, who took the government side, or who betrayed them. Even the rebel atrocity at Scullabogue is portrayed as a terrible but understandable reaction to outrages committed

[90] '[Harvey] gave up health, fortune, influential and highly-paid connections and friends, liberty, and lastly laid down life itself for the sake of his persecuted countrymen, mostly of a humble station and a different religious persuasion from his own. What a contrast to the ambitious, double-minded, time-serving vendors of innocent blood, upon whom the Government heaped honours and wealth, to the infamous Higgins, to Corrigan (happily dispatched to his account), to "Sheares" Armstrong, to the nameless traitors who delivered Father O'Coigly and poor Lord Edward into the hands of their enemies – in short, to all the obscene vultures that sniffed and gloated round the Dublin shambles!' (pp. 289-90).

by government forces, particularly the burning of the rebel 'hospital' at Ross.[91] Denis D'Arcy, in common with other leaders, constantly acknowledges that the rebellion is a lost cause even before it begins, but he is full of what might be called Fenian optimism – which may be defined as pessimism about the present but optimism for a future successful rising:

> 'If it be not now, as Hamlet says, it will be to come. A system based on selfish injustice and buttressed by corruption and terror may last for a long time, and often does, as a drunkard may maintain a semblance of health and spirits by constant resort to the dog that bit him ... whenever he feels a bit low, but it cannot last for ever .... I have lived long enough to see many surprises and many disappointments, and I shall not be astonished if I am food for worms long before I see Ireland free, or even if not free, treated with common humanity and justice. Nevertheless, Oulart is good, and Enniscorthy is better, and we will go on until we drop. There is no other way' (pp. 265-6).

This, in a nutshell, is the Fenian philosophy and interpretation of 1798. The rebellion deserves to be celebrated, commemorated and validated not because it was a success, but because it was yet another chapter in the national narrative of a glorious struggle against oppression and another step along a road that would ultimately, at some unspecified time in the future, lead to 'freedom' of some sort for Ireland. Each successive unsuccessful uprising is in fact a triumph, adding more grist to the Fenian mill and placing more heroes and martyrs in the pantheon of freedom. Central to this interpretation is the identification of some progress towards the Fenian goal: the Ireland of the 1890s, for all its political and social controversies, is a far better place than that of the 1790s. This progress, allied to the fact that many of the heroes of the past realised that what they fought for would not be achieved in their own lifetimes, gives at least the illusion of

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[91] Cormac's reaction to the scene at Scullabogue reflects the fact that Mary Doyle, the woman with whom he was in love, was one of those burned in the hospital at Ross. The existence of this 'hospital' in Ross continues to be a matter of heated historical debate. Gahan accepts its existence as a matter of fact in *People's Rising*, but is more circumspect in *Rebellion!*, stating that soldiers 'set fire to a four-storey building in Mary Street, in which about seventy rebels were taking shelter, perhaps because they were wounded, burning them all to death'; see Gahan, *People's Rising*, pp. 131, 210; *Rebellion!,* p. 63. Pakenham does not mention the incident, despite acknowledging that soldiers shot wounded and innocent civilians with impunity after the battle; see *Year of Liberty*, p. 208. The most outspoken critic of the 'hospital' idea in recent times is Tom Dunne in *Rebellions*, who describes it as a 'hitherto unnoticed atrocity', and who disputes the existence of any corroborating sources, claiming the motivation behind the claims for this 'hospital' was a nationalist desire to have 'an exact parallel' for Scullabogue; see Dunne, *Rebellions*, pp. 131, 227-30.

progress towards an inevitable goal. The differing fates of Cormac Faly and Denis D'Arcy illustrate this fact. Cormac, in surviving the rebellion, writes his memoirs in order to inspire future generations and to perpetuate the memory of heroes such as D'Arcy, both in print and by naming his own son after him, just as the family retain the 'Cahir' name. Denis D'Arcy's reward is the highest one that can be bestowed on a Fenian icon of the past: he is killed at the battle of Castlebar, at the highest point of rebel success in the western rebellion, and dies 'in the happy belief that victory had come to Ireland at last' (p. 310). Denis is spared witnessing the disappointment of another heroic failure.

'A new and brighter day': the novels of 1898

Four new novels with the 1798 rebellion as their theme were published in the centenary year of 1898: H.A. Hinkson's *Up for the Green*; Randal McDonnell's *Kathleen Mavourneen*; Adela Orpen's *Corrageen in '98*; and Margaret Pender's *The Green Cockade*. Together with the large amount of articles, poems, plays, pamphlets and commemorative memorabilia produced they played a part in ensuring that the centenary compared favourably with the 1897 diamond jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria, something that was particularly important for nationalists.

Henry Albert 'H.A.' Hinkson (1865-1919), was an author and barrister who was married to Katharine Tynan and eventually became resident magistrate for south Mayo in 1914.[92] *Up for the Green* was the third of at least eighteen novels he wrote in the period 1895-1913. Hinkson uses the technique of employing a narrator who is ostensibly unsympathetic to the rebel cause to add a degree of veracity to his flattering account of rebel activities in Wicklow. His narrator, Jeremiah French, is a pious businessman and yeoman from Cork who along with his daughter, Patience, is captured by rebel forces on his way to Dublin.[93] French expects the worst from those he describes as 'bands of

[92] See Brady and Cleeve, *Irish Writers*, pp. 106-7; *Who Was Who: 1916-1928* (London: A.C. Black, 1929), p. 499.

[93] French's language and manner, his daughter's name, and his concern for animals would suggest that he is from Quaker stock. This would add to his veracity as a narrator, as Quakers were widely respected for their truthfulness and objectivity. The narrative is purportedly based on the account of a Samuel Riley, a yeoman from Cork captured by rebels on his way to Dublin in September 1798. I have been unable to trace any such narrative. If it is fictitious then it may be an attempt to add another layer of authenticity and veracity to the rebel's conduct as it is described in the story. The setting of September would also place the action after

malcontents, who, calling themselves United Irishmen, declared that they would no longer be governed by the English, as they had been, but would set up for themselves a government of Irish and would be independent of the English for ever'.[94]

In fact French is continually surprised at the organisation, humanity and moderation of the rebels. The money they borrow from him is repaid to the extent that he actually makes a profit from his transactions with them. The rebels also respect his property, which is in stark contrast to the treatment received from those French describes as 'our own friends', the yeomanry (p. 208). By the time French and Patience eventually get to Dublin, French finds himself defending the rebels to his ultra-loyalist kinsmen; their comments and behaviour making him 'wonder no longer that there are many honest folk and Protestants, to boot, on the side of the rebels' (p. 279). Patience falls in love with Major O'Neill, one of the rebel leaders, and French reluctantly helps him to escape to Lisbon. French eventually decides to sell his business and move to Marseilles as he is now a suspected person in Cork. He agrees to the marriage of Patience and O'Neill: 'for though he is a rebel, I have found him very honourable' (p. 326).

