

Thomas Moore

Memoirs of Captain Rock



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THOMAS MOORE

MEMOIRS

OF

CAPTAIN ROCK

THE

CELEBRATED IRISH CHIEFTAIN

WITH SOME

ACCOUNT OF HIS ANCESTORS

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

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*Edited and introduced by Emer Nolan,
with annotations by Seamus Deane.*

Field Day

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Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself

edited and introduced by Emer Nolan;

with annotations by Seamus Deane.

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Introduction

In 1824, Longman of London published *Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors*, a work professing to be the reminiscences of the leader of a protest movement that had destabilized large areas of the south of Ireland over the previous three years. ‘Captain Rock’ was the *nom de guerre* frequently appended to threatening notices and letters delivered by the protestors to their perennial enemies—landlords, tithe proctors, large farmers, and the like. In this book, published anonymously, the central satiric strategy was to make that well-known name a secret identity by effectively merging the individual and the generic voice in the first-person narrator. *Memoirs of Captain Rock* was an immediate success and went through five London editions in 1824; there were also editions in Paris, New York and Philadelphia in the same year. German and French translations were published in 1825 and 1829 respectively (see Appendix for the Introductions to these translations).¹ Yet, despite this early success, which was sustained for more than a decade, this is the first Irish edition of *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, and its first reprinting since 1835.

It was well known at the time that the poet and satirist Thomas Moore (1779–1852) was the author, although his name did not appear on the title page; he did, though, sign the Preface with the last letters of his first name and surname (SE). Moore was the first Irish Catholic writer in English to achieve both a national and an international reputation. The son of a Dublin grocer, he was a graduate of Trinity College,

1 On the publishing history of the *Memoirs*, see Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber, with Anne Mullin Burnham, *A Guide to Irish Fiction, 1650–1900* (Dublin, 2006), 933–34 and below, liii–liv.

Dublin; his subsequent literary career in London was advanced by the patronage of prominent Whig aristocrats. He was a political satirist of note, an innovator in the genre of biography and a pioneer of the versified 'Orientalist' romance, in the wildly successful *Lalla Rookh* (1817). However, it was the *Irish Melodies*, an unprecedented generic and commercial phenomenon, which were published in ten volumes between 1808 and 1834, that made Moore a celebrity. His performances of the songs, all of which were based on traditional Irish airs, created a sensation in the drawing rooms of English Regency society. In Ireland, the *Melodies* were rapidly promoted to the position of showpiece in a new repertoire of music and story that was to become as important for an emergent Irish nationalism as opera was for its later counterpart in Italy. Byron, Shelley, Goethe and Stendhal are among the most famous admirers who contributed to Moore's European and worldwide renown as a writer who passionately advocated the cause of liberty. In Ireland, his popularity endured to exceed even that of the poets of *The Nation*, the newspaper of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, and of the now much more highly regarded writers of the Irish Literary Revival.

There has been much debate about the cultural and political significance of Moore's *Melodies*. Many of the airs adapted by Moore and his collaborator Sir John Stevenson had first been recorded by Edward Bunting at the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792. Bunting's task 'was to take down the airs played by the different harpers [without] adding a single note to the old melodies'. The ten elderly harpists who performed on that occasion represented a frail surviving link with the ancient music of Ireland. 'The music of a country and its language are analagous', claimed Bunting. 'There are idioms and characteristical delicacies in both, to enter into the spirit of which, some time and practice are requisite: And this is peculiarly the case with those compositions, which are the productions of a very distant period.' Bunting and his republican associates who promoted the festival believed they would 'not merely gratify the natural feeling of national pride; we are tracing the progress of the human mind, and endeavouring to restore a page in the history of man'.² This aim was widely taken to have been distorted by Moore. Controversy over the *Melodies* began with Bunting's own objections to

2 Edward Bunting, 'Preface', in *A General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland, Arranged for the Piano Forte* (London, 1809), i-iv.

the ‘drawling, doleful and die-away manner’ in which Moore performed some of the airs recorded in the first volume of *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* (1796):

The world have [*sic*] been too apt to suppose our music of a highly plaintive and melancholy character, and that it partook of our National feeling at the state of our country in a political view, and that three parts out of four of our tunes were of this complaining nature. Now there never was anything more erroneous than this idea.³

Moore’s critics complained that he had betrayed both the generally animated and joyful spirit of traditional Irish culture, and also the political optimism of the United Irish movement, which had helped to save this music from oblivion.⁴ For the airs had not just been modified by Moore’s own predominantly nostalgic and melancholic verses for them; they had been, so the accusation went, transmogrified.

Some nineteenth-century accounts of Moore, such as those by Bunting or Samuel Ferguson, as well as more recent ones by, for example, Liam de Paor, represent Moore as attempting to ‘civilize’ the Gaelic tradition in order to render it safe for a metropolitan audience and for ‘respectable’ Irish nationalists.⁵ In his invention of this ‘tradition’ of Irishness, de Paor asserts, Moore’s poetic voice represented the English-speaking, aspirant Irish middle class, ‘and greatly helped to reconcile Ireland to a slow modernization by glorifying the past while making the changes of the present seem to be of the order of nature’.⁶ The United Irishmen had sought to ally what Bunting calls the lively ‘natural character’ of

3 Quoted in Harry White, *The Keeper’s Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork, 1998), 43. See also White’s discussion (36–52) of Moore and traditional Irish music.

4 The view that the United Irishmen were uninterested in indigenous Irish culture has been challenged by Luke Gibbons, ‘Republicanism and Radical Memory: The O’Conors, O’Carolan and the United Irishmen’, in Jim Smyth, ed., *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union* (Cambridge, 2000), 211–37.

5 See Seamus Deane’s discussion of the reception of the Melodies in his introduction to Thomas Moore in Seamus Deane, ed., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, 3 vols. (Derry, 1991), I, 1053–56.

6 Liam de Paor, *Tom Moore and Contemporary Ireland*, Ó Riada Memorial Lecture (Cork, 1989), 6.

the Irish with a project of enlightenment and reform.⁷ It was before the Rising of 1798 that Moore, in the company of his United Irish friends and fellow students at Trinity College, Edward Hudson and Robert Emmet, first heard several of the airs for which he later wrote lyrics. Moore commemorates both Emmet and Lord Edward Fitzgerald in the *Melodies* (he also published a laudatory biography of Fitzgerald in 1831), and ostensibly aches for the ‘pure ray’ of political freedom (‘Tis Gone and Forever’) in many of the songs. Nonetheless, he consigns both the heroism of ancient Ireland and the United Irishmen’s brand of revolutionary activism to the past. He becomes instead, as de Paor claims, ‘the public relations man of the movement whose political leader was [Daniel] O’Connell’—despite Moore’s own disdain for O’Connell’s personality and his confessional politics, and despite the dependence of the latter’s successful campaign for Catholic Emancipation on ‘the obliteration of the United Irish project’.⁸ The very popularity and ‘translatability’ of the *Melodies* may in fact testify to the blandly ‘modular’ nature of a conservative nationalism, which steals elements from a traditional culture in order to serve its modernizing, homogenizing programme.⁹

However, the tone of Moore’s works—verse, prose, and satires in both modes—varies considerably, and his writing exhibits mixed and at times contradictory political opinions. Critics have sometimes claimed that a consistent but ‘veiled’ politics lies behind these disparate and elusive texts: the author’s own views, so the argument goes, remained essentially as they were when he was an undergraduate at Trinity, but he was obliged to adopt various disguises or ‘masks’ in changed political times, especially because of his dependence on English aristocratic patronage and on the London literary marketplace.¹⁰ It might be suggested, then, that the extraordinary *Memoirs of Captain Rock*—a history of English

7 Bunting, quoted in White, *Keeper’s Recital*, 43.

8 de Paor, *Tom Moore*, 7; Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760–1830* (Cork, 1996), 153.

9 On the ‘modular’ nature of modern nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (London, 1991), 81. The implications of Moore’s ‘romancing’ of the Rising have been intensively examined by some recent scholars; for example, see Gibbons, ‘Republicanism and Radical Memory’, 225–26.

10 See Tom Dunne, ‘Haunted by History: Irish Romantic Writing, 1800–1850’, in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge, 1988), 86.

rule in Ireland narrated by a fictional Irish rebel—represents a break with the indirection and the pessimism of the *Melodies*, and a return to the ‘United Irish’ Moore. More interesting than the question of the author’s political consistency, however, is how the *Melodies* and the *Memoirs* render contrasting ‘polite’ literary versions of the traditional, the barbarous, or the ‘wild’. The differences between the two works are not merely produced by a ‘development’ from a sentimental to a satiric treatment of Irish political issues. Indeed, these two modes alternate quite regularly in Moore’s writing. But in *Memoirs of Captain Rock* we do have something unique—a work in which he finds something to do with Irish history other than to ‘bewail’ it.¹¹



The Limerick novelist Gerald Griffin observed that the Rockite disturbances of 1821–24 created a new demand among the English reading public for narratives about Ireland. Although underground, oath-bound, ‘Whiteboy’ societies had been sporadically active throughout large areas of southern Leinster and Munster for decades, the scale and ferocity of the campaign of ‘Captain Rock’ certainly marked a watershed in the history of agrarian protest in Ireland. Tadhg O’Sullivan, for instance, emphasizes that it was the most serious outbreak of popular violence since 1798, and seemed to many observers to represent a ‘continuing echo’ of the Rebellion.¹² The Rockites emerged at a time of economic crisis, especially amongst the landless labourers, consequent on falling agricultural prices after the end of the Napoleonic War, and during a period of intense grievance over the payment of tithes to the Established Church. Some of the ‘outrages’ involved ritualistic elements, and there was great official alarm about the widespread circulation among the peasantry of the millenarian ‘Pastorini prophecies’, which forecast the imminent destruction of

11 To paraphrase Terry Eagleton, ‘The Masochism of Thomas Moore’, in *Crazy John and the Bishop, and Other Essays on Irish Culture* (Cork, 1998), 143.

12 Tadhg O’Sullivan, “‘The Violence of a Servile War’: Three Narratives of Irish Rural Insurgency Post-1798”, in Laurence M. Geary, ed., *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), 76.

the Established Church.¹³ Among the most notorious incidents of the Rockite campaign was the gang rape of a number of wives of soldiers belonging to the 1st Rifle Brigade, who were ambushed near Kildorrerey, County Cork, in February 1822.¹⁴ Indeed, the Rockite disturbances were notable for the high number of attacks on the military, the police and well-protected gentry targets, particularly during the week-long ‘jacquerie’ of January 1822. The influx of police and military into the ‘disturbed’ districts at first led to an intensification of such attacks, as well as contributing to the sectarianization and politicization of the conflict; however, the extraordinarily high levels of official suppression eventually led to the break-up of the Rockite movement during 1825.¹⁵ One particular incident that occurred relatively late in the disturbances was widely condemned. In September 1823, a party of men dressed in women’s clothing murdered three members of the Frank family of rack-renting middlemen at Rockmills, County Cork. The assassins had danced and chanted at the scene, symbolically washing their hands in a bowl of water. This attack took place in the same month that Moore began to write *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, and was still being extensively discussed in the British periodical press at the time of its publication.¹⁶

Thus Griffin writes that it was the ‘subtle and murderous insurrection of 1821, 1822, so wonderful in its unity of purpose, so fearful and mysterious in its mode of operation’ that ‘first excited in England an alarmed interest and a strong curiosity respecting the habits of the [Irish]

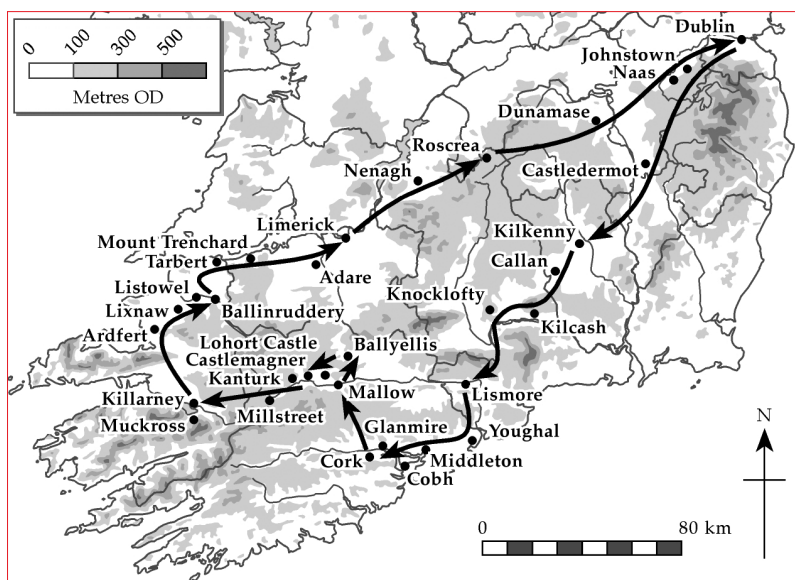
13 See James S. Donnelly, Jr., ‘Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movements of 1821–4’, in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr., eds., *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780–1914* (Dublin, 1983), 102–39; Stephen Gibbons provides the texts of many Rockite letters in his useful collection, *Captain Rock, Night Errant: The Threatening Letters of Pre-Famine Ireland, 1801–1845* (Dublin, 2004). For a broader analysis of rural society in the nineteenth-century, see Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton, 1979).

14 See Donnelly, ‘Pastorini and Captain Rock’, 134–35.

15 See Tadhg O’Sullivan, ‘Captain Rock in Print: Literary Representation and Irish Agrarian Unrest, 1824–1833’ (M.Phil. thesis, University College Cork, 1998), 49–51. On the disturbances of 1822 and the legislative and policing responses to them, see also Galen Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812–1836* (London, 1970), 133–59. For an account of the emergence of modern policing in response to agrarian insurgence over a longer period, see Stanley Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780–1850* (Cambridge, 1988).

16 On the resonance of the Franks family murder in England, see O’Sullivan, ‘Captain Rock in Print’, 57.

people'.¹⁷ He implies that it is hard for outsiders to comprehend how any population could produce and sustain such 'a system of terrorism';¹⁸ it was certainly a widely shared conviction, found in much of the official as well as the literary writing of the time, that Ireland's problems could only be resolved if the causes and nature of agrarian violence were understood. Presumably, this was part of the inspiration for Moore's tour of the south of Ireland in the summer of 1823, during which he discussed the unrest with O'Connell and others, and saw 'for the first time in my life, some real specimens of Irish misery and filth; three or four cottages together exhibiting such a naked swarm of wretchedness as never met my eyes before'.¹⁹



Moore's Tour in Ireland, Summer 1823

17 Gerald Griffin, 'Conclusion', *The Rivals; Tracy's Ambition* [1829], with an Introduction by Robert Lee Wolff, 3 vols. (New York, 1979), III. 295.

18 So described by George Cornwall Lewis in *On Local Disturbances in Ireland* (London, 1836), 189.

19 Wilfrid Dowden, ed., *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, 6 vols. (Newark, 1983–91), II. 659.

He began work on the *Memoirs* on his return to England. But the ‘explanation’ of the phenomenon of Captain Rock offered by Moore’s text (and the style and form in which it was presented) baffled many of the expectations of the various readerships that he had already created for his works. Part history, part fiction and part satire, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* defies any easy generic classification. It does not feature in any of the standard critical studies of the early Irish novel, but neither do later commentators regard it as a ‘serious’ historical work.²⁰ Other Catholic writers, such as the novelists John and Michael Banim of Kilkenny, struggled with the problem of how to depict Ireland within the protocols of English literary realism. In their stories, they attempt to show how the Irish could become self-disciplined and ‘civilized’. Moore, on the other hand, is uninterested in any ‘realistic’ depiction of Irish peasant life, and refuses the moral panic that surrounded the issue of agrarian violence in particular. Instead, the book’s eponymous hero sketches a wholly unexpected outline of the genesis of the popular disaffection of the early 1820s. Thus Moore’s text appears simply to bypass or ignore the difficulties that early nineteenth-century Ireland evidently presented to both English and Irish writers of all kinds—difficulties particularly associated with Irish peasant culture and its notorious, supposedly incurable, inclination to endemic violence. Nor do we find here any attempt at the formal ‘resolution’ of historical and political problems that is so marked a feature of fictional works by both Protestant and Catholic writers at this time.²¹ Perhaps due to its radical novelty, Moore’s act of ventriloquism, so significant in its own time,

20 For example, Thomas Flanagan’s pioneering *The Irish Novelists, 1800–1850* (New York, 1959) does not mention Moore’s *Memoirs*; Joep Leerssen notes that ‘Of the partisan, partial small-scale histories that were written in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion and the Union, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* is perhaps the most interesting achievement’, but goes on to contrast Moore’s work with the more ‘serious history-writing’ of Hardiman and Lanigan in the 1820s; see *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork, 1996), 86–88.

21 For example, David Lloyd argues that all early nineteenth-century Irish novelists accept the colonial settlement ‘by which the possibility of reconciliation or resolution in Ireland takes place within the historical frame of a movement from barbarity and lawlessness to civility or cultivation’; see David Lloyd, ‘Violence and the Constitution of the Novel’, in *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin, 1993), 135.

has until recently been lost to literary history.²² In this text, Moore offers us not necessarily a ‘truer’ or more informed account of popular resistance than that offered by his contemporaries, but in many ways a more suggestive one.

The Missionary and Captain Rock

Moore’s Captain Rock is only briefly described from an external perspective, during the course of the framing narrative that introduces and concludes the *Memoirs*. The narrator here is an English Protestant missionary who has come to Ireland to convert ‘the poor benighted Irish’ (this was at the height of the proselytizing crusade of the so-called ‘Second Reformation’) (*MCR* 1). The missionary is treated ironically from the outset; he never develops into the kind of guide to the peculiarities of Irish life the early nineteenth-century reader might have expected to encounter, either in fiction or in non-fictional texts. Instead, ‘authority’ in the text is effectively handed over to the ‘native’ himself. Captain Rock is the author of the scholarly manuscript that constitutes the bulk of the text. This document narrates the history of Ireland from the twelfth century to the present, complete with classical and literary quotations and copious allusions to various British and Irish authorities. Captain Rock presents his work to the missionary, who contributes only a few remarks in footnotes. By this stratagem, Moore avoids the moral and political problem of how a representative of a marginal culture should be exhibited to the metropolitan culture. He also avoids the questions of how to represent Irish speech, and how to translate an oral

22 But for important recent accounts of *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, see Patrick O’Sullivan, ‘A Literary Difficulty in Explaining Ireland: Tom Moore and Captain Rock’, in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1939* (Dublin, 1989), 239–74; Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 77–89; Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford, 1997), 67–68; Luke Gibbons, ‘Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place: Art and Agrarian Insurgency’, in Tadhg Foley and Seán Ryder, eds., *Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 1998), 23–44; O’Sullivan, “‘The Violence of a Servile War’”, 73–92; Julia Wright, “‘The same dull round over again’: Colonial History in Moore’s *Memoirs of Captain Rock*”, *European Romantic Review*, 14 (2003), 239–49. For the broader context of Moore’s satire, see Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789–1832* (Cambridge, 1997).

culture into print, which so preoccupied many of his Irish and British contemporaries. Captain Rock may speak English with a brogue, and the Rock family may speak only in Irish among themselves, but he writes in standard English, of a particularly satiric kind.

Moore's missionary is indeed a very feeble representative of English society. Having read the manuscript, he simply aborts his Irish mission, and leaves without having tried to see the papist natives for himself. Rather than fulfilling the role of a cosmopolitan traveller, the missionary is notably timid, and somewhat emasculated by his association with the earnest and naïve women of the Missionary Society in his small home-town in the west of England. He is afraid of travelling to Ireland, but more afraid of what these pious ladies might think of him if he refuses to go (*MCR* 2). The comedy of his introduction depends on the extent to which the English missionary and his friends underestimate the incommensurability of English and Irish realities, as they send over 'a whole edition' of a religious work by 'Miss — of our town, to the effect of which upon the Whiteboys we all looked forward very sanguinely' (*MCR* 2). But these well-meaning evangelists, who are anxious that Worcester has, for want of Christian preachers, become 'a waste and a howling wilderness', cannot begin to imagine what 'the mountains of Macgillicuddy' must be like (*MCR* 2). And, in complex ways, Rock both confirms and confounds the missionary's expectations of Irish barbarism.

The missionary first encounters the garrulous, expansive Captain, 'an extraordinary personage', outlandishly disguised in 'green spectacles and a flaxen wig', on the Limerick coach (*MCR* 3). Rock has therefore already strayed beyond the usual habitats of 'real Irish' characters in Anglo-Irish fiction, which tended to marginalize and quarantine its native exotics in remote glens or crumbling ruins.²³ This ringleader of Irish outrage is first glimpsed by daylight, in 'modern' circumstances, rather than in any isolated, archaic, romantic enclave; he is eccentric, almost dandy-like, but also mobile, sophisticated, communicative and 'civilized'. In the course of their journey, it becomes obvious that this Irishman prefers 'monologue to dialogue', but he also seems at least as well able to 'read' the missionary as the missionary is able to 'read' him (*MCR* 4). Rock smiles 'rather significantly' when he is first told of

23 As noted by Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 37.

the visitor's object in travelling to the south of Ireland; later, he gently dissuades him from wasting his time (*MCR* 5, 6). The missionary is certainly less courageous and 'manly' than Rock, but neither is the latter simply the barbarian that the Englishman might have expected to encounter at the civilizational level of the Irish peasant; crucially his superior 'manliness' is itself an unexpected 'English' trait. The Captain is both the more exotic *and* the more polished, the more romantic *and* the more rational, of the pair. The missionary visits his friend in Tipperary, a county synonymous with agrarian trouble since the mid-1700s and the epicentre of the Rockite troubles in the early 1820s. Only some days later does the missionary recognize Rock's true identity, as the leader of the band of 'some hundreds of awful-looking persons—all arrayed in white shirts', which he, under the influence of Irish 'mountain dew' (*MCR* 5), stumbles across while visiting a ruined abbey at midnight. The missionary enjoys a private conversation with Rock, about which he does not reveal any details, and having taken delivery of Rock's manuscript, concludes that the people of Ireland need neither instruction nor conversion, and that it is their rulers who require enlightenment (*MCR* 6). But we appreciate that he cannot easily convey this message back to the ladies in his Missionary Society. He reports that one of them succeeds in turning the story of Captain Rock into a 'romance', which the missionary expects will be 'much more extensively read, than the Captain's own authentic memoirs' (*MCR* 6). This satiric comment on Irish 'romance', as opposed to Rockite 'authenticity', is especially interesting from Moore, himself often criticized as feminizing or domesticating the traditional Irish culture on which he drew for his *Melodies*.

Several of Moore's key themes in the *Memoirs* are announced in the missionary's Preface. As soon as the missionary arrives in Dublin he hurries to a 'Religious Tract Establishment' in Sackville Street for 'all proper instructions' (*MCR* 3). His enterprise is thus closely associated by Moore with the proselytizing efforts of various evangelical organizations active during the early decades of the nineteenth century. These aimed to convert the Irish masses to Protestantism, especially by means of the dissemination of bibles and religious literature.²⁴ In the

24 See Irene Whelan, *The Bible War in Ireland: The 'Second Reformation' and the Polarization of Protestant-Catholic Relations, 1800-1840* (Dublin, 2005).

course of Rock's later reminiscences about his childhood in Munster, he condemns the Kildare Street Society (or Kildare Place Society), the London Hibernian Society and 'a host of other minor societies', ridiculing their tales of successful conversions, and citing the growing commentary on their corruption and bigotry (*MCR* 95–97). This sardonic account of the failures of Protestant evangelism in Ireland introduces the loud contemporary debate, widely taken to have been initiated by the sermon (later published in pamphlet form) of William Magee, Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, during which he declared Catholicism was 'a Church *without a Religion*' (*MCR* 16n). This opening salvo in the pamphlet war that raged throughout the period of the Second Reformation provoked notable responses from spokesmen for a newly invigorated Catholicism, such as James Doyle, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin (J. K. L.) (see *MCR* 18n). Written during a period of intense sectarian polarization, Moore's book is thus both a product of and a contribution to increased Catholic self-confidence in this period. The *Memoirs* sets out to account for Irish Catholics' always fierce resistance to the Reformation and to Protestantism (*MCR* 28–29). In particular, Catholic resentment about the compulsory payment of tithes to the Established Church occupies more space in Rock's narrative than any other single issue. Thus, the *Memoirs* is not merely a prelude to Catholic Emancipation, achieved in 1829; it also anticipates the longer battle between Catholicism and the Church of Ireland in the nineteenth century, including the bitter controversies over education and the intensifying disturbances over tithes of the 1830s. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1838 effectively settled the question of tithes, and the anomalous constitutional position of the Church of Ireland was eventually resolved by the Disestablishment Act of 1869.

Although the missionary arrives in Ireland more than two decades after the Act of Union (1800), the events that led up to that event have clearly not been forgotten. He comments on the melancholy spectacle of the now defunct Houses of Parliament in Dublin's College Green (*MCR* 2), and sees evidence of the 'ruin and havoc' caused by the rebellion of 1798 as he travels through Kildare in the Limerick coach (*MCR* 3). Sir Richard Musgrave's history of the rebellion had formed part of the missionary's preliminary reading for his Irish trip (*MCR* 2); through his conversations with Captain Rock, he is soon introduced to

a contrary account of the roots of violence in Irish history. Throughout the *Memoirs*, Rock challenges what were then the two most influential works on Irish history, Musgrave's *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* (1801) and Sir John Temple's history of the Catholic rebellion of 1641, *The Irish Rebellion; or, An History of the Irish Papists to Extirpate the Protestants in the Kingdom of Ireland* (1646). Following Temple, Musgrave had argued that recurrent rebellions in Ireland were produced by Catholic barbarity and conspiracy; 1798 was, thus, a repetition of 1641. By contrast, Rock's first reported speeches in the *Memoirs* outline the view of Irish history transmitted by what he calls the 'popular traditions of the country' (*MCR* 3). This is the heart of the matter. Irish history is understood to be formed by an inescapable cycle of injustice ('misrule') and violent reaction. Seen from the point of view of the victims of that injustice, the Catholic population, this monotonous narrative is the product of implacable policy, sustained by subsidized government propaganda that passes itself off as history.

As the coach passes the ruins of an unfinished house near Naas, Rock explains to the missionary that this house was 'begun, but never finished, by Lord Strafford, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland' (*MCR* 3). Strafford, appointed as lord lieutenant by Charles I in 1632, was widely reviled in Ireland; he ultimately fell from favour with the king and was executed in 1641. Rock recalls that Strafford's nickname was 'Black Tom', and invokes him as an exemplary 'favourite of hate'—one of those historical figures who are 'remembered only to be cursed' in Ireland (*MCR* 3). He states that Strafford 'still haunts the imagination of the peasant, as one of those dark and evil beings who tormented the land in former days, and with whom, in the bitterness of his heart, he compares its more modern tormentors' (*MCR* 3). Black Tom lives on in popular legend, because present-day sufferings keep alive the memories of historical oppression. So Rock suggests that contemporary conditions account for the particular forms of Irish historical memory. As he asks the missionary:

Is not this singular? ... is not this melancholy? That, while the progress of time produces a change in all other nations, the destiny of Ireland remains still the same, that 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! (*MCR* 3–4)

From the outset, he asserts—against Musgrave and others—that English misrule is the constant of many centuries of Irish history, and that Irish violence is mainly reactive in nature. Here Rock first articulates his theory of Irish history as essentially cyclical; he will return to this throughout the *Memoirs*. In one crucial footnote, for example, Rock declares that ‘*semper eadem* (and generally according to the *Irish* translation of it, “worse and worse”’) is destined to be the motto of Ireland to the end of time’ (*MCR* 24n). He goes on to oppose history written by defenders of the British state to the largely oral history of Irish Catholics in a style that, in general, vindicates the latter. This is one strategy; there are others.

For instance, if we trace the later treatment of Strafford in the *Memoirs*, it is perhaps predictable that Black Tom (along with ‘Old Oliver’ [Cromwell]) will play a leading role in the ‘frightful stories’ told to the young Rock around the turf fire in his father’s cabin, sending him terrified to bed (*MCR* 126). But Moore does not confine himself merely to countering official history with popular memory. Rock challenges the accuracy and the tone of the accounts of Strafford’s career given by David Hume in his *History of England* (1754–62) and John Macdiarmid in *Lives of British Statesmen* (1807), comparing them in particular to Strafford’s own letters (see *MCR* 45–47). He later laments the reliance of Hume (whose *History of England* was regarded as authoritative), on Temple for his account of 1641 (*MCR* 54). Thus, Rock repeatedly calls well-known historical works into question by reference to specific incidents, documents and sources. He points out that such texts, inclined to seek anecdotal enhancement for their partisan purposes, selectively rely on oral accounts of events, which may themselves be biased or untrustworthy. In this context, Rock discusses the notorious ‘Depositions’, supposedly eyewitness statements that had detailed Catholic attacks on Protestant settlers in Ulster in 1641 (these were later lodged in the library at Trinity College, Dublin, where it was virtually impossible for Catholic historians to gain access to them²⁵). Doctor Maxwell, the bishop of

25 See Clare O’Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland* (Cork, 2004), 145.

Kilmore, testified that the ghosts of Protestants drowned at Portadown had been observed walking on the river, singing psalms and shrieking for vengeance; this demonstrates, according to Rock, ‘that Protestant bishops occasionally can rival even Catholic ones in their deglutition of the miraculous’ (*MCR* 54). In such passages, Moore breaks down the opposition between authoritative, written history and the stories or legends of conflicting groups, by emphasizing that all forms of historical writing can be partial and selective. He reports that when Musgrave was collecting his materials for his history of 1798, this gullible historian was told ‘monstrous fictions’ by ‘some humorists in Dublin’; these Musgrave gravely transferred to his own ‘dull pages’, where they await some future Hume ‘to carry on the old, but never obsolete task, of blackening the character of the Irish’ (*MCR* 54n).

Nevertheless, Rock insists that his conclusions about Irish history in the *Memoirs* will be based mainly on the words of English monarchs, officials and settlers, and on the writings of historians who were regarded by the authorities as politically acceptable. His most important source is John Leland’s *History of Ireland from the Invasion of Henry II, with a Preliminary Discourse of the Antient State of that Kingdom* (1773), from which he quotes repeatedly. Rock comments that no one could regard Leland, a fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, a prebend in St. Patrick’s Cathedral and a chaplain in Dublin Castle, as a source of ‘political heterodoxy’ (*MCR* 37n). In fact, Leland’s Catholic associates such as Charles O’Conor and John Curry had anticipated from him an account of 1641 that would challenge Temple, but were profoundly disappointed in this by his *History of Ireland*. Curry wrote his *Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland* (1775) in part as a corrective to Leland (there are several allusions to this work in the *Memoirs*, and see also Rock’s praise for Mathew Carey’s treatise on 1641 (*MCR* 54n). But Rock declares that he wishes to avoid over-reliance on historians who had explicitly set out to defend Catholic positions, including Curry and Philip O’Sullivan Beare (*MCR* 37n). As we shall see, neither does Rock indulge in nostalgia for Ireland’s ‘Golden Age’—its culture and polity before the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1172. This is arresting, given that Moore had drawn extensively on the works of Sylvester O’Halloran and other antiquarian scholars for many of his lyrics in the *Melodies* (‘The Harp that Once’, ‘Remember the Glories of Brien the

Brave'), and indeed is usually credited with introducing many of the antiquarians' images and legends of ancient Ireland into mainstream cultural nationalism. Instead, the *Memoirs* will dramatize the influence of an idealized version of remote Irish history on Irish peasants, such as Rock's own father, in complicated and ironic ways.