The conceit of making French hostile to the rebels could only work, however, if he remained a loyalist in his heart: 'albeit at the time I wished that my daughter's husband had been a loyalist … yet must I confess that he has proved as dear and excellent a son to me as a husband to my daughter' (p. 326). Although the novel has moments of danger and horror, and is very critical of the yeomanry and extreme loyalism, at heart it is a rather gentle and benign work. It is populated by chivalrous rebels decked out in splendid uniforms that presumably reflect the rather shallow and selfish nature of the narrator. *Up for the Green* is an uncontroversial conservative nationalist account of the rebellion. While the marriage of Patience and O'Neill has echoes of the 'Union of hearts' trope, the couple make their life abroad and Patience is won over to the rebel side.

Randal McDonnell's *Kathleen Mavourneen*, like *Ninety-Eight*, takes the form of a manuscript; in this case one dated 1819. McDonnell (1870-1944) wrote at least four novels and was a regular contributor of verses to the *Irish Book Lover*. *Kathleen*

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the main activity in Wexford. Interestingly, the novel is dedicated to 'my friend' Frank Mathew who, of course, wrote *The Wood of the Brambles* (1896).

[94] H.A. Hinkson, *Up for the Green: A Romance of the Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1898), p. 2; further page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

Mavourneen was popular enough to have been reprinted eight times by 1935 and tells the story of Hugh Tallant, a young aristocratic Catholic whose family is left impoverished after 'Limerick and the Broken Promise'.[95] The novel steers an uncertain course. Although it is virulently pro-Catholic and scathing of the lower classes in general, the hero ends up marrying a Protestant girl – the 'Kathleen Mavourneen' of the title – 'of the middle class' (p. 8). A particular dislike of the author appears to be the accents of the lower orders of all countries, with the Scots accent being proclaimed as 'vile' (p. 258) and the English accent 'sublime' in its use of bad grammar (p. 239). Even Kathleen's voice is 'marred by a slight accent' (p. 9). It may be that the pomposity of Tallant is meant to alert us to the fact that he may not be altogether reliable in his judgments and opinions, but if that is the case then the irony is lost in a welter of confusion. While none of the opinions expressed by Tallant are, of themselves, particularly odd, the sheer number of unorthodox interpretations he holds may be evidence that his judgment is not strictly to be relied upon.[96]

Tallant's judgment becomes an important and significant issue when one considers that the conceit in *Kathleen Mavourneen* is that of setting the date of the manuscript as 1819, and thus ensuring a 79-year gap between the impressions of Tallant and the contemporary reader. Initially, the intervening period appears to back Tallant's political judgment. He forecasts that although Henry Grattan's popularity had waned by

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[95] Randal William McDonnell, *Kathleen Mavourneen: A Memory of the Great Rebellion. From the Record of Hugh Tallant, Rebel to King George of England in the Year of Grace One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Eight* (London, 1898), p. 3; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text. His other novels include *When Cromwell Came to Drogheda* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1906); *My Sword for Sarsfield* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1907) and *Ardnaree* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Sons, 1911). The conceit of editing a manuscript is a common feature of all his novels, with all of them purporting to be 'memoirs' or 'manuscripts'. He also wrote a number of books on steam locomotives and several books of verse, the last of which was *Songs of Seaside Places and Other Verses* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1932).

[96] Certainly Tallant makes a number of assertions and character judgments that are, to say the least, unusual and rarely if ever made in other '98 novels. He repeats a rumour that Reynolds the informer may have tipped off his kinsman Lord Edward Fitzgerald about the proposed raid on the Leinster Directory at Oliver Bond's house, although he admits that it would have been strange if Fitzgerald had not informed the others (p. 115). He also blames Nicholas Murphy, the houseowner, for the capture of Fitzgerald, as he did not assist him in his battle with Sirr's men (p. 137). Sirr himself is described as being 'a really brave man … though nothing can ever atone for the fearful cruelties he practised upon the helpless peasantry' (p. 50). In addition he suggests that John Warneford Armstrong, the betrayer of the Sheares brothers, who is usually execrated by nationalist and unionists historian alike, was 'an honourable man … [who committed] a foully dishonourable action … urged on by the interested advice of outsiders [his senior officers], whose reputations can in no wise suffer no matter how the weathercock of fate may turn' (p. 156). He also claims that Jonathan Swift was, like Fitzgerald, a patriot with 'the same bond of sympathy for an oppressed and a downtrodden people', which may be gilding the lily somewhat (p. 139).

1817 – the last time Tallant had seen him – a statue would eventually be raised to him in Dublin. An editorial interjection states that it was not until 'many years after Mr. Tallant's own death' that it occurred (p. 126).[97] Although he admires Jonathan Swift and Grattan, it is clear from the narrative that Tallant's primary admiration is for Wolfe Tone.[98] It is Tone who sends Tallant the plans for a French invasion and detailed instructions for the Directory: plans which Tallant has to destroy during a raid by Sirr and his men on his lodgings. Tone is described as having fought with 'unrivalled gallantry' before his capture at Lough Swilly (p. 207). In the forms of Tone, Grattan, and Jonathan Swift, we have the great triumvirate of patriotism: the radical and violent tradition; the constitutional tradition; and the polemical tradition. While all are lauded, it is Tone who is the most attractive and dynamic of the three.

However, some elements in the novel suggest that the contemporary reader is living in Tallant's nightmare vision of the future. He laments the fact that 'An enormous pillar and statue to an English admiral [Nelson] in our principal thoroughfare was erected not so long ago, while not a single statue to a great Irishman adorns our city' (p. 145). He adds: 'I have heard upon good authority that, should his present Gracious Majesty condescend to visit this poor country in the near future, there will be a subscription list opened to collect funds for the building of a new bridge across the Liffey. It will be named *Kingsbridge*, I hear, in honour of the proposed visit, and to show our great and abiding love for this pure monarch and the English people' (pp. 145-6).[99]

By making the building of Kingsbridge part of a nightmarish future rather than the recent past, the author is highlighting the continued failure of the Irish people to commemorate appropriately the heroes of their own country. Seen in this way, *Kathleen Mavourneen* becomes a contribution to the debate about the celebration of Queen

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[97] The statue was unveiled in 1880 after a twelve-year public campaign; see Judith Hill, *Irish Public Sculpture: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998), pp. 104-6.

[98] McDonnell writes that the novel was inspired by a visit to Wolfe Tone's grave, and the 1898 edition contains a photograph of the grave; ('Introduction', p. [i]).

[99] In a 'Prelude' to the 'manuscript' McDonnell writes in an ironic tone of the 'intense love' of the Irish people demonstrated by the 'present representative of the House of Hanover' [Queen Victoria], who had spent twelve days of a reign of sixty years in Ireland ('Prelude', p. vii). Such a comment is obviously meant to be a critical comparison of the diamond jubilee celebration of her reign in 1897 with the efforts to appropriately commemorate the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. Similarly, the 'present' monarch in 1819 would have been George III, the king who had presided over the loss of the American colonies and who refused to support Catholic emancipation as part of the Act of Union.

Victoria's diamond jubilee and how best to commemorate the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. McDonnell attacks in his 'Prelude' to the novel those 'who, in order to show their loyalty to England, consider it correct and fashionable to cast a slur upon the names of men who lived and died for Ireland one hundred years ago' (p. iv). In this regard the 1819 date of the manuscript becomes relevant again, as the writer's respect and admiration for Tone and Grattan has not become lost with the passage of time or the subsequent calumnies heaped upon them. *Kathleen Mavourneen*, in eulogising Swift, Grattan and Tone, seeks to bring together all strands of nationalist tradition in a common desire to commemorate all the heroes of Ireland's struggle for freedom: a particularly pertinent desire in light of the controversy over the proposed site for a statue of Wolfe Tone.[100]

The last two centenary novels echo the first novels written about the rebellion in the early years of the nineteenth century. Adela Orpen (née Moore), author of *Corrageen in '98*, was a native of Monksgrange, Co. Kilkenny, and was married to the Irish historian G. H. Orpen.[101] Her novel takes a conservative view of the rebellion that echoes other conservative representations in fictional form of the previous one hundred years. The rebellion is portrayed as sectarian and priest-ridden, and the Protestants involved on the rebel side are atheists or Paineites or both. They are beguiled by impractical notions of liberty and sexual licence in the grand tradition of anti-Jacobin writing that equated

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[100] In 1898 a plinth was constructed at the top of Grafton Street by the 1798 commemoration committee, but a statue was never erected on it. In an ironic twist, it was used instead as a base for a Boer War memorial. A statue of Wolfe Tone was finally erected opposite the Shelbourne Hotel on St Stephen's Green in 1967. McDonnell's desire to avoid a split in nationalist thinking can be seen in the fact that he states that it is 'the great longing of the majority of the people for the restoration of the old Parliament at College Green' (p. vii) – the notion of 'restoration' presumably being more palatable than 'establishment'. Such a wish might appeal to some degree to home rulers, Fenians, and – perhaps – old-fashioned patriots alike. However, in the Introduction to the manuscript 'Tallant' clearly favours independence and the physical force option. According to him, the failure of the cause in 1798 was due to the traitors in their midst, but the nobility and worthiness of the cause 'is proved by the fact that it was always held up as the sole curative for the country's ills by generation after generation of her noblest sons' ('Introduction', p.[i]). This kind of ambiguity bedevils the novel as a whole; for an account of the centenary commemorations, see Conclusion, pp. 296-7.

[101] Orpen wrote a number of other novels, including *The Chronicles of the Sid* (London, 1893); *Perfection City* (London, 1897); and *The Jay Hawkers* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1900); the latter two having American settings. Her husband, Goddard Henry Orpen (1852-1932), was a historian with Kerry connections who wrote *Ireland Under the Normans 1169-1333*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911-20); see *Thom's Irish Who's Who: A Biographical Book of Reference of Prominent Men and Women in Irish Life, at Home and Abroad, 1923* (Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1923), p. 196.

political with sexual freedom.[102] The landlords are portrayed as hard but fair and, entirely convinced of the essential goodness of their tenants, they are taken by surprise by their disloyalty. The novel is set in Wexford and revolves around the relationship of Lady Laura Rossiter, the wife of Sir Edward Rossiter, a good-humoured landlord; and Horace Brandon, their neighbour, a 'kindly enthusiast'.[103] Brandon is a free-thinker who rejects both religion and the institution of marriage, and who describes the relationship between Ireland and England as a 'vampire-bond' (p. 81). Brandon and Lady Laura are influenced by all things French, whereas Edward Rossiter and his mother dress in the English style. Laura aspires to be a romantic Irish heroine and is encouraged by Brandon to see herself as the personification of the spirit of rebellion in Ireland, which panders to her vanity, but also reveals how little she really knew about the realities of social upheaval: 'She was ready for the revolution, but it must be a fairly gentle revolution, above all with no hideous sights unfolded before her pretty eyes' (p. 129).

Brandon disapproves of the excesses committed by the *jacquerie* of the French Revolution, but his own vanity convinces him that he will have the courage and the moral authority to control the 'ignorant multitude' (p. 7) when the time comes. As the novel progresses it becomes clear to both Brandon and Laura that their notions and expectations of rebellion are entirely unrealistic. Laura loses her infant son and is convinced that he is dead, and in the *dénouement* of the novel she narrowly escapes the burning barn at Scullabogue. Brandon, who is a leader of the rebel army, has his illusions shattered and shoots himself on hearing of the Scullabogue massacre, assuming that Laura has perished. Much of the novel's power is contained in the fact that Brandon is an atheist who takes his own life to escape to the 'Eternal Nothingness', lest he should meet 'the mournful spirit of Laura Rossiter once again' (p. 300). Presumably, most readers of *Corrageen in '98* believed that a worse fate lay in store for him. After her experiences Laura is a changed woman.

Central to the narrative, however, is the symbolic power of the fairy stone of Corrageen. This lies at the start of the novel in the grounds of Corrageen House, the home of the Rossiters. Local superstition holds that should the stone be disturbed a great

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[102] See chapter three, pp. 86-7.

[103] Orpen, Mrs [Adela], *Corrageen in '98. A Story of the Irish Rebellion* (London, 1898), p. 129; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text.

disaster would occur and the harvests would be lost forever.[104] Laura Rossiter, however, is determined to remove the stone and build a summerhouse on the site. Old Mrs Rossiter, her mother-in-law, is a shrewd aristocrat who is clever enough to know the consequences of meddling with and disregarding local tradition. She pleads, to no avail, for the stone to be left where it is. The reaction of the locals to the stone's removal highlights one of the most important and complex things about symbols in general: their power comes not so much from themselves but from the reaction of others to them. Since the locals believe that something evil will come of removing the stone, they are ready to accept and participate when evil, in the form of the rising, occurs. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. The clear inference is that meddling with the natural order of things merely creates a licence for others to do the same. The site, where Laura and Brandon regularly meet in secret, becomes a desolate area where no flowers or shrubs will grow.