In the final lines of his Preface, the missionary warns that the reader might be surprised by the 'civilized and correct' style of Rock's manuscript, and by Rock's classical quotations (*MCR* 6). The missionary refers the reader to Charles Smith's *Antient and Present State of the County of Kerry* (1756) for corroboration of the view that the lower orders in Ireland have a 'greater knowledge in this way, than some of the better sort in other places'; O'Halloran, among others, made similar claims about the Irish peasantry (*MCR* 6). Notwithstanding this, Rock is of course extraordinarily learned for a man in his social position. But at the same time, Moore's creation of a protagonist who is at once victim of, actor in, and erudite interpreter of Irish history is more than a convenient breach of realist verisimilitude. It also allows Moore to intervene in debates about the literacy of the Irish poor, which are sketched out in the *Memoirs* in relation to Rock's family history and his hedge-school education. In this regard, Rock's account of his remarkable father is as significant as his own life story. Arguably, both father and son represent nightmarish versions of what the authorities most feared from what they regarded as the half-educated Irish. For in some ways, a bilingual, semi-literate rural underclass was potentially even more threatening than one supposedly steeped in a doomed, pre-modern oral culture.

The question of Captain Rock's class identity is ambiguous in the *Memoirs*. The present-day Rock, christened Decimus because he was his father's tenth son, was born into a reasonably prosperous farming family, which had managed to hold on to a small estate (*MCR* 80). Because of restrictions against Catholic landholders, Rock senior's land was legally in the possession of a virtuous Protestant barber. Despite the 'hereditary tendencies of his nature', the elder Rock lived quietly until he was betrayed to the authorities by one of his sons, a convert to the Established Church (*MCR* 81). As Rock assures us, this treacherous son was only his half-brother, whose mother (his father's second wife) was descended from one of Cromwell's Irish army; by contrast, his own mother (his father's third wife) was a 'regular O'Brien' of Gaelic stock

(MCR 80n). Disinherited and beggared by his own son, Rock senior sank into the ‘class of wretched cottiers’ (MCR 81). This was beginning of his career as a troublemaker. His resentment at his own losses chimes with a general sense of dispossession among the Irish poor, evidently encouraged by the teachers in the hedge schools:

[Rock’s father] had a vague idea, in which the schoolmaster used to help him out, of those happy days when Ireland was styled the Island of Saints, and when such of our ancestors as were *not* saints were, at least, kings and princes. Often would he hold forth, amidst the smoke of his wretched cabin, on the magnificence of the Hall of Tara, and the wisdom of the great Ollam Fodlah, much to the amusement, as I have heard, of the second Mrs. ROCK, who, proud of her own suspected descent from a Cromwellian drummer, used to laugh irreverently both at my father and at old Ollam Fodlah. (MCR 125–26)

As Decimus Rock declares, ‘there is no doubt that the faculty of reading and writing is as much diffused among the Irish as among the English peasantry. The difference is not in the *quantity*, but in the *quality* of our education’; for example, in the ‘library’ of the hedge school attended by the present-day Rock, we find ‘Annals of Irish Rogues and Rapparees’, alongside ‘Memoirs of Jack the Batchelor, a notorious smuggler, and of Freney, a celebrated highwayman’ (and for religious instruction, a copy of Pastorini’s Prophecies and the Miracles of Prince Hohenloe). (MCR 100) It was precisely the intermingling of classical texts and languages with popular celebrations of heroic criminality and Catholic superstition that made the hedge schools so suspect. The masters were often assumed to be the organizers of secret societies and the writers of threatening letters and notices. These literary productions by the secret societies underlined that the real social threat lay not only in the ignorance of the lower orders, but in their capacity to use language to inflammatory or seditious ends. As Helen O’Connell has suggested, for many elite observers it seemed that, rather than displacing ‘the prejudices and backwardnesses of orality’, the hedge schools appeared actually to enhance them.²⁶ In its own confusion of elite and subaltern

26 Helen O’Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford, 2006), 86.

culture, and its deployment of high cultural reference and scholarship in the investigation of popular mindsets and protest movements, Moore's *Memoirs* thus plays with prevailing fears about peasant readers and writers.

The missionary makes a final appearance at the conclusion of the text, when we hear that Captain Rock is to be transported to Botany Bay. Rock's true crimes have gone undetected, but he has been found guilty of breaking curfew and (ironically enough, given the preceding manuscript) for 'not being able to give an account of himself' in court (*MCR* 184). But here the missionary serves merely to report an eyewitness description of the 'national' figure of Rock as he embarks at Cobh, attired

in an old green coat, supposed to be the same, but without the yellow facings, which was made up for Napper Tandy, as an officer of the Irish National Guard, a pair of breeches, the colour of which the reporter unluckily could not ascertain, and stockings, of the staple manufacture of Mr. Dick Martin's Kingdom of Connemara. (*MCR* 185)

The last words of the text all belong to Rock, quoted from his final letter to the missionary (who evidently is not tempted to betray him to the authorities). Rock is triumphant and undefeated in spirit, confident that his campaign against the unreformed English government will continue under the leadership of his son. He comments on the state of Ireland in 1824:

A Lord Lieutenant, whose enlightened and liberal intentions alarm and offend the stronger party; while his limited powers and embarrassed position incapacitate him from gaining the confidence of the weaker, a Secretary, worthy of the good old Anti-poperity times, and to whose spirit I would ensure a safe passage over Mahomet's bridge into Paradise, if narrowness (as it is probable) be a qualification, for the performance of that hair-breadth promenade, the Orange Ascendancy flourishing under the very eyes of the Government, and imitating that Oligarchy mentioned by Aristotle, whose oath was 'We will do the multitude all the evil

in our power', the Established Clergy still further enriched, and threatening to 'push' the Landed Gentry 'from their stools', more than a million spent annually upon soldiers, to keep down the Catholics, and only a few thousands per annum given to educate them, with such actual results of the policy of our present rulers, and with Mr. Peel, Lord Eldon, and the Duke of Wellington in the Cabinet, to answer for the complexion of their future measures, I may safely, I think, reckon upon the continuance of the ROCK dynasty, through many a long year of distraction and tumult; and may lay my head on my pillow at Botany Bay, with the full assurance that all at home is going on as prosperously as ever. (*MCR* 186–87)

This passage is typical of Moore's style of argument throughout the text. There is a wealth of detailed political analysis, improbably (for an English readership) put into the mouth of an Irish agrarian leader, and juxtaposed with the innovative concept of a trans-historical and trans-generational 'Rock Dynasty', for which 'tumult' is 'prosperity'. Rock is a fictionalized individual; he is both like and unlike Mr. Peel or the Duke of Wellington, for he too represents a collective, even a primal, force. His removal from Ireland is irrelevant, because a tyrannized people will *always*, he argues, resist.

Memoirs, Book I: Rock's History Lessons

Captain Rock's manuscript is divided into two books, entitled 'Of My Ancestors' and 'Of My Own Times', respectively. The first book is devoted to the story of the Rocks up to the time of the present Captain Rock's birth (supposedly in 1763), and the second deals with Ireland between that date and the Captain's transportation to Australia.

The opening chapter of the *Memoirs* contains Rock's brief commentary on Ireland's pre-invasion history. Accepting the view of antiquarians who had set out to defend ancient Ireland from charges of 'barbarism', Rock asserts that its laws were 'models of perfection' (*MCR* 10). As such, it was not a country in which the Rocks, with their 'love of riot' (*MCR* 13), could distinguish themselves; and so for 'the first 1,100 years of the

Christian era, we hear but little or nothing of the achievements of the family' (*MCR* 10). Rock offers a backhanded compliment to the English government for having 'at all times consulted our taste in this particular ... from the invasion of Henry II down to the present day' (*MCR* 13). Moore draws here on the researches of antiquarian scholars such as O'Halloran and Charles Vallancey, while distancing himself from their wilder speculations and their reverent tones. He also risks offending Catholic sensibilities, by emphasizing how Pope Adrian 'made a present of Ireland to Henry II' (*MCR* 10). The chapter ends with a line from Virgil, but given an Irish-flavoured 'translation' by 'one of my family':

Through Leinster, Ulster, Connaught, Munster,
ROCK's the boy to make the fun stir! (*MCR* 13)

These lines represent Moore's first citation of the 'voice' of the Rockites. He will go on to quotes such 'poems' and 'prophecies' throughout the text, offering a literary equivalent of the threatening letters, rhymes and oaths of the agrarian secret societies. With his reference to the four provinces of Ireland, Moore generalizes the phenomenon of Irish agrarian violence, and relates it to 'deep' historical causes. This was contrary to the rhetorical strategy of those who stressed the local, reflexive or non-political nature of Whiteboyism.²⁷

Over the next several chapters, Moore embarks on his account of the history of Anglo-Irish relations since Henry II's invasion. One key concern is to emphasize the intensity of the conflict between colonists and colonized in Ireland, even in the period before the Reformation. He asserts that the Irish were severely mistreated even before there were any religious differences between themselves and their rulers, and that this helps to account for the later failure of Protestantism in Ireland. Rock suggests that the policy of the English conquerors was never to 'share with [the Irish] the advantages of their own institutions', but instead to

27 For example, the novelist William Carleton, an Ulsterman, insisted that agrarian violence was mainly concentrated in the south of Ireland. He suggested that if 'Tipperary and some of the adjoining parts of Munster were blotted from the moral map of the country, we would stand in a far higher position than that which we occupy in the opinion of our neighbours'; William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* [1830–33], with a Foreword by Barbara Haley, 2 vols. (Gerrards Cross, 1990), I. xxi.

devote themselves to the ‘culture of poison and sitting down, like witches, with a plantation of night-shade around them’ (*MCR* 15). For example, he alleges that the Irish suffered the same sort of legal restrictions in the twelfth century as under Lords Camden and Castlereagh in recent times, so steadily have the English ‘persevered in their ancient maxims of policy’ (*MCR* 14). Although the Irish pleaded for conciliation and for admission to the advantages of the English laws, they were repeatedly rejected. Under such laws, Rock’s ‘pugnacious progenitors first rose into repute, and began that career which, under the various names of *Mere Irish*, *Rapparees*, *White-boys*, &c., they have continued prosperously down to the present day’ (*MCR* 15). Moore quotes from Sir John Davies, who suggested that as long as the Irish were ‘out of the protection of the laws, so as every Englishman might oppress, spoil, and kill them without control, how was it possible that they should be other than outlaws, and enemies to the crown of England?’ (*MCR* 16). Moore also broaches the question of tithes at the end of the second chapter of the *Memoirs*. Although O’Halloran had asserted that the Irish had paid tithes faithfully in ancient times, Rock states that tithes were only introduced to Ireland at the time of the invasion, as one of the inducements used to encourage the prelates of Ireland to accept the sovereignty of Henry II (*MCR* 17). He lauds the Synod of Cashel (actually the Council of Cashel, 1171) for planting this ‘apple of discord’, that ‘by the side of the Orange, and other wholesome fruits, still blooms in the garden of the Rocks with undiminished strength and fertility’ (*MCR* 18). Thus, the Irish were treated to what Rock sarcastically calls ‘a gentle course of alteratives’, as they were prepared for the inoculation of a new religion ‘by the same skilful and friendly hands’ (*MCR* 25). Noting that ‘the aristocratic faction’ in the reign of Edward II behaved in much the same way as the Orange faction of the nineteenth century, Rock argues that the

Grand Periodic Year of the Stoics, at the close of which every thing was to begin again, and the same events all to be re-acted in the same order, is, on a miniature scale, represented in the History of the English Government in Ireland, every succeeding century being but a renewed revolution of the same follies, the same crimes, and the same turbulence that disgraced the former. (*MCR* 20)

In this way, rebellion is fomented by the administration and is inevitably followed by ‘one of those daring rebellions in which the revenge of an insulted people naturally breaks forth’ (*MCR* 21). As illustrations of the further ‘apparatus of persecution, with which Laws and Religion have ever been surrounded in Ireland’, Rock alludes to the desecration of the monastery at Clonmacnoise, and the destruction of the crozier of St. Patrick. The same policies of persecution, he claims, have kept the Irish ‘good Catholics and bad subjects ever since’ (*MCR* 28–29).

There is a significant modulation in the tone of the *Memoirs* as Rock’s historical narrative reaches the sixteenth century. Rock alleges that Elizabeth attempted to ‘pacify Ireland by exterminating the Irish’, and notes that one of ‘her agents in this work of desolation’ (Sir George Carew) left behind ‘a record of his sanguinary exploits’ entitled *Pacata Hibernia*, or ‘Hibernia pacified’ (*MCR* 34). He also cites Edmund Spenser’s famous description of the effects of war and famine in Munster, but declares with satisfaction that if Carew’s ghost could now see the south of Ireland, he would see that ‘though the same peace-makers, slaughter and persecution, have been tried under almost every government since his time’, the Irish have neither been pacified nor eliminated (*MCR* 35). Later in the *Memoirs*, Rock continues to dwell on the unruliness of the Irish as a form of resistance, but also increasingly celebrates their very survival as a rebuke to tyranny. He here considers the fate of Ireland during the constitutional and religious vicissitudes of England during the seventeenth century, commenting on the relative tranquillity of the country during the reign of Queen Mary, and the various injustices endured under James I and Charles I. But the most significant episode in this history of Rock’s ‘Ancestors’ is undoubtedly the rebellion of 1641. The leader of the Rocks at the time of the rebellion in Ulster was evidently sick in bed during the crucial late months of 1641, but left behind a diary which, according to his descendant, contains ‘the concentrated essence of Irish history’ (*MCR* 53). The journal peters out as the revolt spreads; Rock is far more interested in the history of how rebellions are ‘got up’ in Ireland than in the details of the campaigns (*MCR* 48). The various entries describe how the rebellion was provoked, by the dissemination of rumours about a plan to massacre Catholics, by the ignoring of pleas for conciliation by moderates and by the persecution of law-abiding Catholic lords. But for many in the

administration, rebellion was, in the words of the seventeenth-century Rock, ‘the goose that layeth golden eggs’, in the form of land seizures and confiscations, and they were not fools enough to kill it (*MCR* 49). This Rock ancestor fixes the disputed date of the massacre of Catholics at Islandmagee as 18 November 1641 (*MCR* 51). In other words, these killings inspired rebellion, rather than being an act of retaliation by the Protestant settlers against Catholic outrages. And as Rock proclaims, ‘the same drama, a little modernized, was acted over again in 1798; and the prompter’s book and stage directions are still at hand in the archives of Dublin Castle, whenever an able Orange manager shall be found to preside over a renewal of the spectacle’ (*MCR* 48–49).