The destruction of the fairy stone becomes a metaphor in *Corrageen in '98* for a thoughtless disregard for superstition, folklore, and – by extension – history and tradition. Only those with a healthy respect for such traditions – which rules out many atheists, freethinkers, revolutionaries, libertarians, iconoclasts and political radicals – can truly understand, influence and control the ordinary people of Ireland. The novel is not entirely pessimistic, however. Lest an accusation of promoting superstition could be levelled at Orpen, the curse is seen in the end to relate to just one year's harvest, suggesting that once the natural order is restored things can very quickly get back to normal. In a development that is heavily symbolic, Laura's son is returned to her in the summerhouse, a sign that the curse has been dispelled. *Corrageen in '98* is a novel out of its time. It is a warning that the implications of ignoring tradition and folklore can be serious. Specifically, it encourages the landed classes to have imaginative sympathy with their tenants, or face potentially dire consequences. For most landlords, however, it was already too late.

The ability to relate to and understand folklore and tradition is used to opposite effect in the final novel of this study, Margaret Pender's *The Green Cockade*; an edition

[104] 'What though the grain be in the green,/If low be laid the Fairy Stone,/Nor lord nor heir of Corrageen,/Shall haul the golden harvest home!' (p. 24)

of which was published in Dublin as late as 1943.[105] Pender (1850?-1920) was a Belfast Catholic writer who was heavily involved in organising the centenary commemorations in Belfast.[106] Set in Ulster, *The Green Cockade* has William Putnam McCabe, previously featured in *Agnes Arnold* and *The Foster-Brothers of Doon*, as the hero. McCabe is able to turn folklore and tradition to good effect for the rebel cause. Although a Protestant of the 'middling' class, he spent much of his childhood in the home of Neal Magilla, a 'noble specimen of our Irish peasant – hardy, honest, God-fearing, and industrious; with a heart big and kind enough to hold the whole world, and a head as clear as a Prime Minister's'.[107] McCabe's empathy with the peasant and his ways, whether Catholic or Protestant, helps him to be effective in recruiting people to the United Irish cause as he travels around the north of Ireland in the guise of a preacher known as 'the converted papist'.

The Green Cockade is an exciting tale which sees McCabe and his companion, Jemmy Hope, involved in all sorts of scrapes and thrilling escapes from prisons, cavalry, and traitors to the cause, usually by some clever ruse that leaves their pursuers looking foolish. The novel has its fair share of villains too, both male and female, including the melodramatic Ned Newell, a debauched portrait-painter and informer; the cowardly and cold Maxwell Lovel, the proposed leader of the northern rebellion; the sadistic Captain Cross; and the over-sexed, cruel and mentally unstable Etta Sinclair, whose unrequited passion for McCabe results in her offering her body to any man who will undertake to kill him.[108] *The Green Cockade* employs many gothic tropes as well, with female virtue regularly placed in danger, rebels hiding underground, and the mysterious and quasi-supernatural deaths of Etta Sinclair and Ned Newell when they take the wrong path in the caves. Uniforms and general 'show' are an important element of the novel. There is also

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[105] The novel was reprinted on at least three other occasions: 1900, 1920 and 1942. An Irish-language version was also published under the title, *An Cnota Glas* (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair,1941).

[106] Pender (née O'Doherty) also wrote *The Bog of Lillies* (n.d.) and *Married in May* (n.d.) as well as *The Last of the Irish Chiefs* (1920) and *The Spearmen of the North* (1931).

[107] M.T. Pender, *The Green Cockade: A Tale of Ulster in '98* (London, 1898), p. 114; further page numbers will be included parenthetically in the text. The observation may have been an ironic one, given that William Pitt, the Prime Minister of the time in which the novel was set, had a fearsome reputation for drinking to excess.

[108] Edward John 'Ned' Newell is a real historical personage, and was an informer, although certain liberties have been taken with his life, and indeed, his death. Maxwell Lovel may be a demonisation of the proposed leader of the northern rebellion, Robert Simms.

an attitude to the female body – possibly for the benefit of male readers – which borders on titillation. For example, when Madge Magilla, Neal's daughter, is captured and publicly prepared for flogging, Pender writes: 'it seemed as if the flowing lines of her magnificent figure, the taper neck and swelling bust, the exquisite beauty of the bare-foot and graceful ankles, suggesting the freedom of the mountain in every buoyant movement, had never before appeared to such conspicuous advantage' (pp. 36-7).

The above observation is entirely consistent in a novel where the uniforms on all sides are splendid and outward show is generally indicative of internal worth. Elizabeth Lockhart, a Scottish Catholic who is Etta Sinclair's stepsister, pins the green cockade of the title to her breast in protest at the proposed flogging of Madge Magilla and it is this that attracts McCabe's notice as he rescues Madge. McCabe and Elizabeth fall in love and Maxwell Lovel's unrequited love for Elizabeth is seen as one of his motivations for betraying the rebellion and trying to kill McCabe.

This brief summary of the plot of *The Green Cockade* may give the impression that it is a superficial novel whose use of gothic plotlines and tropes underlines how devalued the political debate about the significance of 1798 had become. In one sense this is true, but the very superficiality of *The Green Cockade* is its most important political statement. A comparison with the first 1798 novel, *The Rebel*, published ninety-nine years previously, may provide a useful way to conclude this study. Like *The Rebel*, *The Green Cockade* also assumes that its own political perspective is incontrovertible, although this time it is the nationalist interpretation that is the accepted truth. Both are hard-line in their refusal to forgive political indiscretions and both glorify those it perceives as martyrs to the excesses of the other side. Thus Henry Joy McCracken is 'transfigured' on the scaffold, and his execution is described in quasi-religious terms, with the promise of resurrection 'on a new and brighter day!' (p. 323).

The Green Cockade recognises the importance of martyrdom and – perversely, it seems initially – informers in the construction of the great nationalist interpretation of Ireland's struggle for freedom. The fate of the 'traitors' – that is, to the rebel side – in *The Green Cockade* is an assurance to the reader of the righteousness of the rebel cause. Ned Newell is seen to be Castlereagh's *doppelgänger* in the novel, turning the latter into a Dorian Gray-type figure, with the former reflecting his descent into infamy. Castlereagh

notices that Newell's clothes 'were fashioned after the exact model of his own' (p. 247), and Newell desires a title while Castlereagh is portrayed as desiring an English peerage. Newell even moves into rooms in Dublin Castle 'as grand as my Lord Castlereagh's' (p. 240). Thus when Newell is charged to kill the 'incorruptible' McCracken and to identify the leader of the northern rebellion and turn him, he is Castlereagh by proxy. As such, the blame for McCracken's eventual execution is laid securely at Castlereagh's door.