Rock concludes Book I of the *Memoirs*, or what he refers to as his ‘faint and rapid sketch of the chief measure taken by our English masters ... to civilize and attach the Irish people’ (*MCR* 75), with an outline of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history. He commends Cromwell’s genocidal savagery towards the Irish as ‘at least, more humane than the slow lingering process of exclusion, disappointment, and degradation, by which their hearts are worn out under more specious forms of tyranny’ (*MCR* 56). His account of the war between James II and William of Orange, decided in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, is notable for its lack of reverence for the Stuart king, instead mocking the Irish for their misplaced loyalty to the Jacobite cause (*MCR* 59). Rock mourns the betrayal of the Treaty of Limerick (1691), as not only ‘grossly violated in every particular, but followed up, without any further provocation from the Catholics, by a system of the most odious persecution that ever disgraced the bloody annals of bigotry’ (*MCR* 65). But an ‘Irish Chronicler’ can say little about this period of Ireland’s history, as the ‘chief actors in the scene can hardly be called Irishmen, and the sufferers in the background were all mute and nameless’ (*MCR* 69). Instead, his account of the Penal Code is mediated largely through literary and historical quotations, much of it from Anglo-Irish sources. Rock quotes at length from Jonathan Swift’s devastating description of the miserable conditions of Irish Catholics in this era (*MCR* 70); however, he is sceptical about Swift’s reputation as a ‘patriot’, claiming that the Dean cared as little about the sufferings of his Catholic fellow countrymen as his Gulliver did for the ‘disfranchised Yahoos’ (*MCR* 69). He suggests that if details of the conduct of the

English in Ireland had been read about in the satirical fictions of the day, such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or Voltaire's *Candide*, such works would have been regarded as absurdly exaggerated (MCR 60). Rock also cites Edmund Burke's furious condemnation of the Penal Laws (MCR 68). In Ireland, the Age of Enlightenment was a time of darkness; the anti-Catholic laws 'had been enacted in one of the golden periods of English literature, and remained, like "phantoms, wandering by the light of day" amidst the general and increasing illumination of Europe' (MCR 81).

Book I of the *Memoirs* ends with Rock's account of the decision of the Irish House of Commons to abolish the title of agistment in 1735. Although the clergymen of the Church of Ireland pleaded to be allowed to continue to collect this title on pasture land, its abolition meant that the burden of tithes thereafter fell most heavily on tillage farming, and on the 'the very poorest of poverty's children', the cottiers (MCR 74). Anticipating the turn to grievances about tithes and to popular protest in the early chapters of Book II, Rock states that 'the consequences of this vote to me and my family, and the increased sphere of activity which it has opened to us, may be judged from the events of the last sixty years' (MCR 74). In introducing the history 'Of My Own Times', Rock wishes to demonstrate how 'steadily the same system has been pursued ever since, with the same happy results to the Government, the people, and to me' (MCR 75).

Memoirs, Book II: The Life and Times of Captain Rock

Decimus Rock began his life, he claims, on the very day, in 1763 (actually 1766), when the English hanged Fr. Nicholas Sheehy of Clogheen—'one of those *coups d'état* of the Irish authorities', as Rock says, 'which saved them the trouble of further atrocities for some time to come' (MCR 85). What was widely regarded as the judicial murder of Sheehy (who had been accused of involvement in Whiteboy crime) horrified Irish Catholics; in this text, the killing is seemingly revenged by the birth of another troublemaker. It is as if violence—also called 'noise', 'fun', 'sport'—is a biological response, on the part of Nature itself, to injustice and political folly (MCR 10, 13, 85). Rock senior's several

wives and many children underline the fertility and indestructibility of the family.²⁸ The chapter that tells of Decimus's arrival in the world concludes with the following 'prophecy':

As long as Ireland shall pretend,
Like sugar-loaf, turn'd upside down,
To stand upon its smaller end,
So long shall live old ROCK'S renown.
As long as Popish spade and scythe
Shall dig and cut the Sassanagh's tithe;
And Popish purses pay the tolls,
On heaven's road, for Sassanagh souls—
As long as Millions shall kneel down
To ask of Thousands for their own,
While Thousands proudly turn away,
And to the Millions answer 'Nay!',
So long the merry reign shall be
Of Captain ROCK and his Family. (*MCR* 85)

The abuse of power represented by tithes is challenged by the 'millions' of Catholics who oppose the demands of the Church of Ireland. Contrary to 'the noble example of the elephant, which refuses to propagate its race in bondage', the Irish population continues to increase (*MCR* 114).

So Moore devotes much of the *Memoirs* to a depiction of an ongoing tradition of insurgence that heroically defies both 'misery and Malthus' (*MCR* 132). The very 'national characteristics' that so appalled many observers of Ireland—the hyper-fertility and 'turbulence' of the rural poor, their millenarian fantasies, the semi-literate productions of 'Captain Rock'—are appropriated for Moore's representation of scandalous rural underclass activity in this text. His literary 'politeness' paradoxically enhances his rendering of popular resilience and wit. Instead of detailing rapes, maimings and killings, Rock insists on the

28 According to an anecdote related in *Captain Rock in London*, when one of Rock's ancestors was shown the head of his son fixed on a pole opposite the Castle-gate of Dublin, he remarked, 'My son has many heads'; see Michael J. Whitty, ed., *Captain Rock in London; or, The Chieftain's Gazette* (London, 1825–26), 35. This journal was one of the many publications inspired by the success of Moore's *Memoirs*.

‘recreational’, or even the artistic nature of insurrection (*MCR* 38). Moore analyses the spirit of popular protest in a manner that anticipates the work of contemporary Irish historians and cultural critics, who have only recently begun to decipher the complex articulation of agrarian insurgency with folk culture, ritual, and ‘subversive law’.²⁹

In Book II of the *Memoirs*, Rock recalls his father’s character and his view of the political events of the later decades of the eighteenth century. As we have seen, he discusses his father’s education, and reports that Rock senior refused to ‘risk the orthodoxy of the young ROCKS within the proselytizing vortex of a Charter School’ (*MCR* 98). As well as being an organizer and commander of the Whiteboys, old Captain Rock evidently helped numerous agrarian secret societies, including those whose members were northern Protestants (*MCR* 84). At the time of his father’s death, Rock reminisces about his many stereotypically Irish traits, including his bravery, his hospitality, his wit, his ‘bulls’, and his startlingly rapid transitions from melancholy to mirth (*MCR* 125–29). But although Decimus Rock does not display the same array of Irish national characteristics as his Irish-speaking father, neither is the contrast between father and son handled in the standard way of early nineteenth-century Irish or British fiction.

Influential novels of Moore’s day, such as Lady Morgan’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) or Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814), often conclude with the marriage of the central English character to the child of a former leader of the old, defeated culture. These unions are offered to the reader as images of historical progress. Such stories seek to teach us that, with the passage of time, the pain of historical loss will lessen,

²⁹ By contrast, see E. P. Thompson’s extraordinarily suggestive analysis of anonymous threatening letters in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, ‘The Crime of Anonymity’, in Douglas Hay, et al., *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975). There is an exceptional state archive on popular political activity in rural Ireland in the nineteenth century. Historians and cultural critics have yet to approach the various sources in this archive with methods developed by researchers working on other geographic areas, notably India and Latin America. For innovative early work on Irish agrarian unrest, see Galen Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812–36* (London, 1970); Clark, *Social Origins*; and Clark and Donnelly, eds., *Irish Peasants*. For more recent work by cultural historians, see Gibbons, ‘Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place’, 23–44 and Heather Laird’s reinterpretation of various forms of peasant resistance, *Subversive Law in Ireland, 1879–1920: From ‘Unwritten Law’ to the Dáil Courts* (Dublin, 2005).

and genuine conciliation become possible. In figures such as Morgan's Glorvina or Scott's Rose Bradwardine, Gaelic national character is also softened and feminized. Obviously, no marital conclusion between the male rebel and the male missionary is imaginable here; that trope is dismissed from the outset. But even though Rock's narrative of his own family history makes it plain that he is less stereotypically 'Irish' than his father, the old Captain, Moore does not try to persuade us that a new generation will automatically be less recalcitrant than its predecessors (*MCR* 122–29). Indeed, Rock cites as an example of his own 'degeneracy' his foolish excitement, in 1782 (when, after a campaign associated with Henry Grattan, the Irish parliament attained a measure of legislative independence), at seeing the 'prospects of peace and freedom' opening up around him. He 'was ready, in the boyish enthusiasm of the moment, to sacrifice all my own personal interest in all future riots and rebellions, to the one bright, seducing light of my country's liberty and repose' (*MCR* 122–23). But his father's superior wisdom and sardonic realism win the day, as the false hopes of the 1780s give way to the chaos of the 1790s. He assures his son that the Rocks have 'a Power on our side that "will not willingly let us die"; and, long after Grattan shall have disappeared from earth ... the family of the ROCKS will continue to flourish in all their native glory'; he orders his heir to give up 'this foolish romance' of reform (*MCR* 124). The old man had been correct in predicting that, under the present system, 'progress' in Ireland is impossible. Thus Rock contextualizes the violence of his father and his followers, in the 'desperate game between them and their masters':

To reproach a country thus trained, with its riotous and sanguinary habits, to expect moderation from a people kept constantly on the rack of oppression, is like Mercury, in Æschylus, coolly lecturing Prometheus, on the exceeding want of good temper and tractableness he exhibits, while the only grievance, forsooth, he has to complain of, is being riveted by his legs and arms to a rock, and having a wedge of eternal adamant driven into his breast! (*MCR* 129)

A good deal of Book II is occupied with an extended discussion of the theological and moral basis of tithes. Rock's key conclusion is that tithes

were originally based on an abuse of papal authority, and it is therefore bitterly ironic that they are unknown in their British form elsewhere in Europe (*MCR* 109). The topic of tithes leads to lengthy and furious denunciations of the greed of the Church of Ireland, which features some of the most vivid imagery in the text. Throughout, Rock stresses the Catholics' superiority in numbers:

All this time the Catholic 'Enemy' (as the laws called their own manufacture) went on increasing in silence and darkness, like the fire which some French philosophers suppose to exist at the centre of the earth, working its way upward in secret, till it will at last make the surface too hot to hold us. (*MCR* 113)

As he argues, this is a

judgment of insulted Nature upon that perverse and vicious policy, which dares to set itself in array against the wants and wishes of a whole population, and, like the absurd people mentioned by Ælian, who opposed the coming-in of the sea with shields and swords, thinks to stop the great current of nature by means of penal statutes and bayonets. (*MCR* 132)

But despite their riches, the Protestant clergy are like Sinbad in the Valley of the Diamonds, 'walking amidst wealth, but not at all comfortable' (*MCR* 159).

As the Captain's manuscript draws to a close, Rock imagines himself confronting two representatives of ecclesiastical and political authority respectively. In the first scene, he encounters a 'Parson in the field' (which would have been a potentially uncomfortable meeting for any Protestant clergyman); in the second, he fancies himself as a 'political Mephistopheles', advising the prime minister, William Pitt, in 1795 (*MCR* 176).

Rock tells the parson that the Church should use its income from the tax of first fruits for the purpose for which it was intended. In one of his most extravagant rhetorical flourishes, Rock asks:

how much odium, ill-blood, and discord might have been avoided, if such a fund had even been employed towards the remission of those disgraceful Rates, by which the pig-stye of the poor Catholic is made tributary to the ornamental spire of the Protestant, and wretches, who are all but starving themselves, are taxed to provide the Church with sacramental bread and wine, how far such salutary effects might have been produced, by a little more obedience, on the part of the Church, to the laws not only of the land, but of humanity and religion, it is not for Captain ROCK to insist upon at present ... (*MCR* 144)

In an apparent parody of the pretended civility of some of the Rockites' missives, the chapter is signed in the style of a letter (*MCR* 144).

In his conversation with Pitt, Rock urges the prime minister to recall Fitzwilliam, whose administration had raised Catholic hopes, as his recall would encourage Catholics to join with the United Irish conspiracy in the north, which had previously been dominated by 'the Protestants and Presbyterians of the North' (*MCR* 176). By these means, both Captain Rock and the Ascendancy would get the rebellion they desired (*MCR* 178), preparing the country for the extinction of its parliamentary independence (*MCR* 181–82). Rock recalls that the false promise of Emancipation after the Union was held up to the lips of Catholics, like a poison draught at Cleopatra's banquet; and his manuscript ends with a couplet from Cowper, to describe how the minister

Gave Liberty the last, the fatal shock,
Slipp'd the slave's collar on, and snapp'd the lock. (*MCR* 183)

Rock comments that the 'seventeenth century opened with the perfidy of James, who first flattered the hopes of Catholics, and then plundered and persecuted them afterwards, the birth of the eighteenth was signalized by the violation of the Articles of Limerick, and the Union, a measure arising out of corruption and blood, and clothed in promises put on only to betray, was the phantom by which the dawn of the nineteenth was welcomed' (*MCR* 181). Clearly, rather than his own time representing a moment of any particular optimism, Rock regards it as virtually the nadir of Ireland's history. Indeed, more Gothic images

involving the monstrous and phantasmal are used in these passages than in any of the earlier chapters concerned with Ireland's misfortunes.

The explanation of the 1798 Rising in *Memoirs of Captain Rock* is in many ways similar to that in Moore's biography of Fitzgerald. Rock emphasizes the government's culpability in fomenting the Rising, but here betrays a more recognisably élite disapproval for popular agency and violence (for example, in his disdain for the 'mob' of forty-shilling freeholders) (*MCR* 336). He suggests that the 'lowest of the populace' were lashed into 'a fury as blind as that of the Cyclops in his cave, but only the more ferocious for being unenlightened'; in this way, 'the cause of the people in Ireland' was disgraced (*MCR* 178). However, in the *Memoirs*, there is no paean of praise for Fitzgerald or Emmet, and no allusion whatever to O'Connell or to the changed complexion of Irish political opposition after the Rising and the Act of Union. Nor, as Moore assumes the voice of Captain Rock, does he fear to speak of even the worst aspects of '98:

With respect to the atrocities committed by some members of my Family, during the paroxysm of that re-action which the measures of the Government had provoked, it is far from my intention to enter into any defence of them. I will merely say, that they who, after having read the preceding pages, can still wonder at such events as even the massacre of Scullabogue, have yet to learn that simple theory of the connexion of events with their causes, which is the sovereign cure for wonder on all such occasions. (*MCR* 180–81)

At the end of the *Memoirs*, Captain Rock is still thriving, occupied with 'the great press of political business' the Union brought upon him (*MCR* 83). Despite the 'phlebotomy' of 1798, which enabled the British government 'to cool down the temperament of the country, into a state tame enough for the reception of a Union' (*MCR* 176, 178), Ireland has not been subdued by the 'contract' of Union, with its false exchange of the 'fairy money of Hope, which seems gold to the eye, but will turn into dust in the hand' (*MCR* 182). In Ireland, the supposedly civilized discourse of modern politics has been betrayed (contracts, for example, made in Ireland by the English are no better than 'marriage vows, false

as dicers' oaths' or 'to be read, like witches' prayers, backwards') (*MCR* 63, 65). In this way, English 'civility' has itself produced Irish violence.

The difference in tone and attitude between Moore's *Melodies* and the *Memoirs of Captain Rock* derives from this reordering of the standard opposition between the 'wild' and the 'civil'; it is part of the 'secret' history of Ireland that these are intimately related, not opposed. By extension, this is also the 'secret' of the Irish agrarian 'secret societies', such as the Rockites—the insight that they have into Irish affairs that the authorities refuse to acknowledge. And so, in aesthetic terms, the harps of Erin (arranged for what Moore called the pianofortes of 'the rich and the educated' in the *Melodies*) are countered in this text by the rather rougher music of the 'lovers of discord and misrule', Captain Rock (*MCR* 20).³⁰

The Reception and Influence of *Memoirs of Captain Rock*

Moore's satisfaction with initial responses to this work is recorded in his journals. Lady Holland described the book as a '*chef-d'œuvre* of perspicuity and pleasantry'; other leading lights of Moore's circle, such as Lords Holland, Lansdowne and John Russell, sent their effusive congratulations; the publisher received a letter from a Dublin bookseller concerning the 'sensation' created by 'the Captain' in Ireland: 'The people ... through the country are subscribing their sixpences and shillings to buy a copy; and he should not wonder if the work were pirated.'³¹ As well as newspaper notices, a number of substantial periodical reviews appeared in the *Westminster Review* (April 1824), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (May 1824), and *The Edinburgh Review* (October 1824), and a further lengthy review in *The Monthly Review* (January and March, 1825) followed the publication of full-length rejoinder to Moore, *Captain Rock Detected* (1824), by the Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan, a convert to Protestantism who was becoming a leading apologist for Orangeism.³²

30 Letter to the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal, *Poetical Works of Thomas Moore* (New York, 1887), 290.

31 *Journal of Thomas Moore*, II. 726–27.

32 For reviews of the *Memoirs* in the *Monthly Review* and *Morning Chronicle*, see P. D.

The contemporary reception of *Memoirs of Captain Rock* reveals a good deal about the political impact of the work on the pieties of the day in all that concerned the representation of Ireland. All who responded to the book were aware of Moore's established reputation as a poet and songwriter; several tried to reconcile his *Melodies* with what the *Westminster Review* referred to as this new volume of 'Moore's Miseries'.³³ Commentators of all political persuasions remarked on the stylistic brio with which the *Memoirs* presented Irish historical and political grievances. Sympathetic or liberal reviewers hoped that the lively humour of the work would 'make the topic of Ireland fashionable'; that is to say, the *Memoirs* would finally render Irish history comprehensible to English readers.³⁴ The reviewer in *The Times* announced:

[The author] seems to have found the true royal road to knowledge, divesting an obscure and unattractive history of whatever could alarm the indolent or perplex the dull, while the love of justice, humanity and liberty, breaks out through every apostrophe of the author, however he may affect to veil his emotions under sarcasm, levity or scorn.³⁵

This view is echoed by the well-known Whig journalist and wit Sydney Smith, writing in *The Edinburgh Review* some months later. He argues that Moore borrows the name of a 'celebrated Irish leader' to typify the 'violence and insurrection which is necessarily generated by systematic oppression'; Smith excuses the jocular tone of the *Memoirs* as a way of hiding the 'deep sarcasm and substantial terrors of his story'.³⁶

Garside, J. E. Belanger, and S. A. Ragaz, *British Fiction, 1800–1829: A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception*, designer A. A. Mandal, <http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>, accessed 18 June 2007, DBF Record No. 1824A070. For an account of the initial reaction to the *Memoirs*, see Hoover H. Jordan, *Bolt Upright: The Life of Thomas Moore*, 2 vols. (Salzburg, 1975), II. 375–80; Tadhg O'Sullivan analyses these responses in 'Captain Rock in Print', ch. 3. [Mortimer O'Sullivan], *Captain Rock Detected; or, The Origin and Character of the Recent Disturbances, and the Causes, both Moral and Political, of the Present Alarming Condition of the South and West of Ireland, Fully and Fairly Considered and Exposed: by a Munster Farmer* (London, 1824).

33 *Westminster Review*, 1 (April 1824), 492–504, 502.

34 *Westminster Review*, 1 (April 1824), 502.

35 *The Times*, 27 April 1824; quoted in Jordan, *Life of Thomas Moore*, 379.

36 *The Edinburgh Review*, 41 (October 1824), 143–53, 143–44.

But for more conservative critics, the comedy of the *Memoirs* was entirely unacceptable. One of the first reviews complained that ‘It is scarcely possible that any reader should not, from the title of this book, be led to anticipate some account of the late insurrections in Ireland. Of this, however, there is not one word.’³⁷ This reading is not at all surprising, given its provenance in the Tory *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. There are at least a few words about ‘the late insurrections’ in the *Memoirs*, but the reviewer may have preferred something more expressive of the thrilling horror of agrarian violence, as it appeared from the point of view of the élite:

When we read Captain Rock’s *Memoirs*, and remembered the scenes of blood which for three years have desolated the fairest provinces of Ireland—while, with fear and trembling, we at this hour think of the insecurity of our friends there, the first feeling excited by the book, was sorrow that any one could be found to jest with such a subject.³⁸

Moore had abused his fame to produce what would ‘in the mouth of a real Captain Rock be treason—that which in a village pot-house, would lead to crime, to be punished by death’.³⁹ In Ireland, Mortimer O’Sullivan also condemned Moore’s omission of the grim details of Rockite outrages, and protested that the *Memoirs* had ‘collected, within a portable compass, all the topics that can stir the blood of the uninstructed Irish’.⁴⁰ And Sir Jonah Barrington, for example, later alleged that Moore addressed ‘distracted cottagers’, rather than the proprietors and legislators of Ireland.⁴¹

The notice in the *Westminster Review*, although obviously written by an admirer of Moore, was also somewhat critical. This reviewer, too, professed himself surprised by the lack of ‘reality’ in the *Memoirs*, and was disappointed that Captain Rock is not ‘a real potatoe [*sic*] and milk,

37 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 15 (May 1824), 544–58, 545–46.

38 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 15 (May 1824), 544.

39 *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 15 (May 1824), 549.

40 [O’Sullivan], *Captain Rock Detected*, 199. *Captain Rock Detected* also includes a story, ‘The Ruin’, in which agrarian insurgents are portrayed as merely the bloodthirsty dupes of upper-class agitators.

41 Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches of His Own Times*, 2 vols. (London, 1869), I. 351.

or gun-powder and whisky, Irishman, but a sort of abstraction of Irish riot'.⁴² He remarks:

When we heard that Mr. Moore was editing the captain's life, we hoped to see such a picture as might be given by a man of imagination and knowledge, by a man acquainted with his own country and the human heart, of the manner in which a Captain Rock and his followers are made, of the manner in which individual Irishmen are worked up into that state of excitement and ferocity of which we see the daily fruits in almost every part of Ireland. We hoped for such a Captain Rock as the author of *Old Mortality* might make, if he chose, instead of strengthening absurd prejudices which exist, or directing his strength against the caricatures of follies which have passed away, to acquire some claim to the gratitude of the age.⁴³

Memoirs of Captain Rock would have been a more responsible and important book, the writer argues, if Moore had created a fictional representative of an exotic culture in the manner of an Hibernian Walter Scott, 'the author of *Old Mortality*'. Moore fails to depict Captain Rock as a 'typical' Irishman, flouting the novelistic conventions that were increasingly familiar to both British and Irish readers at this time. It seems that only Roger O'Connor, the eccentric brother of the United Irish leader Arthur O'Connor, thought that Moore took too moderate a view of Ireland's political situation. O'Connor is referred to in the *Memoirs* as one of the possible 'original' Captain Rocks (*MCR* 11). In his *Letters to His Majesty, King George the Fourth, by Captain Rock*, he reasserts his claim to the title, but insists that the history Moore relates of 'spoliations, massacres, degradations and insults heaped on the Irish people' will never be balanced by the 'one pitiful item—*Catholic Emancipation*'.⁴⁴

42 *Westminster Review*, 1 (April 1824), 494.

43 *Westminster Review*, 1 (April 1824), 492–93.

44 Roger O'Connor, *Letters to His Majesty, King George the Fourth, by Captain Rock* (London, 1828), 339–40. This, however, is by no means an inarguable reading of the politics of the text. Rock's direct appeal for Emancipation (at that point where the political concerns of the 1820s are most explicitly addressed) comes at the end of Book II, ch. XI, before the account of 1798 and Rock's subsequent adventures. Certainly,

However, it may be that some of those who excoriated the *Memoirs* (this ‘pernicious missal’, ‘the most exceptionable publication, in all its bearings as to Ireland, that I have yet seen’), read it more sensitively than those who welcomed it.⁴⁵ Of course, many admired Moore’s book because they believed that it would attract support for the cause of Catholic Emancipation. Indeed, O’Connell’s biographer makes the claim—impossible, since O’Connell was dead before Beecher Stowe’s famous novel appeared—that he once described the book as being to the struggle for Catholic Emancipation what *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was to the abolition of slavery.⁴⁶ Such a suggestion interestingly misrepresents the text, however, for indeed it would be hard to imagine anything further removed from Beecher Stowe’s sentimental fiction than Moore’s work. More recently, Tadhg O’Sullivan argues that Moore reoriented ‘the “Rock” signifier away from the nom-de-guerre of threatening letters and towards the new strident voice of Catholic middle-class politics in the mid-1820s’.⁴⁷ Thus the *Memoirs* civilized or sanitized the most fearful feature of Irish popular culture. It was therefore integral to the O’Connellite project of weaning the rural poor away from violent, local agrarian movements and leading them into non-violent, national politics. This is consistent with readings of the *Melodies* that would claim that in them, something wild was tamed and domesticated. To be sure, Moore (no less than O’Connell) cannot entirely be absolved from the charge of appropriating popular insurgency for middle-class political ends, especially in his stress on tithes and constitutional grievances rather than on rent and land. In his defence of the Church of Ireland in *Captain Rock Detected*, Mortimer O’Sullivan dwells on Moore’s relative silence on the abuses of landlordism. The Land League leader Michael Davitt later argued that O’Connell and Catholic leaders entered into ‘a tacit, if unacknowledged, co-operation’ with ‘the spirit of Whiteboyism’ during the Tithe War—only to resume their usual denunciations of secret societies after the 1838 Tithe Commutation Act.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding

the book does not *conclude* with a plea for Emancipation, in the apparently conciliatory style of, for example, the Banim brothers’ novel *The Boyne Water* (1826).

45 [O’Sullivan], *Captain Rock Detected*, 214; Barrington, *Personal Sketches*, I, 350.

46 See Oliver MacDonagh, *O’Connell: The Life of Daniel O’Connell* (London, 1991), 299.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin was first published in serial form in 1851, after O’Connell’s death.

47 O’Sullivan, “Violence of a Servile War”, 74.

48 Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), 48.

the force of this argument, the central contention here is that *Memoirs* involves something more far-reaching and unsettling than the middle-class adoption of the Rock name for specifically constitutional nationalist purposes. But disagreements about this text again point to the ambiguous status of Moore in Irish literary history. Although he is regarded as having virtually invented the maudlin, sentimental culture of Irish Catholic nationalism in the *Melodies*, the *Memoirs* provide a gleeful and uncompromising investigation of other modes of 'Irishness'.

The responses to the *Memoirs* by Mortimer O'Sullivan, Roger O'Connor and M. J. Whitty (an Irish journalist in London, editor of the *Dublin and London Magazine* [1825–26] and its more polemical offshoot, *Captain Rock in London* [1825–26]) indicate that Moore's adoption of the Rock persona was significant enough to be imitated or challenged by several other Irish writers. Tadhg O'Sullivan suggests that through the figure of Mortimer O'Sullivan, who began his career by attacking Moore in *Captain Rock Detected*, and was later a founder of the unionist *Dublin University Magazine*, we can trace Moore's achievement in provoking 'an attempt ... to forge a conservative Irish Protestant rhetoric which could overturn the literary authority and success of *Memoirs of Captain Rock*'; in addition, Moore obviously helped to inspire Whitty's project of creating an Irish Catholic 'magazine' culture in a metropolitan setting.⁴⁹

It is more difficult to measure the general effect of this wily narrative on the new Irish Catholic public sphere in the 1820s. The *Memoirs* was certainly an important but overlooked influence on the Irish novel at this time.⁵⁰ Indeed, it could be argued that an entire subgenre of Irish fiction—the novel of agrarian violence—emerged out of the reaction to Moore's text. Including such stories as Eyre Evans Crowe's 'The Carders', from *To-day in Ireland* (1825), Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *The Rockite* (1829) and William Carleton's 'Wildgoose Lodge' (1833), this literary line extended into the late nineteenth century with a number of well-known novels set against the backdrop of the Land League campaign, for example Emily Lawless's *Hurrih* and George

49 O'Sullivan, 'Captain Rock in Print', 139–40; 149.

50 Ina Ferris suggests that the Irish novel first became established 'as a separate generic category in the British literary sphere' during the 1820s; see *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002), 130.

Moore's *Drama in Muslim* (which were both first published in 1886). Like Mortimer O'Sullivan in 'The Ruin', a fictional fragment included in *Captain Rock Detected*, some of these novelists were concerned to counter Moore's outrageous representation of the secret societies and of agrarian violence in the *Memoirs*. In a more complex fashion, the first Irish Catholic novelists, such as Gerald Griffin, in *The Rivals* and *Tracy's Ambition* (both first published in 1829), and John and Michael Banim, in *Croboore of the Bill-Hook* (1825) and their historical novels, *The Boyne Water* (1826) and *The Last Baron of Crana* (1830), struggled to reconcile elements of Moore's account of agrarian insurgency with a greater measure of ambivalence about the culture of the rural underclass.⁵¹ Their fascinated and even obsessive treatment of Rockites, Whiteboys and rapparees nonetheless offers a counter-narrative to these writers' ostensibly respectable O'Connellite politics. And in a clear instance of Rockite intertextuality in John Banim's anonymously published *The Anglo-Irish of the Nineteenth Century* (1828), a garrulous stranger, encountered by night in a stagecoach, expresses the most 'extreme' political opinions to be found in any of these novels.⁵²

These allusions to Moore's *Memoirs* date from before the Great Famine of the 1840s, the transformative calamity of nineteenth-century Irish history. In any case, Moore's tribute to the vivacity, fertility and levity of Irish peasants was bound to have a different resonance after the disaster of the Famine. In the changed conditions of the later nineteenth century, Irish rural life assumed a new character of fidelity to an increasingly centralized and authoritarian Church and intense economic and sexual self-discipline. References to the *Melodies* abound in the most popular novel of post-Famine Catholic Ireland, Charles Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1873) (as they had in its precursor, Griffin's *The Collegians* [1829]). Scenes of musical performance and the constant discussions of the psychological effects of song in *Knocknagow* underline the importance of music both as a key mode of cultural memory and a way of controlling or subduing the memories of a recent traumatic

51 David Lloyd suggests that the notorious 'instability' of the Irish realist novel stems in part from the difficulty of representing agrarian violence within the protocols of an imported English realism; see *Anomalous States*, 125–62.

52 For an extended treatment of works by Irish Catholic novelists in the nineteenth century, see Emer Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (Syracuse, 2007), ch. 2.

past. The citations of Moore and of various traditional airs facilitate Kickham's strange combination of Gothic horror with a Victorianized, sentimental account of the intimacies of Irish village life. From the moment of their first appearance, the *Melodies* had been criticized for excessive melancholy, for falsifying traditional Irish music and for inculcating a conservative form of resistance to British domination of Ireland; all of these charges took on new force in the later nineteenth century. It is in this guise that Moore was rejected by the writers associated with the Irish Literary Revival, who were committed both to a renewed effort to uncover Gaelic, or 'Celtic', traditions and to an English-language Irish literature informed by currents of European modernism. In W. B. Yeats's view, neither Moore nor the Catholic middle class which idolized him, held much aesthetic or political interest; in his early critical essays, Carleton is hailed as the first 'authentic' native Irish writer in the English language.⁵³ For a long tradition of twentieth-century Irish literary history, Catholic-authored literature in English begins not with Thomas Moore, but with Carleton—the son of a peasant family who was a convert to Protestantism, chiefly concerned with the 'improvement' or modernization of Irish rural life.⁵⁴

Although the *Memoirs* have an obvious strategic importance in the history and literature of Irish Catholic Emancipation, they also have a place in the wider European religious and specifically Roman Catholic revival that became increasingly vigorous in the aftermath of the French Revolution and, after almost a quarter century of war, of the defeat of Napoleon. The endurance of the Irish Catholics under a long, bitter persecution and their newly-effective organization into a modern political community was much admired by French liberal Catholics such as Montalembert; he regarded O'Connell as one of the key historical figures of the century whose career exemplified the transforming (but not revolutionary) power of the ancient faith in combination with a democratic politics. Moore was the poet, the cultural icon, who gave the Irish Catholic cause a universal pathos and appeal. But an

53 See W. B. Yeats, 'Irish National Literature I: From Callanan to Carleton' (1895) and 'William Carleton' (1896), *Uncollected Prose*, 2 vols., ed. John P. Frayne (London, 1970, 1975), I. 394–97; 359–64.