Traitors and informers cannot hope to be forgiven in *The Green Cockade*. This is made clear by the rather contrived ending of the novel, where years after the rebellion McCabe, now settled in France and married to Elizabeth, receives a letter from Jemmy Hope describing the appearance of Lovel at Castlereagh's funeral: 'never shall I forget the stony horror of his gray, ashen face, or the expression of his wildly-staring, fixed, and motionless eyes – eyes that seemed to look, but not to see, or rather to look on something that no one else could see, and that something *frightful!*' (p. 381). Lovel is reported in Hope's letter as having gone mad and dying horribly after Castlereagh's burial, having flourished under him: 'His hallucination was that Castlereagh, still potent, even in death, and sitting in council with the Powers of Darkness in the infernal regions, had adjudged and commanded him to cut his throat, as the only means of escape from the torments of a guilty conscience' (p. 381). Lovel's death is a diabolical re-enactment of the suicide of Wolfe Tone: he tears his own throat with his fingernails, 'until on the fifth day, in the midst of a frightful paroxysm, he expired' (p. 381).

This melodramatic ending has much of Charles Lucas' *The Infernal Quixote* (1801) about it as well. McCabe's reaction is telling, when he remarks in the last line of the novel: 'The mills of God grind slowly .... Yes, heaven pardon them – if it can! But for such as these, on earth there can be no forgiveness' (p. 382). Even Elizabeth can find nothing more conciliatory to say than echoing McCabe's hope that heaven might pardon those she describes as 'Wretches!' (p. 382). An authorial interjection suggests that the 'two gilded miscreants' Castlereagh and Newell, left behind 'a memory whose blackness reproach could not intensify or charity illume' (pp. 382-3). The meaning is clear: what they have done is beyond human powers of forgiveness – like in *The Rebel*, some things are too terrible to forgive.

In the end even as ostensibly light a novel as *The Green Cockade* displays a hard-line attitude to those who attempted to subvert or betray the rebellion and an assumption that the rebellion does not need to be explained or justified. In this sense it represents the triumph of a new orthodoxy over an old, and an inversion of the anti-Jacobin assumptions made in the first novels about the rebellion. In *The Green Cockade* those who attempt to subvert or betray the rebellion are portrayed as evil. Although the rebels 'lost' in the short term, over the grand sweep of the nineteenth century they succeeded, in that they endure as popular icons and the inspiration for novelists. This reversal of fortune cannot be allowed to obscure the fact that though the orthodoxy has changed, some of the underlying attitudes remain the same. This change reflects both the judgment of history and the changing readership for novels, and the continuing desire of novelists to make the 1798 rebellion relevant to the times in which they lived.

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What is perhaps most striking about the 1870-98 period is that there is little evidence of any debate about the cause and course of the rebellion between 'nationalist' and 'unionist' fiction writers. The facts seem to be accepted as irrefutable, and historiographical tension is confined to the competing nationalist narratives. Broadly speaking, nationalist accounts usually betray within them the tensions between Fenian and Catholic-nationalist versions of 1798, and what emerges is a 'New Departure' interpretation of 1798, which mingles the land question with both the constitutional and violent political traditions. Ironically, this allows even Fenian writers to use aristocratic interpretations of the past to justify their radical solutions for the future. Fenian novelists write the rebellion into their version of Irish history, seeing the United Irishmen as prototype Fenians, and in a novel such as *Ninety-Eight*, literally the ancestors of the Fenians of the day. Other Catholic nationalist writers tend to follow the Kavanagh line, although not always uncritically: as in Conyngham's *Rose Parnell* (1883), where the simplistic Catholic/nationalist equation is challenged by the rise of Charles Stewart Parnell as leader of nationalist Ireland. In turn, Kavanagh's 'faith and fatherland' interpretation is taken to such a racial extreme by M. Louise O'Byrne in *Ill-Won Peerages* (1883) that even the Wexford rebellion is deemed not 'Irish' enough.

Unionist novels in this period tend to shy away from grand narrative accounts of the rebellion and in general adopt a less assertive and more conciliatory tone, rarely portraying the rebellion as inherently wrong. Novels such as *Great Grandmother's Days* (1883) and *True to the Core* (1883) focus on personal experiences in 1798 and allow the writers to control the narrative and avoid the larger historiographical issues. If the period after the first home rule bill in 1886 did result in a hardening of attitudes there is little evidence of this in the unionist 1798 novels, which suggests that the topic had been largely abandoned by more extreme unionist writers. Instead, novels such as *My Lords of Strogue* (1879), *Heir and No Heir* (1890) and *Shilrick, the Drummer* (1894) are all pleas for tolerance, understanding and Union in its widest sense; laying out strategies for accommodating patriotism and patriotic feeling within the Union. Their representations of the rebellion were less concerned with the past and reflected more the political concerns of the day: the land issue, Fenian agitation and home rule. Presbyterian novels of this period also contained patriotic and – in the case of *Betsy Gray* (1888) – celebratory impulses as well, although it must be acknowledged that the last Presbyterian novel was published ten years before the centenary of the rebellion.

As early as 1895 the rebellion was capable of inspiring a novel like *The Wood of the Brambles*, an ironic commentary on the Irish psyche and the nature and consequences of rebellion that should have an important place in any history of Irish modernism. In contrast, the novels first published in the centenary year see a reversion to forms of the distant past. *The Green Cockade*'s hard-line attitude and reluctance to forgive mirrors the first 1798 novel, *The Rebel*, albeit with its value system inverted. *Corrageen in '98* is in the grand tradition of anti-Jacobin literature represented by the second 1798 novel featured in this study, *The Infernal Quixote*. *The Green Cockade* may not be the most memorable novel about 1798, but in the easy assumptions it makes of readers and its certainty that the political viewpoint propounded is incontrovertible, it is the clearest example of the triumph of the new orthodoxy about 1798.

CONCLUSION

'By Memory Inspired': Continuous Commemorations, Scholarship and Speculation

> *The ideals to which they [the Girondists] had held were ones shared by most liberal Englishmen; their fate had been actual and devastating .... Overturners of a world, they had been destroyed by its convulsions.*
>
> **Thomas Flanagan, *The Year of the French* (1979)**

The laying of the foundation stone for a statue of Wolfe Tone at the junction of Grafton Street and St Stephen's Green in Dublin was the symbolic highpoint of the 1898 centenary year commemorations.[1] A monster parade in Dublin on 15 August 1898 involved, according to the *Freeman's Journal*, 'scores of thousands',[2] with perhaps as many as 100,000 people attending the ceremony itself. Described as 'the greatest public celebration of revolutionary nationalism that Ireland had ever seen', in terms of numbers it was only eclipsed by the crowds who had gathered to celebrate the unveiling of the statue of Daniel O'Connell sixteen years earlier.[3] It was a fitting nationalist response to the diamond jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria the previous year. The march snaked its way around the city centre, stopping at key locations connected with the United Irishmen, including Wolfe Tone's birthplace, Oliver Bond's house, and the burial places

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[1] For accounts of the politics surrounding the 1898 commemorations in Dublin and the rest of the country see Peter Collins, *Who Fears to Speak of '98?: Commemoration and the Continuing Impact of the United Irishmen* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2004); Anna Kinsella, 'The Nineteenth-Century Interpretation of 1798', op. cit., and '1798 Claimed for Catholics: Father Kavanagh, Fenians and the Centenary Celebrations', in Keogh and Furlong (eds.), *The Mighty Wave*, pp. 139-55; Thomas J. O'Keefe, 'The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: The '98 Centennial', in *Éire-Ireland*, xxiii, 2 (Summer, 1988), 51-73, and '"Who Fears to Speak of '98?": The Rhetoric and Rituals of the United Irishmen Centennial, 1898', in *Éire-Ireland*, xxvii, 3 (Fall, 1992), 67-91; Senia Paseta, '1798 in 1898: The Politics of Commemoration', in *Irish Review*, 22 (Summer, 1998), 46-53; and Selina Guinness, '1898: The Year of the Undead', in P.J. Mathews (ed.), *New Voices: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000), pp. 19-26. For articles focussing on the significance of political statuary and ritual in the 1898 celebrations see Gary Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland, *c.*1870-1914: Symbolism and Ritual', in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy (eds.), *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin: Town House, 1994), pp. 103-17; and John Turpin, '1798, 1898 and the Political Implications of Sheppard's Monuments', in *History Ireland*, vi, 2 (Summer, 1998), 44-8. General articles on memory and 1798 include James S. Donnelly, 'Sectarianism in 1798 and in Catholic Nationalist Memory', and Maura Cronin, 'Memory, Story and Balladry: 1798 and its Place in Popular Memory in Pre-Famine Ireland', in Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance*, pp. 15-37 and 112-34 respectively; R.F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798', in McBride (ed.), *History and Memory*, pp. 67-94; and Tom Dunne, '1798: Memory, History, Commemoration', in *Journal of the Wexford History Society*, xvi (1996-'97), 5-39.

[2] *Freeman's Journal*, 16 August, 1898.

[3] Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments', op. cit., p. 113.

of the Sheares brothers and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Upon arriving in St Stephen's Green, the Fenian John O'Leary, after a short speech, laid the stone. The assembled masses also heard speeches from John Dillon and John Redmond, who represented the two strands of Irish constitutional nationalism divided in the wake of the Parnell crisis. The overflowing platform was top-heavy with Catholic clergy and also contained the lord mayor of Dublin, other municipal representatives and MPs. Also present were representatives of the Irish in America, France, South Africa and Australia, as well as Maud Gonne and W.B. Yeats, who spoke on behalf of the Irish in England. As such, it was an impressive display of nationalist unity.

According to the *Freeman's Journal*, John O'Leary was widely cheered when he stated that those who wished to see Ireland free 'must become United Irishmen again, in a literal sense at least, and, personally, I could wish that we were all United Irishmen in the National sense, too'.[4] John Dillon reminded his audience that the first blow Tone struck for freedom was for the Catholics of Ireland, and John Redmond, in describing 1798 as the result of a 'deliberately, cautiously and ably-planned effort to achieve National liberty',[5] implicitly challenged both Musgrave and Kavanagh's interpretation of the rebellion. The insurrection was portrayed as a great national drive for independence with the United Irishmen as the mainspring behind it, and Wolfe Tone was eulogised as the founder and the greatest United Irishman of all. In an editorial on the event the *Freeman's Journal* wrote that the monument to be erected should be worthy of the founders of a nation, and that its erection would require a united effort, adding that the events of the commemoration gave 'every ground for confidence that the needed effort will be made'.[6]

The fact that the proposed statue was never actually erected can be seen as a symbol of the failure of Irish nationalism to deliver on its promises and on its inability to remain united. The statue's absence became a kind of presence in the Irish mind, encapsulated in the reference to 'the slab where Wolfe Tone's statue was not', in

[4] *Freeman's Journal*, 16 August, 1898.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

Ulysses.[7] It was emblematic of the presence of a memory that was not vested in something tangible and that had yet to have any kind of official existence. Irish history was not taught in schools and, as Gary Owens has noted, it was common for nationalists to lament the fact that there were remarkably few statues and monuments to Irish patriotic figures in Ireland. There was, therefore, very little physical evidence of the nationalist vision of Irish history.[8] The official commemorations placed a great emphasis on the non-sectarian ideals of the United Irishmen, but on the whole the commemorations were a Catholic and nationalist affair, and Protestant Ireland largely declined to participate. The attempt to impose a nationalist interpretation as the official public version alienated unionists. It demonstrated once again that Ireland did not have an agreed history. This lack of an agreed history was especially acute in the context of 1798, which was practically unique as the only Irish historical event of significance to succeed in uniting participants across the sectarian divide.

The 1898 commemorations, therefore, were an attempt to solidify one aspect of the Irish historical experience through an official 'remembering' of 1798. It is in this context of commemoration that the novels about 1798 examined here must be considered. As we have seen the rebellion played an important role in shaping the Irish novel, and also in highlighting the limitations of the nineteenth-century novel form for reflecting the Irish historical experience. For propaganda purposes, poems, ballads and plays were more effective tools. Cheryl Herr, for instance, writes that Irish political melodramas could 'recast selectively' elements of 1798 that suited their own purposes, and this was especially true of plays written specifically to commemorate 1798.[9] Drama did not need

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[7] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, with an Introduction by Declan Kiberd (1922; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 294.

[8] Ireland, in fact, had remarkably few public monuments of any description in comparison to other European countries. Owens calculates that of the fifty or so public monuments in Ireland prior to 1888, only eight could be regarded as having nationalist associations. Indeed, even allowing for an 'unprecedented' flurry of monument-building in connection with the 1898 commemoration, by 1914 only about forty nationalist monuments had been erected; see Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments', pp. 104-6.