54 For example, Carleton is the first writer in English of Catholic provenance to be considered in Declan Kiberd's *Irish Classics* (London, 2000); see also O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement*, 85–98.

examination of Moore's text reveals what perhaps should have been an even more obvious connection, although it is scarcely mentioned even in contemporary reviews—that with the history of the revival of Catholicism in England. The Anglican revival and the later conversion of John Henry Newman is generally acknowledged as a crucial part of England's modern history, but there is only faint recognition that Emancipation for English as well as for Irish Catholics had a role in the formation of early Irish modernity. Moore refers to a number of Irish and English Catholic clerics whose careers can be fully understood only in this context—Arthur O'Leary and John Milner, for instance. On the question of tithes, a vexed one at any time and a matter of outrage in Ireland, where (as the Captain informs us on several occasions), the impoverished Catholic minority paid tithes to a minority Church that was already rich in recently-renewed government support for church and glebe building as well as from its own accumulated wealth, Moore draws heavily on English as well as Irish disputes. He dwells at some length on the critical differences between the Catholic idea of the State's relation to the Church and the Anglican, Erastian notion of the subordination of the Church to the State. Captain Rock's range of reference is impressive, from Archbishop Warburton in the 1730s to William Coxe in the early nineteenth century. But he also makes it clear that the Anglican justification for tithes is an integral part of the history of both English and Irish Protestant propaganda against Catholicism and Catholics. Thus we find that Moore draws on some of the writings of the prominent English Catholic propagandist, William Eusebius Andrews (*MCR* 69n, 141n, 150n, 154n, 157n), who returns the compliment by citing from the *Memoirs*. By the second decade of the century, in both countries, Catholics had begun to become more vocal about their disabilities and about the long history of Protestant alarmist and sectarian folk history that had to be confronted during the long struggle for Emancipation. This situates Moore's book in the pre-history, so to speak, along with *The Catholic Miscellany*, the writings of Andrews, Charles Butler, Milner and others, of Newman's later defining and sardonic work on anti-Catholicism, especially his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* of 1851.

Of all Irish writers, it is Joyce who is most famously linked with Newman, towards whom he may be said to have been richly ambivalent.

Long before Joyce, commentators on Newman had dwelt on his devotion to an ideal of Catholicism, especially its triumphal claims to historical priority, doctrinal purity and to universality, and on his subtle, lucid prose style; these attract Stephen Dedalus's attention too. But it is Moore's 'Irishness', not his Catholicism, that plays a central role in the intrigue of Stephen's developing consciousness. In Stephen's austere judgement, a tremor of servility palsies Moore's affiliations and reputation. Even so, Joyce represents an exception, partial but crucial, to the early twentieth-century flinch from Moore's 'inauthenticity'. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Dedalus certainly expresses contempt for Moore, as he passes the 'droll statue of the national poet of Ireland' in College Green; Dedalus remarks on the figure's 'servile head', describing Moore as a 'Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian'.⁵⁵ Like his Revivalist counterparts, Joyce disdained Moore's performances of 'Irishness' for an English audience: his generation of experimental Irish modernists would make a definitive break with the colonial dependence of Irish literature on English forms and the English literary marketplace. But although Joyce's work resists a mass readership, its celebrity status highlights his ambivalent relationship to modern commodification and consumerism. In this he has something in common with Moore, the first Irish Catholic artist to turn 'Ireland' into a commodity. Jennifer Wicke, for example, contends that *Ulysses* (1922) is 'indisputably allied' to mass cultural narratives such as those of modern advertising, and suggests that the 'unabashed sentimentality' of the work also demonstrates its 'mass-cultural aspect'; it is also surely doubtful whether Joyce would have entirely minded the current exploitation of his work by the tourist industry in Dublin.⁵⁶ In spite of his occasional scorn for Moore, he refers to the *Melodies* throughout his works, alluding to every one of them in *Finnegans Wake* (1939): he takes

55 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1916], ed. Seamus Deane (London, 1992), 194–95; the 'Firbolg' were supposedly the early, barbaric inhabitants of Ireland, the 'Milesians' their more civilized successors. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom passes the same statue and notes, with an ironic nod to one of the most popular of the *Melodies*, that 'They did right to put him over a urinal: meeting of the waters' (*Ulysses* [1922], ed. Hans Walter Gabler [London, 1986], 133).

56 Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, and Social Reading* (New York, 1988), 125, 168; and on Joyce's production of *Ulysses* as a 'high art' commodity, see Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, 1998), 44.

their appeal seriously, and was evidently not immune to it himself.⁵⁷ Like Moore, Joyce too has his oscillations: between the sardonic critique of ‘Grace’ and the lyricism of ‘The Dead’ in *Dubliners*; between the savagery of ‘Cyclops’ and the rapture of ‘Penelope’ in *Ulysses*; and between the raucous ballad of Tim Finnegan and the lonely song of Fionnuala in *Finnegans Wake*. But if Joyce had known of the *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, he might have discovered his predecessor’s full range as an innovative Irish writer, who registers the carnivalesque dimension of Irish popular culture as well as its mournful sentimentalism. Joyce’s works experiment with new ways of representing mass consciousness in Ireland, over the course of the country’s historical evolution from colony to partitioned states. Perhaps the *Wake* can be regarded as the last phase of an experiment that began in Ireland, when in *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, in satiric vein, the Captain tells us that Irish history is the selfsame story of subordination and insubordination repeated over and over again.

Emer Nolan

Dublin, February 2008

⁵⁷ For Joyce’s allusions to Moore and other Irish writers, see James S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in Joyce’s Finnegan’s Wake* (New York, 1959); see also Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, ch. 5, on Joyce’s relationship to Moore and nineteenth-century Ireland.

Chronology

- 1779 Born, 28 May, 12 Aungier Street, Dublin, to Anastasia Codd, formerly of Wexford, and John Moore, grocer and wine merchant, both Catholics.
- 1789 In his second school, Samuel Whyte's academy, Moore is introduced to the world of the theatre and public declamation; receives a solid grounding in Latin.
- 1795–99 Enters Trinity College, Dublin (legally possible for a Catholic only since 1793). He joins the College Historical Society. Befriends Robert Emmet, Arthur O'Connor and Edward Hudson. Involved in the protests of that year against the recall of the liberal Whig lord lieutenant, Lord Fitzwilliam, and his replacement by the harsh and reactionary Lord Camden. He becomes a regular reader at Marsh's Library in Dublin during his undergraduate years. Partly on Emmet's advice, he keeps his distance from the radicals of the United Irish movement, although he retains his belief in the nobility and justice of their cause. During the visitation of Lord Clare, as chancellor of the college, aimed at clearing out all students of revolutionary sympathies, Moore manages, with some difficulty, not to implicate any of his friends who are involved.
- 1799 Graduates from Trinity, enrolls in the Middle Temple, London, to commence the study of law.

- 1800 *Odes to Anacreon* (translations). For long after the reception of these translations as salacious and risqué, the author is known as ‘Anacreon Moore’. J. S. Mill described this reaction, in 1824, as an example of ‘cant’ that has ‘rarely been surpassed’.
- 1800–03 Forms friendship with Francis Rawdon Hastings, Lord Moira, at whose house, Donington Park in Derbyshire, Moore stays for extended periods; he has the use of Moira’s private library. Through Moira, he is introduced into Whig political and social circles in London, where he becomes and remains an admired figure, particularly at Holland House in Kensington, the famous residence of Lord and Lady Holland, which became the Whig *salon*. Its Irish members include, among those referred to in *Captain Rock*, Henry Grattan, John Philpot Curran, William Conyngham Plunket, Thomas Spring Rice, and, of related political families, the Fitzgeralds, the Ponsonbys and Petty-Fitzmaurices (Lansdownes).
- 1801 *Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Little*. A volume of light, amatory verse, with Moore using one his most cited pseudonyms.
- 1803–04 Appointed registrar of the Naval Prize Court in Bermuda. Sails to the West Indies; departs after four months in April 1804, leaving a deputy in charge; spends five months in the United States and Canada, is received by President Jefferson.
- 1806 *Epistles, Odes and Other Poems* (also published in Philadelphia) is so savagely reviewed (and Moore described as ‘the most licentious of modern versifiers’) in *The Edinburgh Review* by the editor, Francis Jeffrey, that Moore challenges him to a duel, an occasion that arouses much derision from, among others, Byron, who caricatured it in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809); this provokes another challenge

Chronology

from Moore, not taken up by Byron who is abroad and quite unaware of it. Despite this, Jeffrey and Moore become good friends.

- 1806–07 During a stay in Dublin, Moore is approached by the music publishers William and James Power, with a proposal that is the basis for the *Irish Melodies* contract—£500 per year.
- 1808 *Corruption and Intolerance: Two Poems Addressed to an Englishman by an Irishman*. Moore's first satire, heavily annotated and slow-footed verse, points up the contradiction between English boasts of liberty and the tyrannical treatment of Ireland. It contains, as an appendix, Moore's first essay on the possible benign effects of a national music on the spirit of tyranny.
- 1808–34 First 2 vols. of *A Selection of Irish Melodies, with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson and Characteristic Words by Moore*; the series continues until the tenth number, published twenty-six years later. In sequence, the 130 songs are published as follows from vol. 3 forward: 1810, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1818, 1821, 1824 and 1834. The first authorized edition without the music was in 1821.
- 1808–09 Spends the autumn season of these years in Kilkenny, taking part in the theatrical society's productions, including his own opera *M.P.; or, The Blue Stocking* (later performed in London in 1811). He meets Elizabeth (Bessy) Dyke.
- 1809 *The Sceptic: A Philosophical Satire*.
- 1810 *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin*. Moore intervenes in the Veto controversy against those Catholic bishops who had agreed to allow the British government a veto over episcopal appointments in exchange for Catholic Emancipation.
- 1811 Marries Bessy Dyke in London. They move to Kegworth,

close to Lord Moira's estate, where again he has access to Moira's private library.

Meets Byron and a close friendship begins.

- 1812 Receives the huge advance of £3,000 from Longman for *Lallah Rookh*.
- 1813 *Intercepted Letters; or; The Twopenny Postbag*. By 'Thomas Brown, the Younger'. Satiric verses, chiefly at the expense of the Prince Regent and his friends; it has fourteen editions in a year.
- 1814 Byron dedicates *The Corsair* to Moore.
- 1816–24 *Sacred Songs*. Moore's second 'song-cycle', first of 2 vols. Publishes his poem 'Lines on the Death of Sheridan' in the *Morning Chronicle* on 5 August 1816.
- 1817 The Moores' first child, six-year-old Barbara, dies. They move to Sloperton Cottage in Wiltshire, which is to remain their home for the rest of their lives. It is close to Bowood, Lord Lansdowne's estate. Lansdowne becomes a friend and patron of Moore and allows him to use the library at Bowood.
The Moores eventually have five children, all of whom die before their parents.
- 1817 *Lallah Rookh*, Moore's monumental narrative of 'oriental' verse in four separate tales, becomes one of the bestsellers of the age. The struggle between the Persian fire-eaters and their Muslim overlords is widely understood to be an analogy for the Irish situation. Lord Byron, in *Beppo* (1818), speaks of the current 'Eastern' vogue to 'sell you, mixed with western sentimentalism, / some examples of the finest orientalism'.
- 1818 *The Fudge Family in Paris*. Published under the pseudonym

‘Thomas Brown, the Younger’ and set in the Paris of the Restoration, now flooded with English visitors, these comic verse epistles, representing different political views, from the most servile to the most rebellious, have Lord Castlereagh and his reactionary partners and policies as the main target.

Returns to Dublin where he, with his father, is fêted at a public dinner and receives great acclaim at the theatre. He calls his reception ‘better even than Voltaire’s at Paris, because there was *more heart* in it’. Byron call this Moore’s ‘apotheosis’ in Ireland.

Moore learns that his deputy in Bermuda has absconded, leaving him with a debt of £6,000. He is compelled to leave England to avoid debtors’ prison.

1818–21 Travels in France and Italy, initially accompanied by Lord John Russell. Visits Byron in Venice; Byron gives Moore the manuscript of his memoirs in 1819.

1818–26 *National Airs*, 6 vols. The third song-sequence or -cycle, modelled on the *Melodies*, containing a few lyrics, e.g. ‘Oft in the Stilly Night’, good enough to be mistaken for one of them. They are miscellaneous, not only ‘national’ airs, and have never compared to the *Melodies* in popularity.

1819 Shelley dedicates his verse satire *Peter Bell the Third* to Moore.

1821 An intervention by Lord Lansdowne in relation to the debt, allows Moore to return to England. He repays the debt to Lansdowne within two years.

1823 *Loves of the Angels*. A palely erotic and ‘Eastern’ narrative, in which three angels describe how they gave up their immortality for the love of mortal women. It has four editions in this year alone.

Fables for the Holy Alliance. Satiric and chatty poems on

the reactionary Europe of the Congress of Vienna.

- 1823 26 July–25 August, Moore's trip to Ireland to visit Lord Lansdowne's Kerry estates; meets Daniel O'Connell, witnesses the poverty and disturbed state of the country, especially in the aftermath of the outbreaks of agrarian protest and violence that began in 1821. This experience, and his subsequent (voracious) reading on Irish history, form the basis for *Captain Rock*, which he begins writing and researching in the autumn of this year.
- 1824 9 April, *Memoirs of Captain Rock* published.
In May, in his role as Byron's literary executor, he witnesses the burning of the manuscript of Byron's memoirs in the offices of the publisher John Murray. Moore had used the memoirs as collateral for a loan from Murray, which, on the news of Byron's death in April 1824, he repaid, and then, under pressure from Byron's family and representatives, agreed to have the manuscript destroyed.
- 1825 *Memoirs of the Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*. Interesting but not memorable account of Sheridan's brilliant, dissolute career as dramatist, politician and Irish adventurer, and his final abandonment by the Prince Regent and other false friends.
- 1827 *The Epicurean*. Moore's 'Egyptian' historical fiction or romance, an almost featureless production that exposes his damaging attachment to what in the novel he calls that 'mixture of the melancholy and the voluptuous' that threatens on occasion to become faintly pornographic—*very* faintly.
- 1828 *Odes upon Cash, Corn, Catholics and Other Matters*. This is a collection of 'odes' in the loosest sense of that loose term—more like lampoons or pasquinades, satiric, political squibs—that caricatures numerous anti-Catholic, anti-

Emancipation and pro-Corn Law Tory politicians, part of what in 1841 he genially called ‘my long course of Anti-Tory warfare’. All had been previously published in various London newspapers.

1830 *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life*, 2 vols. Moore’s friendship with Byron and his knowledge of the destroyed papers makes this a vital document in Byron scholarship. It is certainly the finest of his biographical writings.

1831 *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*. A salute to the United Irish leader, to Moore’s own youth and to the aristocratic heroism and nobility of spirit that had belonged to the extinguished generation of Irish nationalists, Fitzgerald, Tone and Emmet.

1833 *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of Religion*, 2 vols. This is not just a celebration of the achievement of Catholic Emancipation but also a defence of Roman Catholicism, not only as a political force but as a religion, rationally preferable and superior to Protestantism in historical truth and continuity. The dedication reads: ‘To the People of Ireland This Defence of their Ancient, National Faith is inscribed by their devoted servant, the Editor of ‘Captain Rock’s Memoirs’.