[9] Cheryl Herr (ed.), *For the Land they Loved: Irish Political Melodramas, 1890-1925,* edited and with a Critical and Historical essay by Cheryl Herr (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 21. J.W. Whitbread's play *Wolfe Tone* (1898), written for the 1798 centenary, created 'pandemonium' when performed in the Queen's Royal Theatre in Dublin, playing to full houses during its run. 'This is the sort of a play that will ultimately put a new spirit into Ireland', wrote one reviewer; see Herr (ed.), *Political Melodramas*, p. 9. Note the similarity with the comment made by Frederick Allen, the secretary of the IRB supreme council, who felt that the centenary might 'put a little spirit into the young men here, and Lord

to be realistic, or to concern itself with broad historical issues, and the genre itself imposed its own conventions on the subject matter.[10] Yeats' question: 'Did that play of mine send out/Certain men the English shot?' in reference to the most famous 1798 play of all, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902), is not entirely self-regarding.[11]

Both the United Irishmen and Young Ireland appreciated the propaganda value of a good ballad, but P.J. McCall's famous 'Boolavogue', first published in the centenary year, remains for many the classic account of the 1798 rebellion. It concentrates on the Wexford rebellion, portraying it as a fight for 'Ireland's freedom', and ends with an exhortation for people to be ready for a future call to arms.[12] Although there are no specifically sectarian sentiments expressed in the song, the only leader mentioned is Fr Murphy. In the other most famous 1798 ballad, Carroll Malone's 'The Croppy Boy' (1845),[13] the eponymous hero is captured when he confesses his sins to a 'priest' who turns out to be a yeoman officer in disguise. The implication is that the rebels were pious Catholics, while the story of a (presumably Protestant) yeoman desecrating the sanctity of the confessional would have a particularly sensational effect on the Catholic listener. The malleability of ballads, and their ability to adapt and incorporate new names into the pantheon of Irish nationalist heroes, is clearly seen in 'By Memory Inspired', another popular lyric.[14] In a late nineteenth-century version of this ballad, the names of John Mitchel and Daniel O'Connell were linked with William Orr, John and Henry Sheares, Oliver Bond and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, in a clear example of how the United Irishmen, constitutional Catholic agitators and Young Irelanders had all become part of a grand tradition of Irish nationalism.

In contrast, the propaganda value of novels was limited, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth-century, by both literacy levels and price, and by the fact that novel-reading was essentially a private and personal activity. The sheer length of novels

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knows they want it'; quoted in O'Keefe, '1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen', 54-5; and Paseta, '1798 in 1898', 47.

[10] Another Whitbread play, *Lord Edward, or '98* (1894), for example, had six villains to maximise its melodramatic effect; see Herr (ed.), *Political Melodramas*, p. 48.

[11] W.B. Yeats, 'Man and the Echo', in *Yeats' Poems*, edited and annotated by A. Norman Jeffares, with an appendix by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 469.

[12] See 'Boolavogue', in Moylan (ed.), *Irish Song Tradition*, p. 45.

[13] 'The Croppy Boy' was originally published in the *Nation* in 1845. 'Carroll Malone' was the pen-name of Dr William B. McBurney; see Moylan (ed.), *Irish Song Tradition*, p. 75.

[14] See Moylan (ed.), *Irish Song Tradition*, p. 122-3.

also imposed an entirely different set of demands on the writer, and created a different range of expectations from the reader. Chief of these was a need for exegesis, which in the case of 1798 novels was usually some kind of historical contextualisation. In the absence of an agreed or stable interpretation of Irish history, this often proved problematic and divisive. It is in this context that the alternative rebellion strategy can be seen to have played an important role in demonstrating a range of potential rebellions that *could* have occurred rather than focussing narrowly on the actuality of the rebellion. In some respects this may appear to be the direct opposite of good history, but Tom Bartlett has argued that 1798 historiography has been hampered by a tendency to examine the 1798 rebellion 'in terms of the agenda set by its nineteenth-century historians', privileging Wexford, Wicklow, Antrim and Down where there were 'major battles, much loss of life and great devastation'.[15] 'As a result', Bartlett claims, 'we have by and large ignored the range of the rebellion, [and] the very large number of counties which experienced some disturbance .... Why there was no rebellion in, say, Armagh, or in Kerry; why the rebellion in, say, Limerick or Kilkenny, took a different form to that elsewhere: these questions ... might yet prove to be as important as the traditional questions about why rebellion broke out in Wexford and in Antrim and Down'.[16]

From our perspective it is striking that the assertion by a thoughtful modern historian that we are not asking the right questions about 1798 is one that had been taken up in the nineteenth century by many of the 1798 novelists considered here. They asked, if not necessarily the right, then different, questions, and used the imaginative scope allowed them to play out alternative scenarios that highlighted elements of the rebellion that were present but often lost amongst the contested historical accounts. One of the chief elements lost in the polarisation of historical opinion about the rebellion was a broadly patriotic impulse that is not nationalism and does not necessarily identify with the nationalist vision of the Irish nation being formed in the nineteenth century. This feeling can be seen in the patriotic novels of the 1820s, and in Presbyterian writing, and even in novels that are ostensibly unionist in tenor. There were novels that were resolutely anti-Jacobin and novels that were unapologetically nationalist, but most fell

[15] Thomas Bartlett, 'Why the History of the 1798 Rebellion has yet to be Written', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, xv (2000), 181-90; 189-90.
[16] Ibid.

into neither category. Thus a novel such as *The Rebel* (1799), which portrayed the rebellion as a sectarian bloodbath underpinned by the evil doctrines of French republicanism, or a novel such as *The Rebels of Glenfawn* (1852), that imposed an alternative vision highlighting the nobler aims and principles of the United Irishmen, were not so much perverting the historical reality of the rebellion as identifying different aspects of the rebellion that were obscured by attempting to encompass the entirety of the rebellion into one resolved synthesis. The novels of the nineteenth-century provided a working-out of a range of alternative scenarios relating to the 1798 rebellion, the United Irishmen, and the political future of Ireland.

It is important, however, also to acknowledge that these novels did have a function as mainstream historical narratives. On the day following the centenary celebrations the *Freeman's Journal* carried an advertisement for the publishers M.H. Gill that listed Randal McDonnell's *Kathleen Mavourneen*, John Hill's *Ninety-Eight* and James Murphy's *The Shan Van Vocht* alongside Alice Milligan's *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, Tone's own *Life*, and W.J. Fitzpatrick's *The Sham Squire and the Informers of 1798*, with no attempt to make a distinction between fiction and non-fiction titles. A similar advertisement for James Duffy included *Kathleen Mavourneen* and *Ninety-Eight* beside rebellion histories by Edward Hay, John Mitchel and Charles Hamilton Teeling, as well as Thomas Moore's *Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.*[17] The distinction between fiction and history was blurred mainly by the need to provide more historical education: one of the core reasons for the 1798 commemorations. In the centenary year, novels helped to satisfy a demand for 1798 material that publishers were only too happy to supply. These fictions both encapsulated and became part of the accumulated memory of 1798: they portrayed and were part of a portrayal of the rebellion that was not the actuality in a Rankean sense, but that was shaping and reflecting what the rebellion had become.