1835 Visits Ireland in August–September; rapturously received in Dublin, Wicklow, and in Wexford where he visits his mother’s family home.

1835–41 *History of Ireland*. Laborious and uninspired, this product of Moore’s fast-waning powers is further hampered by his (admitted) flawed knowledge of the early and medieval periods.

He is granted a literary pension in 1835 and a civil-list pension in 1850.

- 1838 On his last visit to Ireland, attends an orchestral performance of the *Irish Melodies* in Dublin; is greeted by an extraordinary display of affection and enthusiasm by the audience.
- 1841 *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore Collected by Himself*, 10 vols..
- 1852 Dies, after four to five years of increasing mental senility, perhaps brought on initially by the shock of the death of his son Tom, in 1845. Buried at Bromham, Wiltshire.
In Dublin, at the Antient Concert Rooms, on 25 and 26 February, concerts are held as a 'Grand National Commemoration of our Gifted Countryman, Thomas Moore, Esq.', at which a selection of the *Irish Melodies* is played.
- 1853 Three 'Grand Irish National Concerts' are held in memory of Moore at the Royal Irish Institution, 5 College Street. Thereafter, Moore's birthday on 28 May becomes an annual event in the Dublin musical calendar.
- 1853–56 Lord John Russell, ed., *Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, 8 vols..
- 1855 Bessy Moore, his widow, leaves 2,000 volumes from his library to the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin.
- 1857 Statue of Moore by Christopher Moore, the first of an Irishman erected in the streets of Dublin, unveiled at College Street.

Editions of Memoirs of Captain Rock

I Britain

Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824) [1,000 copies]

2nd edition (1824) [possibly 1,500 copies]

3rd edition (1824) [1000 copies]

4th edition (1824) [4,500 copies]

5th edition (1824) [1,000 copies]

Memoirs of Captain Rock [pseud.] the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (London: C. Higly, 1824) [Sometimes described as '4th edition'; seems to be a pirated edition.]

II United States

Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (New York: J. McLoughlin, 1824)

Memoirs of Captain Rock

Memoirs of Captain Rock [pseud.] the Celebrated Irish Chieftain: with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (New York: William Durel and Co., 1824) [Based on pirated London edition.]

Memoirs of Captain Rock [pseud.] the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (Philadelphia: H. C. Carey and Lea, 1824) [Based on pirated London edition.]

III France

Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1824) [Based on pirated London edition.]

Insurrections Irlandaises, depuis Henri II jusqu'à l'Union, ou Mémoires du Capitaine Rock, le Fameux Chef Irlandais, Précédés de Quelques Détails sur Ses Ancêtres. Par Thomas Moore. Traduit de l'anglais par I. Nachet (Paris: J.-G. Dentu, 1829)

The Works of Thomas Moore, Comprehending All His Melodies, Ballads. Etc., 13 vols. (Paris: Galignani, 1832) [vol. 9, *Memoirs of Captain Rock*]

Memoirs of Captain Rock (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1835) [vol. 83 in series of ancient and modern authors; bound with *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion*]

IV Germany

Memoiren des Hauptmann's Rock. Ueber die Verhältnisse des Staats, der Kirche und des Volkes in Irland. Mit geschichtlichen Erläuterungen und Belaegen [sic] herausgegeben von Thomas Moore. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt (Breslau: Josef Max und Komp., 1825)

V Modern Reprints

Memoirs of Captain Rock, the Celebrated Irish Chieftain, with Some Account of His Ancestors. Written by Himself (New York: AMS Press, 1978)
[Reprint of second edition.]

Note on the Text

The text is based on the first edition of 1824, with minor corrections added by Moore himself in the third edition of that year. Otherwise, errors have been silently corrected; capitalization of titles and of certain key terms (e.g. ‘Government’) has been made consistent. Punctuation, especially the use of the dash, has been modified and spelling has been modernized.

MEMOIRS
OF
CAPTAIN ROCK,
THE
CELEBRATED IRISH CHIEFTAIN,

WITH SOME

Account of his Ancestors.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

London:

Printed for

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN,
AND GREEN.

1824.

Preface

By The Editor

IN INTRODUCING to the reader the following account of Captain Rock, it may be as well that I should also give him some account of myself, and of the manner in which the manuscript of the Captain came into my possession.

I little thought, at one time of my life, that I ever should be induced to visit Ireland. Often, indeed, had I declared—so great was my horror of that country—that ‘I would just as soon trust my person among those savages of the Andamans, who eat up all new-comers, as among the best bred gentlemen of Kerry and Tipperary’. The circumstances that at length led me to muster up courage enough for the undertaking, were as follows:

In the small town of —— where I reside, in the west of England, some pious persons succeeded, the year before last, in establishing a society on the model of the Home Missionary in London,¹ with this difference, that the labours of the latter are principally confined to England, while ours were chiefly, if not exclusively, directed to the conversion and illumination of the poor benighted Irish.

The ladies of our town, in particular, were so impressed with the urgency, of raising that unfortunate race from darkness, that every moment of delay in sending missionaries among them, appeared, as it were, an age lost to the good cause. ‘What could be more imperative,’ they asked, ‘than the claims of those destitute souls upon us? If the County of Worcester, which has hitherto been accounted the Garden

of England, is now (as the Report of the Home Missionary assures us) become, for want of preachers, “a waste and a howling wilderness”,² what must the mountains of Macgillicuddy be?’

In this temper of our little community, it was my lot to be singled out—as knowing more of Catholic countries than the rest, from having passed six weeks of the preceding summer at Boulogne—to undertake the honourable, but appalling task of missionary to the South of Ireland.

To hint any thing of my personal fears to the ladies (all Christians as they were), was more than I had the courage to venture. As a brave man once said, to excuse himself for not refusing some coxcomb’s challenge, ‘I might safely trust to the judgment of my own sex, but how should I appear at night before the maids of honour?’³

I, accordingly, prepared myself as speedily as I could for the undertaking; and read every book relating to Ireland that was, at all, likely to furnish me with correct notions on the subject. For instance, in every thing relating to political œconomy and statistics, I consulted Sir John Carr,⁴ for accurate details of the rebellion of 1798, Sir Richard Musgrave,⁵ and for statesman-like views of the Catholic Question, the speeches of Mr. Peel.⁶

I was also provided by our Society with a large assortment of religious tracts, written expressly for the edification of the Irish peasantry; particularly, a whole edition of a little work by Miss —— of our town, to the effect of which upon the Whiteboys we all looked forward very sanguinely.

With the details of my journey to Dublin I shall not trouble the reader, nor with any account of the curiosities which I witnessed during my short stay in that city. I visited, of course, the Parliament House, which is a melancholy emblem of departed greatness. In the House of Lords, the only relic of its former pomp is a fragment of an old chandelier, which they show mournfully to strangers, as ‘the last remaining *branch* of the Aristocracy’—and the part of this structure which *was* the House of Commons, is, since the Union, by a natural transition, converted into a *cash* office.⁷

* The Rev. Timothy East, of Birmingham, states, in a published sermon, which we earnestly recommend to the attention of the Public, that the county of Worcester has been termed the Garden of England; but, in a moral light, it may be regarded as a *waste, howling wilderness*.⁸

Having received all proper instructions from the manager of the Religious Tract Establishment in Sackville Street⁹ (to whom our fellow-labourers of the London Tavern had consigned me), I left Dublin in the Limerick Coach, on the 16th of July, 1823,¹⁰ in company with a gentleman who wore green spectacles and a flaxen wig, and who was, in many other respects, a very extraordinary personage.

As he was one of those people, who prefer monologue to dialogue, he talked through the whole journey, and I listened to him with exemplary patience.

The first place of any note, on our way, was Naas—near which there is the ruin of a magnificent house,¹¹ begun, but never finished, by Lord Strafford, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.¹² In pointing it out to me, my friend in the green spectacles said: ‘It is melancholy to think, that while in almost all other countries, we find historical names of heroes and benefactors, familiarly on the lips of the common people, and handed down with blessings from generation to generation, in Ireland, the only remarkable names of the last six hundred years, that have survived in the popular traditions of the country, are become words of ill-omen, and are remembered only to be cursed. Among these favourites of hate, the haughty nobleman who built that mansion, is to this day, with a tenacity that does honour even to hate, recorded; and, under the name of Black Tom, still haunts the imagination of the peasant, as one of those dark and evil beings who tormented the land in former days, and with whom, in the bitterness of his heart, he compares its more modern tormentors. The Babylonians, we are told by Herodotus, buried their dead in honey, but it is in the very gall of the heart that the memory of Ireland’s rulers is embalmed.’¹³

From his use of metaphors, and abuse of the Government, I should have concluded, that my companion was a genuine Irishman, even if the richness of his brogue had not established his claim to that distinction.

In passing by the town of Kildare he directed my attention, to the still existing traces of that ruin and havoc, which were produced by the events of the year 1798, ‘one of those ferocious rebellions’ (as he expressed himself) whose frequent recurrence has rendered Ireland, even in her calmest moments, like those fair cities on the side of Vesuvius, but a tenant at will to the volcano on which she is placed!

‘Is not this singular?’ he added, ‘is not this melancholy? That, while

the progress of time produces a change in all other nations, the destiny of Ireland remains still the same, that 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!¹⁴ 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 tranquillity—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!

At Roscrea, about half-way between Dublin and Limerick, I parted with this gentleman, having, in the course of conversation, communicated to him the object of my journey to the South, at which, I observed he smiled rather significantly.

From Roscrea I turned off the main road, to pay a visit to an old friend, the Rev. Mr. —, whom I found comfortably situated in his new living, with the sole drawback, it is true, of being obliged to barricade his house of an evening, and having little embrasures in his hall-door, to fire through at unwelcome visitors.

In the neighbourhood of my friend's house there are the ruins of a celebrated abbey, which stand, picturesquely enough, on the banks of the river, and are much resorted to by romantic travellers.¹⁵ A wish had, more than once, occurred to me to see the effect of these ruins by moonlight; but the alarming indications of the gun-holes in the hall-door had prevented me from entertaining any serious thoughts of such an enterprise.

On the third evening of my stay, however, the influence of the genial 'mountain dew',¹⁶ which my reverend host rather bountifully dispensed, so far prevailed over my fears and my prudence, that I sallied forth, alone, to visit these ruins.

Of my walk I have no very clear recollection. I only remember that from behind the venerable walls, as I approached them, a confused murmur arose, which startled me for a moment, but all again was silent, and I cautiously proceeded. Just then, a dark cloud happened to flit over the moon, which, added to the effects of the 'mountain dew', prevented

* Whiskey, 'that has never seen the face of a gauger'.¹⁷

me from seeing the objects before me very distinctly. I reached, however, in safety the great portal of the abbey, and passing through it to the bank which overhangs the river, found myself all at once, to my astonishment and horror, (the moon at that moment breaking out of a cloud), in the midst of some hundreds of awful-looking persons, all arrayed in white shirts, and ranged in silent order on each side to receive me!

This sight sobered me completely—I was ready to sink with terror—when a voice, which, I could observe, proceeded from a tall man with a plume of white feathers in his hat,¹⁸ said, sternly, ‘Pass on’, and I, of course, promptly obeyed. Though there was something in the voice, that seemed rather familiar to my ears, it was not without exceeding horror that I perceived the figure that spoke, advance out of the ranks, and slowly follow me.

We had not gone many steps, when I politely motioned to him to take precedence, not feeling quite comfortable with such a goblin after me. He, accordingly, went before, and having conducted me to a spot, at some distance from the band, where we could not be observed by them, turned hastily round, and took me, with much cordiality, by the hand.

I now perceived—what the reader must have anticipated—that this personage was no other than the disguised gentleman in green spectacles; nor was it long before I learned, from his own lips, that I then actually stood in the presence of the great CAPTAIN ROCK.

What passed between the Captain and me at that interview, I do not feel myself, as yet, at liberty to reveal. I can only state that it was in the course of that short meeting, he presented me with the manuscript which I have now the honour of submitting to the public, requesting of me, as a favour, that I would read it attentively over, before I threw away any further labour or thought upon the mission which I had undertaken.

I lost no time, as may easily be supposed, in complying with the Captain’s wish. That very night, before I slept, I carefully perused the whole of his manuscript; and so strong was the impression it left upon my mind, that it is the Rulers, not the People of Ireland, who require to be instructed and converted, that I ordered horses early the next morning, returned with all possible dispatch to my constituents, called

* Hickey, a *pseudo* Captain Rock who was hanged last summer at Cork, appears to have generally worn feathers in his nightly expeditions.¹⁹

instantly a full meeting of the ladies of the Society, and proposed that a new mission should forthwith be instituted, for the express purpose of enlightening certain dignitaries both of Church and State, who are, in every thing that relates to Ireland, involved in the most destitute darkness.

The ladies listened to my proposal with apparent interest, but no steps have, as yet, been taken on the subject, and the only result of my communication to them has been a romance by Miss ——, on the story of Captain Rock, which is, at present, I understand, in the printer's hands, and which I shall not be surprised to find much more extensively read, than the Captain's own authentic memoirs.

With respect to the style of the following pages, though frequently rambling and ill-constructed, it will, I have no doubt, surprise the reader, as being much more civilized and correct, than could be expected from a hero like the Captain. The classical quotations will also excite some surprise, but this kind of learning was once very common among persons of his rank in Ireland; and Smith, in his *History of Kerry* tells us, 'that classical reading extends itself, even to a fault, among the lower orders of Ireland, many of whom have a greater knowledge in this way, than some of the better sort in other places'.²⁰

March 31, 1824. S. E.²¹

Book The First

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Of My Ancestors

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Genus antiquum terrae

*Virgil*¹

Chapter I

A.M. 1–A.D. 1172

Antiquity of the Rocks · Reign of Ollam Fodlah, Dubhlachtha, Flabhertach, &c. · Moran's Collar · Chief Justice Bushe · Beautiful Young Lady · Revolution among the Letters of the Irish Alphabet · Name of Rock, whence Derived · The Irish Proved to be Jews · Moral Character of the Rocks

THE ROCKS are a family of great antiquity in Ireland; as old, at least, as the ‘ancient family of the Wrongheads’¹ in England.

That we had made some noise, even before the memorable period, when Pope Adrian made a present of Ireland to Henry II, there is every reason to believe;² but under such wise monarchs as Ollam Fodlah, Dubhlachtha, Flabhertach, Brian Boromhe, &c., whose laws, as Mr. O’Halloran assures us, were models of perfection, it was difficult even for the activity of the ROCKS to distinguish itself.³ Accordingly, for the first 1,100 years of the Christian era, we hear but little or nothing of the achievements of the family.

There is, indeed, one remarkable circumstance, connected with the administration of justice in those times, which may account for the tranquillity and good order which, we are told, prevailed. The Chief Judge, on all solemn and interesting occasions, had a kind of collar placed round his neck,* which possessed the wonderful power of contracting or relaxing, according to the impartiality of the sentence

* Called, from the name of one of their most just judges, ‘Moran’s collar’. Even to this day (says O’Halloran), in litigations between people, *by the judgment of Moran’s collar* is a most solemn appeal.⁴

pronounced by him, and which pinched most inconveniently when an unjust decision was uttered. The use of this collar has been since discontinued, on account of the risk of strangulation to which it exposed many honourable judges, and the collar itself was supposed to be lost; but, to the inexpressible joy of all lovers of Irish curiosities, it was again discovered a short time since, and is at present, I understand, worn on all occasions by the Chief Justice of Ireland, with the greatest possible ease and comfort to himself.⁵

We may imagine how dull my ancestors must have found those times, when a beautiful young lady, (as Dr. Warner tells us) adorned with gems, and in a costly dress, having only a wand in her hand, and a rich gold ring at the top of it, could travel from one end of the kingdom to the other, without the least chance of robbery, or even *abduction*, on the way.⁶ So excellent was the police of Brian Boromhe, and, still better, so moral and well-behaved were his subjects!