The centenary commemorations did not create a significant upsurge in new fiction writing about 1798. Although four new titles were produced in the centenary year, and many others were republished, in literary terms 1798 did not have to be brought back because it had never gone away. From 1799 on fiction writers were engaged in what

[17] *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1898.

Gautam Chakravarty has called in another context, 'continuous commemoration',[18] and this persisted for some time after the centenary.[19] Production of new 1798 titles remained relatively constant, averaging about one new title a year from 1870 to the outbreak of World War I. Thereafter, the topic appears to have declined in popularity, undoubtedly because of political developments in the twentieth century and the replacing of 1798 with 1916 as the ultimate moment of heroic national resistance to British rule. The fact that the nationalist interpretation of the 1798 rebellion remained largely unchallenged and that many popular 1798 novels, such as *Kathleen Mavourneen*, *The Shan Van Vocht*, Margaret Pender's *The Green Cockade* and W.G. Lyttle's *Betsy Gray*, were reprinted well into the twentieth century, may also have contributed to this fall-off.

The legacy of the novels of the nineteenth century can be seen in the major fictional representations of the rebellion written in the twentieth century. The influence of Frank Mathew's *The Wood of the Brambles* is evident both in Francis MacManus' *Men Withering* (1939) and in John McArdle's short story and film, 'It's Handy When People Don't Die' (1980). The title of Sam Hannah Bell's novel about Belfast after the rebellion, *A Man Flourishing* (1973), echoes and interrogates the title of MacManus' work and the respective fates of the two communities featured. As such it is evidence of a dialogic interaction between twentieth-century fictions of 1798 that mirrors the assumptions made here about the nineteenth century. In an ironic touch, *A Man Flourishing* keeps alive the radical Presbyterian interpretation of the rebellion seen in novels such as *Charlton* (1823), *O'Halloran* (1824), *Strong as Death* (1875) and *Betsy Gray* (1888), by charting the eclipse of that radicalism in the Belfast of the early 1800s.

However, the legacy of the nineteenth-century novel in the most famous rebellion fiction of all, Thomas Flanagan's *The Year of the French* (1979), is more equivocal and nuanced. As befits one of the pioneers in the study of nineteenth-century Irish novelists, Flanagan essentially uses both literary men and women and a collection of literary sources to recreate the past. Like *Men Withering*, *The Year of the French* uses a poet from the Gaelic tradition as its central character. In attempting to escape from the narrow

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[18] Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4.

[19] For an account of the period from 1898 up to World War I, see Eileen Reilly, 'Who fears to Speak of '98? The Rebellion in Historical Novels 1880-1914', op. cit.

nationalist interpretation by employing a range of narrators, *The Year of the French* is presented as a pastiche of nineteenth-century writing employing memoirs, historical narratives and the device of a poet searching for an image to highlight the fact that the past is both a matter of perception and a textual creation.[20]

Equally fitting from a critic who believed that nineteenth-century novelists created no useful tradition for future writers is the fact that novels do not feature as a source, except as a source of romantic idealism. Significantly, Maria Edgeworth makes a cameo appearance in *The Year of the French* when she pays a visit to the battlefield at Ballinamuck.[21] Both Maria and her father, who is portrayed as a pompous and testy man, are too short-sighted to see the bodies of the dead rebels that still lay on the field. It is difficult not to interpret this as anything other than a comment on the ultimate futility of the Edgeworths' brand of Enlightenment optimism, given with the benefit of hindsight. When the fictional George Moore goes to visit his brother John – who was awaiting trial and execution for his involvement in the rebellion – in prison he reacts to John's assertion that he had attempted to 'free his country' by thinking: 'To free his country. His mind was stuffed with phrases from novels, gestures from plays, stale secondhand rhetoric of the liberty-mongers'. Moore's response to John's request for some books to pass the time is to ask: "Novels?".[22] However, *The Year of the French* does pay homage to the nineteenth-century novels of Edgeworth and Owenson in two main ways: like *The Wild Irish Girl* it is also a text about other texts, and in the complexity of the society presented it owes much to the example of the national tale.

It is the use of multiple narrative sources in *The Year of the French* that highlights the continuities and the essential difference between it and the majority of the nineteenth-century novels examined here. A recognition of the subjectivity of historical perception and the confining nature of a grand historical narrative is shared, but while Flanagan sought to return to the nineteenth-century environment from which these fictions sprang,

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[20] *The Year of the French* reflects the novels featured here in that it is styled as a nineteenth-century literary construction of 1798. It is presented as a montage of documents published in the 1798-1849 period. Maj Gen Sir Harold Wyndham's narrative is an extract from his book *My Campaigns*, supposedly published in 1848, and Sean MacKenna's diary was purportedly edited and serialised in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1848-9.

[21] This mirrors a real-life incident; see Hollingwood, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing*, op. cit., pp. 40-1.

[22] Thomas Flanagan, *The Year of the French. A Novel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), pp. 350-1.

the novelists attempt to escape from the constraints that this environment imposed upon them. The trajectory of *The Year of the French* is into the past, whereas the trajectory of these novels is into the future.[23] The nineteenth-century novelists constructed a particular vision of the rebellion which was then used to look ahead to a time when future objectives would be realised. Depending on the particular period and political philosophy of the individual writers these objectives included Catholic emancipation, repeal of the Union, tithe amelioration, land reform or settlement, home rule, an independent republic, an 'Irish Ireland', the demise of Catholicism, a greater sense of Ireland's imperial destiny, or a new arrangement within the Union.

Most of all, for the nineteenth-century writer there was a general sense that the ultimate consequences of the rebellion were still unclear. In *The Year of the French* George Moore – historian, essayist, and master of Moore Hall in Mayo – spends most of his time during the rebellion writing his 'History of the Girondists'. What Flanagan writes of the fate of the Girondists was just as relevant for the United Irishmen and the ascendancy oligarchy they opposed by 1898: 'Their rise to power, their precarious hold upon it, the utter ruin of their fall already lay sealed in the past, stuff for scholarship and speculation, and yet they had helped to usher in this new, incomprehensible world'.[24] For most novelists writing about 1798 in the nineteenth century, the legacy of the rebellion was, even a century later, 'incomprehensible', and the rebellion itself was still fertile material for both historical scholarship *and* novelistic speculation.

[23] Of the novels discussed in this thesis, only M. Louise O'Byrne's *Ill-Won Peerages* (1884) could be said to be uninterested in the future.
[24] Flanagan, *The Year of the French*, p. 345.

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Note: With the exception of the primary novels listed in the 'Novels and Literary Sources' section, publishers are named only for post-1900 publications.

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