The only thing that seems to have been out of order among the ancient Irish was their alphabet, in which the letter A had been unaccountably deposed from its supremacy to make way for B.* Whether the ROCKS had any hand in this revolutionary movement among the letters does not appear; but Hutcheson (in his *Defence*, &c.) in a great degree exculpates them from such a suspicion, being of the opinion that the colony which first imported the alphabet into Ireland, had come away with it from Phoenicia rather in a hurry, before the point of precedence between A and B was properly settled.⁷

With respect to the origin of the family name, ROCK, antiquarians and etymologists are a good deal puzzled. An idea exists in certain quarters that the letters of which it is composed are merely initials, and contain a prophetic announcement of the high destiny that awaits, at some time or other, that celebrated gentleman, Mr. Roger O'Connor, being, as they fill up the initials, the following awful words: *Roger O Connor, King!*⁸

Others perceive in the name an indication of the design of the Papists to establish their own religion in Ireland, through the instrumentality of Captain ROCK, and quote in support of this conjecture the sacred

* It appears, however, from Mr. O'Halloran, that St. Patrick acted the part of General Monk to the alphabet, and that the restoration of A to its birthright is one of the chief achievements for which we are indebted to him.⁹

text: 'On this *Rock* I will build my church';¹⁰ while others, not less learned, are persuaded that the name has some connection with the *Saxum Jacobi*, or Stone of Jacob, which (according to Mr. Hamilton, who has written to prove that the Irish are Jews¹¹) was brought from Egypt to Ireland, some time before the general Exod under Moses, by a portion of the tribe of Joseph, called Eranites, and is now under the coronation chair, in Westminster Abbey.*

In support of this hypothesis (namely, that the Irish are Jews) Mr. Hamilton has produced some very striking proofs. Thus, he shows that the fine linen, mentioned in *Revelations* as worn by those personages who are to gain a victory over the Beast, is an evident allusion to the staple manufacture of Ireland; while the 'harps' which they bear are, no less evidently, intended to represent the provincial arms of Leinster, which have been (as Mr. O'Halloran tells us) a harp, *or*, strung, *argent*, in a field *vert*, ever since the landing of Heber and Heremon in Ireland, on the 17th day of Bel, or May, in the year of the world, according to the Hebrew computation, 2,736.¹²

The Irish being thus indisputably proved to be Jews, it is to be hoped that the Irish country gentlemen (now that their estates are beginning to illustrate the doctrine of Evanescent Quantities¹³) will, when forced to take refuge in the arms of their brethren of Israel, find them considerate and compassionate, if it were for nothing but old consanguinity's sake.

With respect to the moral character of my ancestors in the times of Ollam Fodlah and Brian Boromhe, there is no doubt that, however suppressed or modified, it must have been pretty much the same that it is at present. The Great Frederick used to say, that while the French fight for glory, the Spaniards for religion, and the English for liberty, the Irish are the only people in the world who fight *for fun*;¹⁴ and, however true this may be of my countrymen in general, there is no doubt of its perfect correctness as applied to the ROCK Family in particular.

Discord is, indeed, our natural element; like that storm-loving animal, the seal, we are comfortable only in a tempest; and the object of the following historical and biographical sketch is to show how kindly

* 'This marble chair was lent by the monarch of Ireland to Fergus, King of Scots, and it remained at Scone until the year 1296, when it was, with other regalia, carried to England by the first Edward.'—*O'Halloran*. It is said to make a remarkable noise when any of the true descendants of Milesius sit upon it.¹⁵

the English Government has at all times consulted our taste in this particular, ministering to our love of riot through every successive reign, from the invasion of Henry II down to the present day, so as to leave scarcely an interval during the whole six hundred years in which the Captain ROCK for the time might not exclaim

*Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?*¹⁶

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

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

Chapter II

1172–1189

Reign of Henry II · Queues and Mustachios · Attention to Them by the Legislature · Fine for Killing a Mere Irishman · The O'Driscolls' Expensive Killing · English and Irish Cursing Each Other · Apostrophe to Tithes

IN THE YEAR 1180, and for some centuries after, if a man was caught in Ireland with his upper lip unshaven, he was held to be no true Englishman, and might be plundered without ceremony, or killed at a very trifling expense.¹

In the year 1798, under the Government of Lords Camden and Castlereagh,² if a man was caught in Dublin who had no queue,³ he was held, in the same manner, to be no true Englishman, and might be whipped, *ad libitum*,⁴ by any loyal gentleman who had one.

This shows, at least, how steadily the rulers of Ireland have persevered in their ancient maxims of policy, and what importance may be given to mustachios and tails by a government that will but for six hundred years set seriously about it. In the former period, of course the whiskers of the ROCK Family flourished, persecution being to whiskers more nutritive than the best Macassar oil;⁵ and, in the latter period, Crops, as we all know, became so formidable as to require not only an army of twenty or thirty thousand men, but all Lord Cornwallis's good sense and humanity, to put them down again.⁶

I have said that the penalty, in those times, for killing a mere Irishman was but small. Sometimes, however, the price was higher. Sir John Davies, in his *Historical Relations*, tells us of 'one William, the

son of Roger, who, among others, was, by John Wogan, Lord Justice of Ireland, fined five marks for killing one O'Driscoll';* this was an unusually extravagant mulct;⁷ and it would be a curious research for an antiquary to inquire why the O'Driscolls were so much more expensive killing than other people.

The following verses, addressed, I understand, to a certain personage, whose hatred of an Irishman is, at least, equal to his love of a guinea, come nearer, perhaps, to the sum at which, in the honeymoon of our English connection, the life of a *merus Hibernicus* was valued:⁷

Oh, hadst thou lived when every Saxon clown
First stabb'd his foe, and then paid half-a-crown;
With such a choice in thy well-balanced scale,
Say, would thy avarice or thy spite prevail?⁸

It was in such times, and under such laws, that my pugnacious progenitors first rose into repute, and began that career which, under the various names of *Mere Irish*, *Rapparees*, *Whiteboys*, &c., they have continued prosperously down to the present day.⁹

It has usually been the policy of conquerors and colonists to blend as much as possible with the people among whom they establish themselves, to share with them the advantage of their own institutions, to remove all invidious distinctions that might recall the memory of their original invasion or intrusion, in short, to sow in their new neighbourhood the seeds of future shelter and ornament, instead of perversely applying themselves to the culture of poison, and sitting down, like witches, with a plantation of night-shade around them.

Had our English conquerors adopted this ordinary policy, the respectable Family of the ROCKS might never have been heard of; a few dozen rebellions would have been lost to the page of history;

* In the 4th of Edward II R. de Wayleys was tried at Waterford for feloniously slaying John Mac Gillimorry. The prisoner confesses the fact, but pleads that 'he could not thereby commit felony, because the deceased was a mere Irishman, and not of free blood', &c. &c.—See the *Eleventh Address* of Dr. Lucas on this subject.¹⁰

and Archbishop Magee would not, perhaps, at this moment, have been throwing six millions of people into convulsions with an antithesis.*

The English, it is evident, from the very first, disdained to owe any thing to love or good will in the *inamabile regnum*¹¹ which they established among us; and Sir J. Davis, already quoted (with a candour like that of more modern functionaries, who acknowledge the misrule of every government but their own, and grant that, up to the precise moment when they came into power, all was wrong), thus briefly describes the policy that prevailed during the first three hundred and fifty years of British domination in Ireland: 'It was certainly a great defect in the civil policy of Ireland, that, for the space of three hundred and fifty years, at least, after the conquest first attempted, the English laws were not communicated to its people, nor the benefit or protection thereof allowed them; for, as long as they were out of the protection of the laws, so as every Englishman might oppress, spoil, and kill them without control, how was it possible they should be other than outlaws, and enemies to the crown of England?'¹²

As, since the Reformation, a difference of creeds has been one of the chief points in that game of discord at which the Government and the ROCK Family play so indefatigably together, it may be supposed that, at the period of which I am speaking, the agreement of both parties in the same belief would, at least, have narrowed the arena of dissension, and that discord being thus 'at one entrance quite shut out',¹³ they would have had rather more idle time on their hands than at present.

But people, well inclined to differ, seldom find much difficulty in managing it. In the Arian controversy† it required but that innocent diphthong *oi* to set the whole Christian world by the ears for ages; and no mightier monosyllables than 'by' and 'from' have produced a schism between the Greek and Latin churches for ever.

* See the celebrated *Charge* of this prelate, where, after asserting that the Presbyterians have a Religion without a Church, his Grace balances the antithesis, by adding that the Catholics have 'a Church *without a Religion*', thus nullifying, at one touch of his archiepiscopal pen, the creed of not only six-sevenths of his fellow-countrymen, but of the great majority of the whole Christian world. Never did a figure of speech produce a more lively sensation.¹⁴

† *Tu fis dans une guerre et si triste et si longue
Périr tant de Chrétiens, martyres d'une diphtongue.*

*Boileau*¹⁵

Our English polemics, however, required no such important differences, to stimulate in them the *odium ecclesiasticum*¹⁶ against their Popish brethren, but at once proceeded to burn their churches,* and murder their priests, with as right good will as if all the letters of the alphabet had been at issue between them.

The effect of this aggression was such as might be expected; and the country soon exhibited the extraordinary spectacle of two hostile altars set up by the same faith, at which believers in the same Pope knelt down to curse each other, with no other difference in the formula of their maledictions, than that one cursed in English and the other in Irish. Well might a philosophic member of the ROCK Family exclaim, in witnessing this phenomenon, ‘If such is the mode in which these pious persons *agree*, what precious sport we shall have when they *differ*!’

I had almost forgot to mention, though of the utmost importance in a history of our family, that to the occupation of Ireland by the English we are supposed to be in a great degree indebted for the first regular introduction of the blessed system of tithes. Among the bribes, by which the prelates of Ireland were induced to yield obedience to the bull of Adrian, and surrender the sovereignty of their country to Henry II, was that article of reformation (as it was called), passed by the Synod of Cashel,¹⁷ which enjoined the payment of tithes by the laity, a mode of taxation till then, it seems, hardly known in Ireland. Mr. O’Halloran, it is true, asserts the contrary; and even represents the ancient Irish to have been such exemplary tithe-payers, that they not only contributed a tenth of their corn and cattle to the Church, but threw every tenth child,† as a make-weight, into the bargain, a species of small-tithe, by the bye, which, in the present state of the population of Ireland, and the enormous wealth of the Irish Church, it might not be unadvisable to restore to the parson.¹⁸

* ‘In Ireland it had long been a custom for the inhabitants to deposit provisions, and effects of greater value, in the churches, where they lay secure, amidst all their domestic quarrels, as in a kind of sanctuary, which it was deemed the utmost impiety to violate. But the English had no such superstitious scruples.’—*Leland*.

‘The Irish, at length, to deprive their invaders of this resource, burnt down their own churches (as their annals express it), *in spite to the foreigners*.’—*Leland*.¹⁹

† Among the pastoral customs of those happy times, they used (says Dr. Milner) to baptize their children in butter-milk.²⁰

Mr. O'Halloran, however, is not always to be depended upon; and, in addition to other evidence, we have lately had the expressed opinion of a learned and right reverend Roman Catholic prelate,* that the payment of tithes, as a regular and compulsory due, may be dated from the period to which I have referred it.

Honour and praise then to the Synod of Cashel, for having planted among us this additional apple of discord, which, unlike the apples of Mr. Andrew Knight,²¹ has neither changed in character, nor degenerated in flavour; but, by the side of the Orange,[†] and other wholesome fruits, still blooms in the garden of the Rocks with undiminished strength and fertility!²² All hail, too, most ancient and venerable tithes, by whatever name ye delight to be called, praedial, mixed, or personal!,²³ long may ye flourish, with your attendant blessings of valutors, tithe-farmers, and Bishops' courts, to the infinite recreation of the ROCK Family, to the honour and glory of parsons Morrit, Morgan, &c., and to the maintenance for ever of the Church Militant, as by law (and constables) established in Ireland!²⁴

* See the *Vindication of the Irish Catholics*, by Bishop Doyle, the most striking display of clerical talent and courage, that has appeared among the Catholics since the days of O'Leary.²⁵

† *O sanctas gentes, quibus haec nascuntur in hortis Numina.*

*Juvenal*²⁶

Chapter III

1189–1509

Period between Henry II and Henry VIII · The Irish Partial to Justice · Ineffectual Efforts to Obtain It · Parallel between the Barons of Edward I and the Orange Ascendancy · Rebellion of the Macs and Os · The Rocks in Danger · Penal Laws under Edward III · Captain Rock's Taste for Music · Surprising Ingratitude and Obstinacy of the Irish

A SHORT REVIEW of some of the reigns that preceded the Reformation will sufficiently account for the distinguished part, that my ancestors played during the whole of that period.

My unlucky countrymen have always had a taste for justice, a taste as inconvenient to them, situated as they always have been, as a fancy for horse-racing would be to a Venetian.

In the reign of Edward I,¹ that part of the native population which came in immediate contact with the English settlements, and which it was, therefore, a matter of the utmost importance to conciliate, petitioned the King to adopt them as his subjects, and to admit them under the shelter of the English law. They even tried the experiment of bribing the Throne into justice. 'An application was made,' says Leland, 'to Ufford, the chief governor, and eight thousand marks offered to the King, provided he would grant the free enjoyment of the laws of England to the whole body of the Irish inhabitants. A petition, wrung from a people tortured by the painful feelings of oppression, in itself so just and reasonable, and in its consequences so fair and promising, could not but be favourably received by a prince possessed with exalted

ideas of policy and government, and, where ambition did not interfere, a friend to justice.²

But, though the King was well inclined to accede to their request, and even ordered that a convention should be summoned to take this petition into consideration, luckily for the lovers of discord and misrule, his wise and benevolent intentions were not allowed to take effect. The proud barons, to whom he had entrusted the government of Ireland (or, in other words, the Orange Ascendancy of that day), could not so easily surrender their privilege of oppression,³ but, preferring victims to subjects, resolved to keep the Irish as they were. The arguments, or rather evasions, by which they got rid of the question altogether, so closely resemble the shallow pretexts which have been played off against the claims of the Catholics in our own time, that their folly, though of so old a date, appears to us quite recent and modern, and they might have been uttered by Mr. Goulburn³ last week, without breach of costume or appearance of anachronism: 'Edward was assured that an immediate compliance with his commands was not possible in *the present state of things*; that the kingdom was in too great ferment and commotion, &c. &c.' 'And such pretences,' adds Leland, 'were sufficient, *where the aristocratic faction was so powerful*.'⁴

Read 'Orange faction' here, and you have the wisdom of our rulers, at the end of near six centuries, *in statu quo*.

The Grand Periodic Year of the Stoics, at the close of which every thing was to begin again, and the same events to be all re-acted in the same order, is, on a miniature scale, represented in the History of the English Government in Ireland, every succeeding century being but a renewed revolution of the same follies, the same crimes, and the same turbulence that disgraced the former.⁵ But *Vive l'Ennemi!*,⁶ say I: whoever may suffer by such measures, Captain ROCK, at least, will prosper.

And such was the result at the period of which I am speaking. The rejection of a petition, so humble and so reasonable, was followed, as

* 'The great English settlers found it more for their interest that a free course should be left to their oppressions; that many of those whose lands they coveted should be considered as aliens; that they should be furnished for their petty wars by arbitrary exactions; and in their rapines and massacres be freed from the terrors of a rigidly impartial tribunal.'—*Leland*.⁷